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T. F. Torrance

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# SERMONS

PREACHED on several

## SUBJECTS

AND

## OCCASIONS,

WITH SOME

## LECTURES.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

By *WILLIAM DUNLOP*,  
Late *Regius* Professor of DIVINITY, and ECCLESIASTICK  
HISTORY, in the University of *Edinburgh*.

THE SECOND EDITION.

VOLUME THE FIRST.

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M DCC XLVI.





T H E  
P R E F A C E,

C O N T A I N I N G

A general ACCOUNT of the LIFE,  
CHARACTER, and WRITINGS of  
the AUTHOR.

**T**H E Author of the following discourses, Mr. William Dunlop, professor of divinity and church history in the university of Edinburgh, was son to Mr. William Dunlop, principal of the college of Glasgow; and, by his mother, grandson to Mr. John Carstares, one of the ministers of that city: so that, if a mixture of the blood of two such great men could produce any thing extraordinary, it might be expected in our author.

Principal Dunlop, was son to Mr. Alexander Dunlop, minister of the gospel at Paisley, a person of very considerable note, for piety, learning, zeal, and credit in the church of Scotland. He married Elizabeth Muir, sister

to William Muir, of Glanderston, whose son, as heir, represents the ancient and honourable family of Caldwell in the west of Scotland; her sister, Janet Muir, was married to Mr. John Carstares, and was grandmother to our author by the mother's side; Margaret Muir, a third sister of the same family, was married to the great and learned Mr. James Durham, one of the ministers of Glasgow.

Our author's father, amongst his other eminent qualities, had a greatness of spirit that few could equal. He gave proof of it in that undaunted resolution and fortitude of mind, with which he bare the persecutions and hardships to which he was exposed for conscience sake, and which sent him, as an exile, as far as the American plantations: where, while he abode, he was the great encouragement and support of his countrymen and fellow-sufferers who went along with him: but I am not here to enter on a detail of his sufferings, and the many proofs he gave of an unshaken firmness of mind, whilst under them. When it pleased God to bring about the late happy revolution, under the conduct of king William, of ever glorious memory, Mr. Dunlop returned to his own country, and was by the favour of that prince promoted to the station of principal of the college of Glasgow. The authority with which he governed that learned society, and the respect that was paid

paid him both by masters and scholars, was an undoubted evidence of his great abilities: for, by the force of his genius, and the improvement he had made in solid and useful learning, even in the hurry and distress of evil times, he was able, not only to discharge the duties of his station, but, on all occasions, to acquit himself so as to be esteemed and respected by all ranks of persons.

When the church of Scotland, *anno* 1694, sent a deputation of their number to wait on his majesty king William, and to negotiate some affairs of the church at court; Mr. Dunlop was one of them; and very deservedly: for he was remarkable for his publick spiritedness, and exerted himself always with uncommon vigour and activity for the general interest of the church. His zeal animated his prudence, and his prudence governed his zeal in all his actings for the publick good; and his whole character was adorned with such a sincere and fervent piety, as became a good Christian, and a worthy minister of the gospel of Christ. He died March, 1700, and left behind him a mournful widow and three sons, the eldest, Mr. Alexander Dunlop, a worthy Gentleman, at present one of the professors in the university of Glasgow; the second died sometime after; the youngest was our author.

It was the happiness of the sons to have part of their education under the care and inspection of their father: after he was

taken from them, they continued the tender charge of their mother, a person of great worth, excellent temper, singular prudence and piety, and in whom all the warmest passions of an affectionate mother were governed with great discretion and evenness of mind. Our author continued in his mother's family at Glasgow, till he had finished his course of Philosophy, and obtained the degree of master of arts in the university there: and for some years longer applied himself to the study of divinity, under the direction of the reverend and learned professor Mr. John Simson. After this he removed to Edinburgh, and lived with his uncle, the very reverend principal Carstares.

And now, having mentioned this great name, I own, I should be guilty of an inexcusable omission, if I should say nothing more of one whose memory deserves so much to be honoured by all that are friends and well-wishers to the church of Scotland. Mr. Carstares was certainly a very great man, and I believe few ever heard of his name without conceiving so of him. It was a convincing evidence of it, that he had so much of the favour and confidence of that wise and discerning prince, king William, with whom he came over in his happy expedition to save these nations from popery and arbitrary power, and whom he served in the station of chaplain till that prince's death. How much he was trusted by

by the king his master, and that in matters of the greatest importance, and how faithfully he served him, is not to be here related; since Mr. Carstares, out of his great modesty, has thought fit to let nothing thereof be known to the world: certain it is, that, as he had his prince's ear in a very distinguishing manner, so he never failed to employ his interest with him for the good of the church of Scotland.

For a proof of the esteem that great prince had of him, I shall only here transcribe the words of Mr. Robert Fleming, in his dedication of his poem on the death of king William, addressed to Mr. Carstares, "I must allow myself the liberty, tho' I am afraid it will not agree to your modesty, to tell you what I know to be certainly true, and for which I can produce worthy persons, who were eye-witnesses, for vouchers, that his late majesty, not very long before his death, when some eminent persons happened to mention your name, was heard to express himself thus, as nearly as I can remember the words. "As for Mr. Carstares, I have known him long, I know him thoroughly, and I know him to be a truly honest man." A character perhaps as great as ever he gave of any person, especially if we consider how frugal he was of words, more especially this way."

While Mr. Carstares was at court, he was honoured and respected by persons of all

ranks; and, though his interest with his master the king, and the faithful advices he gave, which he reckoned were for the service of his government, drew upon him a good deal of odium from those who were for different measures; yet he bore it patiently, and had the happiness of being secretly esteemed, even by those who seemed to have the deepest grudges at him, and with most of them he came to be in very good terms afterwards, when those things that were the occasions of different sentiments were out of the way.

So fixed was he in the principles of the church of Scotland, and so much did he value the character of being a member and minister thereof, that, tho' he had great and tempting offers made him, he would never accept of a superior dignity in another church.

After the death of the great king William, Mr. Carstares came to Scotland, where he was soon made principal of the college of Edinburgh, and one of the ministers of that city, continuing at the same time chaplain to her majesty Queen Anne. It was surprising to observe how Mr. Carstares, after so long an avocation from such kind of business as he was now called to, did nevertheless acquit himself in the duties of both his stations, with as much advantage as if he had been employed therein all his life long. He had indeed a genius that made him capable

pable of any thing he should apply himself to, and that, with the improvements he had made in useful learning, even amidst the croud and hurry of affairs in which he was for the greatest part of his life engaged, made the poet's character justly applicable to all his performances,——*Nil molitur inepte.*

In his ministerial charge he was equally diligent and prudent, and applied himself with the greatest cheerfulness to the lowest and most toilsom offices thereof. He had an admirable gift both of prayer and preaching, choosed always to insist on the most weighty and important subjects of religion; and delivered his sermons so gravely and distinctly, with such an acceptable pathos and well plac'd accent, and all the other advantages of a natural and easy eloquence, as never failed to fix the attention of his hearers, and greatly to promote their edification: his sermons were of that sort as to be understood by the meanest capacities, and admired by the best judges.

How useful he was in the church judicatories, I need not stand to tell; since a person of his distinguished abilities, could not but add a lustre to any society of which he was a member, and at the same time be capable to do the greatest services to it. Indeed he had a great share of the direction and management of the publick affairs of the church rolled over on him, not as what he affected, but what his superior capacity

and hearty concern for the common interest made inevitable. He was four times moderator of the general assembly, and always acted his part with such singular address and dexterity, as did mightily facilitate business, and afforded a pleasure to all who saw him in the chair.

In his academical station he shone with no less bright a lustre than in his ministerial character. His agreeable aspect, his polite behaviour, joined with his piety, prudence, and learning, gave him all the advantages that became the head of so learned a body. He was equally respected and loved both by masters and students, and the honour they paid him was owing more to the esteem they had of his person and merit, than to the superiority of his station; by which means, his authority over them stood on a footing equally easy to himself and them. In all his publick appearances in the university-hall, he had the applause, I might rather say the admiration, of the best judges. He spake the Latin with great purity and elegance. He exerted himself for the publick good of the society, and procured very considerable favours to it, for which his memory will be ever honoured, both by the present masters and their successors. He was indeed a person of singular generosity, took a pleasure in obliging others and doing kindnesses to them.

He was extremely courteous and affable, and excelled as much in humility and mo-  
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defty as in other virtues. So far was he from affuming, that he ever put himself upon a level with these who, in all respects, were much inferior to him: and so far was this from lessening their respect and duty to him, that it was mightily heightned thereby; the more he condescended, the more they esteemed and honoured him.

He was such a despiser of money, and such a lover of hospitality and charity, that notwithstanding all the opportunities he had of becoming rich, if he had inclined to it, he had nothing at his death to leave his lady, a person of singular worth, and with whom he lived in all the sweetest endearments of conjugal affection, but her own patrimony, which he was careful to reserve for such an event.

His conversation was very entertaining and instructive; for as he had access to observe a great many things that were but little known to the world, so he was very free in bringing them out on proper occasions. And what endeared his conversation to all that enjoyed it, was that height, I had almost said, that excess, of good temper and good breeding with which it was sweetned.

He was truly in all respects a very great man, an honour to the nation and church of Scotland; and there are but few such men as Mr. Carstares, that one age produces. And, what crowned all his other good qualities, was his sincere and undisguised piety

towards his God and master, and which made him the worthy son of such a worthy father, as the great and good Mr. John Carstares, before mentioned, who was certainly one of the brightest lights of his days, a person honoured and esteemed by all sorts of people for his notable endowments both of body and mind, who excelled in all ministerial gifts and qualifications, and particularly in an incomparable gift of preaching and prayer; so that it is hard to tell, whether the father or the son derives the greatest lustre the one from the other; certain it is, that their characters are mutually brightned by their relation one to another.

But now, to return to our author, Mr. William Dunlop: After he had spent some time in the study of the civil law, and applied himself farther to the study of divinity, under the care and direction of his worthy uncle, of whom we have been speaking, and the reverend and learned Mr. William Hamilton, professor of theology in the university of Edinburgh, he was urged to enter upon trials for the holy ministry, in the year 1714, when he was about twenty-two years of age. Though his heart passionately inclined him to the work of the ministry, as what he had the most exalted thoughts of, as he was often both then and afterwards heard to express himself, yet it was with difficulty that he was prevailed on as yet to set about it. He performed all the parts of his  
trials

trials before the presbytery of Edinburgh, so much above the ordinary rate, that he was licensed to preach the gospel, not only by the unanimous vote of the presbytery, but with their most affectionate commendations.

Soon after this he was made professor of divinity, and ecclesiastical history, in the university of Edinburgh, by his majesty king George, which confined his residence to that city, where he both preached upon occasions, and attended the business of his profession.

How he acquitted himself in both, is so well known in the place, and still remembered with so much advantage to his memory, that I am sure, what I shall say of him, will be far from raising an equal idea of him in the minds of those who may only come to know there was such a person, by what they read of him here; but it is well I have myself to assist me in giving his character. The following volumes, to which this is prefixed, will tell what he was while the world lasts: for "by them, being dead, he yet speaketh," and will speak while men have eyes to read, or ears to hear.

When he preached it was hardly possible for one to be added to his audience, so did people, especially of the best judgment and taste, crowd the place where he preached: and yet not one could be observed unattentive.

He was one of those orators that triumph over their audience; I may say he flamed in the pulpit from beginning to end; he fixed the attention of his hearers, struck their minds, captivated their hearts, and led their passions which way he pleased; nor was this the effect of mere artificial rhetorick and oratory, but flowed rather from the real sentiments and affections of his own soul transfused into his hearers: for, as he had a warm imagination, lively fancy, and mighty voluble expression, so he had a deep impression of all the great subjects of religion upon his heart; and when he spake of them, he did it always with such clearness and elevation, with such force and vehemence, and power of persuasion, enlivened with a suitable action, as was not in the power of his hearers to resist. One, methinks, may easily perceive this in reading any of the following sermons, in which the spirit of the author still breathes with such a mixture of warmth and sublimity, both of thought and expression, as carries the mind away with pleasure through all the various turns of his discourse, and makes the reader not only to understand, but feel his subject.

He was indeed a very extraordinary genius, and, I may say, a kind of prodigy both for his natural and acquired parts, considering his years. There are few parts of valuable learning in which he had not made considerable advances, he had a penetration  
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that pierced deep into the subjects that he studied. And though he read much, and forgot little of what he read, being blest with a faithful memory as well as quick perception, yet he commonly went beyond his authors by the penetrating reach of his own understanding.

He had a strong, clear, persuasive way of reasoning, and could urge an argument with almost irresistible force: for as his thoughts were distinct and ready, so his words did roll in an eloquent torrent, with an admirable freedom and celerity, and still free of intermissions and precipitation. He was much addicted to devout ejaculations, when sitting, or walking, even in the streets, with his friends. He had an admirable way of turning the discourse of the company where he was into a spiritual strain, and of making spiritual reflections on ordinary subjects. In private conversation with his friends, when he entred, as often he did, upon a divine and heavenly subject, he would sometimes be carried out as in a rapture, and, without premeditation, would speak in so sublime and elegant a strain, with such a transporting sense of the things that at the time entertained his mind, that all the company, who could scarce forbear thinking him inspired, would be made to stare at him all the while: and when he was done and began to recollect himself, he would be seen to blush as if he had done  
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an indecorous thing, in opening himself with so much freedom before others.

He was ever far from carrying it so as to give any, with whom he conversed, occasion to think that he upbraided them with his superior sense: for his humility and modesty were nothing short of his other virtues. When he was to persuade others to be of his mind in any point, by his way of speaking, he would always have them to think, that he was but telling them what were their own sentiments and inclinations, that he might not seem to overcome them by dint of argument.

He had one of the warmest souls that ever dwelt in a mortal breast; and was so full of affection and kindness, that his friends would sometimes chide him for the excess of his civilities: but it was natural for him to be kind, as it is for the fire to burn. And his generous soul, like a living spring, could not but be still flowing out in expressions of sincere affection and goodwill to his friends: but his friendship did not consist in mere compliments and verbal expressions, but in real offices of kindness, in which he was extremely active upon all occasions; and he had access to do considerable services to his friends; for, notwithstanding of his youth, he was honoured with the acquaintance and friendship of persons of the best rank in the nation; and who had it in their power to do acts of favour to others; and Mr. Dunlop  
never

never failed to employ his interest with them for the service of his friends. With what dutiful regards he behaved towards his aged mother, whose dearest comfort on earth he was, and who would have rejoiced to exchange her life for his, would be in vain to tell; since he, who excelled so much in all the other relative offices of life, could not be wanting in that, which, next to our duty to God our Creator, has justly the preference before all others.

Though he merited the esteem and respect of all, yet they who knew him best, were sure to value him most: Oh with what pleasure have his friends hung about him! What a happiness did they think it to have him all their own for a little while, retired from the world, and shut up in any place of retreat, where they might enjoy his conversation, of which they never could weary. The cheerfulness of his temper, the quickness of his wit, and especially his extensive knowledge of things, and the frankness with which he did impart it, made his friends value his company as one of the chief delights of their life: nor could they ever part from him, without wishing for a new opportunity of being entertained after the same agreeable manner.

His soul was admirably formed for the exercises of piety and devotion, and he took a mighty delight in them. When he prayed he seemed to be in a rapture from beginning

to end: for as he had accustomed himself to think much on the wonders of redeeming love, the felicities of the heavenly state, and the other great subjects of Christianity, so in prayer he would be sometimes carried out into such a transporting view and sense thereof, and speak of them in such a manner, as would put all that heard him, in something of a rapture.

He had one of the happiest talents of extemporary speaking, that perhaps ever a mortal was blest with. And, what was admirable, he could not allow himself to speak triflingly even on a mean and trifling subject: and when he was called to speak on a grave and serious subject, his first thoughts were so just and so well exprest, that one, who knew no better, would have taken them for the result of the deepest meditation and most leisurely reflection. Such are all the discourses published in the two following volumes: for they were all of them written as fast as his pen could follow his thought; and to compose several discourses, even such as are here, put him to far less trouble than to mandate one.

What a pity was it, saving the divine pleasure, that the world did not enjoy such a valuable person and uncommon blessing for a longer time? What a figure had he made in the world? And what an ornament had he been to the Church of Scotland, if he had lived to double his years? But his  
Lord

Lord and master, the wise disposer of all things, had other work for him in a better world, to which he was translated, Octob. 29. 1720. when he was about eight and twenty years of age. And the change was most welcome as well as advantagious to himself. As he had entertained himself with many sweet contemplations of heaven in his life, so he went thither, when called by death, with a heart rejoicing at the thought of his being put in the endless possession of all his exalted expectations and hopes. As he lived so he died, "rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God." I might here tell with what patience and resignation, yea, cheerfulness, he bore his last sickness, and welcomed the approaches of death. An unweildy body had been his chief disadvantage for some time; but it was marvellous to see how his spirit retained its vigour to the last: as appeared in the time of his sickness when he addressed himself to God by prayer, or asked a blessing on what was given him by way of food or medicine, which he did, even several times on the day of his death, with the same force and ardour that he was wont to shew in his health. Many memorable sayings dropt from his mouth during the time of his sickness, which spoke the calm and devout temper of his mind: I shall mention but one, not many hours before his death; when he observed his afflicted mother sitting by him weeping, he turned

ed himself towards her, and taking her by the hand, said smiling, "Mother, can you  
 "grudge to part with a son to that good  
 "God, who spared not his own son, but  
 "delivered him up to the death for us all?"  
 There was something so moving in his speech  
 and manner at the time, as affected the com-  
 pany present both with sorrow and joy, so  
 as they could not forbear weeping. I may  
 say of him, that as he was lovely and plea-  
 sant in his life, so was he in his death.  
 "Blessed are the dead that die so in the  
 "Lord."

It will now be expected that I should  
 give some account of the discourses here-  
 with published. The Reader will easily  
 perceive from what has been already hinted,  
 that none of them were composed with a  
 view to their appearing in print: nay, so  
 far were they from being finished by the  
 author, or getting his last hand put to them,  
 that I am verily persuaded, there were none  
 of them ever revised by him, in order to  
 their being corrected or made one whit the  
 better after his first hasty and careless enough  
 way of writing them. They were all of  
 them occasionally preached, and composed  
 for occasions as they occurred. This is one  
 reason why so many of them are imperfect,  
 the author, as having no fixed congregation  
 to preach to, having no occasion of resum-  
 ing his subjects and going through with them,  
 as those who have fixed auditories may and  
 ought

ought to do. And another reason of it is, that the author sometimes trusted his memory with a good deal of what he delivered in the end of his sermons, without committing it to writing. However, imperfect as they are, such as have seen and perused them in manuscript, have judged them so much above the ordinary rate, that they have advised the publishing of them just as the author left them, and reckoned it a pity the world should want even his fragments. And, that the author's reputation might owe nothing to any other hand but his own, care has been taken to keep these discourses absolutely genuine: for which reason several verbal corrections or alterations that might have been made without observation, and perhaps with no disadvantage, have been purposely omitted. As to the method in which they are ranged, that pertains not at all to the author, but is entirely owing to the publisher, who, having taken a survey of all these discourses and the several subjects of them, with a view to put them in as natural an order as well could be, has made such a disposition of them as they now appear in, which, it is hoped, shall not be thought disagreeable.

I might remark a great many things more particularly with respect to these discourses. As that the subjects of them are all such as may be called select, great and important, and of the last consequence for men to be  
rightly

rightly instructed in, and to have a due sense of: that our author's method of handling them, tho' new, is always natural: that he pursues his arguments with a surprizing elevation and vehemence both of thought and expression: that his flight, like the eagle's, is swift and strong; but, though he rises high, he never goes out of sight, but draws the reader's eye all along after him, and, when it is proper, comes down with the whole weight of his subject upon the heart and conscience: that he abounds with bright and dazzling images; and, when he represents things, he makes them as affecting almost as if the reader did see them with his eyes: that he knew how to touch the secret springs of the soul, and to work the passions to a height: that all his oratory is animated by a vehement love to God, and a hearty concern for the good of souls: that this is the heart and soul of his rhetoric, and nothing but this could be at the bottom of that vehemence and ardour that glows throughout all his discourses, and makes the reader's heart to glow in perusing them.

But many such things will occur to the serious and attentive reader himself, and therefore I insist not further on them: but, in conclusion, shall only say, that, if I mistake not the matter mightily, the judicious reader will find these discourses, upon his perus-

perusal of them, so full of uncommon beauties and distinguished excellencies, as will make him value the collection as a very precious jewel, for which he will both honour the memory of the author, and thank the publisher for the service done to the world in sending them abroad.

I should now come to give an account of his academical prelections, and tell the world how much he had of the esteem and respect of that learned society of which he was a member: but in regard his performances of this sort, which are fully as excellent in their kind as these now published, may, after this, come to see the light, I shall leave what might be proper to be said of them, and of the author with relation to them, till that time come. And I only now farther add, that as the benefit and satisfaction of the reader is sincerely intended by the publishing of the following discourses, so I heartily pray the end may be obtained.

S E R M O N

I have been thinking of you  
 and wondering how you are  
 getting on. I hope you are  
 well and happy. I have been  
 very busy lately but I have  
 not forgotten you. I will write  
 to you again soon. I love you  
 and miss you very much.

I have been thinking of you  
 and wondering how you are  
 getting on. I hope you are  
 well and happy. I have been  
 very busy lately but I have  
 not forgotten you. I will write  
 to you again soon. I love you  
 and miss you very much.

MEMOR



## S E R M O N I.

I JOHN V. 3.

*For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous.*

**T**H E ignorance and corruption of apostate man, are full of objections against the holy laws of God, the divine beauty whereof is clouded by our lusts and passions, and their perfect purity appears harsh and severe to a blinded mind, and polluted affections: hence there is so monstrous a mistake in our opinion of things, that an infinitely good and compassionate Redeemer is looked upon as a hard and rigid master, while the tyrannical God of this world, the best wages of whose service are poison and death, is entertained as an easy and merciful Lord by the children of disobedience. And such not only are the private suggestions of a wicked heart, but in these degenerate times, when sin appears without shame, and mad men are got to such an height of impudence, as to justify and palliate their iniquities,

ties, there are not a few, who openly alledge the pretended severity of God's commands, for an excuse of a profane contempt of them, and flatter themselves into a fancy, that a mortifying of raging lusts, and a restraining impure desires, is a slavery not to be born with, and a yoke they may without injustice shake off; nor are there wanting misrepresentations of Christ and his ways, which are whispered into the ears of the best saints on earth, by a cunning and malicious tempter, and too easily entertained by yet unmortified corruptions in their hearts, which give rise to repining and impatience, and make them sometimes secretly murmur, what is openly avowed by the wicked and slothful servant in the parable, Matth. 25. 24. "Lord, I knew thee, that thou art an hard man, reaping were thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strowed."

It shall be therefore my endeavour upon this occasion, through the assistance of God's holy Spirit, a little to shew the injustice and unreasonableness of so blind an apprehension of religion, and convince us that there is not the smallest ground for any jealousies of your heavenly king, as if he were an austere master, or his laws a heavy burden: and I am sure, that upon an attentive and unprejudiced consideration of them, we will all chearfully join in loudly proclaiming, that "his commandments are not grievous."

I shall not detain you by discoursing upon the epistle in general, that I may come to the doctrine I design to discourse upon. In it the apostle chiefly insists upon explaining and recommending that noble and heavenly grace, "the love of God," with its inseparable attendant, a sincere charity and affection to our fellow Christians, "the love of the brethren;" of which general subject of the epistle, what is contained in the text is a part; where

where we have, 1. A very emphatick and significant description of the love of God, that which is the most obvious and surest evidence of its sincerity, and best distinguishes it from a sudden violent flash of a natural passion, or any other kind of hypocritical affections; “for this, saith the apostle, “is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.”

A holy life, in conformity to the divine precepts, is indeed both a necessary effect, and an eminent cause of love; wherever this heavenly fire is kindled in a soul, it enliveneth the Christian’s obedience, and purifieth his conversation; as on the other hand, the more accustomed we are to an experimental knowledge of religion, its pleasantness and beauty warm our affections, and each advance we make in doing the will of our heavenly Father, tends to blow up our love into a vehement flame, because it weakens those lusts and corruptions, which cool or interrupt the outgoings of a soul towards its God. Nor can we look at this grace in any view, but we must see the truth of what the apostle here asserts. Love is ever occasioned by some similitude and resemblance in the nature and disposition of the persons; and what likeness can we imagine betwixt a wicked life, and the infinite purity of that being, who is glorious in his holiness? A rational affection is mainly bottomed upon a just esteem of the excellencies of the person we love; and this esteem, if sincere and vigorous, always tends to an imitation thereof in our own temper and practice; nor is it possible, that there can be a real value for one, whom we do not endeavour, at least in so far as can be, to be like unto; and you will easily be convinced, that the only way to be like God, is to be holy, and keep his commandments.

Oh! let us then seriously examine the matter, and not presumptuously flatter ourselves into a fatal security, and a fond opinion of our state and frame. Let us never imagine, that we can have an affectionate admiration of God, while our nature and practice are liker the devil than him, whom it is impossible to please without holiness; or that the esteem of his eternal love and infinite mercy, can dwell in a soul that is possess'd by implacable hatred, and all revenge and cruelty; and that person, whatever he pretends, cannot possibly be enamour'd with the beauties of redeeming grace and patience, of overflowing compassions and great faithfulness, in whose breast envy, and rancor, and falshood dwell, or whose conversation hath more of the rage, and bitterness, and calumny of a lying spirit, than the forbearance and goodness, or meekness of a Saviour: no, did we really love such a God, and were captivated by his excellencies, it would be our pleasure and study to copy after them; and there is an essential and eternal connection betwixt purified affections within, and an holy practice and temper without; so that obedience being both an effect and cause of a vigorous love, you see with how strong an emphasis the apostle affirms, that "this is the love of God that we keep his commandments."

2. In the text we have a very amiable and endearing character of the religion and laws of our blessed master, "and his commandments are not grievous." How confidently soever blind men, who are ignorant of their value and perfection, and who never saw the preciousness of a Saviour, or the beauty of holiness, may spurn at them as arbitrary and intolerable, and clamour against religion as a laborious and slavish employment, and groan under its precepts as a burden too heavy to be born; yet they are all of them founded upon  
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the strongest reasons, and the truest interests of those who obey them; they are the glory and perfection of our nature, and the surest means of our happiness; and with respect to God, the almighty King of the world, his commandments proceed at the same time from the justest authority, and the tenderest love to his subjects; and this, if we either consider these laws in themselves, and as they are obeyed by the inhabitants of heaven, every piece of whose service carries along with it satisfaction, where these commandments, instead of being grievous, afford endless joys, and are a delight as well as a rule to saints and angels: or if we consider these commands as adapted to the present state of sinful and fallen man, they are not grievous; none of them unnecessary or disagreeable to the most compassionate designs towards us; they are the easiest terms, and give us no reason to complain or fret at a hard usage from God, or think that our appetites are too rigorously restrained by needless impositions; yea, the seemingly most melancholy and uneasy parts of religion, self-denial, mortification, contempt of the world, enduring persecution or death itself, will deserve what is said of God's laws, Deut. vi. 24. "And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God for our good always."

I need scarce observe to you, that both in sacred and profane authors, it is very usual for a denial of any quality to include the affirmation of the opposite one; and so that "his commandments are not grievous," imports that they are pleasant, and reasonable, and advantageous.

It is upon the last part of the text I design at this time to discourse unto you, "his commandments are not grievous," which is a plain assertion, and I need draw no doctrine from it,

otherwise than by repeating an exhortation of our Saviour's, in a parallel place, Mat. 11. 29, 30.  
 " Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me,  
 " for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall  
 " find rest unto your souls; for my yoke is easy  
 " and my burden is light."

I can at this time but go a very little way into so large a subject. The beauties and advantages of religion, and the excellencies of God's precepts are so great and many, that only a few of them can be touched on in one discourse: That I may not therefore encroach too far upon your time,

I shall only offer some general considerations to convince us, that our corrupt hearts never have reason to repine at any of the duties of religion, that all the terms thereof are just and equal; in a word, that none of God's commands are grievous or tyrannical; and as I go along, I shall endeavour to mix practical reflections with what may be said.

1. This will appear, if we consider the person whose commands they are, the relation we stand under to him, and the absolute nature, and vast extent of his dominion over us. A burden may be accounted heavy, not only from its intrinsic weight, but from the proportion it bears to the right and authority of the person who imposes it; and in this respect it is plain, that it may be unjust and grievous for one man to exact the same service from me, which must in reason be paid to another; for the obedience required ought always to bear a proportion to the obligations we are under, and the nature as well as degree of the benefits bestowed. It would therefore be grievous for a worldly monarch, who can only afford me temporal safety and protection, to require the highest love and most active obedience, or oblige me to evils that are greater than any good I can  
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gain in his service, or more extensive than the foundation of his authority over me; and an earthly parent might justly be accused of harshness and tyranny, if he demanded all my affection and service, since that must be owing to the Father of spirits. But think upon it, as it is Job 33. 4. "The spirit of God hath made thee, and the breath of the Almighty hath given thee life." He called us out of nothing by the word of his power; and so all that we have, or are, is due to him by the clearest title. It is impossible God can require too much of us, because his dominion is founded in our very being, and every faculty of our soul, and each member of our body, is a witness of his right to our life and labours; and when he demands them for his pleasure, we can but give him of his own. Is it grievous, think ye, that our understanding should be devoted to the knowledge of God, or our affections to his love, since he is "our maker, who giveth us songs in the night, who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven?" Job 35. 10, 11. Or is it unjust that "he who planted the ear, and formed the eye," should expect the one always open to his commands, and the other employed in contemplating the glory of his excellencies; or that our members should become instruments of righteousness to him, by whom "we were fearfully and wonderfully made?"

In a word, since God's right to our obedience extends to our whole being, soul, and body, we are, and have nothing but what we owe to him, and should every moment of our time, and every bit of our strength, be required intirely to his praise, the vaineft of sinners, who so insolently reproach his laws, could not answer the apostle's question, Rom. 9. 21. "Hath not the potter

“power over the clay?” And, instead of submitting to a temporal death, should he put a period to our being, as well as to our life, and annihilate us, he only takes away what he freely gave, and was under no obligation to continue. It is enough then to silence all the variety of cavils, as to the pretended severity of God’s commands, and the grievousness of his service, that each of us may say to him, what the prophet speaks, Isa. 64. 8. “But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter, and we all are the work of thy hand.” This justifies his right to the strictest and most universal obedience, and founds his laws upon a bottom, too firm to be shaken by any objections of an unbelieving or repining heart.

And now, when meditating on this argument, let us reflect, with shame and sorrow, upon our manifold transgressions, which you see trample upon the most sacred rights, and strike against the most absolute, as well as justest authority. How detestable a robbery, and perverting of that which is right, to employ these spirits or bodies to the dishonour of the God who made them, and to whose powerful goodness we owe our preservation and happiness, and turn our faculties and members into weapons of rebellion against the glorious Author of life and being, who gave us them for nobler purposes! Let us seriously speak in to ourselves, O my soul! is it possible that, without a blush, I can look up to the Father of spirits, who was my trust from my youth, by whom I have been holden up from the womb, and who took me out of my mother’s bowels, yea, raised me from nothing, and yet how little have I served him? how often murmured at his commands, and made that very soul an habitation of rebellious thoughts, and traiterous designs against my almighty

ty Maker and righteous King? have defiled my memory and understanding, by filling them with impure or worthless imaginations, spent my breath in contemning and abusing him in whose hands it is, or to foolish and vain purposes; and have polluted and prostituted these affections which were planted in me by that God, who infinitely merits our love; and yet, amazing disorder! is the object of their hatred and averfation? whither can I turn my eyes or thoughts? while I can look no where at myself, soul or body, but I must see his authority, and my baseness stamped upon every part, and loud reproaches to the monster that is “unmindful of the rock that begat him, and hath forgotten God that formed him,” Deut. 32. 18. “Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise! Is he not thy father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee and established thee?” Deut. 32. 6. How loudly will heaven and earth proclaim the justice of the condemnation of every rebel, against so righteous an authority! how shall the most profane wit and fretful sinner have his mouth stopped! and what an eternal confusion shall pierce through the soul! when God shall reason, as it is, Isa. 43. 15, 21, 22, 26. “I am the Lord, your holy One, the Creator of Israel, your king. This people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praises: but thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob! but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel! Let us plead together; declare thou that thou mayst be justified.”

But, 2. That none of God’s Commandments are grievous, will appear, if we consider the natural tendency of them, and the happy end of a Christian’s faith and labours, the salvation of his soul. It is a truth, too plain to be disputed, that

how irksom and painful any thing may be at present, yet, if it be attended by a good superior to the evil, no man can, in reason, complain that it is a grievous imposition. It is the thoughtless fool only who measures the weight or easiness of a burden by present feeling, without looking to the conclusion of things, and the prospect it gives him. Let then some duties of religion, such as mortification of rampant lusts, and a patient enduring the forest persecution, be as toilsom and painful as a wicked soul can imagine, and tho' "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; yet when afterwards they yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them who are exercised thereby," Heb. 12. 11. how reasonable and equal will they be found?

If we knew what an infinite God, our chiefest joy, and an eternal heaven mean, what despicable thoughts would we entertain of all the pretended hardships in religion, which Satan so injuriously aggravates, and the infinite disproportion that any labour, or hazard of the spiritual warfare bears to the excellency of the reward? and the glory of an heavenly triumph, would, without the least mixture of flattery, engage us to assent to the great apostle, "That the sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed," Rom. 8. 18. And indeed a fulness of joy, and an eternity of blessedness, so incomparably exceed any consideration of a transitory life, that I need not insist upon so plain an argument, that "none of his commandments are grievous," and that the greatest pains are easy for such a reward.

Let then the attentive consideration hereof suitably affect you that name a Redeemer's name. Look up, Christians, to that glorious object of your hopes, and lift up a believing eye to the regions

gions of felicity, that happy country of love and joy, the endless pleasures, and ravishing delights whereof may stifle all the harsh thoughts of God and his ways, animate us in the midst of the most perplexing difficulties, and sweeten all the labour and vexation, which the hardest proof of our obedience God calls for from us, can be attended with. Let us comfort one another with these words, What though my soul be now in an enemy's country, and a strange land, where the inhabitants are rebels against the king of Zion, and hate, with contempt, all his faithful subjects, insult them with scorn, and fright them with persecution: Tho' thou hast to deal with an adversary skilful to destroy, and used in all the arts of ruining souls, whose snares and devices often banish sleep from the eyes, and imbitter thy life with carefulness and anxious fears? Take courage from the views of your native country, where the eternal harmony, and the endearments of an heavenly friendship will banish the uneasy remembrance of the land of Mesech, and the tents of Kedar, where you now sojourn: That happy kingdom where you will never meet with one disaffected subject to your amiable sovereign, to tempt you to rebellion by evil communication, and misrepresentations of his laws, or grieve your spirits by his murmurings; where an endless pleasure in obedience, and the heavenly vigor and activity of a soul, pure and lively as a seraph, will succeed to the present difficulties of religion, and the laziness or discontent of a slothful or fretful heart; and where the devil finds no more any place, and will never again render your minds uneasy, nor be looked upon as a formidable enemy, but as a conquered slave to adorn your Redeemer's triumph.

Can thou then complain of the fatigue of a short campaign, or call the labours and hazards

of a momentary war, grievous and intolerable, when you look to the glory of the victory, and the splendor of the crown that shall adorn the head of every faithful soldier who endureth to the end? Methinks heaven were enough to alleviate every grief and sorrow, and silence every murmur; and that an eternal kingdom might swallow up all the hardships which can possibly ly in the way to it, and make the roughest paths smooth and easy.

O the shameless jealousies and mistakes of an unbelieving soul! must I fret at struggling now with corruptions, which shall in a little be subdued under our feet, and mortifying of raging lusts, or aspiring passions, which find place only here, or complain at wrestling with a frail body of sin and death, when no remainders of it will ever disturb our eternal home, or will be complained of in the land of uprightness? or is God a hard and severe master, though I, in his service, must be tossed a little on a boisterous and unsettled ocean, and live in a valley of tears, since a few days will put a period to fears, and toil, and sorrows, and land us in these secure and quiet mansions, where a perfect serenity, and a calm satisfaction in a purified soul, and a glorified body, that can never be ruffled, gladden the hearts of the blessed inhabitants of such peaceful regions? or, is it grievous that God sometimes requires me to expose this impure, and painful, and tottering habitation of clay, a dying body, to dissolution or sufferings for his name's sake, that I may rise again in glory, and take it up fitted for heaven, no more a clog to the spirit, or a seat of disease and pain, but brighter than the sun in his strength, and swift, and vigorous, and beautiful as a cherub, and shall, instead of sickness, and the inactive sluggishness of flesh and blood, and the decay of old age, become life, and spirit, and joy, all of them secure  
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and immortal? But I cannot stay to touch at more instances of this nature, where the conclusion of the matter demonstrates, that “none of God’s commands are grievous.”

Let heaven then, Christians, animate us with a persevering courage, and invincible resolution; make us complain of no losses or dangers in the Christian warfare, nor give back from troubles and difficulties, seeing our crown is incorruptible, and glory eternal, and reward fulness of joy. O the brightness of that happy and glorious day, and the enlivening prospect of these better times! when God himself, the sun and the fountain of satisfaction, scatters ever, round about him, light and contentment, which admit no bounds to confine them, nor clouds and mists to darken their beauty and joy. May not these support our spirits amidst the horrors and darkness of the night here below? when “an abundant entrance shall be administered into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour. Therefore,” as it is, 1 Cor. 15. 58. “my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

3. That “his commandments are not grievous” will appear, if we consider, that the severest duties of religion are absolutely necessary to our safety and happiness. We must resist, even unto blood, striving against sin, subdue our corruptions, and deny all unlawful pleasure, or else become inglorious slaves to these tyrannical masters; and should the imaginary heaviness of Christ’s burden, and toil of the work, make us give over our endeavours, and swim down the stream of lust and temptation, it will carry us to that troubled ocean of fire and brimstone, which is the only place sin rolls to. Ah! how injuriously do  
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men cry out that the laws of Christ are grievous, when obedience to them is the life of our souls? how unreasonable a part do such act? they'll submit, without complaining, to the most lothsom drug that may cure a disease, and think no prescription grievous that may make a tottering body a few days longer of tumbling down, yea, not grudge the cutting off a member to stop a devouring gangrene, and yet exclaim against religion and its laws, that it is an intolerable precept to cure these lusts which are the death of our souls, and to restrain a passion, which seeds not on the body, but preys on the spirit, wastes its faculties, consumes its strength, and will prove destruction and rottenness; and they grumble because we must fight when it is in opposition to our greatest enemies, whose utmost pleasure it is to ruin and cheat us, and are ever acted by an implacable hatred to our glory and happiness.

And indeed all the amount of the most grievous of God's commandments, is no harder a thing than not to murder ourselves, and throw away our eternal All, to be at some short pain and uneasiness for our liberty and life, not to yield ourselves mean and cowardly slaves to the most cruel tyrants, but fight for the honour and advantage of a necessary conquest. All this then is a demonstration of the truth of the text, that how toilsom a life Christianity may be said to be at present, yet it is absolutely necessary; and that the obedience you fret at, or an endless hell must be resolved upon. Ah! how mad a choice do the greatest number make? but whatever others do, let this lighten our burden, and put life in our endeavours, that every corruption we subdue, we slay a mortal adversary; and that by vigorous unwearied advances in grace and holiness, we remove the farther from the gloomy regions of darkness.

ness and wo, and are the nearer being quite pulled out of the horrible pit, into which our apostacy from God has sunk us. Extend thy views, sinner, beyond time, look at the raging billows of an unquenchable flame, which is ready to catch hold of thee. Hearken to the sighs and howlings, and despairing cries of damned ghosts, who are shut up in that dungeon, from falling into which nothing secures thee but the frail thread of a weak life, a vapour that is soon blown away, and will break of itself in a few years. Behold the terrors of an awakened understanding, a raging conscience, and an angry God; and think, if all these are not arguments, strong enough to demonstrate that the only way to flee from such evils, can never be hard or grievous.

4thly, All the difficulties in religion, which occasion so many harsh foolish objections against it, so far as they are real, are owing intirely to ourselves. It is the wilful corruption of our nature, the debasedness of our affections, and the impurity of our lives, which makes it so hard to be sincerely religious. We then must blame ourselves, and not throw it upon God, or alledge that "his commandments are grievous:" but I only name this argument.

5thly, How laborious soever a task obedience to the laws of God is how insuperable the difficulties, and formidable the enemies of our souls appear, and tho' we be a weak and very unequal match for them, yet it will be plain, that "his commandments are not grievous," if we reflect upon the powerful assistances, and prevailing helps that are on our side, the victorious grace of a conquering Redeemer, the influences of light and love, and courage from the holy spirit; and the strength of an almighty arm, which an infinitely merciful God is ever ready to afford

us in the spiritual warfare, and make sufficient for our weakness, will hinder the yoke of Christ from being insupportable, or his commandments grievous.

What has a fearful and unbelieving heart to object? Grant it, that thy lusts are deep seated in thy soul, and have got full possession of all its faculties; that they are strong and active, taller than the sons of Anak, and thou as contemptible in their sight as a grasshopper; yet you have all the fulness of a Godhead dwelling in a saviour, who is every way qualified to succour them that are tempted, hath received gifts for rebellious men, which he is ready to give to them that ask him. Through him you shall be more than conquerors; and that mighty power, which worketh in them that believe, will tread down these which rise up against you: and tho' indeed we, of ourselves, would soon fall trophies to insulting lusts, and domineering passions, and would find it impracticable to work out our salvation; yet, can we call his commands grievous, or him a hard master? when he offers us victorious grace to subdue our corruptions, surmount every difficulty, and escape from the most terrible dangers; that while in the fire and waters of affliction, he is ever with us, ready to guide us by his counsel, and keep us from being moved. In a word, that tho' the legions of hell be numerous and strong, led on by an experienced head, and fired with malice and rage, and we be to stand the shock of these principalities and powers of darkness, yet more are with us than be against us; and, as it is 1 John 4. 4. "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." And before a sinner can alledge, that the hardness and impossibility of religion makes God's laws grievous, let the man come out who dare challenge his Maker, that he

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strove and laboured his utmost till he was unavoidably born down by an irresistible force; and tho' willing to continue his endeavours, and beg divine grace, was disappointed: in which case, I doubt not, every mouth will be stopped. Let us then unweariedly oppose the strongest corruptions, the roring lion, and all the difficulties of religion, being enlivened by a believing look to the invincible captain of our salvation, who can easily give us both to believe, and do, and suffer for his name's sake; let us address him with the faith and desire of the psalmist, Psal. 60. 11, 12. "Give us help from trouble, for vain is the help of man. Through God we shall do valiantly, for he it is that shall tread down our enemies."



SERMON



## S E R M O N II.

I JOHN V. 3.

*And his Commandments are not grievous.*

**I** HAD occasion, some time ago, to discourse in this place from these words, and I shall now take up no more of your time in resuming what was then spoken to, than may be necessary to introduce me to what I design farther to say upon them. Having explained the text, I proposed this subject of discourse from it, namely, That how forward soever fretful men are in complaining of the severity of religion, and the harshness of its statutes; yet, in reality, our blessed Redeemer never gave any of his subjects the smallest reason to murmur at him, as a tyrannical Lord, or an hard and unkind master, but that all his laws are judgment and peace, the glory and happiness of these who are wise to obey them; nor is there one of them but aims at the most compassionate designs, and flows as much from unchangeable love, and boundless goodness to men, as from a regard to the honour and majesty of the law-giver; in a word, that none of his commandments are grievous.

I proposed, in discoursing on this subject, to offer some general considerations, whereby the infinite reasonableness, justice and goodness of Christ's yoke should be made appear, and that the severest of his precepts is far from being grievous, which I proved at large.

I. From

1. From the absolute nature, and infinite extent of God's authority, which is founded in our beings, and hath every faculty of that soul, and each member of that body, which his fingers made, a loud witness of his indisputed right to our life and labours; and of the amazing impudence of a repining sinner, that would challenge "the potter's power over the clay."

I shewed, 2dly, that none of his commandments are grievous, from the triumphant end of a Christian's faith and obedience, the salvation of his soul; and that the endless glories, and ravishing delights that inhabit the kingdom of God, did infinitely more than over-balance all the toils and afflictions which would be met with in the way of uprightness, and were enough to silence every murmur, and alleviate every sorrow, and animate with a patient constancy in the midst of the greatest hazards and uneasiness of the spiritual warfare.

I argued, 3dly, from the absolute necessity of the most mortifying commandments, that the life of our soul depending upon compliance with them, an eternal hell, or obedience must be resolved upon; and that the astonishing horrors of that dwelling-place of divine fury, were frightful enough to render the hardest path easie, by which alone there was a possibility of escaping that wrath to come.

I proved, 4thly, that all the difficulties of religion were owing to the wilful degeneracy of our natures, and base love to our corruptions, and could, in no reason, be charged upon God, or his pure and affectionate commandments. I proceeded thus far at the former occasion, and only touched a little at what I shall now go on to speak to more fully.

In the fifth place therefore, how formidable soever the enemies of our salvation appear, fired with  
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with an implacable malice, led on by an experienced head, and trained up in all the accursed arts of bewitching and ruining unwary souls; tho' we have to struggle against apostate angels, who are greater in strength and knowledge than we, and miss no opportunity of pushing their victories over us; and, which is the most fatal circumstance of our misery, tho' innumerable traitors are got into our hearts, lusts and passions, which are taller than the sons of Anak, and are drunk with the blood of murdered souls, yet we have no reason to exclaim against religion, as an insupportable burden, or a continual warfare with these terrible legions of darkness, as a grievous service, if we take the enlivening prospect of the powerful supports, and prevailing helps that are on our side, the love of the Father, the influences of courage and constancy from the blessed Spirit, and the victorious grace of a conquering Redeemer, which ly always open to animate and assist the good soldier of Christ, and will, without a possibility of failing, enable him "to put to flight all the armies of the Aliens," to pull down the securest strong hold of sin, and escape the cunningest devices of Satan; "for greater is he who is in you, than he who is in the world."

Never does it hold truer than in the present case, that "no man is sent a warfare upon his own charges;" for that mighty power which worketh in them that believe, will tread down those that rise up against you. In our almighty General are inexhaustible treasures of every thing that is needful to give life and spirit to the most fearful and weakest of his followers, and all these riches of powerful grace are at the disposal of a Redeemer's love, and managed with the most compassionate fellow-feeling of all our infirmities, and the tenderest pity of our wants and imperfections,

fections, which leave no doubt of his being ever ready to guide us by his counsel, and keep us from being moved. Can you think then that ever any sinner will have a pretence to screen his cowardice or treachery in Christ's service, under the imaginary difficulties and grievousness of it? since, tho' we be weak and impotent, an unequal match for our adversary, and would at once be crushed by the force of an insulting devil, or a strong temptation, yet, as it is 2 Cor. x. 45. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." And that the same grace is now offered, which hath many a time gloriously baffled all the rage and cunning of hell, and made the weakest saint do valiantly, and become more than a conqueror. May it not stop the mouth of the fretfullest unbeliever, that how hard, yea, impossible he may misrepresent the duties of religion, as an unmerciful burden, too heavy for our shoulders, it can never be a grievous command to "work out the work of our salvation with fear and trembling?" since "it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do." With how much reason doth the apostle subjoin, to so satisfying an encouragement, his injunction, Phil. 2. 14. "Do all things without murmurings and disputings;" especially since, whatever men may advance in speculation, it will never be found in practice, that any can challenge God, that he asked, and it was refused him, and that he knocked, but it was not opened: And indeed how unjust and insolent are the clamours of such against the impracticable hardships of religion, who themselves never tried its

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paths, nor applied to a merciful God that he might "make his grace sufficient for them?"

And now, O my soul, why shouldst thou, murmuring, despair? what, tho' thou be of a short and narrow understanding, surrounded by innumerable mists and clouds, and exposed to mistakes and errors which turn thee out of the way? God is ready to command the glorious gospel of Christ, to shine in upon thee; and by that light from heaven, thou may ever go on in the brightness of his face, to love and serve him: Why needest thou be discouraged; because the snares of sin ly so deep hid, that we are every moment in hazard of being suddenly entrapped by them, and the devices of Satan are too cunning and artful for our weak and blinded minds? Since your Redeemer sees into the bottom of all his plots, and with one glance of his eye, looks on the contrivances of the most proud and politick devil, and abases him, and is ready to fulfil the refreshing promise, Isa. 42. 16. "And I will  
 "bring the blind by a way that they know not,  
 "I will lead them in paths that they have not  
 "known, I will make darkness light before them,  
 "and crooked things straight; these things will  
 "I do unto them, and not forsake them," till, by gradual advances in the knowledge and skill of the spiritual warfare, God will make good in thee, Prov. 4. 18. "The path of the just is as the  
 "shining light, that shineth more and more unto  
 "the perfect day. What, tho' thou be wavering and inconstant, and ready to stumble and fall in the rugged slippery paths of this deceitful world? "he that is able to stablish you," will cause that, as it is Prov. 4. 12. "when thou goest, thy steps  
 "shall not be straitned, and when thou runnest,  
 "thou shalt not stumble." And tho' the prospect of thy raging corruptions which tyrannize  
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within thee, be fatal, and appear very terrifying, and that the disease of sin hath been universally infectious, weakned all our faculties, and wasted our strength; will this want of power give thee reason to complain of God's precepts as grievous and intolerable? since 'tis the glory of a saviour, that he is "the healer of souls, and blesses them, "in turning them from their iniquities." He hath been accustomed to triumph over the strongest lusts, and to the conquest of the fiercest passions, many sons brought unto glory, who were once like thyself, blindness and impotency are trophies of this victorious grace, and shew how easily he can enable thee also, to believe, and do, and suffer for his name's sake.

To conclude this argument, I am sure, the sincere followers of Christ may blush at their murmuring thoughts, which misrepresent his laws as grievous, and be ashamed at their impatience and discouragement from the difficulties of their race, since your compassionate master is "ever "at your right hand that you should not be mov- "ed, the eternal God is your refuge, and un- "derneath the everlasting arms." He spies the devil when pushing at our souls with the keenest fury; and by his prevailing intercession keeps your faith from failing: in the midst of the most dangerous temptations and hellish snares, you are surrounded by his unchangeable love, and guarded by irresistible power, "when you pass through "the fire and waters of affliction he is with you;" and at death he disarms that cruel monster of its sting, and administers an abundant entrance into his kingdom and glory. Let us then, for shame, no more murmur or repine, but address God with the faith and dependence of the psalmist, Psal. 60. 11, 12. "Give us help from trouble, for vain is "the help of man: through God we shall do va- "liantly,

“liantly, for he it is that shall tread down our  
“enemics.”

I have insisted the larger upon this head, because 'tis the argument, which the apostle principally has an eye to, to prove our text, ver. 4. “For whatsoever is born of God, saith he, over-  
“cometh the world.”

6. In order to demonstrate, that “the com-  
“mandments of God are not grievous,” I might insist at length upon the life of our blessed saviour, and the example of the perfectest obedience given by him, to each of them. It was too strong a presumption, that the yoke of the scribes and Pharisees was grievous, when “they laid heavy  
“burdens upon mens shoulders, which they re-  
“fused to touch with one of their own fingers:” But how ought it to endear our Redeemer's laws to us, and instead of the fretful whisperings of unbelief, inflame our love and praises, engage us to a cheerful acknowledgment, that his burden is light, and an affectionate admiration of its infinite reasonableness; that no duty is called for from us, no virtue to be performed, nor any affliction to be undergone, but what was first recommended to us by our Lord's practice, as well as authority? Tho' he was Creator and governor of the world, and so could not be profited by our righteousness, or injured by our sin and folly; yet, that he might save us from hell, and purchase for us the joys of “Zion, he was made  
“of a woman, made under the law.” Self-denial and patience, a contempt of the world and its pleasures, troubles and sorrows were his familiar acquaintances. Those paths of religion, which we so basely grumble at, were troden by him in all their hard and rugged circumstances; never was a saint assaulted by so violent temptations, persecuted with such unrelenting malice, and a-  
bused

bused with so ignominious affronts as our law-giver himself; who herein left us an ensample, that we might follow his steps.

And, O my soul, canst thou treacherously shrink back from the toils and hazards of religion, when animated by so noble an example? dost thou ingloriously desert the captain of thy salvation, who leads thee on to battle, and will bring thee off victorious, who always bears the principal share in the uneasiness and severity of the work, and requires only, that we fill up the little that remains of the sufferings of Christ? O shameful and degenerate spirit! canst thou look upon the life of Jesus, and see him indefatigable in going about doing good, never wearying in saving us, bearing with our follies, and kindly condescending to our weakness and peevishness, intreating us to be reconciled unto God our happiness, while we despised his instruction, and trampled upon his very dying love; and, which was infinitely more, drinking the bitter cup his Father had given him, when he became sin for us, exposing his soul to the fury and vengeance of an holy God; and all, that he might make us blessed and glorious? And shall we basely call any thing grievous, whereby we may honour such a master, or think it intolerable to do for our own salvation, infinitely less than he underwent for our good? or shall we fancy it hard to abandon riches, honours, ease, pomp, or life itself; when poverty, grief, ungrateful and barbarous usage, and the shame and pain of the cross, were the portion of our general? “Be astonished at this, O ye heavens, and horribly afraid.” When we meditate either on the example of Christ’s life on earth, or the glory of his present exaltation, how much force may we discern in the apostle’s advice, Heb. 12. 1, 2, 3. “That we

“ run with patience the race that is set before us,  
 “ looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of  
 “ our faith; who for the joy that was set before  
 “ him, endured the cross, despising the shame,  
 “ and is set down at the right hand of the throne  
 “ of God: for consider him that endured such  
 “ contradiction of sinners against himself, lest you  
 “ be wearied and faint in your minds.”

For consider, 7thly, That the experience of all  
 those heroes of religion, who have already at-  
 tained the end of their faith, and, in that happy  
 state, feel nothing but eternal delight and joy in  
 all the commandments of God, is a demonstra-  
 tion that they are not grievous nor impracticable;  
 for they were once like us, blind, weak and fret-  
 ful sinners, their murmurings at God's precepts  
 were before acquaintance with them; the more  
 accustomed they became to Christ's yoke, they  
 felt its easiness and advantage the more, and blusht  
 at their former harsh and unworthy thoughts of  
 it: for they at length saw God accomplishing in  
 them all the great designs of his grace, and found,  
 that no difficulties were so insuperable, but under  
 such a conduct they might soon be surmounted;  
 no enemies so fierce or cunning, but the captain  
 of their salvation scattered and defeated them;  
 nor any lusts so strong and inveterate, that they  
 could not be subdued under his obedience; and  
 indeed, as to the nature of any yoke, the con-  
 stant experience of those who undergo it, is a  
 surer argument, than all the cavils and disputings  
 of the vaineft wit, which knows nothing about it,  
 but by an empty speculation: now, this is the  
 united voice of all Christ's servants, That “ his  
 “ commandments are not grievous, but more to  
 “ be desired than gold, and sweeter than the  
 “ honey-comb.” Wherefore let us, without a  
 repining thought, “ follow them who through  
 “ faith

“ faith and patience have inherited the promises :  
“ And, seeing we also are encompassed about  
“ with so great a cloud of witnessers, let us lay  
“ aside every weight, and the sin which doth so  
“ easily beset us, and let us run with patience,  
“ the race that is set before us.”

I come now in the second place, to prove a little “ that the commandments of God are not “ grievous,” from a consideration of the nature and intrinsick constitution of these laws ; whereby it will appear, that they are our very life and happiness, that besides the authority enjoying them, and the eternal rewards or punishments whereby they are enforced, all the divine precepts are in themselves lovely and advantagious, and in every respect to be desired and obeyed by us.

Earthly kings have self-interest and views to promote, and their ambition and vanity to gratify ; and having these passions many times most in their eye, their government and laws may often tend little to the good of their subjects, and be more adapted to the power and pleasure of the prince, than the happiness of the people, whereby they become harsh and grievous : but as the independency and excellency of the divine nature, remove him infinitely above such tyrannical designs in framing his laws, and make it impossible, that he can be profited by his creatures, his power enlarged, or his glory brightned, God can have no purpose to serve like worldly monarchs, which should incline him to impose arbitrary and grievous burdens upon his creatures ; nor hath he a view in any of his commands, but that by them he might govern us suitably to the honour of his perfections, that is, agreeably to untainted purity and great faithfulness, to boundless love and overflowing compassions, and mercy which endureth for ever. Can thou suspect, sinner, that

from such lovely springs as these, grievous and hard commandments could ever take their rise, or any thing proceed but the mildest and sweetest government? It is this excellency of the divine nature, which makes it certain, that both in his precepts and in his providences, God is never like our fathers or masters upon earth, “for they verily, for a few days chastned us after their own pleasure, but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness:” how cheerfully then should “we be in subjection unto the father of spirits, and live?” and what Moses speaks to Israel, Deut. 4. 6. may be applied to every particular person: “Keep therefore, and do all his statutes, for this is your wisdom and understanding in the sight of the nations.

I might shew at large, from an examination of the particular nature of each of them, that they are so far from being grievous, that God hath indeed commanded us all these judgments for our good always, that we might live by them: but I shall only, at this time, mention two or three things to this purpose, concerning the nature of God’s commandments. And,

1. Let us consider, that all the precepts of religion are perfectly proportioned to the nature, dignity and capacity of our souls, and in every respect, worthy of them: and indeed this is the chief excellency of all laws; and what will ever hinder them from being grievous, when they have an exact suitableness to the qualities and circumstances of the persons on whom they are imposed, and enjoyn nothing that is unbecoming or injurious to their state and character? And, O! with how beautiful a lustre of truth and equity do the divine testimonies shine in this respect? To give one instance or two: Are we creatures endued with memory and understanding? well, it  
is

is one of God's precepts, that we should employ them about the noblest and purest truths, go "ever on to know the Lord, and seek after wisdom which is the principal thing;" that we should not prostitute our understanding to the search of deceitful dreams and shadows, nor confine our views to this transitory scene of vanity, but employ them in the pursuit of substantial everlasting good, and look, far beyond time, unto the end of things: and that we might have wherewithal to entertain and delight the sharpest eye, he hath brought life and immortality to light, and laid open to us all the glories and joys of Zion, that we might not study vanishing trifles, but apply ourselves to that valuable wisdom recommended by Solomon, Eccl. vii. 12. "For wisdom (says he) is a defence, and money is a defence; but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it." So exactly adapted are the laws of God to this noblest faculty of the mind, that it is one of the great designs of his grace, "to turn men from darkness to light." And as it is, Prov. 1. 4. "To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion:" Whereas sinners are ever children of the night and of darkness, and it is easie to answer the question in the negative, "Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge?" And then are we beings that must last beyond time, and remain to eternity? then how suitable to our nature is the command of God? that we "look not at the things which are seen, and are temporal, but seek for glory, honour and immortality;" and if we be exposed to the thick arrows of death, and if the vapour of our life must soon be dissolved, is it not fit that we should daily wean our hearts from this world, before death tear us from its embraces,

and set our affections on things above, which are eternal in the heavens, and give our hearts and love to the greatest and most amiable object? And since we are shortly to leave this earth, but must abide through the endless ages in the world of spirits, how suitable a command is it hereto, "that we should not be conformed to this world," but aspire after the life and employment of pure angelical beings in the other state? In a word, since the soul is infinitely better than the body, that our chief care and time should be spent about it? and if our desires be so vast and capacious, that we should make God the gladness of our joy, who only can satisfy us; and abandoning the muddy and shallow streams of creatures, thirst after the rivers of his pleasures.

I might, in many other instances, shew that the amount of God's commands, which sinners murmur at as grievous, is that we should think, live and act worthy of an immortal spirit, suitable to our noble endowments, and the value of a soul; that we should not become ignominious slaves to the body, and turn like to the beasts that perish. If we considered aright, we would believe the demands of sin and Satan the only grievous service. How hard and insupportable a burden would we think it, in obedience to sin, to blind our minds and stupify our consciences, to have the vigour and activity of our spirits confined to this valley of tears, and be constantly puddling in the mire of sin and sense, led away by every temptation, and so straitly imprisoned, as not to be able to get out of the body and its pleasures, and rise above its empty honours, and dying pomp and riches? Such a service as this is indeed infinitely unsuitable and disproportioned to our being, and must be a grievous bondage to our nature, and the hardest slavery.

2. Let us consider that the commandments of God all tend to promote even our temporal felicity, and to procure our peace and happiness. So little have they of severity in them that they are as exactly adjusted to our true interests, as if that had been the only view of God in framing them, and that whether with a respect to the mind or the body. For,

What a lovely and peaceable prospect would a soul be, under the government of religion and charity, meekness, humility, patience, contempt of the world, and love to all men? each of which is a continual feast, and gives a joy unknown to transgressors, who, being furiously tossed about by ungodly passions, are kindled with the cruel fire of malice and revenge, and kept in a perpetual anxiety by ambition and pride, stung and gnawed upon by their own anger and rancour, never satisfied with riches, nor full enough of honours, but racked with fears and cares of their unstable fortune, vexed with envy at the esteem or prosperity of others, and discontented with their own lot. From how many fatal plagues of war and division, treachery, and violence which occasion so much disturbance in the world, and rob it of its happiness, would we be delivered, if men, in obedience to God's commands, would subdue their own spirits, and live righteously and godly? These divine precepts we so injuriously murmur at; such as justice, truth, and equity, are the only bonds of friendship, and supports of society, without which the world would be a barbarous wilderness, and a den of robbers: and, were they more generally obeyed, how amiable and sweet would every relation become! how calm and composed! and men, incomparably more to their pleasure and profit, instead of being basely employed in contention and debate, backbiting

and reproach, ruining their neighbour's good name or estate, and wounding their own consciences, would be diligent in their proper callings, modest and humble, affectionately promoting and rejoicing at the prosperity of others, and at peace and love with all men; and while people are eager in blaming this and the other party or occurrence, it is in reality to our contempt of God's laws, that every nation, and each person owe all their wants and calamities.

And then as to the body, sobriety and temperance are the best preservatives of our strength and vigour, and contribute most to the greatest of temporal blessings, a firm health; whereas the pleasures of sin and debauch waste our bodies, and consume our estates, hasten on death, and reduce to shame and poverty. Racking pains, and a decayed constitution, are the ordinary effects of intemperance; and these impure lusts which defile the soul, often reduce, at the same time, a healthful and beautiful body to a lothsom stinking carcase; and in this respect, amongst others, "The wicked do not live half their days." And then treachery, cunning, and the policy of lies, have oft, even in time, returned upon the head of the contrivers, who have been caught in their own snares; so that "godliness being profitable unto all things," I may now conclude this head with the words of Moses, Deut. 10. 12, 13. "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul; to keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?"

In the last place, 3. All God's precepts, not only by the divine appointment, but from their

own nature have a necessary influence upon the perfection of our blessedness in heaven. It is an absolute contradiction for a sinner to be happy; without another enemy, his own raging lusts, and impure desires would distract and tear him in pieces, and ever toss about his soul "like the troubled sea, casting up mire and dirt;" he will carry about his misery and discontent in his bosom, and find "his worst foes those of his own household."

Every advance in religion is a step to greater peace and pleasure; and it is the perfection of holiness in heaven which purifies and completes our endless joy there: and can such commands be, without amazing impudence, spurned at as grievous? Besides, God hath proposed the easiest terms that we could possibly demand; it flows from the very essence of the deity, that "without holiness it is impossible to please him, or see his face." And what would the fretful sinner have? canst thou expect that God should deny his purity, and rob himself of his glory, that he may gratify thy brutish lusts? and because thou hast lost thy beauty and honour, and cleavest to thy filthy abominations, that God should also divest himself of his majesty and excellent holiness, that he might be fit to entertain communion and fellowship with the workers of iniquity? O the astonishing madness of sinners! insolently to clamour against their Maker, because, to indulge their fierce passions, and unrestrained appetites, he will not confound and disorder his government, overturn all his laws, and cease to be pure and holy, that is, cease to be God: and except this, O my soul! what hath not this Saviour done to make his yoke easy! what condescensions, on his part, have been wanting, that could flow from the dearest love, and the most compassionate af-

fection, and that could be suggested by the tenderest pity of our folly and wickedness ! with how much admirable patience and long-suffering have these excellent laws been recommended, and urged home on our obstinate inflexible wills, by the most earnest intreaties, and repeated exhortations, by the sighs, and tears, and blood of a Redeemer, who weeped over our madness, and died to save us.



SERMON



## S E R M O N III.

PROV. xii. 26.

*The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour, but the way of the wicked seduceth them.*

**T**HE purpose and tendency of a discourse from this subject, are so plainly to recommend religion, as possess of the loveliest excellencies, and to represent the righteous, as he really is, the man of the most glorious and exalted character; and the words themselves, without any dependence on the context, are so clear and direct an assertion of these truths, that I have no occasion for spending your time by any further introduction to this noble maxim laid down by the wise man.

The first part of the text, which I design chiefly to insist on, supposes a comparison to have been made between a truly religious person and the rest of the world about him; the result of which enquiry Solomon here gives us, "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour." It is not my intention to discourse at any length upon the person here pointed out to us, under the notion of Righteous, since a knowledge who he is, is presupposed here by the wise man, and it is easier for us to form some notion of him, than to become what he is, and be persuaded to imitate him: I shall therefore only mention, that all the glorious things, that may be spoken concerning the dignity and value of the righteous, can only be applied

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to that man, who is in reality possess'd of this character: nor ought we to call in question the certainty of this divine proverb, because such a superior excellency is not to be found always in those who may usurp the name of righteous, and by an artful disguise, or loud and confident pretensions, may make both themselves and the world fancy, that they are eminently religious. No, the man here spoken of, is inwardly what he appears without, God hath opened his heart, and the streams of his mighty love hath flow'd into his soul, and captivated him under the obedience of the gospel; so that divine love is now the spring of his actions, and the governing principle of his life: he is such a person as hath devoted his very being to the service of the Redeemer, yielded himself to God; and therefore constantly is employ'd in purifying his mind from any remainder of these lusts and passions, which render him unlike to his amiable head and king, and being under the power of an eternal state, is rais'd above the world, and is not conformed to its vain conversation, but obeys the word of grace, which teacheth us, "that deny-  
 "ing all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should  
 "live soberly, righteously, and godly in this pre-  
 "sent world." In a word, he is one who hath received the Lord Jesus as propos'd in the gospel, and strives so to walk in him, and to imitate him.

Now to such a person, in so far as these heavenly virtues have possess'd his soul, and shew their sincerity in a holy and upright conversation, there is attributed, in my text, an incomparable worth and glory, "He is more excellent than his neigh-  
 "bour." The original word may be also translated, "He is nobler and richer, and advanced  
 "to an higher station than others;" so that it points out to us both an inward merit and worth, which give the truest value to a thing, and en-  
 titles

titles it to the chief regard, and also all those ornaments, which give a beauty to real excellency. The righteous is posselt, in a degree superior to others, of every thing that is great and noble, that can be a solid foundation of esteem, or, by its unfading lustre and brightness, can charm the eye and mind of a wise discerner. The word here translated *to excel*, signifies also, frequently *to remain*, to have something always resting and abiding: and this indeed very elegantly points out one thing, which distinguishes the righteous from his neighbour, by a peculiar advantage; namely, that his excellency is constant and abiding; it ever remains with him, being subjected to no vicissitude of times, nor affected by the reelings of a variable world, nor does death itself tarnish its beauty, or rob him of his dignity, but his celestial crown hath a remaining splendor as fixed as eternity; whereas the vain excellency of his neighbour hath nothing resting or permanent, it is as changable as his outward fortune, and in the same hazard of being consumed and wasted, as his body is of dying, in which hour his thoughts and the glory of his house perish.

By the righteous man's neighbour in my text, is, no doubt, to be understood the wicked world about him. But it is not unworthy of our observation, that there seems to be a very sublime emphasis in the wise man's choosing so soft and easy a word to express the ungodly sinner by, when he compares him with the righteous, calling him only his neighbour, without mentioning any of those just, tho' ignominious denominations, which denote the vanity of his pursuits, and the shame and disgrace of his wickedness: for hereby it is insinuated to us, that Solomon, when he makes this comparison, does not design to prepossess his readers, to take matters by the worst handle, or

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represent the wicked in the blackest and most deformed appearance; no, he permits us to grant him all possible advantages, and consider him in his best estate, to view him when raised to the top of greatness, and surrounded with all the airy honours that can spring out of this earth, when glorying in his riches and strength, rejoicing in his wisdom, or wallowing in pleasures, or applauded in his victories and triumphs, so that he allows us to look at worldly men in the fairest light and the most advantageous situation, and yet, even then, “the righteous will be found to be more excellent than his neighbour.”

And now, before I proceed farther, I may observe, that this sacred proverb, is mightily confirmed from the circumstances of the man who spoke it, Solomon; since he himself was thoroughly enabled from the most accurate experience, to judge aright in this competition; never a monarch enjoyed more of the pomp and glory of earthly greatness, and all the satisfaction which terrene things could afford; the sun of prosperity shone upon him with an unexampled brightness, and the noble endowments of his mind, wisdom, and learning, equalled the dignity of his external character. And, as to the other side, we know, that his tender years were devoted to God; and before he was led a wandering from the paths of truth, he had made uncommon advances in religion, and might well be numbered amongst the righteous, so that he was in an unusual manner, fitted to make a just comparison betwixt the different values of persons and things. And it gives force to his decision, when he so solemnly pronounces, “that the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour,” that he cannot be complained of as a partial and interested judge; since tho’, as it is highly probable, when he wrote this  
book

book of the proverbs, he had recovered again his former incomparable esteem of the righteous; yet he had pretensions also, beyond any other man, to all the excellency that could be laid claim to by his neighbour.

The latter part of the text may be considered, either as an argument to prove the first part, “The righteous must be more excellent than his neighbour,” because however fair appearances the state of the other may seem to have, yet they are but false and flattering; “for, says he, the way of the wicked seduceth them.” The paths of sin are deceitful, and its offers are calculated to beguile unwary souls. Its imaginary beauties are only the covering of a deadly poison, and the ornaments of a false face, which foolish men are bewitched by: and then the fruits, which grow in the ways of the wicked, and tempt men to go aside thereto, are like the apples of Sodom, nothing but vexation and vanity. Greatness, it must be acknowledged, riches, power, and pleasures are to be found sometimes scattered amongst those paths, which dazzle the eye, and insensibly allure men with their charms: but then they are all but dreams and phantoms which amuse a sleeping soul; and, instead of satisfying with enjoyment, will certainly sting it with despair and disappointment, when death will awaken the lethargick spirit that was immersed in the body and its delights; and, instead of these enchanting shadows, will present nothing but the horrors of an endless hell to the fearful soul; so that “there can be little excellency in the righteous man’s neighbour, because the way, in which he walks, seduceth and beguileth him.”

Or the wise man may design, in this part of the verse, to give a reason why, that notwithstanding the plainness and importance of the maxim established

established by him, “the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour,” yet the numerous part of mankind should be of a quite different opinion, and bestow both their hearts and their esteem on the world and its vanities. “The way of the wicked seduceth them.” They are thereby led gradually farther from God and religion, their minds are darkned, and their fancy bewitched; so that they are not able to discover the beauties of holiness, nor to judge of the real worth of the righteous: but being under the government of their senses, and their lusts, they grasp only at the shadow of an imaginary earthly excellency, and thus their way seduces and perverts them. But I shall not insist on this, since it is the first part of the text which I am to discourse upon.

In speaking upon which at this time, I shall, through divine assistance, do these two things.

1. I shall in several momentous instances compare the righteous and his neighbour together, and from thence shew that he is in all respects more excellent.

2. I shall draw two or three inferences from what may be discoursed.

1. The superior excellency of the righteous will appear, if we consider the dignity of his birth, and the nobleness of his original, whereby he is adorned, in the most elevated degree, with all the glory and honour that can flow from this spring of excellency. It is true, were we to measure the value of this consideration, by the emptiness of it, when applied to the concerns of men, who fondly boast of the glory of their house, and fancy that the fame and merit of ancestors derive an excellency to their posterity, which increases the more ancient it grows, the argument might appear of no great importance, in the comparison of the righteous with his neighbour: but the birth of a  
Christian

Christian hath a nobleness in it of a more substantial nature, and without any mixture of that vanity which is to be found in the other. Of all the race of mankind, whose names are recorded in scripture, Adam seems to have been the most illustriously born, because he was the Son of God, and the more immediately he came from that fountain of good and happiness, his race was purer and more exalted; and therefore the angels, who have no flesh sprung from the earth, but received their whole being directly from the Father of spirits, had still a more exalted original. Now there is nothing more frequently declared concerning the righteous in scripture, than that they are “begotten of God, which, says the apostle, John 1. 13. were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” And John 3. 8. our Redeemer tells us, that his followers “are all born of the spirit.” The great God hath condescended to become the Father of the righteous, they are exalted to the dignity of his children, being born from above, and made sharers of the glory of their elder brother.

But what I would chiefly remark is, that, in this respect, the righteous have a more illustrious original than the angels themselves: these flaming spirits were begotten by the word of God’s power, and their being was owing to the goodness of a Creator; but in the forming of the righteous, the more amiable perfections of the divine nature claim the principle share, in which all his attributes exert themselves with a peculiar vigour, and shine forth with a superior lustre of excellency. An apostate transgressor, saved from sin and hell, and renewed so as to be made righteous, is the creature of boundless love and unfathomable wisdom: all the mighty powers of eternal love were set

set a work in the framing of this new creature, nor is there one of the perfections and glories of our almighty King, that remained unemploy'd in this admirable work. Mercy, the attribute which is celebrated by the loudest songs of heaven, and wondered at with the greatest pleasure, joyfully owns the righteous for its child and workmanship; and irresistible power, as if it had been but faintly employ'd in creating the world, puts forth its exceeding greatness in them that believe. "We, says the apostle, Ephes. 2. 10. are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works," and the design hereof is told us, ver. 7. "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, through Jesus Christ;" so that every Christian is the result and offspring of the united power of all the adorable excellencies of our Maker, when exerting themselves with the highest glory, and the most amazing efficacy.

And the means whereby this child of mercy is brought forth, are equal in their value and dignity. The life, and death, and tears, and blood of the Son of God, the divine influences and operations of his holy Spirit, all the mighty acts and labours of a crucified and exalted Redeemer, were designed for no other purpose but to prepare the way for its birth, to breathe an heavenly life into the righteous, and while this seed of grace is nourished in the soul, and the new creature preserved from secret snares, alluring temptations, and fiery darts, till it be brought to its manly age and confirmed state in that kingdom, wherein dwelleth everlasting righteousness, what endearing patience, overflowing compassions, mighty power, and manifold wisdom are unweariedly employ'd? So that the birth of the righteous is as high and noble as heaven, and all the amiable glories

of the great God, contribute their lustre and majesty, to ennoble the righteous, and adorn his original with the honour of an unbounded excellency; and therefore the apostle seems to give him the preference, in this respect, to the angels themselves, James i. 18. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures."

Is it needful, my friends, that I now consider the claim which the righteous man's neighbour can lay to any excellency of this nature, or to prove that any nobleness of blood, or greatness of family, which arises only from the earth, and are at length buried in the dust, can never come in competition with the more exalted original of the righteous: these advantages of birth, which have so high a value stamped upon them, by unthinking men, owe the greatest part of their worth to fancy and prevailing opinion, and, at the best, are but thin and airy shadows of excellency; they never make a man really the better, and, at the utmost, are only calculated for the night and darkness of this world, where meteors, which shine with a false light, and extinguish with a short blaze, are gazed at, and deceitful appearances impose upon our weakness; but they'll all vanish at the approach of the everlasting day, and no distinctions of blood, that men here call noble, will find place in the grave: in the other world, they will become empty names, nor can the longest race of ancestors contribute to raise the character of one soul there; so that death strips his neighbour of all the fading ornaments of that poor nobleness which he can boast of; while, in that hour, the birth of the righteous shines forth with a fresh glory, and appears more illustrious in the other world, where all the wonders of redeeming love and power are displayed in their beauty, from  
which

which the original of the sincere Christian sprung. Nor shall I shew, that his neighbour owes frequently his greatness and fame to chance or to wickedness, and that tyranny, fraud, covetousness, and oppression, are the sources of his pretended excellency.

And now, before I leave this head, consider, Christians, the nobleness of your birth, and the great things that God hath formed you for, when “ he hath begotten you again unto a lively hope, “ by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the “ dead:” Be ashamed of every desire and action that are unworthy of so glorious a rise, and abhor the thoughts of prostituting the honour of your celestial birth, by any thing that is mean and trifling. Consider how far the world is below you, and with what disdain you should trample on its pleasures, which are only fit for beasts, and men of the same make, who are born only of this earth. Let us value ourselves as the offspring of God, and if we be, what we pretend, the sons of his love and mercy, let us endeavour always to bear up to the dignity of this character, and walk worthy of the estate we are born to, “ an “ inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and “ that fadeth not away, reserved in the heavens “ for us: 1 Theff. 5. 5, 8. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we “ are not of the night, nor of darkness. But let “ us who are of the day, be sober, putting on “ the breast-plate of faith and love, and for an “ helmet, the hope of salvation.” But,

2dly, The superior excellency of the righteous beyond his neighbour, will appear, if we compare their aims, designs, and the tendency of their endeavours, together; nor is this a bad rule whereby to judge of the true nature and qualities of persons: for such whose views are mean  
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and despicable, may naturally be supposed to be of narrow souls and low dispositions, since their projects will always bear a proportion to the frame and temper of their minds; whereas those who aim at exalted objects, and aspire to the highest and most valuable goods, should, in reason, be esteemed of more generous and elevated spirits, and in so far to have a just claim to the greater excellency.

Now, so far as any hath a title to the character of righteous, heaven is his professed aim, and he seeks for glory, honour, and immortality; his divine ambition soars above the clouds, and stretcheth its views towards the immense regions of eternity; the whole of his wishes and pursuits look to an everlasting kingdom, and an incorruptible crown; his soul being too large for the earth, and its desires too extensive for time, God alone is its exceeding joy, and his fulness the only portion it can acquiesce in; and in a word, the “righteous look not at the things which are seen, and are temporal, but at the things which are not seen, and are eternal.” Whereas it is evident from the nature of the thing, and constant experience, that his neighbour hath no projects that extend beyond time, nor aims that rise above the world; its riches, honours, pleasures bound his thoughts, and engross his cares; a great estate, an eminent station, and perhaps that wit and learning which have no influence on eternity, and, it may be, fame and applause, fill his soul, and are the highest wishes of his ambition. Now, as all these are vain and perishing, are but confined and temporary enjoyments, the soul that is glued to them, and minds no nobler pursuit, must be of the same nature, that is, poor, weak and contemptible, of a narrow contracted spirit and mean little qualities, that can never be a capable  
subject

subject of any thing that is great and excellent ; so that as far as all the glorious things which are spoken of the city of our God, the delights of angels, and the joys of a seraph, are beyond the short-lived pleasures of sin and sense, or as eternity exceeds time, so much greater excellency adorns the righteous, than what can be pretended by his neighbour, whose portion is with the men of this earth.

Oh ! my friends, how low sunk must an immortal soul be, that creeps upon the earth with the serpent, and feeds upon dust and ashes instead of beauty and dignity ! What shame and disgrace must cover that degenerate spirit, that hath forgotten its birth and its expectations, wallows with the dogs and swine in the puddle of lusts and pleasures ; and while itself is immortal, yet no more than the beasts that perish, doth it extend its aims to eternity ? with such a person, and such all ungodly men are, there can be no remains of any thing that is great and noble, and we may truly conclude, that he hath utterly “ fallen from his “ excellency.”

3dly, As these glorious things, which the righteous are born unto, and the exalted hopes whereby they are animated, must necessarily enlarge their souls, and inspire them with noble and generous sentiments ; so, from their nature and constitution, the righteous are fixed and steady, they are governed by maxims which are invariable, and they are moved by certain and regular principles. Now constancy and firmness are, by all the world, acknowledged to be shining ornaments of an exalted character, and a distinguished excellency ; whereas a changeable irresolute mind, and a wavering inconstant management, are ever an argument of a mean and contemptible disposition.

'Tis

'Tis without dispute, that a person will be influenced by the objects he pursues, and the designs which he hath mainly in view; and therefore the righteous man, having made God his choice, and fixed his steady eye upon the blessings of that kingdom which can never be moved, he stands and acts upon a solid and unshaken bottom, and his soul, so far as it is under the government of religion, must be firm and stable as the heavens, the exalted object of his expectations; the power of an eternal life preserves him from being tossed about by the vicissitudes of times and interests, or cajoled by the allurements of flattery, nor can the changeable winds of prosperity and adversity alter his course, or blow him down from his excellency: and as nothing in the world can do the least injury to his heavenly inheritance, temporal things must be too weak and fading to disturb him; for the God who is his portion, being ever the same, and to eternity encompassed about with great faithfulness, his soul is stayed upon him, and his temper, his actions and his schemes are still the same, and have all the excellency of the exactest harmony and uniform regularity. Whereas, his neighbour is wavering and variable without any fixed principle that governs him, or any thing that can be depended upon, and consequently he is void of true excellency; and it must be necessarily thus from the nature of the thing, because really the objects of his wishes, hopes and views are all terrene and mutable, and he must, according to their uncertain course, change and alter.

The righteous man's neighbour is either under the tyranny of his boiling impetuous passions, or a slave to his furious lusts and pleasures, and how miserably do these shake and toss about the unstable

stable soul, Isa. 57. 20. "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt:" or if his neighbour is, it may be, dazzled by the splendor of greatness, and bewitched with the enchantments of power, "he hath said to the fine gold that it is his confidence," is perhaps fond of fame and honour, and eagerly sucks in the breath of popular applause, or whatever other thing be the idol he serves; it is plain he will be directed and steered in the whole of his conduct thereby. And as every thing in this scene of vanity and mortality, is exposed to a thousand uncertainties and variations, so the righteous man's neighbour must, like his portion and his end, be unstable, airy and fantastical, and therefore worthless and despicable: whereas no changes move the righteous, nor do any storms and tempests overturn him, for, as it is, Heb. vi. 19. "He hath his hope as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entreth into that within the vail."

But 4thly, As this noble quality extends itself to the whole of his life, and hath an universal influence, the righteous man in all relations and circumstances, hath an excellency far superior to that of his neighbour. He is the only steady friend, that upon no consideration will prove false or fickle, because, being a citizen of Zion, the humour of the multitude, or the changes of one's lot in the world, are none of the maxims which obtain with him, and have no influence on that place, where all his delights and expectations are. It is the righteous alone who can be a real patriot of his country, or have an unbiassed zeal for the publick; it is he only that merits the prince's favour, or can be depended on with confidence, whose measures are always uniform, and his friend-

friendship to be trusted and valued: because, that divine law which he studies to obey, is ever the same, and these exalted aims which sway him, are all heavenly and unchangeable; nor hath he self-interests in this earth, or secret views to pervert his conduct, or occasion an alteration; and it is the very design of religion to purify him from all those little sublunary passions, which make men trick and dissemble, do mean and inglorious, false and treacherous actions. In a word, as a father or a child, a master or a servant, a relation or companion, a prince or a subject, “the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.”

I know the opinion of the blinded world is upon the other side; and there are many, who have no pretences to religion, that will fancy themselves highly injured, when I represent them as so worthless and changeable, that they can never in any station be trusted to, or depended upon; they boast of their being men of honour and generosity, and believe these principles enough to intitle them to esteem and character: but that same honour, so much valued, if distinguished from religion and piety, is but an airy fantastical appearance, and will never make a person steady or faithful. It is true, that some men of the world are of nobler and braver inclinations than others, and may have got above many of the baser passions which some are swayed by, and this may give them an appearance of excellency: but, so long as they are not of the righteous, they must have still a weak and wavering side, which exposes them to despicable enough vices, and demonstrates how little they can be relied on: and there is still some one earthly affection or other, which domineers over them. One perhaps may contemn riches, and nobly reject the greatest treasures, rather than do an unworthy action, betray

betray his friend or his country: but then possibly flattery will overcome the same person, and gratifying his pride and vanity, make him ingloriously change all his measures, and ambition or popularity may do what covetousness could not effect; or if superior to all these, yet anger, revenge or discontent may render him as faithless and as variable; and that even after enduring so many trials, that one was put beyond fears and doubts of him. The whole world in all ages is full of such instances, nor is it possible, that so long as this world bounds a man's hopes and endeavours, and the thing he pursues is temporal, the matter can be otherwise; because there the governing principle, the master affection is earthly and mutable. It is the love of God, and the power of an happy immortality, a blessedness raised above the tricks and changes of this world, that can be the only spring of a brave and noble life; and it is the righteous alone, who can in a just and proper sense be confided in, or esteemed as a man of honour and generosity: his neighbour is whirled about by the variable winds of riches, power, fame, or pleasure, and being "unstable as water, can never excel."

5thly, This is one demonstrative proof, how far "the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour," that all the advantages and ornaments which this last can boast of, are external and accidental to him: they are things that relate to the body, and reach no farther than the senses, a splendid equipage, a sumptuous table, full coffers, or magnificent posts and titles, or strength and beauty, which are the principal vouchers, that the neighbour, mentioned by Solomon, can bring to prove his excellency, have little to do with a spirit, and add no value to it, nor can they, in a proper sense, be called our own; so that

that they are extremely light and superficial, and are indeed but paint and varnish which may hide some deformities: whereas the excellencies of the righteous are deep and lasting; they are seated in the heart and spirit, which they adorn and beautify with love, and meekness, and humility, and the other noble graces of the christian life. And indeed, had we a just notion of things, what a sparkling loveliness would we discern, in a mind that is purified from lusts and passions? where reason and religion govern the inferior appetites, every thing is serene and composed, and the beauties of holiness shine with a dazzling light and glory.

And it were easy, did your time allow, to prove, that indeed there is no true beauty and dignity but in the soul, and that it is a beastly shame, for one that has a soul to fancy that they can be placed elsewhere. I might shew, that no triumphs are so glorious as those gained over our own selves; and that in the other world, the least passion that hath been restrained, the smallest corruption that hath been mortified, will be applauded and honoured more than all the victories of the greatest heroes over conquered nations; for, as the same wise man saith, Prov. 16. 32. "He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city:" so that as far as the soul is nobler than the body, or an immortal spirit more quick and capacious than inactive flesh and blood, so far does the glory and worth of the righteous excel these of his neighbour. Many other things might be spoken on this subject; but your time being gone,

I shall only add, in the sixth place, that as permanency and stability is one of the chief ingredients in the value of any thing, so herein does the

excellency of the righteous exceed, beyond comparison, that of his neighbour: that however great and noble a figure the indowments of his mind, or the advantages of his fortune, may enable him to make in the world, and whatever shew of excellency some of these men may have attained here; yet, in all respects, death puts a period to it, nor can it outlive the grave. And indeed, if you would discern the emphasis of this divine proverb, look, my friends, to that fatal hour, and mark the end of the transgressor: behold the shadows of the everlasting evening stretching themselves over all earthly glories, and what dimness, and what melancholy succeeds that false blaze which dazzled the foolish sinner's eyes; look to his expiring honours, and his vanishing greatness; see how irresistibly death robs him of his treasures, and how one step of the king of terrors, makes all the phantoms of that, so much boasted of, power and excellency, disappear and evaporate. Vain inconsiderate men! to boast of glories which every fever or decay can at once extinguish; and to esteem that excellency, which lies at the mercy of every disease, and a thousand chances, or the murdering hand of any ruffian, can strip us of without remedy. And are we so mad, as to admire and pursue any thing that is so slippery and uncertain? Oh! the fearful state of the despairing soul! which, when awaking at death, will, with horror, discern, that the things it gloried in and valued, were only dreams of excellency, but the realities of folly, poison and destruction. It was from the prospect of the amazing change that happens in that hour, that Zophar so elegantly expresses his contempt of these vanities, Job 20. 5, 6, 7, 8. "The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment. Tho' his excellency

“cellency mount up to the heavens, and his  
“head reach unto the clouds; yet he shall perish  
“for ever: he shall flee away as a dream, and  
“shall not be found: yea, he shall be chased a-  
“way as a vision of the night.” And the ques-  
tion of Eliphaz is an unanswerable argument of  
the little value of any thing that can be pretended  
to by the neighbour of the righteous, Job 4. 21.  
“Doth not their excellency which is in them,  
“go away? They die even without wisdom.”  
And as it is, Psal. 49. 16. “Be not thou afraid  
“when one is made rich, when the glory of his  
“house is increased; for when he dieth he shall  
“carry nothing away, his glory shall not descend  
“after him.” But so far is this from being the  
condition of the righteous \*\*\*\*\*





## S E R M O N IV.

LUKE xii. 4, 5.

*And I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that, have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him.*

**L**OVE and fear, in a subordination to which all the other passions exert themselves, are the two great springs which move and animate the lives of rational creatures: by the first whereof, they are affectionately drawn and united to a valuable and amiable friend; and by the last, they shrink back and flee from a terrible and dangerous enemy: and the universally diffused influence which these have upon our whole management, must render it of the highest importance to us, that they be moved by suitable objects; and so we shun the being either allured by empty deceiving nothings, under the colour of good, or frightned by imaginary terrors. And our concern in this matter should be greatned, and become more solicitous, when we consider how easily our blind and ignorant minds are imposed upon, in a world where errors and deceits are every where scattered about, and all these numerous occasions of our mistaking, are managed by an artful cunning devil, with the greatest advantage, to gain his

his malicious purposes, and promote our ruin. We are sunk so deep into the mire of sensible things, and our reason is so debased and weakned, that such things as strike our fancy and senses have the only influence upon us: and thus, while we dote, with the most excessive fondness and foolish love, upon perishing vanities, that are utterly destitute of any excellency which may render them worthy of our affection, that God who is infinitely amiable and lovely, is overlooked by us. In like manner also, we are for the most part, only afraid of such as can render us uneasy in this life, and touch our temporal possessions, while we little mind him whose power extends incomparably farther, and can pursue with vengeance, even beyond death and the grave.

It is my purpose, at this time, to discourse a little to you upon the last of these, and, through divine assistance, to offer some things, the consideration whereof may tend to persuade us, that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” whereas, to be afraid of man that shall die, is a very great advance in folly. To shew unto you, that those only act a reasonable part who look into the invisible world, and dread the terrors of that God who commands there, while they contemn and undervalue the fury and rage of those, whose little power extends no further than the outward man, and can do no harm to the immortal part. In a word, to prove that the most terrible evils which can befall us in this life, however so much they may startle and fright us at first view, are not really so very formidable in themselves; and, when compared with the miseries of an eternity, altogether trifling and inconsiderable, and that indeed it is infinitely better to be exposed to the frowns of the whole world, than to the anger of a God. And thus I shall, in

some instances, lay before you the reasonableness of our Saviour's advice to his friends in our text, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but fear him who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, fear him."

Our blessed Redeemer, who was always going about doing good, ever employed in curing the diseases of the body, or the blindness of the minds of men, lays hold upon the opportunity of that numerous assembly, which we find gathered unto him in the beginning of this chapter, to instruct them in several useful and important truths; and, in the first place, cautions them against the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, a subject he frequently discoursed on, that vice being, of all others, the most dangerous, it being, at the same time, very insinuating, as having a fair and alluring appearance, and also extremely fatal to the power of true religion, which lies much in sincerity and uprightness. And this exhortation he presses home upon them, from the consideration of that awful day, when the most retired whisperings should be proclaimed aloud, and the deceit of the hypocrite, whereby, it may be, he not only imposed upon others, but flattered himself, would be fully laid open. But seeing the Scribes and Pharisees were, at this time, the most popular set amongst the Jews, who had the greatest interest and authority, being the oracles and favourites of the people, and so were in a capacity to reward such as depended upon them, and to persecute and bear hard upon those who opposed their doctrine, and did not reverence their persons: Now, lest our Saviour's hearers should be overawed by the calamities which they might be exposed to, if they should forsake the prevailing party, and give ear to his word, he arms them against the excessive fear

fear of men, in our text, from a consideration of the short reach of their malice and force, and the incomparably greater power, and consequently the so much more to be dreaded anger, of God.

In the words then, which I have read, we may shortly take notice of these things. In the fourth verse, we have first an object upon which our fear should not be terminated, "them that kill the body." Our Saviour here mentions the last and greatest evil which our fellow-creatures can possibly inflict upon us: and, though a kind and powerful providence, often sets bounds to their rage, that it is not able to stretch itself thus far; and the wicked, when they persecute the good, are often by an interposing hand disappointed of their cruel designs upon their lives; yet our Redeemer fairly puts the case, and supposes the utmost extremity, namely, that men have such a power over us, as to have access to cut short our days, and threaten us with death, which is the most frightful effect of their malice and rage, and is the greatest terror whereby they can assault our courage, or shake our resolution: and herein our Lord gives proof of his candor and integrity; he did not flatter and entice his hearers with promises of safety, riches, honours, or any other allurements of time, but, as he ever loudly proclaimed, that all his followers were to lay their account with taking up their cross, so he here presents the cross in its most frightful aspect to them, namely, when arrived so far as to the killing of the body.

But it seems also to be plain enough, that all the lesser afflictions and calamities, which may at any time attack us in the performance of our duty, are comprehended herein; all that train of losses and pains that may precede death, which, as I have already hinted, is particularly mentioned

in the text, as being the last and more considerable evil than any of them: because it holds so evidently true, that if we are not to be afraid of them that can kill the body, we ought certainly not to be afraid of them who can deprive us of our ease and comfort, who can banish us from our country and friends, or ruin our estates; who can thrust us into a prison, expose us to shame and ridicule, or blemish our reputation by calumny and reproach. So that this is the meaning and extent of the exhortation in our text. Be not afraid of men, tho' they be able to occasion temporal losses and disadvantages to us, of whatever kind they be; yea, tho' they can carry things to extremity, and kill the body, be not afraid of such. We are not to understand this, as if we were to be regardless of our ease and safety, or hazard them without due caution; or were needlessly to throw away our estate and life, as if they were things useles and insignificant: no, but the meaning is, that we should have no such fear of them, as ever to bring the hardest thing men can do to us in the smallest competition with our duty to God, and the maintaining a good conscience. In such a case, says our Saviour, let them not disturb and discompose your minds, as if they were much to be dreaded; look down with a noble contempt upon them, as persons that can do you no considerable injury, or deprive you of a valuable good; be as little moved with their threats and cruelty, as little affected at the approach of their highest terrors, and the greatest dangers, as a man would be at an enemy, who, at the worst, could only give him a slight wound, which might be easily and speedily cured, but could never pierce deep or touch the vitals.

2. In the text we have the ground, upon the account of which, we need not be "afraid of  
" them

“ them who can kill the body,” because, after that, they have no more they can do. They thereby place us beyond their reach, and can never disturb us more. The haughtiest and most potent monarch who ever lorded it over the empire of Rome, is unable to give the least pain and anxiety to him who was laid in the dust, his hand is not long enough to stretch itself into the invisible world, and those whom he pursues with the most eager hatred and keenest revenge, find a secure retreat from his rage in that house appointed for all living: he that made the earth to tremble, and destroyed the inhabitants thereof, when either death seizes himself, or while he lives, with respect to those whose body he kills, in that moment he becomes weak as others, and can do no more; “ For in the grave the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary be at rest; there the prisoners rest together, they hear not the voice of the oppressor; the small and great are there, and the servant is free from his master,” as it is elegantly expressed by Job, 3. 17, 18, 19.

And in the general, “ they can kill the body,” under which all the other temporal evils that wicked persecutors can inflict upon us, are, as I have already mentioned, comprehended: but can do no more, or, as it is expressed, Mat. 10. 28. “ are not able to kill the soul;” that nobler and better part of us can in no case be injured by them; and not only after death their dominion is wholly at an end, but even while we live, and they are tormenting the body, and ruining our temporal goods, our spirits, in the ease, happiness, and safety of which our only valuable interest lies, are infinitely above their attempts. Nor can the most formidable of mortals wound the soul. And then this phrase, “ they can no more,” plainly points out to us, that their power is so weak, extends to so  
few

few of our concerns, and these so inconsiderable, when compared with those of incomparable greater importance, that it is scarce worthy of our notice and regard, and makes it utterly unbecoming us to be afraid of the utmost which they can do.

But on the other hand, in the 5. verse, we have such an account of that person who ought to be the object of our fear and dread, as carries alongst with it the reason which proves that he should be so, “ he that after he hath killed, hath “ power to cast into hell.” That God who is Lord and master of each part of us, and can at once render us miserable in both soul and body, who, while he punishes us without, can dry up all the sources of comfort from within, and, while he raises storms which blow away our temporal prosperity, is able to excite more furious tempests in the midst of our breasts, and shake our souls with more terrible convulsions; and then the grave is no screen from his power, nor death a cover from the lashes of his justice; but after he hath driven us out of this world, he can thrust and detain us in flames of fire as lasting as our souls, while he makes these souls as lasting as eternity; who can blast all our hopes, and for ever banish our happiness: this is he whom our Saviour forewarns us to fear. And as he repeats it again with a strong emphasis, “ yea, I say unto you, fear him,” it is he whom we ought to look upon as the only dangerous enemy; for his wounds are fatal, and his arrows pierce deep into our souls: he whose hatred we ought to avoid, as the greatest evil which can possibly befall us; for “ who knoweth the power “ of his anger?” and whose displeasure we can never dread too much, “ for as his fear is, so is his wrath.” It is this infinite and eternal being, the views of whom ought to swallow up the fear of men, and dissipate the apprehensions of their might  
and

and fury into nothing: and while we should, with a becoming fortitude and bravery, remain unshaken by shame and poverty, forfeitures and imprisonments, sickness and pains, yea, by gibbets and axes; his terrors ought to make us afraid, and cause our joints to tremble.

From the first part of the text, or the 4th verse, this observation seems naturally enough to be deduced; namely,

That the power of the greatest men upon earth, “who can kill the body, but are able to do no more,” is so little, and of so short a continuance; all the disadvantages which they can occasion to us, and any evils and crosses that they may threaten us with, are so small and inconsiderable, do so very little damage to our truly valuable interests, and are so soon at an end; that we should not be so afraid of their rage and most formidable terrors, as in the least to shrink from our duty to God because of them: nor ought any of the dangers of a present life, discompose our minds, and distract us in the performance of it. In discoursing to you from this doctrine, I shall, by divine assistance, endeavour to do these things.

1. I shall illustrate the truth and reasonableness of the observation, by running over a few of those evils, which, during our lives, we may be exposed to from them who can kill the body; and such of those as are ordinarily most terrifying to mankind, and fright us most: and by taking notice, as I go along, of the import of the phrase, “they can do no more,” whence they will appear but little and inconsiderable.

2. I shall apply myself to this more directly, by considering particularly the last and greatest of the dangers we dread from the hands of men, killing of the body: and shew, that if they can do

no more, we have indeed but small reason for being afraid of them.

3. I shall apply what may be said to our practice, and shew the influence it should have on our life and affections, and particularly this passion fear.

As to the first thing proposed; In the first place, they that kill the body are indeed able to spoil our estates, and rob us of our possessions; a plentiful fortune, or any lesser measure of the comforts of this life, which an inheritance, or our industry and labours may afford us, are in hazard and may be reached by men: but then they can do no more, they cannot deprive us of that nobler satisfaction, which a pious contentment with lower circumstances, and a narrower lot will afford; they are not able to touch that inward pleasure, which a person, who knows the vanity of prosperity, and the numerous snares it is surrounded by, and that a man's life is far from consisting in the abundance of the things which he possesseth, will feel in the deepest poverty: they may indeed wear out the body by hunger and cold; but they cannot canker the mind with repining and discontent. It is not in the power of the mightiest tyrant upon earth, to fret the Christian's spirit with envy and revenge, or kindle that cruel fire within his breast: and while he spoils his corn or his wine, and reduces him to the most pinching straits; he cannot darken the light of God's countenance, or lessen that delight which it affords the soul whereupon it graciously shines. Nero could attack a Paul with fastings often, and watchings, and with perils of different kinds; but was not able to stir up anxious desires and disquieting thoughts within him, or rob him of that superior joy, which he must feel, " who hath learned in every condition wherein " he is, therewith to be content, and knows " how

“ how to be abased, and how to abound.” They who can kill the body are able to disturb our outward quiet, and make sleep flee from our eyes, and they may blow up those tempests whereby we may be tossed about in a vain uncertain world : but then they can raise no storms in our soul, nor, by their utmost efforts, in the least ruffle that smooth calm, and divine serenity, which will reign within that man who is faithful in his duty to God, and hath made his constant concern to fear him, “ who can kill the soul,” and not to be afraid of “ them who kill the body.”

And in short, such persons may divest themselves of any remains of humanity, and exercise all the arts of a cunning subtil cruelty ; they may rack and torment with exquisite tortures, but they can do no more, are utterly incapable to restrain the comforts of religion and truth, which the experience of the saints hath often proved to be able to afford a satisfaction superior to the pain flowing from the severities of the most hellish rage. They cannot awaken that gnawing worm, and raise these dreadful convictions, which lash and sting the soul with incomparably greater terrors : nor can the keenest and most powerful cruelty, put a stop to the pleasure of a peaceable conscience, and a reconciled God.

So that you see, that men are not able, even in this life, to spoil our chiefest and only valuable possessions, the goods of the mind, or blast our future hopes. and that if we be sincerely religious, and maintain a conscience void of offence, in all manner of holy conversation, we have, even upon earth, inward and inconceivable joys, which they cannot deprive us of, and we may, whether they will or not, possess the pleasure of contentment, and a calm resignation to the divine disposal ; and, in spite of their malice and fury, rejoice,

joice, yea, glory in tribulation. How little then are they to be dreaded? why need we be afraid of so impotent a rage, as can kill the body, and hath no more which it can do? But let us consider a little further the extent of their power.

2dly. Such men may drive us from the society of our friends, with whom we used to solace ourselves, and in whose company we promised our souls a great deal of satisfaction; they may put a period to the life of our nearest relations, or separate us from a friend who may be dearer than a brother, to whom we have often unbosomed our griefs, and who, by an affectionate sympathy, had frequently alleviated our sorrows; and they may tear those asunder, who would almost rather choose to part with life, than with one another: but then, this is all they can do; they are not able to deprive us of our God, who is the best, yea, only valuable friend; nor rob us of the compassionate sympathy of our amiable and exalted Redeemer, who “bears our burdens with us, “and hath a fellow feeling of our most solitary “infirmities.” They may interrupt the sweets of society with an indared companion upon earth: but they cannot prevent our communion with God, or break off that invisible fellowship we enjoy with him by the flowings of a lively faith, and a flaming love on our part; and the ineffable communications of grace, peace, and satisfaction from that inexhausted fountain of bliss. And are not these more than enough to make the wildest solitude pleasant and agreeable? They who kill the body may indeed fright us with banishment from our native country, which is generally so dear to mankind; they can thrust us into an uninhabitable desert, or make us wander unknown amongst strangers: but they have no more which they can do. Though they throw us out of their  
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synagogues, they cannot break that powerful tie, whereby we are united to that noble general assembly of the first-born; or dash out the least name that is written in heaven: and, when excluded by them, we may still remain possessed of that honour and dignity, which attends him who is a member of that glorious society. In a word, they can confine our bodies to a prison, but are not able to bound our souls; or curb them from aspiring unto that blessed and ravishing hope, and breathing after the joys which never have an end: and while they may bereave us of our liberty, and send us into slavery, they cannot take away the freedom of our spirits, or put us under the debased dominion of these vile lusts and passions, to which the children of disobedience are disgraceful slaves.

In the second place, to all our other afflictions, they may add the blemishing of our reputation by calumny, and depriving us of our good name, which is so much valued by wise and virtuous men: and thus they dealt by the apostles, who were blackned as fowers of sedition, and enemies to the peace of mankind, and to all good order and government; yea, were held out as the filth and offscourings of all things: but they could do no more. They could, by the false and lying tongue, impose only upon the blind and ignorant part of the world; and stain their reputation with the weak and credulous, whose favourable opinion is of little value, and their censures may justly be contemned: but they are not able to impose, by their misrepresentations, upon our God, by whose judgment we must stand or fall: they cannot make our own consciences accuse, twit and upbraid us; or lessen our character in the esteem of the holy and pure angels, who may behold us. And need we be afraid of the bad report of the ignorant and blind? They can expose us to shame, contempt

tempt and ignominy: but then they are able only to make us “the song of the drunkards,” and the mirth and diversion of the foolish persons, who need not put us to the blush, but are rather objects of our pity, or disdain, than of our envy. Thus I have hinted at a few of those evils and calamities which may befall us, while in this world; and which are within the power and reach of these who kill the body: and, as I went along, very shortly touched at some considerations to demonstrate their inconsiderableness, and that, since they have no more that they can do, they are not much to be valued or dreaded by us.

I come now to the second thing proposed, which was to consider, somewhat more particularly and directly, the last and greatest of the dangers we dread from the hands of men, and the utmost extent of their power. “They can kill the body:” and to shew that, if they can do no more, we have indeed but small reason for being afraid of them. It is true, they may not only render our lives uneasy, but which is worse, cut short our days by the hand of violence, and hurry us out of this world; and this is what generally makes us most afraid of them, fear of death is the greatest shock they can give to our firmness, and what prevails upon so many to give way and abandon their honour, religion, and conscience, and sacrifice them all to the security of their life: but then, they have no more that they can do. That moment that the monarch kills his slave, he puts an end to his power over him, and can never regain it, the servant is thereby made free from his master, and all the tumults of the people, the voice of the oppressor, and the noise of the mightiest waters cannot disturb the repose of the dead. And those, from whose power we could never be secure upon earth, who might drag us out of a  
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lurking place, or force us from a strong hold, are not able with the most numerous armies to storm the grave, or make a prisoner of any of the inhabitants of that house.

And then, the other world, whither our souls take their flight, is intirely out of their reach; and the king can pretend to no more dominion there than the peasant: so that these who kill the body, can only, at the utmost, disquiet us for a few moments, and all that their power extendeth to, is to a vain life, a vapour that is soon blown away; while the smallest part of our eternal and endless life comes not within their territories. How contemptible is the power? how little the might of these who have no more that they can do?

It is indeed not to be dissembled, that death is extremely terrible to human nature, and that these who kill the body, tho' they do no more, seem, at first view, to be able to do a great deal; for it is not without reason that death gets the awful denomination, Job 18. 14. of the "king of terrors;" few men are able to look it in the face and not tremble: and it requires all the fortitude of a Christian, to think coolly, and with sedateness, upon his last change, a being sent out of this earth into an unknown world, a state of things so hid in darkness, and which we have so little acquaintance with; but yet, if we will impartially take a view of things, it will appear, that they who can kill the body, but do no more, really possess such a small measure of power, and the injuries they are able to do us are so inconsiderable, that they scarce deserve the name; and that, as it is, 1 Pet. 3. 14. "If we suffer for righteousness sake, happy are we; and we need not be afraid of their terror, neither be troubled." And here let us shortly consider,

1. The infinite disproportion betwixt the duration of the longest lived man upon earth and eternity. Our enemies, how dreadful soever, can reach us only during this life ; and if they kill us, they at the most deprive us of, it may be, twenty or thirty years time, after which we would naturally have dropped away. And how is this space lost in eternity ? how contemptible and inconsiderable are these few moments, or any thing that can be done in them, to those who are created for immortality ? O inconceivable and immense eternity ! how vast the gulph and profound this abyss ! how is the utmost stretch of the liveliest imagination lost and buried in thee ! how little a way can the eye, even of an angel, pierce into this boundless unfathomable ocean, which can only be measured by that God who inhabits eternity ! Our earth, when compared to the universe, is but like a small point ; and yet the proportion betwixt the bulk of this vast world and the least atom, if I may so speak, is a perfect equality, when compared with that infinite inequality which is betwixt eternity and the highest number of ages which the strongest fancy can conceive, or the hand of the swiftest writer, in the longest time can mark down in figures. And now, methinks, when we consider this, time is lost, and we can scarce find our life, or be able to distinguish from nothing the noise, the threats and the cruelties of those who tyrannize only during that moment, and can do no more but kill the body, and deprive us of a few days longer living. Were we like the beasts that perish, or did our souls exist only some thousands of years after death, it might be some way reasonable to be afraid of those whose power reacheth to this life : but when the matter is infinitely otherwise, for us to be afraid of them that kill the body, is as absurd, as it would be for one who  
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possessed the largest empire, to tremble and quake at the approach of an enemy, who, at the most, could not make his way farther, or conquer more than a few miles of a barren desert that lay upon his frontier. I am sure, if we should divide our thoughts and concern betwixt this life and the next, in a proportion to the length and importance of the one and the other, we will have no fear, no dread, no regard left for this earth, or the fury and wrath of those who can only rage upon it without being able to do more.

2. Let us consider, that as the shortness of human life, when prolonged to the utmost, demonstrates the inconsiderableness of that power which cannot extend itself beyond it; so the argument becomes more forcible, from the extreme uncertainty of our living so long, and the numerous ways whereby this weak thread may be cut in pieces. Were there nothing that could give a finishing stroke to our days before they ripened to maturity, beside the violence of men, there might be some more ground alledged for our being afraid of their terrors; but alas, death hath a thousand other ways to force its passage by, for a disease can do the work as soon as a gibbet: and if, to preserve our life, we should make cowardly compliances with prospering wickedness, and forsake the ways of religion; the moment after we have out-lived our glory and a good conscience, a fever, which will give a deaf ear to our servile flatteries and fawnings, may on a sudden tear that life from us, for the fear of losing which we made God our enemy, and covered ourselves with shame and dishonour.

We have surely as much reason to be afraid of a gout or gravel, or of a decay or gangrene, or any of these fatal arrows of death, which often mortally wound us in the bloom of a flourishing youth;

youth; as of him that can kill the body. And it ought certainly to lessen the dread of men very much, that they are not the masters of the only dangers which threaten our lives; and that, tho' we were assured of their favour and protection, an enemy independent of them may hurry us into the invisible world. How little and contemptible is the vain empty monarch when surrounded with his armies? All his power reacheth no further than to a fading uncertain life, that is but little worth the keeping: and there are few animals so weak or stupid, but they are able to do as much as he; for there is scarce any of them but may be an instrument of our dissolution.

Why then, seeing our bodies are so frail, and exposed to so many conquering enemies, who have every one of them a breach wide enough to enter by, so long as there is a pore in our bodies, and they are led on to battle by the king of terrors; let us act a wise part, by abandoning the thoughts of maintaining such a defenceless post as our life upon earth is, and learn calmly to resign it whenever God shall summon our souls: let us look upon the invisible world as our eternal habitation, and prepare to enter it without repining, whenever he who keeps the keys of death turns them, and sets open the door: and let us never think of living a moment longer, than we can do it consistently with an unalterable steadiness in pure principles, and an holy practice, with a disinterested regard to the honour of our God and the liberty of our country, and with vigorous endeavours in every duty, which reason or religion calls for from us.

3. Let us, who name the name of Christ, and profess to be his friends and followers, consider to this purpose, that death is disarmed of his terrors, and hath now no more sting. Our Redeem-

er hath tamed that dreadful monster, and a pleasing and amiable prospect is given us of the most cruel and shameful death, by him who hath triumphed over death and the grave, and laid them conquered at the foot of his cross; who hath for ever finished transgression, which was the only formidable attendant that accompanied the king of terrors: and by that life and immortality which are brought to light by him, he hath beautified with a charming lustre the darkest part of the valley of death.

Let us now see what we have to fear from men, and review a little those dreadful dangers, which they who kill the body may fright us with. They can send us out of a valley of tears, where the best pleasures are mixed with sorrows, and the delights soon lose their relish and flee away, into our Father's kingdom, where dwell fulness of heavenly joys, and rivers of immortal pleasures. They can deprive us of a vain life, that we may be clothed with immortality; and violently pull asunder this tabernacle of clay, that it may put on incorruption. They can kill a weak imperfect body, that is so heavy a clog to the soul, and so liable to diseases and pains, that it may rest in the grave, and be purified into a fittedness for that place, none of the inhabitants whereof to eternity say that they are sick. Powerful men can put a period to our wanderings in a desolate wearisom wilderness, and an end to our tossings upon a boisterous unsettled ocean; and then land us upon that shore, where there is an uninterrupted contentment, an everlasting calm, where no storms can blow to disturb it. They may, by killing the body, separate us from our nearest friends and relations, whom we leave behind us, and thereby throw us into the arms of an exalted Redeemer, who has the flame of our love, and to whom we have dedicated our souls;

souls; and possess us of the incomparably more ravishing endearments of an heavenly friendship with saints and angels, amongst whom every dispute and debate is eternally banished, that can occasion the smallest alienation of mind, or cloud the joy of an immortal love. In a word, they can exalt us from a base sordid earth, to Zion the city of the living God, where “we shall be ever with the Lord.” And should we then be afraid of them who kill the body, when this is the utmost that they can do?

It may indeed be objected, that these reasonings hold well enough in speculation; but are hard to be reduced to practice, and that they can influence only sincere Christians, who are animated by the hopes of a better life: this is, I own, true, but then it ought to persuade all of us to abandon our iniquities, and embrace religion and holiness as the only thing which can enable us to act up to the dignity of a man and a Christian, can exalt us above the fears and terrors of our fellow-creatures, make us firm and steady in a good cause, and faithful to our God, and, in the most dangerous circumstances, inspire us with an unshaken loyalty to that king, whom God, in his great goodness, hath given to rule over us. Let this doctrine make deep impressions on us, especially in such a season as this, when a wicked and unreasonable rebellion hath arrived to so great an height among us, and fear of men, in one shape or other, may be the prevailing passion with many to slacken them in their duty, and diminish their vigour. All I shall say upon this subject is, that though we have no great reason to doubt the success of our cause, and the continuance of the present happy establishment; yet let us suppose the worst that can happen, that perjury and usurpation should triumph over honour and justice, that  
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our liberty should become a captive to tyranny, and oppression, and our religion be a trophy of prevailing popery and superstition, and our lives and estates at the disposal of prospering wickedness: I say, were we assured of such a case, yet, from what hath been said, it appears that those would act an infinitely foolish part, who should be frightened hereby from a zealous appearance in defence of so good a cause, or for fear of resentments, should neglect diligence and activity in any thing, which, in their several stations, they might in the least contribute to the maintaining and promoting of it.

*This Sermon was preached in the New Church of Edinburgh, the first Sabbath of Nov. 1715.*





## S E R M O N V.

L U K E xii. 4, 5.

*Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that, have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear, Fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.*

**F**E A R is one of the great springs, upon which the management of rational creatures depends; the universally diffused influence it has upon our whole conduct, makes it of the highest importance to all of us, that it be moved by suitable objects, that so we may neither be frightned by imaginary terrors, nor be foolishly stupified into a disregard and unconcernedness, about such things as carry misery and death along with them, and ought really to be dreaded by us as the greatest evils, the most dangerous enemies. And our concern in this matter should be greatned, and become more solicitous, since we live in a vain world, where every thing hath a vizard, puts on a false face to deceive us, and nothing appears as it really is in itself, and where we are so far debased under the slavery of sin and sense, that outward appearances influence and affect us more than the reality of things: and so while we are afraid of such as can render us uneasy in this world, touch our temporal life and possessions, or deprive us of those enjoyments which strike our fancy and senses; we  
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are very apt altogether to neglect and overlook him, whose power extends incomparably farther, and is able to pursue us with greater terrors, and an infinitely severer vengeance beyond death and the grave.

Agreeably hereto the generality of foolish men bend their chiefest endeavours towards the security of things which are temporal, and their principal care is employed in avoiding the occasions of losing them; they fear most those who can deprive them of their riches, ease, honours, and the other allurements of time, while they inconsiderately venture upon the losing that "favour which is better than life," as if it were unworthy their pursuit, and are not afraid to provoke that anger, which, how little soever it exert itself in this world, will flame with inconceivable fury in that which is to come; as if this earth were the only object of our concern, and the future state of little moment or importance to us.

But we ought certainly to consider wisely wherein our interest lies, who is the most dangerous enemy, and whose terrors will at last be found to be most dreadful, and most to be avoided; that so we may not be fatally mistaken in the object of our fear, and while we timorously run away from evils that are but of little consequence to us, ignorantly rush upon the death and ruin of our souls. And to this purpose, I made choice of these important words of our Saviour in the text, whereby he guards his hearers against an excessive fear of men, whose power is of but little extent, and their rage will soon be at an end; and persuades them to fear him, whose mighty anger is not confined by the narrow boundaries of a short life that in a moment evanisheth, but stretcheth itself unto eternity.

The text contains these two momentous truths.

1. We have the object upon which our fear should not be terminated, “them that kill the body, “and after that have no more that they can do.”

I had occasion some time ago to discourse upon this same subject from this place, when I explained and improved this first part of the text; and shall resume no more of what I then said, but what may be necessary to lead me with the greater advantage to the second part of it; namely, the consideration of that almighty Being, whom we should have the highest fear and awful regard to, he “who after he hath killed, hath power to cast “into hell.” Upon which I design, through divine assistance, principally to insist at this time.

I formerly told you, that here we have, first, The extent of mens power, the utmost which they are able to do to us, and what we have most to fear from them, killing the body: and that we were not to confine this to the precise literal sense of the words, a putting a period to our days; but that all the lesser calamities and afflictions, that train of losses and pains which precede death, and which we may be exposed to from the hands of men in the performance of our duty, are to be included therein. But killing the body is here particularly mentioned by our Saviour, as being the utmost extremity that mortals can carry their resentments to, and the most frightful effort of their malice and rage, whereby they can possibly assault our courage, and shake our resolution: and because it holds so evidently true, that if we are not to be “afraid of them that kill the body,” we certainly need not to be terrified at those who can deprive us of our ease and comfort, banish us from our country and friends, or ruin our estates; who can thrust us into a prison, expose us to shame and ridicule, or blemish our reputation by calumny

ny and reproach. So that this is the meaning and extent of the exhortation, Be not afraid of men tho' they be able to occasion temporal losses and disadvantages to us, of whatever kind they be, yea, tho' they can carry things to an extremity, and kill the body; yet we should not be so afraid of them, as ever to bring the hardest thing they can do to us in the smallest competition with our duty to God, and maintaining a good conscience: in such a case they are not much to be dreaded, as if they could do us a considerable injury, or deprive us of a valuable good; and we should be as little moved by their threats and cruelty, as little affected at the approach of their highest terrors and the greatest dangers, as a man would be at an enemy, who, at the worst, could only give him a slight wound, which might be easily and speedily cured, but could never pierce deep, or touch the vitals.

2. I told you, that in the words, we have the argument which proves that we ought not indeed to "fear them that kill the body, because, after "that they have no more that they can do;" they thereby place us out of their reach, and can never disturb us more. The haughtiest and most powerful monarch, when once he kills his slave, or death overtakes him, is not able to give him the smallest uneasiness, his hand is too short to stretch itself into the invisible world; and those whom he pursues with the most eager malice and keenest revenge, find a secure retreat from his anger in the grave, for "there the wicked cease "from troubling, and the weary are at rest, and "hear not the voice of the oppressor." And then I told you that this phrase, "they can do no "more," points out to us, that as they are able to do us no injury of any kind after death, so even during our abode in this world their power reacheth only to our bodies, and while these may be

tormented by their cruelty, they are not able to touch our better and only valuable part, nor can the most formidable of mortals wound our soul; and thus it is expressed in the place parallel to our text, Matth. 10. 28. "And fear not them who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul:" so that, in general, "they can do no more," plainly imports, that the power of men is so weak, extends to so few of our concerns, and these so inconsiderable, and it is so soon put to an end, that it is utterly unreasonable and below the dignity of our immortality to be afraid of the utmost which they can do to us.

In discoursing upon this, that I might take in, as much as might be, our Saviour's design, I, in the first place, ran over several of the calamities and afflictions, which, during this life, we are afraid of from the hands of men: and by touching a little at the import of the phrase, "they have no more that they can do," I proved that we had no reason to make them the object of our terrors; for I shewed, that while the cruel tyrant tormented our bodies, he was not able to disquiet our souls, or stop the light of God's countenance from filling us with a divine calm and satisfaction; though he might forfeit our estates, and rob us of our possessions, he was unable to spoil our heavenly treasure, or blast our future hopes, or to deprive us of that pleasure which a good man will always feel, who "knoweth how to be abased, and how to abound, and in every condition therewith to be content." And tho' men could banish us from our country and friends, and hinder us from enjoying their society; yet the mightiest of them were not able to deprive us of our God, or the affectionate sympathy of an exalted Redeemer. And then, that tho' they might bereave us of our liberty, and thrust us into a prison, or send us to slavery, yet they

they could not take away the freedom of our spirits, or bound them from aspiring to the blessed hope, and soaring above the vanities of life, and the rage of men, to the “rivers of pleasures that are at God’s right hand.”

2. I considered a little more particularly the last and greatest of the evils we dread from men, and that which makes them most terrible to us, namely, “killing the body.” And I offered several considerations to prove, that however frightful this might appear to us at first view, yet, since “men can do no more,” we have no reason to be much afraid of them. I shall only now repeat the last thing I said on this head (See the last paragraph of the preceding sermon,) and then proceed to the other verse.

I come now to the second part of the text, upon which I purpose at this time to discourse, namely, that almighty Being, who ought to be the object of our highest dread, and whom we can never fear too much; together with arguments to persuade us hereto. And here we may take notice, 1. That he can inflict upon us, even in this life, all the evils and calamities which men can possibly threaten us with: and that he hath the power of our life, and can also cut short our days; this is plainly insinuated in these words, “Fear him, which after he hath killed.” And then,

2. That the power of men, which I have already mentioned as included in the former verse, even during our present life, extends only to the body; they cannot rage and exercise their revenge within our breast: but it is quite otherwise, even while in this world, with respect to God’s power over us; it reacheth also to the soul, he can wound and kill it. It is remarkable to this purpose, that, when speaking of men in the former verse, it is

said, "they can kill the body," to admonish us that their power is confined to that outward part: but in this verse, when speaking of God, it is said absolutely, "after he hath killed" without any addition, to point out that his power reacheth to every part of us, that he can disquiet our souls as well as torture our bodies, and render us miserable in both; who, while he punishes us without, can dry up the smallest source of comfort from within; and, while he raises storms which blow away our temporal prosperity, is able to raise more furious tempests in the midst of our breasts, and shake our soul with more terrible convulsions.

And then 3. We have the principally distinguishing character betwixt the power of men and that of God, "after he hath killed, he hath power to cast into hell." The grave is no skreen from his wrath, nor death a covering from his justice, though "the weary be there at rest from men, and the voice of the oppressor is not heard:" yet the noise of God's thunders shakes the silent grave, and causes all his enemies lying there to tremble; after he hath driven us out of this world, he can throw us into flames, for which his right hand will furnish fuel to eternity; he can blast all our hopes, and for ever banish our happiness. This is he whom we ought to look upon as the only dangerous enemy, for his wounds are always fatal, and his arrows pierce deep into the soul: his hatred we ought to avoid as the greatest evil, "for who knoweth the power of his anger?" and whose displeasure we can never dread too much, for "as his fear is so is his wrath." It is this infinite and eternal Being, the views of whom ought to swallow up the fear of men, and dissipate into nothing the apprehensions of their might and fury: and while  
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we should with a becoming fortitude and bravery remain unshaken by shame and poverty, forfeitures and imprisonment, sickness and pains, yea, by gibbets and axes; his terrors ought to make us afraid, and cause our joints to tremble.

4. In the words we may take notice of the very emphatical manner whereby Christ expresseth this exhortation, "But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear," I will tell you beforehand what shall certainly happen, though it may be now invisible to you. He hereby points out to us, that the force of his exhortation and the strength of its reason, might not seem so great according to the present state of things, but that they have respect to futurity. And indeed while men sport away their thoughtless life in a vain world, and are busied with its follies; while they are mounted upon the pinnacle of honour and fame, and eagerly pursue their ambitious wishes, the securing their present greatness, or raising it to a more elevated pitch; while they are captivated by the charms of riches, and "say to fine gold, thou art my confidence," and employ their time and cares to add to their treasures; or while they spend their years in mirth and pleasure, and wallow in voluptuousness; they may then be so dazzled with the false lustre of these enjoyments, as to see no enemy but what tends to deprive them of these; and to fear nothing but a being tumbled from their greatness, emptied of their possessions, or deprived of access to gratify their lusts and pleasures. But would men look a little forward to the end of things, cast their eyes into the invisible world, and the almighty king of it; and meditate upon that state of things, when the earth will tremble under their feet, and flee away from their embraces; they would have quite different notions of matters, and be fore-

warned, that, however they may be unnoticed now, at length every eye that shall then see the Redeemer revealed in his glory, will be convinced of this truth, that those act only a wise part, that fear him, “who after he hath killed, hath power “to cast into hell.” And this I take to be insinuated in this phrase, “I forewarn you.”

That I may, with greater advantage, open up and improve this awful exhortation of our Saviour’s, and shew the reasonableness and force of the arguments contained in our text, whereby it is supported; I shall, through divine assistance, follow much the same method that I used with respect to the former verse.

1. I shall shortly lay before you what I said was insinuated in this phrase in the text, “after he “hath killed,” namely, that God is more to be feared than men, even with respect to this present life.

2. I shall, something more particularly, consider the direct and principal argument of the text, “who after he hath killed, hath power to “cast into hell.”

3. I shall, if your time allow, briefly shew the influence this doctrine ought to have upon our practice.

As to the first of these, tho’ I might go through all the particulars which I mentioned, when discoursing on the extent of man’s power; and shew with how much greater force they call upon us to fear God: yet I shall only in general give you what I have to say on this head, in these two particulars.

1. Then, all the evils and calamities of life, and the last of them, “killing the body,” which makes us so afraid to provoke men in power, and prevail with many to abandon their integrity and steadiness, honour and religion, rather than hazard

zard the loss of their worldly enjoyments; I say, all these are within God's power also, he can deprive us of them, and consequently we should be as much afraid of offending him as of irritating them, even upon this account. And though his immediate management will be more conspicuous in the future state, yet he is in every case exalted as head above all, he ruleth ever by his power, and his eyes behold the nations. The influence of his providence, though it be secret, yet is powerful and diffusive through all the counsels, the designs, the endeavours of men. And how oft has he given evidently bright proofs, that even riches and honour are from him, that in this very earth he raiseth up and boweth down; and that, though we were concerned and afraid only for our temporal interests, yet God should in that case be our fear.

Not only have we heard, but our eyes have seen illustrious evidences hereof, when, not long ago, the arts of cunning and treachery flourished and proved successful, and some \* had raised themselves upon the dishonour and disadvantage of their country: possibly the only things that those persons guarded against or were afraid of, were the vigorous endeavours of such patriots, as were not willing to throw away religion and liberty; and lest the people might be awakened from their dream, and revenge the deceit upon those who had lulled them asleep; or lest by some accident they might lose that ear they had possessed themselves of. They, possibly, dreaded no other enemies; and if they could have surmounted the attempts of those, which in many instances they shewed themselves able to do, they might have continued secure: but he that hath power to kill, by applying his hand to the prop that supported them,

\* The ministry in the end of Queen Anne's reign.

them, at once tumbled down all their projects, confounded their counsels, and blasted their hopes. And can we miss, when thinking on this, to reflect upon a late neighbouring monarch †, who had made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the inhabitants thereof: and though the glory of his arms was often sullied, and his designs baffled by his fellow-creatures; yet he bore up under his losses from men, till his own cunning, and the avarice, ambition and treachery of others, gave him an opportunity to triumph over those who had conquered him, and retain many of his unjust usurpations. He might then perhaps have imitated the great Babylon, mentioned Rev. 18.7. and “say in his heart, I sit as a king, and shall see no sorrow:” but he had no forces to guard the most dangerous breach; God sent one of his executioners, a gangrene stormed his palaces, and tore him from his kingdom and glory, and at once brought down to the grave his pomp and the noise of his viols; and the least feared proved to be the most dangerous and formidable enemy.

There is no number of God’s mighty armies; all the diseases of the body, the gout and gravel, the fever and decay, are irresistible instruments of his power. And even, while we live in this earth, if we dote upon riches, and make base sordid compliances to acquire them, or abandon a good conscience for fear of losing our possessions; God can make our gold to canker, and our silver to rust, and he can breed a moth that will insensibly consume our substance, and reduce us to poverty. If for fear of losing the esteem and applause of men, and to maintain our interests and reputation, we flatter and caress, and depart from uprightness and sincerity; God can throw

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† This Sermon was preached in the new church of *Edinburgh*, two or three months after the *French king’s* death.

a dead flie into the ointment, which will make our character to stink, and render us contemptible. If we climb to honour by the steps of iniquity, and please men more than our maker; he can invisibly baffle our projects, and ruin our designs. Or if to save our life, when we might have exchanged it for a better immortality, and resigned it with the glory and bravery of a Christian, we should deny our holy principles, and make shipwrack of our faith; the moment after we have outlived our honour and conscience, he can by a disease drive us out of the world, covered with shame, and tear our lothsom disgraceful souls from our body. So that if we consider even the things that are temporal, God is more to be feared than men.

But 2. As to God's power even in this life, I told you, it is expressed absolutely, "who after he hath killed," namely, both soul and body. The cruellest tyrant, whom we can be afraid of, is able only to torture our bodies; but he cannot ruffle the calm of a peaceable conscience, or stop the joy of a reconciled God: but he who killeth, is Lord of each part of us, and though we may wallow in an affluence of temporal goods, and have all the instruments of ease and luxury, he can pierce into our souls, and put them upon the rack in the midst of their enjoyments. He is able to fright a rich person, not only, as powerful men can, by spoiling him of his treasures, but he can raise these anxious cares within his breast, that insatiable hunger after more, and such disquieting fears of losing what he hath, as will render his state more deplorable and less happy, than if he were deprived at the same time of his estate, and freed from his anxious solicitude about it.

And:

And then, though men often stupify their conscience, whenever God awakens them, and sets their sins in order before them, with what tormenting convulsions is he able to shake the frightened soul? and its most hidden retirements are not a retreat from his terrors. And experience has sometimes convinced us, that more intolerable pains have arisen from the lashes of a roused conscience, than from the cruelties of the most savage barbarity. Take a prince adored by his servile flatterers, surrounded by his armies, and satiated with victory and conquest; yet God can in the midst of all that noisy pomp, glory and seeming happiness, make his injustice, oppression and pride severe tormentors to him. It is a noble passage of the Roman historian Tacitus, where, speaking of that famous confession which the wicked emperor Tiberius made of his inward terrors, in a letter to the senate, he makes this reflection on it, That “if the breasts of tyrants  
 “were laid open, such cuttings and lashes would  
 “be seen in them, as would make it evident,  
 “that as the body is rent by the strokes of the  
 “executioner, so is the soul torn in pieces by its  
 “own cruelty, lust and wicked designs. So evident was that, says he, that the greatness of  
 “Tiberius’s fortune, or his private retirements,  
 “could not protect him, but he was obliged to  
 “acknowledge the punishment and torments  
 “which raged within his breast\*.” It is true,  
 that

\* *Tacit. Annal. Lib. 6. cap. 6.* Insigne visum est earum Caesaris literarum initium, nam his verbis exorsus est: *quid scribam vobis, P. C. aut quomodo scribam, aut quid omnino non scribam, dii me decæq; pejus perdant, quam perire quotidie sentio, si scio.* Adeo facinora atque flagitia sua ipsi quoque in supplicium vertebant. Neque frustra præstantissimus sapientiae firmare solitus est, si reculantur tyrannorum mentes posse aspici laniatus et ictus; quando et corpora verberibus, ita saevitia, libidine, malis consultis animus dilaceretur; quippe Tiberium non fortuna, non solitudines protegebant, quin tormenta pectoris suasque ipse poenas fateretur.

that these things are neglected by stupid sinners, who do not now feel them, and they are indeed in themselves only the beginning of sorrows, which God reserves to pour upon his enemies in the world to come: And this leads me to the

Second head proposed, namely, to consider a little the direct and principal argument of the text, “who after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell.” And this is what indeed raiseth the terrors of God to an infinite length, above these of the greatest and most powerful of mortals, and is an awful demonstration, that he ought to be our fear and our dread. It is not my purpose to discourse at any length upon that accursed place, the prison of damned spirits, and the dreadful habitation of divine fury and justice; this would prove too copious a subject for your time: I shall only say, that it is there, where the infinite God displays the severity of his vengeance, and gives a practical answer to the psalmist’s question, “who knoweth the power of his anger?” there he glories in the destruction and misery of impenitent sinners. And if an omnipotent God be able to ruin us, there we shall be filled with wo and torment; there, where the inhabitants ly down in the flames, and dwell with everlasting burnings, and where all the society is that of devils and damned spirits like themselves, which may increase, but can never lessen the extremity of punishment. But, that I may give some view of our Saviour’s design, and press home his exhortation upon our souls, I shall briefly represent the difference betwixt man’s power and God’s, and what we have to fear from the one and the other, in three or four general considerations, which are pointed out to us, by our Saviour’s account of it, “they kill the body, and  
“ have

“ have no more that they can do ; but after he killeth, he hath power to cast into hell.”

1. The evils that we can be afraid of from our fellow-creatures, however great, heavy and frightful they may be, will soon have an end ; they can last only a few moments, till some wind blow away the vapour of our life ; then, as Job speaks, “ the servant is free from his master :” and as we need little value the favour of those whose breath is in their nostrils, so we may easily bear up under the frowns that will for ever cease to disquiet us, when a few years are gone. But alas ! death only enters us into God’s empire, where he reigns without controul, so that he can pursue us with vengeance beyond death and the grave, and begin to make us miserable when the power of men is at an end. In a word, he is an everlasting enemy, and the miseries he inflicts endure for evermore. And as there is no proportion betwixt our short vain lives, during which alone men can afflict us, and that boundless duration to which God’s power reacheth, so there ought, in all reason, to be no proportion betwixt our fear of God and of men. It is not possible to imagine a greater and more momentous difference betwixt any two things, than, it is easie at first view to perceive, betwixt time and eternity. And would we but raise our thoughts, and fix our attention upon this subject ; and seriously and calmly consider with ourselves, what it is to be for ever, how little and trifling would the most important concerns of time appear to our eyes ? and how great the infinite folly of those, who fear temporal losses that are but for a moment, while they neglect an eternal weight of misery ? But,

2dly, The evils we have to dread from men, as they quickly fly away, so they are of a confined nature. I have already told you, that they,

in no case extend to the soul; and even with respect to our outward circumstances, that they cannot readily reach them all at once; if they be able to deprive us of one comfort, another, of a different kind, may be still left us; something, at the worst, may remain pleasing and favourable: but, as it is expressed, Mat. 10. 28. "God destroys both soul and body in hell." There is no power of our spirits but what will bear its share of that endless misery, and contribute to heighten the torment of the soul. The omnipresent God knows every thing within us that is capable to suffer; and he will lay open the smallest and most hidden recess of our souls, that he may fill it with his terrors. And then our bodies will be raised to destruction, and, with the most exquisite art, be framed for the keenest punishment. Were you ever under the torture of the gravel, or distracted by a violent head-ach? had you any experience of the other racking pains which different diseases occasion? or did you ever feel the fire and faggot, and the other artful instruments of cruelty? well, imagine all these different pains heaped on the same person at once, how frightful soever this state may be, it will afford but a faint notion of the evils we have to fear from God, when he casts into hell.

In a word, during this present state of things, there is nothing pure, and altogether of the same nature, but there is ever some small composition of sorrow and joy, of pain and ease; but in that which is to come, it is quite otherwise. In heaven, rivers of pleasure, to eternity, run pure without the least allay and defect; and, in hell, torrents of brimstone, and the flame of unmixed torments overflow those, who while upon earth, would not make God their fear.

3dly, There is this remarkable difference betwixt the power of man, and that of God, which naturally flows from the former head, and, in some measure, seems to coincide with it; namely, when men have done their utmost to disquiet us, and have stretched their revenge and cruelty, there is still some place left for us, where we may solace ourselves, whither they cannot follow us. Let them ruin our estates, yea, and our reputation, let them confine or torture our bodies, and deprive us of our friends and relations; yet a good man may retire within himself, and there enjoy the ravishing comforts of religion and truth, while every thing is boisterous, and nothing but raging tempests without; he may withdraw from that noise and violence, and find a silent calm, a smooth tranquillity reigning in a conscience that hath God for his friend; and this men cannot blow upon, nor is it in their power to cause any disorder there, or throw in any guilty fears and disquieting reflections. But alas! in hell, where God is the enemy, whither can we flee for refuge and help? where shall we go to allay and sweeten our pains? should we, endeavouring to shun the rage of our torments, and the flashes of those devouring flames, retire within our breasts; ah! the terrors there are more dreadful than those from without, and the storms blow with the height of violence, and no peace nor calm is there. In hell, the stings of an awakened conscience, of all others, make the deepest wounds, and most smarting pains; every act of rebellion against God, and transgression of his laws, will be then turned to a scourge to lash the soul; and each sin will be ripened to a fiery serpent, that shall for ever gnaw their vitals. So that there is no source of the least ease and comfort left to those whom God casts into hell; for, that I may allude

lude to our Saviour's words, Mat. 12. 36. "there  
" a man's foes will be those of his own household."

And,

Lastly, Our courage and spirits may be supported under the heaviest afflictions men can threaten us with, because we may have the prospect of some thing that will counter-balance our present pains; "the light afflictions which are  
" but for a moment, are not to be compared with  
" that weight of glory," which the faithful subjects of Messiah, the king, shall be possessed of: and sure we need not be afraid of an evil that will be attended with a greater good, or dread them that can take lands and houses, yea, and life from us, since we shall, at last, receive an hundred-fold. But he, "who casts into hell," blasts all our hopes, at the same time he banishes our happiness; we can never expect the smallest relief from our torture, but an addition to it by the lively actings of an eternal despair: there is no other God that can relieve us, or rescue us out of his powerful hand. Let us therefore "sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be  
" our fear, and let him be our dread."





## S E R M O N VI.

P S A L M xliiii. 4.

*Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto  
God my exceeding joy; yea, upon the harp  
will I praise thee, O God, my God.*

**I**F we, with any degree of attention, should take a view of the melancholy condition, which rebellion against the Lord of the world, and a vicious life hath thrown miserable mankind into, who were originally beautified with the ornaments of purity, and enriched by the treasures of innocence; with what reason might we grone at the doleful prospect, and be convinced with the psalmist, Psal. 39. 5. That “verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity.” For, beside that which is of the infinitely greatest importance, the terrors of eternity and an enraged God, those devouring flames, that ocean of brimstone and inextinguishable fire, wherein all the little dreams of pleasure and the vain amusements of unthinking sinners, shall be for ever lost and overwhelmed by these billows of wrath, tho’ they be now overlooked, and made the subject of the mirth of the scorner: if we but consider man while he dwells upon this earth, how vain are our joys? how empty our happiness? we are continually tossed about by disquieting fears or disappointed hopes, the props we lean on for the accomplishment of our wishes prove too weak to bear us up, and the friends we trusted to are found  
false

false and flattering; and those things which we eagerly pursue, and flatter ourselves with satisfaction and contentment in the possession of them, when once attained, soon lose their relish, and are bigger with cares than comforts.

How do the covetous or ambitious vex and disquiet their lives with toils and cares, that they may fill their treasures, or climb up to the pinnacle of pomp and honour? and, alas! when they get thither, how miserably are they disappointed of bliss and joy? and, instead thereof, find as much sorrow and uneasiness, as many unsatisfied desires, and craving empty wishes attending the glories of a court, as the obscurity of a retired life; and though more outward splendor and shew, yet as little inward calm and pleasure; nor is the rich more satisfied with gold than the other is with honour. And were there any real good worthy of the pursuit to be gained, yet how uncertain is our possession of it? and how liable to change? how oft hath experience shewn us, that innumerable accidents can bring down all the greatness and pomp of the best established favourite, and turn them to meanness and contempt? And hath not a plentiful estate and universal affluence, been often changed for poverty, and as general want and indigence? or if we solace ourselves with an useful and endeared friend, and should find one that is steady and faithful, and would not change his affection with the different turns of our circumstances; yet how soon may death rob us of that comfort, and blast all its pleasures? and in the same manner it fares with every thing else that this world can afford its inhabitants: how much alloy and uncertainty are in all our fading enjoyments? how fatal must be the enchantments of present things, that notwithstanding our own trial and experience of all others loudly proclaim that  
all

all is vanity; we should still be as fond of these nothings, seek after the enjoyments of time with as much keenness and eagerness, and bend all our thoughts and cares to the acquiring of them, as if we had no reason to be convinced, that undisturbed and unmixed joy and bliss are not found in them. O the amazing madness of stupid sinners! thus to “ spend their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not.”

That I may, thro' divine assistance, persuade you and myself not thus to sow wind, and reap nothing but vanity, and still be roving abroad thro' the world, crying out, “ Who will shew us any good?” I design, at this time, a little to consider God, under the character given of him by the royal prophet in our text, as the only exceeding joy, which can quiet and content our souls in this world amidst its noisy tumults, and under all the changes we are liable to here below; and then fill them with an eternity of heavenly pleasures, in the world which is to come: and from this argument, to shew you the loveliness and excellency of true religion, and recommend it to our choice from that infinitely satisfying joy of the Lord, which it spreads over all those who go on in these paths of pleasantness and peace. And so it is my purpose to point out that harbour, whither our souls should steer and take up their rest when tossed about by adversity: that fountain of good, whence we should draw all our comforts and pleasures, if we would have them pure and lasting; by drinking of which only we should seek to revive our spirits, when born down by affliction and robbed of all other comforts: In short, to engage us in all the circumstances of our lives, and, as well under losses, griefs, disappointments,

as when flourishing in prosperity, to go, with the psalmist, “to God as our only exceeding joy.”

The penman of this psalm, who is not unreasonably supposed to have been David, that sweet singer of Israel, seems, from the general subject and several particular expressions in them, to have composed this and the preceding psalm, which is much of the same nature with it, when under the pressure of some of those afflictions, which were scattered through the life of this good man: and it may be either when banished from his country and friends, and obliged to wander in the wilderness by the malice and jealousy of that cruel tyrant Saul; or when forced to abandon Jerusalem the city of God, and be separated from the ark, that noble symbol of the divine presence, and so justly esteemed the glory of Israel, by the unnatural rebellion of his undutiful and ungrateful son Absalom.

I shall take up as little of your time as may be, by speaking to the psalm in general. It consists of pleadings with God, and with his own soul, that he might hearken to his cries, and relieve him from his oppressions, and that he might be animated to a lively faith and steady confidence in the salvation of his God. In the preceding verse he prays to God that he would “send forth his light and his truth; let them lead me, let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles;” that is, that he would, as some think, order matters so in his gracious providence, as David might be freed from the restraints he was now under, and his banishment from the city of God; and might again have access to the place where his honour dwelt, and in publick ordinances, might join with the congregation of Israel in the worship and praises of the Lord. But the subject of the psalm seems to afford ground to extend this  
petition

petition farther; namely, to the inward condition of his spirit, which at this time, was cast down and disquieted within him. His views of the goodness and power of divine providence, of that favour wherein alone life and its happiness consist, were now clouded and darkened: perplexing thoughts and anxious cares disturbed his mind, which had not that calm and serenity it formerly enjoyed, while the light of God's countenance shone upon his soul with a more enlivening brightness, and the comforts of religion overflowed with more plentiful streams of gladness. In this disconsolate state, he begs that divine light and truth might be the guiders of his soul, to lead it to the holy hill of God, to clear up his doubts and fears, and impress him with a powerful sense of the excellency of religion, and the bliss of having God for his father and friend, which might easily counter-balance all other griefs and losses. And, in the verse which I have read, he informs us how his management and practice would be influenced upon such a supposition.

1. "Then will I go unto the altar of God," he would with cheerfulness run and offer up the sacrifices of thanksgiving to his gracious deliverer; and he would take his own soul as the burnt-offering, and kindle and burn it up with the fire of a vigorous love, and raised affections, terminating upon God, the flames whereof should ascend to him alone.

And then, 2. In the words of our text, he would come "to God himself his exceeding joy." While mists and clouds now overspread his disquieted soul; and he had not such a clear and steady prospect, either of the infinite comforts of religion, and the superior happiness of the divine favour, or of his own interest in him as his reconciled God: possibly he was too sensibly affected with his present  
sent

sent sufferings, and overvalued his liberty; and the peace and authority of his government, the loss of which rendered him uneasy and cast down. But when the divine light and truth should give him a lively view of things as they really are in themselves, he would then forget the banishment from his country, and the hazard of his crown and all its charms, as things but of little consideration to him; and “come to God his exceeding joy,” he in whom alone were the sources of his highest pleasures, who was the only fountain of his bliss: for while plenty and affluence of every other enjoyment, the glory of his crown and the sweets of supreme authority, the fulness of his treasures, and the triumph of frequent victories, with ease, peace and health, could, all of them, afford him but a little satisfaction, a low weak delight; yet he would, when naked and robbed of all these, find the presence and favour of God his exceeding joy, full, pure and complete happiness, the inexhausted source of those springs that would overflow all his soul, and make it glad. Or, as the Hebrew is more exactly translated, “unto God “the gladness of his joy,” that which gave a relish to every other comfort, which was the soul and life of his pleasures, and could only make them real and lasting; it was God who raised his joy to fulness of satisfaction and contentment: whereas all the allurements of a present life, and the charms of sin, only amuse with a trifling faint pleasure, but can never satisfy and content those who abandon themselves to their fatal enchantments.

And then, 3. Being possessed by those amiable and lovely views of God, “upon the harp he “would praise him;” his heart would be filled with a wondering love, and his mouth with songs of praise and thanksgiving, that ever this God,

whom the angels adore, and hell trembles at his thunders, should so amazingly humble himself as to become the joy of his creatures: that they, who had prostituted the dignity of their immortal souls to the lowest basest lusts, who had wandered from the fountain of life, and sought to drink their pleasures from broken cisterns, and to find good any where but in their Maker; should yet, when they had tried the vanity and utter insufficiency of sin, and its highest offers, and brightest charms, have access to return to this God, who in justice might have proved for ever their irreconcilable enemy, as their exceeding happiness, “the gladness of their joy.” And indeed this is the subject of an eternal song, to which all the harps of those who stand about the throne, that numerous harmonious consort of the redeemed, will be ever exactly tuned, and for ever employed in celebrating the praises of it.

It is only the middle part of the verse which I design, at this time, to discourse on; namely, that lovely notion under which a reconciled God is here represented to us, “the exceeding joy.” And I shall, abstracting from the psalmist’s particular circumstances, consider him in general as clothed with this character: and you may easily perceive that the doctrine whereupon I intend, through divine assistance, to speak a little, is this; namely, That, while all other comforts, the best and most lasting enjoyments, are imperfect, weak and fading, utterly unable to give us fulness of satisfaction and abiding happiness; it is God alone who can be to his creatures “an exceeding joy, “or the gladness of their joy;” and that therefore, leaving all other things, they should in every circumstance of their life come to him as such. In discoursing upon this doctrine, I shall, through divine assistance, endeavour to do these things.

1. I shall offer two or three general considerations to convince you of this truth; namely, that it is God alone who is the exceeding joy, the gladness of our joy.

2. For the further illustration of this truth, I shall mention a few of the greatest sorrows and most disquieting troubles, we can be exposed to while in this world; and shew that even under the heaviest of these pressures, there are sources in this God of unfading and exceeding joy.

3. As your time may allow, I shall apply these things to practice; and endeavour, from the meditation of them, to persuade us to be so wise, as abandoning all other comforts, to come to God at all times as the gladness of our joy.

The first head I named was, to offer two or three general considerations to persuade us, that God alone is "the exceeding joy." And I shall endeavour to mention such arguments, as we may easily, from experience and the nature of the things, see the truth of them. I would only observe in the beginning, that we ought not to be prejudiced against this truth, or doubt of its certainty; because even those who may really have an interest in God as their father, friend, and portion, do not always feel this exceeding joy: for this is no defect in God their happiness, but is owing purely to themselves, and principally to their wandering after some vanity, and not with a due steadiness and vigour "coming to God as "the gladness of joy," and placing their comfort only in his favour.

1. God alone is the source of full, complete and enlarged joy, which can satisfy all our desires, without leaving a craving wish behind it. Beside the nature of things, I might ask these who have had most of the world and its delights, if there was not still some defects, some flaws in  
F 2 their

their joy, which made them seek for further satisfaction, and still cry out, “Who will shew us  
 “any good?” Let the voluptuous man tell, when wallowing in all the pleasures of luxury and plenty, if his soul had not more desires than it possessed delights, if he did not wish for and find himself capable to contain further enjoyments, and while he gratified one appetite, felt another craving satisfaction; and if, at the highest degrees of them, his pleasures were not low, and vastly inferior to the enlarged capacity and boundless wishes of a spirit: and then how soon was he cloyed with delights, that naturally lost their relish by a little short experience of them? Let the ambitious monarch, who glories in the greatness and extent of his flourishing empire, hath the absolute rule of his subjects, and is the terror of his enemies, acknowledge, if all that pomp and shew leaves no defect in his imperfect happiness, if some cares do not disturb his repose, and further projects, still to be accomplished, sully his joy, and hinder it from being exceeding joy, if it is not always mixed with some alloy, and never perfect and pure. And the rich man is as little contented with his treasures. And, as to the more refined pleasures of the mind, the wise and learned, when they have the clearest views of things, and make the most vigorous and ravishing advances in knowledge, will soon own, whatever pleasure the discovery of truth may afford them, that it is always weak and imperfect; that still something searched into remains unknown, and clouds their joy with doubts and debates: they will assent to what we have, Eccles. i. 18. that “in much wisdom is  
 “much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge  
 “increaseth sorrow.” So universally does it hold true, with respect to every enjoyment upon earth, Eccl. i. 8. “All things are full of labour, man  
 “can-

“ cannot utter it, the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.”

And indeed the best, even of our allowable creature-comforts, while we have them, can at the best let fall only some drops of joy upon our spirits, without ever overflowing them: that insatiable thirst of a soul after happiness, can only be fully satisfied by drinking of the rivers of pleasures, of which God is the fountain; these streams can only, in an enlarged sense, make it glad; this God is an exceeding joy, and those who have him can wish for nothing more; this ocean of the purest delight, can fill the smallest and most lurking desire: and this the psalmist, who had so often experienced it, bears witness to, Psal. 36. 7, 8.

“ How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God,  
“ therefore the children of men put their trust  
“ under the shadow of thy wings; they shall be  
“ abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy  
“ house.” This infinite God, who made our spirits, knows the whole of their capacity, all their powers and desires, and he who created them must certainly be able to fill them with joy.

And that I may proceed to something farther, you may easily conceive the truth hereof, even upon earth. What exceeding gladness of joy must a truly pious man have? when the light of God's countenance shines in upon him with that favour wherein is life; to see him the absolute Lord of the world, who made the universe and governs it, and at the same time, to know, that this God is their God, that these everlasting arms which support the frame of nature, that power which, by the smallest nod, can shake it again into nothing, are underneath them to make them happy and safe; to give life to their joys, and establish their happiness. How ravishingly sweet must the meditation be, think you, of a person who can look

up to the sun, moon, and stars, those vast and glorious bodies, and be assured that he, of whose fingers they are the workmanship, is their reconciled Father and friend, who hath the tenderest concern for their souls, and covers them over with the garment of an everlasting love? If the ambitious favourite upon earth please and value himself so much upon his interest at court, and his having the ear of the prince, tho' a fading creature like himself; what excess of delight must fill the soul, which beholds the infinite God, the almighty King of eternity, its assured portion? And as all the divine perfections are incomprehensibly glorious, so the pleasure that flows from the views of their being ours, must be inconceivably excellent and satisfying. What mighty joy, think you, must accompany the contemplation of an exalted Saviour? To behold him that died for us, redeemed us by his blood, and conquered us by his power, now "sitting on the right hand of the " majesty on high," having in his hands the reins of the nations, and the " keys of hell and of " death." These things are so plainly the result of a lively view of God as our chiefest joy, that the grossest infidels, who make these superior pleasures the object of their ignorant contempt, and scorn them as vain and imaginary, must yet own, that the person who can fancy himself into a steady belief of them, will certainly have exceeding joy. How justly then does the psalmist, upon a view of the glory and greatness of his God, tell us, Psalm 104. 34. " My meditation of him shall be " sweet, I will be glad in the Lord; and Psalm " 63. 3, 5. Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee, my soul " shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, " and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful " lips ;

“ lips; and Psalm 34 2. My soul shall make  
“ her boast in the Lord.” But,

2. It will appear, that “ God is the exceeding  
“ joy,” if we consider that, as he is the only  
source of complete and full happiness, so the de-  
light that flows from him is lasting and permanent.  
Tho’ a man could really be satisfied with riches and  
greatness, or wallow in outward pleasures to the  
utmost extent of his desires: yet, alas! they are  
fading, a thousand winds may every moment  
blow them away from us, and deprive us of our  
happiness, which on that very account can be but  
of little value. A crown may be tumbled from  
the head of him that wears it: and he that says  
to fine gold, thou art my confidence, may have  
his estate blasted by providence, or his riches torn  
from him by an oppressor that is stronger than  
himself: the friends we trusted to may desert and  
betray us, and those whom we were once dear to  
may cool in their affection: or if we should meet  
with a rare companion that were a valuable friend,  
and steady in his love and esteem, yet, alas!  
“ his breath is in his nostrils;” and, if we place  
our comfort in him, death can give a finishing  
stroke to our uncertain joy. But God is ever-  
lasting, his love is unchangeable, and his power  
to make us happy is firmer than the foundations of  
heaven and earth: and when the streams of all  
other comforts are dried up, this river of delight  
admits no decay, is never diminished. Here is a  
friend that will never prove wavering nor incon-  
stant; whom nothing can stop our access to, nor  
render him unable to satisfy our longing souls with  
his goodness. And then,

3. Which is something of the same nature  
with the former, and so I shall only mention it,  
this joy can never be disturbed with fears of its  
coming to an end. Besides, that all worldly goods

are really of short continuance, and soon leave us, it deserves our notice, that even while we have them, the little satisfaction they afford must be extremely diminished by distracting apprehensions, and the anxious consciousness that there is another state of things whither we must, in a little, depart, that the earth will at last tremble under our feet, and flee away from our embraces. When the young man rejoices in his youth, and walks in all the ways of his heart, his short joy must be not a little sullied, and clouded by the fears of his coming to judgment: this is the dead flie which causes the most grateful enjoyments of time send forth a stinking savour. And, I believe, experience hath often shewn, that some persons fears of losing what they valued as their greatest good, hath quite dried up any satisfaction they might have had in the possession of it. But the exceeding joy of God is ever clear and serene, and it is heightened by the assurance of its stability: that very king of terrors which blasts all other enjoyments, enlivens and quickens this; and the man who hath it, needs not tremble when he looks at the approaches of death and the grave, for they only carry him the nearer to "the gladness of his joy." And I believe we may readily own that he must be happy "who hath hope in his death." And then,

4. This, if I may use the phrase, is an unfurmountable joy, always victorious and triumphing. The character given of love, Song 8. 6, 7. very well agrees to it; for "love is strong as death; " many waters cannot quench love, neither can " the floods drown it: if a man would give all " the substance of his house for love, it would " utterly be contemned." Take the highest allurements of a vain world, those we most eagerly pursue, and dote on with the greatest fondness: yet they can only please and afford us delight in  
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some circumstances; and many things we are ordinarily exposed to, will weigh down the scales to the side of sorrow, and render them altogether useless and uncomfortable to us. Let the voluptuous man have all the means of luxury in the greatest plenty, and every thing that may gratify his different lusts: yet how will a painful disease make his spirits droop, and hang down in the midst of those enjoyments wherein he places his happiness? The ordinary accidents of human life, a gout, a gravel, or a headach will, while they last, sowre and imbitter these poor joys, and render the effeminate person utterly destitute of any satisfaction from them. And thus all the charms of a court, and the splendor of a crown, are not so full of pleasure, as a racking disease is of pain, they are all overcome by its fury.

But here is the excellency and glory of this exceeding joy; you can imagine no circumstances that it will desert the person in, who comes to it: it is not only beyond any other good, but it is superior to every evil, yea, to all of them in a heap. The hottest flames of persecution cannot dry up this river, the streams whereof make glad the city of our God; it will stand the most violent shocks of poverty, contempt, losses, tortures, and, still being unshaken, triumph victoriously. And the experience of the saints hath given frequent proofs, that all these things, instead of blunting, hath put a keener edge upon their satisfaction: thus the apostles "gloried in tribulation." This is the distinguishing honour of the gladness of that joy which is placed in God, that they who have it may say, as it is, Hab. 3. 17, 18. "Altho' the fig-tree should not blossom, neither fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive should fail, and the fields should yield no meat, the flock be cut off from the fold, and there should be no  
F 5 "herd

“ herd in the stalls. Yet will we rejoice in the  
 “ Lord, and joy in the God of our salvation.”  
 And this leads me to the

Second head, namely, to mention a few of the most disquieting troubles we can be exposed to, while in this world: and to shew that, even under the heaviest of those pressures, there are sources in this God of unfading and exceeding joy. This is too large a field for me to go far into it, and, because I have already taken up too much of your time, and that I may save some for an inference or two, I shall but briefly mention a few of those many things which might be discoursed on from so fruitful a subject. And,

1. If we should, through calumny and reproach, have our reputation blasted, and our good name and esteem with men ruined, or if we should be exposed to shame and ignominy; a man who had placed his delight in popular applause, and thirsted after that vain thing called fame and glory, would lose this part of his happiness, and in so far be rendered miserable: but God is in this case “ an  
 “ exceeding joy;” he is not to be imposed upon by misrepresentations, nor ever errs in judgment. And what a mighty pleasure, think you, must the soul have amidst shame and reproach? and how little needs it be moved by them; that can solace itself with the sense of having the approbation of him whose understanding is infinite, that can retire to a quieted conscience and enjoy its calm; and that is animated by the glorious prospect of that day, when God will honour and beautify it before the solemn general assembly of rational creatures, by declaring himself its reconciled God and almighty protector, and vindicate it by a sentence that shall stand for ever.

2. Let a man be attacked with the falsehood of these he trusted to, and the cutting sorrow of be-

betrayed friendship. And indeed few things are more sensibly affecting, than a disappointment in the affection and fidelity of those we firmly depended on; such an event is attended with a surprise of trouble, and often breaks all our measures, which, it may be, much depended upon him we trusted to: but, however shocking this may be to others that have no where else to go to, the good man runs to “God his exceeding joy.” With what pleasure does he flee from the treachery of men, and the uncertainty of their favour, to that eternal love which never languishes or decays? how cheerfully does he look up to that faithful friend, who never disappointed any that trusted to him, for great is his faithfulness? or if we be struck with sorrow by the death of an endeared relation, who always proved steady, and in whom we promised ourselves much satisfaction: yet if God be “the gladness of our joy,” when these little streams of comfort are turned away from us, we have the fountain, the ocean of bliss that can satisfy our souls, and wipe away our tears. How sweet is the meditation of a husband, father, and friend, that the king of terrors will not deprive us of? from whom neither death nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, can ever separate us. I might instance at large,

3. That during all the changes that can whirl about a vain world, all the vicissitudes of prosperity and adversity, whereby the rich and great are often robbed of their comforts and rendered miserable; he that has God for his joy, can remain unshaken in the midst of those storms which toss about others. He is under no disquieting apprehensions of the dreadful event of the most terrible convulsions and confusions; because his exceeding joy is not at all affected by them, they can never touch his happiness: and so terrors do not  
make

make him afraid; “tho’ the earth be removed, “and the mountains be carried into the midst of “the sea; though the waters thereof rore and be “troubled; though the mountains shake with the “swelling thereof: yet there is a river whose “streams shall make glad the city of God.” And when they are actually subjected to poverty, pains, tortures, imprisonments: yet while they walk through the fire and waters of these afflictions, the gladness of their joy still accompanies them; a few drops let fall from the rivers of pleasures, support their sinking spirits; the assurance of a blessed immortality, the glories of the heavenly kingdom, and the brightness of the celestial diadem, animate them with courage and confidence in the flames; and the presence of their God fills them with a joy, that all the malice and power of hell cannot stain and blot. And do you think that any of the “short afflictions for a moment,” can be very bitter to him who hath the lively prospect of “an eternal weight of glory?”

And then, lastly, In the hour of death, God remains alone the exceeding joy. O how pale and dim do the brightest charms of sin look then? how little do riches please or profit? how empty are honours and greatness? how vain fame and applause? how nauseous the remembrance of former pleasures, and past days of mirth, and unthoughtful folly? and how miserable comforters are all these together, to him that must leave them? look into the other world, and how do the hearts of the ambitious and voluptuous then utterly sink, and all their vain joys melt away? it is then that the comforts of religion and truth only are valuable, and that this exceeding joy of the Christian, instead of decaying, begins to make its streams of gladness flow higher, when they see their God, Lord of the other world, king of  
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eternity, ready to make them swim in the rivers of those pleasures, some small streams whereof made them so glad while in this earth. And how may they rejoice in the decay of that body, which they know is dissolved, that it may be purified into a fittedness for heaven, and beautified with the glory of that place? and this we find was actually the psalmist's case, Psal. 73. 25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? namely, God the exceeding joy; and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

I shall only mention one or two of these many useful inferences which such a subject would afford.

I. We may hence take notice of the infinite madness of foolish men, that, when so noble a happiness is proposed to their choice, they should wilfully neglect it; and throw away "the gladness of exceeding joy," that exalted delight always perfect and pure, which is larger than our highest wishes, and as lasting as our souls, which would make us happier than we can possibly conceive any state without it. This superior joy that is worthy of our highest love, and most vigorous pursuit, would prove steadable to us when all other comforts shall abandon us, and give us hope in our death; it would afford us a serene calm while upon a reeling earth, and make us with unmoved pleasure look down upon all the confusions of a vain world, the bustle and noise that is made in it; and enable us nobly to contemn death and danger, and inspire us with the truest honour and bravery; and then it will be eternally fresh and complete in the future state. O fatal stupidity! to perish for ever when we may have such a salvation! to pine away in the pursuit

suit of empty vanities, and miss true blessedness when we have such a joy set before us. Oh! to die within sight of happiness, which would become ours, would we but reach out our hand to embrace it. And what are these fatal enchantments whereby we are bewitched to the ruin of our souls, and are the cause of such amazing madness? Why, the lustre of disguised nothings, the shew and dream of faint delights, debased and disgraceful lusts, which are the blemishes and diseases of the rational nature, fading vanities, that in a few moments flee away and leave us for ever, when we stand most in need of support. And are these the charms, for the sake of which we contemn the chiefest good, the exceeding joy, and neglect the favour of our God? How may the heavens and earth be astonished at foolish sinners? and what a cutting reflection will it be at death, when we shall experimentally feel the usefulness of all the pleasures of sin, and the follies of life; that for the sake of them we have made this God our enraged enemy, who offered himself to be our joy? when we shall never to eternity have another view of that joy, but what may tend to heighten our anguish and horror, at the sight of the greatness of the good, and of our infinite stupidity in neglecting it. O that we were wise and would consider this.

Secondly, \*\*\*\*\*

SERMON

## S E R M O N VII.

MATTH. VI. 33.

*Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.*

**I**T is my purpose at this time, by the assistance of God's holy spirit, to demonstrate the amazing folly of deluded sinners, who flatter themselves with a prospect of happiness from the enjoyments of a perishing world, which are inevitably blasted by death, and shrink away into nothing at the approach of the king of terrors: and on the other hand, to shew you the true understanding of those, who seek for bliss in the comforts of undisguised religion, which the last enemy is so far from being able to diminish, or mix with sorrow; that death only purifies these exalted joys unto the perfection of eternal delight in heaven. And thus I shall endeavour to persuade all of us, to make a wise choice in a case of such incomparable importance to our souls; while others spend their days in vanity, and reap at last no reward but vexation of spirit; while men, bewitched by the enchantments of sin, make this world the idol to which they pay their services, are ambitious of its airy honours, and fond of its fading applause; while they eagerly grasp at its riches, which cost so much toil in the acquiring, and yield so little content in the enjoyment, or debase their souls by wallowing in its polluted pleasures; that we may abandon these unworthy pursuits to the ignorant and blind, and, as be-  
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comes the children of the light and day, raise our desires to the better things of immortality, make God and Christ our choice, and seek for a happiness in the country of light and love, where the heavenly delights, instead of deceiving us by expectations greater than the reality, will surprize our souls by a fulness incomparably beyond our highest hopes, and, being eternal and as lasting as ourselves, can leave no room for fears of our being ever deprived of them. In a word, it shall be my endeavour at this time, to make it evident how infinitely reasonable the advice in our text is, to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.”

The connection betwixt which words and the preceeding part of this excellent sermon of our blessed Saviour upon the mount, is obvious enough. Our Lord, having exhorted his hearers to the study of religion and the service of God, mentions one thing as absolutely necessary to the doing of this with vigour and sincerity, namely, a wearing their hearts from the present world and its profits, of whatever kind; that they might be no more enslaved to the desire of riches, nor under the prevailing influence of Mammon; for, says he, “ye cannot serve God and Mammon.” Persons who are resolved to devote themselves to the Lord, must not think of bowing to another master; nor can the purified pleasures of the divine life, and heavenly desires, with vigorous endeavours after the joys of Zion, dwell in a soul that is at the same time possessed by carking cares, and an anxious solicitude concerning the enjoyments of this world, an over-thoughtfulness about what they should eat or drink, and wherewithal they should be clothed.

We are not to imagine, that our Saviour designs here to dissuade men from a moderate concern  
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about their temporal interests, or give any pretext to excuse an idle lazy disposition; as if the necessaries of life, food and raiment, were to be provided for us by a miraculous providence, without the concurrence of our own labour and care: diligence, even in outward business, is not only allowable, but even commendable. What our Saviour then in the context warns his hearers to avoid, is, that fretful anxiety of thought, which flows from a heart that is under the dominion of a present world, and argues too eager desires after it; that extravagant concern to secure and augment our earthly possessions, which disturbs the uneasy mind, and so much engrosses the cares of men, as to leave little place for the nobler hopes of religion, which are infinitely more worthy of their pursuit, and have the justest claim to their chief concern and diligence. 'Tis such an anxiety about the world, which our Lord here offers several arguments against: such as, the consideration of the goodness of a bountiful God, which is the surest support in any of our concerns; and affords good ground to depend upon a kind providence, for such things as are necessary for the support of human life, to every person, who, with a mind undisturbed by a tormenting solicitude, and resigned to the divine disposal, is diligent in a lawful employment, while his principal work and desire looks towards another world. Which argument Christ insists upon and establishes, from the divine care about lesser matters, "the fowls of the air and lilies of the field," in which he had no such peculiar interest as he claims in his children who depend upon the bounty of their heavenly father.

And then, in the verse preceding my text, he insinuates another argument to support this advice, "for after all these things do the Gentiles seek."

“ seek.” Cares that were chiefly employed about the world, and an anxious thoughtfulness as to their circumstances upon the earth, might be some way excusable in the blinded heathens, who had not the discoveries of a reconciled God, and the happiness of a future state; and therefore, their prospect and expectation being confined to this earth, no wonder that its riches and pleasures terminated their desires, and were the end of their diligence and concern: but the thoughts of such a management ought to make them blush, whom life and immortality brought to light, laid under an obligation to cast their eyes beyond time, and its disguised vanities, and made it altogether suitable for them to be principally animated by views relating to eternity. Which introduces the exhortation in the text, “ seek ye first the kingdom of God;” and furnishes a very powerful consideration against a fretting carefulness and eager concern about the world, namely, that they had incomparably more valuable interests to employ their thoughts, things which were worthier of their pursuit, and would prove more to their advantage.

This text may be naturally divided into these three parts. First, We have here an object worthy of our esteem and choice, which our Saviour exhorts us to seek, “ the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” The “ kingdom of God,” frequently in the new testament, signifies the gospel dispensation, which took place after the Messiah had finished the work of a Redeemer upon earth, under which so clear discoveries were made of divine grace, and the glory of immortality; and thus our Lord, Mark 1. 15. when he begins to preach, says, “ that the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand;” and the apostles are often said to “ testify and preach the king-  
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“dom of God.” But there is no doubt that this phrase is also frequently designed of heaven, that glorious object of a Christian’s hopes, and the excellent happiness which inhabits that blissful place: As when the apostle speaks to the Corinthians, 1 Epist. 6. 9. “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?” And that this sense is immediately intended in our text, seems abundantly plain, tho’ there can be no reason to exclude the other, since ’tis certain that no man can hope to become an inhabitant of Zion above, if he be not a sincere subject of the kingdom of grace upon earth: and he must seek after the righteousness hereof, if he entertain any solid prospect of possessing the other.

It is remarkable, tho’ every part of this great universe be equally under the dominion of God, and he reigns king throughout all the regions of this immense empire; yet heaven is very elegantly distinguished from earth by this character, “the kingdom of God:” for it is there where the glory of the divine government shines with the most perfect lustre, and is managed immediately by himself in a way altogether agreeable to his excellencies; in that place he sways a sceptre of love over a willing people, who glory in being the servants of so amiable a king, and never weary in their obedience: there the harmony of an eternal agreement and love, swallows up the smallest remains of discord and debate amongst the subjects of this kingdom; where there are no counter-intriguings and party-designs to disturb their peace, or cool their affection; no misrepresentations and discontents, that can be worked up into rebellion, or give rise to the least murmur against their God; for they not only submit, but delight and rejoice in every measure of the perfect government that is there. In a word, God  
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is distinguished in that glorious kingdom of his, by the amiable character of love, and by his throne that is beautified by the lustre of eternal love: he scatters round about him divine light and pleasure, which pierce and run through every soul that inhabits these blissful regions: so that you see with how strong an emphasis heaven is in a particular manner called, “the kingdom of God,” where he takes pleasure to crown with happiness every subject, while each of them hath the utmost delight in returns of praise and obedience.

Our Lord mentions here also the necessary means of attaining this kingdom; and it is certain that no man can in earnest pretend to seek after it, without a serious study to walk in the way which leads to it. “The kingdom of God,” says he, and his righteousness,” whereby we may understand either sincere obedience to the law of God, that “holiness without which no man can see him;” a compliance with the calls of grace which “teacheth us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly:” or it may point out to us the spotless and meritorious obedience of the Messiah, who is “the Lord our righteousness,” and in which every one who would successfully seek this kingdom must have an interest.

2dly, In the text, we have a qualification of this pursuit of the heavenly happiness which our Lord here recommends, “Seek ye it first.” And this is to be understood first with respect to the time; we must not delay religion till old age, while we pursue this world during our youth: no, if the joys of Zion be so incomparably beyond the flattering vanities of the earth, it is certainly reasonable that our earliest concerns should be employed about them; nor ought we ever,  
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for the sake of deceitful trifles, to hazard the loss of our eternal all, by putting off the securing a portion therein. The bloom then of our days, and the vigour of youth, should be employed in the remembrance of our Creator; and nothing ought to be our care, till we be first reconciled to him in the Redeemer. And then seeking this kingdom must also be with the most vigorous diligence and earnest endeavours. We are not to fancy, while our hearts are fixed upon this earth, and our years spent in acquiring its riches or honours, that a languishing look to heaven, or a feeble wish that we may “die the death of the “righteous” will ever carry us to Zion: no, this must be our principal aim that hath the deepest root in our hearts, and the greatest share of our lives; as heaven is infinitely better than this world, so our breathings after it must be quicker and stronger than any earthly desires.

3dly, We have an additional encouragement proposed to us, “all these things shall be added “to you,” or as the Greek word points out, “they shall be thrown in as accessories” to this which is the principal thing. And, indeed, tho’ the treasures of bliss and joy, which God hath reserved for them that love him, are so incomparably excellent as easily to compensate the loss of every thing else; yet it is certain, that a sober virtuous life is the readiest way to attain even temporal comforts, which may be necessary for our support; and that as sin ruins the soul, so it frequently wastes the estate, and reduces to poverty: so that “godliness hath the promises both “of this life, and of that which is to come.”

This text affords a variety of subjects that might be usefully spoken to: but, that I may not draw out this discourse to too great a length, I shall,

shall, through divine assistance, endeavour only to do these things.

1. I shall in a few particulars make a comparison betwixt the honours, pleasures, riches, and whatever else upon earth captivate the affections and employ the cares of foolish men, those things which, as our Saviour tells us, “the Gentiles seek;” betwixt them, I say, and the happiness of another life, which is the reward of true religion: and thence shew how infinitely reasonable it is for us to “seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness.”

2. I shall propose a practical inference or two.

1. Then, we ought to “seek first the kingdom of God,” and make our earliest endeavours and strongest desires towards it. Look up to this happy place, and compare together its lasting enjoyments, with the flattering offers of sin, and the pleasures that are temporal in respect of their duration. You will easily be persuaded, upon the smallest reflection, that a reasonable man must not only consider the present delight and advantage, which any pretender to his esteem and pursuit may afford him; but also carefully examine the future prospect it gives him: else he may soon cheat a thoughtless mind with an imaginary good. For if my soul will be as much mine to morrow, and will remain so to eternity, as it is to day: it is plain, if I act a wise part, I must provide for it against hereafter; and it is as much my business to have a concern about well grounded hopes of its being happy during the future ages, as for its present satisfaction. Now here is a perfection of glory, a beauty of happiness, which at once ought to determine our choice, and, by a superior splendor of true felicity, hide from our eyes all the little contemptible charms of a fading world, namely, that this is an everlasting

lasting kingdom, and that our Redeemer, as the apostle speaks, Heb. 5. 9. "Being made perfect, became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Here then are offers proposed to you, that bear a proportion to your being, and are as lasting as yourselves: and when the soul once enters into the regions of immortality, there will be no fears of diminished bliss, nor the melancholy prospect of a period to its joys; you can never outlive this glory, for there the immortality of your spirits, and the eternity of your happiness, will ever run along in parallel lines that know no end.

And this affords the keenest edge that can be put upon the most exquisite bliss, and, of all others, of the incomparably most important consideration. O vast and inconceivable eternity! how does the view of it confound our thought and swallow up our imagination! how little a way can we reach into this boundless ocean, this unfathomable gulf, which can only be looked unto fully by that God who inhabits eternity! When we have most laboriously employed our wearied minds about the greatest number of years that the liveliest fancy can conceive, or the swiftest hand can mark down in figures, we approach only to the shore of eternity, and can go no further: if so, how incomparably valuable must this kingdom of God be? for the longer its happiness lasts, it is evidently the more advantagious; and every year of its continuance adds to its weight: but where there are no number of years nor any end of days, there can be no comprehension of the worth of this bliss; and its excellency must as far exceed our conception, as its eternity does.

And, besides that the joys at God's right hand will really endure for evermore, what an exquisite relish, think you, must the infallible assurance  
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hereof continually put on the present possession of these purified delights? O what amazing rapturous satisfaction must possess a soul, seated in these peaceful mansions, when it shall stretch its enlarged capacity to distant times, and wander through the immense regions of eternity, all full of pleasures reserved for it! when, as far as it can look into those endless ages, it will see them big with satisfaction, and shining with the glories of its unfading crown! and tho' the greatest saint in heaven can never have a comprehensive view of eternity; yet when its curious thought can go no further into this ocean, it will be lost in joy, and its views swallowed up of future delight.

And besides the express promise of God in scripture, "who is not a man that he should lie," the eternity of the heavenly happiness seems to follow upon the nature of the thing; for, as I hinted in the explication of the text, in that kingdom of God there are none of the secret causes, that weaken governments upon earth, and have ended in the ruin of the greatest monarchies, no factious hopes, nor selfish views, nor unsatisfied ambition, nor haughty oppressive greatness, nor murmuring discontented subjects; nor a wavering inconstant sovereign, who often raises a favourite upon a capricious humour, and tumbles him down by a new turn of a changeable fancy: for, as fulness of joy, which every citizen of Zion possesses, leaves no room for fretfulness and dissatisfaction; so an eternal love and esteem knits for ever, in the strictest bonds of peace, and union to their amiable sovereign and to one another, all these souls that are fully purified from the least dregs of these disorderly and aspiring passions, which occasion so much discord and dispeace upon earth. And then this is "the kingdom of God," in the midst of which he reigns  
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that it can never be moved. It is guarded by irresistible power, and surrounded with unchangeable love; his everlasting arms being its refuge, beautifies it with the lustre of an eternal excellency; and death, which puts a period to all the enjoyments of time, is then confined to hell, and can never draw near the frontiers of that undisturbed kingdom.

And, that I may say no more upon this head, as the eternal duration of the heavenly happiness is, of itself, an unanswerable argument why you should seek it first; so we find this consideration was what supported the primitive Christians under all their discouragements. 2 Cor. 4. 16, 17, 18. "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day: for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

And now, after so lovely a prospect of this kingdom, need I mention the other branch of the comparison, which our Saviour warns us not to be too eagerly concerned about, namely, these short pleasures, fleeting honours, and uncertain riches, which "all perish in the using." I shall not now argue from their emptiness, while we have them: but this certainly, with a wise man, is enough to stain their beauty and dissipate their charms, that they are so soon at an end. For besides, that the king of terrors often attacks us unexpectedly, and no age or state of life is secure from his most hasty approaches, he cuts down youth in its bloom, and tumbles suddenly the haughty monarch from his throne; consider that,

even when life and its pleasures are prolonged to the utmost length, how short they are, and how little suitable to our immortality: death in a few years must take off the mask from all these disguised nothings, which employ the solicitous cares and unfruitful labours of foolish men; and then its pale looks will blast all the hopes, and for ever banish the happiness of the most prosperous transgressor.

Oh! seriously examine the matter, were you to end your being with this transitory life, or to last only some ages beyond it, the extravagant madness of men, in grasping temporal enjoyments, might be some way excusable: but alas, what proportion is there betwixt these earthy treasures which we are so fond of, and the immense duration of your spirits? methinks, one look into eternity were enough to take off the disguise from time, and shew how contemptible all its offers must be to a soul, which were to exist but as many millions of years as we can conceive; why, even in that case our life upon earth, sixty or seventy years, would be so inconsiderable a part of it, as to be scarce worth the caring for: and how infinitely more foolish must it be, to make choice of this world for our portion, when we are to remain for ever in another? oh! the surprizing folly of men! bewitched by the enchantments of sin, to dote upon the false beauties of a vapour blown up by fancy, and easily broke into nothing by the smallest puff of every wind: to put their confidence in a life so uncertain, liable to innumerable fatal accidents, and at the best so short. Inconceivable madness! to pursue with such keenness the nothings of time, and neglect the glories of immortality. How unwise a part do such poor politicians act? how little know they the value  
of

of their souls? and how far do they debase the dignity of their natures?

It is not to be denied, but that honours and riches dazzle the eye, and captivate the mind; but then it is, in truth, only of the ambitious or covetous mad man: for after all the bustle and noise which vain men make, oh, what profit or fruit have they, when at the top of their designs? how despicable a thing is it to behold a great man glorying in his wisdom and bravery, climbing with so much toil and anxiety to the pinnacle of honour? To what purpose? why, after a few years dreaming, there to be seized by death, torn from his happiness and hope, and all his honour laid in the grave. What a contemptible thing is it, for which a victorious general fights and labours many a dangerous fatiguing campaign? or the luxurious wallow in effeminate pleasures? or an ambitious king disturbs his own repose, and the peace of the world by a croud of vexatious projects? Why, a little false glory which is tarnished by death; or an enlarged empire, all the power and riches whereof, cannot secure the vain monarch against one attack of a fever or decay. And is this all the business of the rich and great? Is this the end of their contrivances, which wholly employ their hours? Is this all the cunning design of their politick schemes? The whole art and wisdom whereof, are not proof against a gout or gravel.

So that you see, the eternity of the heavenly happiness makes it infinitely worthy of our chiefest desires, while the short lived pleasures of time ought to be trampled upon as trifles, below the regard of an immortal soul. Let us then “be wise and be taught.” And tho’ the blinded Gentiles, and others as ignorant and mad, seek these things, tho’ the head of the ambitious be

turned giddy, by looking at that gaudy idol, honour and greatness; and tho' the covetous wretch hug his treasures, "and say to fine gold, thou art my confidence:" in a little all of them are torn from their gods by death, and drop unthinking into hell. Let us act a wiser part, make choice of the unfading crown; and seek it with, at least, as much diligence and care, as they pursue their vanities: seeing, as the apostle tells us, 1 Cor. 9. 25. "And every man that striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things: now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible."

2dly, We ought, if we would act a wise part, "to seek first the kingdom of God," rather than the good things of time, if we compare the nature as well as the duration of them. All the different offers of sin, which have so fatal a dominion over the hearts of foolish men, as they are short-lived, so they are unsatisfying: they afford but a low delight, and leave a great many empty desires. And it is plainly thus from reason and experience; it is not possible that carnal pleasures which are confined to the body, or those airy delights of honour and fame which only tickle a vain imagination, can ever fill the enlarged capacity of that being which is designed for nobler enjoyments, and is of a nature itself vastly superior in excellency to all these poor treasures; our thirst after happiness is too intense, to be satisfied with these muddy and shallow streams: and so when at the top of human felicity, alas, how little undisturbed satisfaction is to be found? and how many craving desires, that still cry, "Give, give," rage in a discontented spirit that grovels upon the earth? Can there be any thing more affecting than the account that Solomon gives us? who had all the opportunities of tasting whatever  
bliss

bliss this world could afford, and wanted no occasion of putting the keenest edge upon sensual pleasures they were capable of; he was flattered by the glories of a throne, and indulged himself for a time, in all the soft effeminate joys of luxury and debauch; his wisdom enabled him to contrive every kind of pleasure, and the riches of his kingdom to furnish himself with the means thereof: and yet this is the melancholy account of the result, *Ecceſ. 2. 11.* “Then I looked, ſays he, “on all the works that my hands had wrought, “and on the labour that I had laboured to do, “and behold, all was vanity and vexation of ſpirit, and there was no profit under the ſun.”

And what is the reaſon that the rich man adds ſo greedily to his treaſures, and the ambitious climbs up higher, with as eager endeavours as he mounted the firſt ſtep of honour; but becauſe they are unſatisfied with their portion? and I might appeal to the monarch upon the moſt glorious throne, if cares and fears, new projects and deſigns, do not take up more place in his ſoul, than undiſturbed pleaſure and calm delights. And thus in every ſtation of life, he that ſeeks his happineſs in the world, is ever like “the troubled “ſea,” always unſettled, and diſcontented with the preſent, ever rowls after ſomething further, without a poſſibility of finding reſt. But then, in the kingdom of God, fulneſs, as well as eternity of joy, hath its habitation: in this place is an endleſs variety of unmixed and purified bleſſings, that can ſatiſfie all our deſires, and leave no room for a diſcontented wiſh. God himſelf is the ſource whence they uninterruptedly flow: and from his boundleſs power and love, torrents of the pureſt delights run through all the regions of heaven, and overſpread every ſoul, for God is their exceeding joy: and let the deſires after hap-

piners be never so vigorous and extensive, the rivers of these inexhausted pleasures must quench the thirsty spirit.

I might enlarge upon this ravishing subject ; but, because I have already spent too much of your time, I shall only mention, that as every thing in this kingdom is purified into a state of unblemished perfection, and freed from every defect ; so there are in it treasures of glory and bliss, exactly suited to every particular faculty of the soul. The understanding, which upon earth is never satisfied with knowledge, will be then filled with the noblest truths ; no mean trifling disputes will then employ our thoughts, no cavilling questions, nor any noisy wranglings of a learned ignorance : but the soul, with open eyes and an unerring apprehension, shall uninterruptedly contemplate the beauty of the divine nature, and the amiableness of their king, the glory of his perfections, the mystery of his grace, and the wisdom of his providence, and the excellent contrivance of all his works. And O ! what an exquisite delight will these views carry along with them to the wondering mind ! where there is nothing to allay the satisfaction, since no doubt or anxiety, which are so inseparable from our enquiries upon earth, can find place there : for “ in Zion “ God himself is their sun,” who ever shines with an invariable brightness, and from him unmixed truth and light make an easie and pleasing passage into the bottom of a glorified understanding ; and no clouds nor mists ever hover above these serene regions.

And as their knowledge is thus elevated, so their love to God is blown up into a vehement flame. No soul there, but is kindled by that heavenly fire, which is preserved in its vigour without a possibility of cooling, by the constant  
views

views of his beauty and excellencies ; while every spark of this fire of love animates divine pleasure, and puts life in their joys. For, but consider, is it possible to conceive an higher bliss, than of that person who loves God with all the soul, and sees at the same time, with the utmost evidence, that he is his God and Father reconciled in Jesus Christ? O! to behold the best and greatest of beings his portion and reward! If on earth the favour and smiles of a dying prince are so much valued, and his caresses sought after, what an inconceivable delight must fill the soul, that hath a clear and steady view of unerring wisdom, and boundless knowledge, and irresistible power, and eternal love, all employed to secure and exalt its happiness?

In a word, every thing is calculated to promote perfect joy in these mansions of felicity. The obedience paid there, flows from a willing mind, and carries alongst with it contentment, and the very labours are sources of satisfaction. All the members of that noble society are perfect lovers, who envy not one another's happiness, nor grudge their bliss: but, being all purified into a fitness for the endearments of an heavenly friendship, are mutually delighted by the comforts of each other. And then, the body will be made every way suitable to such a glorious and happy soul, no more a clog and burden to the spirit, nor an instrument of temptation and pain, free from diseases and weariness, and the decay of old age; in beauty and strength and pleasure, no doubt, far beyond what we can conceive upon earth. And now, oh, let us ask our souls, if we can be contented for ever to throw away such a kingdom and its happiness that we may gratifie our corrupt appetites, by tasting the unsatisfying pleasures of a fading world? what profit shall we

have of all these things whereof death will make us ashamed?

But 3dly, and I shall but just mention it, Let us consider that every joy in the kingdom of God, as it is perfect and eternal, so it is in all respects worthy of the glory and dignity of our natures, our honour and duty as well as interest. And thus religion is in the most significant sense "the whole of man:" whereas all the offers of sin, and pleasures of sense, as they are unsatisfying and transitory, so they are mean, low and disgraceful; they are covered over with all the shame that can accompany an unjust, ungrateful and sordid spirit, which hath utterly lost all sense of its own dignity, or its obligations to a good God who made it, and crowns it with his benefits. What can be more monstrously inglorious? than for an immortal soul to truckle ignobly to fleeting vanities, to ly under the dominion of a base lust or a beastly passion, and be so irresistibly led captive by the first sensual delight that comes in its way, as, forgetting honour, to follow it over the belly of gratitude and conscience, and, it may be, resolutions to the contrary?

Should not serious reflection cover, with blushings, that degenerate spirit, which hath so far forgot its heavenly original, as to endure subjection to a body, and pursue the same nasty delights with the beasts which perish, and, like them, wallow in the puddle of sense? A monarch, who, instead of minding the affairs of his empire, should trifle away his time with babbles and play things, and, instead of glory and fame, pursue only some childish diversions; does not act, by half, so despicable a part, as a man, that is capable of the exalted joys of heaven, and the elevated pleasures of the mind, and yet prostitutes his immortality to perishing delights, and looks no farther than  
present

present feeling. Oh! how infinitely are these below our nature and reason, and if we knew aright our own dignity, with what a noble ambition would we trample upon every thing under the sun! and blush at the thoughts of entering into so inglorious a match, as that is betwixt an everlasting spirit, and the pleasures of a fading earth? Amazing stupidity! what an extravagant disorder of thought must the empty fool have? who struts about, and values himself so much upon that visionary phantom, nicknamed Honour, and is all in a foam when he fancies it is touched; and yet can himself, at the same time, calmly resign his reason, and religion, and glory, his eternal, and even temporal interest, to the impure embrace of some brutish lust or decaying vanity.

Thus you see the delights of this earth are the reproach of a soul, whereas every thing in heaven is truly excellent and honourable. To have the understanding filled with the purest and sublimest truths, the love and affections terminating upon the best of beings; and all our praises and songs centring in the glory of him, who is infinitely amiable in himself, and to whose goodness we owe all our hopes and happiness; and to be clothed with a glorious body, which does not pretend to be its master, but is in a perfect subjection to sanctified reason. These indeed are things we may openly aspire after, and not be ashamed.

4thly. Let us consider the hazard or dangers, which attend the choice we make of these different pretenders to our esteem and affection. Could the vanities of a perishing world so far change their natures, as to attain to a capacity of becoming permanent and satisfying; yet take notice, unthinking fool, that there is poison mixed with the purest of their joys, which will, at length, reach our vitals, and kill our souls; and the most

bewitching sin, and fairest temptation is a cockatrice egg, that shall be hatched by death, and there will break forth a fiery flying serpent, to torture, with an eternal sting, the mad man who makes the world his choice: for all these things which the Gentiles seek, are at the disposal of another; the gods, before which the ambitious, or covetous prostrate themselves, are under the dominion of the great king of heaven, who can pull you from their embraces, and instead of comforts, make your gold and silver to canker, and your treasures prove fountains of tears and sorrows. All the arrows of death are in his quiver, and the bluntest of them will soon dissipate the forces of the proudest monarch, and confound the intrigues of the vainest politician, and waste the richest treasures.

While it is yet a season for thought, consider it, miserable sinner, that, by seeking your happiness in the goods of time, and complying with the solicitations of a corrupt appetite, you arm against you infinite strength, and animate inexorable justice; you kindle that anger of which none knoweth the power, open the treasures of the fury and wrath of an enraged God, and break up the flood-gates of those torrents of brimstone and flames, which will fill the cup of those whose portion is in this life; whereas on the other hand, as the kingdom of God is composed of joys that are, in their nature, perfect and eternal, so it is absolutely secure from the terrors of the most formidable enemy; for he, that built this "house not made with hands," ruleth over all. Were he only king of heaven, you might be under some apprehensions of being possibly dispossessed by one of his rivals, but he is Lord of hell too, and, while he governs Zion by the amiableness of love, his chains bind fast his insolent foes, and his  
power

power curbs the rage, and restrains the fury of the legions of darkness. So that, in “seeking “first the kingdom of God,” you cannot run the smallest possibility of hazard, the paths of religion are guarded by the strength of an almighty arm, none can pluck you out of a Redeemer’s hand; and when you arrive at the kingdom, the eternal God will be your refuge, and the everlasting arms, underneath its foundations, will preserve it firm and undisturbed.

Your time being gone, I shall not insist upon the many useful inferences which might be drawn from what hath been discoursed, only let us all be determined to make a wise choice, by a sincere and speedy compliance with the affectionate exhortation of the lover of perishing souls, in our text, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his “righteousness.” I shall not take up your time with motives to enforce so reasonable a proposal, the whole of this discourse being practical, and tending to engage us hereto: I shall only add to what hath been said, Let us beware of being influenced by things, as they are represented to our passions and affections, by a flattering world and the caresses of sin, which courts us under a disguise, and puts on a false face, when it tempts men: but let us be so wise, as to look at matters in the view, which death will, in a few days, certainly place them in.





## S E R M O N VIII.

P S A L M xvi. 11.

*In thy presence there is fulness of joy, at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.*

**T**HOUGH happiness be the general pursuit of mankind, and their common enquiry, "who will shew us any good?" Yet, how fatally mistaken is the greatest part of them in their answering this question? and how few attain to, or so much as seek after what deserves the name of happiness, or is worthy of our pursuit? Sinners bend all their thoughts and care towards enjoyments that are false and flattering, and often disturb their repose and peace by pursuing wind and vanity, the debased pleasures of sin and sense, the most durable whereof are but short and fly away in a moment; they shall not be found when the soul stands most in need of support, and when ever it awakes out of its dream, then these imaginary joys, into which we fancied ourselves, prove the realities of torment and death, and are not only unprofitable and fruitless, but bring forth eternal shame and misery. Present feeling is the rule of their life, and the deceiving pleasures of a vicious course so possess their souls, that they never enquire into their management, but embrace devouring coals in their bosom, and stupidly go on to sport with poison and death.

But it is certainly our wisdom and true interest, to look unto the end of things, and search, with the

the most careful diligence, into the good which we make the object of our desires and pursuit: that we may fix upon that portion which will not forsake us, when the earth shall tremble under our feet and flee away from our embraces, but prove steady and assured to us beyond death and the grave; and may not inconsiderately abandon ourselves to the enchanting allurements of wickedness, and the offers of a present life, and make a wrong choice in a case that is of such infinite consequence to us.

It is therefore my purpose at this time, by the assistance of God, to discourse a little to you upon that overflow of happiness and bliss, which is proposed to the followers of Christ; and of the noble prize, which God will bestow upon such as continue to run to the end of the Christian course: that so, from a consideration of the excellency of this kingdom of righteousness, and the incomparable value and worth of this crown of glory, we may be engaged to desire this “one thing which we will seek after,” and may be animated to aspire unto it by the most vigorous active endeavours, and not suffer ourselves to turn lazy and languishing; but, when we look at that recompence of reward, to strive with unwearied resolution, and with undaunted courage press through death and danger, in order to our attaining of it; and that being under the influence and power of this eternal life, we may contemn and trample upon the base sordid pleasures which engross the time, thought, and cares of the ignorant and the blind; and that we may never have any projects and designs, nor take any measures that are unworthy of such elevated views, but shew in all the parts of our conduct, that we hope one day to dwell in that “fulness of joy,” which uninterruptedly flows from the divine presence, and be possessed

possessed of those “pleasures which are at his right hand for evermore.”

Several verses of this psalm are directly applied in the new testament to Christ the Messiah, and asserted to have had a prospect unto him. Your time will not allow me to enquire particularly how far this passage of scripture may be applied to David the penman of it, or what parts thereof are not so probably designed of Christ. The apostle Peter informs us plainly enough, Acts 2. 25.—28. that what we have from the 8th verse to the end of the psalm, was foreseen by David as a prophet concerning the Messiah: and it contains an account of these supports, whereby he was enabled to persevere in accomplishing the work, which his Father had given him to do upon earth; and of those views he had, from the steady consideration whereof he did not faint or despair, “but endured the cross, and despised the shame.” God was at his right hand, and these almighty arms that were always underneath him kept him firm and unshaken; so that he was not moved by the power, rage, and cunning of hell, or the continued contradiction of sinners: yea, the prospect of his heavier sufferings from God the great judge, when he should “lay on him the iniquity of us all, and bruise him for our transgressions,” with the cruel and ignominious death to which he was subjected, did not lessen his courage, or make him shrink from his resolution; because he had the assured hope that his sufferings, however severe, were to last but for a moment, and that death was to have but a short dominion over him, for “his soul should not be left in hell, nor would God ever suffer his holy one to see corruption.” And then, in the words I have now read, he takes a triumphing view of the glory that should follow after, and of that fulness of immortal joy

joy which the divine presence would at last afford him; and, by this noble prospect, he bore up his spirits from sinking, when under the heaviest pressures: and hence “his flesh did rest in hope.”

These words, considered particularly as spoken by our Saviour; and the use he makes of this assurance of the happy issue of all that he was to endure, might afford us many profitable instructions: but I design to consider them only in general, as a description of the excellency of the happiness of heaven, which is promised in the gospel to all such as, by a patient continuance in well-doing, wait for it. And we may very allowably take what is here said, as an account of the glorious reward which all the sincere followers of Christ shall be possessed of: for “he is gone to  
“prepare a place for them, and will come again,  
“and take them to himself, that where he is  
“there they may be also;” and so they shall with him swim in these rivers of pleasures which are at God’s right hand, and be partakers of that fulness of joy.

In the text, we may consider these two things, first, we have the perfection and completeness of that bliss which is to be enjoyed in heaven. And,

1. There is “fulness of joy.” The best state upon earth leaves a great many unsatisfied desires, and is not of equal extent with the capacity of the soul; it is mixed with numerous alloys, and, at the most, but faint and languid: but in Zion which is above, there is an overflow of the purest delights; and, though the capacity of the soul, both as to knowing and enjoying, will be then mightily enlarged; yet these rivers of pleasures will run through the innermost recesses of a glorified spirit, and leave no room for a remaining wish, but will search out, and intirely fill up the  
smallest

smallest lurking desire, till the soul can have no more.

2. "These pleasures are for evermore." That little satisfaction which the highest enjoyments of this world can afford, is but short-lived, and soon passeth away; or, even while we have them, they lose their relish, and a little time gives us a disgust at these things which we so eagerly pursued before: but it is quite otherwise in heaven; the joy there never languishes or decays, but is always fresh and new, and will remain to eternity in its vigour and strength; there are no fears of diminished youth, but the assurance and the prospect of an everlasting continuance thereof, must put the keenest edge upon their satisfaction.

Secondly, In the text we have the spring and cause of the excellency and eternity of this happiness, "thy presence, and thy right hand:" for I take this to be the force and meaning of these phrases, and not that they barely point out the place where it is to be had; agreeably whereto the apostle mentioning this passage, Acts 2. 28. expresses it so as to make the presence of God the cause of this joy, "thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance." God indeed is not confined to any place, for he fills heaven and earth with his presence: but 'tis in heaven that in a special manner he manifests the glory and perfection of his goodness, there he is present as the inexhausted fountain of happiness and bliss; and while the terrors of his irresistible power and inexorable justice, are the attributes whereby he governs in hell, the amiableness of his love reigns in heaven: it is there he is present as a father and a friend, with that presence which spreads satisfaction and contentment wherever it reaches, and to be where it is must be fulness of joy.

"At

“At thy right hand.” I need scarce take notice to you, that the right hand is the place of dignity and honour, and that the hand is the seat of power and strength, P<sup>sa</sup>l. 89. 13. “Thou hast a mighty arm, strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand;” and so this phrase denotes the security and stability of that which is said to be supported by it: it is God’s right hand which makes those pleasures last for evermore, hence nothing can deprive us of them, or ever lessen them; it is because God is in the midst of heaven, that it can never be moved. This phrase may also have a special respect to the peculiar glory of the Messiah, “who, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.”

In discoursing to you from these words thus explained, I shall endeavour to do these things.

1. I shall very shortly propose two or three general considerations, to convince us that the reward, which God hath laid up for them that fear him, must be every way full and complete.

2. I shall a little instance this more particularly in the knowledge, love and worship of the saints in heaven; and shew that, from a conjunction of these, there must necessarily arise fulness of joy. And, on this head, I shall confine myself to the excellency of these, as they flow from the divine presence, and have God himself for their immediate source.

3. I shall draw a few practical inferences from the preceding discourse.

1. The happiness and glory of heaven are illustrated by such things on earth, as are most valued and esteemed, and sought after with the greatest earnestness; and yet these are declared to be but a faint emblem of the superior glories and joys of the future life. We are said in scripture to

“reign

“ reign with Christ there, to be made kings and  
 “ priests unto God, and to be crowned with honour  
 “ and immortality:” and these similitudes are  
 used in this case, because there was nothing  
 on earth that could afford us a more raised  
 notion of the excellency and dignity of that ex-  
 alted state; for a crown is the last wish of ambi-  
 tion, in which the most soaring hopes propose to  
 rest. But tho’ this dazzles the eyes of silly mortals,  
 and is admired by them as so glorious and great;  
 yet all its splendor and charms look pale and dim,  
 when compared with that incorruptible, unfading  
 diadem, which exceeds not only what we may be-  
 hold at a court, but goes vastly beyond the ut-  
 most reach of our imagination, for “ eye hath not  
 “ seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath it entered  
 “ into the heart of man to conceive it.” In  
 short, while in all our worldly pursuits, we pro-  
 pose to attain more happiness and content-  
 ment than ever we find in the possession of them:  
 the joys that are above, will incomparably exceed  
 all our expectations, and surprize, with a ravish-  
 ing amazement at their fulness, even the saint that  
 had attained to the highest thoughts of them upon  
 earth. For,

2. Heaven must afford a happiness and a glory,  
 that are suitable to the majesty and the greatness of  
 the king of the world, and a bright demonstration  
 of the liberal goodness and rich mercy of God,  
 when he designs to bestow unrestrained communi-  
 cations of them. We indeed every day partake of  
 his bounty, and have experience that in him com-  
 passions flow: but the feast with Abraham, Isaac,  
 and Jacob, will be, like that famous one of Aha-  
 fuerus, according to the state of the king; for  
 God will then sit upon the throne of his kingdom,  
 and, in that feast, will shew forth the riches of  
 his glorious empire, and the honour of his excel-  
 lent

lent majesty. And, O my soul! when the inexhaustible sources of infinite goodness and grace shall be there fully opened, with how strong a current of pleasure must the streams of joy, “that make glad this city of our God,” run through all the inhabitants of that happy place! It must also be a reward that is worthy of the sufferings of the Redeemer, and the purchase of his blood. And how exalted a notion, think you, does this give us of these joys? that, to procure them for us, “God was made manifest in the flesh, and became obedient to the death. If he give his Son for us, will he not with him give us all things?” I shall mention upon this head only, in the third place,

3. These joys must be full, because God himself will be immediately our exceeding great reward, Isa. 28. 5. “In that day the Lord of hosts will be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty unto the residue of his people;” which passage refers ultimately to heaven; then he will be the fulness of our joy. The voice from heaven, where this happiness of the redeemed is best known, proclaims this as the noblest account of it, Rev. 21. 3. “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.” And, Rev. 22. 3. ’tis said, “There shall be no curse there,” nothing that is hurtful and uneasy, weak or imperfect, “but the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it.”

The second thing I proposed, was to speak a little upon these particular instances, the knowledge, love, and worship of the saints in heaven; and to shew that from the conjunction of these, there must necessarily arise fulness of joy: and, on this head, I shall confine myself to the excellency of these, as they flow from the divine presence,  
and

and have God himself for their immediate source. And,

1. As to the understanding of the saints in heaven, it will be conversant about the noblest and purest truths, and admit nothing that is trifling and mean; and, which is the perfection of their knowledge, God himself will immediately inspire them with it; "with him is the fountain of life, and in his light they shall see light," Psal. 36. 9. And this is very directly asserted concerning heaven, Rev. 21. 23. "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." And Rev. 22. 5. "And there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light." Now the excellency of our knowledge in heaven, as it flows from God and the Lamb's being the light of it, and its having the divine presence for its sun, will appear in the following instances.

1. This proves that it shall be perfect and complete, vastly exceeding what we can arrive at here, in its enlarged extent, purity, and evidence, 1 Cor. 13. 12. "For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now we know in part, but then we shall know even as we are known." The narrowness of our knowledge upon earth, besides other grounds of it, arises from the defects of our faculties, and the imperfection of the means afforded us. Our memories are weak and feeble, and want that vigorous firmness which is so absolutely necessary to great advances in understanding; we are slow to learn, and then easily forget what we may discover; and here we have but imperfect ordinances and sacraments, to be helps to us in the most important

truths:

truths: but when God shall be our great prophet, and the children of the resurrection shall all be taught of him, there can be no place for any remainder of such defects; God's work shall then be perfect, because immediately his own; and they that walk in a light so piercing and so pure, must be filled with noblest truths, without any mixture of ignorance and error; yea, where the least clouds and mists that can occasion doubt or debate, and hang over us while here below, shall be eternally scattered by God and the Lamb.

O bright and glorious day! ever clear and serene, without the smallest shadow of obscurity, when God himself shall be the sun, and nothing to hide him from our views. Then the glorified soul, with one glance of an eye, enlightned with rays from God himself, shall pierce incomparably further into the abyfs of nature, the management of providence, and the mystery of grace, than the most laborious and accutest philosopher or divine, after their painful researches; and shall, ravished, contemn that vain wit and learning which are often overvalued and doted on, and cry out "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world?" There the less knowing Christians, who lived in greater purity and love to the Redeemer, were warmed into a more fervent zeal, and who made higher advances in practical Christianity, tho' without the natural abilities or acquired accomplishments, which put such a distinguishing lustre on some men while on earth, will feel no want of such attainments; but shall have as noble endowments, and as quick an understanding, as those to whom they were far inferor in the learned qualifications, which, tho' means of knowledge here, shall then be extinguished and swallowed up by the superior light of God and the Lamb; and, at most, prove like the stars which

which are of use to us only in the night-season, and are hid and lost in the brightness of the day.

2. From God and the Lamb's being the light of heaven, it follows that our knowledge there shall be attended with ease and pleasure, free from that vanity and vexation of spirit which accompanies a small measure of it here. Learned men upon earth consume their spirits and strength by the toil of laborious study; and, after all their pains, are entangled and fretted with a thousand perplexing difficulties, which toss about the mind, and keep it on the rack for the discovery of one clear undisturbed truth: so universally true is the observation of Solomon, Eccl. 1. 18. "In much  
" wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth  
" knowledge increaseth sorrow." Besides that, the little vigour and activity of our understandings are almost entirely spent in acquiring the means of knowledge, which are of no value, but as they tend to the finding out of other real truths. How much of our time do languages, and the other preparations to sciences engross? But no remainder of any of these disadvantages can ever disturb those who have God for their teacher; his light, in which they shall dwell, will make an easy passage into their souls, and, with an excess of satisfaction, insinuate itself into all the windings of our understandings, no part of which shall be taken up with any unnecessary furniture; and then we shall have nothing to do, but to know and enjoy.

3. Hence follows the constancy and uninterruptedness of our knowledge in heaven. Objects here below are placed sometimes in a clearer light, and then an interposing cloud darkens our views; our minds are not always alike free and open, and the arguments to convince us, do not bear themselves in at all times with the same evidence, or find us in an equal temper to examine them; hence

we are so wavering and inconstant, so often change our opinions, and are filled with doubts and debates. But in heaven the matter is quite otherwise, there is neither error nor uncertainty, no diminished light or interruption of our views of God and his perfections, when "we see him as he is," or where he himself is the sun: it constantly shines with an invariable brightness, and there is no cloud can enter heaven to obscure this light for a moment, but it pierces the soul quick and lively as it came from the great fountain of it. And as this eternal sun loses none of his light by an unbounded communication of it, the knowledge of these on whom it shines remains in its vigour for evermore.

But, 2. The love of God in heaven will be perfect, as the knowledge of him is. "We shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is." His infinite excellencies and amiableness will draw, with the cords of a man, all to whom they are discovered, and fix them in the service of him, the best as well as the greatest being. Glorified saints will then love their God with all the power and strength of their souls, and shall not bestow the smallest part of what is his due upon any rival: this heavenly fire which burns in their breasts, will ascend only to him, and 'tis in obedience to his commands, that they shall scatter any sparks of it among their fellow-creatures. They shall dwell in his love, and the divine presence will work the same miracle in heaven, which it did before Moses in the bush, by kindling all the spirits who inhabit the new Jerusalem into a flame of divine love, that shall never, to eternity, diminish, or turn faint and cool.

I thought to have discoursed more fully upon this ardent love, and on the purity of that spiritual worship, and of those zealous services which  
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the blessed above unwearied pay to God. But, because of your time, I shall proceed to shew very shortly, that from what hath been said concerning the perfection of the knowledge and love of God, which the saints in heaven are possessed of, there must necessarily spring fulness of joy.

1. If we reflect upon ourselves, we may easily take notice how much pleased we are upon the discovery of any excellencies or ornaments of the object we love. Love naturally makes us partake of the bliss and prosperity of the person to whom we are united by so strong a tie; besides the satisfaction that arises from the finding that we have made a wise choice, and bestowed our affection and esteem upon one that is worthy of it; and this pleasure increaseth proportionally to the ardency of our love, and the clear knowledge of the value and worth of the object. And if so, what inconceivable delight must such have, whose souls are all filled with the love of God, which engrosseth the whole strength and force of their spirits; when, by their divine knowledge, they shall behold the infinite amiableness, and the incomprehensible perfections of him to whom they have given their hearts; when they shall perceive, with the highest evidence, that he whom they made choice of for their portion, while foolish sinners contemned and neglected him, he for whose sake they abandoned the allurements of sense, and underwent the miseries of life, is altogether lovely, and infinitely worthy of the praise and services of angels and men? Every attribute of God, they shall have the view of, and each excellency they discover in him their portion, will add to the vigour and activity of their love; while each spark of this fire of love will put life into their pleasure, and quicken their satisfaction.

But

But further, tho' saints even upon earth, take more delight in obeying God, than the wicked do in the greatest affluence of their corn and wine, and find his "law sweeter than the hony and the hony-comb;" yet the best of them can conceive but little of the pleasure of heavenly services, because their love and devotion are so cold, and their obedience so faulty and imperfect. But to afford some notion of the fulness of the joy I am discoursing of, let us but consider, that glorified spirits, from the perfection of their love to God, and the knowledge of him, must have the deepest rooted conviction, that true religion is the brightest ornament and honour of the creature; that to admire, adore, and worship such a being, as they see God is, must be the noblest employment of the highest spirit, to love and serve whom, they are intimately persuaded is the greatest exaltation of the rational nature, and its truest good.

Now what unbounded pleasures must overspread the souls of such, when they shall know and feel, that they themselves have attained to this greatest good, that they are as holy as God commands them to be, and have no blemishes and defect in their worship; when their will runs, with its whole might, in obeying that law which is all their delight, and never faints or wearies in that pleasing work! what rapturous joys must attend the raised devotions of glorified believers, when they shall with as loud songs, and as vigorous a love, as the angels in heaven, sing, "salvation to their God that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

In short, if they shall "ever go on in the brightness of his face, to love him, and shall see him as he is, and if that knowledge, which is in part, shall be done away;" the satisfaction which is in part, must also flee away and vanish with it, and be succeeded by fulness of joy.

Then, as it is, Psalm 17. 15. "They shall behold his face in righteousness, and be satisfied when they awake with his likenesses."

I have not now launched out into any thing that is curious and speculative, nor mentioned any imaginary pleasures; but only such as necessarily flow from the nature of the things, and the truth of which we may be easily convinced of by reflecting on the frame and make of our own spirits. But let us consider in the

Second place, The relation in which saints shall behold this God standing in to them, of a Father; and a friend reconciled to them by the blood of Christ, and joined to them in an everlasting covenant, which he will, by his power and grace, keep inviolable: and he will see what fulness of joy must possess the children of the resurrection, who then have the clearest views of divine omnipotency, that can as easily shake the universe into nothing, as he now supports it in its beautiful order, of the power of a right hand that can irresistibly kill and keep alive, save or destroy; who alone is a valuable friend, or a dangerous enemy; and who, at the same time, have the persevering assurance, that these everlasting arms are underneath them, to support them secure and undisturbed, to guard them from enemies, and crown them with immortal life. Oh! how charming will so near a prospect be of unerring wisdom, untainted holiness, inflexible justice, infinite goodness, and unsearchable riches of mercy, all centring in their God and portion, and which they know, he will employ to make them glorious and happy! For "this God will be their God for ever and ever."

Thus, though I have said but little of the happiness of the new Jerusalem, that city of God; and have not so much as touched upon the perfection

fection of a glorified body, which will be purified into a fittedness for heaven; nor of the endearing society of saints and angels, the fellowship amongst all the redeemed, in a state were the differences of temper and opinion, that are even amongst good men in this world, and the hatred and contention that too often follow them, shall be swallowed up in the joyful harmony of an eternal agreement and love; nor of the tears that God shall then, with his own hand, "wipe away from our eyes:" yet, I hope, what hath been spoken, may shew the truth of the text, that "in the divine presence there is fulness of joy, and at his right hand pleasures for evermore."

I shall conclude with two or three inferences from the preceeding discourse.

1. Hence we may be informed of the infinite folly of miserable sinners, who "spend their money for that which is not bread," who vex and toil their souls, in pursuing wind and vanity, and rove from one empty pleasure to another, without finding any durable rest and content; yea, who roll poison and death as "a sweet morsel under their tongue;" when God hath made them capable of so substantial bliss, and offers to them a happiness larger than their wishes, and as lasting as their souls. Amazing stupidity! how justly may heaven and earth be astonished, that men should debase themselves as low as hell, and be slaves to the devil, and these vile lusts which govern the beasts that perish; who, if they were but willing and obedient, might be exalted to heaven, and partake of the blessedness and dignity of angels! The higher that the happiness in God's presence is, the greater and more fatal is the folly of sinners in neglecting it; and if there be there fulness of joy, there must be the utmost excess of extravagant madness, in preferring any of the in-

chantments of sin unto it : he is not half so foolish, who would lose the opportunity of conquering his enemies, and securing the peaceable possession of a crown, by consuming the season of gaining it, in some trifling amusement ; as the madder sinner, who throws himself out of the divine favour, and deprives his soul of immortal joy and life, by indulging unrestrained appetites, and gratifying his raging lusts and passions. Think upon that time, foolish sinners, when this earth shall tremble under our feet, and flee from our embraces, and with it all our comforts and joys perish ; when terrors shall surround your dying souls on every side, and ye dare not look up to heaven, which ye never sought after, and where every thing is armed against your wickedness ; and when ye shall never have another view of the pleasures that overflow there, except to augment torment and despair, upon a reflection on the good you have irretrievably lost. “ O that we were wise, “ and were taught, that we might consider this, “ and think upon our latter end ! ”

2. Hence we may learn the shamefulness and disgrace of the least sin of any kind in Christians, who are all children of the light, and children of the day ; who profess to be waiting for this excellent happiness, and to walk in the path of life that leads to it. How inglorious is it for such, so far to forget the dignity of a Christian, and the honour of the unfading crown, as to stoop to embrace any of the offers of Satan, or make the least approaches to the mire of sin and sense ? How would we blush at our pursuing the profits or honours of this world, not only by direct injustice, or fraud, but even, when we do it, by the most refined arts of trick and cunning, or by any low mean practices, by insincerity and ingratitude, or a neglect of candor and ingenuous plainness ? If  
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we would look up to that object of our hopes, and when we think upon that "inheritance of the saints in light," how should confusion cover our faces, that ever we should have entertained earthly designs, and followed low projects, that are so unworthy it, and so unbecoming persons who hope to be mixed with that pure society? and indeed, there are few things which more fully shew the reproachful nature of every sin, and how diligently we ought to shun the least appearance of evil, than this, that "our conversation should be in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ;" and that all our desires and aims, and our whole conduct speak forth that we are heirs of the kingdom of righteousness and peace.

3. What hath been discoursed may engage us to imitate the example of our blessed Redeemer, "who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame." This excellent happiness, and fulness of joy, should animate us in the midst of difficulties and dangers, make us chearfully tread the roughest paths, and willingly submit to all the tribulations which ly in the way to the kingdom, and not to faint or weary, seeing "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," 2 Cor. 4. 17. The prospect of this reward should make us stedfast in our religion, tho' reproached and persecuted by sinners; and keep us so firm in the faith and practice of Christianity, as never to abandon them for the frowns and favours of the world, nor be frightened by those who can only kill the body, and so, when they have done their utmost to the Christian, they, instead of injuring him, send him out of an uneasy world, a valley of tears, to an eternity of rest, and land him safe in his

Father's kingdom, above these storms and tempests, whereby he was tossed about in a boisterous unsettled ocean.

I shall put an end to this discourse by one use of exhortation; and I am sure this doctrine loudly calls upon us all to break off our sinful courses, by repentance, lest we miss this excellent happiness, and prove cast-aways; to enter immediately upon a religious life, and begin the Christian race; and to aspire to this fulness of joy, by a true faith upon Jesus and his righteousness; such a faith as purifieth our hearts from all iniquity, and worketh by love, by piety towards God, justice and uprightnes towards our neighbours, and a careful preserving our own souls and bodies in purity and holiness, "fit temples for the Holy Ghost to dwell in." In short, by a constant universal obedience to the word of grace that is preached to us, "that denyi<sup>ng</sup> ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

I shall mention only, very briefly, these three motives.

1. As I have already shewn, the presence and enjoyment of God in heaven, is our greatest good, which justifies the wisdom of making it our choice.

2. He is the only good. Were it possible to be happy without him, tho' in an inferior degree; could we even always feed with the swine upon husks, our folly might be something more excusable: but there is no neutrality betwixt our Maker and his enemies, we must either walk in his light, and be saved by his grace, or die by the hand of his justice. God has declared in scripture, that  
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he will make his mighty power known in all men, either by the excellency of their happiness, or the depth of their misery: and, as God will punish the contempt of his mercies, proportionably to the value and greatness of them; every drop of those rivers of delight which run through heaven, must become oyl and brimstone to heat the fire of hell, and raise the more dreadful flame. And will we be so mad, as “to choose death rather than this “life?”

Lastly. These joys are not unattainable by sinners. Access is made to the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus, the captain of our salvation, who hath triumphed over death and the devil, and laid them both conquered at his feet: so that if we will fight under his conduct, and look to him, “the author and finisher of our faith,” we shall surmount all difficulties, and subdue every enemy. Now this should spur us up, that “we fight not “as those who beat the air, and run, at a venture, for an imaginary, or an uncertain prize.” Let us then, though we be impotent and weak, and vain is the help of man, yet strive, through God, to do valiantly, and never give over, till we be possessed of that “fulness of joy which is “in his presence, and these pleasures which are “at his right hand for evermore.”





## S E R M O N IX.

MARK ix. 46.

*Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*

**T**RUE Religion is recommended to the choice of mankind, by so numerous and powerful arguments, that heaven and earth may justly be astonished at their having so little influence on the minds of sinners, and its making so inconsiderable progress in a thoughtless world, who are deeply intoxicated with the fatal enchantments of sin, and abandon themselves to its unrestrained embraces: for, on the one hand, religion doth allure men to its study and practice, by the dignity and beauty of its nature, its agreeableness to the honour of an immortal soul, and the incomparable rewards of pleasure and peace in the presence of God, wherewith the head of every one, who walks in its divine paths, shall be eternally crowned; and, on the other, it is supported by the terrors of almighty power and enraged justice, to the lashes of which every enemy of God exposeth himself by his transgressions. We are, at the same time, drawn to the service of our maker, by the cords of the highest and most generous love, which ought certainly to be the strongest bonds upon a man; and, I may say, dragged to it also by these everlasting chains of darkness, in which, those who are not frightened, by the prospect of them, from disobeying

ing God, shall be reserved to the judgment of the great day.

When I had, some time ago, occasion of discoursing from this place, I endeavoured, in some small measure, to explain, and press home upon our souls the first of these arguments, by laying before you the beauties of holiness, and its incomparable gains, and opening up a little the excellency and value of those exalted joys, the fulness whereof dwells in the presence of God, that assured reward of them who diligently seek him: and I shall now pursue the same end, by speaking a little upon the infinitely fatal consequences and dangers of sin, and the inconceivable extremity of the horrors and misery of that accursed place, where impenitent transgressors take up their eternal habitation. I then endeavoured, tho' all I could do was indeed but dark, to give you a distant prospect of the happiness of the new Jerusalem, that city of God, and present the king of Zion to your thoughts, in the amiableness of his victorious grace, sitting on a throne of mercy, and swaying a sceptre of unchangeable love over a willing people: and I shall, at this time, present him to your views, clothed with irresistible fury, and surrounded with death and terrors, which he scatters abroad in the prison of torment, where he triumphs without end over conquered enemies, sees and abaseth the proud, who scorned his laws, and had no honour for his merciful government. And as I, upon the former occasion, discoursed on mercy and truth going before his face, so I shall change the prospect, and take a view of justice and judgment, the habitation of his throne, where he shakes his rod of iron by that hand which is full of power: and thus it is my purpose, at this time, by the assistance of God, from a consideration of these terrors of the

Lord, to persuade us to a sincere and thorough repentance of our numerous iniquities, and immediately to flee from these paths, which lead all those, who walk in them, to that death which never hath an end; and to convince us, that God, being infinitely the most dangerous enemy, who hath still in his quiver innumerable arrows of the keenest fury, and that sin laying our souls open to be wounded by them, and making us the objects of his hatred and displeasure, it must, of all evils, be the most dreadful, and its terrors such, as ought to fright us from its practice. And thus I shall shew, that the most luxuriant pleasures, and the fairest advantages of sin, which cheat and flatter so many into their eternal ruin, are incomparably vain and trifling, when laid in the balance with the much heavier torments which are the wages of them: and so, that a man who gains the whole world, is surrounded with its brightest charms, and wallows in all its delights, is nothing profited, if thereby he lose his own soul, for which nothing can be so valuable as to become a suitable exchange.

And, in order hereto, I have made choice of that awful and affecting description of the miserable state of the enemies of God in hell, “where  
“their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched:” to the immediate explication of which words, I shall come, as soon as may be, without taking up much of your time in considering the context.

Our blessed Saviour, in some of the preceding verses, takes occasion to inform his hearers of the great danger which men exposed themselves to, by offending the most inconsiderable of those who believed in his name, either in endeavouring, by contempt or persecution, to draw them off from the profession and practice of Christianity, or discouraging

couraging them by offences to abate their vigour and cheerfulness in the divine life, or in doing any thing which might prove a stumbling block and an occasion to them of sin, and departing from the purity and glory of their profession. However low notions the person guilty hereof might entertain of his crime or hazard, yet "it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea." From which particular instance, our Lord proceeds to an important persuasive to the duty of mortification in general, which he presses, over and over again, in a variety of expressions, to persuade us of the absolute necessity of this duty, and of his earnest concern that we might be so wise as to comply with his calls. He puts the case of those lusts which have got the greatest influence over us, and have endeared themselves so far to our souls, that they are become equally the object of our affection and care with the most useful members of our bodies, the eye and hand, and which one would be most loth to part with.

Let it be a corrupt pleasure or passion, which by its suitableness to our natural constitution or outward circumstances, and, by a long unrestrained indulgence, hath acquired an uncontrouled dominion over us, and insinuated itself to the very bottom of our soul and tenderest love; let it be such a lust as hath the most to plead in its favour, and is accompanied by the most enticing charms, and what, in a peculiar matter, tends to the gaining of our worldly purposes, and accomplishing our ends: yet, if it either be mixed with sinful impurity, or have a tendency to promote its accursed dominion over us, and engage to its practice, or be an hindrance to vigorous advances towards more exalted measures of grace and holiness,

ness, and be a blemish upon the glory of our Christianity, notwithstanding all these advantages which may have so endeared it to our affection, it ought immediately to be cut off, hated and abandoned, and no more admitted into any society and friendship with us.

Let it be the dissimulation and address of the ambitious politician, who is eager in the pursuit of honours; the trick and cunning, or low mean practices of the covetous worldling, “who hath said to fine gold, thou art my confidence;” the flattery of the great; or the pleasure of the voluptuous, that he hath the keenest relish of, and which he pursues most eagerly; and in a word let it be the best of our comforts: yet, however necessary such things may be to advance our designs upon earth, if they offend either ourselves or others, and be unbecoming a follower of the Redeemer, we should immediately without delay strip ourselves of them, and allow them no place in our hearts or practice. And our text is the argument whereby our Lord enforceth this exhortation; and indeed it is as powerful as the duty is hard and uneasy: for, says our Lord, it is infinitely better and more profitable, in such a case, to enter into life spoiled of all these beloved lusts and outward advantages, than being possessed of them to be cast into hell, the terrors whereof are represented with a great deal of force in the words which I have read; and it should quicken our attentive consideration of them, that they are in a few verses no less than thrice pronounced, by him who knew so perfectly the moment of things, and never trifled away his time by useless repetitions.

I shall only take notice further, as to the context, that our Saviour is far from asserting, that any vicious pleasure or ungodly practice can ever really

really be of such consequence to a person, as that the parting with it and cutting it off, would be as considerable a loss, as that of the right eye or hand: no, for whatever pain it may give to un-subdued corruption, the abandoning of any transgression, of whatever kind, is truly the gain of the man, and tends to the happiness and honour of his nature: but our Lord making the utmost supposition, granting that what he requires were, as the sinner might alledge, as the plucking out of an eye, or the cutting off of a foot, shews that, even in that case, it would be much more reasonable than by keeping them to run the hazard of hell-fire.

In the text we may consider these two things, whereby the dreadful punishments of the damned are represented in their horrors. 1. The variety and diffusive nature of them, extending to both soul and body, filling our whole capacity of suffering; there are the worm and the fire, the one to gnaw the spirit, and the other to torture the body. 2. The eternal duration of them, “the worm dieth not, the fire is not quenched.”

1. I say, we have the punishment which immediately and directly hath its seat in the soul: for that this is meant by the worm in our text, I think, is agreed on by all commentators, and there is no reason to call it in question: namely, all those tormenting reflections and convictions of an awakened conscience, which will gnaw and wound the tortured spirit with the sharpest pains, when God will put the keenest edge upon eternal despair of ever recovering the smallest part of contemned happiness, and will enliven the dreadful assurance of an endless continuance of their pain; when a view of the glory they threw away, and of the fulness of offered, and yet neglected, joys, will incessantly twit and upbraid their folly and stupi-

stupidity in so wilfully refusing the good and choosing the evil; and the sight of an almighty enemy, in whose favour they might have found their life, will spread pains and tortures inconceivable, if not felt, and keep the soul on the cruellest rack; and the remembrance of past pleasures, these shadows of good which they so fondly doted on while in this vain world, will heighten present torment, and sting the enemy of God.

These are the worms which never die. And, probably, they may be fitly compared to that animal upon these two accounts. 1. As experience shews, the worm is bred within the body of the person upon whose bowels it preys; he is, as it were, the womb it grows in, and supplies it with nourishment while it wastes and gnaws him: so this kind of hell torments hath its seat in the innermost part of the soul, and stings the damned in their bosom, and, like this worm, are nourished by their thoughts, and finds within the soul enough to support and quicken them; their own memory, conscience and understanding are the fruitful sources of these stinging reflections, and afford fuel to the raging flame. And 2. They may be expressed by the worm here by our Lord, because of their infinite number which fill the whole soul, and none of them without contributing their part to the extremity of punishment; and you know that these worms, which sometimes breed in human bodies, are so numerous as to render them a fit illustration of this matter.

2dly, We have the other kind of hell torments expressed here by fire. I shall not take up your time by enquiring curiously into that needless question, whether there will be material fire in hell? since it is of little importance to us, could we determine it: and, I hope you believe, hell hath too much ado with practice, to need to become

come the subject of a fruitless speculation. The pains arising from a body, which the scripture assures us will be calculated and framed for destruction, are without doubt meant hereby in the text, as distinguished from the worm: and they seem to be held forth in this and many other places of scripture by this dreadful element fire, because it is the most terrible instrument of punishment which this earth is acquainted with, and consequently the most proper to represent their extremity, and heighten their terrors. Thus you see the diffusive extent of hell torments.

2. As I told you, we have their boundless duration, "that their worm dieth not," they can have no hopes of being freed from this enemy by its death, and, as the original word may point out to us, this worm and its gnawings are never perfected and finished; nor will time blunt the edge of these instruments of divine vengeance; "and this fire is not quenched;" where God furnishes the fuel, and his powerful anger blows it up, the furnace can lose none of its heat, nor the flame of its rage and violence: but while the everlasting God lives, he will live to be the kindler and nourisher of hell's fire; so that both these expressions point out to us the eternity of that destruction, wherewith God will "take vengeance  
" on those who know him not, nor obey the gos-  
" pel of Christ." And indeed this consideration, as it banishes the smallest glimpse of hope, is one of the most frightful strokes which finish this terrible picture, which our Lord draws of the wrath that is to come, in our text.

Thus I have explained in some measure these words, which seem to be taken from a passage in the prophet Isaiah, where they occur, Isaiah 66. 24. speaking of the judgments, which the followers of God should behold inflicted upon his  
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enemies, it is said, “ And they shall go forth,  
 “ and look upon the carcases of the men that  
 “ have transgressed against me, for their worm  
 “ shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched,  
 “ ed, and they shall be an abhorring unto all  
 “ flesh.”

In discoursing upon this awful subject, I can mention but a few of the affecting considerations which it might afford: and indeed the proof that God will then give of the glory of his inexorable justice, and the terrors of his majesty which guard him in hell, are in so far like the overflow of love and joy, which he spreads through heaven, that both of them are raised vastly beyond our present comprehension; and it is but a small part which our weak imagination can fancy, either of the amiableness of the one, or the frightfulness of the other. The great variety and different nature of the punishments in the future life, all conspire to make up and center in the extremity of misery: but, that I may give such a notion of them as may be sufficient to influence our practice, and fill us with the dread of taking up our habitation in that accursed place, I shall, through divine assistance, pursue much the same method which I followed when discoursing on the happiness of heaven, and endeavour to do these things.

1. I shall offer some general considerations founded on scripture testimonies, and the nature of the things, which shew how dreadful the punishment of the damned must necessarily be, how quick and sharp the gnawings of this worm, and how raging and devouring the flame of this fire.

2dly, I shall consider, a little more particularly, the two parts of that remarkable division which is made in our text, of hell torments, into the worm and the fire; together with that despairing

spairing sting of both these, their eternity, the one's not dying, the other's not being quenched.

Lastly, I design to draw some practical inferences from what may be said, and shew how powerfully such a doctrine should determine us to flee from every sin, as our most dangerous enemy, and the death of our souls; and to make universal holiness, and a denial of all ungodliness, the chief study of our lives.

I begin with the first of these, namely, some general considerations, which shew how great and terrible the excess of the miseries of impenitent sinners must be, in the world which is to come.

1. The holy scriptures represent them to us by such things as are the instruments of the severest pains upon earth, and are most dreaded by mankind: as the glory of the habitation of divine mercy, is shadowed forth by the brightness of a crown and a kingdom, the "cities being of pure gold," and the most valued "precious stones," in all the variety of their splendor, "the foundations of its walls;" so the different state of the dwelling-place of God's wrath, is resembled to devouring fire, which strikes us with so much terror, and affects us, if we be within its reach, with so exquisite a pain: and the flashes hereof not only are sometimes said to scorch miserable sinners; but the inhabitants of that accursed place make their very bed in the flames. How awful a question does the prophet ask, Isa. 33. 14. "The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprized the hypocrites; who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" And where these tormenting flames rage, there is not the smallest allay of ease, not a drop of water to cool their tongue. And Matth. 13. 50. "They  
" are

“are said to be cast into the furnace of fire, where shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” And the horrors of this prison are further represented by the utter darkness which is there; as is their disability to make the smallest struggle against the vengeance of their almighty enemy, by their being “bound hand and foot.” And there God is said to “tear them in pieces, and cut them afunder.” In a word, these “vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, are cast into the lake of fire and brimstone,” which, as it is the fuel of the fiercest, so of the most noisom and stinking flame, and which at the same time scorches and suffocates. Yet these, however dreadful, are but the faint emblems and metaphors of what is much more violent in reality: for as, after all the glorious things that are spoken of the city of God, “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath prepared for such as love him;” so the treasures of his wrath reserved for the day of this battle, are as much beyond our imagination, for, “who knoweth the power of his anger?” And yet, methinks, an ocean of fire and brimstone is enough to rouse up our stupidity, and make us tremble lest we tumbled into it. But,

2. The torments of hell must be so great, as both to afford a suitable illustration of the glory of inexorable justice, of the exact proportion, which “the righteous judge of all the earth” ever observes, betwixt the aggravations of the crime, and the foreness of the punishment; and also to become the infinite vengeance of an enraged enemy, who has no way left to repair the insolent affronts done to his government, and the displeasure given by sin, which is the object of his greatest hatred, but by the terrors of “the re-  
“com-

“compence of their reward,” which must be worthy of the fury of a God; for it is his design to shew his fury.

Oh boundless and inconceivable misery! is inexorable justice to be the measure of it? and the divine hatred of sin, which is infinite, to be its rule? If then justice shall be the more glorious, the more miserable that the objects of it are, and the honour and steadiness of his government seem brighter by the flames of hell, how terribly must they then rage? since their vehemence is, in proportion, to shew the more illustriously God’s abhorrence of impurity, and the perfection of his righteousness; every spark of his love to holiness and purity, which the angels so fervently adore and admire in him, will whet the anger of God, that he may shew how much he abhors iniquity, by “pouring tribulation, anguish and wrath upon every soul that doth evil.” And indeed as the happiness of heaven must be exceeding great, because it is to be suitable to the state and grace of the king, and is to be a proof of the riches of his goodness; so the torments of hell must be extremely intolerable, since they are to afford a demonstration of the just severity and vengeance of a jealous God: and hence the apostle, very justly, infers the fearful condition of sinners who then fall into his hands, from its being the day of his vengeance, Heb. 10. 30, 31. “For, saith the apostle, we know him that hath said, vengeance  
“belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith  
“the Lord; and again, the Lord shall judge his  
“people.” Whence the apostle draws the inference, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands  
“of the living God.” Oh, consider it, sinners, when the infinite sources of inexorable justice will be then all let out upon thy soul, with how strong a current will the rivers of brimstone and  
flame

flame overwhelm and pierce into thy bowels! then God will ride in triumph over the necks of transgressors; then, as the psalmist speaks to God, P<sup>sal.</sup> 21. 8, 9. “Thine hand shall find out all  
 “thine enemies, thy right hand shall find out  
 “those that hate thee; thou shalt make them as  
 “a fiery oven in the time of thine anger, the  
 “Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath, and  
 “the fire shall devour them.”

Let us not fancy that, because God is held forth to us in scripture, as “full of compassions, and  
 “of great loving kindness,” there will be then any mixture of mercy or pity towards us: it is true, God is infinitely good, but he is just too, and he knows how to be both in perfection. He is not like weak mortals who are full of imperfection, and are ready either to raise their justice to cruelty, or let their mercy degenerate into silliness and contempt: no, for in God’s government in the other world, both of these attributes shine in their greatest brightness, without encroaching on the different provinces of each other; and while in heaven he sways a sceptre of love, and spreads about him “fulness of joys” and immortal contentment, in hell he governs by “a  
 “rod of iron, and rains down nothing but fire,  
 “brimstone and furious storms,” and both of these are pure and unmixed. And as it is represented to us in the parable of the rich man, there is so great a gulf fixed betwixt heaven and hell, that as not the least spark of the flaming wrath and noisome smoke, which rage below, can ascend to disturb the inhabitants of Zion; so not the smallest drop of the rivers of pleasures, which overflow there, nothing of divine goodness and compassion, can fall into hell to cool their tongue, or ease the pain: in the one are pure mercy and joy, in the other unmixed misery and vengeance. And  
 indeed

indeed in these two different states, God designs to manifest both grace and justice in their perfection, as is held forth to us, Rom. 9. 22, 23. "What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory?" So that do not fancy that mercy will in the least stop the hand of justice, or weaken the force of its lashes in hell; you see long-suffering patience took place enough upon earth, while there was a day of salvation, but all the inhabitants of hell are "vessels of wrath fitted for nothing but destruction."

3dly, The terribleness and extremity of the misery of the damned will appear hence, that it must bear some proportion to the riches of the despised and neglected offers of grace, and that especially in gospel sinners: for the nobler and more valuable any blessings are, the crime in abusing and contemning them becomes more aggravated; and God, the righteous judge of all the earth, gives always a suitable recompence of reward, and one that is proportioned to the nature and circumstances of the thing. Take a view then of that love of God towards sinners, which shines with so much brightness in the Redeemer's face, of the purchase of his blood, and of the glorious privileges of his followers; look up to heaven the seat of his mercy, and the excellent happiness there, and think what torments must be proportioned to the insolent scornful neglect of all these: thus every drop of the rivers of God's pleasures will prove oyl and brimstone to make hell's fire burn with the more vehement flame. O dreadful state! when God, out of a regard to the honour of the great salvation, and the riches  
of

of mercy in Christ, will be stirred up to lay the severer lashes on the soul that contemned them ; and that he may shew his value for them, must be animated to the greater fury against those who trampled them under the feet of their sinful pleasures. How many arguments, think ye, and how fearful ones, must press God to pour destruction upon the damned to the uttermost ? when each of the glorious things spoken of the city of our God, and every blessing offered in the gospel, will become pleaders for justice, and call aloud to God to avenge the scorn and contempt of them : and, which ought to cause all our joints tremble, when God's love to his own Son, will push him on to the more racking tortures of those who would not have him to reign over them ; and his regard to the honour and glory of him, in whom he was always well pleased, must inflame his rage, and put vigour into his fury against the enemies of the Redeemer, who valued their lusts more than the love and death of a Saviour, and poured the most provoking indignities upon his person and kingdom. And indeed, I have often thought, that, as the excellency of the heavenly happiness appeared very illustrious, in that it must be worthy of the purchase of the Redeemer's blood ; so it affords a terrible notion of the pains in hell, that there must be a vengeance suitable to the contempt of such a Saviour, and the crucifying him again afresh : and accordingly tho' there were very frightful instances of divine severity under the law, the despisers of it were destroyed of fiery serpents, the earth swallowed them up quick, and fire from the Lord devoured them ; yet, as if all these were but light and inconsiderable, the apostle puts the question, Heb. 10. 29. " Of how much sorer punishment think ye, shall " he be thought worthy, who hath troden under

“ foot the son of God, and hath counted the  
“ blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanc-  
“ tified an unholy thing ; and hath done despite  
“ unto the spirit of grace ?”

4thly, Another awful consideration to this purpose, and indeed the horrors whereof swallow up our poor comprehension, is, that God, in the punishment of the damned, not only shews the inviolableness of his justice, but designs “ to make  
“ known the glory of his power,” and to manifest the strength of the same, by the severity of the lashes. Oh amazing, confounding thought ! If infinite power be illustrated in the greatness of our misery, when “ we are crushed before the  
“ moth, and at the very rebuke of his counte-  
“ nance we perish ; and God can, as it is, Job 40. 11. “ look on one that is proud, and a-  
“ buse him, and his eye can cast about rage and  
“ destruction :” so that you would think, when a look of God, one movement of his eye causeth such terrible effects, it should require no great effort of his power to torture us, and that this might easily be accomplished : but, mistake it not, hell’s torments will be so exquisite and excessive, that they will, as it were, put infinite strength itself to a trial if it can inflict them : the first nod of an angry Creator would soon turn us to nothing ; ay, but he will enlarge the capacity of the soul for suffering, and support it with one arm from failing, but it is only to manifest the boundlessness of his power, in crushing and squeezing it the more dreadfully with the other. He will not then only touch the sinner with his finger, how strong soever that is ; but he will take his fist, which men use when they would employ the whole force of their arm, to make the heaviest stroke, Ezek. 22. 13, 14. says God, “ I will strike with my fist at thy dishonest gain,  
“ and

“ and can thy heart endure, or thy hands be made  
“ strong in the day in which I shall have to do  
“ with thee?” These torments will be so great,  
as to convince every body who looks at them,  
that no power less than God’s could be able to in-  
flict them: we have a remarkable passage to this  
purpose, Ezek. 22. 21, 22. God, speaking to  
impenitent transgressors, says, “ I will gather  
“ you, and blow upon you in the fire of my  
“ wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst  
“ thereof, as silver is melted in the midst of the  
“ furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst  
“ thereof, and then it follows, and ye shall know  
“ that I the Lord have poured out my fury upon  
“ you.” And accordingly the scripture repre-  
sents God as taking the punishment of the dam-  
ned from creatures, as instruments, immediately  
into his own hand; so they are said “ to fall into  
“ the hands of a living God,” and himself is the  
“ fire wherewith they are consumed:” and thus,  
2 Theff. 1. 9. they are very emphatically said to  
be “ punished with everlasting destruction from,  
“ or by the presence of the Lord,” God is inti-  
mately present to every little lurking place of the  
soul, to all its retirements, and so the fury of his  
presence fills the least part of these vessels of wrath  
with torment, while his wisdom and knowledge,  
before which our whole frame and make are na-  
ked and bare, will be employed to invent the  
cruellest tortures, that his power may grow illu-  
strious in the executing them; for they are also  
to be “ punished from the glory of his power,”  
and, as if the works of creation and providence  
were but a small and easy thing, his avenging,  
punishing work is called not only an instance of  
his power, but the glory of it. O woful state  
of impenitent transgressors! when nothing less  
than the strength of God’s arm is able to draw  
the

the bow, which sends out the poisoned arrows of the keenest fury, whereby their souls must to eternity be pierced.

I thought to have shewn, from several considerations, that the eternity, extremity, uninterruptedness and diffusive nature of hell torments, through the whole man, will all flow from God's being the immediate author of them, and his presence being their source: but because of your time, I shall proceed to the second head of discourse which I proposed, namely, to speak a little more particularly to the two parts of that remarkable division which is made in our text of hell torments, into the worm and the fire; together with the despairing sting of both these, their eternity.

And I begin, in the first place, with the worm, whereby is pointed out to us, as I shewed in the explication, that part of the punishment which hath its immediate seat in the soul, the gnawing convictions of an awakened conscience, and the great variety of cutting reflections, which will incessantly torment it: and, indeed, these will make up the principal ingredients of their misery, and their own thoughts will prove the severest whips, and give the sharpest lashes; so that if I may allude to what our Saviour says upon another occasion, "a man's enemies will be these of his own household."

While we live in this world, where the body hath so much mastery over the soul, and so powerful an influence upon our management, we are apt to mind it most, and place our chiefest felicity in its pleasures, and the greatest misery in its being pained and tortured; sensible things weigh most, and make the deepest impressions upon us: but this flows from a mistaken opinion of the true nature of things; for as the spirit is

incomparably more quick and vigorous than the body, so its faculties are stronger than the members of the other, and are capable of greater degrees either of pleasure or pain. The upbraidings of an awakened conscience, and the lively reproaches of an enlightened understanding, are incomparably sharper than an headach, the gout or gravel. The soul is indeed the man's self, and his happiness and misery must flow principally from it: thus, while every other calamity may be supported with resolution, a wound here is intolerable, as Solomon informs us, Prov. 18. 14. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmities, " but a wounded spirit who can bear?" And oh, how incomparably less supportable, will be an infinite number of deep wounds given to it, by the numberless scorpions and fiery serpents, into which every new thought and reflection of a sinner will be turned in hell! and indeed, there will be such crowds of torturing convictions, and all so exactly ordered by God, on purpose to aggravate their pain, that it is but a little of this dreadful subject I can represent.

However, to give some notion of these inward spiritual tortures of the damned, I shall consider a little the employment of their thoughts in these three respects. 1. As they are taken up about the actions and circumstances of their life while in this earth. 2. As they regard the great God their Lord and their enraged enemy. And 3. As they respect the joys of heaven which they have for ever lost, and the blessed inhabitants of that happy place. And as to the first of these,

1. Their quick and lively memory will press in upon them the past pleasures, which they were so fond of, the business and designs which employed all their time and care, together with a strong conviction of their infinite vanity and folly, which  
must

must necessarily raise the most dreadful anguish in the miserable soul. How will the thoughtless mirth and jollity, wherewith they sported away their time, be reflected on with awakening convulsions! The days of their pleasure, now for ever blown away, the vain amusements and diversions which were the only business of their life, will raise a dreadful storm in a spirit, that can now no more flatter itself into security, or by company and debauch, as it used to do, divert the gnawings of these worms. Oh, how bitterly will they meditate upon this and the other time, when they pleased themselves in their wit and good humour, when they minded nothing of another world, but drove away fears and cares! but now find the reality of what they made the subject of their foolish mirth, and every circumstance of these things will come in as an addition to the torturing remembrance of them. What fretting considerations must the thoughts of a soft down-bed, of the most luxurious meats and richest wines, and the sound of the viol, which once gratified them, be to the rich and great! who now must make their bed in the flames, have not a drop of water to cool their tongue, and, instead of the harmony of musick, hear nothing but the doleful screeches of the damned.

How will the thoughts of that servile flattery and adoration, and unreserved submission and compliance, which were paid to the conquering monarch by his slaves, rack him, when now he is as contemptible as any of them, and cannot so much as in the least flatter himself into a moment's calm! the remembrance of that time when his vanity and pride made him think himself a little God, and above the insults of fortune; the power of his empire, the number of his ar-

mies, the glory of victories, and the splendor of his triumphs, will be all fresh before his eyes, and tend to aggravate the misery of the woful change of his condition ; and then think, what a gnawing thought it must be, that for these perishing vanities he lost his God and Saviour, and brought on himself this condemnation ! Oh, how will his infinite folly and stupidity then upbraid and pierce him to the heart !

How fearful will be the reflection of ambitious politicians, upon the several arts and methods they were busied about, to raise and establish their fortunes, to secure the favour of the prince, and countermine the designs of their rivals, to attain this and the other end, which were the only employment of all their hours ! when they will be under the painful experience of their utter unprofitableness, and the fretful thoughts of their madness, in never minding all the while the most dangerous enemy, an angry God, or to secure themselves from falling into hell. And then all the sins of their youth and old age will prove dreadful tormentors ; oh, how inconceivably furious will they rage in a distracted soul, and raise the most terrible storms there !

Oh, how will the cheats and deceit of the covetous man, his injustice and oppression, his dissimulation and over-reaching, prove whips to lash the impenitent transgressor ! then will be accomplished what we have, Job 20. 15, 16. “ He hath  
“ swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit  
“ them up again, God shall cast them out of his  
“ belly. He shall suck the poison of asps, the  
“ viper’s tongue shall slay him.” Then every farthing of unlawful gain will turn to a coal of brimstone, and kindle in the heart of the sinner, as the apostle speaks to the rich men, James

5. 3. "Your gold and silver is cankered, and  
"the rust of them shall be a witness against  
"you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire ;  
"ye have heaped treasure together for the last  
"days."

Then avarice, revenge, hatred, backbiting, tyranny and oppression, with the whole sins of a man's life, will return upon himself, and become as an innumerable multitude of vipers, serpents, and every hateful poisonous beast, to rot the bowels, and gnaw upon the soul. This fruit of sin is very emphatically represented to us, Isa. lix. 5. speaking of those whose "hands are defiled with  
"blood, and their lips speak lies, who conceive  
"mischief, and bring forth iniquity," the prophet says, "they hatch cockatrice eggs, and weave  
"the spider's web, he that eateth of their eggs  
"dieth, and that which is crushed breaketh out  
"into a viper." Now, hell is the place where all these accursed seeds are fully ripened, and every one of them becomes a fiery flying serpent to sting the sinner, and not one of them shall fail of bringing forth this fruit: for, as I told you before, it is God who is the principal author of hell torments, and he will take care to bring every one of these sins, with all their aggravating disgraceful circumstances, and set them in a clear view, send them home upon the soul with the utmost evidence: fain would the sinner then divert those thoughts, or forget them; but oh, it is God who will set them on their consciences, and rouse them up; it is he that, with his own hand, will sharpen the teeth of each of these fiery serpents; he will bring forth from his treasures, and make crawl into the belly of the transgressor, all these enraged vipers; while he enlarges the capacity of the spirit, that it may receive the more of them,

and quickens its taste that it may feel the sharper pains. There is a remarkable and very awful passage to this purpose, Psal. l. 21, 22. speaking of the iniquities of the wicked, “These things  
 “hast thou done, and I kept silence, thou thoughtst  
 “that I was altogether such a one as thyself, but  
 “I will reprove thee, and set them in order be-  
 “fore thine eyes. Now consider this ye that  
 “forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there  
 “be none to deliver.” He will set them in order; God seems here to be represented as a General leading his army to battle, every one of these sins, each action of the man’s life, are his soldiers which he sends to destroy the soul; and, when he marches against it, he will see there be no deserters, nor weapons that are blunt and un-serviceable, but every thing quick and piercing. And he will put them all in the exactest disposition, he will place them with the greatest skill and art, so as to make the deepest impressions upon his enemies, and leave them no possibility of any escape, and will accurately consider what way they may be most serviceable to heighten the extremity of their torment. Oh! how dreadful then must be the gnawings of these worms, and stings of these serpents, when under the direction of so wise and powerful an adversary!

I cannot stay further upon so momentous and vast a subject, tho’ it might be easie to discover new and new terrors in it: but what has been said may be sufficient to convince us, that the wicked by all their ungodly deeds and foolish mirth, do, in truth, in the properest sense, “treasure up wrath to themselves against the day of  
 “wrath.” But,

2dly, Let us consider the thoughts and convictions of the damned as they respect God their  
 great

great Lord and irreconcilable enemy. And I shall but just mention, that he will then reveal himself and his terrors in the midst of their souls, and open up their eyes that they may clearly behold what kind of an adversary he is, and how miserable they must be who have to do with his fury and vengeance. The clear and steady view, which the saints have of the greatness and glory of God's perfections in heaven, makes up a principal part of their happiness, because they love him, and know that all these excellencies will promote their blessedness, and they see with ravishing delight him who is their God for ever and ever: but on the other hand, think a little and consider, how inconceivably tormenting to the damned, must be the unavoidable prospect of almighty power, of the strength of that arm which made the universe, of unerring wisdom and boundless understanding, and of the stability of a government than can never be disturbed and is managed with perfect equity, all of them centring in their enraged enemy, who pursues them with an irreconcilable hatred. Oh how terrible will be the fight! and yet they must see it in its brightness, and tremble at it to eternity.

With what fearful convulsions must the views of justice, inexorable to them, of holiness and purity that require their misery and take pleasure in their ruin, then shake the soul, when darted into it from God himself! And, beside the nature of the thing, some foretastes which wicked men have had in this world of the dregs of this cup, are a demonstration of their bitterness and strength, and what the full draught of it must be there: as a good man speaks when a little under the frowns of God, Job vi. 4.

“ 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.” But in hell it will hold true in  
a quite different manner, and in the strictest  
sense, with respect to the wicked, what the same  
person complains of, Chap. xvi. 12, 13, 14.  
“ God hath taken me by my neck, and shaken  
“ me to pieces, and set me up for his mark.  
“ His archers compass me round about, he  
“ cleaveth my reins asunder, and doth not spare,  
“ he breaketh me with breach upon breach, he  
“ runneth upon me like a giant.” And are we  
strong as God is, to contend with him?



## S E R M O N X.

P S A L M XC. 12.

*So teach us to number our days, that we may  
apply our hearts unto wisdom.*

**I**T is a no less amazing than melancholy instance of the thoughtlessness of foolish men, and the fatal stupidity which hath seized on us since our apostacy from God; that, tho' every moment affords new demonstrations of the frailty of this transitory life, and the vanity of all the variety of its enjoyments which bewitch sinners, yet these disguised nothings employ our cares and labours, and are as eagerly grasped at, as if a perishing honour, or short-lived estate, riches which soon fly away, or any of the decaying advantages which this world affords, were a portion for a soul, or deserved so much regard from an immortal being: and that while these empty and deceitful dreams make such deep impressions; so awful and sensible a thing as death, which spreads everlasting darkness over all the glories and beauties of life, and the terrors whereof are daily before our eyes, should yet be utterly disregarded by the living, and as little influence their projects and actions, as if they were above the common laws of mortality, and were never to have any thing ado with death.

It is therefore my purpose at this time, by the assistance of God's holy and good Spirit, to convince us that it is infinitely reasonable to think seriously upon our latter end; to look on the king of terrors as an enemy that will certainly invade us

in a little, and against whose attacks it is of the last importance to us to be well prepared; and to consider that the horrors of death are not far removed, but make quick advances to the strongest and healthiest constitution, and will shortly seize upon our heart and make their way into our vitals: that being thoroughly impressed with the awe and dread of that solemn hour, “we may  
 “so number our days as to apply our hearts unto  
 “wisdom;” make death a sharer in all our designs and pursuits, one of our faithful and constant counsellors; and enterprize nothing which it disapproves, and will in that day perish.

I shall take up as little of your time as may be, by discoursing upon this remarkable Psalm in general: it consists mostly of devout and practical meditations; which, under the influences and direction of the holy Spirit, were suggested to Moses, by the melancholy circumstances, in which the justice of God had placed the murmuring and rebellious Israelites in the wilderness; who, besides the general subjection to the laws of mortality, had the youngest of them their life confined to forty years; in which space all that perverse generation were, by an irreversible sentence, to end their days, and while they lived to wander thro’ that terrible desert. But though this gave occasion to the psalm; and consequently some passages in it have a peculiar emphasis and significancy, when applied to the state of that age, and particular condition of the Israelites: yet all of it so well suits the state of mankind in general, and may be so justly extended to every dying inhabitant of a tottering house of clay, that I need not shew the reasonableness of pitching on this text, as a proper subject for the meditation of us all.

The psalmist, having taken a view of the melancholy condition of frail man, and the moving cir-

circumstances which God at this time had placed his own people in; raises his thoughts, in the verse immediately preceeding my text, from these particular instances of the divine displeasure, to a consideration of the inconceivable dread and terror of an offended God in general: the thoughts of which made him break forth in this awful exclamation, “Who knoweth the power of thine  
“ anger? even according to thy fear so is thy  
“ wrath.” And it deserves notice, that this meditation introduces the prayer in our text with a particular emphasis, and adds a great force to it: for tho’ death in itself be a very important thought, and the shortness of a transitory life extremely affecting; yet it is the consequence of it, that eternity, which takes place after our days here are at an end, that is of the greatest consideration, gives the chief weight to the momentariness of our present state. For death does not put a period to our beings, or kill our souls; no, it places us more immediately under the government of God, and throws us either into the flames of an eternal and consuming fire, or raises to the possession of everlasting love and overflowing compassions. And this being the case, you see with how full an emphasis the meditation upon the power of God’s anger in the former verse, makes the psalmist, with so much earnestness, put up his petition, “So teach us to number our days.” It was the view of our falling immediately into the hands of so terrible a God, after these days were at an end, that made the numbering them aright so necessary and so important.

In the text we may shortly take notice of these two things, 1. We have a very valuable and excellent attainment, an employment both useful and glorious, which all of us should endeavour to be busied about, “the applying our hearts unto wisdom.”

“ dom.” I need no other argument to prove that by wisdom, in the text, is meant serious religion, and the service of God, but by mentioning what kind of wisdom this is; namely, such a management as death will discover to be true prudence and sagacity. It is not therefore the vain airy schemes of a pretendedly cunning politician, to undermine his rivals, and secure the favour of the prince, or the applause of the people, the most artful of which cannot abide one look of the king of terrors; all whose uncomfortable friends, and unstable supports, and best laid projects and designs, are broken and dissipated into empty smoke, by the first approach of an invisible and eternal world; it is not the skill and experience of the bravest and wisest general, who, after all his precautions against the hidden stratagems, or more open attempts of a formidable enemy, hath no way to secure his own heart and vitals against a fever or decay: In a word, it is not the foresight and dexterity of a covetous or tricking miser, or of an intriguing cheat, nor the politicks of an ambitious great man, whom the generality of the world nickname prudent, that is to be understood by wisdom in our text; because in the hour of dying, all the thoughts of such persons perish for ever. But it is a so well laid management, that it will appear to be wise in the end of things; and can abide the test of that great touchstone of mens understandings, death; such as carries its views beyond time, and stretches itself into eternity; and will not only be reckoned wisdom by short-sighted vain creatures, who are ever deceived by appearances instead of realities; but what will be esteemed so in all the changes of time, and will appear wise upon the brink of an awful eternity. And I am sure that in this sense of the word, no man but he “ who fears God, and keeps his com-  
“ mand-

“mandments, will be found to apply his heart  
“unto wisdom.”

2. We have a happy mean to promote our attaining to this wisdom, “to number our days,” that is, to consider our abode in this world with seriousness and deep attention, to ponder our years here in all their relations and proportions, and to meditate on these things in a due manner, suitable to the importance of the subject. And, as there are numberless difficulties and diversions from such a thoughtfulness, and our wavering minds are hard to be fix’d, or drawn off from sensible things, therefore it is necessary, earnestly to address God, and depend upon his assistance and the influences of his Spirit, that he who only can do it, may “so teach us to number our days, as to apply  
“our hearts unto wisdom.”

In discoursing upon this large subject, I shall endeavour only to do these two things.

1. I shall very shortly open up what is imported in “so numbering our days.”

2. I shall mention some of these pieces of true wisdom, which such a numbering of our days will suggest to us, and engage us to study: and, as I go along, I shall apply what may be said to our practice.

1. I shall a little open up what is imported in “so numbering our days.”

First then, one part of this work is, to take an affecting view of the absolute shortness of man’s life, when prolonged to the utmost extent of mortality; to think what the patriarch says, that “few and evil are his days:” and tho’ he springs up like a beautiful flower, and in the bloom of youth appears gay and sprightly, apt to charm the eye of the beholder, and to cheat his own soul with an inconsiderate imagination of a continuance of this vigour and health; that yet, Job

14. 1, 2. “ Man that is born of a woman, is of  
 “ few days, and full of trouble; he cometh forth  
 “ like a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth also  
 “ as a shadow, and continueth not.” Sinful  
 men are very ready to slide easily and thoughtlessly  
 down the streams of misspent time, while amidst  
 the pleasures of sin and sense; and to be so pos-  
 sessed by the pomp and charms of a world which  
 surrounds them, that few attentively think upon  
 their end, or look at that dismal eternity of night  
 and darkness which they are carried to by corrup-  
 tions; till they just arrive at it, and have no time  
 to provide a remedy. And he that is hot in the  
 pursuit of power, riches or lusts, neglects the  
 question, how long they are to continue? Now  
 we should “ number our days,” look back to that  
 multitude of generations which have fled away as  
 a dream, and are not to be found: we ought to  
 consider the lives of our fathers, and see if, from  
 casting up the accounts, it does not appear, that  
 “ the days of our years are threescore and ten,  
 “ after which we are soon cut off and flee away,”  
 and that each may set down the sum agreeably to  
 what Job speaks of his own particular case, Job  
 16. 22. “ When a few years are come, then  
 I shall go the way whence I shall not return;  
 “ my breath is corrupt, my days are extinct,  
 “ the graves are ready for me.” And with Da-  
 vid, Psalm 39. 5. “ Behold, thou hast made my  
 “ days as an hand-breath, and mine age is as no-  
 “ thing before thee.”

2. “ To number our days,” is, not only to  
 consider and count how few or many they are in  
 themselves; but to compare the relations they  
 have, and the proportions they bear to other things  
 which concern our management. I need not tell  
 you, what almost endless variety of relations and  
 combinations there are, which numbers can be  
 placed

placed in ; and that, to the discovering and improving many of which, the skill of an able mathematician is required ; now no less accuracy and diligence is necessary in numbering our days. The wisdom of any choice does not only depend upon what it is in itself, but on the relation it bears to other things : and a merchant, if we consider only one branch, and do not balance all the parts of his accounts, and adjust his schemes amongst themselves, can never have the reputation of dexterity in business : we must, in like manner, reckon what proportion our days bear to the immortality of a spirit, and the eternity of an endless life, or an everlasting death ; for without this, we can never know what share of our care and labour, and affection is due to these different periods of our being, time, and eternity.

Stretch your thoughts to these vast ages, look into that gulph which can only be measured by the God who inhabits eternity. Think, if you can reckon up the number of its years, or find a sum that is equal to its continuance : and if you see that there is no end of the days, that the very shore of eternity confounds your thought, and empties your imagination, and that there is indeed no counting of what is beyond number ; then balance with it the other side of the account, and think seriously if the drop of time be not swallowed up in this immense ocean, and if the longest life does not disappear as a momentary vapour, a disguised nothing, which is only raised, by our foolish fancy, into an appearance of any thing worth the minding. We should often reflect on the infinite disproportion that time bears to what follows it, or our abode here, to the continuance of the world of spirits ; and if we place our days in this view, it will be an useful step to the numbering them so as is represented in the text.

3. As a consequence hereof, we ought to consider, what is the result of the accounts so stated, and the influence it hath upon the things which we pursue and labour after: to calculate, if a life “unstable as the wind, and swift as a weaver’s shuttle,” be fit to be trusted to, and securely relied upon as a sufficient happiness; if a country where we are pilgrims and strangers ought to captivate our affections, or be anxiously cared for; and if a few days, like the watch of a night when it is past, can reasonably demand as much pains and diligence about them, as what exceeds them in no less a proportion than that of infinite greatness; or if he can be counted a wise man, in whose practice and politicks time is of a greater consideration and bulk than eternity. This is to number our days.

4. All this must be gone about with the utmost deliberation and diligent search: for, besides the difficulty of the matter to persons that are surrounded with sensible enjoyments, and often intoxicated with present vanities; the account is of the last importance to us, and an error in it, may be of eternally fatal consequences. Let us then retire frequently from the noise and hurry of the world into ourselves, consider how frail we are, that the constitution of our bodies is not fitted for a long continuance here, but every member of them proclaims our mortality, and each pore a wide enough breach to let in the terrible conqueror: and it will be of great use for us, to be sometimes conversing with these objects that will settle our disordered fancy, draw us off from the world, and familiarize us with death; to be often looking to the grave as our house, and to corruption as our parent; and for this end, to give an attentive ear to the voice of diseases which range about us, and to the expiring groans of our dying friends and acquaintances that are no more. These will afford excellent

cellent rules in the divine arithmetick, of “so numbering our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”

I might add several other things which appear to me to be very naturally imported in the so numbering of our days: but I shall pass them, that I may have a little time for speaking to the second head, upon which I intended chiefly to discourse; namely, the instruction which such a numbering of our days affords, and the pieces of true wisdom it will engage us to study. And this is indeed so moving a subject, and so full of matter, that I can but touch at a few of the considerations which it suggests to us, and shall only, in these five or six particulars, mention what might be lengthned out into a great many different heads.

1. This will inspire us with quite different sentiments of all those acquired outward distinctions amongst men, which raise some so far above others in their own conceit, and the blind opinion of their neighbours; and affords a convincing demonstration of the real value of all those different objects which sinners dote on so fondly. I need not tell you that the rich and great are vain of their honours, and puffed up by the pomp and splendor of their character, or the nobleness of their blood; that our eyes are soon dazzled by the lustre of a crown and court; that a large estate, a magnificent retinue, or a costly equipage, raise our esteem of men, who fancy themselves extremely distinguished and raised above the level of those about them by these advantages; that such things are eagerly grasped at, are the objects about which ambitious passions make such a bustle; and that we are all fond enough of such charms: each of us may find how beautiful and desirable a thing a great character, full coffers, a prevailing interest at court, or the applause of popularity appear  
to

to us; that the acquiring as large a share hereof as we can, is become the chief business of men, who measure the happiness and worth of persons by their portion in this world, and the appearance they make in it. But numbering of our days will cure us of this wild fancy, and bring us to a sober mind: because, for instance, how gay and flourishing soever a favourite may look amidst the caresses of flatterers, and the smiles of the monarch; how vainly soever he struts about, and swells his pride by the servile applications of those who depend on him, and boasts himself in the wisdom of his schemes, and the success of his politicks; yet, alas! these little goods are deceitful, because so soon at an end, like the entertainment of a man in a dream, and infinitely shorter, in proportion to the immortality of our soul, than a night's fancy is to our life upon earth. The breath of the king of terrors at once blows away all their beauty, and death draws a dark and melancholy vail over all the glories and splendors of life, and is a proof that they were only shadows and not substances which enchanted us.

Look to the greatest of men who ever governed the empire of Rome, and had the disposal of nations, lived amidst luxury and pomp, and victories and triumphs, when he comes to his death-bed, oh! how dismal a sight! a trembling soul dislodged from a decaying body, separated from all its comforts, and robbed of its honours, shivering at the sight of that terrible monster Death, which seizes on his heart, and drives him out of this world in the midst of his armies and vanities, as helpless and miserable as the slave in the same condition with himself; and, after all the noise he made in the world, yet, as the “ cloud is consumed and van-  
 “ nisheth away, so he that goeth down to the grave  
 “ shall come up no more, neither shall his place know  
 “ him

“ him any more.” How would it cool our affections to this world, lessen our esteem of the rich and noble, who have nothing but the childish magnificence of titles, and the fading glory of power and riches to distinguish them; and, instead of admiring, make us look down upon all these gaudy trappings, and imaginary honours, with as much contempt, and entertain as low an opinion of them, as we do the emperors and heroes in a stage-play! If we looked at them in the view wherein the prophet places the tyrant of Babylon, Isaiah 14. 10, 11. “ All they shall speak  
“ and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak  
“ as we? art thou become like unto us? Thy  
“ pomp is brought down to the grave, and the  
“ noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under  
“ thee, and the worms cover thee.” And really, what can be more affecting than to behold a dead general, or an expiring monarch? how moving a demonstration of the vanity of this world, and of the folly of men, who judge of others by their earthly pomp and glory! are these cold hands, and pale lips, and closed eyes, and that lifeless stinking carcase, all the poor remains of him that was lately huzza’d by the people, and adored by his soldiers, that filled the nation with his fame, and was looked on as a little God, by his own pride, or the flattery of others! is this he that made the earth to tremble, and made such a bustle in the country, and did shake kingdoms, whose body is turned into a loathsom corps, not to be distinguished from common clay; and all the account of his past greatness and power, when numbered, amounts to no more than the empty pomp of a funeral! and, if it be so with respect to those who possess most of this world, in all the varieties of its enchantments and pleasures, it will certainly hold good, with relation to the greatest part of

us, who can attain to but a lesser share of them, that “vanity of vanities, all things are vanity.”

Let then the richest and noblest, and all of us number their days, and then reason with themselves, O! my soul, what extravagant fancies hast thou entertained, to value thyself upon distinctions, which death will put an end to, to indulge pride and vanity, because of these empty baubles, these play-things for children, which, in a few days, will be infinitely useles! how mad have I been, to be bewitched by these false glories, to have dreamed away my life in the pursuit of them! when, had I looked to the end of things, I would have found my days a shadow, and every thing that perishes with them mean and insignificant; and that my soul must be stripped of them all, and go as naked and bare as that of the meanest slave, into the world of spirits; a world where crowns and sceptres meet with no regard, where power, and riches, and nobleness are all empty names, and raise no man's character, or exalt a soul. The grave takes off the disguise, and tears away the false face which earthly vanities are masked with; and convinces me, how loudly soever the world proclaim him wise, and talk of his abilities, that he is a weak and foolish man, whose politicks reach no farther than these days which I have numbered, and found to be a short vapour, and whose projects cannot stand out against death. I will therefore no more call the vile man honourable, or the prosperous sinner wise and happy; but I will give these names, and bestow my esteem on things, as they will appear at death, and be reputed on the brink of eternity.

I might insist upon reflections of this nature at great length; but shall only say, that a right “numbering of our days,” will make us form our judgments both of persons and things, not as they appear

appear during this momentary and scenical state, where every thing is under a disguise, but as they will be found at death: and then, to be sure, sincere religion alone will be reckoned wisdom: and, it will hold true, with respect to the vainest wit, and the cunningest politician, and the proudest great man, what is said of mankind, Job 4. 19, 20, 21. "That they dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth. They are destroyed from morning to evening; they perish for ever, without any regarding it. Doth not their excellency, which is in them, go away? They die even without wisdom."

2. A "numbering of our days," yields also a convincing proof of the folly of that vanity and pride, which take their rise from any of the natural ornaments of body and features, which providence hath given some beyond others. It is too frequent an extravagancy, for persons who pretend to have rational souls, yet to overlook them, and value themselves rather by the make of their bodies, than the temper and qualities of their spirit. What senseless pride does a beautiful face, and handsom shape inspire some weak minds with? And we may guess, by the care and pains which many take to improve and set off their natural comeliness and proportion by art and dress, and by the general air and turn of their life, that these advantages have an uncommon lustre and worth in their fancy, and are sufficient to gain love and admiration. It is true, that when a graceful and sprightly body, is the habitation of a pure and virtuous soul, when the beauty of the face speaks out the modesty, and humility, and calmness of the mind; when the delicacy of features, and the justness of shape, raise our thoughts to the art and wisdom of the great Creator, by whom

whom we are “fearfully and wonderfully made:” in such a case, that natural loveliness, which some have beyond others, needs not be altogether without regard; but if any of these charms are prostituted to inflame impure desires, and defile the soul, or become incentives to vanity and pride, a little numbering of our days will demonstrate how foolish and unwise such persons must be: for, besides that it seems wild and incredible, that an immortal spirit should ever place the amiableness of the man in the body; how short-lived are these imaginary excellencies, if our days be so few, and these beauties last no longer than they? How mad a thing is it to fancy ourselves better or happier on that account! and, when the empty vapour is at an end, and one of the arrows of mortality drives out the life, and freezes the blood and spirits, how ghastly will the lustre of these features look then! how pale and discoloured the bloom of youth! how frightful and lothsom that beauty so foolishly admired! and how useless and idle all the pains and care that have been thrown away in adorning that body, which must now have the worms for a covering! And indeed, methinks, one sight of the horrors of a dead carcase, were enough to cure the disease of those who are vain of any of its beauties: is that strength and vigour to be boasted of, which, instead of bullying and insulting others, will, in a little, be unable to support the feeble dying man, about to moulder into dust, and be treated with no more regard than common earth! In a word, in that hour it holds universally true, what David says to God, Psal. 39. 11. “When thou with rebukes  
“ dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his  
“ beauty to consume away like a moth; surely  
“ every man is vanity.”

3. As a “ numbering of our days,” shews how false notions of things they are, which I have been exposing, so it will rectify our thoughts, and instruct us in the solid foundation of real esteem of others, and what we ourselves should wisely choose and seek after; namely, such truly valuable excellencies as survive these few days, and last beyond them. A man can never number them, but he must see them so short and momentary, that all that pomp and splendor, which are laid in the grave with the body, must needs be infinitely trifling and insignificant, and that a man is not much the better, or more honourable, merely on the account of worldly grandeur and power. “ Num-  
“ bering our days” will make us choose things as they look on a death-bed, and as they will be reputed in the other world.

And now, O my soul! seriously consider the matter, take an affecting view of the most prosperous transgressor, when the earth trembles under his feet, and the violence of an incurable disease, or the decay of old age seizes him, will the magnificence of his palaces, or the harmony of musick then follow him down to the grave? can his palate relish the inventions of luxury, or his vanity carry alongst with it the flattery he was accustomed to see? The king of terrors is storming his heart, and darkness covering the lust of his eye, all his treasures at once wasted, and his plots blown up, and the whole labour of his life altogether useles: now he hath nothing but his soul, which he never thought of, nor took care to adorn and accomplish. Instead of all his pageantry and pride, I can see nothing but the storms of a raging conscience, the terrors of an angry God, and the dismal prospect of the regions of sorrow and blackness, where his own folly and madness will eternally sting him, and where an impure unholy

unholy spirit, no more disguised with the mask of this world, will appear in all its shame, and disgrace, and meanness. But, on the other hand, behold how the despised and neglected follower of Christ in that hour rejoices, animated with better hopes, and enlivened with the glorious prospect of his Father's kingdom, where things are esteemed in a quite different manner, than they are amongst the clouds and mists of this earth, and set in a clear and unerring light; where he shall be received with the loud and joyful acclamations of numberless saints and angels, these true discerners of merit, and, which is infinitely more, with the approbation of God and Christ, and seated in that happy and eternal country, of which holiness is the only glory, where conquered lusts, and sanctified affections, and enlightened minds, are the undisguised beauties and triumphs of a spirit, and its lovely never-fading charms. But, O my soul! how mad have I been, in pursuing with so much toil, wind and vanity; and catching at an empty vapour, in gathering an estate, or raising a family to dying honours, and providing for the body without caring for the soul, the years whereof cannot be numbered, and its purity and holiness the only riches that survive the grave; yet, since I have "numbered my days on earth," I will no more "spend my money for what is not bread," nor dote on a life that does not deserve the name, but "apply my heart to true wisdom," the love of God, and obedience to his laws, and a securing an interest in the righteousness of a Redeemer, who reigns in that eternal world, and can make me happy there, while I will despise all the gaudy pomp of great men, or the treasures of the rich, or the pleasures of the effeminate, and conclude with David, Psal. 49. 16, 17. "Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory  
" of

“ of his house is increased; for when he  
“ dieth, he shall carry nothing away, his glory  
“ shall not descend after him:” but, Psalm 17.  
15. “ I will behold thy face in righteousness; I  
“ shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy  
“ likeness.”

4. Another chief piece of wisdom, which such a “ numbering of our days” will teach us, is the proportion which we should bestow of our time, and affections, and labours, upon this world and the next. For if the amount of our days here be infinitely exceeded by those endless ages, so far should our diligence, in what relates to eternity, go beyond our anxiety about this world; that is, this earth should have none of our love or esteem, no part of our projects and endeavours; but all of them ought to rise towards higher views, and tend to preparing us for the other world: so that “ whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do,  
“ we should do all for God’s glory,” because this is the only thing that will be available after death. But your time being gone, makes it that I can only mention this, and what follows, without insisting on the fruitful meditations they afford.

5. As this will cool our desires to the world, and moderate our anxiety about it; so it will teach us to be content in every condition, and, without repining, to submit to all the changes and crosses of our outward circumstance. For, after a man hath “ so numbered his days,” he will reason with himself, why should I value what happens in a life that is soon at an end? whether this vapour be gay and beautiful, or dark and ragged, since it is in a moment to be blown away? what great matter is it, if I lose an estate, or be turned out of a place, or fail in designs to advance my worldly interests? since these all reach no farther than a few days, a very nothing when compared

pared with that eternity, upon which they have no influence: and when the proudest and most powerful tyrant can do no more than what a fever, or gout, or gravel is able to perform, and what I am sure must certainly befall me in a little. God has made me capable of eternal joys, and gives me the hopes of an endless heaven. If then that lasting home be so glorious and secure, may I not bear with the inconveniencies of a night's lodging, or stormy passage, by the way; or need I repine at the loss of my dearest relations and acquaintances, since, from "numbering my days" I find this the nature of mortality, and that I shall only want their company for an hour or two, to be eternally possessed of the endearments of a heavenly friendship, and a nobler, as well as a more lasting, society with them.

6. \* \* \* \* \*



## S E R M O N XI.

I C O R. vii. 31.

*For the fashion of this world passeth away.*

**T**H E R E is nothing which hath a more fatal influence upon the eternal concerns of mankind, and is more unworthy of the glory of an immortal spirit, than love to this present world; the love of the Father cannot dwell in a mind that is possess'd by so impure and base a passion, nor is it possible that a soul can be devoted to its Maker, and be at the same time a servant to Mammon: the cares of this life, when given way to, soon choke all the seeds of grace and holiness; and give so much employment to the man immersed in this earth, that they leave neither leisure nor inclination for the incomparably more momentous interests of a world which is eternal. But notwithstanding of the malignant nature, and woful tendency of an eager pursuit of the things that are temporal, yet these gain an easy conquest over deluded mortals. The heart of man hath a thousand passages for the love of the world, to make its entrance, in some shape or other, and seize upon the affections, and few can stand it out against the enchantments of this poisonous charmer: tho' it is as certain as the divine faithfulness and omnipotence can make it, that we must either "overcome the world," or be ruined by it, with a destruction that is everlasting; and must disengage ourselves from the love and pursuit of it, or resolve

to lose our souls. And as the apprehensions hereof should ever awaken our thought, and make the boldest sinner tremble; it must certainly be of great use to us, to disintangle us a little from the amusements of this present life, and abate, if not cure, our fondness for the shining toys, or the voluptuous pleasures of it: upon which account, I have made choice to discourse upon an important argument, that, thro' the blessing of God, may be of some weight with us; namely, that "the fashion of this world passeth away."

The holy apostle had, in the preceeding part of the chapter, given several advices and directions to the Corinthians, with respect to their entering upon a married state, arising from the peculiar circumstances that Christians were then placed in; which made it very expedient for them, to be as disengaged from the cares of a family, or any other temporal concerns as might be: upon which occasion, he introduces one general argument, which ought always to be of the greatest weight with men, should prove an effectual remedy for an excessive inclination to any of the enjoyments of time, and prevent our hearts and lives being ever very deeply engaged in the business or pleasures thereof; namely, the vanity and changeableness of every thing here below, "the fashion of the world passing away."

To the consideration of which words I shall immediately apply myself; the duties mentioned in this, and the two preceeding verses, being inferences from this great maxim of human life, and will therefore fall naturally before us in the applicatory part of our discourse.

By "the fashion of the world," we are to understand in general, the state and condition thereof, its manners and customs, its different faces and appearances, its enjoyments, business and cares;

cares ; and, in short, every thing that imployes the eager desires and projects of its inhabitants, and is presented to them for their possession or amusement : now all this “ passeth away ;” the gay appearances of this world are constantly changing ; they every day put on a new form, and shew how unstable and deceitful they be, that they are dreams and shadows, and have nothing that is lasting and substantial ; and then they will all at length entirely flee away, the approach of death will hush up in a profound silence, all the noise and bustle of a vain life, and the world shall at last expire with its inhabitants ; all its airy forms will be for ever dissipated, and itself must give place to those “ new heavens, and that new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

But for our more full understanding of this text, it may be proper to observe to you, that the phrase here used by the apostle, particularly the word translated *fashion*, seems to be borrowed from the theatre, and to point out the resemblance which it hath to the various scenes of human life ; and indeed this world, and the state of mankind in it, are, with a great elegance and justness of thought held forth to us by this metaphor. You know upon a stage, that the actors assume imaginary characters, and are clothed with borrowed forms ; one counterfeits the courage and triumphs of the hero, another appears with a crown and sceptre, and struts about with all the solemnity and majesty of a prince ; a third puts on the fawning smiles of a courtier, or the hauteur of a successful favourite ; and the fourth is presented in the dress of a scholar or a divine : an hour or two they act their several parts, and amuse the spectators ; but as the scenes are constantly shifting, so when the play is concluded, the feigned characters are laid aside, and the imaginary kings and emper-

rors are immediately divested of their pretended authority, and ensigns of royalty, and appear in their native meanness.

Just so, this world is a great stage, that presents as variable scenes, and as fantastical characters, princes, politicians, and warriors, the rich, learned and wise; and on the other hand, the poor, weak, and despised part of mankind, possess their several places upon the theatre; some lurk obscurely in a corner, seldom come from behind the scenes, or creep along unnoticed; others make a splendid shew and a loud noise, are adorned with the honours of a crown, or possessed of large estates and great powers, fill the world with the glory of their name and actions, conquer in the field, or are laboriously employed in the cabinet: well, in a little, the scene is turned, and all these vain phantoms disappear. The king of terrors clears the stage of the busy actors, and strips them of their fictitious ornaments; and, being brought all upon a level, they go down to the grave in their original nakedness, and are jumbled together undistinguished, and “pass away as a tale that is told.” Thus you see how nobly the apostle expresses it, when he tells us, for so his words may be translated, “That the scene of this world passeth away.”

But, my friends, I must here make a melancholy reflection, that human life is not only justly compared to the idle amusements of the theatre, but is indeed incomparably more vain and foolish. For few actors upon a stage have, I believe, ever had their imaginations so disordered as to fancy they really were what they appeared to be; or that they possessed the real honour and authority of a crown, because they wore it while the play lasted: whereas mad men are so drunk with the cares of life, and intoxicated with the enjoyments of  
this

this world, as to forget that they are transitory and empty; they swallow down gold with a vehement thirst of riches, and their greatness and power inflames their pride, and possesses their souls, tho', alas! all these appearances are as deceitful as those of theatrical actors; death will put as certain and as complete an end to them all; and the generation which now fills the world, will be as clean swept off the stage by the besom of destruction; for "the fashion of this world passeth away."

I have only one thing more to observe, in order to our having a full view of the text; namely, that upon the Greek or Roman theatres, to which the apostle alludes, the actors, if I mistake not, frequently, if not always, came upon the stage in a disguise, with a false face, which was adapted to the different person or character which they designed to assume; so that no man was to be seen with his real face, but all put on borrowed visages: and, in allusion to this, the text might be translated, "the Masquerade of this world passeth away," pointing out to us the fraud and hypocrisy which prevail in the world, and the flattering disguises which mankind generally put on; which shall also all "pass away," when the grave will pull off the mask, and they go down into the other world naked and open, and can no more be varnished over with fraudulent colouring.

In discoursing upon the words thus explained, I shall, through divine assistance, do these things.

1. I shall in some instances open up "the fashion of the world," and shew in what respects it shall "pass away."

2. I shall speak a little concerning the periods of earthly things, and the different seasons when the fashion of them may be said to pass away.

3. I shall make some practical reflections.

1. I am in some instances to open up the “*fashion of this world,*” and shew in what respects it shall “*pass away.*”

1. I may begin this head with a general observation, That the whole world, in whatever shape it appears, and whatever part or circumstance of it we consider, is of a languishing constitution, and all partakes of this universal decay of nature; nor is there any one thing in it that is firm and substantial, and which is exempted from the prevailing vanity that diffuses itself over all this poor scene of folly and change: so that the business as well as pleasures, the possessions as much as the diversions of mankind, their schemes, projects, power, riches, in a word, every thing that they have or are, take to themselves wings and flee away.

“*Man dieth and giveth up the ghost, and where is he?*” there is no tract of his life nor remembrance of him left behind, for “*the place that once knew him, knoweth him no more:*” and as the body is thus mouldered into the dust from whence it was taken, every thing that depends upon the body, that is to say, the whole business, hopes and delights of worldly men, must with it be buried in the grave. For you will at the first sight perceive, that all these things belong to the bodies and senses of mankind, and cannot outlive them; and that the strength, and beauty, and honours, and estates, which make the gayest figure upon the stage of time, and are most in the esteem and fashion of this world, are all of an external nature, and they relate solely to this tabernacle of ours which must be dissolved, and find no place in an immortal spirit when divested of its clay. All which things are very emphatically summed up by the apostle in a passage

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sage parallel to my text, 1 John 2. 16, 17. "For  
" all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh,  
" the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is  
" not of the father, but is of the world: and the  
" world passeth away and the lust thereof." And  
thus we see every day mortality putting an  
end to the fashion of this earth; and that vast  
multitude of successive generations, that have fled  
away as a dream, and are no more to be found,  
presents to our eyes innumerable affecting demon-  
strations of the variable face of things here below,  
and what poor nothings the most shining baubles  
of time really are.

And as the dissolution of the body occasions  
such an amazing alteration, so the soul enters in-  
to a new world, the fashions whereof are infi-  
nitely different from the manners of this earth;  
it is governed by different maxims and laws, and  
furnishes new employments and unknown pleasures  
or pains, and must therefore prove, to a person,  
whose thoughts are confined to this earth, in e-  
very respect a strange country. And as the scenes  
of this world are often shifted, the theatre itself  
will be at last pulled down; for as it is 2 Pet. 3.  
7. "The heavens and earth which are now, are  
" kept in store, reserved to fire against the day  
" of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men."

So that you see that the wise man's observation  
holds universally true, Eccles. 1. 2. "Vanity of  
" vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities,  
" all is vanity." And we may affirm of "the  
" fashion of this world," in all the appearances  
of it, what the prophet does, Isa. 24. 4. "The  
" earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world  
" languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty peo-  
" ple of the earth do languish." But it will be  
proper to explain these things more fully, by lay-  
ing before you some of the particular fashions of

the world which shall pass away : I shall mention a few heads of this kind.

I. All the distinctions that honours, birth, estates, or preferments make amongst men, will be intirely demolished : so that the heraldry or blazonry of this world, if I may so call it, will pass away. Upon earth there are great distinctions made amongst mankind by their outward circumstances ; and they are placed in very different situations, upon an higher or lower ground, according to their several ranks and orders : the birth of some makes them noble, and their blood gives them preeminence ; the high posts of others in the commonwealth raise them above the level of the multitude, and entitle them to honour and regard ; the power and riches of some, their interest at court, and favour of the prince, procure the humblest submissions from a croud of expecting dependents, and never fail to produce a plenty of flatterers and admirers ; and the popular arts, or the lucky chance of others distinguish them, by the huzzas of the multitude, from many, whose little power, retired life, or silent virtue leave them neglected and unnoticed. And it is easie to observe how apt men are to overvalue these outward distinctions, overlooking the real differences among souls : they dazzle the eye, and soothe the vanity of our weak minds : and as they are eagerly courted, so, when obtained, they soon swell with self-pride and disdain of others, and beget in men an overweening conceit of themselves, as if honours and an estate made the rich and the great creatures of a nobler make than their inferiors, and gave them a claim to an higher regard and veneration ; and such is the fashion of this world, that they really procure them. And we are all too apt to regulate our esteem, our respect and applauses to others, by their possession  
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of those glittering toys, more than by their inward qualities; yea, so degenerate is the world become, that gold alone, without another property, shall gain more deference and influence to a fortunate or a covetous worldling, though a fool, and, it may be, what is worse, than a thousand beauties and virtues that are seated in a person's soul, and render him truly amiable.

This then is one of the fashions of this world, but it shall soon pass utterly away: our senses will convince us that, as to all external appearances, death strips the several ranks of mankind of all the badges of their different characters, and levels the most exalted stations. Antiquity of families, and nobleness of blood do not shine thro' the grave: nor does the king of terrors distinguish betwixt the rich and great, and the poor and contemptible; but all of them are equally confined to the same cold and desolate habitation, their bodies are alike putrid and lifeless; nor do titles and preferments give a value to the dust of those who enjoyed them, but the ashes of the greatest prince mingle themselves with the as precious remains of a slave. "As the fool dieth, so dieth the wise man:" and there is none of human race so mean and wretched, but who may then with confidence address the haughtiest tyrant and most prosperous politician, with the words in which the prophet makes the inhabitants of the grave insult the Babylonian monarchs, Isa. 14. 10, 11. "Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols; the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee."

This mortifying subject to the pride of ambition, is obvious to every body's eyes, who looks into the grave and beholds a dead carcase: but if  
by

by faith we extend our views beyond it into the eternal world, we will see farther, “ that the “ fashion of this world fieth away. When the bodies of men return to the dust, their souls enter into the world of spirits, a country where none of the airy distinctions upon earth find any more place, where crowns and sceptres meet with no regard; and nobleness of birth or greatness of power contribute not to give the smallest elevation to a soul, or procure it the least respect from the inhabitants; and where all the cunning arts of human wisdom, or the shew of riches and the splendor of honours, will be trampled on with the utmost contempt, and can never gain the esteem and applauses of that world, the fashions whereof are so contrary to the manners of this.

It is true, indeed, there will be very important distinctions amongst departed spirits, and, in the other life, there shall be incomparably more shining glories, as well as more shameful disgraces and miseries, than here below. The vast gulf betwixt heaven and hell will separate the two great divisions of mankind: all upon the one side will be raised to the noblest places in the court of the mighty king, and they shall all become favourites of the universal ruler, when that holy nation of kings shall be crowned with diadems that are beautified with immortality; and yet no doubt there will be great distinctions among the dwellers in the celestial mansions also, and some will have more dazzling honours, and be exalted to higher thrones than others: while all on the opposite side of the gulf, will be sunk into the most intolerable slavery and disgraceful ignominy, and share of the racking miseries of devils and damned ghosts; and there will be great differences as to these also. But now these important distinctions that shall be made in the other world, are not regulated

gulated according to the fashion of this; the things for which a man is flattered and admired here, for which compliances are made to his schemes, and assent given to his counsels, are of no avail there; for riches, and power, and craft of every kind, oppressive greatness, fraudulent counsels, and political cunning, shall have the mask pulled off which they wore upon the theatre of time, and appear to be disguised nothings: while grace and holiness shine forth in their eternal amiableness, become the sole foundation of esteem and approbation; and the only spring of honour, religion, now despised by ambitious men, is the only nobility of the future state, and the poorest Christians, the persecuted martyrs and confessors, will have the chief posts there; and the least victory over a lust, will obtain a more glorious name than the conquests of the bravest general: while sin shall render a monarch and a statesman contemptible and ugly, and the deceitful and lying paths of the transgressor will destroy him.

What an amazing change of fashions will this be? and how will so strange a country surprize the empty fool, that never minded any thing but this present life? What shame, think you, and agony will fill the ambitious prince, when he goes into a world, where the humble religion of the beggar meets with more veneration than his scepter, and the holy life of a servant or a slave will gain him the esteem of that place, more than all the pomp of greatness or the arts of popularity; and the least virtue, the smallest seed of grace, will nobilitate the mean and despicable things of this earth, and give them the preeminence beyond the highest titles and richest treasures? what intricate reverse of fortunes and characters will this be? and in how poor a figure will those vain scornful men, who now behold others with a su-  
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percilious disdain, then appear, and be terribly looked out of countenance, in a world, the maxims and customs whereof are so widely different from this?

But 2dly, The civil and political fashion of the world will pass away. The present circumstances of mankind make human government and order necessary to the publick safety, and give rise to the offices of judges and magistrates, whether supreme or subordinate, to whom God hath committed the administration of justice, and the punishment of vice, and hath constituted them his deputies for this purpose, without interposing immediately himself, except in the case of miracles: and it is the many defects, which persons in authority are liable to, in common with their subjects and inferiors, and consequently the imperfection of human governments, which is an occasion of the numberless disorders that reign in the world, of the security that some men have in fraud and violence, and of the troubles others find in the paths of justice.

Now, when the scene of this world is shifted, there will be no use for the present constitution of monarchies and commonwealths; but the king effectually abdicates his authority, and the subjects drop their allegiance at the grave. A pious prince will carry his religion into the other world, but he must leave behind his earthly honours, which are fashionable only in this world. And as it is Job. 3. 18, 19. speaking of the grave, "There the prisoners rest together, they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and great are there, and the servant is free from his master." And then, which makes the most important change, instead of these imperfect and delegated magistracies, in the other world, God will assume the government immediately him-

himself, and will, in that glorious kingdom, manage it in a way altogether agreeable to his excellencies. An end will then be put to the irregularities and confusions of this changeable scene; and beauty, harmony and glory will reign through the universe for ever; unerring wisdom, irresistible power, and inexorable justice, with infinite purity and boundless compassions, will then sit upon the throne of the world; holiness, love and joy shall triumph through all the regions of heaven; while the devils and wicked men are bound in everlasting chains; and an avenging God, by a severe and impartial justice, armed with omnipotence, and directed by an all-seeing eye, renders unto every one according to his works, and returns the wickedness of the transgressor upon his head.

And, as the political fashion of the world shall thus be changed, so all the different relations and ties of nature or society, which prevail now, will pass away. Parent and child, master and servant, husband and wife, and the other denominations of this kind, will go into disuse; and, with respect to the blessed, will be succeeded by the nobler indearments of a heavenly friendship, and the divine relation of the sons of God: for, as our Saviour assures us, Luke 20. 35, 36. "They  
" which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that  
" world, and the resurrection from the dead, nei-  
" ther marry, nor are given in marriage, neither  
" can they die any more. For they are equal  
" unto the angels, and are the children of God."

3dly, The busy fashion of this world, and the active scenes of life will pass away. All the different projects and pursuits, which employ the eager thoughts and labours of earthly minds, will in a little time utterly fail; the objects of them will disappear, and prove vain and useless, and  
men

men must be occupied with some thing else in the world to come.

The three bewitching enchantments which captivate mankind, and are the aim of all their labours, are honours, riches, and pleasures; they now fill the theatre, and are doted upon and grasped at by the foolish actors: but as in the hour of death, they are all chased away, so the schemes that are formed about them must vanish also, how well soever they were laid. All the intrigues that a plotting head can form, for making an estate, or raising a family, will be blown up, in the day that riches cannot redeem his soul from the grave; all the artful flatteries and feigned excuses, where-with a deceitful heart is at pains to disguise itself, will cease of course, when death shall tear away the false face from the most cunning deceiver; and all the politick designs, which a crafty prince, and his wise council, pursue for enlarging or securing his dominion, must pass away, when the greatest emperor is confined in the grave. Psal. 146. 3, 4. "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help, his breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish."

One would be apt to imagine, that this world were a very durable thing, and that its fashion were to last a long time, if not to eternity, when he considers the bustle and stir that men make about it; how eager they are in the pursuit of its pleasures, how they put themselves on the rack to gain its riches, and enter so vehemently into every different project that may increase their fortune, as if their whole soul and thought centered on this earth; or what fatigue and anxiety they will undergo, to mount the pinnacle of honour, or to indulge a voluptuous appetite; surely as the psalmist speaks, Psal. 49. 11. "Their inward  
" thought

“ thought is, that their houses shall continue for  
“ ever, and their dwelling-places to all generati-  
“ tions, they call their lands after their own  
“ names:” but how vain is “ man being in ho-  
“ nour, he abideth not, but is like the beasts  
“ that perish.” Impitiable death seizes him in  
the heat of his busy schemes, and at once blows  
them all up, and confounds him; a deep project  
that took up both his head and heart, and would  
bring in a million to his coffers, will not comfort  
a drooping soul in its last moments, or lessen the  
agony of his expiring groans: and a fever or a  
decay, is an invincible obstacle to all his fond con-  
ceits, which he never seriously thought of; for he  
goes into a world, the manners whereof are so  
different from the follies of this, that he will  
“ have no profit of all his labours.”

I might enlarge upon many more particulars,  
but I shall only add,

4thly, The moral and religious fashion of this  
world will also pass away, and that both with re-  
spect to real and to pretended Christians: I obser-  
ved in the beginning, that the word *fashion* in  
my text, had a respect to the different disguises  
which the actors on the ancient theatres put on,  
and might be almost translated literally, “ the  
“ masquerade of this world.” And indeed there  
are too many melancholy proofs, that this is one of  
the most common “ fashions of the world;” the  
perfidious heart and the lying tongue are the qua-  
lities of vast numbers, whose chief talent and  
deepest wisdom is to put on a false face, and be  
artful in dissimulation: how many empty caresses,  
and faithless promises, and inconstant, if not pre-  
tended, friendships are in the world? so that the  
upright and sincere man, hath almost wholly left  
this scene of guile and untruth: and how ready  
are selfish views, little by-ends, and counterfeit  
pre-

pretensions, to intermix themselves with the conduct even of the better sort; which gives it a base alloy, since these are all unworthy of that noble candor, and generous openness of mind, which are the glory of a man, and the ornament of a Christian. And in religious matters, the same deceitful paint and varnish are successfully made use of; hypocrites impose upon the credulous multitude, and sometimes on their own souls too; loud noisy pretensions, a “stand by, for I am holier than thou,” will gain more applauses to a proud Pharisee, than the real, though silent, graces of a sincere Christian: how often does the affected austerity of the countenance, and the airy forms of an external mortification, differ from the inward thoughts and real temper of the mind? and many a whited sepulchre is admired and celebrated, that “within is full of filth and rottenness;” so that in this world, almost every body acts under a borrowed appearance, and we see the outward form, the vizard, rather than the man.

But however these fashions obtain among the clouds and mists of this impure region, they will pass away: men, together with their bodies, must lay down all disguises, and will appear naked and open, as soon as they enter the world of eternal realities, where dreams, masks, and amusements find no place. The great king and judge, before whose tribunal all must appear, is too wise to be imposed upon by the most cunning deceiver; the piercing light that surrounds him, will soon discover all the false pretensions of hypocrisy, and dive into the bottom of a selfish heart; and the falshood, flattery, and dissimulation, which were so artfully smoothed over and concealed, will be set in the clear view of the vast assembly of creatures, and meet with the just contempt and hissing

sings of all that multitude. At the great day, what was whispered in the ear in closets, will be proclaimed on the house-tops: the breasts of sinners shall then be torn open, and all that detestable spawn of hypocrisy, that accursed brood, will break through their disguise, and crawl forth in the day, to the universal astonishment and abhorrence; nor will there be the least bit of a vizard left, no remains of a patch to cover a blemish, not one hypocrite shall be then able to mix himself concealed with the congregation of the just, nor shall truth and piety be any more loaded with calumny and reproach; for “the fashion of this world passeth away.”

And then, with respect to the state of religion, and those who are indeed of the household of faith, “the fashion of the world,” with regard to them also, will in a great measure, pass away. The church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven, have, in all the parts of their devotions and enjoyments, very different fashions from those that obtain in the church upon earth; as the voice from heaven teaches us, Revel. 21. 5. “And he that sat upon the throne, said, behold, “I make all things new.” I can but slightly touch at the great alteration that shall then be made. The outward ordinances, sacraments and ministry of the gospel shall then pass away; the spirit and life of the angelical services, will succeed to external observances. And when God and Christ shall be the unerring teachers, when the light of that eternal sun shall shine with an unvariable brightness, and “saints are all come “in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge “of the son of God, unto a perfect man;” there will be no more use for apostles, and prophets, and pastors, these under-shepherds, whose office is confined to the wilderness; the weak eye of  
the

the soul will become strong and piercing, and no clouds are ever found in the celestial regions; “ Here we see darkly as through a glass, but  
 “ there face to face; here we know but in  
 “ part, but then we shall know even as we are  
 “ known.”

The heaviness of our minds in the work of religion, the coldness of our devotions, and the carnality or lifelessness of our affections, “ these fashions of the world shall pass away,” and be exalted into the activity of a seraph, and purified into a vehement flame of undecaying love; and unknown ardours of pure and holy passions will animate our praises, when we sing the new song of Moses and the Lamb, and join our Hallelujahs to compose the harmonious consort of the redeemed. And all the severe and difficult duties of Christianity will then be at an end; repentance, mortification, and patience, are graces never exercised beyond the grave; nor do meekness, self-denial, and resignation, meet with any trials in the invisible world; for all the warlike fashions, the laborious toils and sorrows, and dangerous adventures of the militant church will pass away: every part of obedience will then flow from a complacential will, and be a spring of purest joy; all the paths of religion will be watered by the rivers of eternal pleasures, and new delights will possess every power of the soul with endless satisfaction. In a word, glory, and triumph, and exultation, to know, and love, and enjoy, all in their highest perfection and purity, is the unchangeable fashion of that world which shall never pass away: for snares and temptations, diseases, and death, which make such havock upon earth, will be then confined unto hell; and there the fashion of wicked men too will be as far changed also; their prophane and lustful thoughts, and their brutish pleasures, and their worldly schemes,

schemes, will all grow into enraged vipers, stinging their souls; and the honours and gain of unrighteousness, will be wrought up by God's own hand into cruel engines of misery, and then their laughter will appear to be madness, and their wickedness shall severely reprove them.

And then, for I can scarce miss so awful a thought, "the fashion of this world," as it is a state of trial, where good and bad men indifferently dwell, and where all have the offers of salvation, will also pass away. The clean shall then be separated from the unclean, and God will become all love in heaven, and all fury and wrath in hell; an impenitent sinner shall never, to eternity, hear another sermon to mock at, nor possibly obtain another merciful proposal to despise: and as the hope that still remains for a living man, is one of the most comfortable fashions of this world, so when it passeth away, and is turned into raging despair, and furious gnashing of teeth, it must make a terrible alteration of the scene, and mighty convulsions in the soul. Consider this, ye that forget God, before ye be tumbled off the theatre, for then it will be as the angel pronounces, Rev. 22. 11. "He that is unjust let him be unjust still, and he which is filthy let him be filthy still."





## S E R M O N XII.

M A T T H. XXV. 13.

*Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.*

**I** SHALL not spend your time in explaining the preceding parable; the obvious scope of it is, to represent the great necessity all men are under, to study a constant preparedness for their latter end; and to keep themselves ever in such a disposition of heart and life, as they would wish to be in that hour: and it illustrates the fatal consequences of delays in the business of religion, from the instance of the foolish virgins, who, by a slothful dependence upon enow of after-opportunities to prepare themselves for the bridegroom's coming, were taken unawares, when there was no possibility of a remedy, and for ever lost the honour and happiness of being admitted to the marriage. From which parable my text is an inference, "Watch therefore," &c. As your time will not allow me to consider the parable, and give an account of these customs among the Jews, which may be necessary for a clear interpretation of it, I shall immediately apply myself to the words now read.

"The day wherein the Son of man cometh," is by some referred to the day of judgment, that solemn appearance of the blessed Jesus, when he shall come the second time to render unto every man

man according to his works: but, tho' we need not exclude that awful and glorious period of the exaltation of the Messiah, to which the text may be ultimately referred; yet it may also be very well understood of the hour of death, when an end is put to the season of divine patience, and the state of our trial; the phrase here used, and all the circumstances of the parable agreeing exactly with this meaning. For death makes its approaches to us oftentimes without ever being discovered, till it seizes on the heart; it suddenly rushes in upon the strongest and healthiest constitution, and cuts short the days of the most flourishing youth: it is then, that the unalterable condition of mankind is finally determined, and if our lamps be gone out, there is no possibility afterwards of procuring oyl to them, but we must be eternally banished the presence of the blessed God, and shut out from the marriage of the Lamb, and all that an everlasting heaven means. And so it is for this hour that we must study a constant preparation, and watch always.

And it seems to be a very noble expression, and big with important instruction, when death is represented by "the coming of the Son of man;" this teaching us, that our last hour is not owing to chance or a fatal necessity, that we do not perish as the beasts, and like them go out of the world of beings, when we depart from this earth: no, our death, as well as our life, is under the government of him whom God hath anointed King upon his holy hill of Zion; he hath the keeping of the mighty keys of hell and death, and as he turns them, and opens the door, our entrance into the invisible world is determined, and this part of his dominion is managed with the most consummate wisdom, and aimed with an unerring hand at the glory of his love, and of his throne;  
in

in the exalting of which, and rendering it more illustrious, he makes the last end both of the just and the unjust harmoniously conspire.

This phrase also points out to us, that immediate dominion of Christ, which takes place over us at death: it opens the gate into that awful empire of the Son of God, where every eye sees and feels his power and majesty, and both his sceptre of grace and his rod of iron exert themselves with an eternal efficacy. And therefore death is not only clothed with the clouds and darkness of the silent grave; but becomes incomparably more awful, by the amazing horrors of an enraged, and an almighty enemy which accompany it, and by the flashings of that consuming fire which surrounds the Son of man, when he comes in that hour to cut off the days of an impenitent transgressor. As on the other hand, death being held forth to us as “the coming of the Son of man,” scatters all the shades of that long night, enlightens it with the beams of the everlasting day, and clears it up to all his sincere followers, with the ravishing prospect of a Redeemer’s love and power, these inexhausted sources of joys and pleasures for evermore.

Concerning our death, this “coming of the Son of man,” it is affirmed, that “we know neither the day nor the hour;” that is, we are altogether uncertain about the season of it, and cannot so much as make the most distant conjecture concerning it. By the Hour here, we are not to understand that which the English word commonly means, the twenty-fourth part of a day; for in that case, it would have been needless to have told us, that we knew not the hour, after it had been said that we knew not the day, which is not so precise and determinate as an hour: but the original word is frequently meant in a much more  
 extended

extended sense, for the general period and season of any thing; thus it is said, that "Christ's hour" was not yet come," when the appointed time of his sufferings and passion was not fulfilled. So that this word in the text is designed to instruct us, that we are not only ignorant of the day of death, but also extremely uncertain as to the season of it; it cannot be foreseen, whether the sovereign arbiter of the lives of men, will snip the bud of springing life in infancy, if he will suffer it to flourish and ripen to old age, or if he will, in a moment, pull it off in the vigour and firmness of youth.

The last thing contained in the text is, the inference from the great uncertainty of this day, "Watch therefore." Let death be constantly placed before your eye, and the subject of your serious meditation; labour diligently to keep yourselves ever in a fit posture for receiving its attacks, that this last enemy may not surprize you unprepared: and let this be the unwearied employment of your lives, abandon not a moment to sloth and ease, lest they prove fatal to you; dread the thoughts of delaying the business of your souls, and postponing that work, which one frown of the king of terrors will make you wish, but all in vain, that it had been taken care of in the first place; nor allot so much as one day to the pleasures and follies of this life, and a forgetfulness of your latter end, lest that prove the "day where" in the Son of man cometh."

In order to lay before you, as shortly as I can, the purposes of this text, and engage you to the duty charged upon us in it, "to be always watching:" I shall begin with some representation of death in general, and endeavour to awaken our thoughts, and affect our souls with so awful a prospect; in the next place I shall consider the uncertainty of the season of our death, and the amazing folly of trusting to youth and health, and delaying religion

till old age; after which I shall discourse a little upon the suddenness and surprizingness of death, its seizing upon many, without the least foregoing symptoms of a disease, who, like those which shall remain alive at the approach of judgment, change their state, and are removed from this to the other world in “the twinkling of an eye.” From all which I shall endeavour to explain and recommend this watchfulness enjoined in our text.

There is no body so stupid as to think calmly, that he is raised above the universal fate of mankind, and shall never taste death; nor can we doubt of a maxim of religion, which is confirmed by daily experience, that “it is appointed for all men once to die:” so that we will easily profess to believe what is affirmed by Job, Chap. 14. 1. “Man that is born of a woman, is of few days and full of trouble; he cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down, he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not: man dieth and wasteth away, yea, 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.”

But yet how seldom do we meditate upon this awful change of our state? how few understand what death means, or duly impress their souls with a sense of its mighty terrors, and its astonishing effects? tho’ frequent and serious views hereof would be of great use for a right government of our lives, and one would think should be a very reasonable employment for a man who is himself to die.

Come then and let us consider a little this fearful monster, and look into the grave that gapes so widely, and devours the living with a constant de-

destruction; let us affect our souls with a sight of the desolations which it hath wrought upon the earth, and behold how vastly far death, an instrument of divine vengeance, hath sharpened its conquests over the desolate world, and what a melancholy havock it hath made of the sons of Adam. How does it amaze our thoughts, to look back upon that vast multitude of past generations, that have successively filled the earth, and acted upon the stage of life, and, alas! have been all sweep-ed off by the besom of destruction? All those heroes of war, that laid waste kingdoms, and made the world as a wilderness, that spread the terror of their arms over conquered nations, the Pharaohs, Cæsars, and Alexanders, who made such a bustle and noise upon earth, all are become a prey to the universal destroyer; and, at the appearance of this inexorable tyrant, Death, the offspring of sin, have fled away as a dream, and are not to be found. These princes, and philosophers, and politicians, who were so busy about many things, filled the world with their fame and their glory, and were the subject that moved the tongues and thoughts of men who admired their greatness; whose extensive learning, wise counsels, and deep intrigues, successful negotiations, fierce battles, and dazzling triumphs, imploy so many histories, and were the matter of flattering panegyrics, are now all hushed up in a profound silence, and are forgotten in the land of the living. And those who now act in the same stage, kings and princes, statesmen and generals, who are thought now so wise and penetrating in their counsels, and look so glorious and splendid at the head of their troops, flushed with victory, and animated with fierceness and intrepidity, will, in like manner, prove trophies of a greater conqueror, Death, and will all be hurled out of this

world, and give place to men as vain and foolish as themselves.

When we look to a charnel-house, and take a view of the grave, what amazing and dismal scenes present themselves! how many great and important images appear! distracting horrors strike our imagination, and hideous sounds of diseases, destruction and death, with all their woful and black train, terrify us! Ah! the melancholy confused heap of the ruins of mankind, what a terrible carnage is made of the human race! and what a solemn and awful theatre of mortality, covered with the disordered remains of our fellow-creatures, presents itself to our minds!

There ly the bones of a proud monarch, who fancied himself a little God, mingled with the ashes of his poorest subjects! Death seized him in the height of his vanity; he was just returning from a conquest, and his haughty mind was swelled with his power and greatness, when one of these fatal arrows pierced his heart, and, at once, finished all his perishing thoughts and contrivances: then the dream of glory vanished, and all his empire was confined to the grave. Look how pale that victorious general appears; how dead, and cold and lifeless these arms that were once accustomed to war; see if you can discern any difference betwixt his dust and that of the most despicable slave. Yonder a numerous army, once fierce and resolute, whose conquests were rapid as lightning, and made all the nations to shake for fear of them, are now so weak, that they ly a prey exposed to the meanest animals, the lothsom worms, who crawl in triumph over them, and insult their decayed ruins. There a body that was so much doted on, and solicitously cared for, and the beauty and shape whereof were so foolishly admired, now noisom and rotten, nothing but  
vermin

vermin are now fond of it, so affecting a change hath death made upon it. Look, next to this, upon the inglorious ashes of a rich covetous wretch, whose soul was glued to this world, and huggèd itself in its treasures; with what mighty throws and convulsions did death tear him from this earth! how did his hands cling to his gold! with what vehement desires did he fasten on his silver, all of them weak and fruitless! Look now if riches saved him in that day, if you can perceive any of his useless treasures lying beside him in the grave, or if the glory of his house have descended after him. Yonder an ambitious statesman, his rotten bones are scarce to be discerned; how did he applaud his artful schemes! how securely did he think them laid, and flattered himself with the hopes of an established greatness! but death stepped in, blew them all up at once; this grave is the whole result of his counsels. And lo there, what horrid and suffocating stink ascends from these many hellish sacrifices of lust and impurity, who wasted their strength in debauch, and carried down with them nothing but the shame of beastly pleasures to the grave! But there is none end of the corpses, nor can we survey this terrible field of death's conquests.

Ah! how confounding a sight! O cruel and inexorable death! how doth it triumph over all the efforts of vain men! with what disdain does it trample on all the glory of life; and, like an irresistible torrent, carries down before it all the imaginary securities of wisdom, and riches, and power! But, my friends, the principal improvement of this is to consider, that we shall, in a little time, be all of us instances of what hath been now said; to know death is to apply it to ourselves, and when we view its horrors, to reflect that we are subject to it, and must also die. Oh! let this employ

our thoughts, and let us endeavour, but once, to get a thorough notion of that thing we call Death, and put our minds into that posture now, which they must, whether we will or no, be formed into at “the hour when the Son of man cometh.” Let then every one of us look into our breasts, and seriously bespeak ourselves.

Take a view, O my soul! of the king of terrors, who daily threatens thy life, and in a little will bring thee under the dominion of the grave. How ghastly and formidable does that devouring monster appear! how grim an aspect does it put on, and all arrayed in the black and melancholy dress of fears, darkness, and sorrows! Oh! how do I quake and tremble at the amazing sight! the looks of it strike terror into the very heart, and chill the blood and spirits. See how fast it approaches, I am daily wearing off the stage, and death still increases its horrors, and possesses the troubled breast with greater astonishment and anguish: and now I am pushed to the very brink of eternity, O my poor trembling soul! thou art now to be dislodged from the body, to bid a lasting farewell to all thy dear friends and acquaintances, to all the pleasures and enjoyments of life, to the whole of thy projects, and business, and pursuits; these may fill thee with regret and concern, but oh! the more dismal prospect of eternity! whither art thou going! all is clouds and darkness before, impenetrable mists hover above this bottomless gulf, which thou canst not see through; what perplexing fears possess thee! what convulsions do so great an uncertainty about this future world, and the impossibility of remaining any longer in this, raise in thy breast! The fatal moment draws near, ah! amazing sight! My soul startles at the prospect, and the fainting heart would fain shrink back, and retire from the confounding apparition:  
but

but impitiable death never spares its prey; no tears of lamenting friends, no expiring sighs and groans of a departing soul, procure the smallest delay; and thou must inevitably plunge into that terrible chaos; how mighty confounding a venture is then made!

But yet, O my soul! there remain things still more awful and disquieting, than these black clouds and tempests which roll above that fearful abyfs. Look beyond these mists, oh! the flashes of these devouring flames, that break through the, otherwise impenetrable, darkness: yonder an avenging God, enraged omnipotence blowing the unquenchable fire; how do these hellish billows rore, and pierce my heart with their dreadful noise! how big with terrors are these dismal regions! hearken to the howlings and despairing cries of damned ghosts! see the devils in all their hideous shapes approaching, and the jaws of destruction wide open to swallow down its prey! And, oh! my soul, is death an entrance for the greatest part of mankind into such a place, or such a society! and art thou thyself uncertain, but that the step thou art to make thy feet will slip down, and thou, stumbling upon the dark mountains, wilt fall over this dreadful precipice, into the infernal lake, where sulphur and fire have their dwelling-place! Oh! our spirits sink beneath the burden, our eye is dim with the vision, and amazement confounds all the powers of the soul, unable to endure so many horrors.

This, my friends, is death, or rather, these are a few of the softest and least frightful lineaments of that terrible thing, the importance and awe whereof vastly exceed all the images which we can form of them.

Your time will not allow me to insist upon the momentous inferences which this subject would

furnish us with; death is full of instruction, and if once we come to think seriously what it is, the practical truths which it contains will easily flow into our minds, and be, without difficulty, conceived: I shall therefore only touch at a little part of the improvement we should make thereof.

This may rouse up the slothful stupified consciences of impudent and secure sinners, who are regardless of God and religion, despise the plainest arguments, and most affectionate intreaties, and wallow in sensuality and impurity. Methinks death might awaken any remains of thought in such persons; that the very uncertainty of the future condition of souls, the mighty change that will then be made in the fashion of this world, where we now live, and the thick darkness of that long night, were sufficient to create an anxiety and perplexity in the breasts of transgressors, and work them up to some concern about it: but when death is “the coming of the Son of man,” is an entrance into the invisible state, and presents to our eye all the terrors of an everlasting hell; it must be surprizing stupidity, that can abide the apprehensions of it, without trembling. People are ready sometimes to run mad with the fright of perhaps imaginary apparitions; but I have often wondered, how any man that hath not accepted of the great salvation, and fled for refuge to the only hope of perishing souls, can ever think upon death without a trembling sweat, and turning really distracted with the amazing sight. I know some infidels may intirely debauch their reason, and flatter themselves with the hopes that nothing remains after death, and that their souls perish with their bodies: but, what if they be mistaken, if there be such things as lakes of fire and brimstone, prepared for them? oh! how fearfully will they be undeceived! and when hell opens its devouring  
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jaws to swallow them, with what torturing confusion and agony will they plunge into the vast abyfs of eternity ! Methinks the very possibility of this were enough to congeal our blood and spirits, and engage us to look forward, and think what we will do in the end thereof.

The fight of the king of terrors, tends also to raise us above all the little aims of the great rich men upon earth, to inspire us with the highest contempt of the power and pomp of this world ; and convince us how poor a happiness, how false a glory the most prosperous transgressor can ever be possessed of, when in his highest elevation ; this will learn us to pity, instead of envying their honour. The shades of the everlasting evening will darken all the beauty and lustre of created beings, keep our eyes from being dazzled, or our affections from being captivated, by things which will become so poor and worthless in that awful hour.

The meditation on “ the Son of man’s coming,” will enlarge our thoughts beyond the little boundaries of a fading life, towards the immense world of spirits, of which death is the gate, these infinitely greater pleasures and pains which we are capable of : and, by the views hereof, it will make us disdain all the poor trifles of this scene of mortality, and persuade us that we were designed for incomparably nobler and more durable purposes ; it will elevate our desires and projects from time to eternity, and make our views look as far as the endless ages, and animate us with a noble ambition of mounting up to as high a station, and as great a perfection of felicity as the most exalted seraph.

Such views of death will also prove extremely useful to cure the vanity and levity of our minds, and work us up to a composed serious frame of heart and life, such as becomes dying creatures.

By this means we will become moderate in the use of outward enjoyments, and temperate in all things: the rich and the great will thence learn to curb their pride and vanity, and cool their love to shew and magnificence; and to be careful about something else than a costly equipage, and a luxurious table, or any of the extravagancies in furniture, dress, and clothing. I need not pretend to condescend upon rules for the regulating of such things; one look, my friends, of death, in its formidable horrors, will carry alongst with it plenty of instruction, and cure our fondness for these vanities.

Death will inflame our active love, and quicken our longing desires after the blessed Jesus, who hath conquered this grim monster, and brought life and immortality to light: what amiable lustre will it give to his person and his sufferings? and, with what warm affections will it engage us to a persevering fidelity to him, who saved us from so great a destruction?

And in the last place, death will be a significant commentary upon the words of the wise man, Eccl. 12. 13. "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter, Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole of man."

I come now, in the second place, to consider the uncertainty of death as to the general season of it, we "know not the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." Perhaps what hath been said may, in some measure, affect us with the views of death, as a very awful and momentous thing; and I am persuaded that there are few, if any, who do not wish to "die the death of the righteous;" and, for that end, resolve, some time or other, to become religious, and abandon those sins which make their latter end so terrible to transgressors: but then, alas! we are ready still to  
postpone

postpone our great work, to fancy that we will have space enough to prepare for death, and that old age is the fittest season for it; young men, whose blood is warm, and their passions strong and active, are tempted to imagine that youth may be devoted to gaiety and pleasure, that then is the time for tasting the enjoyments of sense and gratifying every appetite, for minding the present world, making an estate or raising a family; while they stifle the voice of conscience and the fears of death, by fond resolutions to become serious when old, and devote their advanced years to the concerns of their soul.

I might at large represent the folly and the baseness of this arguing, the madness of spending our prime and vigour upon perishing nothings, and reserving only our feeble languishing spirits for the most glorious and noble purposes, heaven and eternity: I might shew the growing danger of our utter impenitency, that our corruptions will be ever gathering strength, and possessing themselves more thoroughly of our heart, that any convictions and resolutions, to amend our life, will be daily decaying; and so repentance will become more difficult, and at length impracticable, while the sinner grows old in his transgressions. And I might ask you, with what confidence you can offer your God and Saviour, the corrupt tottering remains of these members and faculties, which have been enfeebled by the vilest lusts, and spent in the service of his implacable enemies? if you can expect that God will accept of such a lame and blind sacrifice, or bestow the purchase of his Son's blood as a reward of our unworthy offering? But I shall only mention the argument directly in my text; namely, our absolute ignorance as to the season of our great change. You are convinced you must repent or be eternally ruined,  
and

and therefore you resolve to dedicate old age to this business: but what if you never arrive at it, and you be pushed off into the bottomless gulf when you have got but mid way upon the stage! Are, my friends, heaven and hell to be ventured on so uncertain a bottom! And can you think, without horror, upon the king of terrors, seizing you secure amidst the follies of youth! how few arrive at the boundaries of mortality, threescore and ten, or fourscore years! and, what a vastly superior number fail by the way! When the beautiful flower is but just springing up and opening its buds, how often is it blown away or violently plucked off? They are only shewn, and in a moment disappear.

Yonder a vigorous healthful youth, the joy of his parents, and the hope of their old age; he is just entering upon the theatre, big with projects and with hopes: but an unforeseen disease cuts down the promising plant, and all the efforts of his lively spirits, and a strong constitution, are in a moment overpowered by the terrible conqueror; look to another, he is advanced farther, and arrived at all the firmness and force of a man, he is got into the world amidst a croud of business and cares; and, being past the dangers of youth, flatters himself with a peaceable old age: but death, furious and irresistible, storms the seat of life, and drives him away in his wickedness, or in his fatal security; and so he for ever loses his soul.

These very things, upon which people build their hopes of a long life, prove oftentimes the occasion of their ruin: the vigour of blood and the strength of youth, add a redoubled force to a fever, and make the disease flow into the heart with a more impetuous tide, till his own force overthrow him: the advantages of an healthful and nimble body make men frequently presume  
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upon them, and their inconsiderate rashness pushes them upon the instruments of their destruction; the rage of youthful passions and the strength of their appetites, are many times arrows of death which wound their vitals. So uncertain a prospect can any man have of old age, and so stupid a thing it is to allot that imaginary and fallacious period to our eternal all, the saving of our souls.

The loud voice of this doctrine is the advice of the wise man, Eccl. 12. 1. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." Dread the temptation of an ensnaring delay, and with eagerness lay hold on the golden season of present opportunity: "Behold, now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation; to-day therefore if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Remember, my friends, that death spreads its conquests over all the periods of life, and spares no age: let the thoughts hereof cool the boiling heat of youth, and curb our passions, that we may hearken to infinite wisdom, and "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."

And now, may I not turn my discourse to the younger part of my audience, and especially to those of a distinguished birth or fortune, and who enjoy the advantages of a plentiful estate and a polite education? That age of life is active, warm and couragious: you have perhaps the seeds of a generous and noble disposition, are guided by a sense of honour, and animated by ambitious hopes: would to God I might prevail upon you to make a wise improvement of this temper, and persuade you to pursue substantial and enduring, not fantastical and perishing, objects; I refer it to your calmest thought, how can you so advantageously

tagiously bestow the bloom and flourishes of your youth, as upon God and your souls? how glorious will it be for you, to subdue your own spirits, when hardest to conquer; and to govern these passions, the youthful impetuosity whereof will make your triumphs more illustrious? No victories so worthy your aims, as those to be gained in the spiritual warfare; nor any honours so shining and permanent, as those of the incorruptible crown which fadeth not away.

Young and valiant soldiers of Christ, who dedicate their first years to the captain of salvation, are gazed at by heaven itself with a peculiar delight and wonder; and their heroick bravery and constancy in the cause of God, will exalt them to the most dazzling thrones, and will be rewarded with the brightest diadems. All the holy angels, yea, God himself, and our Saviour, look down with joy upon the temptations surmounted by you, and the difficulties you overcome; your conquest of every youthful lust and pleasure, is attended with the loud acclamations of all the seraphick hosts: the fame and glory of your Christian victories, fly through the invisible world upon the wing of an angel; and death itself applauds you, when it draws a dark and melancholy vail over the false glory of the greatest generals, and all the honours and treasures of mankind are wasted in the grave. And think, my friends, how glorious your youth, and how easy and peaceful old age will be to you; and what a brave thing it will be, to disarm death itself; and what joy and composure must possess the happy soul, that can look the king of terrors in the face without shrinking, and be assured that death will prove an introduction into never ending blessedness.

But notwithstanding of all that hath been said, foolish men are still bewitched by the enchantments

ments of sin, and tho' they must acknowledge that it is a vain thing to depend upon old age; yet they are ready to flatter themselves that, at the least, they shall have some warning, which they hope will be timeous enough; and that, at worst, they will have the day of a sick-bed for a season of preparation. Ah! how infinitely improper a time do we pitch upon for repentance, and the saving of our souls! But, methinks, besides a multitude of other considerations, that the views of a sudden death should startle us, and confound so vain an imagination: and indeed there is nothing in the world that is so apt to fill us with a just astonishment, and the deepest concern of soul; this grim monster oftentimes lurks in secret ambushes, and at once rushes upon his prey and devours it; the arrows of death fly imperceptibly, no eye can see them till they touch the heart; and, thus the thoughtless sinner, in the very midst of his follies, is tumbled over the fearful precipice, not a moment's time for preparation, no space for so much as one serious thought or a prayer to God for mercy. O! what surprizing horrors will accompany such a soul into the other world! and, how should the apprehensions of it affect the living!

It is a frightful thing to consider how many kinds of sudden deaths mankind is exposed to, which give no forewarning, not the least symptom of an approaching disease, no decay of nature nor languishing of spirits, but all at once the blood freezes, and death storms the heart, and oppresses its motion. The sudden stoppage or bursting of several vessels in the human body, the coagulation of the blood, obstructions in the brain, &c. are all fatal causes of apoplexies, lethargies, universal palsies, and the other engines of a hasty death, which seize on persons in their greatest health

health and ease. There are no less than seven or eight different causes of an apoplexy, assigned by learned physicians, which I mention to shew how great a variety of accidents may destroy this tabernacle of ours, and put a stop to all the animal function. And have we not, my friends, known our acquaintances pulled away in a moment, when they looked as long-lived as ourselves, and drop down suddenly in our streets, benumbed and senseless, while in the midst of their comforts and business?

How should this affect us! how home should it strike upon our consciences, and keep us ever in a holy and serious frame! and art thou, O my soul! in such a hazardous situation! am I uncertain but that death may be now playing about my heart, and the next moment will make its irresistible attack; that the king of terrors hath seated itself in my brain, or that any other invisible cause shall stop the fountains of blood, and put an end to life and breath! Ah! how may all shiver at the thought of being so quickly dragged before their judge, making one venture for heaven or hell! and is either the speaker, or any of the hearers, assured that he himself shall not be the first awful illustration of such a discourse!

How much, and how important practical instruction might we hence learn! but, your time being gone, I shall but just mention two or three particulars, wherein the duty inferred in the text consists, “watch therefore.”

I. In order to this, we must abhor the smallest delay in the concerns of our soul, and immediately accept of the offered reconciliation with our offended maker: if we lose heaven, we lose our eternal all; and if we lose this present moment, we may be put beyond a possibility of gaining it.

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This duty, therefore, supposes, in the first place, that we lay down the weapons of our rebellion, believe on the Son of God, and flee to the everlasting righteousness brought in by him; and that, forsaking our sins, we put ourselves under the conduct of the invincible captain of our salvation; for it is, by his almighty arms alone, that we can hope to conquer death, and come off victorious in that warfare; and it is under the shadow of his wings alone, that we can watch to any purpose.

2. To practise this duty, is to consider ourselves as dying creatures, and to act always as if the next moment we were to be seized by the king of terrors: for if we are not sure but that the next hour may be our last, we should certainly behave as if it were known to us that it would actually be so, and be careful to do nothing which we would not desire to be employed in at the moment of our change. Oh! if men considered what sudden and surprizing deaths they are exposed to, would they live as they do! would any venture to expire in the impure embraces of an harlot, to fall in a drunken quarrel, or be chocked by blasphemies and oaths! would men ever run the hazard of going down to the pit with a lie in their right hand, and meeting the Son of man in the midst of fraud, perjury, or any other villany! And, alas! would any of us be so vain and foolish, so busy about this world, and so forgetful of the invisible and eternal habitation of spirits!

3. If we be watching to purpose, we must disengage our affections from all the comforts and enjoyments of the present life, and keep ourselves as disintangled, as may be, from its allurements. Death is a terrible thing to an earthly mind, it is with dreadful pains and convulsions that it is torn  
from

258 *Wath, for we know not the Hour, &c.*

from the body ; and it makes an ugly spectacle, when numberless vain cares, and fruitless wishes hang about the departing soul : we should therefore learn the divine art of dying daily, gently loosing our hearts from these bodies, that so we may easily move forward at the appointed season, whenever it comes, and, with joy and composure, mount up to the invisible regions.

In the last place, \* \* \* \* \*



S E R M O N

## S E R M O N XIII.

R E V E L. i. 18.

*And have the keys of hell and of death.*

**T**HE stupidity and ignorance of foolish sinners, is the only occasion that so many of them are to be found enemies to the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and obstinately continuing to fight against him by their unbelief and wickedness: it is from want of consideration of his absolute authority over the world, and incontrollable power to preserve the order of his government against the force of all its foes, that any are so mad as wilfully to throw themselves out of his almighty protection, and rebel against his laws: and it is fatal blindness of mind, that is the cause that all men are not allured to his service and obedience, by the excellency of his awful perfections, joined with the amiableness of his endearing love. Sinners know not what a Saviour he is, else they would immediately flee to him for refuge, to be washed and purified in his blood, and protected against enemies and danger, by his mighty arm. It is therefore my purpose at this time, by the assistance of God, to discourse a little to you concerning the exalted state of our Redeemer, now in heaven “far above all principalities and powers;” and of the enlarged extent of his empire, the glory of his kingdom, and the unbounded greatness of his authority, whereby “he hath a name above every name,” at which the devils tremble, while the angels and saints adore it; and so reigns  
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king upon Zion, both Lord and Christ; that from a consideration hereof, we may be convinced that it must be the most extravagant madness for us to provoke his anger, and be found in the camp of rebels; and that all the alluring pleasures of the present life, or the highest enchantments of sin, can never be the least balance to the inevitable danger, and the infinite misery we are exposed to, by having to do with him as an enemy; and that it is only in his favour and friendship we can be, in any degree, happy or safe, since death and hell are not a covering from him, nor the grave, where the weary find rest, an hiding-place from his vengeance: so that it must be in vain for any of his adversaries to dream, that they can oppose his power, or lurk in secret from his omniscient justice. And thus, that we may be persuaded, that these only are wise and taught, who “kiss the Son lest he be angry, and they  
“perish from the way: for if his wrath be kindled  
“but a little, blessed are all they who put their  
“trust in him.”

And I hope it will not be an unpleasing subject of meditation to sincere Christians, to take a view of the majesty and honour of that Saviour, whom they have made choice of for their Lord and portion; to think a little upon the triumphs of the invincible captain of their salvation, who is now no more exposed to the insults of wicked men, and the rage of devils; but sits secure, undisturbed, a priest upon his throne, to curb their fury, and restrain their wrath, and to make all his faithful soldiers, who fight with persevering courage under his conduct, partakers of his glory, and sharers in his victories over all the enemies to their souls: especially upon a sabbath-day, which is particularly set apart by God, for our calling to mind and celebrating our Redeemer's conquest

conquest of death and the grave; when he this day, gave a finishing stroke to the tyranny of satan, and so gloriously destroyed the works of the devil, by his rising again from the dead, and giving so illustrious a proof, that he had fully satisfied the justice of his Father, and entirely routed and put to flight all the armies of the aliens; since “his soul was not left in hell, nor God suffered his holy One to see corruption.” And for this purpose I have made choice of the words now read, “and have the keys of hell and of death.”

The book of the Revelation is a noble prophecy concerning the gospel church, and the condition of it from its first beginnings, till the consummation of things, and the taking place of those new heavens and earth that are spoken of in it. Where we have laid before us, the early seeds of Antichrist, and of the other enemies to the kingdom of the Messiah, the gradual advances which that mystery of iniquity made, the amazing height to which it hath grown; and the happy issue, which all the events of time will at length have, in the utter overthrow of Babylon and the legions of hell; the safety and peace of Zion, and the eternal glory and praise of God, and the Redeemer. And though many passages in this book are dark and hard to be understood, and the sense of them lies hid, possibly not to be discovered, till the accomplishment of the prophecy gives light unto them: yet there are many important truths and profitable instructions every where scattered through it, which are plain enough to the diligent enquirer; and eminently conduce to the raising our admiring thoughts of Christ the Messiah, and to our being kept firm and steady in the faith and practice of Christianity.

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In this chapter, after the preface or introduction, which is from the beginning to the 9th verse, we have an account of the source of this prophecy, the authority on which it depends, and whereby it was delivered to the churches. Jesus Christ represents himself to his servant John, clothed with honour and majesty, and surrounded with a glory that became the exalted Redeemer and the great king of the church. In the verse preceding the text, we have the effect this appearance had upon John: he was not able to endure the dazzling splendor and brightness of it; and the thunder of Christ's voice, the terribleness of that "sharp two-edged sword" which went from his mouth, and the awfulness of his mighty power which then shewed itself, so frightened him, that "he fell at his feet dead." Our Saviour by his right hand revives him from this condition; and gives such account of himself, as might calm and settle the mind of his servant, and recover him from that disturbing fear into which a view of his greatness had thrown him: and how could this be done more effectually, than by letting John know, that the glorious person who spoke to him, was the same Jesus, who had manifested such an overflow of compassion and fulness of love to sinners, "in becoming obedient to the death," on their account? "I am he that liveth, and was dead," says he, fear not." How did this sweeten and alleviate the terrors of his greatness? that they belonged to him who had shewn so much friendship and favour for men, that they were not in the hand of an enemy, or of a severe and inexorable judge; but that they surrounded a merciful and gracious Redeemer: this, if I may speak so, took away their sting, and made that excellent majesty which John saw, so comfortable and amiable. And what an inconceivable ravishing joy must the  
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beloved disciple then have had! to know, that he whose glorious greatness and awful power so amazed and frightened him at the first, was the same Lord and master that had admitted him to such intimate communion with himself while on earth, and in whose bosom he had so often laid his head, that he was now "alive for evermore." And then, in the words of the text, our Redeemer gives us another character of that exalted state he was now possessed of, or a farther account of his greatness, which tended mightily to strengthen and encourage John: for now that he had declared that he was Christ the Saviour, the more excellent and exalted he was, the greater the safety and happiness of his followers, and the fuller the joy and peace of such as had embraced him as the captain of their salvation, and had consecrated themselves and their services to his praise; "and have the "keys of hell and of death."

Keys denote the rightful authority of the person that hath them, and also his power and ability to exercise and maintain that right. Thus, when Christ commits to his apostles the government of the church, he expresseth it by "giving them the keys of the kingdom of heaven," Matth. 16. 19. In like manner, God the Father, when putting the government into the hand of the Messiah, Isa. 22. 22. "And the key of the house "of David will I lay upon his shoulder, so he shall "open and none shall shut, and he shall shut and "none shall open;" which glorious privilege Christ directly applies unto himself, Rev. 3. 8. "Behold, "I have set before thee an open door, and no "man can shut it."

The word here translated *hell*, of which, and of *death*, our Redeemer asserts that he hath the *keys*, seems generally, in scripture, to signify that place of eternal torment, where the damned are to suffer

suffer the punishment of their iniquities; thus, Luke 16. 23. “the rich man is said to lift up  
 “his eyes in hell, being in torments;” and, Rev. 20. 14. “And death and hell were cast into the  
 “lake of fire, this is the second death:” and so the phrase in the text denotes the dominion of the Redeemer over hell itself, and all its devils; tho’ they have departed from their first habitation, and revolted from God, yet Christ hath still a right to their obedience, and a power sufficient to bound and restrain their wicked attempts, and to make them, though against their inclination and design, subservient to his pleasure and glory.

But this word in profane authors is used in a far larger extent, and signifies in general the invisible world, where spirits, and the souls of men, reside, and that whether in the seats of bliss or misery: it denoting, in short, every thing that is covered from our sight, and into which our eyes cannot penetrate. Nor is there any thing absurd, if we should take it in that extensive signification in our text: for this more fully expresses the universal dominion of our Redeemer, not only over *hell*, the prison of the damned, but over *heaven*, the region of light and happiness; his empire stretching beyond all bounds, over every part of the vast invisible world, which is plainly enough asserted of it in other places of scripture, Eph. 1. 19, 20, 21. “According  
 “to the working of his mighty power which he  
 “wrought in Christ, when he raised him from  
 “the dead, and set him at his own right hand in  
 “the heavenly places, far above all principality,  
 “and power, and might, and dominion, and  
 “every name that is named, not only in this  
 “world, but also in that which is to come.”  
 And, Eph. 3. 15. “Of him the whole family in  
 “heaven and earth is named.”

It is added in the the text, “and of death;” he guards the passages into the other world, and hath the absolute disposal of the lives of men: he prolongs their abode on this earth, or cuts short their days, as it best suits the interests of his kingdom, and the ends of his government: he openeth these gates and none can shut them; and when he closeth them, they must remain shut till his hand open them again.

The doctrine that naturally flows from the words, thus a little explained, is this,

That the Lord Jesus Christ, the mediator betwixt God and lost sinners, is made the head over all things; and hath a dominion that is not confined to this earth, but extends itself over all the vast invisible world, where he sits king upon his throne. And particularly, that he alone hath the disposal of the lives of men, and by death sets fixed bounds to their countenance here below; and that, when at his command they must be separated from the body, and depart into another state, they nevertheless still continue under his empire: for “he hath the keys of hell and of death.”

In discoursing to you from this doctrine, I shall, by the divine assistance, endeavour to do these things.

1. To give some further account of what is imported in the Redeemer’s “having the keys of hell and of death.”

2. I shall hint at the justice and reasonableness of his having these keys committed to his management. But I shall endeavour to be short upon both these heads, because I design to insist longest, in the

3. Place, in drawing some practical inferences from this doctrine.

1. Christ’s having “the keys of hell and of death,” imports that he must also have the go-

vernment of this lower world, and by his powerful providence overrule all the events of time, and dispose of every thing here according to his pleasure: for if it were otherwise, it were utterly impossible that he could have the “key of death.” Whence it follows clearly, that he must have the disposal of our life, and all the things relating to it: for if no person can prolong his days one moment, when he opens the gate of death, and if none can get out of this world, either by a natural disease, or the hand of violence, but as he pleaseth to turn his key; it must be beyond doubt, that nothing done here, can be without the bounds of his large dominion, of which this earth is but the narrow frontier.

The Messiah then, our great King, invisibly directs all the commotions of this world: the projects of the cunning politician, and the noise and blood of the warrior, are constantly under his eye; and turned, through all their different windings, by his unerring hand, till they at last harmoniously center in the glory of the divine excellencies, as they shine in the Redeemer’s face. It is he who watcheth over true believers, interposes in all the temptations they are attacked by; strengthens and supports them; or, for wise ends, suffers them to yield to prevailing corruption, that they may be raised up again more eminently for the honour of God: and it is he, who at length, thro’ an infinite variety of providences, and continued influences of grace, often unnoticed by us, prepares them for being inhabitants of the new Jerusalem; and then, by turning the “key of death,” transplants them into that nobler part of his empire, the heavenly country, there to behold his glory, and to serve him in a higher station than they were in while here below.

It is the Messiah also who sets limits to the wickedness of sinners, who notices all their errors, and restrains their rage. It is he who suffers the devil to tempt them; and permits them to give loose reins to their corruption and folly, by wallowing in unlawful pleasures, till at length their "iniquity become full, and they vessels of wrath fitted for destruction;" and then he tumbles them headlong into hell; and, having the keys and management of it, keeps them in chains there; and makes the darkness and torment wherein they dwell, a clear light to discover the inexorable justice and untainted holiness of his government.

The bustle and noise which the princes of this earth make about their pitiful interests, the confusions and animosities which disturb the repose of the world, the aspiring of the ambitious, and their different plots to gain their designs, the triumphs of the conqueror, and the cries of the vanquished or oppressed, are none of them by chance; but are all subjected to the influence of Christ's government. And though "his ways be in the deep waters," and his providence not discerned by unthinking sinners; yet "he sitteth upon the floods, he sits king for ever, and laugheth in heaven" at the vain efforts of his enemies: for he beareth in his hand a rod of iron, whereby he can easily dash them to pieces. And we see from our text, besides other means of ruining his adversaries and defeating their contrivances, that, by his possessing "the key of death," he hath a never failing one; namely, to hurl them out of the world by the word of his power, and blow away the vapour of their life: and in that day all the business and thoughts of the wisest and greatest perish for ever.

It is he who was "dead and now liveth for evermore," that killeth and maketh alive, that

bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up; he is our God, the God of our salvation, unto whom the issues from death belong. In short, it is he who establisheth Zion in the midst of her enemies; and maketh the seemingly croffest and most disadvantageous events, turn to her profit and honour: for “he loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.”

2. In Christ's having “the keys of hell and of death,” his dominion over the devils and damned spirits is particularly imported: these are the hosts of that accursed place, which be subdued upon his cross, when he openly spoiled principalities and powers; and whom he now holds in fetters as his lawful captives. Though Satan makes often a dreadful havock of the church, and usurpeth dominion over a great part of the world; though he be vigilant and active in the ruining of souls, and opposing the holy kingdom of the Redeemer: yet all this is only when the Messiah lengthens out his chain; and, in his infinite wisdom, suffers him to deceive or tyrannize over the nations. And this roring lion, wherever he goes, must carry about with him the marks of his subjection and slavery; and the head of the church, with the smallest pull of this chain, can hale back the strongest armies of devils headlong into hell, as easily as by one look, when on earth, he made the bands of the Jews who came to take him, fall stupified upon the earth before him.

The power which the great dragon gave to the beast and false prophet is limited and confined, and intirely subordinate to the supreme dominion of the Redeemer; it was by his permission, that they had the key of the bottomless pit, and opened it to darken the church by the smoke thereof, and to send out such an innumerable multitude of locusts and scorpions, as we have it, Rev. 9. For  
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even then Christ gave a proof that he retained “the keys of hell,” since they, and the apostate angel who headed them, had their power only for five months; and during that time they could not break loose or stretch one link of their chain, to injure the least of those that were sealed with the seal of God in their foreheads. And to this purpose we have a noble instance, and a bright demonstration of the Messiah’s government and power over hell and death, Rev. 20. 1, 2, 3. “And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand; and he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years be fulfilled; and after that he must be loosed a little season.” Thus the usurping god of this world is, with the greatest ease, dragged back to his prison of torment, whenever the Author of our salvation orders it; nor is the air sooner moved up and down by storms and tempests which toss it, than the devil, “the prince of the power of it,” is blown into everlasting darkness by the breath of the Messiah’s mouth.

Yea, he so manages “the keys of hell and death,” that the malicious unwearied endeavours of Satan to dishonour Christ, and defeat the design of his coming into the world, are so far from gaining their end, that our Saviour effectually advanceth all his purposes by them. Hence the devil, by his impudent and blasphemous tempting of him in the wilderness, contributed to the making of Jesus “a perfect high priest, that could be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; and was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without

“ sin : whence he is able to succour them that  
 “ are tempted.”

3. If we may take the world translated *hell*, in the original, *Adis Hades*, according to its most extensive, and indeed natural signification, then we have a very elevated account of the glorious dominion of our Saviour over all that vast unknown world, and its different inhabitants of whatever kind, who are all subjected to him, and governed by him. As in hell he maintains his authority, by the terrors of his irresistible power, whereby he soon crushes the stoutest of these rebels ; so in heaven, the better part of *Hades*, he sways the sceptre of love over all those noble and glorious spirits, who delight to do his pleasure, those flames of fire that are so active and vigorous in his service ; and he is their common head and Lord, being now gone into heaven, he is on the right hand of God, angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto him. And as we read, that in general they are all “ ministring spirits, “ sent forth to minister unto them who shall be “ heirs of salvation ;” so we have innumerable particular instances of their being employed by the Mediator in the affairs of his kingdom. And no doubt these invisible and powerful friends oft assist us, and promote the concerns of our souls, when we may be ignorant of their good offices, by protecting us from danger, diverting or confounding our enemies, comforting and strengthening such as are violently assaulted by the fiery darts of the devil, or by animating us to constancy in the midst of hazards, extricating us from perplexing difficulties ; and by exciting holy resolutions and pious meditations, while the wicked one may be whispering a temptation into our ear, or more openly proposing the pleasures of sin and sense to our affection and choice. But now, all these, or any

any other services, they perform by the direction of the Messiah; he marshals that heavenly host, and leads them on against our enemies; hence we read, Rev. 12. 7. “of Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon and his angels;” and, 19. 14. “and the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen white and clean.” And that noble company will all at length be part of his retinue, when “he shall come in flaming fire, with his mighty angels, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of Christ.”

There might be a great deal more said concerning those “keys of hell and death,” which our Redeemer hath the possession of; but, because I have already taken up too much of your time upon this head, I shall only touch at the next in a few words, to make way for some practical improvement of what hath been said.

The second thing then proposed, was to hint at the justice and reasonableness of his having these keys committed to his management. I shall not insist upon his indisputed right to them, as God the Maker and preserver of all things; but only very briefly mention these three considerations, which will shew us the equity of this government’s being laid upon the shoulder of the Mediator.

1. This was absolutely necessary, in order to his becoming a triumphing victorious captain of salvation to lost sinners; and his finishing that adorable mystery of grace, in which the honour of God, and the bright discovery of so many of his perfections are so eminently concerned. For this end, as it “behoved him to be made perfect through sufferings,” so he must also be made perfect by power and dominion: how else could

he preserve his people from falling, and present them faultless before the throne of his glory? how could he protect his church from enemies, keep it from being overwhelmed by the floods of terrible persecution, or the more dangerous ones, alluring temptations, and at length settle mount Zion upon the top of the nations? If he had not the command of the other world also, “the keys of hell and of death,” how could he “bruise that serpent’s head,” and deliver his elect from the jaws of that cruel lion, or ever “make all things work for the good of his chosen?” In short, these keys were so absolutely necessary for him as Mediator, that his having this office, is rendered as the reason of their being committed to him, John 5. 26, 27. “For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself, and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.”

2. He hath acquired this dignity and honour by his perfect obedience, and meritorious sufferings. It was but just, since he so inconceivably glorified the Father, by humbling himself to take “on him the form of a servant, and becoming obedient to the death, even that of the cross;” that he should again glorify the Son, “by giving him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and every tongue confess that he is Christ the Lord.” Besides this, he hath conquered these apostate spirits, he bore the assault of all the legions of hell, in his own person, and gave them an utter overthrow; he stormed all their strong holds, and laid waste their territories: so that these regions of darkness are his by undoubted conquest. “He spoiled these principalities

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“ ties and powers, making a shew of them openly, and triumphing over them;” he by force wrested these keys from the devil, who had usurped the possession of them, Heb. 2. 14. “ Through death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.” And is it not equal and reasonable, that he alone should continue in the possession of “ the keys of hell and of death?” And I am sure, he hath the justest title to the government of those whom he came to save, and who are redeemed by his blood, and rescued by his power. Yea, the blessed angels in heaven are under very peculiar obligations to his obedience, as might easily be made out: besides, as divines generally think, they owe their fixedness and assured perseverance in their happy estate to him, “ of whom the whole family in heaven and in earth is named.” But,

3. The equity hereof will appear, if we consider that the continuance of the present state of things, with respect both to the visible and invisible worlds, is owing entirely to his mediatorial work. What is the reason that the devils are yet “ reserved in chains to the judgment of the great day,” have some respite from the extremity of torment, and are allowed to “ go to and fro thro’ the earth;” or that wicked impenitent sinners have not the final sentence immediately past and executed upon them; but because these things are fit in order to the illustration of the divine excellencies, in the recovery of sinners, and the gathering in of the elect? Were it not for this, “ the heavens had long ere now been rolled up as a scroll, and the earth burnt up with fervent heat;” the present state of things would have vanished away, and “ the new heavens and new earth” would immediately have taken place, “ and death and hell been cast into the lake of

“fire:” it is for the elects sake that these days are prolonged. And now, can there be any thing more equitable, than that the Redeemer should reign over this world, till, “having fully subdued his last enemy, death, he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father:” and, “putting down all rule, and all authority, and all power, he himself become a subject,” in that state of things wherein “God shall be all in all.”

I shall now propose a few practical inferences from the preceeding discourse; and this doctrine affords a great number of very profitable instructions, both as to our faith and practice.

1. From what hath been said, we may infer the true Deity and Godhead of Jesus Christ; or, if the argument drawn from hence be not strictly demonstrative, it may, at least, tend to confirm us, who believe this important truth, in the faith of it, and give us occasion to reflect upon the many convincing proofs we have thereof in the word of God. For, besides that “the keys of hell and of death,” seem to be too great a trust to be given to a creature, what wisdom and knowledge but his, whose understanding is infinite, could ever be able to have such a steady view of all the events in both worlds, behold and counter-mine the numerous contrivances of devils, and of wicked men, direct the services and ministry of so many angels, take notice of the smallest circumstance of every thing on earth; and have so full and steady a comprehension of them, as to make them all, however perplexed and seemingly disagreeing, harmoniously concur to the great design of them, the perfecting the work of redemption; and without the least jussling, amicably center in the glory of God, and the good of the redeemed? He that can make such a weight lean upon the finite un-

understanding of a creature, of however exalted an order, abstracting from the unbounded power that is also necessary for the executing of them, I think whatever pretensions such a man may make to freedom of thought, and justness of reasoning, he must swallow a pretty gross absurdity, and be a far more easy and credulous fool, than those whom he may load with that reproach, for submitting their knowledge and faith to the revelations of God.

2dly, What hath been said, may also be of some use to us in establishing the doctrine of the perseverance of true grace in saints, namely, to shew that “none can take them out of Christ’s hand.” He not only can give them grace sufficient for their weakness, and send his holy angels to assist and keep them in all their ways: but, by his having the “keys of hell,” the devil, that grand director of the temptations whereby true believers are so often ensnared, is absolutely under his dominion; and he can, in a moment, command him back to the dungeon, “that he should no more deceive his people.” In short, all his fiery darts, all his wicked suggestions, his wiles and different devices to ruin souls, or to blunt their keenness and vigour in the ways of religion, his frowns and his favours, are so entirely subjected to this great keeper of the keys, so incontrollably under his influence, that it must be easy for him to “preserve the redeemed from falling, and present them faultless before the throne of his father’s glory.”

3dly, What hath been said concerning the vast Hades, or unseen world, that noble empire of the Messiah, spoken of in our text, affords us infinite proofs of the incomprehensible love of Jesus Christ. His unbounded goodness, and riches of never failing compassions to the children of men,

we ought to admire and adore : but we can comprehend but a fmall portion of thofe ways of grace. After we have raifed our foul to the higheft pitch of elevation it is capable of, and employed all its powers, and ftretched our thoughts to their utmoft extent, to ufe them all in meditating upon the glory of his amazing condefcenfion and tender mercies ; we can do little more but ftand aftonifhed at the “ height, and length, and depth of “ them,” and proclaim that they are “ paft finding out :” that he who reigns in fo vaft an empire, of which this earth is but an hand-breadth, and as a drop in the ocean, who is fupreme Lord of that immense invifible world, fhould yet look down upon “ tabernacles of clay, and dwell with “ men, that he fhould “ bear with our infirmities,” condefcend to all our weakneffes, and employ the riches of fo glorious a kingdom to make us happy and fafe. Is he the keeper of thefe keys, what is man that he fhould be mindful of him, or at all regard him ?

Is he the willing and amiable governor of an innumerable company of angels, thefe glorious hofts of heaven, who all excel in immortal beauty and ftrength, who love and ferve him as they ought, who boaft in being his fubjects, and are fwifter than the wind, and yet fteadier than the firmeft mountain, in executing all his commands ? and yet, does this king not only accept of our weak imperfect fervices, of our cool and languifhing love, of our low carnal worfhip, fo void of fervour and zeal, and fo wandring, lifelefs, and inconstant ; but alfo befeech us to what is only our own intereft and advantage, with as great earneftnefs and patience as if he himfelf were profited by us ?

Is he the victorious general over fo many armies of invincible fpirits, and keeps “ the keys of “ hell,”

“hell,” so that he can by one turn of them tumble all his enemies into these everlasting burnings? and is he the Lord of our life and breath, who can in a moment put a period to our days? and yet does he continue us so long in being, and gives us access to “the grace wherein we stand,” even while we abuse and affront his laws, while we despise his power, and laugh at his justice, yea, while we scornfully ask “where is the day “of his coming?” Can the least of the subjects of this heavenly Hades, crush us in the acts of wickedness into powder; and yet are we spared, as if it required some time and pains for him to destroy us?

Let the angels, these happy servants of his, who stand continually in his presence, adore and celebrate these mysteries of love, of grace and patience; for as for us the children of men, there is no spirit left in us, our eyes are soon dazzled, and we cannot see this glory and live: yet let us “praise him while we live, let us call upon him “while we have any being, let our souls and all “that little that is within us bless his holy name, “who forgiveth all our iniquities, who healeth “all our diseases, who redeemeth our life from “destruction, and saveth our souls, that they “should not go down to the grave.” Let the keeper of these keys have all the service and obedience of that life which he continueth to us, when he could so easily deprive us of it. Let us no longer reckon our souls our own, but account them altogether his, let all the powers of them love and adore him. Let our sabbaths be spent in unwearied contemplation of the riches of this his glorious kingdom, and his infinite condescension and forbearance to us. Let all the parts of our time be dedicated and consecrated to such a Lord and Redeemer, that so we may live to him.

4thly, This should disarm death of its terrors, tame that frightful monster, and enable us to look with calmness and composure upon our great change, death. It is true, it is an awful thought, we are too closely united to our bodies to part easily with them; and no wonder that an unseen eternal state, an unknown world, should fright our souls, and make them tremble at the approaches thereof; but yet if we be what we pretend, followers of Jesus, I am sure the consideration that so lovely and amiable a Redeemer keeps the keys of death, should scatter these clouds, and make the otherwise dark valley light and pleasant. Why, it is he whom your souls love above all, he who died for you, and in whose gracious presence and fellowship you have found more joy, than the wicked in the greatest abundance of their corn and wine; it is he who commands in the other world as well as in this: and shall we be so timorous in going to that empire, where the Redeemer, our chiefest joy, reigns without controul? It is he who opens the gates of death, and shuts them, so as no devil can come after us, or throw in any of his poisoned arrows. This should engage us cheerfully to expect our dissolution, to die daily; and be ready whenever our Lord calls us, turns the keys and opens the gate, to enter in without any reluctance. If we be Christ's good soldiers, there can be nothing more reasonable; for this is not our country or fixed quarters; while on earth we are centinels, placed in the out-works, exposed to the fire of the enemy, ready to be overwhelmed by their number and power, and in hazards of many wounds and bruises, or, which is worse, of shamefully running from our post; now, death does not turn us out from the Messiah's army, it only sends us home never to fight any more, but to be eternally employed in  
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adorning his triumphs, and bearing a share in them. A Christian should be as glad to get safe out of the world, as a Roman general, who entering the city in triumph after a dangerous doubtful war, wherein he was afraid to have been beaten, and lost his reputation, now rejoiceth at the happy turn, and the honour of a victory.

At the best, this earth is but the frontier of our Lord's dominion, the most unpleasant part of the country, and exposed to the inroads and ravages of enemies; and shall we repine to be called to the court, the seat of the king, there to serve and enjoy him? The little of such a resigned temper of soul that is amongst us, and the slavish fear of death that prevails, is too evident a proof that we are but pretended Christians, or have but faint impressions of this great truth, that the Redeemer "keeps the keys of hell and of death.

5thly, This should make us careful improvers of our time while we have it, since it is not in our own hand, and at our disposal, but another keepeth the keys of it: and that Jesus is the person who doth so, should animate us in the midst of difficulties and dangers. His Lordship over hell and death ought to make us steady in our religion, courageously to resist the devil, and not be moved by the rage of men. Did we consider that our Saviour's kingdom is over all, that no enemy can touch us but by his allowance, and that when they have done the worst, "killed the body," they only send us to our own home, and that we are after death still in our Redeemer's empire, how would we join with David, Psal. lvi. 11. "In God have I put my trust, I will not be afraid what man can do unto me." Do we fight under such a general, and serve such a master, and will we cowardly yield ourselves to a devil; when, if we would but look to the author

thor of our salvation, he can with a nod scatter all the armies of hell, or keep them locked under his key: this may make us, in the ways of truth, contemn the greatest monarchs, and despise their malice and anger; yea, trample upon the promises or threats of crowns and sceptres, since all the wicked of the earth, the greatest of their rulers, are but pitiful slaves to hell, where our Lord has the absolute command: he can deliver us out of their hand, or turn all their impotent efforts to our advantage. Let us then with holy resolution and boldness finish the Christian warfare; and, because Christ keepeth “the keys of hell and death,” let us with confidence apply to him in the words of Israel, Psal. lx. 11, 12. “Give us help from trouble, for vain is the help of man; through God we shall do valiantly, for he it is that shall tread down our enemies.”

6thly, Doth Christ keep the “keys of hell and of death?” Then consider, foolish sinner, whom thou opposeth in fighting against his holy kingdom; infinite madness, to harden our heart in pride, and not to glorify the God “in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways.” Sinners may now scoff at this Redeemer, because he is invisible, ridicule faith in his name, and rolling all our cares on him; they may forget his laws, and break his holy commands without fear; yea, flatter themselves in their folly, and rejoice in their wickedness: but “their mirth is but like the crackling of thorns, not only soon over, but they really consume and burn themselves in making that noise; “the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment, and then they shall perish for ever.” When the now despised or neglected Messiah, shall open the gates of death with his key, then the remedies of the ablest physician,

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the intreaties of friends, the splendor of a crown, or the riches of the largest empire, will not be able to redeem the soul for a moment; but it shall in an instant be torn from the body, and dragged before Christ the great Lord of the other world. The dog and furies, which the poets with the utmost reach of their imagination painted so formidable, can give but a faint notion of the dreadful consternation and horror which shall fill the soul of an unbeliever, when it looks into the other world, and finds the reality of what he ridiculed; and hath the fearful prospect of Christ the judge, who will lock him up eternally in hell, of which he keeps the keys, and will for ever pierce the innermost recesses of his spirit, with the arrows of his powerful vengeance; when they shall feel that "darkness will not cover them" from his lashes, and that "if they make their bed in hell he is there," so that there can be no possible escape from enraged omnipotence.

"Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings, be instructed, ye judges of the earth, serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little: blessed are all they that put their trust in him." And let us all, who believe these awful truths, immediately apply ourselves to this "one thing needful," to have this glorious king the Messiah our friend, and reconciled Saviour, by a true faith on his name, and careful imitating his holy example, and an universal obedience to all his commands, by abandoning the tents of the rebels, and "keeping ourselves unspotted from the world, in all godliness, sobriety, and honesty, by having our conversation in  
"hea-

“ heaven,” that so, when this keeper of the keys, shall be revealed from thence, we may be able to “ sing aloud of his power and mercy, to rejoice “ at the remembrance of his holiness,” and say from the bottom of our soul, “ even so come “ Lord Jesus,” having this judge our friend.

I shall conclude with reading these two scriptures, Luke 21. 34, 35, 36. “ And take heed to “ yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be o- “ vercharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, “ and cares of this life, and so that day come up- “ on you unawares, for as a snare shall it come “ on all them that dwell on the face of the whole “ earth: watch ye therefore, and pray always, “ that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all “ these things that shall come to pass, and to “ stand before the son of man. Eccl. 12. 13. “ Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter, “ fear God, and keep his commandments, for “ this is the whole of man.”



## S E R M O N XIV.

R O M. ii. 16.

*In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.*

**T**H O' the far greatest part of mankind are deeply sunk in the mire of sin and sense, and have altogether debased their rational faculties, so that they are chained down to present enjoyments which captivate their souls, and keep so intire possession of them, as to hinder them from looking into that state, whither constant experience assures us all flesh must, in a little time, go; they drop into hell amidst the charms of sinful pleasures, and are not awakened to serious thoughts about the end of things, till their stupid consciences, which so long resisted the divine threatnings, and the united voice of reason and revelation, are roused up by the lashes of God's fury: yet it certainly becomes us, to whom "life and immortality," and I may add, "eternal death are made manifest" by so noble a light, to look into the invisible world, where our short time upon earth will be swallowed up by an eternity of bliss or misery. And it is of the highest importance to all who are united to these tabernacles of clay, which, as a vapour, are so easily blown away, to search with the most impartial diligence into every circumstance of that other state, wherein death will place us, that we may know

know how we ought to manage ourselves while here, so as to be in the favour of the Lord and king of that world: and it must be a very fatal stupidity that diverts us from so momentous an inquiry. It is therefore my purpose, by the assistance of God, to discourse a little to you upon a subject, which cannot be curious or trifling, namely, the judge before whose tribunal we must, at length, all of us stand, and upon whose sentence our all depends, whether we shall be filled with happiness as great as we can enjoy, or with torments as heavy as we can endure. And I hope it will not be an unpleasing subject to us Christians, to take a view of the power and glory of him, to whose service and praise we profess to have consecrated our bodies and our souls; but that it may increase our joy, as well as instruction, when we consider, that “it is Jesus Christ  
“ by whom God will judge the secrets of men.”

The apostle Paul, from the sixth verse of this chapter, asserts the equity of the divine judgment, and that he will render to every man, without exception, according to the exactest rules of right. And of this impartial justice he gives an instance from the heathen world, whom God would punish, because of their disobeying that law of nature, of which there were such remains in the hearts of all men, as to render them inexcusable who contradicted its commands by their wicked lives: which he proves in the fifteenth verse, from those notions of right and wrong, which the consciences of men shewed to be universal, when they every where accused or excused, accordingly as actions were conformable, or contradictory to this light.

Some commentators think, that the verse I have now read is connected with the fifteenth thus, that as conscience in some measure does its work  
while

while upon earth, so it will perform it fully, and to the conviction of every person, in the day that “men shall be judged by Jesus Christ,” when sin and sense should no more blunt its edge, or hide the most concealed crime from its lashes. Others think the words are immediately connected with the sixth verse, “Who will render to every man according to his deeds, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men.” But it is the same to my purpose, which of these opinions we follow, since neither of them make any alteration in the design of the text, which contains these three very important truths.

1. We have the subject of the last judgment, the things which the judge will, upon that awful occasion, examine into, and reward or punish, “the secrets of men.” Then not only open villainies, but retired lusts, shall aggravate the condemnation of the ungodly; when the concealed projects of the crafty politician, and the hidden deceit of the disguised hypocrite, which now lurk in darkness, shall be placed in a full light: In short, when no action or thought, of whatever sort, shall be passed by unnoticed.

2. We have the standard and rule to which every part of the divine procedure shall be conformed: “According to my gospel,” saith the apostle, which I have a commission from the great author of it to preach unto men, and now deliver unto you. If we refer this to such as have had access to the revelation of Christ, then it will, in a very direct way, be the rule of the last judgment, as it was the rule of life to them: and if we refer it to the heathens, they shall be judged also according to what the apostle had delivered in the preceding verses, even “as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law.”

3. We have the person who will then be clothed with the character of Judge, “ Jesus Christ ; “ in the day when God shall judge the secrets of “ men by Jesus Christ.” God is here said to judge by Christ, because Jesus shall act in that day, not barely as the second person of the glorious Trinity, but as the Mediator and Redeemer of men, by an authority derived to him from the Father ; in the same manner, as we find several parts of the work of redemption ascribed to the Father by Christ. Our Saviour’s acting in that day by a delegated power, does not at all insinuate, that he will not be then the supreme Judge, for from his sentence there can be no appeal: nor is it unusual amongst men, for persons to communicate unto others all the authority they themselves are possessed of, that, in particular causes, they may finally, and without reserve, determine in them ; so the “ Father judgeth no “ man, but hath committed all judgment unto “ the Son,” John 5. 22.

It is not my purpose, at this time, to discourse about the first two of these things ; and I design to confine myself to the last of them, namely, the person by whom we shall all be judged, by *Jesus Christ*. In treating of which subject I shall,

1. Prove that Jesus Christ, the Messiah God-man, will judge the world upon that awful day, which the father hath appointed for that purpose.

2. I shall offer several considerations to shew the equity and reasonableness hereof : that so we may be led into admiring thoughts of the wisdom and justice of the divine constitutions, and the unsearchable depth of his understanding.

3. I shall endeavour from this argument to engage our souls to the love and service of God and the Redeemer ; by applying this truth directly

rectly to practice, in the regulating of our affections, and the conduct of life.

In general, the Lord Jesus is appointed head of angels and men, nor is there any creature which is not subjected to his large and great dominion; of him the whole family in heaven and earth is named: and all things are given to his hands, that he may be a triumphing captain of salvation, and be able to subdue all things to himself; and conquer these principalities and powers which oppose their force against the great “*de-*”  
“*sign of God manifested in the flesh, the destroy-*”  
“*ing the works of the devil, and bringing many*”  
“*sons unto glory,*” who were once slaves under his tyranny. Hence “*unto us a child is born,*”  
“*unto us a son is given; and the government*”  
“*shall be upon his shoulder: whose name shall*”  
“*be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty*”  
“*God, The everlasting Father, The Prince*”  
“*of Peace.*” And his rule is not confined within this earth, for “*he hath the keys of hell and*”  
“*of death,*” governs in both worlds; he keeps the passages from the one into the other, and when death finishes our life here below, we do not slip out of his empire. Now, as all power is thus committed to him in heaven and earth, he doth not “*deliver up the kingdom to God even*”  
“*the father, till he hath subdued all things un-*”  
“*der his feet,*” and so he must reign judge at the last day; and the father hath given all judgment into his hands.

The places of scripture which may be adduced as proofs hereof, are very numerous. I shall name a few of them which will be sufficient for our purpose. Matth. 16. 27. “*For the Son of man*”  
“*shall come in the glory of his father, with his*”  
“*angels, and then he shall reward every man*”  
“*according to his works.*” He will not appear  
“*the*”

“ the son of a carpenter,” but with the majesty and power that becomes the great Judge of angels and men. We have a very particular distinct account of this matter, which admits of no doubt about its meaning, Matth. 25. 31, &c.

“ When the Son of man shall come in his glory,  
 “ and all the holy angels with him : then shall he  
 “ sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him  
 “ shall be gathered all nations, and he shall sepa-  
 “ rate them one from another, as a shepherd di-  
 “ videth his sheep from the goats ; and he shall  
 “ set his sheep upon his right hand, but the goats  
 “ on the left. Then shall the king say unto them  
 “ on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my fa-  
 “ ther, inherit the kingdom prepared for you  
 “ from the foundation of the world. Then  
 “ shall he say also to them on the left hand, de-  
 “ part from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire,  
 “ prepared for the devil and his angels.” And  
 this truth was ordered to be taught as certain and  
 important, Acts 10. 42. “ And he hath com-  
 “ manded us to preach unto the people, and to  
 “ testify, that it is he which was ordained of  
 “ God to be the Judge of quick and dead ; and  
 chap. 17. ver. 31. “ He hath appointed a day,  
 “ in the which he will judge the world in righ-  
 “ teousness by that man whom he hath ordained ;  
 “ whereof he hath given assurance unto all men,  
 “ in that he hath raised him from the dead.”

It were easie to multiply testimonies concern-  
 ing this illustrious character of the Redeemer,  
 and the exalted glory which will surround him  
 when “ he shall appear the second time without  
 “ sin unto salvation :” but I shall add only one  
 other, and that a very bright proof of this truth,  
 2 Theff. 1. 7, &c. “ And to you who are trou-  
 “ bled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall  
 “ be revealed from heaven with his mighty an-  
 “ gels

“ gels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them  
“ that know not God, and that obey not the  
“ gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be  
“ punished with everlasting destruction from the  
“ presence of the Lord, and from the glory of  
“ his power.” From these places we have a sure  
foundation: for, I hope the charming and plea-  
sing prospect that our Saviour, whom we ought  
to love above all, and whose glory should be the  
greatest joy of our souls, shall one day appear  
with a majesty that will fright into everlasting  
horror the most obstinate of his foes, “ when he  
“ shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to  
“ be admired in all them that believe.”

I come now to the second thing proposed,  
namely, to offer several considerations to shew  
the equity and reasonableness hereof, that so we  
may be led into admiring thoughts of the wisdom  
and justice of the divine constitutions, and the  
unsearchable depth of his understanding.

In discoursing upon this, I shall not insist bare-  
ly upon the numerous arguments of his perfect  
fittedness for so great a work, as he is God; but  
confine myself to the great reason of this consti-  
tution given us by our Saviour himself, John 5.  
26, 27. “ For as the Father hath life in himself,  
“ so hath he given to the Son to have life in him-  
“ self; and hath given him authority to execute  
“ judgment also, because he is the Son of man.”  
Wherefore I shall offer you some things to this  
purpose, from his being Mediator, God-Man,  
the author and finisher of eternal Salvation to lost  
sinners.

I. The Father hath appointed him the supreme  
Judge of angels and men, as a reward of his per-  
fect obedience and meritorious sufferings. The  
Messiah glorified God upon earth, and manifested  
his name to the praise of the riches of his grace

and power, beyond any expressions that were given of them in the works of creation, or the management of providence; all the divine excellencies are amiable and bright when shining in the Redeemer's face; the low mean condition of our Saviour upon earth, and the miseries of life he was exposed to beyond any of the sons of men, were attended with such invincible patience and perfect resignation to the divine pleasure; the will and glory of God had such a governing power over all his actions and thoughts, that his will cheerfully complied with the drinking of that cup which was filled even with the Father's wrath: and therefore it was just and equal, that the Father, whom he had so much honoured, should also glorify the Son. Of this reason we have a noble account, Phil. 2. 6, &c. "Who being in  
 " the form of God, thought it not robbery to be  
 " equal with God; but made himself of no re-  
 " putation, 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 hum-  
 " bled himself, and became obedient unto death,  
 " even the death of the cross. Wherefore God  
 " also hath highly exalted him, and given him a  
 " name which is above every name; that at the  
 " name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things  
 " in heaven and things in earth, and things un-  
 " der the earth: and that every tongue should  
 " confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory  
 " of God the Father."

It is the first principle of religion, that "he  
 " who cometh to God, must believe that he is,  
 " and that he is a rewarder of them who dili-  
 " gently seek him;" that our gracious Maker  
 will never "let the house of Jacob seek him in  
 "vain:" and is there not infinitely more reason  
 that he should reward Christ's services? What

can be more equal, than that Jesus, “ who was “ made a little lower than the angels” for the suffering of death, should be “ crowned with “ glory and honour, and be set over the works “ of God’s hands?”

And as it was fit that God should thus highly exalt the Messiah, so his being ordained the supreme Judge at the last day, was an honour peculiarly proper for God to bestow upon him. The apostate angels employed all the power of hell to oppose the kingdom of Christ, and God’s designs of grace to men; they still do what they can by fraud and force, by all the cunning arts of those subtil spirits, or more open attacks, to make war with the lamb and his father: now, it is Christ who protects his church amidst these dangers, he by his own right arm “ bruises satan’s head,” he it is who throws that strong enemy out of the hearts of sinners, and defeats all his efforts to regain the possession of them, and at length seats them above these difficulties in his father’s kingdom: and how just and reasonable is it, that the Redeemer should give the final judgment to conquered devils, and drive into everlasting destruction those wicked spirits who opposed his government, and were crushed by his might? It is fit, that he who in his majesty rode prosperously and broke their force, should himself give the finishing stroke to their righteous punishment. And with how just a glory will the Messiah be crowned, when foolish sinners who contemned him upon earth, and particularly these who abused his person and crucified him, when Pilate, the Scribes and Pharisees, who poured so many affronts upon him while before their tribunal, and laughed at his deity, shall then stand before his judgment-seat, and be driven from the glory of his presence to those flames, where they will for ever shew

forth the height of their iniquity and the power of his justice? Thus Christ is appointed the Judge, that then the most hardened spirits may feel that, though “with one mind they gave their power  
 “and strength unto the beast, and made war  
 “with the lamb; yet the lamb overcame them;  
 “for he is King of kings, and Lord of lords,  
 “and they that are with him, are called, and  
 “chosen, and faithful.”

Now if we turn our thoughts to the followers of Jesus, what more equal, than that he as Mediator should openly acquit them of all their sins, who “bore the punishment of them upon the  
 “cross?” that he should determine their happiness in heaven, who purchased these mansions for them, “and reconciled them to God by his own  
 “blood?” How congruous is it, that he should  
 “present them faultless before the throne of his  
 “Father’s glory, whom he preserved from fal-  
 “ling upon earth?” That he should by his sentence declare them “blessed and faithful servants” to God; who were brought into the kingdom of light by himself? he healed all their diseases, saved their souls from death, and through him were their iniquities forgiven.

2. The wisdom and justice of God in appointing Jesus Christ the Judge, will appear, if we consider that the persons who are to be judged were under his government, while in a state of trial; and therefore the Redeemer is fully acquainted with the merits of the cause, and perfectly qualified to determine concerning all the pleas of the different parties: for he knows their actions, no circumstance of them is hid from his eye.

I have already told you, that the Messiah is “a  
 “priest upon his throne,” and his kingdom ruleth over all the affairs of the world, and the management of it is laid upon his shoulder, so that  
 he

he is peculiarly interested in every event. It is a part of his office to search into the hearts and reins of the children of men, and he is acquainted with all their goings; no contempt of the divine government, no secret treachery of his subjects, but what are open and manifest in his sight; all the plots, and the very beginnings of a rebellion against the Lord of the universe, are bare before him: hence, as it is in our text, he is fitted for judging "the secrets of men." Now what can be more equal, than that he should judge men for the actions they did, while under his dominion, and in disobedience to his laws; he whose understanding can never mistake in giving judgment? for every thing that relates to such as shall be tried, are now written in his book, and to be found with him.

And as he is thus qualified for punishing of impenitent transgressors, so he is the fittest for "giving eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him:" it is by faith in him they have any share in the divine favour; and, as it is "out of his fulness they all receive, and grace for grace;" he must exactly discern what rewards are agreeable to the different strength wherewith they set forward to Zion. He knows the degrees of goodness and love to him, and zeal wherewith they are animated to his service, and "all their tears are bottled up" with him. So that he is possessed of every thing that may qualify him for "judging of angels and men."

3. The divine wisdom appears hence, that the justice of the sentence is mightily cleared by Christ's being the Judge. He is the Son of Man, of the same nature with ourselves, "Bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, he took on him the seed of Abraham:" and thus has a very near relation to those whom he is to judge. I

may apply to this purpose what the apostle says of him as a Priest, he is not a Judge who will be cruel or severe, as a foreigner might be to home-born subjects, who will not readily be "touched with the feeling of their infirmities," but we have a Judge who was "in all points tempted like as we are:" he is acquainted with all our weaknesses and wants, he remembers that we are but flesh, and a wind that passeth away, and so is full of compassion towards us. Now, what can tend more to shew the justice of the sentence against the disobedient, than this consideration, that he is the Son of Man who passeth it? Surely he will not wrong our cause, nor injuriously punish us. Can they complain who have one of their own blood, and who manifested such unparalleled love and goodness towards them on earth, to enquire into their management? What can sinners desire more favourable, than that their advocate and intercessor should be their Judge, who will never banish any of the same nature with himself from his presence, if their iniquities do not call for that punishment?

Further, if the father had immediately sentenced sinners, and appeared with the terrors of a law-giver, without any mixture of the condescension and grace of a Redeemer; his creatures would have been frightened into nothing by the thunder of his voice, or it might have been pretended, that, if the damned had had access to plead their cause fully, and propose their defences, they might have justified themselves, or shewn the severity of the judgment: but now, sinner, what excuse hast thou left, or cloke to cover thy crimes? thy Judge is the Son of Man, thou mayst speak with him face to face; if thou hast any thing to palliate thy wickedness, or extenuate thy treachery and rebellion, lay it open before him. When  
Christ

Christ is the Judge, no sinner will have a pretence for Job's excuse, Job 23. 3, &c. "O that  
" I knew where I might find him, that I might  
" come even to his seat; I would order my cause  
" before him, and fill my mouth with arguments.  
" I would know the words which he would an-  
" swer me, and understand what he would say  
" unto me:" for lo, thou worker of iniquity,  
thy Judge is near to thee, and of the same blood  
with thyself. Jesus Christ may then say to every  
transgressor, as Elihu says to Job, which fully  
expresses my purpose, Job 33. 5, &c. "If thou  
" canst answer me, set thy words in order before  
" me, stand up: Behold, I am according to thy  
" wish in God's stead, I also am formed out of  
" the clay: Behold, my terror shall not make  
" thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy  
" upon thee." You see then, from Christ the  
Son of man's being Judge, how illustrious the ho-  
nour of God's justice, and the equity of the last  
sentence, shall shine forth as the sun in its strength;  
then the damned will be for ever deprived of any  
excuse, or pretence to cloud the brightness of its  
light.

Besides, Christ is God as well as man; and  
therefore, as he will have the tenderest concern  
for us, so the most sacred regard to the honour  
of the divine laws will always possess him. And  
thus, by having both natures, the rights of man-  
kind and the glory of God's government, will  
be both inviolably preserved: when the Judge  
will have such a mixture of greatness and autho-  
rity, as never to sink below the majesty of so ex-  
alted a character; and of mercy and love, as ne-  
ver to punish more than we deserve.

4. Jesus Christ being appointed the supreme  
Judge, will conduce mightily to the ends of the  
judgment, and add force to the execution of the

sentence: and this both as to the good and the bad. The truly pious, who shall be placed at his right hand, will then have the perfectest assurance that their happiness shall come fully up to the sentence of Christ, when they shall for ever enjoy the purest pleasures, in that kingdom of God wherein dwelleth righteousness: and we may suppose them to argue thus, Is the Messiah who redeemed me with his own blood; who manifested the sincerest love, when he gave himself for me a sacrifice through the eternal Spirit, and by that once offering of himself finished all my transgressions; he who sent the rod of his power out of Zion, and subdued my soul into the obedience of God, is he my Judge? Then I may safely rely upon the reward he assigns, I am sure he will never deceive me, nor beguile my soul with an imaginary joy; when he loaded me with so real benefits upon earth, and “became poor that I thereby might be rich.” Thus you see the admirable wisdom in Christ’s being Judge, since it will conduce so much to the reward of the godly, the declaring of which is one design of the last judgment. I may add also, that hereby the sons of the resurrection are made capable of bearing a share in that glorious work, and a part in their Redeemer’s triumph over all his enemies, when “they shall sit with him upon thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

This argument we are upon, will hold good also with respect to the wicked. Christ’s being the Judge, will fill them with despair, and the horror of an eternal fire from which they cannot possibly be delivered. Had God the Father pronounced the sentence, they might be supposed to imagine that it were severe, because he is represented as “a jealous and terrible God;” so at length might admit of some mitigation, as he dealt with Adam: but from the condemnation’s being pro-

pronounced by him, who is known to us by his name “mercy and love; who came not to condemn the world, but that through him men might have eternal life;” whose compassions so flowed that he *wept* over lost souls, who were ruining themselves: hence, I say, it follows, that it is impossible for such to escape when he condemns; his sentence must be irreversible, for there can never be a more merciful and amiable Judge, one who delights more to pardon, and has less pleasure in punishing.

5. Another consideration, which will tend to evince the wisdom of this constitution, is, that hereby the infinite evil of sin, and the inconceivable danger in committing it, are made evident by a very illustrious proof. What can be conceived more abominable and vile, and big with evil, than that which will make love turn into severity; and oblige a Saviour, who did so glorious things, that he might “open a new and living way into the highest heavens for rebellious sinners,” to enter upon so strange a work as punishing? The sending of creatures into misery, is so unlike to the management of Christ upon earth, when “he came to seek and to save us,” that I am sure sin, which is the cause of his doing so, must be inconceivably sinful: and indeed I cannot frame a more detestable notion of wickedness, than that, when the Son of God’s love will be the Judge, even he will, upon the account of it, banish souls into everlasting destruction.

6. The last thing I shall mention, and which indeed seems to me a very noble and glorious effect of Christ’s being the Judge at the last day, is, that hereby God will practically shew the consistency of all the divine perfections, of infinite love and infinite justice; of the riches of inexhaustible mercy, and untainted holiness, and awful severi-

ty. It has been always a very perplexing difficulty, to reconcile these attributes which seemed to be jarring and contradictory: and the effect of this upon blinded men, was, that they were either driven to despair; or puffed up to presumption, as they lost fixed impressions of the divine mercy, or from a wrong notion of it lessened their awe of his justice, and fancied that he was “one altogether like themselves.” But now you see, by Christ’s being the Judge, the same person exerting the highest acts flowing from all these attributes, with undisturbed harmony: he who humbled himself unto death that he might deliver them who were under its bondage, and patiently endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, now appears armed with fury against iniquity, and infinitely jealous of the honour and dignity of the divine government. He knows how to save and how to destroy: by a look from the right to the left hand, he gives “a depart into everlasting fire,” or an “enter ye into the joys of your Lord,” at the same time the highest instance of justice, and the noblest act of love. How indisputed a proof will then be given, that the grace of Christ did not tend to licentiousness, and a patronizing of sin; and, how fatally mistaken they shall be who turned it to wantonness! how ravishing will be the prospect to the enlightened understanding of a perfected saint, when he shall view in Christ all the divine excellencies, even mercy and justice, kissing each other!

I hope what I have said upon this head, may tend, in some measure, to the influencing our thoughts to admire the wisdom and equity of God’s management, in “judging the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.”

The last thing I proposed, was to endeavour, from this argument, to engage our souls to the  
love

love and service of God and the Redeemer, by applying this truth directly to practice, in the regulating of our affections and the conduct of life.

I. From what has been said, we may be convinced of the infinite folly and misery of stupid sinners, who contemn Christ, or neglect to procure an interest in his special love. How melancholy must it be to all who have any bowels of compassion towards their fellow-creatures, to behold prevailing wickednesses carrying so many, like the wind, from the only good that is worthy of pursuit, and to see them confining their sordid desires to the narrow limits of the short-lived pleasures here below! So far are the rational faculties debauched by a habit of sin, and the universal corruption of our natures, that the plainest and most important truths are treated with ridicule or neglect. Madmen! who throw about fire-brands, arrows and death; who feed upon poison, and fancy it a sweet morsel; their taste is so vitiated that nothing is palatable to them, except what will consume their bowels, and prove rottenness to the bones; and who pay so little regard to the only remedy of all these evils. We are overwhelmed with foolish sinners.

Is not the life of the stout and most vigorous, as empty as a vapour, and as easily dissolved? how numerous, and oft-times how inevitable, are the accidents which give a finishing stroke to these lusts and pleasures, which many so much dote upon? Think then a little upon that time when the earth shall tremble under thy feet, and flee away from thy embraces, and with it all thy joys, all thy bliss perish. What wilt thou have, sinner, to support thy courage and thy hope, when the vanities of life shall be swallowed up by death, and thou dar'st not look up to God above who  
was.

was never in thy thoughts, and darest that Saviour whom thy impious wit or thy dissolute practice affronted and dishonoured? Then shalt thou be “driven away in thy wickedness, while the “righteous shall have hope in his death;” then hell, and a thousand horrors, shall haunt thee in thy last hours: and how inconceivable the shame, the dread, and the torment that shall seize upon thy soul, when thou enterest into the other world, where Christ the Lord reigns to tear in pieces his malicious foes!

Is Jesus appointed to be Judge of all? then what a mighty power has Satan and sin got over men, who shew no regard to his favour, and behave upon earth, as if they could brave it out against him in hell? they fancy that a crucified Messiah is not to be much dreaded, and so laugh at his terrors. And ah! in these degenerate and melancholy times, too many ridicule every thing that is grave and serious, as if eternity were a fit subject to be jested upon by a profane wit. How many are gone so great lengths, as to imagine that a disregarding of the sacredest doctrines of the scriptures, and the great concerns of another world, are necessary to entitle a man courageous and brave; and that it is only the weak and the timorous who fright themselves with the terrors of hell, or flee to the Lord Christ to be saved from them! Well, but the day is a coming, when “this Jesus shall descend with the glory “of his Father,” and the mighty angels; and how will paleness cover thy face, and trembling seize thy joints! when thou shalt be dragged before his judgment-seat. Those heroes of sin, who made so much noise in the world, shall then, with the most abject cowardice, seek to hide themselves from the Redeemer, whom they insulted here; but then the hills shall not cover thee from the  
power.

power of this Saviour ; but thou, and the devils whom thou hast served, shall be together sent by him into “ everlasting darkness, where shall be “ weeping and gnashing of teeth. Be wise now “ therefore, O ye kings! be instructed, ye “ judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, “ and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son lest “ he be angry, and ye perish from the way, “ when his wrath is kindled but a little: blessed “ are all they that put their trust in him.”

2. Hence we may see the true wisdom of those who have made Christ their choice, and imbraced him for their all ; because thereby they have engaged in the service of him who is to be their Judge, and the “ excellency of the knowledge of “ Christ, and of him crucified, for he now lives “ and shall die no more.” Let us, from this consideration, live “ a life of faith upon the Son “ of God,” and trust to him as the only Saviour who can give eternal life to all who obey him ; and let it be the fixed resolution of our souls to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

I am afraid, that it is now turned too fashionable for many, who own the Christian name, to have little of this Redeemer in their religion. Their own righteousness, and a false notion of morality, have almost banished the essential articles of the faith concerning justification through the blood of Christ. And a “ righteousness which “ is of God through him, holiness in all manner “ of conversation,” is undoubtedly the character of the disciple of Jesus : but, by pressing it, we must not prostitute the divine purity to our imperfect services, but raise our thoughts to an exalted religion, that is worthy of our God, a morality that looks to Christ, that by him it may be accepted of the Father, and prove of any saving advantage

vantage to us. I wish there were none who, in effect, turned Christianity into a refined heathenism, and by their management, looked rather like the scholars of Plato or Seneca, than the disciples of Jesus, who redeemed us by the blood of his cross. Were Cicero or Seneca, to be our judges at the last day, it might be reasonable to think, and live according to their maxims: but, methinks, the consideration, “that the secrets  
“ of men shall be judged by Christ according  
“ to the gospel,” ought to be a powerful argument with us all, to “count every thing but loss  
“ that we may win him,” and not to dote upon other masters, but to learn of him, by whose sentence we must stand or fall.

3. Here is mighty comfort and encouragement to all the truly pious, who, “by a patient con-  
“ tinuance in well doing, look for the blessed  
“ hope, and the glorious appearance of the great  
“ God, and our Saviour.” Hence they may have what shall bear up their sinking spirits under the heaviest pressures, and make them rejoice even in tribulations. Were the pillars of the earth shaken, and the frame of nature unhinged, let the most boisterous storms and tempests threaten the repose of the world, you who have dedicated yourselves to Christ, may enjoy a calm serenity amidst all these convulsions, seeing Christ, who is your life, shall judge angels and men. Let devils, and the wicked upon earth, attack you with all their force, the Redeemer keeps your souls; and if they kill the body, you go to him the Judge of all. How perfect a tranquillity may they possess, who know that he is their friend! they may “go ever on in the brightness of his  
“ strength, so in his favour shall their horn be ex-  
“ alted.” What shall make these afraid, who are united to him who keepeth the keys of hell and of death,

death, and who, with equal power and authority, reigns king of both worlds! and with what a pleasure should it fill true believers, and spread a joy over their souls! when they know that the Saviour who possesseth their hearts, for “ they “ have none in heaven but him, and on earth “ whom they desire besides him;” when they know, I say, that he “ in whom is all their de- “ light,” shall one “ day appear in the clouds, “ with the whole glory of heaven, when all na- “ tions shall be gathered before him,” and he there sit their supreme Judge; and when they his followers shall receive, from his hands, an eternal reward, and “ so shall be ever with their Lord.”

O incomprehensibly glorious day! when the mighty kings on earth, “ who would not have “ this man to reign over them,” shall have all their ungodly deeds fully repaid them; when the most despised disciples of Christ, that were contemned upon earth, or underwent cruel sufferings from bloody persecutors, shall be seated with Christ on his throne to judge a Pharaoh or a Cesar, who once oppressed them. How amazing a change, when the weakest babe in Christ shall judge and condemn angels! And are you now furiously attacked by satan and his armies, and fight against principalities and powers, which, it may be, sometimes gain ground upon you, to the sorrow of your life? bear up against them with undaunted courage, remember the captain under whom you fight; and take a view of that glorious day, when you shall have dominion with Christ, over the strongest of devils, in the morning of “ the resur- “ rection.” How pleasing will it be to reflect upon the force and fraud of those wicked spirits, wherewith you had to struggle, and that with difficulty, while on earth, when they shall then be subdued under your feet, and Christ shall judge angels.

angels and men by the gospel, which “ was made  
 “ to you the power and the wisdom of God ?”  
 Then shall those who grieved your souls by their  
 contemning of God and his Christ, have all their  
 hard speeches of the Saviour and his holy religion,  
 recompensed by eternal shame and confusion of  
 face ; and the honour of your Lord and his doc-  
 trine, and all that you could endure upon their  
 account, fully repaired.

Let these pleasing hopes comfort us under the  
 fears of death, and the discouragement of life,  
 often meditating upon what is delivered to us by  
 the apostle, 1 Theff. 4. 14. “ For if we believe  
 “ that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them  
 “ also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with  
 “ him : for this we say unto you by the word of  
 “ the Lord, that we which are alive, and re-  
 “ main unto the coming of the Lord, shall not  
 “ prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord  
 “ himself shall descend from heaven with a shout,  
 “ with the voice of the archangel, and with the  
 “ trump of God ; and the dead in Christ shall  
 “ rise first : then we which are alive and remain,  
 “ shall be caught up together with them in the  
 “ clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so  
 “ shall we be ever with the Lord. Wherefore  
 “ comfort one another with these words.”

Lastly, What has been discoursed should awaken  
 us into a very solicitous diligence, so to manage  
 ourselves, while in this world, that, at Christ's  
 appearance, we “ may lift up our heads with  
 “ joy, because then our redemption draweth  
 “ nigh.” Let us in particular imitate, and strive  
 to advance, as near as we can, to the noble ex-  
 ample of a Christian life, which Jesus, who will  
 be our Judge, set before us when upon earth ;  
 “ be holy and humble like him,” always submis-  
 sive to the divine pleasure ; and, from the bottom

of our soul, let this voice be the measure of our life, "Not our will, O Lord, but thine be done." We are all children of the light and of the day; we profess to believe that the heavens which cover us shall be dissolved, and the earth wherein we now live shall be burnt up with fervent heat: let not then our portion and our treasures be here consumed with it, but may our "affections be set upon things above where Christ our Judge is."

I shall conclude this discourse with our Redeemer's exhortation to his disciples, Luke 21. 34, &c. "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares; for as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."





## S E R M O N XV.

R O M A N S ii. 16.

*In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.*

**T**H E devices of Satan, that irreconcilable enemy to the glory of God, and the happiness of men, whereby he, with unwearied and malicious diligence, endeavours to obscure the one, and prevent or lessen the other, are so unaccountably many in their number, and so cunning and artful in their nature; that the world must be extremely dangerous, when so filled with disguised snares, and it requires the utmost attention and care to keep our souls free from falling into them. How necessary is that direction of our blessed Saviour, that without ceasing we ought to “watch and pray, lest we enter into “temptation,” and be overcome by it? Seeing we are thus surrounded by adversaries to our salvation, who lose no opportunity of retarding us in our spiritual race, and are perfectly instructed in all the different arts of that cursed war; which they manage, alas! with too much fatal success, by drawing away so many into rebellion against their Maker, and to the just ruin that must necessarily follow upon such treachery and disobedience.

The devil not only makes open and direct attacks upon souls, and shews his design to allure or force them into his service: but he also quiets men into a false security, and then undermines with the less hazard of being discovered: nor is

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he ever more to be dreaded, than when, like the Parthians of old, he pretends a retreat, that the unwary soul may be more deeply and unavoidably pierced by his poisoned arrows. He hath temptations suited to all the different constitutions and inclinations of mankind: when he finds any so impressed with the terrors of a God and approaching eternity, that he cannot easily induce him to banish these awful objects entirely from his thoughts, and altogether throw off religion and truth; he then endeavours to ruin the soul by more subtil temptations, by painting over a false and deceitful religion, with glorious appearances and beautiful colours, in which it takes up its rest, and is lulled into a deadly sleep. Agreeably to this, if we take a view of the world, we may easily notice, that not only the far greatest part of it are utterly ignorant of Christ, “the way, the truth, and the life,” who nevertheless have confidence and hope, in those very superstitious and idolatrous practices, whereby they affront the true God, instead of honouring him with real services: but that even where “the day-spring from on high” hath overshadowed men, and life and immortality,” as well as the only way to attain to them, are brought to so full light; the greatest number of such as profess Christianity, and name the name of Christ, please themselves with a religion that is contrary to the scriptures, and will never be able to carry them to heaven. External performances, and a regulating our outward actions, according to the letter of the law, are often overvalued and confided in, while at the same time retired lusts, that are secretly harboured within the breast, and indulged there, are certain enough proofs of an impure soul and a false security.

It is therefore my purpose, at this time, by the assistance of God, to explain, at some length, one of the important truths contained in this text; and thence to shew the necessity of holiness, in our most private retirements and hidden designs, as well as in our publick appearances and open management; an exalted religion which runs thro' the whole man, and universally influences all the relations and circumstances of his conduct: and to rouse up our souls from speaking peace to themselves in any lower attainments, and dreaming that they are reconciled to God, while they are in reality enemies to him by their unrenewed minds.

The holy apostle Paul, from the beginning of this chapter, shews the equity of the divine government, whereby he always renders to every one, without the least exception, according to the exactest rules of right. And of this impartial justice, he gives an instance in the heathen world, which God would condemn for its disobedience to that law of nature, of which there were such remains upon the hearts of all men, as to render every one of them inexcusable, who contradicted its precepts by their wicked lives: and that there were such notions of right and wrong, he proves in the 15th verse, from the witnessing of the conscience, and its every where excusing or accusing them, according as their actions were conformable or contradictory to this light.

Some think that the words I have now read, may be connected with the 15th verse, thus, that as conscience does its work in some measure while upon earth, and is a proof of the secret notions of their duty, which all men have in some degree; so it will perform it fully, and to the conviction of every person, "in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ;"

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when sin will no more be varnished over with any charms, or the conscience stupified: but sin appearing, as it is, vile and abominable, the conscience shall prove a severe tormentor to an awakened soul. But this does not seem to me very probable, it not conducing so directly to the apostle's design, which is to give a present proof of the Gentiles having the law written in their hearts, which is not so well gained by giving an account what will be the actings of their conscience in the future life, as by shewing what it now does while in this world.

The text seems therefore to be better connected with the sixth, or rather with the twelfth verse, "For as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel." Which words contain these three very important truths.

1. We have the person who will be clothed with the glorious character of the supreme Judge at the last day, Jesus Christ. He who humbled himself to the lowness of a servant, that he might be made perfect through sufferings, and the author and finisher of eternal salvation to lost sinners, shall then be advanced to this exalted dignity, and surrounded with the glory of his Father, and shall pronounce the final and irreversible sentence upon angels and men. God is here said to judge men by Christ, because our Saviour will then act in the capacity of Mediator, by a power delegated to him from the Father, who in the work of redemption is represented as clothed with the authority of the deity, and as the supreme Lord. But this consideration doth not in the least lessen the majesty of Christ, or at all argue that he will not, at the great day,

day, act as the supreme Judge, from whose determinations there can be no appeal; for, as it is not unusual amongst men, for a person to communicate unto another all the authority he himself was possessed of, to make him his plenipotentiary, and give him full unlimited powers; so “the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed to the Son all judgment,” without any reserve. I have, in another place, already discoursed upon this head, and shewn, at large, the wisdom and justice of the divine constitution, whereby Jesus Christ, the Son of man, is appointed to judge the world in righteousness, and endeavoured thence to engage us to the love and service of God and Christ: and I shall not now repete any thing I then said; but proceed to some other truths contained in the text; where we have,

2. The things which shall be enquired into at the last judgment, and either rewarded or punished, “the secrets of men;” then retired lusts, as well as open crimes, shall aggravate the condemnation of the ungodly. The hypocrite, and the cunning deceiver, who now lurk in darkness, and may easily impose upon weak ignorant men, and cover the greatest villanies with specious pretences, shall then be unmasked; and that pure light, wherewith the Judge shall be clothed, will pierce through the soul of the sinner, and discover lurking iniquity in every recess of it. Then the devil himself, who so artfully disguises temptations from the eyes of mortals, shall not be able, with all his craft, to cover the first bud-dings or the smallest circumstance of so much as one impious thought: but all will be naked and bare. And on the other hand, not only the good works of the truly pious, whereby they shined before men, and were the light of the world, shall then be rewarded; but every secret grone  
that

that prevailing iniquity occasioned to them, the smallest degree of love to God and the Saviour, and the least act of obedience to the divine law, shall be openly proclaimed, and crowned with glory and immortality. In short, we are hereby instructed, that no action, word, or thought, however inconsiderable, and how little noticed, either by ourselves or others, will be passed by, when the world shall be solemnly judged by Jesus Christ: but all of them will be set in a full light, and thoroughly examined into, and, agreeably to their different natures, approved or condemned.

3. We have the rule, to which every part of Christ's procedure shall be perfectly agreeable, "according to my gospel," saith the apostle. That word of life, which, by authority from its great Author, I have delivered unto you, the gospel, will be the very direct and immediate rule of the last judgment, with respect to Christians who have lived in its light; and as to the heathens, their condemnation will be also agreeable to what the apostle had laid down in the preceeding part of the chapter; namely, that "as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law."

It is my purpose, at this time, to discourse to you upon the second of these truths contained in the text; namely, the subject of the last judgment, the thing which will then come under the consideration of the Judge, "the secrets of men." And as this phrase is without any restriction, and to be taken in its utmost latitude, we are to understand by it, not only these private actions and designs which may be concealed from others, tho' they are known to our own consciences; but also such things as may escape ourselves, the nature whereof may be mistaken or undiscovered by us. The hypocrite, who either designedly cheated o-

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thers by false pretences, or who really flattered himself with deceiving hopes, and imagined that in truth he was what he appeared to be, shall then be made manifest: and the good actions of a true Christian, which might not only be uncharitably mistaken by the world, but unreasonably censured by his own conscience, shall then be fully vindicated.

The text is so direct to my purpose, that I need not give you any observation different from the words of it; namely, that in the great day of accounts all “the secrets of men” shall be judged. In discoursing upon which, I shall, by the assistance of God, do these things.

1. I shall unfold, at some greater length, what is signified by this phrase, “the secrets of men.”

2. I shall endeavour to prove, that all these “secrets of men” shall be judged at the last day.

3. I will a little open up the force of a peculiar motive to engage us to a religious life, and the careful avoiding of every sin, which arises from this consideration.

4. I shall draw some practical inferences from the preceding discourse.

I begin with the first; namely, to unfold, at some greater length, what is signified by this phrase, “the secrets of men.”

And, 1. All our actions, that are known only to God and our own consciences, which we have been at a great deal of labour and toil to conceal from the eyes of the world, and which possibly may be placed beyond the reach of the most sagacious enquirer, shall then be published in the solemn assembly of angels and men. None of us but are guilty of a great many crimes, to which ourselves alone were witnesses; and “shall not God search them out? for the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his go-  
“ ings.”

“ings.” All the tricks of guile and dishonesty, the smooth flattering words whereby we carefs and beguile the unwary, will then be discovered to have been empty professions, without any real friendship and regard. Our words which we so lavishly throw away upon very trifling occasions, and thereby sacrifice truth and sincerity to the customs of the times, will then every one of them be ranked in their order, and the bottom of the views and designs whence they flowed, fully ript up. Then the treacherous aims and contrivances of the cunning politician, and all the different parts of his schemes to raise his character, and gratify his ambition, which lurked undiscerned within his own breast, shall be divulged; and all his wisdom, closeness and care, will not be able to keep one of them secret. The wickedness of our hearts shall be as open as the iniquity of our hands. The numerous lusts which we too easily entertain, and the many abominations which ly there undisturbed, impure thoughts, which have never broke out into actions; the secret pleasure, and debased satisfaction we may entertain in the misfortunes of our neighbours, and our envy at their prosperity; disguised malice and revenge, how fairly soever coloured over, shall be all of them declared as in the day. In short, every the least thought of sinners shall then be judged, and the night and darkness will not cover them from the presence of the Judge. And this our Saviour very plainly assures his disciples of, Luke 12. 1, 2, 3. where he bids them “beware of the leaven  
“of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy: for there is  
“nothing covered, that shall not be revealed,  
“neither hid, that shall not be known. There-  
“fore whatever ye have spoken in darkness, shall  
“be heard in the light, and that which ye have

“spoken in the ear in closets, shall be proclaimed  
“upon the house-tops.”

2. By “the secrets of men,” we may not only understand these our private actions or thoughts that are in themselves evil; but the ends and springs of such as are even materially good, the spirit which animates the soul in all its motions: for the Judge will then trace every thing to the fountain whence it flows, and uncover it. We are often deceived as to the designs of others, yea, it is very difficult-always to know our own: the sources even of our own management, ly hid in deep obscurity, and are generally like the head of a river which is beneath ground, or covered with a rock, and are not throughly seen into, except by him who taketh up the mountains as a small thing. How few are there who really aim at the divine glory, and the honour of Christ; and are not influenced in their conduct by other motives? Sincerity and uprightnes here is an high attainment, and belongs to very few. Pride, and the gratifying our own humours, vain-glory, and the love of applause, and our other worldly interests, frequently push us on to actions outwardly good; and are the causes of that appearing religion which is to be found with the greatest part. The esteem of our neighbour’s fame and reputation, may engage men to do many things, curb their other appetites, and deny themselves those pleasures which the love of God, and a disinterested regard to religion, would never restrain them from: it is really to themselves, that such  
“sacrifice and burn incense.”

Nor are we to imagine, that this is to be found only with plain hypocrites, who know they are such, and designedly make religion a cloke to cover their selfish ends: no, self is extremely subtil, and mighty insinuating; and, even while lurking undiscerned, it may be the secret spring  
which

which occasions our motions. A man, as he shuns discovering unto others, that he gratifies himself, while the glory of God, is the pretended mark he aims at; so if he have any remains of modesty, the thoughts of his hypocrisy will make him blush even in private: and therefore he does all he can to banish this uneasy reflection, and to persuade his own soul, that it is really sincere and upright enough, and to hide from it these by-ends, whereby he is in truth solely and universally managed. Nor is it impossible, that what is said of common liars, may hold true with respect to notorious hypocrites, that by frequently boasting unto others of the sincerity of their intentions, and their regard in every thing to the commandments of God, they may come at length to be persuaded of it themselves.

Now, at the day of judgment, the most secret inducements to any of our actions, and all the moving principles of them, will be thoroughly examined into, and impartially judged. It will then be discovered, whether we sought our own things, or the honour and glory of Christ: if we made moderation, and that pure peaceable wisdom which is from above, only a cloke for our lukewarmness, and a cold unconcernedness about religion: if we were truly prompted by a zeal for holiness and truth, which can never be too active and vigorous, when managed agreeably to the laws of the gospel: or if we were only hurried by the violence of our own ungovernable tempers; and satiated our malice and revenge, or indulged our peevishness and untoward humours: if education and custom be the only rise of our profession of Christianity; or if we have that inward taste and feeling of its divine original, which will keep us steady in the faith, when it is deserted by others, and when the owning of it is accompanied with many tribu-

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lations: if the terrors of hell, and a slavish fear of present shame and future misery, be the only reins which curb our corruptions from breaking out to open impieties: or if the amiableness of the divine excellencies allure us to obedience, and mix our awe with the tenderest love. In short, when “the secrets of men shall be judged by Christ,” not only the general tendency of our lives, but the spring of every particular action will be set in a clear light; and every thing, in all its relations and circumstances, shall be fully unfolded: for “no thought can be withholden from him; Who “is he that hideth counsel without knowledge?”

3. By “the secrets of men,” may be pointed out to us, those actions which are ordinarily accounted indifferent, and to have little influence upon a spiritual life; but which may be either done or omitted without any great hazard: and these may very justly be termed “the secrets of men,” tho’ they be publickly enough performed; because it is so extremely hard to discover the sinfulness or duty of them, and how to manage ourselves with respect to them as we ought. Now at the last day, not only things that are positively sinful, or plain omissions of duty, must be accounted for; but even every moment of time, which we so inconsiderately squander away by idle amusements and foolish diversions, when it might be spent usefully to ourselves and others, will be laid open in its hainous aggravations. Christ will then judge the smallest point of our life that is consumed in unprofitable discourse, or empty speculations and curious enquiries; when, had it been right employed, it might have conduced to our growing in the knowledge of Christ crucified, and the returns of love and obedience we owe to the Redeemer, which are so infinitely valuable, and so absolutely necessary.

And I am apt to believe, that when the secrets of our unnoticed sins, and the universal extent  
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of holiness in all manner of conversation, shall be revealed by Christ the Judge, no action, considered in all its circumstances, will appear to have been absolutely indifferent; since we are commanded so diligently to “redeem the time,” and in every moment of our lives, to “work out the work of our salvation,” without dallying and delay: and this is the account our Saviour gives of this matter, Mat. 12. 36. “But I say unto you, that every idle word which men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment;” not only of their hard and ungodly speeches, but of every vain dispute and insignificant conversation that conduceth not to edification, and tendeth to no valuable purposes.

4. Lastly, By “the secrets of men,” I think, may be understood, the universal influence which our example may have upon the actions of others. Sin especially is of a mighty contagious nature, it poisons the air where it is committed, and is greedily sucked in by those about us. It is “a little leaven which soon leaveneth the whole lump,” not only of our own souls, but of the society we live in: nor was there ever a leprosy so spreading and infectious as it is, and the working whereof is ordinarily so hidden and retired.

It is impossible to trace the mischief, that the least sin of ours may occasion in the world, thro’ all its different windings. When we make other men partakers of our disobedience, we cannot know how far the diffusive influence of it may reach to places of the earth, with which ourselves have no other communication, and in many after ages, when our heads shall be buried in the dust. Now as these are, in the most proper sense, “secret sins,” they will all be laid open at the day of judgment; and we will then not only be sentenced for what we have done in our own persons;

sons; but all the iniquities of others we have been accessory to, or might have conduced to the preventing of, by a well ordered conversation, will prove parts of our guilt. Jesus Christ will then open up that invisible train of consequences, whereby the sins of millions, it may be many ages after, are some way connected with a transgression of ours. And so our guilt mixeth itself with the current of impiety in a thousand channels: nor is it unjust, that the iniquities of all those persons should be laid to our charge, and in that day wound our heads, seeing it was entirely our folly and fault, that we were not careful enough to prevent such dreadful consequences, as we knew might follow upon the least departure from God; and that we are plainly forwarned, “not to be partakers of other mens sins.”

Thus I have in some measure shewn what is imported in this phrase, “the secrets of men:” and have considered them more directly as they respect the wicked. But,

It will be easy to apply what hath been said to the sincerely pious at the day of judgment. Not only the publick services they did to God and religion, will be rewarded; but their inward acts of love and faith shall then be openly proclaimed; every tear they shed in secret for prevailing iniquity, and every sincere prayer they put up for the glory of God, and the good of others, shall be “declared as upon the house-tops: Lord,” saith David, Psalm 38. 9. “all my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee.” The acts of compassion and charity, which they did not vainly blaze abroad through the world, but the right hand bestowed, while the left was ignorant of it; every injury that hath been patiently born in private, every trespass of our neighbour that hath been forgiven, and  
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not repented, shall then be spoken in the light. The calm and silent Christian, who approves himself to God and his own conscience, though reproached and slandered by men, shall then be at no loss; but purity in the heart, upright designs, and sincerity in the life, an unfeigned zeal for the glory of Christ and the honour of religion, though unnoticed or mistaken by the world, will be fully rewarded; while a clamorous noisy religion, that may make louder pretensions, shall be covered with shame. And this, our Saviour assures us, will be the procedure of the last judgment with respect to secret prayer, fasting, and alms; and no doubt it will be in like manner as to all other things, Matth. 6. 3, 4. “ But when  
“ thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know  
“ what thy right hand doth, that thine alms may  
“ be in secret, and thy Father who seeth in  
“ secret himself shall reward thee openly.”

The second thing proposed, was to prove that all these secrets of men shall certainly be judged in the last day. Your time will not allow me to insist upon the perfect fittedness of Christ the Judge for this work, from his thorough knowledge of every event; for his “ eyes are upon all their  
“ ways, neither is their iniquity hid from his  
“ face,” and all the churches know, that “ it is  
“ he who searcheth the hearts and reins.” I shall only very briefly add one or two other scriptures to these already mentioned, which are very express to this purpose: and then, in a few words, shew the necessity of this, from the nature of the judgment itself. 1 Cor. 4. 5. “ Therefore judge  
“ nothing before the time, until the Lord come,  
“ who both will bring to light the hidden things  
“ of darkness, and will make manifest the coun-  
“ sels of the hearts: and then shall every man  
“ have praise of God.” Eccl. 12. 14. “ For

“ God shall bring every work into Judgment,  
 “ with every secret thing, whether it be good,  
 “ or whether it be evil.”

As these texts are very plain proofs of the doctrine, so the nature of the thing demonstrates its certainty. There could be no judgment at all if the secrets of men were not then judged: for true religion lies in the soul, and Christ is only acceptably served when he governs there. Our righteousness in no case profiteth our Maker, but he is pleased to accept of our hearts and sincere love; and if we do not give him them, we can bestow nothing upon him. Outward professions can only deceive men, but if not attended with inward purity, they must be hateful to him whose eyes pierce through every disguise: the immensity of his nature makes it impossible, that there can be in a proper sense, any secrets of men with respect to him; for he is intimately present with the soul, and equally discerns it in its retired wishes as in the professions of the lips, Jer. 23. 24. “ Can any hide himself in secret places, that I  
 “ shall not see him, saith the Lord? do not I  
 “ fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?” and, Heb. 4. 13. “ Neither is there any creature that is  
 “ not manifest in his sight: but all things are  
 “ naked and opened unto the eyes of him with  
 “ whom we have to do.” And indeed, the supposition that the secrets of men should not be judged by Christ at the last day, is so flatly contradictory to the very first and most essential principles of all religion and holiness, and so evidently dishonourable to the perfect purity of an omniscient God, that I need not stay to offer any more particular arguments upon this head.

The third thing proposed, was to open up the force of a peculiar motive to engage us to a religious life, and the careful avoiding of every  
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sin, arising from the consideration of the truth of this doctrine; namely, the inconceivable shame and dreadful confusion of face, wherewith impenitent sinners, who have not fled to Christ for refuge, and have no share in his righteousness, that pure and clean raiment of the saints, must be wholly covered with at the last judgment, when all the secrets of their hearts shall be openly proclaimed before that general assembly of angels and men. This is indeed a noble argument of the fruitfulness and ruining nature of sin, whereof we shall then be ashamed; and might be, in many instances, improved to very useful purposes: but, because of the length this discourse is already drawn to, I shall content myself, by proposing a few of the many things which this subject offers.

Shame is one of the human passions, arising from a sense of having done what is below the dignity of our natures, and proves dishonourable and disgraceful to us: and this becomes in a more particular manner tormenting and disagreeable, when those blemishes of ours are discovered to others. It is easy to guess the mighty power of this passion, and the exceeding pain and uneasiness caused by it, if we reflect upon ourselves. How anxious are we, when under the apprehensions of having any base design, or retired hidden crime made known to the world? And at how great a price would we willingly buy off the reproach and scandal, which attends the discovery? We then flee from company, and the face of every person we meet with proves as an executioner to torture us: nor can we, even in secret, endure the thoughts of having any of our faults detected, and so losing our fame and reputation in the world. To how great extravagancies, alas! hath this driven some of no very heroick dispositions? And we have reason to lament a too common effect of

this shame, whereby it excites persons to the committing more execrable and abominable impieties, that lesser ones may be concealed from the knowledge of others. Now, as we may thus see how frightful and painful an evil shame may be, even while upon earth: the following considerations will evince, that the shame attending the judging the secrets of wicked men at the last day, must be inconceivably more uneasy and afflicting, than can be possibly felt or imagined in this world.

1. The number and quality of the secrets which shall then be revealed. All the numerous evils which are seated in our hearts will be pulled out of their holds: and a multitude of wickednesses which reign there, exceeding in their number and vileness, any of those sholes of insects where-with God plagued the land of Egypt, every debased lust and degenerate passion, shall then be laid open, clothed with all their vileness and disgrace. Contempt of God shall not, as it is too oft upon earth, be reputed courage and bravery; but fatal rashness and horrid stupidity. The sinner and the fool will then be the same: and the freedom of a loose dissolute life, so much doted upon, will then appear the vilest slavery, and be attended with the greatest contempt. And now, if the discovery of one sin be so frightful to us here, where little of its disgrace is known, and its aggravating circumstances are easily smoothed over: what everlasting confusion must run through the soul, that shall have iniquities without number revealed, and the eyes of the understanding opened to perceive their hainousness; and so constant impressions thereof made upon it by God himself, that it shall not be able, for one moment, to divert its tortured thoughts to another subject?

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2dly, The surprisingsness of the change, the sudden alteration in the views, that both the person himself and his neighbours had of his state upon earth, will exceedingly augment his confusion. As when a proud Pharisee, who gloried in his religion, and boasted of his righteousness, shall be found utterly destitute of them: and the contempt and reproach of so ill-grounded pride and vanity, shall succeed to the general applause and the admiration of a stupid multitude, which he flattered himself with. How terrible! how amazing a change! to be thrown down from the swellings of self-conceit and the esteem of the world, and sunk into the most abject state of shame and disgrace.

3dly, This shame will become more grievous, from the innumerable multitude of the persons, to whom their hypocrisie shall be manifested. Every single member of that vast assembly, will contribute to make the pain accompanying it the more intense and intolerable: when they shall stare the criminal soul out of countenance, without a possibility of its hiding its face from their views; when the posterity of Adam from the beginning to the end of things, and those thousands of thousands of angels, will all be present to behold the soul torn open, and each of its lurking villanies crawling abroad in full light.

4thly, The quality and character of these witnesses, will also shew the greatness of the shame and confusion of the wicked. We may easily find with ourselves, the uneasiness of any of our sins being manifested, heightened from a consideration of the holiness and goodness of the person to whom the discovery is made, and in whose presence we are: because his virtue and religion are a cutting reproof and severe reproach to our impieties, so contrary to them. Now at the last judgment shall

shall be present the holy angels, who are without any stain or blemish; and so the sight of these noble and pure spirits, must needs prove a mighty torment to such debased impious wretches: and there sits Christ the Judge, who “is holy, harmless, undefiled,” and, by a distance longer than that betwixt the heavens and the earth, “separated from sinners.” Besides, every worker of iniquity will be clothed with a very peculiar shame, when he there beholds saints redeemed by the blood of Christ, and crowned with joy and immortality; and possibly some whom he contemned upon earth, and said, “Stand aside, for I am holier than thou:” while he, who was of the same blood with them, and had the same gospel preached to him, finds that he has foolishly thrown away an infinite good which they are possessed of, and stupidly preferred lying vanities to his own mercies.

And now need I say any more, beside the bare representing of this argument, to shew you the infinite folly of iniquity, and particularly of secret sin, and how careful we ought to be to abandon what will be attended with so fatal consequences? “What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed, for the end of those things is death,” Rom. 6. 21.

I might endeavour also upon this head to allure us to serious religion, from the views of that noble and divine pleasure, and that triumphing confidence which shall spread over the Christian’s soul, upon the secrets of their hearts being judged by Christ their amiable Redeemer: but your time hinders me to enter upon it. I shall therefore conclude this discourse, by drawing these practical inferences from what hath been spoken.

1. Hence it is evident, how foolish and unreasonable a part the greatest number of Christians act,

act, when they are at so solicitous pains to preserve an un sullied reputation, and “make clean the outside of the cup and platter,” to appear fair and flourishing before men; while they neglect to mortifie these lusts which rage within and defile the heart. This is as extravagantly mad, as if a person who had an ulcer in his bowels, ready to turn to an incurable gangrene, should bend all his thoughts to keep some little spots from breaking out and tarnishing his beauty, and never endeavoured to put a stop to the rottenness which is feeding upon his vitals, and will consume the bones. Could we cheat Omniscience as easily as we impose upon our own blindness or the weakness of others, we might possibly escape with our secret crimes: but seeing heaven shall one day reveal every iniquity, the consideration hereof should engage us to look inwards into our own breasts, before that awful day come, when Jesus Christ shall tear them up in the assembly of angels and men; and diligently to pursue sin and satan thro’ all their lurking places in the soul, that they may not escape our search: and let us never spare one of these enemies to our salvation, when discovered, but immediately put them to death, nor be moved with pity to the least of them, as Lot was to the City of Zoar, because that “was but a little one;” for the smallest spark of impurity, in so corrupted souls as ours are, is full as dangerous as the beginning of fire amongst combustible matter, which, though imperceivable at the first, is easily blown up to a devouring flame. And, that we may manage in this important work with the better success, let us never “lean to our own understandings:” but earnestly beg of God, “who is greater than our consciences,” that he would discover to us, and purge us from our secret sins.

2. We are hence instructed in the way how we may appear with joy and confidence before our Judge, at the great day of accounts, which is a matter of so infinite importance to us. Let us “cleanse our hearts, and wash our hands in “innocency,” and then we may, without being ashamed, approach before him, “who judgeth “the secrets of hearts,” and is not, like man, determined by outward appearances. Let us then who believe these truths, “purifie our souls and “bodies, which are temples for the Holy Ghost “to dwell in;” and endeavour to be filled with the graces of unfeigned love to God, and faith upon the Redeemer. Let us not only worship him with our lips, but adore him from the bottom of our hearts: that, when they shall at the last judgment be opened up, divine love may be found the governor in the midst of us. Let us hence be engaged, in sincerity to consecrate our selves and services to the honour and glory of our lord; that “whether in this life or in death we “may be entirely his:” and to dedicate to his praise, the most hidden action and inconsiderable thought, as well as the more noticeable parts of our life; and thus “approve ourselves to God “who seeth in secret,” without doting with too great fondness upon the vanishing breath of mens applause, or overvaluing their sentiments of us. I shall conclude this discourse, with that momentous exhortation, which the wise man founds upon this doctrine we have been speaking of. Eccl. 12. 13, 14. “Let us hear the conclusion of the “whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole of man. For “God shall bring every work into judgment, “with every secret thing, whether it be good, “or whether it be evil.”


 S E R M O N XVI.

DANIEL xii. 2.

*And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.*

**T**HE inspired prophet, having, in the preceding chapters, foretold some of the great designs of providence, and opened up the seats of the several monarchies, hath, in the first verse of this chapter, represented to him the glorious period of the gospel dispensation, and the coming of the Son of God into the world, the Messiah, that noble hope of the church, and the joyful deliverer from evil promised to the fathers. From which notable event, without touching at the intermediate times, there is a sudden transition made to the final consummation of all things by the second appearance of that victorious prince. And the verse which I have now read represents to us, the state of mankind at that time, when the voice of the Son of God shall send forth a sound, strong and efficacious enough to raise them up from the sleep of death itself. And ah! how surprizingly different will the circumstances of the human race then be? “some shall awake to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

It is upon the last of these which I design at this time to discourse; and I shall, through the assistance

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ance of God's holy spirit, endeavour to lay before your thoughts, that part of the punishment of impenitent transgressors at the last day, which consists in the mighty shame and confusion which will then overtake them, attended with a horror and amazement which exceed the highest apprehensions that we can possibly form of them. And this being a very great and important subject, I shall immediately apply myself to it, without spending any more of your time upon the context.

A transient reflection upon ourselves, will convince us that shame is one of the strongest and most lively of all our passions, none of which affect us with a more sensible uneasiness than it does; whence we find, by frequent experience, the unhappy consequences of this affection. Unto what pains does it not put hypocrites, to conceal from the world, even those crimes which could not be punished by human laws? and there are many instances how much it prevails upon such poor creatures, who, it might be thought, were almost lost to all sense of shame. The fear of infamy will push those, who have thrown away their modesty and virtue, to murder the fruit of their own womb, that they may prevent the scandal of a discovery. So that you will easily conceive, what a dreadful torment it must be, what throws and agonies it must occasion in the soul, when the confusion of sinners, at the general judgment, shall be raised to the greatest height, and every thing will be calculated to extend and increase its horrors.

The text represents this shame, not as an accidental or less considerable circumstance of that solemn day, but as the very design of the resurrection of the unjust; "they shall awake to  
"shame and everlasting contempt." It will be

one end of God's raising them up from their long sleep, and of gathering together that general assembly of rational creatures, that shame, scorn and infamy, in their greatest fury and anguish, may be poured out upon all the enemies of our heavenly king, and the despisers of his grace: and therefore God will take care so to order matters, that there shall be nothing wanting which can tend to make the blushes deeper, and the confusion more perplexing.

And as this shame will be astonishing in its nature, so it will be endless in its continuance: for, says my text, "they shall awake to everlasting contempt." It is one of the most frightful considerations, with respect to the punishment of the damned, that all the parts of it will be eternal, and that there can never be the smallest glimpse of hope to comfort the sinking spirit. And therefore they shall not only be exposed to all the agonies of the utmost infamy and contempt, in the presence of angels and men, but the shame and loathsomeness of their sins will be carried down with them into the other world: eternity shall not abate the quick sense of them, nor harden one sinner against their violence; nor will the darkness of those gloomy regions afford a covering to the confounded soul; but heaven will for ever look down upon them with the utmost disdain and abhorrence; and all the inhabitants of that miserable place will be exposed to the scornful hissings and outrages of one another, while that same avenging God, who blows up hell's fire with an everlasting flame, shall also impress their souls with an eternal shame, and his enraged Omnipotence shall take care that their blushes lose none of their tormenting powers for ever.

I cannot pretend to lay before you all the important particulars of so vast a subject, but I shall en-

endeavour to explain, in some measure, the nature of that shame, which will seize upon ungodly men at the last judgment; and affect our souls with a vigorous sense of its infinite horrors; that we may be now prevailed upon to consider seriously, “what fruit we will find in these things whereof we shall be then,” in such a manner, “ashamed,” by doing the following things.

1. I shall shew how aggravated that shame must be, from the condition of the wicked themselves, the persons who shall be the objects of this contempt. 2. I shall do this, from a consideration of the great assembly which shall then be present, Christ himself, saints and angels, the apostate spirits, and impenitent sinners. 3. I may, for the same end, represent to you some other momentous circumstances of that awful day of the coming of the Son of God. After all which, if your time allow, we may draw some practical inferences.

1. In order to represent to you that shame and contempt, to which ungodly men shall be awakened at the resurrection, I am to consider the condition in which they themselves shall be found.

Raise your thoughts, my friends, to the glorious appearances, and the magnificent solemnities of that notable day of the Messiah's triumphs, when all the glory of the celestial worlds shall be, at once, displayed in the person of the great Judge: heaven shall come down here below, and all the tribes of angelical hosts, in their most radiant pomp and beauty, will add to the majesty of his throne: When this whole world shall flame with an universal blaze, and, at once, the whole race of mankind, kings, and princes, and philosophers, the noble and the vulgar, in whatever station of life or period of time, shall be collected from the four winds of heaven, while hell yields  
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up its prisoners too, that the whole system of rational beings, in all their various orders and different circumstances, may compose one great assembly, which the universe is never but that once to behold.

How readily, my friends, will such an incomparable sight astonish those who are not thoroughly prepared for it: at the views hereof, what Micah speaks in another case, will be verified, Micah 7. 16. "The nations shall see, and be confounded  
"at all their might; they shall lay their hand  
"upon their mouth, their ears shall be deaf:" for how will a numberless multitude of such spectators, look every man dreadfully out of countenance, who is not fitted for that solemn appearance? "but the ungodly are not so, they  
"cannot stand in the judgment, nor sinners in  
"the congregation of the righteous;" for they will be then both destitute of every thing that can inspire men with confidence, and make them lift up their heads with joy amidst that illustrious assembly, and then they will also be overwhelmed by all the flowing springs of scorn and contempt.

Men upon earth are readily ashamed at the want of any thing which they imagine necessary for their quality and station, or suitable to the pretences which they make: and a small acquaintance with ourselves or others will convince us, what a torment it would be, for example, to a professor of any science, to have his ignorance in his proper business discovered, and to fall into a gross blunder in his own trade before a multitude: what an uneasie thing is it for a gentleman to be exposed to a company, for the want of manners, politeness, education, or whatever else is necessary to a person's birth and character? and so far is this passion shame misapplied, that men are often extremely put to the blush for things that do not  
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depend upon themselves; a fortune, equipage, table, &c. whereby they may bear some proportion to others of the same quality and rank: and their poverty or low circumstances, affects them with a sensible shame. And we see how tender this passion is in those, who are ambitious to be thought men of honour, and in duels and otherwise expose their lives to the greatest hazards, rather than bear the imaginary disgrace of, it may be, a trifling affront. Now let us apply these observations to our present purpose.

At the last day it will appear, with the strongest evidence to every person of all that vast assembly, that holiness and goodness are the brightest glory of a rational soul, that they give the sole beauty and excellency to a spirit, and are the only things to be esteemed and admired; and for their incomparable dignity and value, they will then shine forth with the most dazzling light of heaven; while the honour of crowns and sceptres, of riches and power, of wisdom and learning also, with all the other airy phantoms that are fashionable only in the present world, all vanish in empty smoke. Now, when ungodly men shall find themselves wholly destitute of the ornaments of purity, that they have not the least share in any thing that is noble and worthy; possess not one of the graces and virtues of religion which beautify their soul, and have no title to the everlasting righteousness brought in by the Redeemer: with what dreadful confusion of face will they be introduced into that great assembly, and have their eyes opened to behold their own poverty and want, and compare it with the splendor and comeliness of saints and angels? Ah! their wild and staring looks! when the shame of their nakedness shall be displayed before the universal congregation of creatures: then these beauties of everlast-

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ing righteousness, which surround the great Judge, will pierce into the very souls of wretches intirely deprived of them, and make them hang down their heads like a bulrush, and strive to sneak into a corner. With what consternation will they look up to the sparkling purity of myriads of the heavenly hosts, who are clothed with light and majesty, while poor they, are naked and bare, “polluted in their blood, and cast out into the open field, to the lothing of their person,” without so much as a possibility of being covered from one eye of all that innumerable multitude? There is no creature there, but by looking on their nakedness, must add to their reproach and disorder. And thus the united eyes of angels, men and devils, will stare the desponding transgressor quite out of all countenance.

But then, the shame of their poverty will be mightily increased, from the lively impressions that they might have been possessed of all these beauties of holiness once in their offer; and from the views of their fellow-creatures, friends and acquaintances, exalted at their Saviour’s right hand, and partakers of his honours and triumphs. Oh! with what inconceivable pangs of confusion and overwhelming eruptions of despairing shame, will they bear such a sight, and amazed, cry out, yonder our own poor relations and neighbours, yea, our own servants, to whom with so much disdain we preferred ourselves upon earth, and whom we used to treat with neglect or contempt: but now they are amiable and glorious as the seraphs, the rays of the eternal king of Zion enlighten and comfort them; see what joy and serenity dwell upon their countenance, how noble their pure white garments appear, upon what dazzling thrones they are seated, and what immortal diadems of beauty they wear; while we  
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that had souls as well as they, of the same dignity and value, we who might have been exalted to as high a station, and had the earnestest intreaties to provide for our souls, and the sincerest offers of pardon and happiness, are poor and naked, have not the smallest ornament, or the least comely feature. What a mean disgraceful figure must such contemptible creatures make, who are despised by all this great congregation? Oh! how can they endure their looks! and what swellings of indignation and confusion will be ready to burst their very souls! and indeed, my friends, it is impossible to conceive the agony of such, when the shame of their nakedness shall be laid open.

But then in the second place, beside the utter want of every thing that can afford them confidence at that solemn appearance of Christ, they shall be brought forth then covered over with all the impurities and deformities, that can give rise to the highest contempt and ignominy: for matters will be placed in a quite different view then, from what they are in during this night of blindness and deceit; sin will appear the greatest abomination and the most loathsom monster, its vileness will then be represented to every eye, even to that of the sinner himself, with such a convincing evidence, that nothing will look so ugly, nor any plague so hateful and noisom: he will then perceive, that sin is incomparably the most disgraceful evil, and what justly exposes a person to the most scandalous infamy; and therefore, when he sees himself altogether polluted with the filth of it, and is dragged out clothed with his shame and baseness to be exposed to the most publick derision, what confounding convulsions must he feel! Conceive, my friends, a transgressor in such a case, his own conscience twitting and upbraiding

braiding him, the vilest and most ignominious pollutions sticking close to him; the sources of his confusion being within his own breast, which he can never flee from; all that vast multitude of angels, men and devils, the whole creation of God, as it were, turning their eyes towards him; fixing on him their most disdainful looks, reviewing all his shame and nakedness, and surrounding him with their general hissings and reproaches; while he hath no place to flee to, the rocks and mountains refuse to shelter him; and when he would fain hang down his head, the power of his angry Maker lifting it up, that he may be the more amazed, and his bluthes may be further redned: and imagine after all this, what a terrible astonishment will then seize upon all the powers of his soul.

But it will not be improper to mention a few particulars, with respect to the incomprehensible shame which the sins of the transgressor will then fill him with. 1. The infinite aggravation hereof, will flow from the endless variety and innumerable multitude of these abominations, which shall then be disclosed, and every one of which will prove a plentiful fountain of overwhelming shame. We are very ready to overlook or forget the follies and errors of our life, and to fancy that God may do so too: but we are wofully mistaken, his piercing light discovers our most secret actions, and our very thoughts, ere they be formed within us; for as it is, Prov. 5. 21. "The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings:" and as all these are carefully recorded, so the books will be opened at that great day of the Lord, and every thing found there will be read out with a voice which shall reach all that assembly, Eccl. 12. 14. "God shall bring every work into judgment,

ment, with every secret thing whether it be good, or whether it be evil." And our Saviour assures us, Luke 12. 2. "That there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, neither hid that shall not be known." And if so, in that great day of discoveries, what innumerable transgressions will compass the sinner about, when all the vain thoughts and foolish actions of his life shall be at once presented in their utmost deformity and crookedness? What a surprising multitude of frightful monsters, and hideous shapes, will then appear! when so many impure desires and lusts, fierce and ambitious passions, beastly imaginations, idle words, perfidious promises, cunning and deceitful projects, and hypocritical professions, will be produced, a confounding sight to the guilty soul! with what terror will he look on them! and with how deep blushes must such an ugly spectacle, that is a lothing to the whole assembly, affect him! We now "drink down iniquity as the ox doth water," and there are a multitude of secret lusts and idols of jealousy, which imperceivably defile the man: but then they shall all crawl abroad in open light, like so many enraged vipers and nasty vermin, to sting and confound the sinner with the utmost horror and disorder. At that time there will be no member of their body, nor faculty of their soul, not one thought of the heart, nor any action of the life, but will be a subject of blushing, and will contribute their part to overwhelm transgressors with scorn and ignominy: they can nowhere turn their eyes or thoughts, but they must meet with their shame; so that they shall be a terror to themselves, and, to use the prophet's expression, Jerem. 3. 25. "They will ly down in their shame, and confusion will cover them."

2. The exceeding hainousness, and monstrous abomination of their sins, will contribute hereto: for, in proportion to these, the shame of them will be increased. Now, their transgressions will then be placed in the brightness of God's countenance, which will at once discover all their deformities: the presence of the triumphant king of the church, sitting upon the throne of his holiness, will leave no room to doubt of this matter. The glory of the angels, and the excellency of righteousness, shining on the spirits "of just men made perfect," being at the same time represented, will augment the confusion of impenitent sinners. Then, as it is Jerem. 2. 19. "Their own wickedness shall correct them, and their backslidings shall reprove them; and they will know and see that it is a bitter and an evil thing, that they have forsaken the Lord their God."

3. The secrecy of many of these abominations which will then be brought forth, and the security which sinners flattered themselves into, when committing them, will aggravate the surprize of the discovery, and augment the shame thereof: upon which account, as hypocrisy is in a particular manner hateful to God, so it will naturally cover the face of the false and deceitful man with the greater confusion, when in that day it shall be fully laid open. What a dreadful amazement will it be to a presumptuous sinner, who vainly pretended to religion, and was loud and clamorous in his professions, yea, flattered himself into a conceited opinion of his extraordinary grace and piety; when, in that day, Jesus Christ will openly disown him, and be ashamed of him before angels and men, when his breast shall be torn open, and all the secret lusts, the malicious heart, and the lying tongue, his by-views and selfish

ends, will be shewn forth as in the clear day! The false colourings which varnished over a pretended zeal or humility, will then be entirely washed away from the deceiver, and the rottenness within discovered, where there was formerly a whited sepulchre. Oh! when the man who beguiled his neighbours, enjoyed a great reputation in the world, pretended much, and was believed and applauded by the multitude, shall have the fair mask pulled off, and nothing but the most monstrous deformities, and the basest passions, ambition, covetousness, wrath, malice, pride, and self-conceit, to be seen underneath it: How will all his presumptuous confidence in a moment fall, and despairing blushes that will reach his heart, with their agony and disorder, seize upon him? The upbraiding sight of his admirers, whom he had deceived into a fond opinion of him upon earth, will terribly perplex him. And the confounded hypocrite, if I may so speak, will be set upon the pillory in the midst of that vast congregation, and be turned round about, that the angels may laugh at him with disdain and derision, that he may stand exposed to the loud reproaches of mankind, and to the contempt of his old acquaintances; and that the hellish fiends may spit at him their venom, and surround him with their hissings.

Let any of us, my friends, reflect how uneasy the apprehension is, of having any of our secret errors or follies discovered to the world; and then think, how vastly beyond our thought must be the dreadful convulsions which shall tear the heart of an hypocrite, when he shall be made a shameful spectacle before all the numerous hosts both of heaven and hell, as well as the inhabitants of this earth. Then it will appear, that “the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of  
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“the hypocrite but for a moment.” Then will be accomplished, in the most emphatical sense, Isa. 33. 14. “The sinners in Zion are afraid, “fearfulness hath surpris’d the hypocrite.”

4. The madness of thoughtless transgressors, which shall then appear in all its extravagancy, will mightily contribute to drive their confusion to an extremity: there is nothing of which men are more ashamed than folly, and to be thought a fool is generally esteemed the most contemptible character. How will then the prosperous sinner, who neglected God and religion, imagined himself secure in his riches and greatness, and overvalued the wisdom and cunning of which he fancied himself master, be terribly surpris’d, when he sees such a thorough alteration in the state of things, and the fashion of this world entirely fled away? and that now he is gathered among all the inhabitants of the immense universe, before the impartial judgment-seat, where crowns and sceptres are trampled upon with disdain, where all the aims of ambition, and the triumphs of the conqueror, appear to be empty shews and shining toys; where riches, and power, and pleasures vanish away, and are of no account before that tribunal, and can give no man confidence or support there. Ah! what a fool will he think himself, that he was bewitched by these false enchantments, and wilfully fell into so deplorable a mistake? how will he reproach his easy credulity, in giving so ready an ear to the allurements of sin, and being caught by play-things, which he sees at length prove instruments of death? Then he will blush, that he should have been so cheated, by the implacable enemy of his soul, and beguiled by the deceitfulness of sin; and the thoughts, that this his folly is to be proclaimed to the whole creation, and that he is to be expos’d to so uni-

versal infamy, will pierce his very heart, and make his spirits sink within him.

The whole train of a man's life will be then brought fresh into his memory, and set in open view: all his thoughts and contrivances, his glory and victories, his riches and pleasures, his politick schemes and deep intrigues, about which he was so busy, and the success whereof blowed up his pride and vanity; and, it may be, his wit and learning, with other accomplishments of body and mind, and behold, all is dream and shadow, vanity and vexation of spirit, and there is no profit of all his labours. Oh! how will it gall him to see all these, not only fruitless and insignificant, but darkness, poison, and destruction, a seed of serpents to sting him, and a nursery of torturing reproaches from his own conscience? and then what outrageous scorn must he lay his account with? every sinner, if I may so speak, will be the jest of the whole creation: the myriads of angelical hosts will laugh at him with a divine contempt, and with insufferable reproaches, they will then ridicule his airy schemes, and his fine contrivances, and mock a life that hath been one continued train of the most grievous blunders and excesses. The eternal applauses that will be given to the choice of the righteous man, who made God his portion, and whose wisdom shines then with so bright a light, will be a cutting satyr against him who refused the offered salvation, and gave a deaf ear to instruction; and shall cover with the deepest shame, the mad man that ever preferred any thing to his God, and bartered his conscience for the whole world. The devils themselves will mock him with their hellish scorn; and, in their satanical malice, insult his simplicity which led him into their snares, and made him a partaker of their condemnation. In a word,

as Christ the great Judge will, as it were, point out the foolish transgressor to the whole assembly, they will turn their eyes upon him, and all the multitude of angels and men will join in insulting him with the sharpest reproaches, in such words as these of David, which I may apply to this purpose, Psalm. 52. 7. "Lo! this is the man that  
"made not God his strength, but trusted in the  
"abundance of his riches, and strengthened him-  
"self in his wickedness." The righteous then will see them, and laugh at them in the words of Solomon, if we take them as they are generally understood, in an ironical sense, Eccl. 11. 9.  
"Rejoyce, 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." And how, my friends, will fierce and imperious persecutors, and the rich and great who are accustomed to perpetual flattery and ceremony, or indeed any of us, be able to bear with such usage? for, alas! this amazing shame can neither be despised nor endured; for then will be fulfilled, in the most emphatical sense, with respect to the greatest and most fortunate sinners, what the prophet speaks, Hab. 2. 16. "Thou art filled with  
"shame for glory:--- The cup of the Lord's  
"right hand shall be turned unto thee, and shame-  
"ful spuing shall be on thy glory."

5. In the last place, I may add, that as the ungodly are said in my text, to "be awakened  
"into shame and everlasting contempt," and as God never loses any part of his end, so every thing, with respect both to soul and body, will be exactly calculated to raise the surprize and agony of their confusion to its greatest height. Their eyes will be made quick and piercing, to

behold more thoroughly their own vileness and abomination; their views will be kept fixed, whether they will or not, upon those lothsom and confounding spectacles; and their sense of shame will be made strong and vigorous, that they may be more capacious to receive these inexhausted springs of eternal contempt: God is said, Psal. 50. 21. "to set their iniquities in order before them" And agreeably hereto, that almighty Lord of Hosts, who is so skilful in fight, will dispose all the sins of a man's life, and the whole follies of his youth and old age, in such exact order, as to make the utmost impressions of shame: he will expose them in all their baseness, ingratitude, treachery, and inglorious degeneracy; and will clothe them with all their aggravating circumstances, in such a manner as may raise the deepest blushes.

Nor is it improbable, that the very bodies of those who shall be thus awakened, these bodies so overvalued above the soul, and anxiously cared for, may be fashioned in the most hideous and monstrous shapes, that they also may contribute their portion of shame, being rendered as ugly and deformed, as the bodies of the saints shall be beautiful, when "fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body."

I come now to the second thing proposed, namely, to explain and illustrate somewhat further the shame and everlasting contempt, unto which the ungodly shall be raised out of their graves, from a consideration of the great assembly, which shall then be present. And here,

I. We must consider the glorious head of that vast congregation, their almighty Judge and King, our Saviour; for it is he will indeed conduce most to the tormenting confusion of transgressors. It is then that Jesus will come the second time; and  
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it is every where in scripture distinguished, as “the day of his appearance and revelation :” and therefore he will have the chiefest share in all the great transactions of that memorable day. I might enlarge upon this head much longer than your time will allow me. All the ungodly awakened out of their graves, shall then behold the despised Jesus, surrounded by the brightest glory of his Father, adored by all the heavenly potentates and thrones, these numberless armies that attend his vengeance : while all the hellish hosts tremble at his presence. How much must such a sight confound them, at the remembrance of their folly in rebelling against this almighty king, despising his government, and disobeying his gospel ? when they compare their own management on earth, with what they now see, what strange reproaches and invectives must they make against themselves ? And as Jesus will then shine forth in all his beauty and majesty, infinitely worthy of our choice, of the ferventest love and unwearied obedience ; how will they blush that they should have refused his service, and bestowed their affections on base lusts, brutish pleasures, and perishing vanities, rather than on so lovely and precious excellencies ? and all the triumphant hallelujahs and praises which they will hear his followers paying him, will prove a confounding sound to those who obstinately despised him.

It is remarkable that upon that solemn day the great Judge will appear also as our Saviour ; he sits there as the Son of man, and carries about with him all the characters of a Redeemer : the glory of his majesty and his sufferings, will at once appear, and by so near a comparison of these two, the incomparable riches of his love will be manifested with the most ravishing and delightful beauty : and must not the sight of such a Saviour,

think you, make them dreadfully ashamed of all the injuries that they did to him, and of the unworthy treatment they gave to “the blood where-  
 “with they might have been sanctified?” Oh! how will they be able to look him in the face? one glimpse of the crucified Jesus will quite overwhelm them. And oh! he will be of all others the most confounding sight, when “he cometh  
 “with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and  
 “they also which pierced him, and all kindreds  
 “of the earth shall wail because of him: And  
 “then he will convince them of all their ungodly  
 “deeds, which they have ungodly committed,  
 “and of all their hard speeches which ungodly  
 “sinners have spoken against him.”

The last day is the great period of our Redeemer's triumphs, when he will make an open shew of conquered adversaries, and expose those that hate him to the publick scorn and ridicule of the universe: and therefore we may justly imagine the blessed Jesus, thus pointing out the despiser of his grace to the whole spectators. Lo, the obstinate rebel, “that would not have me to reign  
 “over him;” there the ungrateful wretch, that for the most admirable condescension, and endearing kindness, repaid the best friend of his soul, neglect, hatred, and disobedience; there the monster that stood it out against my very dying love, that hardened his heart against my blood and wounds, tears and sorrows, undergone for his sake: and yonder another, who professed my name, but proved a perfidious traitor, basely deserted the arms of Israel, and preferred the world, his vile lusts, and pitiful interests, to his oaths to his General and Saviour, who had not dealt so by him, when encompassed about with infinitely greater temptations. Oh! my friends, how will these reproaches pierce the speechless sinner!  
 How.

How amazed and confounded will he stand, without one word to answer! And then all that assembly will be animated by the bright discoveries which then are made of Christ's love and power, to pursue the infamous monster with their loud upbraidings, and most disdainful contempt; see Prov. I. 24, &c.

And, oh! how will profane mockers and hardened infidels be then confounded, at the prospect which they, awakened out of their graves, shall have! they will then exclaim, Lo, yonder he comes, he whom we never thought of, whose religion we bantered and disbelieved. Ah! how are all our witty jests and scoffings quite spoiled! see how his eyes flame with vengeance! and what infinite realities there are in all that his gospel told us, which we impiously traduced as cunningly devised fables! Ah! how does this practical demonstration confound all our atheistical schemes, and cover the authors of them with insupportable shame! But, oh! how can we abide this day of his coming! and yet there is no place for us to hide our heads in.

But, in the next place, we are to consider upon this head all our fellow-creatures of human race, who shall also make up a part of this great assembly. And indeed the vast extent of this theatre, the concourse of all ages and generations, that have ever appeared in the world, gathered together at once, must needs make every thing, which shall be then transacted, exceeding awful and solemn: but, beside this, there are innumerable circumstances of the persons then present, and their relations to us, which will add to the shame of the ungodly. We may easily guess, from considering what happens on earth, and the temper and disposition of our minds, how sensibly the presence of their friends and acquaintances,

will affect the impenitent, when, before them, they shall be exposed to all this ignominy: the prayers, instructions and good advices of godly parents, and Christian friends, who will be present, must prove bitter ingredients. The partners of iniquity, and the witnesses of their crimes, will also raise mighty blushes in such persons. The sight of glorified saints, that were once persecuted and scornfully treated in the land of the living, will exceedingly aggravate the shame of their proud oppressors. Now, when matters are so entirely changed, the cruel insults and mockings of, it may be, a slave or a captive, will make the agony more exquisite, and the blushes redder, in an imperious master, or an haughty conqueror.

A proud Haman, who could not endure the smallest mark of disregard, but was so feelingly touched with an imaginary affront done him by a Mordecai, that it clouded all his honours, and fretted him in the midst of all the goods that fortune can bestow, must then be tortured with pangs of despairing shame, inconceivable to mortals, when the miserable creature, as full of vanity and self-pride as ever, must, without the least mixture of regard, be trampled upon with the utmost scorn and disgrace by all the myriads that compose that vast congregation. And it cannot but make such a confounded criminal, as a wicked prince or favourite shall then be, hang down his head with the deeper blushes and an increased horror, when he shall be exposed to such despicable and ignominious usage, in the eyes of those who, upon earth, paid a servile adoration to his greatness, inflamed his pride with their fulsom flatteries and caresses, and were ingloriously subservient to all his pleasures. Ah! with what agonies will he behold them, by whose mean submissions he was beguiled into a fond conceit of himself, and a neglect of  
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his Maker, whose poisonous conversation seduced and corrupted him !

And with what wild and distracted looks must they, whose society was a confederacy against God and religion, stare one another in the faces? whose guilty minds are conscious of the affronts they poured on the faith and practice of the gospel, of the frothy wit whereby they ridiculed sacred things, diverted themselves with divine revelation, and made a future world the subject of a drunkard's song, or the sarcastick talent of a profane mocker. The views of one another will confound them the more, when they are come into the world of realities; and dreams, and fancies, and disguises, which found place on the theatre of time, are for ever gone; when they now see that their laughter was madness, and that they then played with hell and destruction: nor will there be one person, who was ever an accomplice of their crimes, or an instrument of their brutish pleasures and worldly projects, but who will add to the rage of that universal derision and infamy which shall then cover them: and all the schemes of their politick wisdom, and arts of their successful cunning, with the whole business of their life, will then be springs of overflowing shame; when their folly and madness will be manifest, and the wheedling pretences, whereby they imposed upon their admirers, are of no more efficacy in that world, where cheats and false faces never prevail.

In the third and last place, the presence of devils and accursed spirits will also contribute its share to the hightening of the shame of ungodly men, in that solemn period of the great day. It must vex and gall them to the very heart, to be exposed to the derision of these accursed spirits also; and to be surrounded by the cruel hissings of  
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the hellish serpents, who shall then become instruments of their pain, as they were of their rebellion and apostacy: and therefore, no doubt, the devils, who now beguile foolish men into the same condemnation with themselves, will then join in the heavy accusations and biting satires that shall be made against them, and upbraid them with their simplicity, in being so easily deceived, and sottishly imposed upon: upon which account, hell itself will then hoot at them, and the scorn and opprobry of these malignant vipers will, no doubt, much increase their universal confusion. Were these enemies to our great king capable of any satisfaction in that glorious day of his triumphs, it would be the malicious pleasure of insulting one another's miseries and disgraces: and therefore we may well conceive the devils abusing the woful tribe of sinners, with the most outrageous scoffings, and pointing out their disgrace to the innumerable spectators, Lo, there the haughty tyrant, whose vain mind we deceived with the dying phantoms of power and dominion; there the weak fool, whose imagination was distracted with the glittering shew of titles and preferments; there the covetous wretch, whom we engaged, by perishing riches, to sell his soul; there the thoughtless creatures, to whom we varnished over the poison of sin, and the emptiness of temporal amusements, with such fair appearances, that they, for their sake, prostituted their consciences, betrayed their Saviour, were ungrateful to their best friend, ventured upon hell and damnation, and believed our temptations rather than God himself. And is it not, my friends, reasonable to think that these insults of devils, who cheated us, and their thus reproaching our folly, will give a peculiar fury to the mighty vexation at so cruel and publick affronts?

Besides,

Besides, men will then behold, what abominable creatures the infernal spirits have become, by their apostacy from their Maker; and with what contempt and disdain they also are looked down upon, by our victorious King, and all his saints and angels: and therefore their souls shall be pierced with cutting reflections upon the shamefulness of that inglorious slavery, which they brought themselves under to these accursed hosts: they will then with blushing behold what vile masters they served, and how scandalous they became when led captive by them at their pleasure; how ignominious it was for them to be blindly directed by the father of lies, to be prompted to rebellion against their merciful and rightful Lord, by such debased spirits and conquered traitors, that were already bound in everlasting chains of darkness, and to prefer the society of dogs and swine to the company of blessed angels, and the favour of God himself. I come now to the

Third thing proposed; namely, to illustrate the nature and extremity of that shame, to which ungodly men shall be raised up at the day of judgment, from some other general circumstances thereof: and I shall only mention these three particulars.

1. At that time, every thing will be advanced to its highest perfection, and fully completed, whether it be pleasure or pain. Upon this earth, our affections are but low, our passions of any kind have but little strength and vigour, and our capacities are narrow; and therefore our happiness or miseries are neither of them complete in their kind, or enlarged to their utmost boundaries: but in the world to come, the natures of things will be entirely finished; and as our souls will then have a relish for nobler joys than the imperfect satisfactions of time, so they will be fitted

ted for more terrible sufferings, and all the uneasy fretful passions will become incomparably more furious, and extended with a more impetuous tide to rage and anguish: and no doubt, among others, the sense of shame will be then made quick and piercing, every blush will give a stound and trembling that will reach the heart; while the soul shall have new sources of disgrace opened, and shall have a thousand tender senses of ignominy and scorn unknown to it here, which shall then be ever grated with all that infinite variety of disdain, hissing, and reproach, which all that vast assembly can pour upon it. The eye shall then be strengthened to see all the insults the sinner meets with, his ear to hear the upbraidings of his own conscience, and all that are round about him; while the swellings of his proud breast, that are also increased, shall render him the more impatient, and the more feelingly touched by so overwhelming a calamity, when he must “ly  
 “down in his shame, and his confusion must cover  
 “him:” for then is the harvest of the world when every thing is ripened, the wheat to be gathered in, and the tares made fit for their final end.

And as the soul shall be thus formed for all the vexatious throws of an insufferable shame, so God himself shall become the scoffer and upbraider of the guilty transgressor: not only his presence will naturally put him terribly out of countenance; but that infinite Being, as he is a consuming fire to the workers of iniquity, so he will himself execute this part of the punishment by exposing them to so publick derision. This is very plainly held forth to us, Pro. 1. 24. to the end. And who will then abide it? What sinner so stout as to harden himself against his Maker, when God will set all his vile abominations in the brightness of his countenance, and with his own finger  
 point

point him out to the ridicule of angels and men? And while the poor confounded creature would fain hang down its head, and hide its rueful countenance, his omnipotent arm pulls it up, and sets its bare face to be stared at by the scornful looks of the universe.

2. As at that harvest of the world, every thing will be fully ripened, and, among the rest, the tormenting powers of shame shall attain their utmost vigour and rage, and penetrate the soul with the utmost consternation; so there will be nothing to allay the confusion, nor any remedy for so terrible a disaster; nor will one of the amusements of sinners upon earth find place there, they will not be able to cloud their understandings, or shut their eyes against the shame of their nakedness: the drollery and ridicule will then be entirely turned, nor will they ever work themselves up to a humour of diverting their blushes by jesting upon sacred things, and banishing all thoughts of another life, or bantering the belief of it out of the world: the most abject cowardice and sneaking meanness of a confounded soul, will succeed to the present insolence and levity of profane men: there will not then be one person in all the congregation of creatures, who will approve their ways, and help to keep them in countenance: there will be no corner for them to flee to, to conceal their guilty heads; nor the least remain of a disguise or patch, to cover one blemish, or varnish over the ugliness and deformity of their opprobrious state: the mountains and hills will not shelter them from one disdainful look of any eye there; nor will then the folly of mirth or the voice of flatterers, in the least, diminish or divert the grating sound of hissings and reproaches, which shall from every corner reach their ears, and shake their very souls. And then in the

3. Place, As the shameful fruits of sin are then fully ripened into the height of their poison and bitterness, so they will be endless in their continuance ; for, says my text, “ they shall awake “ to everlasting shame and contempt.” Upon earth, habit and custom bring us into a familiarity with any thing, and mightily abate its force ; and thus a train of bad usages and reproach, will harden a man at length into an utter insensibility of shame, so that it ceases to become a punishment : but in the other world, this cruel passion will never be blunted or lose any of its fury, their folly will be ever as lively represented to their thoughts, and their vileness and disgrace will ever be the same in the eyes of all the universe, and in the cruel upbraidings of their own minds ; so that all the eternal pangs and convulsions of blushing and consternation, will rage in their souls with an insurmountable violence. And who can conceive the horrors of that shame, that is envenomed with utter despair ; and edged with a piercing sense of the eternal impossibility of their ever retrieving their honour, of ever being deaf to scorn, or insensible of their confusion, or able to retire into a corner from the outrageous insults and virulent scoffings, that they must be exposed unto through all the endless ages of immortality k



## S E R M O N XVII.

R E V E L. i. 6.

*And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father ; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

**H**EAVEN, my friends, is the most delightful imployment of a Christian's thoughts, and what ought, upon many reasons, to be the frequent subject of his meditation. That happy place contains all those eternal treasures of celestial bliss and glory, which animate him in his warfare here below, and comfort his soul while he dwells in the land of Mesech, and inhabits the tents of Kedar : there is the court of the great king, where God and Christ, the constant object of his flaming love and longing desires, have seated their throne ; and from whence flow those rivers of pleasures which endure for evermore : and this is the dwelling place of that noble society of seraphick spirits and perfected souls, unto whose divine fellowship he zealously aspires. In a word, it is the Christian's character and profession to " have his conversation in heaven," and to have the last end of his faith, and hope, and labours there. Heaven therefore, my friends, can never be too often presented to your view ; and its ineffable excellencies will afford an endless variety to this lovely prospect, and keep the soul from being wearied and cloyed by the most constant meditation : for who can tell, or who can think over the glorious things,

things, which, by those who know it better than we, are spoken of thee, O city of God? I shall therefore, in this discourse, confine myself to one branch of this vast argument, and consider only the excellency of the celestial world, as it is a kingdom; and the glory and happiness of saints, as they are represented to us in my text, “And  
“ hath made us kings to God and his Father.”

The apostle John begins this mysterious book, which he sends to the seven churches of Asia, with a very remarkable benediction and prayer for them, addressed to the three persons in the adorable Trinity. “Grace be unto you, and peace from  
“ him which is, and which was, and which is to  
“ come; and from the seven spirits which are  
“ before his throne; and from Jesus Christ.” But when he comes to this precious name that is so dear to a perishing soul, he dwells longer upon the delightful subject, and celebrates his Redeemer’s praises, both in the exalted dignity and merit of his person, as he is “the faithful witness, the  
“ first-begotten of the dead, and the prince of  
“ the kings of the earth;” and also in the glory of his mighty love and endless compassions, “un-  
“ to him that loved us, and washed us from our  
“ sins in his own blood;” the finishing proof and illustrious effect whereof, is, that “he hath made  
“ us kings and priests unto God and his Father.”

This may have some respect to the state of the people of God, even in the present world; for whenever they are subdued under the obedience of the captain of salvation, they, that moment, assume the character of a “a chosen generation,  
“ a royal priesthood, a peculiar people;” as it is, 1 Pet. 2. 9. But it seems evident, that my text is chiefly designed of the better world of spirits, and the exalted station, which “those that  
“ are washed in the blood of the Lamb” obtain,  
in

in these regions of felicity: for saints upon earth, however sure a prospect they may have, yet are far removed from the possession of the kingdom; they have more of the pilgrim and stranger than of the king, nor is this howling wilderness a fit place for a throne to be erected in; and the kingdom of saints, like unto their great master's, "is not of this world;" but, as it is in the verse following my text, which seems to point out to us the period designed by the apostle, when the triumphing conqueror of hell and death shall "come with clouds, and every eye shall see him;" then this holy nation shall all of them be solemnly crowned before the general assembly of creatures; then the glory of their throne will shine forth with a dazzling splendor; and, being possessors of the highest honours and magnificence, they shall also be endued with the heart and soul of a king; so that it is the morning of the resurrection, when they shall indeed have the dominion. This is the true æra of their reign, when they shall "have an entrance ministred unto them abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." And it is not till then, that the complete meaning of my text shall be understood, "he hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father."

What may be further necessary for the explication of the words, will fall in very naturally in the progress of the discourse; in which I shall, through the assistance of the holy Spirit, endeavour to do these things.

1. I shall endeavour to illustrate this metaphor, whereby the excellency of the heavenly glory is represented; and explain to you, by some instances, in what respects the children of the resurrection shall then become all of them kings.

2. I shall open up this subject a little further, by shewing what is imported in their being made “kings by Jesus Christ: it is he, says the apostle, who hath made us kings.”

3. I shall explain what the apostle may intend, by telling us that “Christ hath made us kings unto God and his Father.”

Lastly, I shall improve this doctrine in some practical uses: when I may have occasion to shew how justly the apostle, being ravished with this noble subject, breaks out, in the close of my text, “To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.”

1. I am to illustrate this metaphor whereby the excellency of the heavenly state is represented, and explain to you, by some instances, in what respect the children of the resurrection, when inhabitants of heaven, shall all of them be kings.

It is not to be imagined, that the metaphor will hold in every respect; and that the notion of a king will, in all the particulars of it, agree to the happiness of the blessed: but yet, whatever is great and noble in a throne, will be the portion of saints. The honour of their diadem will shine brighter than corruptible crowns, and a kingdom is but too faint an image of the superior majesty and happiness, which inhabit the temple of God above: but because a throne is the last wish of ambition, which the most towering hopes of mortals aspire unto upon earth; and because we see nothing of greater worth and dignity, than a sceptre, therefore the holy scriptures make most frequent use of a Kingdom, as the fittest emblem of the mansions of immortality, where every thing will exceed our largest wishes, and rise above our highest imagination. Let us consider a little some of the particulars of this subject.

I. Then,

I. Then, Saints shall be made kings in the heavenly world, in respect of the majesty and glory of a king. The first thing that presents itself to us at a court, is its splendor and finery, and the pomp of a king; his numerous train, costly equipage, sumptuous table, and magnificent palaces, all contribute to raise our idea of a prince, and serve to distinguish him from his subjects: but how will such things as these look pale and dim, when compared to the august state of the meanest inhabitant of the kingdom of God? Who can, my friends, express the glory of the place, where the great Lord of the universe erects his throne, and displays the wonders of that majesty and honour, which clothe him? How beautiful will these mansions become, when enlightened by the glory of God and the Lamb, and adorned with all the great and amiable perfections of the Deity, which give an eternal loveliness and nobleness to the court of the mighty King? And when the all-wise and powerful Creator will so contrive that stupendious fabrick, that the symmetry, beauty, and stateliness of it may be every way worthy of him, so as he will not be ashamed to own himself for its builder; what ornaments of glory will not God then be able to give his celestial palace? And then, my friends, what a noble retinue adds to the splendor of this court, when numberless tribes of adoring seraphs, all of them beautified with the charms of immortality, and excelling in angelical vigour and strength, are ever crowding about the throne, surrounding it with their joyful acclamations; and attending in their order and harmonious ranks, ever zealous to run in doing the pleasure of their God!

It is true, you will perhaps alledge, that here is indeed the noblest pomp of a court; but then, saints appear only in the quality of servants, they have

have no train to wait upon them, but they all must concur in their joint attendance upon him that sits in the midst of the throne; and therefore what is said, seems to shew only that God appears like a great king in heaven; but how does that prove that saints are made so? This objection indeed would hold in this world; for an earthly monarch is in himself no way more glorious and excellent than his subjects; he derives the magnificence of his court from the number and riches of his servants, and were he left alone, it would be stripped of its gay appearances: but it is quite otherwise in the celestial world; for the king of heaven hath in himself all the sources of glory and majesty, and derives none from his attendants; it is his own beauty that dazzles the eyes of the seraphs, and gives majestick ornaments to the whole place; so that the humble posture of saints before the throne, instead of an objection, is the very rise of their greatness; the rays of light and honour that are scattered abroad from the eternal sun of heaven, give a comeliness and magnificence to the saints, and surround them with all the glory of kings, in a superior degree to the monarchs of this world, who must borrow their shew and splendor from their subjects. And then all the saints dwell in the palace, they are all favourites, and partake of the common dignity, riches, and majesty which reign in that place; so that this divine society is wholly composed of kings, none of them appear without a crown, and they can all derive, from the King of kings, enough of pomp and greatness to intitle them unto this exalted character.

Look up either to the bodies or the souls of just men made perfect, and you will see every thing suited to the state of a king. It is true, the beauty of the body must always be a trifle, if compared

pared to the lustre of a purified soul; but yet, even it will be adorned with the loveliest majesty, when made conformed to the glorious body of Christ: it will outshine the meridian sun in its strength, and have all the sparkling charms of a spiritual body; strange expression! strong and lively, nimbler than the wind, and as incorruptible as eternity; being purified from the smallest seeds of diseases and pains, from the least deformed feature or wrinkles of old age. And if you now admire the costliness of equipage, and the richness of imperial robes, which you may see a monarch clothed with on his coronation-day; why, as far as the beauty of a star or of the sun excels that of a diamond, so much more glorious will be the very outside of a saint, than any jewel on earth, and that in a literal meaning, and a sensible manner: thus we find of our Saviour, when attended by two of the inhabitants of Zion, at his transfiguration upon the mount, Matth. 17. 2. that “his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment “ was white as the light;” and this appearance is given to the disciples as an emblem of a part of what obtained in the kingdom of God.

But then who can comprehend the honours that the soul of the just man shall be crowned with, when the ravishing beauties of holiness, will, in so large a measure, become theirs, and they shall be made comely, by a liberal communication of that purity, which is the highest perfection of God himself? O! my friends, how beautiful and glorious will these features of a heavenly soul then appear unto a spiritual eye! Flaming love to the greatest and best of beings, zealous gratitude to a Redeemer, ever employed in harmonious Hallelujahs, affections kindled by a holy fire, an enlightened understanding, and a peaceful conscience; passions strong and lively, yet calm and regular,  
all

all of them governed by a sanctified reason, and triumphant grace; a solemn awe of the supreme Lord, mixed with the nearest fellowship; a pure obedience, and a willing subjection, animated by love, and attended with an endless satisfaction; a mind void of fear and baseness, possessed by the surest joys, and faculties every way noble and harmonious: now we see not the lustre of holiness, and know little of the beauty of a soul; but when these, and numberless more unfading ornaments of a heavenly spirit shall shine forth in all their magnificence and honour, how glorious and majestick a shew will we behold it, and ravished, exclaim, that they have all indeed the most dazzling splendors of a throne, and that a Redeemer, who raised them to such excellency, may well be said to have made them kings.

2. Saints in heaven are held forth to us as kings, because they will then have the heart and sentiments of a king. It is reasonably supposed, that a prince has dispositions of mind suitable to his distinguished character: that station requires brave and noble sentiments, designs that are generous and worthy of him, and views that are more elevated than the multitude; and where these are wanting, there is nothing but the outside of a monarch. But now, the people of God, whenever they enter the everlasting kingdom of their Saviour, get all the endowments suitable to a throne, their passions become manly and exalted, their aims are great, and their views lofty: they have the spirit and the heart of a king; with a noble disdain they trample upon a vain world, and a temporal felicity; they scorn to do any thing, base and mean, to prostitute the least affection to the highest pleasures of sin, or consume one thought upon these airy honours, and fleeting riches, which are now the whole business of mankind. Upon earth,

earth, men are the servants of sin, and therefore they have the dispositions and hearts of slaves, they are employed about deceitful trifles, and wallow in filthy pleasures, fit only for the beasts which perish: but the sons of God, being made kings, aim at something that looks like a throne; they behold all created beings, as too mean an object for their love and enjoyment, and nothing but God himself, and his adorable excellencies, can satisfy their ambition, nor is any thing short of immortality a portion worthy of them. In a word, they are of so heroick a temper, that the devil's temptation to our Saviour, of "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them," would not have the smallest influence on their thoughts, and would be too weak an argument, to move them to do any thing below the dignity of their incorruptible crown; for every saint in Zion is, as the church is represented, Rev. 12. 1. "clothed with the sun, and hath the moon under his feet."

2. Another remarkable part of this metaphor, is the sovereignty and authority of a king. The command and rule which he exerciseth, and the obedience due to him, are amongst the most peculiar prerogatives of a prince; and, as the wise man observes, Eccl. 8. 4. "Where the word of a king is, there is power." It is true, that there are not properly any subjects in heaven for us to govern; for, as I told you, there is no person there, but who is himself a king: but yet saints have something, even in this respect, more truly royal and glorious. Solomon tell us, Prov. 16. 32. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city;" and the heathens themselves had it for a maxim, that the man who could govern his passions, and be master of himself,

had a nobler dominion than the greatest conqueror. Upon earth, the best saint hath but small pretensions to the character of a king in this respect; there remain so many fierce lusts and unmortified corruptions, that this must be at the best a state of warfare: it is well for us here, if we fight courageously as the good soldiers of Christ; and if we do so, heaven will prove the habitation of a conqueror, death will gain us a complete victory, and then begins the day of our eternal triumphs, when we shall be made kings. It is the glory of heaven, that there is not one rebel passion there, nor the smallest stirring of a lust; the soul then rules over all its faculties with the greatest ease; reason, which then is purified into religion, reigns as Lord of all the affections, and every tumultuary and disorderly appetite, is a perfect stranger there; the soul hath no struggle within itself, nor do the will and affections make any difficulty in performing their several parts with a joyful harmony; so that the spirit of a just man hath within itself subjects, the government whereof is more glorious to it, and hath in it more of a king, than the lording over the most numerous empire.

And, O! my friends, when the exalted soul shall call to mind the struggles and difficulties of its condition upon earth, with what joyful acclamations will it celebrate the triumphs of victorious grace, and speak of the glories of its conquests! O! there a heart once deceitful and rebellious, but, how do I now find it drawn by the cords of love, and pliable to every duty: yonder passions that were too head-strong for my reason and conscience, often led me captive at their pleasure, and reduced me to the ignominious state of a slave; but now they are peaceful subjects to the voice of religion, and are become harmoniously subservient

to my great interests; they not only do not pretend to tyrannize, but I feel not the smallest reluctant murmurings, and every thing is calm and serene within me. The will, once fierce and ungovernable, hearkens to the softest whisper of a purified understanding, and is become all zeal and joy in its pleasing work: and these base affections, that were so low and heavy, that I was not able, with the greatest difficulty, to raise them above the dross and mud of a vain world, and that cost me so many sighs and groans in a weary pilgrimage; now, being enlivened by the beams of divine light and love, mount up to God himself as swift as the wing of an angel, and with the ardours of an eternal complacency, there find their satisfying rest, without ever falling down again. And now, the body of sin and death being done away, the flesh is as strong and vigorous as the spirit is willing. Never could a monarch glory so justly in the multitude of his people, which the wise man tells us “is the king’s honour,” Prov. 14. 28. or ever felt such satisfaction in the sweets of government, as these heavenly kings will do in this noble empire over themselves, and undisputed command over all their faculties and members. Besides, tho’ the inhabitants of heaven owe not proper allegiance, except to the father of their spirits; yet such an universal love and good-will reigns in these regions of felicity, and they are all so firmly united by the strictest bonds of a zealous friendship, that I might almost venture to say, that in some sense, every one of them is king of all the rest. They will surely find every one as joyful to promote their mutual satisfaction, as affectionate in their service, and as ready to heighten the glory and majesty of their crown, as the most obedient subjects upon earth can be to their prince: and why may not all the inhabitants of heaven, with

respect to one another, maintain the character, which the angels now have with regard to the heirs of salvation, of ministering spirits? Strange harmony of this royal priesthood! who may thus all be servants, and yet shall all of them be made kings.

4. As a prince not only rules over willing subjects, but punishes transgressors; and if he prove a victorious warrior, acquires also a dominion over conquered enemies, which, in this world, adds mightily to the lustre and majesty of a throne; so the followers of Christ shall, with regard to this, in an eminent manner be made kings, when their almighty Lord shall come in the clouds, and erect his awful tribunal. What a numberless multitude of conquered devils and disarmed traitors, will be dragged before his throne! Death and hell will then appear in chains before the prince of life; all the legions of the infernal hosts will shew forth the glory of this wonderful day, while they tremble at his eyes flaming with vengeance; and the doleful tribes of sinners, the princes and tyrants of the world, shall then quake at the terrors of their judge and conqueror. And is there any thing upon earth, that will bear a comparison to the magnificence of that glorious period of our Redeemer's triumphs? Did ever Greece or Rome produce any faint image to resemble the honour and majesty of so august a throne, as our Saviour's will then be! Now all his followers shall be partakers of his dignity, he will then appear as their head; and we are expressly told by our Saviour, Luke 22. 29. that "he hath appointed unto us a kingdom, as his  
" Father hath appointed unto him." And, Mat. 19. 28. that "they which followed him in the  
" regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in  
" his glory, shall also sit upon twelve thrones,  
" judg-

“ judging the twelve tribes of Israel ; and know  
“ ye not, saith the apostle, that we shall judge  
“ angels ? ” And will not the metaphor in my  
text be then fully answered, when a trembling world  
and a conquered hell shall own the kingship of  
this noble company, be forced to acknowledge  
their subjection, and receive their final doom ?  
And I see no reason against thinking that our  
Redeemer, and with him all his saints, shall for  
ever retain a power and superiority over these in-  
fernal hosts, and ever look down upon them as  
their slaves destined to endless torments : and thus  
the dominion, which they shall exercise in the  
morning of the resurrection, may abide to eterni-  
ty, and they always carry this rod of iron as an  
argument that they are made kings. How easily  
might I enlarge upon the wonders of this day,  
and the pomp and majesty of saints, when they  
shall thus trample upon the pride and glory of  
this world, and lord it with an absolute rule over  
ambitious tyrants and haughty princes, who con-  
temned them, and persecuted them in the land of  
the living ? But it is time for me to proceed to  
the

Second head ; namely, to open up the subject  
a little further, by shewing what is imported in  
our being “ made kings by Jesus Christ. Un-  
“ to him, says the apostle, who hath made us  
“ kings.” And I shall but just mention these  
two or three particulars.

I. This phrase plainly signifies, that it is to  
Jesus Christ we owe all the glory of our celestial  
diadem. It is he who hath raised us from hell,  
the greatest of evils, and “ opened for us a new  
“ and living way into the holiest of all ; ” by the  
merit of his blood he hath purchased for us this  
kingdom, and, by the power of his grace, en-  
abled us to surmount all the difficulties, and endure

all the tribulations which ly in the way to it; it is his Spirit which subdues our rebellious passions, beautifies us with the ornaments of innocence, and bestows upon us all these noble qualities that are worthy of a royal priesthood, prepares the kingdom for us, and purifies our souls into a fittedness for it: and it is this great captain, who conquers for us death and hell, and brings under all the enemies over whom we shall then reign; so that he is “the author and finisher of our faith, and ad-  
 “ ministers to us an abundant entrance into  
 “ the everlasting kingdom of our blessed Sa-  
 “ viour.”

But, 2. As, upon all these accounts, it is indeed Jesus Christ who hath made us kings, so this phrase may point out to us, that the glory and happiness of saints will be so contrived, as to bear to eternity this character; and, by their very essential constitution, demonstrate to every eye which beholds them, that it is Jesus who hath made them kings. And herein their dignity may, in its nature, differ from that of the angels, that the love of a Redeemer will be the brightest ornament of their crowns, and their thrones will appear founded upon his blood, and established by his intercession. The mysterious wonders of his dying compassions, and the triumphs of his resurrection, will shine forth in every thing belonging to this nation of kings; and every feature of glorified souls, all their royal qualities and ornaments, will bear the plain vestiges of their original, and shew that they were “washed with the  
 “ blood of the Lamb.” We see that it is not inconsistent with the state of our exalted Saviour, that in heaven itself he preserves the characters of his death and humiliation; and therefore he presents himself as a Lamb slain in the midst of the throne. And is it not reasonable to believe, that  
 the

the blood of the Lamb will spread itself over the thrones of saints also, and that his wounds and sufferings will be interwoven with the honours of their diadem? Nor is it improbable, that the redeemed of the Lord will remain to eternity in such a dependence upon Christ Jesus, as their head, and that their dignity will maintain such a relation to him, as it may evidently appear, that he hath made them kings. And I am sure, that they will then be so kindled with a heavenly flame, that it will make their crowns dearer to their souls, that their Redeemer's love intermixes itself with them; all their affections go out with so much ardour to their blessed Saviour, that it will give a relish to their enjoyments, that they belong to him, and were purchased by his blood; and nothing will more increase the gladness of their hearts in the day of their coronation, than that it is his hand which puts the crown upon their heads, and that he hath "made them kings."

3. If we consider this expression as a part of a song of praise unto the honour of Christ, it teaches us, that as saints in heaven will be fully sensible to whom they owe their glory, so they will not fail to make the loudest acknowledgments of their obligations, and be ever animated with a zealous gratitude. They will never look to their crown, but they will be mindful who hath made them kings, with the most affectionate and humble prostrations, they will devout to him all the honours of their throne, adore him "the King of kings, and Lord of lords;" and, with all the ardours of zeal, they will offer up the sacrifice of thanksgiving, "unto him that loved us, and washed us in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests: thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood,

“ out of every kindred, and tongue, and people,  
 “ and nation ; and hast made us unto our God  
 “ kings and priests ; and we shall reign on the  
 “ earth. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain  
 “ to receive power, and riches, and wisdom,  
 “ and strength, and honour, and glory, and  
 “ blessing : blessing, honour, glory, and power  
 “ be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and  
 “ unto the Lamb for ever and ever.” But I  
 come now to the

Third head ; namely, to explain what the apostle  
 may mean by telling us, that the followers of  
 Christ are “ made kings unto God and his Fa-  
 “ ther ;” and this phrase may point to us,

I. The ultimate end and design of this elevati-  
 on of saints into a kingdom. It is for the glory  
 of God the Father, unto him they are made kings ;  
 and indeed this is the great purpose in which all  
 the works of God, and all the miracles of grace  
 at length conspire : for “ of him, and to him, and  
 “ through him, are all things ; and for his plea-  
 “ sure they are and were created.” Every thing  
 that Christ did and suffered for us, had a respect  
 to this harmonious design of the universe, the glory  
 of the supreme Lord and Maker of all things : for  
 this end we were elected and redeemed, and created  
 “ again through Christ Jesus unto good works,  
 “ unto the glory of God the Father.” And as  
 it is, Eph. 2. 6, 7. “ He hath raised us up together,  
 “ and made us sit together in heavenly places in  
 “ in Christ Jesus ; that, in the ages to come,  
 “ he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace  
 “ in his kindness towards us thro’ Jesus Christ.”  
 And this was the professed design of the Son of  
 God’s coming into the world, “ that he might  
 “ do the will of his Father.” And all the my-  
 steries of redemption will visibly unite in this  
 great center of them, when “ the end cometh,  
 “ that

“ that Christ shall deliver up the kingdom to  
“ God, even the Father, and the Son himself  
“ shall be subject unto him that hath put all things  
“ under him, that God may be all in all.” And  
as it is, Eph. 3. 21. “ Unto him may be glory  
“ in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all  
“ ages, world without end. Amen.”

2. Christ’s “ making us kings unto God,” may instruct us, that this exaltation of saints to a throne will really tend, in a most eminent manner, to the glory of the Deity : for they will not only serve him there under the character of subjects, but of kings ; and the revenue of honour and praise which shall thence arise to him, will be so great and magnificent, as to make it evident, that it is paid by a nation of kings. And indeed, though all his works proclaim the honour of their Creator’s name, yet “ it is in his temple that all  
“ men speak of his glory.” And the finishing stroke given to the mystery of redemption, in the kingship of saints, will afford the brightest display of divine excellencies. God will then be admired and glorified in that assembly of kings, their royal state will shew how powerful was his love, and how victorious his grace ; what mighty patience and compassions exerted themselves, while he bore with all their weaknesses and infirmities, till he wrought so glorious a change, as to raise them from the dunghil of sin and sense to the throne : and what a manifold wisdom it must have been, that accomplished so amazing a contrivance, defeated all the numerous arts of hell, and surmounted every temptation ; and, as the apostle speaks, 2 Tim. 4. 18. who “ delivered them  
“ from every evil work, and preserved them unto  
“ his heavenly kingdom.” In short, they will yield such a mighty tribute of glory to God, that every step of their exaltation, each of the honours

of their diadem, will shew forth the praises of him who opened their eyes, and “ turned them from  
 “ darkness unto light, and from the power of  
 “ Satan unto God, and who called them unto his  
 “ kingdom and glory.”

3. Their being “ made kings unto God,” points out to us the posture in which this noble society shall always appear before the throne. They will not pretend to behave there as independent sovereigns; no, they will be sensible from whom they derive all their glory: their crowns will not have that effect upon saints, which they sometimes have upon kings here below, to make them forget themselves, and inflame them with pride and vanity; no, in the midst of all their celestial majesty, and when seated on their thrones, they pay a chearful homage to the universal ruler, and adore him the “ King of kings, and the King of  
 “ saints.” This is held forth as their submissive employment in the height of their triumphs, Rev. 15. 3, 4. “ Having gotten the victory over the  
 “ beast, they sing the song of Moses the servant  
 “ of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,  
 “ Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord  
 “ God almighty, just and true are thy ways,  
 “ thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee,  
 “ O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou art  
 “ holy.” Saints in heaven are all advanced to the regal dignity; but then their behaviour shews that they will look on themselves only as tributary princes, and that they were made “ kings unto  
 “ God.” We have them represented to us in this posture very fully, Revel. 4. 10, 11. where we are told, that “ the four and twenty  
 “ elders fall down before him that sat on the  
 “ throne, and worship him that liveth for ever  
 “ and ever, and cast their crowns before the  
 “ throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to  
 “ re-

“ receive glory and honour, and power; for thou  
“ hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they  
“ are and were created.” In short, all the en-  
signs of royalty which these kings shall bear, the  
whole beauties and honours of their eternal dia-  
dems, will have engraven upon them, “ holiness  
“ to the Lord,” and that they were made “ kings  
“ unto God.” But then,

4. It affords us a very noble and comfortable  
meditation, when the apostle says, that “ Jesus  
“ Christ makes us kings unto God and his Fa-  
“ ther:” for this shews, that when the universal  
Lord receives our homage, he appears as the Fa-  
ther of our blessed Redeemer, and as our Father  
through him, that is, he comes forth clothed  
with everlasting loving-kindness, and compassed  
about by his great faithfulness; so that when we  
“ cast down our crowns,” it will be before the  
throne of a Father, who hath the utmost tender-  
ness for us, and loves us better than we do our-  
selves; how will this amiable prospect enliven our  
submissions, and make our homage cheerful and  
persevering? upon this account, “ Israel shall then  
“ rejoice in him that made him, the children of  
“ Zion will be joyful in their King.” And our  
being made “ kings to God and his Father,”  
shews that we shall not be then treated as con-  
quered monarchs, that are triumphed over, and  
reduced to the condition of vassals; no, but as a  
father deals with his children, saints shall be ra-  
ther as it were associated into the empire, and  
sit down with God on his throne: they cast down  
their crowns before the sovereign majesty of hea-  
ven; but then as it is before the throne of him  
who there appears, not only as God, but as “ the  
“ Father of our Lord Jesus Christ;” they may  
be assured that the homage which they pay, will  
contribute to the honour and splendor of their  
crown,

crown; every time that this nation of kings throws down their diadems at his feet, he will take them up with his own hand, brighten their lustre, and beautifie them with a fresh glory, when he places them again upon their heads.

5. In the last place, as their being made “kings unto God, argues their intire devotedness to his honour, and that special interest which he hath in this peculiar people; so it demonstrates the stability of that noble empire which saints will then be exalted to, and that no changes of times will put a period to their dominion, or tarnish the glory of their diadems: and this is one shining quality which raises them far above all mortal crowns, namely, that they are “incorruptible, and fade not away.” But now, all this is owing to the efficacy of the divine presence in heaven; this makes it an “everlasting kingdom, and establishes it so, that it can never be “moved;” for it is guarded by his irresistible power, it is surrounded with his unchangeable love, the eternal God being its refuge, and the “everlasting arms always underneath it,” to beautifie it with the lustre of an endless excellency: and indeed God’s being there, is given as the great argument both of the perfection and the stability of the heavenly kingdom, Rev. 21. 3, 4. “Behold, “the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will “dwell with them, and they shall be his people, “and God himself shall be with them, and be “their God: and God shall wipe away all tears “from their eyes, and there shall be no more “death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither “shall there be any more pain. Rev. 22. 3. “And there shall be no more curse, but the “throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it.”

I am come now to the last head, namely, to offer you some inferences from the preceding dif-

discourse: and indeed this noble subject would afford a great variety of useful practical instructions, and very suitable to this occasion; did your time allow me to insist upon them: I can therefore only mention a few things.

I. Labour, my friends, to attain to the steady faith of a future world, and the comfortable doctrine which you have heard concerning it: believe the promises of eternal salvation, and strive to be impressed with the strong and lively views of the immortal glories of that celestial diadem, which your Saviour hath purchased for you by his death, which we have been commemorating: believe the dignity, satisfaction, beauty and happiness that reign in this kingdom, and infinitely exceed these baubles of imaginary dying crowns, which sit upon the heads of kings and emperors in this scene of vanity and changes: and possess your wandering minds with this one glorious circumstance of it, that it enjoys an endless security from every enemy, and beholds death far removed from the frontiers of these blessed regions of life and immortality: let a strong and vigorous faith launch forth into this boundless ocean, and look into the immense spaces of this amazing thing, eternity; see how all its ages shine with the glories of your crown, what a nobleness and state that empire must have, which is extended as far as eternity, and that throne whose majesty and beauty are founded upon immortality; and what a lovely and dazzling brightness will the incorruptibleness of a diadem give it; and by the infallible prospect of its endless honours ever inspire, with the quickest transports of a serene and lively joy, all that nation of kings, which shall then with their God sit down upon the throne of eternity: labour after a firm and habitual faith hereof, by having your serious and frequent meditation

dition employed upon the lovely glories of your father's kingdom, and upon the purity, pleasure and peace of the heavenly state, all of them exalted to the most consummated perfection: "Walk about Zion, and go round about her, tell the towers thereof, mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces:" beg that God may open your eyes, to have a believing view of the reality and certainty of all "these glorious things which are spoken of the city of our God;" and stifle every unbelieving thought, that may call in question what is so surely founded on the divine promise, and the power and love of God.

2. What hath been discoursed ought to inflame our longing desires after the possession of this glorious crown: and since, by sitting down at the Lord's table, we have professed to be citizens of Zion, and to have "washed ourselves in the blood of the lamb," let us with all the ardours of holy affections, breathe after the perfecting stroke of the love of Christ in "making us kings and priests unto God." If you be content, my friends, to live always in this world; and if the best state of men in it would so far please you, as to make you feel no earnestness or inclination to be gone; if you can dwell here without tears and groans, and sighing it out, "Wo is me that I dwell in the land of Mesech, and inhabit the tents of Kedar:" you declare yourselves unworthy of the celestial diadem, that your thoughts are mean and dispirited, and that you have nothing of the heroick temper and the divine ambition of the heirs of salvation. Let us then be mindful that heaven is our home, and this world a strange country; that here we are forced to wander about *incognito*, like a banished prince among those that despise or hate him; and, which is much worse, that together with the glories of  
the

the heavenly throne, we are in a great measure deprived of these noble qualities of heart and life which become it: but being ravished with the unfading beauties of that crown, which the dying love of a Redeemer hath prepared for us, and being transported with the overflowing pleasures and the dazzling honours of the sanctuary of immortality; let our eager eyes and our panting hearts look up to that place, let this be the earnest language of a longing soul, oh! when will the blessed day come, when death will open the prison doors, and knock off the fetters of mortality, that my willing soul may ascend to the mansions of felicity! When shall I be brought into the palaces of the great king, that there I may ever serve him with saints and angels, and make up a part of that nation of kings, which pay a cheerful homage to the universal ruler, and shall never again look, but with disdain, upon the glittering honours, and perishing riches, and brutish pleasures of the world where I now dwell? And oh! that I may soon lay aside this body of sin and death, and all my base lusts, and low affections, and tumultuary passions; and, with the dignity of the incorruptible crown, put on the beauties of holiness, and be animated with all the noble qualities, the heart and the genius of a king. And oh! when shall I see him whom my soul loveth, behold him in all his glory and amiableness, and, with eternal transports of wonder and delight, shall enjoy the brightest prospect!



## S E R M O N XVIII.

PSALM xxxi. 23.

*O love the Lord, all ye his Saints.*

**T**HE holy psalmist, in these words which I have now read, does, with all the warmth of an affectionate zeal, incite us to the Love of God, which is the incomparably noblest passion of a reasonable mind, its brightest glory and most exquisite felicity; and it is, as appears evident from the nature of the thing, and the whole train of divine revelation, the comprehensive sum of that duty which we owe to our Maker, and the very soul which animates a religious life, that “we love the Lord with all our heart, and strength, and mind.” It ought then undoubtedly to be the subject of our frequent meditation, and it cannot but be very suitable to the employment of this holy day, and the place where I now am, for me to endeavour to possess our hearts, with this divine affection, and, without suffering this pure celestial flame to cool and languish, to persuade us to keep ourselves in the love of God.

The words of my text are of so very obvious a signification, and contain an exhortation of so complete a meaning, without taking in the neighbouring context, that I shall spend none of your time, either in stating the connection of the text, or explaining the sense thereof, but immediately apply myself to the subject of discourse which lies before me, and indeed I can only pretend, at this occasion, to represent a very small  
part

part of so noble and vast an argument, which would afford important meditations for many discourses. I shall, at this time, only endeavour, through the assistance of God's holy spirit, to do these two things.

1. I shall offer a few things shortly concerning the nature of this holy passion, and what is imported in the love of God.

2. I shall lay before you a few motives and arguments, which may persuade us to love the Lord our God.

1. I am to offer some considerations for explaining the love of God, and shewing what is imported in it; and here I shall but just mention a few heads of argument.

1. The Love of God necessarily supposes and includes the highest veneration for his adorable perfections, and the sovereign esteem of him as the incomparably most worthy and excellent of all beings; and so to believe, with Moses, Deut. 33. 26. "There is none like unto the God of  
"Jesurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy  
"help, and in his excellency on the sky;" and with David, 1 Chron. 16. 25, 26, 27. "Great  
"is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, he al-  
"so is to be feared above all gods: for all the  
"gods of the people are idols; but the Lord made  
"the heavens. Glory and honour are in his pre-  
"sence, strength and gladness are in his place." Esteem, founded upon a just bottom, is the only spring of a rational affection; and without it there may be a foolish fondness, but it cannot merit to be called love. The soul then that loves its Maker with the ardours of a supreme affection, must be possessed by the believing views of all those glorious attributes of God which adorn his nature, and are displayed in his works, every

ry one of which does praise him; upon the account whereof it beholds him far “exalted above all blessing and praise,” and pronounces, with the psalmist, Psal. lxxvi. 4. “Thou art more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey.”

Such consider the irresistible power of his omnipotent arm, the perfect wisdom of his infinite understanding, and the boundless extent and security of his eternal dominion; and so esteem him as the most valuable friend and formidable enemy. And the inexhausted fulness and blessedness of that great fountain of good and joy, makes them value him as the only refuge and rest of a longing soul, in whom alone the largest desires can be gratified with the purest pleasures, and filled with complacency and delight. And when they review the amiable glories of his name, the dazzling majesty of his throne, mixed with the most attractive condescension and loving kindness; the awe of a king, and the severity of a Judge, tempered with the bowels of a father, the pity of a friend, and the love of a Redeemer: when they behold the most amazing goodness, and tender mercies which never fail, spreading a lovely glory over the magnificence of his empire, and the perfectest harmony reigning among all his different excellencies, then they, with raptures of wonder, cry out, “who would not glorify thy name, O Lord, worthy art thou to receive honour, and blessing, and praise, and dominion.” They are then ravished by the beauty of his nature, see him “fairer than the sons of men,” or the brightest tribes of the celestial world, and perceive, with the psalmist, Psal. 50. 2. that “out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined;” and are so charmed with the light and purity of his holiness, and

the endearments of his grace, that their whole souls are possessed with esteem and veneration for his amiable name, they prefer him before every rival, and see none that can be compared to him. They are convinced, that such lovely excellencies can never be enough admired and adored, that he is worthy of the throne of the universe, and all the ardours of the most elevated affections; since he is the surest friend, the best master, the tenderest father, the most gracious and condescending lord, and the purest fountain of joy and satisfaction, that can alone fill the hungry soul with goodness; and so they cheerfully join with David, P<sup>sal.</sup> 30. 4. “Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness; for his anger endureth but for a moment, in his favour is life.”

And as they thus esteem him the original good and sovereign beauty, in whom every thing that is august and lovely is exalted to its highest perfection: so they look down with disdain on all created beings, when compared to him, as little disguised nothings and airy appearances of fantastick excellency, which have nothing but what is derived from him, which are hateful and deformed, except in so far as they are like unto him, and which are in their own nature limited, inconstant and transitory, that can bear no proportion to the powers of a capacious soul; but must prove disappointment and vanity to those who trust to them, who are bewitched by the false colours and fading beauties of this beguiling world, and who prostitute their affections to the love of created beings, and the pursuit of finite and temporary good.

And in a word, as love to God thus supposes the highest esteem of himself, so does it the great-  
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est value of every thing that belongs to him: a magnifying his works, which are all made in wisdom: a persuasion of the excellency of his precepts, and the purity of his laws, which in all things are “holy, just and good, true and righteous altogether; more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb; and that all his ways are pleasantness and his paths peace:” and a submissive applauding the wisdom and goodness of his providence, and the noble contrivances of his grace. Yea, so high is their Maker in their thoughts, and so powerfully does his beauty warm their affections, and reign in their esteem; that they see a loveliness in his cross itself, and value it more than the richest treasures, and most shining toys of life, and “count it all glory and joy when they are reckoned worthy to suffer for his name.”

2. Another part of the love of God, is to have vehement desires after him, and earnest longings to possess and enjoy him; to draw still nearer to him, till a perfect friendship and an intimate union succeed to the smallest remains of distance and estrangement. Such are the breathings of a soul set on fire by this divine affection, as we find the psalmist have, Psal. 84. 1, 2. “How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts. My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.” As they esteem him the infinitely best portion and greatest good, so they, with the most vigorous emotions of soul, seek to approach him; they believe that all who are far from him shall perish, and that they only are happy whose God is the Lord: and consequently to him they betake themselves as their refuge, they search for him as the richest treasure, they see no  
object

object worthy of their pursuit but himself; and so their hungry and thirsty appetites move towards him, without whom they feel themselves poor and empty, “my heart within me,” says David, Psal. 143. 4, 5, 6. “is desolate, I remember the  
“days of old, I meditate on all thy works, I  
“muse on the work of thy hands. I stretch forth  
“my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after  
“thee as a thirsty land.” The beauty of the divine excellencies, and the amiableness of the king of saints, never miss to inspire those that love him, with the most passionate inclination to communion and enjoyment: every ray of glory and majesty, is a powerful attractive to draw the soul to God; to warm the breast and animate the affections with a holy impatience of the least distance from him, or interruption of the shinings of his countenance, and with a contempt and distaste of every thing besides him. And therefore all the powers of such a soul will be often employed in the affectionate expostulations and the moving complaints of an amorous mind. “O  
“Lord, how long? wilt thou hide thy face for  
“ever? is thy mercy clean gone? why puttest  
“thou me far away from thee? Return, O Lord,  
“how long? Let it repent thee concerning thy  
“servant: O satisfy us early with thy mercy,  
“that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.”  
And then, wherever this holy fire burns in a soul, it extinguishes all inferior baser passions: it not only banishes impure lusts, and quenches the thirsting appetite of ambition, avarice and luxury; but it also disengages the heart from the most innocent enjoyments of life, and fortifies the affections against all the charms of created excellencies; so that they love none in heaven but God, nor is there any on earth whom they desire besides him. And this desire of love is so strong  
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and vehement, that “many waters cannot quench it, neither can the floods drown it;” the horrors of death, and the cruel rage of persecution, are not able to abate it. But the zealous soul will run, even alongst the rugged path of afflictions, with transports of longing joy, if it be the nearest way to the object of its sacred desires, and the shortest road to the kingdom. And then, this love of God will exert itself, in earnest pantings and breathings after the complete enjoyment of him in heaven, and after the second appearance of our Redeemer, to put an eternal end to the least interruption, and to the smallest alloy of friendship to our Maker, and possession of him the greatest good: for “the Spirit and the bride say, Come,” and with them joins every pious lover, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

But 3. This divine love includes our delighting ourselves in God, rejoicing in him at all times, and making our boast of the Lord. A soul inflamed with sacred affections, and attracted by the loveliness of its Maker, must necessarily find all its pleasures and happiness in the enjoyment of him. A zealous lover of God is so thoroughly possessed by a sovereign delight in his excellencies, and an amorous joy in his beauty; that every thing without him, the richest treasures, the most sparkling honours, and luxurious pleasures, are utterly contemned, and give no satisfaction to a mind possessed with a nobler passion: and on the other hand, the greatest afflictions and sorest miseries are sweetened into gladness, and changed into bliss, by the light of God’s countenance. And indeed, this is one of the principal duties of religion, and a native result of divine love, in all the circumstances of life or death to find comfort in God, to solace our souls in the goodness of our king, to draw life and joy

joy from “ these well-springs of salvation which  
“ are in him, and to be abundantly satisfied with  
“ the fatness of his house :” and should the whole  
frame of nature be unhinged, and all outward  
friends and supporters prove false and deceitful,  
our worldly hopes and schemes be disappointed,  
and possessions torn from us, and the floods of  
sickness, poverty and disgrace overwhelm our soul  
with an impetuous tide of trouble ; the sincere  
lover of God, finding that none of these affects  
his portion and the object of his panting desires,  
retires from them all to God his refuge and hid-  
ing place, and there feels his Saviour incompar-  
ably better, and more than equivalent to what  
the whole of the universe can ever offer, or rob  
him of : and his tender mercies, inexhausted ful-  
ness, and great faithfulness yield him consolation  
and rest ; and enable him, what time he is afraid,  
to put his trust in him. Thus we find the holy  
psalmist expressing himself, Psal. 34. 1, 2. “ I  
“ will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall  
“ be continually in my mouth : my soul shall  
“ make her boast in the Lord.” Psal. 57. 1, 2.  
“ In the shadow of thy wings will I make my re-  
“ fuge, until these calamities be overpast ; I will  
“ cry unto God most high, unto God who per-  
“ formeth all things for me.” And as a conse-  
quence of this, the man that loves God, will feel  
no satisfaction comparable to that of becoming  
like to him “ whom his soul loveth :” the subdu-  
ing of his own spirit, and the captivating of every  
rebellious thought under the obedience of Christ,  
are the conquests which will gratifie his divine am-  
bition with the most exquisite contentment : eve-  
ry lust that is mortified by victorious grace, is a  
source of joy and glory to him, far beyond the  
triumphs of the bravest general : and the growth  
of holiness in his soul ; the virtues of the Christian  
life,

life, such as humility, charity, patience and heavenly-mindedness, more thoroughly possessing themselves of his heart, and shining brighter in a pure conversation, cause to him greater exultation and gladness, than all the glittering toys of titles, posts, preferments, or the most flowing plenty of corn and wine, can yield to the men whose portion is in this life. And, in a word, during all the changes of time, and the variable scenes of mortality, they are accustomed to that noble and elegant exhortation, Psal. 149. 2. "Let  
 " Israel rejoice in him that made him, let the  
 " children of Zion be joyful in their king: and  
 " this joy no man taketh from them."

In the fourth place, the love of God naturally expresses itself in earnest wishes, that God may be every way honoured and exalted; and in a zealous concern for the glory of his throne, superior to every other interest of life. He merits not the name of a sacred lover, who in his conduct brings any project or concern in the smallest rivalry with God, who does not place himself on the Lord's side, and makes not religion his first and dearest party, to which he will make every other consideration give way: no services nor abilities of the man, no little by-views, ever prevail with him to esteem or support an enemy to his Maker; but his love to God, will cause him hate all them that hate him, and count them his only enemies.

Love to God in this view of it, will express itself in a melting pity for the perishing souls of poor wretches, that are far from God, who are ignorant of his glorious name, or obstinate in their apostacy from him; it will break out in doleful lamentations, over an unbelieving and profane world, and in heavy sighs, that there should be any creatures so monstrous as to refuse God their hearts, or entertain his rivals; and it will flow  
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down in rivers of tears, for the degeneracy and corruption of the human race, so many melancholy instances whereof every day appear in a vain and sinful age, and grieve at the blindness and perverseness of transgressors: and then it will exert itself in vigorous constant endeavours, by all possible means, to reclaim men from their folly, to persuade them to repentance, and allure them to their Saviour; and it will be the most passionate wish of a zealous soul, that God through Christ in all things may be glorified, that his kingdom may come with power, and his grace every where gain triumphs over satan's empire; and it will often breathe out with the psalmist, Psal. 14. 7. "O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!" Psal. 90. 16. "Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children." In a word, the church of God, and the honour of religion, is to such a person his favourite interest, to which he sacrifices every jarring project and concern, that "peace may be within her walls, and prosperity within her palaces."

5. It is the surest evidence of divine love, and a principal part thereof, that we obey his laws, and imitate his holiness. "This is the love of God, says the apostle, that we keep his commandments:" and that love which bringeth not forth the fruits of righteousness, must be an hypocritical pretender to this divine affection; for if we love him, we cannot miss to endeavour to become like him: the purity of God is his most amiable attribute, and can it ever indeed warm our breast, or attract our hearts, if we pursue not in our own lives that holiness, the perfection of which in God is the great reason of our love, and the shining beauty which should inspire our ardours? or can we pretend to esteem his favour,

and desire his fellowship, and yet remain ungodly, and be void of "holiness, without which no man can see his face," or be looked on by him, except with detestation? upon which account it is, that we find love to God, and obedience to him, so often joined together in holy scripture, they being indeed absolutely inseparable. Thus Moses bespeaks Israel, Deut. 30. 16. "I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments." And our Saviour assures us of this in the most express terms, John xiv. 21. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." The love of God might be explained and illustrated at greater length in many more particulars; but I shall mention no more, that I may save time for the

Second head I proposed, namely, to offer a few motives and arguments to us, to fall in with the exhortation in my text, "O love the Lord." What an amazing thought is it, that there should be any need to incite men to the love of the greatest good, and persuade them to bestow their affections upon their Maker? strange degeneracy of created beings! to hate him who gave them their life, or to be cold in affectionate embraces of their great original, whose "offspring they are." And whither can we turn our eyes and thoughts to God or to ourselves, but we must meet with arguments of love to kindle and feed this sacred flame? but mindful of the narrow bounds of this discourse, I can only touch a small part of so noble a theme.

I. Consider, my friends, what God is in himself, how worthy of the highest esteem, and the most zealous ardours, from the essential perfection of his nature, which is eternally possessed of  
all

all these excellencies, that are calculated to procure admiration and love from intelligent minds. Could I represent to your view, the mighty king of the universe, decked with majesty, and arrayed with glory, and lay before you the dazzling beauties of light and purity, which surround him when he is seated on the throne of his holiness; there would be no more needful to inflame our souls, and give all our faculties the most longing emotions of desire, and make us cry out with David, 1 Chron. 29. 10, 11. "Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel, our Father, for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine, thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all:" but in our present degenerate state, we have only faint views of the divine glory, and have not a relish and taste for infinite amiableness, nor perceive the harmony and beauty of holiness.

Nevertheless, I am sure there are yet with us such remains of light and reason, that we cannot but be convinced, upon the smallest reflection, that every thing which we are apt to admire and esteem in the creatures, is to be found with an infinite superiority of perfection in the Creator. If it be power, wisdom, glory, and dominion, which dazzle our eyes, and attract our affections; they all adorn his nature with the lustre of an eternal excellency: on the other hand, if we are charmed with the nobler beauties of justice, goodness, generosity, and compassion; why, they ever flow in him, and are "over all his works," he is the "Father of mercies," and the most condescending and munificent Lord; kindness and pity give a ravishing loveliness to all the honours of his diadem, and are so interwoven with all

his attributes, and every part of his government, that God indeed is love itself. And now, if we be apt to be captivated with the little glimmerings of these comely features in created beings, how vehement a fire of love should be kindled in our breasts by the united force of them all, centring with their utmost strength and glory, in the great fountain of excellency, from whom all the little streams of felicity and goodness, that are scattered through the universe, flow? and when compared to the boundless ocean of bliss in him, are “less than the drop in the bucket.”

But further, there is nothing valuable upon earth, but what hath its mixture of imperfection; and a little acquaintance discovers flaws and defects in the most lovely creature, which would necessarily, at length, cloy the soul which made it the object of its desires, and give it a distaste: but in God there is an infinitude of excellency, which will furnish out new scenes of beauty and glory to the amorous soul unto eternity, and the more that they are contemplated, they will shine with a fresher lustre, and with redoubled force charm all the powers of an enlightened mind; nor can the capacity ever be so enlarged, or the affections ever be so enlivened, but the incomparable dignity and worth of the king of saints, will maintain a constant admiration, and furnish matter for the most vehement emotions of love.

Awake then, human souls, think upon the nobleness of your heavenly birth, whence you were, and for what mighty purposes designed and endued: how should ye then disdain to be confined within the boundaries of mortality, and scorn to prostitute your affections to dreams and shadows? what a large and comprehensive mind have you, and of noble faculties possessed, fit for the love of the original and eternal beauty, and  
capa-

capable of the enjoyment of the immense excellencies, and the unmeasurable riches of the great God, the fountain of life, and bliss and glory? Will ye then suffer your souls to be clasped unto a clod of earth, and let base pursuits and low interests fetter your immortal powers, and bring down your heaven-born affections to the dust, upon a level with the dogs and swine that lick up its polluted pleasures? What, in all the world, have heaps of shining metal, fleeting honours, flattering applauses, and all the gaudy shews of mortal life, to do with the amours and embraces of an immaterial spirit? How impudent is it, for these momentary trifles, to pretend to match with you? and when we, who are to remain for ever, and have desires and appetites vigorous and lasting as eternity, become fond of the dying features of earthly excellencies, and delighted with the glittering appearances of this changeable scene, how base and adulterous do our passions become? and how little proportion is there betwixt these phantoms, which are the objects of our lust, and the capacity of an intelligent mind, which is so extravagant as to dote upon them?

Return then, immortal souls, return to him whose offspring you are, reascend to heaven whence you came down; and there, let your chaste angelical love be ever attracted by the eternal beauty of “the Father of spirits;” there burn with the most zealous ardours for the enjoyment of him who is all purity and glory, and altogether lovely. Let this fire from heaven alone kindle your souls, and animate your affections to him, whose worthy excellencies are suited to intelligent and immortal loves, and the rivers of whose pleasures will satiate the most thirsty soul; while the endless wonders of his name, will for ever satisfy the eye with seeing, and the heart with delight

and enjoyment. And having thus ascended to God, never more flag and fall down, let not inferior interests, riches, power, or pleasures that are earthly, ingross your time, or prevail on your inclination, and disdain to burn any more with profane and fading ardours. Or, my friends, if you remain stupidly unmoved by all this, what can I say more? well, go on, languish and pine away in the pursuit of wind and vanity, die, die eternally, and be consumed in the impious fire of your adulterous passion to idols, be exposed to the astonishment of heaven and earth; and let all the creation surround with their loud reproaches, that monster that knew God, and did not love him, that was not charmed with the perfection of amiableness, and was attracted neither by his greatness, nor his love, nor warmed and invigorated by the eternal sun and joy of heaven itself. I might in the

Second place, beg of you to consider God in his works and ways, in every one of which he displays these excellencies, which are proper to beget admiring affections. Take a view of him in the eternal righteousness of his commandments, where awful justice, and unspotted purity reign in conjunction with the highest benignity and meekness; see how exactly they are adjusted to all the noble ends of divine government, and to the true interest and dignity of the rational nature; so that obedience is the wisdom and advantage, as well as the duty of all his subjects: let this diffusive goodness, which is the ornament of all his testimonies, endear the author of them to your souls, and warm your affections to so bountiful a sovereign.

Behold

Behold God in the magnificence and wisdom of the works which his hands have made, even this immense universe, which is full of his glory. What art and contrivance! what regularity, harmony and proportion are to be seen in all his productions, in the frame of our own bodies, or these that are about us! and with what beams of majestic glory, do the sun, moon, and stars proclaim, how august and wonderful in knowledge their Maker is! And ought not all these numberless beauties wherewith the world is stored, which the minds of inquisitive men are ready to admire, lead up our thoughts to the great parent of all things, and inflame our amorous souls with love to him, who is infinitely brighter and fairer than them all!

Cast abroad your eyes through the nations, and meditate on the mighty acts which he hath done, and the wisdom and power of his providence, which should charm all thy affections: behold his admirable patience, with what pity he looks down on obstinate rebels; and how he is moved with compassion, when he sees his creatures polluted in their blood, and bent upon their own destruction; how long he waits to be gracious; how unwilling he appears to give up with sinners, and execute deserved vengeance on his enemies; and then with what joy he pardons, for “with him is plenteous redemption.” And what can have more force than these to win thy esteem, and make a willing conquest of thy heart? so that every object about thee is an argument of love, and furnishes fuel for this sacred fire: and whether you behold God in the firmament of his power, or the sanctuary of his grace, you cannot miss to pronounce him altogether lovely. In the

Third place, I might incite you to the love of God, from the example of the noblest and best of

your fellow-creatures. Upon earth, indeed, what a pity is it, that we can present so few arguments of this kind ; but forsake a little this poisonous air, and raise your thoughts to the pure regions of light and joy, and to the myriads of angelical hosts, whose understandings sin hath not darkened, nor weakened their faculties, nor polluted their affections ; oh ! with how near views do they unweariedly contemplate, and ravished, gaze on the beauties of their almighty King ; and by every beam of light and glory, are warmed into love, and animated into transports of joy ! With what holy ardours does that amorous multitude burn, ever zealous, ever persevering ! God possesses their whole soul, he is the source of all their pleasures, and the object they delight to behold, and aspire to be united to, with the closest embraces. There is not one cold heart inhabits that country of love ; with pleasure they run to do all his commandments, and ever rejoice in their King. And is he not as worthy of your longing desires, my friends ! Imitate then their conduct who know him best ; let the sympathetick powers of love propagate this divine flame, send down this sacred fire into this lower world, and make us feel a part of the holy ardours that reign above, working us up to a worthy emulation ; that since we owe as much to our Maker, we may yield to none of our fellow-creatures in loving him. And be afraid, O my soul ! of being inflamed with the fire of hell, or associating thyself with these accursed fiends and malicious spirits, whose enraged passions hate him, and, in doing so, hate every thing that is lovely, yea, hate their own selves ; for “ all they that  
“ hate him, love death.

In the fourth place, besides the incomparable amiableness and excellency of the divine nature in  
itself,

itself, consider what God hath been to us, and what he daily performs for us. Gratitude is a necessary part of love, the arguments of affection derived from this source, are the most feeling and winning, and if any thing will melt a heart, this must do it; for power, goodness, and other perfections, when imployed in heaping benefits on us, are thereby brought near to us, they more easily insinuate themselves into our souls, and their beauty and amiableness are better discerned. And oh! my friends, what mighty arguments of love do here present themselves! and what moving themes should the characters of an omnipotent Maker, and a merciful Saviour, be to creatures and to sinners! I thought indeed to have insisted at some length on this head, but your time being gone, I shall but just mention a very few meditations, which your serious thoughts will easily enlarge upon.

Well then, my friends, to the love of whom am I now endeavouring to persuade you and myself? why, of God, he that made you, gave you your very being, to whose mighty goodness you owe all that you have and are; and does not this give you some emotions of gratitude? why, the very heart that is susceptible of love belongs to him, that he breathed in thee that very spirit, the amorous embraces of which how canst thou then refuse him? Reflect on the matter, sinner; there are, I hope, some remains of humanity with thee, thou art not so hardened as, without remorse, to spurn at thy natural father and mother, who tenderly loved and nourished thee; and wilt thou then, without relenting, flee away from thy heavenly Father, who is infinitely more lovely, and hath wrought far greater things in thy behalf? If you love not God, you must certainly hate him,

hate him! what horrors does this fearful word include! how should the accursed sound make us all shiver! Awake, man, think what thou art a doing, and what furies possess thy breast; hate him! who never did thee the least wrong, but took thee out of thy mother's belly, brought thee up in thy tender years, preserved thee by his kind providence from innumerable dangers; who now, in pity, spares thee, and does not let loose that vengeance, which, in a moment, would consume thee, is sorrowful for thy folly and ruin, and would fain love thee, and for that end, hath sent the Son of his love to die, that he might save thee: why, man, however degenerate thou be, thou art not yet in hell, thou hast not yet all the rage of devils, and the black passions of these infernal vipers; do not then stand unmoved at soft melting an argument.

I would fain persuade myself I hear the soundings of thy bowels, and that thou art brought to cry out, "Wretched creature that I am!" frightened at myself! what have I been doing my whole life? fleeing away from my best friend in all the world, hating him who embraced me with an eternal loving-kindness, trampling on the goodness of my maker and preserver, and spurning at these compassions, to which I owe my soul that it is this day out of hell: and yet, after all this base ingratitude, he is willing to receive me, to overlook all my failures, and yet to embrace me with the arms of mercy; be thou then, O my heart, a willing sacrifice to my dear Lord; rise up, my affections, and let all your powers be exerted in grateful love to the sovereign beauty, and the greatest benefactor; away, ye airy dreams, fleeting honours and senseless heaps of gold and silver, which ingrossed my former desires; and be gone  
for

for ever, ye idols and base adulterous loves, so unworthy of an immortal spirit, that now burns with a nobler flame of chaste and holy passions, eternally consecrated to the author of my being, and the Saviour of my soul.

And now, my friends, whenever the name of Christ a Saviour is mentioned, the argument grows to its perfection, and the mountains of love break out with an irresistible current: open then your hearts, let his exchanging celestial glory for the miseries of this valley of tears, the poverty of his birth, and meanness of his life, his patient enduring the contradiction of sinners against himself, the rage of the people, and the malice of the hellish hosts; let the curse of the law, the wrath of his Father, the chastisement of our iniquities, and the stripes wherewith we are healed, his expiring sighs and groans, and his dying blood, all flow into thy breast, each of them big with the mightiest powers of love, and animated with this sacred fire, enough to kindle every thing within thee, and leave not one cold or rival affection.



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S O M E

LECTURES.



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

1911

LECTURES

ON THE HISTORY OF THE

## LECTURE I.

## P S A L M ciii.

## A Psalm of David.

1. *Bless the Lord, O my soul! and all that is within me, bless his holy name.*
2. *Bless the Lord, O my soul! and forget not all his benefits.*
3. *Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases.*
4. *Who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies.*
5. *Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagles.*

**T**HIS excellent psalm, as the title informs us, was composed by David, that sweet singer of Jehovah's praises, in celebrating the glory of whose excellencies, and especially of his more amiable perfections, it is wholly employed. If we take but a slight view thereof, we may easily find, that it seems to have been penned, when the holy psalmist was under very strong and lively impressions of the ravishing beauty of those divine attributes, which render him infinitely worthy of the most devout and raised acknowledgments from all his creatures. And it is not improbable, that David's song was now animated  
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by the grateful meditation of some fresh mercies, both with respect to body and mind, which had been lately bestowed upon himself: and thus the first five verses seem to have a special regard to the particular circumstances of the psalmist, though there can be no doubt that what he there says, is of general usefulness to the church, and may be applied to every sincere Christian, when in such a case.

From the sixth to the nineteenth verse, the psalmist extends his views to the amazing miracles of unchangeable love, and irresistible power, which God had wrought for the Israelitish church, when the strength of his right arm was their assured protection against the terrors of every enemy, and the glory of his mighty acts was illustriously proclaimed in the conquest of Israel's foes; while his overflowing compassions and tender mercies were, at the same time, no less magnified towards themselves, in so patiently bearing with all their weaknesses, overlooking their frailties, and pardoning their continued ingratitude and disobedience to him who was their secure defence, and unwearied benefactor.

And having thus celebrated the excellencies of God, the lustre whereof shone upon the church in this lower world, the psalmist, in the nineteenth verse, raises his thoughts to that excellent greatness of Jehovah, which spreads itself over every part of this immense universe, to the glory of that throne which is prepared in the heavens, and to the unbounded extent of that kingdom which ruleth over all: from the consideration of which, he excites all the glorious inhabitants of Zion above, that happy dwelling-place of divine love, to join with him in adoring this God, whose beauty and majesty were ever full in their face, and engaged them, with the utmost pleasure, to do.

do all the commandments of so excellent a sovereign. And as, in some dreadful regions of the kingdom of God, there dwell only accursed spirits, irreconcilable enemies to the honour of the divine perfections, devils and damned souls, whose eternal distance from their Maker, and utter despair of recovering his favour, make it impossible for them ever to join in these praises :

It is remarkable, that the psalmist, in this place, exhorts no rational beings to concur in this song, beside these holy ministers of God, that do his pleasure ; but makes a very elegant turn of expression from persons to things, verse 22. “ Bless the Lord, all ye his works, in all places of his dominions.” For indeed, even in the prison of torment itself, God is blessed of his works, the horrors of that miserable place, and the vehement flames which rage there, and the dreadful howlings, with despairing groans, which are to be heard in these melancholy regions of the divine dominions, are ornaments of his triumphs over conquered transgressors, and eternally magnify his irresistible power and inexorable justice, and the perfection of his fearful holiness : and then, because sinful men were, of all the creation, under the most endearing obligations to the love and grace of God, and ought to be impressed with the most grateful sense hereof, the psalmist concludes as he begun this song, “ bless the Lord, O my soul !”

I shall endeavour, at this time, to give you a particular explication of the first part of this psalm, and shew the influence that such meditations ought to have upon our practice.

L. “ Bless the Lord, O my soul ! and all that is within me, bless his holy name.”

“ Bless the Lord, O my soul !” You have often

often heard, that when God is said to bless men, and they on the other hand are excited to bless him, the word is taken in two very different senses. God is the only fountain of being and happiness, from which all good ever flows: and hence he is said to bless his creatures, when he bestows mercies and favours upon them, and gives them any endowments of body and mind, delivers them from evils, is the source of their present comforts and future hopes. But in this sense, you will see there is no possibility of any creature's blessing God; for as his infinite and unblemished perfection, renders him incapable of receiving any higher excellency, or improvement in happiness; so, could we put the supposition, that this immense ocean of good might be increased, it is plain, that we, who receive our very being, and every thing that we have or are from him, could in no case contribute hereto. To bless God then, is, with an ardent affection, humbly to acknowledge those divine excellencies, which render him the best and greatest of beings, the only object worthy of the highest adoration: It is to give him the praise of all those glorious attributes, which adorn his nature, and are so conspicuously manifest in his works and ways. To bless God, is to embrace every proper opportunity of owning our veneration and esteem of his excellent greatness, and to declare to all about us, as loudly as we can, the goodness and grace of his conduct towards men, and our infinite obligations for all our enjoyments to him, "in whom we live, move, and have our being." And a right blessing of God, must take its rise from a heart that is full of esteem and gratitude, which put life in the songs of praises. A like account hereto we have of this duty of blessing God, Psal. 96. 2, 3. "Sing unto the Lord, O bless his name, shew forth his salvation from day to day;

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“ declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people.”

And then, of all others, the most lively and acceptable method of blessing God, is a holy conversation, and earnest endeavours to be purified from all iniquity; for blessing of God consists, as I told you, in adoring his excellencies, and expressing our esteem and veneration of them: but what can be so effectual a way of doing this, as the influence that the views of them have upon our lives? That person best exalts the glory of the divine power, who fears God above all, and trembles at the apprehensions of his wrath, and of his justice; who flees from sin, which exposes him to the inexorable severity thereof; and of his love, who is softened thereby into grateful returns of obedience: and then we celebrate his holiness, when we endeavour to imitate it in our lives, and abandon every thing that is an abomination to the eyes of his purity. And thus the apostle prays for the Philippians, Philip. I. II. “ That they might be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.”

The psalmist here stirs up and excites his soul to the blessing of God, “ bless the Lord, O my soul!” This is an usual enough phrase in the holy scriptures, and very elegantly expresseth the vehement ardour of the psalmist in this business, and his affectionate concern that he might be vigorously employed in so grateful a work. He did not think it enough, lazily to spend his time in outward adorations, and, while his mouth sent forth the voice of praise, to allow his heart to wander about another object: no, he designed that it should be fixed upon God, and that all his external acknowledgments should flow from the bottom of a soul, that was full of the glory of divine perfections.

fections. There can be nothing more foolish, than a fancy, that blessing God without such a temper can be to any purpose: our hearts must be inflamed by the love of God, and warmed by an affectionate gratitude; for without this all is discord, and there can be no tune or musick in our praises: this divine fire of love burning in a soul, is what alone puts life and harmony into our songs, without which they are dull and insignificant.

The psalmist also calls upon "all that is within him to bless God;" that is, every power and faculty of his soul, all which he summons together, that they might join their whole force, and, being united, might contribute what they could to vigorous praises; that his understanding might be seriously employed in steadily viewing these incomparable excellencies of God, which are the matter of our adorations; his will quick, and all his affections enlivened, in conspiring to raise the blessing of God, upon the highest key of love and gratitude.

In this verse the psalmist also insinuates, very emphatically, that which is the great argument and foundation of our praise, "bless his holy name." The name of God frequently signifies his nature and attributes, in scripture: now, holiness is the glory of this name; the purity of God is that which beautifies all his perfections, and renders them worthy to be praised. His eternity, and knowledge, and power, without justice, goodness, and truth, might indeed frighten and confound us; but could not inflame our love, or engage us to hearty blessings: but when infinite mightiness, and unerring wisdom, and eternal dominion, are mixed with unchangeable love, and inviolable veracity and goodness, which exalts itself above all his works; when thus it becomes a holy name, then the divine perfections

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are rendered truly amiable, and a suitable object of our hope and confidence, and loudest songs; so that you see how elegantly the psalmist, upon this occasion, mentions the purity of God, “bless his holy name.”

And besides this, there is indeed nothing that more exalts the glory of divine grace, and of redeeming love towards a soul, than the consideration of God’s holiness: for if your Maker were not of purer eyes than man is, yea, if his hatred to sin, and love to righteousness, were not greater than that of the noblest angel, his pardoning of sin, and patience towards transgressors, would not be such a wonderful condescension; but is his name infinitely holy, so that “the heavens are not clean in his sight?” is the smallest iniquity the abhorrence of his soul, and what he hates with a perfect hatred? surely then his grace and love must be incomparably greater than our thoughts. When such a holy God, notwithstanding hereof, pities vile sinners, hath compassion on their misery, exercises patience towards them, and hath done such amazing things to make them happy; the infinite purity of God clothes his mercy with the most beautiful lustre, and ought to inspire our blessings of him with all the wonder and gratitude we are capable of, at the remembrance of his holy name.

II. “Bless the Lord, O my soul! and forget not  
“all his benefits.”

The psalmist begins this verse with repeating the exhortation he had given to his soul in the former, “bless the Lord, O my soul!” whereby he expresses the pleasure he had in dwelling upon so amiable a subject; and his deep sense that he could never praise God too much, or be too concerned that his blessing might be sincere and lively.

Oh!

Oh! if we knew how infinitely lovely God is, and how excellent his perfections are, after all our endeavours we would be sensible, that our highest adorations of them must be very disproportionated to their glory, and that, when every thing within us hath been stretched to its utmost capacity in blessing him, the song of praise falls vastly short of the perfection and amiableness of the subject which we celebrate.

The inculcating again this exhortation upon his soul, may also point out to us the stupidity of men, and the coldness of their affections, which are with great difficulty warmed into divine love and gratitude. The vanities of sin so dazzle our eyes, and its charms have so powerfully insinuated themselves into the souls of sinners, that the beauties of religion, and the perfections of God, must force their way into our esteem and veneration through a numerous croud of corruptions, which ly ready to oppose them: and where a degenerate spirit is oppressed with so heavy a load of sinful lusts and passions, and dotes upon earthly enjoyments, it requires a great deal of pains and reiterated endeavours, to raise it into a lively sense of the divine glory, and hearty praises of God. All of us ought therefore, instead of abandoning ourselves to a lazy indifference in the service of God, to follow the psalmist's example, and never leave off, by all proper means, to stir up and animate our dull heavy affections, till they turn quick and lively in the loudest praises of so glorious a being as Israel's God is.

The psalmist, after this general exhortation to his soul, mentions one thing in particular, the guarding against which would be of the last consequence in this work, "and forget not all his "benefits:" all these numberless favours which, at any time, he hath heaped upon thee, that  
great

great variety of mercies with respect to body and mind, the bestowing of unmerited good, and the preventing, by the kindness of his providence, many evils which we are exposed to. And, I am sure, we ought to be ashamed at the monstrous ingratitude of a soul, that never casts its thoughts up to the bountiful hand, which scatters through its lot all the comforts which it possesses; or soon loses the remembrance of that amazing goodness, which ought to have made an eternal impression upon its spirit, beyond the power of sin and its charms to efface it, and our proneness stupidly to overlook or forget it. All these, which is plainly insinuated here by the psalmist, ought to make us constantly careful that we seriously ponder the blessings which God renews, from day to day, in so great a variety towards us, and that we keep them ever in our eye, and fix them in our memories. And it is with a peculiar emphasis, that the psalmist cautions his soul against the forgetfulness of all God's benefits upon this occasion, because this is the chief hindrance to a vigorous and affectionate blessing of God: for, would we but seriously remember what we owe to his goodness, and the numberless endearing obligations which call for our deepest acknowledgments, our grateful songs must be powerfully animated hereby, and we could not miss to love and to praise him.

III. "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who  
"healeth all thy diseases."

The psalmist in this verse, comes to take notice of some of these particular blessings bestowed by God upon man, which afford exuberant matter unto the loudest songs: and he begins with that which is of the last importance to us, and is the foundation of every other mercy, "who forgiveth all thine iniquities." Pardon of sin is justly  
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accounted, in the holy scriptures, essential to true happiness, and it will be esteemed a chief part of it, by every person who hath any notion of the abominable nature of sin, and the terrible dangers it lays the sinner open unto. And there can be no consideration more powerful than this, to invigorate us in the praises of God; for it is the most amiable character, under which our heavenly Father can be recommended to the high esteem of a guilty soul, “the forgiver of iniquity:” nor does a Redeemer ever appear clothed with a more ravishing beauty, than when he comes forth as “the Saviour of his people from their sins.” God is said to forgive iniquity, when he, acting as a righteous Judge, imputes no transgression to such as are washed from all their sins by the blood of the Messiah: hence God is said, Rom. 3. 26. “to declare his righteousness that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” But it seems to me, that God is not in this Song so directly considered as a Judge, but that he is rather said to forgive iniquities, upon the account of his eternal love and overflowing compassions, which are the only source of the pardon of sin, and of all other spiritual benefits.

And now, may I not, upon such a subject, address any soul which is amongst the redeemed of the Lord; that hath been convinced of the vile loathsom nature of every sin, and of the dreadful state of a transgressor, that is loaded with the guilt of his iniquities; a soul that hath groaned under the weight of such an insupportable burden, and hath had some experience of the terrors of an awakened conscience, and the fearfulness of an angry God? Is it possible, that thou who art in such a case, can look into thy breast, and behold the multitude of abominations which dwelt there,

or

or look down to the bottomless pit, the flames whereof were ready to catch hold of thee, and not be filled with a wondering love and gratitude to him who blots out all these transgressions? canst thou still remain stupid and deaden'd? and ought not all thy affections to be warmed, and every thing that is within thee enlivened, in celebrating the amazing praises of him who redeemeth Israel from all his iniquities? would we but meditate seriously upon the number and aggravations of our crimes, what a lovely prospect would be given us of Jesus, who saves his people from them? An ardent love would then put life in our songs, and inflamed affections spur up our soul to join, with all its force, in the Hallelujahs of glorified saints, ascribing “riches, and wisdom, and blessing to the Lamb who was slain, and redeemed us to God by his blood.”

The next miracle of divine goodness, which the psalmist recommends to our praise, is the sanctification of a polluted sinner, “who healeth all thy diseases.” Tho’ recovery from diseases of the body need not be altogether excluded from the psalmist’s song, since it is certain that this is owing to God; yet I shall not now insist upon it, because it seems, without doubt, that this expression is principally intended of our corruptions which are the plagues of the soul; and every transgressor is therefore represented in scripture as a diseased person, and hence, when he is converted, he is said also to be healed. Sin indeed is the only proper sickness a soul is capable of, and it is attended with all the symptoms of the most loathsome and fatal disease. In the first place, it tarnishes the beauty of a spirit, which consists in purity, and, like symmetry in the parts of a man’s face, lies in a regular proportion betwixt the faculties, ends and desires of the soul: now what can be so dis-

agreeable thereto, what more monstrously ugly, than an immortal spirit joined to perishing vanities? The head of a man united to a body of the vilest animal, is not really such a deformity in nature. What can be more nauseous, than polluted carnal delights taking up that place in a heart, which should be filled with the more rational enjoyments of a divine life, and enlarged desires after happiness which God can only satiate; all overstained with earthly empty joys? In a word, what more nauseous, than a thousand beastly lusts and passions crawling in a spirit, that is of a nature infinitely above those? So that sin is that which destroys the harmony, beauty, and proportion of a soul, and leaves nothing but ugliness and confusion: and hence this is represented as the condition of a sinner, Isaiah 1. 6. that "he is full of wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores."

But further, beside this effect of a lothsome disease, it is sin which enervates all the powers and faculties of the soul, diminishes their vigour, and hastens on a fatal decay. Does not sin cloud the understanding, and so weaken the eyes of the mind, that they cannot see afar off, nor look beyond the false beauties of temporal vanities, and makes it behold these under a disguise? It is sin which distempers the will, that it runs a madding after imaginary happiness: it is it which clips the wings of the soul, and stupifies its desires, so that its affections can no more soar aloft above the sun, and reach these divine joys that are worthy of its pursuit; but are wearied and tired out of all their vigour, in the search of transitory and unsatisfying good. And then sin, like a fatal disease, will end in the death of our souls, and an irrecoverable separation betwixt them and their blessedness. O! happy were it for us, if it also were such a painful disease, for the present, as to render it an  
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uneasy burden, and make us desire to be freed from it; we might then find that “there is balm in Gilead, and a physician there:” but alas! sin while it kills it stupifies; it is a fatal lethargy, where the soul indulges its sleep, and is insensible of its hazard or the need of a remedy. And now, ought not all this to inspire us with wonder and songs of praise, to God who alone healeth all these diseases? It is he who enlightens our understanding, that it may see through the false mists cast before it; who rectifies the crooked will, and makes it run in a straight path to glory and happiness; who quickens and invigorates cold deaden’d affections, that they move swiftly forward to the good things of immortality; and then, which leads me on to the next thing the psalmist mentions, it is he,

IV. “Who redeemeth thy life from destruction,  
 “who crowneth thee with loving-kindness  
 “and tender mercies.”

By Life here, we are not to understand simply being or existence; nor, consequently, by Destruction the annihilation of it: for of this we are in no hazard, and every one whose wounds by sin prove mortal, and obstinately refuse the remedy, will in a little earnestly wish that this were their portion. But Life in this place, and generally in scripture, expresses the happiness and sweets of being, since this is given as a reason of the fulness of these joys which are in the kingdom of God, Psalm 36. 9. “Because with him is the fountain of life.” And agreeably hereto, by destruction, the psalmist understands the loss of every thing in being that is valuable; and as the separation betwixt the soul and body is the death of the man, so an eternal separation betwixt the

soul and its happiness, is the destruction of our life, here spoken of. And this was plainly what the fatal diseases of sin, mentioned in the preceding verse, hasten'd unto: for they put us at a distance from God the fountain of bliss; and naturally lead to hell, where all the advantages of being, every thing that is desirable in existence, are for ever lost; where every circumstance of things is calculated for the destruction of any remaining seeds of life, and, instead hereof, those vessels of wrath are filled with unmixed torments.

Now it is God only "who redeems our life" when going down to this eternal grave. While all our fellow-creatures had abandoned us to misery, and there was none to uphold us, this compassionate God entertained thoughts of pity towards us; and, by no less a price than that of his own Son, purchased our redemption; and by his almighty power wrought a miracle of grace, to recover us from our mortal disease. Oh! let such a frightful prospect animate our thankful acknowledgments to him who abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light; and engage every one of us, with the psalmist, to enliven our souls in praises, and say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul! bless him who conquered the last enemy, and who, through death, destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

And, as if it were too little a benefit to draw us out of such an abyss of misery, it is added, "who crowneth thee with loving-kindness." He also bestows an excellent happiness upon us. And, indeed, every thing that we have or are is from him; it is God to whom we owe our health, estates, relations, and all other worldly comforts; it is he who gives peace of conscience, pardon of sin,

fin, joy in the Holy Ghost, and at last crowns all with the immortal glory of an heavenly kingdom; so that each circumstance of our being is full of divine love. And surely then, it is but reasonable, that every thing within us should be big with thankful praise. And he crowneth us also with tender mercies, with all the bowels of a compassionate father who hath the utmost tenderness for an only son.

The last of the wonders of God's excellent goodness is mentioned verse 5. "Who satisfieth thy  
" mouth with good things. \* \* \* \* \*





## LECTURE II.

## PSALM CX.

## A Psalm of David.

1. *The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.*
2. *The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion; rule thou in the mids of thine enemies.*
3. *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness: from the womb of the morning, thou hast the due of thy youth.*
4. *The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek.*
5. *The Lord at thy right-hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath.*
6. *He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies: he shall wound the heads over many countries.*
7. *He shall drink of the brook in the way; therefore shall he lift up the head.*

**T**HIS noble psalm is one of the fullest and plainest prophecies concerning the Messiah, that are to be found in the scriptures of the old testament, and ought the more to be the subject of our meditation, because there is no part of all  
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the sacred oracles, that is near so oft quoted and made use of in the new testament: it is designed of the Messiah alone, and it speaks so directly of him, that it cannot be applied to any other person; nor can the matter admit of any dispute amongst those who pay any regard to the doctrine and authority of Jesus Christ, since several passages in it are very directly applied to our Saviour, both by himself and his apostles.

But the Jews, who are obstinate enemies to our faith, throwing away all shame and modesty, have endeavoured to lessen the force of the arguments, that may be drawn hence against them, by such shifts, as sufficiently expose the weakness of their cause, and the impudence of those who maintain it. Their Targum or Chaldee paraphrase acknowledges, that David was the penman of this psalm: but then it explains these words, "the Lord said to my Lord," thus, The Lord said to me, as if David had in this psalm spoken of himself, and the advancement of his family to the throne; but this is so flatly contrary to the literal meaning of the words, which are plainly spoken of some person different from the penman of them, that the modern Jews have betaken themselves to another refuge. They assert that the psalm is to be referred to David as the subject of it, but then they deny that he was the composer thereof, and ascribe it to some person who speaks of David as his Lord: but this is refuted from the title of it, "A psalm of David." I know they endeavour to shun this, by asserting it ought to be translated, "a psalm to David," inscribed or dedicated to him: but it is enough to justify our version, that it is the same word here, which is used in the greatest part of David's psalms, and in some where is expressly asserted, they were composed by him; as in the eighteenth.

Beside this, the matter of the psalm can no ways be spoken of David. In what sense could he be called “ a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek,” or be said to “ sit at God’s right hand ?” which, as we shall afterwards see, denotes the highest dignity and state exalted above the angels; whereas David, though a king, was much inferior to these noble spirits. And it is worthy of our observation, that though David was extraordinarily favoured of God, and was loaded with proofs of his peculiar love; yet his reign was seldom free from rebellions at home, or war abroad: the sword pursued him through his life, so that it could not be said, that he reigned “ till all his enemies were made his footstool,” in so emphatick a manner, as the expression of the text bears.

I shall not spend more of your time in proving that the psalm now read is a prophecy concerning the Messiah, who was David’s Lord; since almost every word in it is an argument to this purpose.

This psalm contains an account of the Messiah as a king, in the first three verses: the fourth speaks of him as a priest: in the fifth and sixth, his victories and triumphs over all his enemies are held forth to us: and in the last, the way is manifested whereby he got to the crown, “ he shall drink of the brook in the way, therefore shall he lift up the head.”

I. “ The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”

The Lord, in the Hebrew, Jehovah, by whom we are to understand the Father in particular, since he is distinguished from the Son, who is called David’s Lord.

“ Said

“ Said to my Lord,” by whom we are to understand the Messiah, who was set upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom to order it; for, as I have already mentioned, he is the subject of the whole psalm: and it is ridiculous to imagine, that the king of Israel would have spoken to any other upon earth, in the submissive stile of my Lord. The Messiah was David’s Lord, as God equal with the Father: but I rather think, he is called so here, upon the account of his headship over all things, as the Mediator betwixt God and sinners; since it is under that notion he is plainly represented to us in the following verse.

Hence we may observe, that the Messiah had a nature superior to the human, and a higher original than the house of David, from which, according to the flesh, he sprung: this is the inference our Saviour himself draws from it, Matth. 22. 41, &c. “ While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David: he saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?” And is Christ David’s Lord? then let us bow our necks, and be obedient to this king, acknowledge him for our Lord; be careful to submit to his laws, and steadily to follow him as our governor, and to imitate David, who, amidst the throng of a court, and the majesty of a king, did not forget or decline to pay homage to the Messiah.

“ The Lord said.” The time of Jehovah’s thus speaking to the Son, might, without straining of the phrase, be referred both to the divine decree, and the prophecies that were upon record

to this purpose: but we are directed, by the apostle Peter, to the time whereunto this has a particular regard, namely, the resurrection of Christ from the dead, Acts 2. 32, &c. “This  
 “ Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are  
 “ witnesses: therefore being, by the right hand  
 “ of God, exalted, and having received of the  
 “ Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath  
 “ shed forth this which ye now see and hear: for  
 “ David is not ascended into the heavens, but  
 “ he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord,  
 “ sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy  
 “ foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house  
 “ of Israel know assuredly that God hath made  
 “ that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both  
 “ Lord and Christ:” so that it is in the view of  
 Christ’s resurrection, that David here says, “ the  
 “ Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou at my right  
 “ hand.”

“ Sit thou at my right hand.” Hereby is signified, 1. The infinite happiness of Jesus the Messiah, and the inconceivable bliss he enjoyed when he ascended to his God, with whom is the sanctuary of immortality and life. We are led to include this in the phrase by David, Psal. 16. 10, 11. where he speaks as a type of the Messiah, “ For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nei-  
 “ ther wilt thou suffer thine holy One to see cor-  
 “ ruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life,  
 “ in thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right  
 “ hand are pleasures for evermore.” And agreeably hereto Jesus is now raised above his former pains and labours upon earth; and this sabbath is appointed to testify, that “ he hath entred in-  
 “ to his rest, and hath also ceased from his own  
 “ works, as God did from his.”

2. This phrase points out to us the exalted state of Jesus Christ, and the glorious majesty that

that surrounds him in heaven, where he sits next to the Father, and has the preeminence over all the other inhabitants of that temple of God: for the right hand is the place of honour, and the father will make him, as Solomon did Bathsheba, sit upon the right hand of his throne. And this is also referred by the apostle to his ascension after the resurrection, Heb. 1. 3. "Who when he had, by himself, purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high."

3. The irresistible conquering power of the Messiah, is expressed by "his sitting at God's right hand." The psalmist says of God, Psal. 89. 13. "Thou hast a mighty arm, strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand." And our Saviour, speaking of his coming to judgment, says, Matth. 26. 64. "Hereafter shall ye see the son of Man sitting on the right hand of power." It denotes also the perfect security of his government, and the ease wherewith he administers the affairs of his kingdom. He sways a mighty sceptre, that, with the least touch, will beat to pieces all his malicious foes: and there he says to his most powerful enemies, what he speaks to the scribes and pharisees, John 7. 34. "Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me, and where I am, thither ye cannot come." And now what a mighty encouragement is all this, to such as are the good soldiers of Christ, and fight under his conduct? since he has assured us, that "he is gone to prepare a place for them, and will come again and receive them to himself, that where he is there they may be also:" and so they have the well-grounded hope, that one day they shall with him swim in those rivers of pleasures that are at God's right hand, crowned with glory and honour, and secure from enemies and  
danger,

danger, when they are caught up to God and his throne.

“ Until I make thine enemies thy footstool,” this is probably in allusion to the practice of the eastern nations, who placed their conquered enemies below their feet, as a token of their intire defeat, and that they were reduced to the lowest kind of slavery and contempt; as we find Joshua made his captains set their feet upon the necks of the Canaanitish kings; much upon the same design with the Roman usage of making their enemies go under the yoke, which was looked upon as the greatest disgrace of a soldier. So the expression here signifies the intire conquest of all the Messiah’s enemies, namely, every person or thing that any way opposes the executing of his designs of grace, in the reconciling sinners through the blood of his cross, and bringing them to the kingdom of God; and that he would tread under foot them who rise up against him, for “ he must “ reign till he put all enemies under his feet; the “ last enemy that shall be destroyed, is death.”

The word *until* does not of itself necessarily suppose that his dominion and power should then have an end; but the apostle Paul, when quoting this place, seems to assert a very great change as to the government of the Messiah. I would not willingly determine positively about the condition of the mediator after the resurrection, which is so mysterious to us; yet I think that these things seem pretty plain, 1. That Christ shall to eternity enjoy the rewards of his obedience unto the death; and that the human nature, united to the divine, shall ever “ have a name above every “ name,” and be the chief of the creation of God. It were impious to imagine that the happiness of saints shall be eternal, and that the meritorious services of Christ should not be rewarded with.

with immortal glory; he then shall ever have the majesty and honour, and ever be possessed of the bliss, which are included in "sitting at God's right hand."

2. Just men made perfect, will, to eternity, look upon the Messiah as the person who redeemed them with his blood, and conquered them with his power, as the author and finisher of their salvation; and will never in heaven be forgetful of his benefits. I shall not determine how far these children of Christ, under him their head, may always make up a distinct society, to praise God in songs, wherein angels can have no share, strains peculiar to such, "who were once afar off, but now are brought near by the cross of the Redeemer:" however it is certain, that they shall particularly praise and love him for his grace, as we find the saints already in heaven, Rev. 5. 12, 9. crying out, and they do so to eternity, "worthy is the lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory and blessing: For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

But then, on the other hand, it seems probable, that there will be a very considerable change in the government of the world by the Messiah. He will then have no enemies to subdue, no devils to conquer, no church upon earth to preserve from their attacks, nor any more sons to bring unto glory; and therefore there will be no use for any power or dominion, that was committed to him for these effects: for "then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and all power." There must be also a great change as to the Messiah's offices of prophet, priest and king.

king. He will have no blinded understandings to enlighten, no errors nor darkness of mind to remove, no earthly affections to purify, nor a crooked will to make straight, nor strong corruptions to restrain and govern; he will have no weak services and imperfect petitions of ours to offer up to the Father, and so will make no more atonement for sin, or intercession for transgressors: all his followers shall then “see God as he is, and “be holy as the angels in heaven.” And thus, having fully subdued the least remain of their body of death, and all things to him, “then shall “the son also himself be subject unto him that “put all things under him, that God may be all “in all.” I thought it might not be unfit to say this much upon this period, “until I make “thine enemies thy footstool.

II. “The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength  
“out of Zion: rule thou in the mids of thine  
“enemies.”

“The rod of thy strength.” The everlasting gospel accompanied by thy holy spirit, shall be a mighty rod to the destruction of thy enemies, and prove the power of God to the salvation of souls; which the Lord would “send out of Zion,” whereby the gospel state is frequently represented, in opposition to the Jewish oeconomy: and the meaning is, from the beginnings of this Church at Jerusalem, it should largely increase its borders. Of which Isaiah and Micah prophesy, when “the mountain of the Lord’s house shall “be established in the top of the mountains, and “all nations shall flow unto it; out of Zion shall “go forth the law, and the word of the Lord “from Jerusalem.”

And it is added as a consequence of this “rule  
“thou in the mids of thine enemies.” Some

think

think that the meaning of this is, that Christ should gather a church from amongst sinners, who should live in the world amidst many enemies, in the throng of which he would govern and protect them. But it seems to be more agreeable, to understand hereby the enlarged extent of the Redeemer's conquests, and the mighty power whereby he overturns the kingdom of darkness; should "rule in the mids of his enemies," that is, he should not only make an inroad upon their borders, and lay waste their frontiers; but the rod of his power should pierce into the bowels of satan's dominion, and storm the capital of his kingdom, whereby he would not only cut off a member, but bruise the head of his enemies.

What is said in this verse, seems to have a special regard to, and was remarkably accomplished in the first preaching of the gospel by the apostles; when the doctrine of Christ crucified made so amazing progress in the world, under the greatest discouragements. It spread itself through the empire, and had its profelytes in the court and the camp; men of all ranks and professions, upon a sudden, embraced a religion that was so contrary to their education, and their worldly interests: and the meanest apostle did more to reform mankind, and put a stop to impiety, than Plato or Tully, and all the wit, learning and politeness of the Greeks and Romans, could ever accomplish. "The Lord gave the word, great was the company of those that published it, kings of armies did flee apace; then was the rod of the Messiah's strength sent out of Zion, and he ruled in the midst of his enemies."

III. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness, from  
" the

“ the womb of the morning, thou hast the dew  
 “ of thy youth.”

Here we have another glorious excellency of the kingdom of Christ, that all the subjects of it should consent to his government, and that none of them should be dragged into his service. An honour infinitely beyond the fawning addresses, and servile flattery that tyrants receive from such as hate obedience, though fear makes them feign it: but this will be the language of a willing subject of Christ's, How love I, O Lord, all thy commandments, surely none of them are grievous, they are sweeter to me than the honey, or the honey-comb. Let the wicked, who fancy thy government heavy and severe, and whose lusts make them hate the restraints of religion, give a loose to their sinful desires, and glory in their imaginary freedom. I esteem it the noblest liberty to be under the dominion of Christ, and my soul rejoices that ever he subdued me to himself: not only the terrors of hell, and the joys of heaven engage me to religion; but its native beauty charms all my affections, and allures my love. A willing soul cries out to the Redeemer, While the wicked esteem it a servitude and cruel bondage to have thee for their king, and “ cast thy cords  
 “ behind their backs,” my heart blesteth the Father of Jesus Christ, that ever he gave thee to reign over me, and I glory in being thy subject, all thy wages are amiable; and, were I in hazard of going out of thy empire, I would be frightened at the thoughts of losing thee for my king, more than at the terrors of death and danger; and would strive with all my might to be continued under thy government, and have thee still subduing my soul unto thy obedience: and it is the sorrow of my life that I cannot serve thee better, and that thy enemies retain any place in my soul.

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The word here translated *willing*, signifies also a *free voluntary offering*; and so these subjects of Christ, shall with joy present themselves to him, dedicate their souls and bodies to his praise, that whether in life or in death they may be his, and account it “ their reasonable service to be a living sacrifice unto him, holy and acceptable.” And this is expressly prophesied of the gospel state, Isa. 66. 19, 20. “ And they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles, and they shall bring all your brethren for an offering to the Lord, out of all nations.” Now, this is very justly said to happen in the day of the Messiah’s power: for what can be a nobler effect of the rod of his strength, than to work so glorious a change, to make them who were slaves to the vilest lusts, all of a sudden, alter their love, and abhor these idols they so much doted upon but a little before?

The word translated *power*, ordinarily signifies *army*, “ thy people shall be willing in the day of thine armies.” When the Messiah shall go out conquering the legions of hell; and the wickedness of sinners, no pressed men shall be amongst his soldiers; but they all will be volunteers, and so no deserters shall be ever found from his troops; when the lamb overcomes the “ beast and the false prophet,” they that are with him are “ called, and chosen, and faithful.”

“ In the beauties of holiness.” They shall be clothed with the ornaments of love and obedience to Christ: or, I think it may very well run thus, “ thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power,” because they shall be engaged to be thine, “ by the beauties of holiness.” The terrors of the law, and the thunder of God do not force them to bow their necks to the Messiah: but the amiableness of his person, and the native beauty of his ways, allure them with “ the cords  
“ of

“of love, and the bands of a man.” Now, what is here said, is peculiarly applicable to the first converts unto Christianity. They had nothing to engage them to profess it, but a willing mind, and unfeigned love, since they thereby exposed themselves to derision and scorn, persecution and death, when the followers of Christ were despised every where as the refuse of mankind, and punished as the vilest criminals; hence they gave a proof that they were “a willing people.”

“From the womb of the morning thou hast the dew of thy youth.” Some understand this of the graces of the spirit, that were poured out upon our Saviour himself without measure: “from the womb of the morning,” that is, say they, from thy very first tabernacling in clay, thou hadst every thing worthy of the Redeemer of men; this dew was poured upon thee from the belly, and thou wast always the holy Jesus from thy very youth, and hast taught and prepared children unto God; and from the very beginning of time, the womb of the world, the prophets spake of thy glory and thy greatness.

But, as this verse treats rather of the excellencies of the Messiah's kingdom, than of the peculiar ornaments of his person, I take the following to be a better explication of this passage. The Hebrews, by a noble metaphor use dew to express a fruitful seed, which will grow up into a numerous offspring: thus it is used, Isa. 26. 19. “Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise, awake and sing ye that dwell in dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs.” And this may be the design of that in the song, Song 5. 2. “Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops

“drops of the night.” Agreeably hereunto, by the *dew* in the words, we are to understand the multitudes of Christ’s children, which he should beget by the gospel, and we may paraphrase them thus. When the rod of thy strength shall go out of Zion, and conquer to thee a willing people, thou shalt have numerous converts, and a multitude of spiritual children: the gospel shall be a teeming womb that will bring forth sons unto thee, in as great numbers as the drops of dew, which are poured forth from the womb of the morning, and all kings shall bow down before thee, all nations shall serve thee; and when they will flow unto thee, thy church will be crowded with such as shall own thee for their Father, as the drops of dew cover the face of the earth in the morning, they “shall fly swift as a cloud, “and thick as the doves to their windows;” so that the church in amazement shall cry out, “who hath begotten me these? who hath heard “such a thing? who hath seen such things? shall “the earth be made to bring forth in one day? “or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon “as Zion travailed, she brought forth children.” A like question to Job’s, Job 38. 28. “Who “hath begotten the drops of the dew?”

And indeed the increase of the gospel church, is fitly compared to dew, both from its fructifying and nourishing nature, and also from the calmness and silentness of its falling down upon the earth. Dew drops down gently and imperceptibly, without being driven so violently by the wind, and making such a noise as the greater rains, and yet is no less beneficial to the parched ground; so the still calm voice of the gospel, did not by blood and war, but with the “beauties “of holiness,” beget children to Christ. What is here said of the Messiah, that “he should have  
“the

“the dew of his youth,” seems to be very well illustrated by a parallel promise concerning his kingdom, Pſal. 72. 16. “There ſhall be an hand-ful of corn in the earth, upon the top of the mountains, the fruit thereof ſhall ſhake like Lebanon, and they of the city ſhall flouriſh like the graſs of the earth:” and ſo God, ſpeaking alſo of the goſpel times, ſaith, Hoſ. 14. 5. “I will be as the dew unto Iſrael, he ſhall grow as the lily, and caſt forth his roots as Lebanon.”

“Thou haſt the dew of thy youth,” that is, either from the very firſt preaching of the goſpel, thou ſhalt beget many children; which was remarkably accompliſhed, when by the firſt ſermon of Peter three thouſand were brought forth at once; or, “thou haſt the dew of thy youth,” a ſeed freed from the languiſhing and decay of old age, and attended with the firmneſs and ſtrength of a vigorous youth. And as what is ſaid in this verſe, was fulfilled after the reſurrection of Chriſt; ſo it may poſſibly have a further proſpect to thoſe glorious times, yet the object of our hopes, when the “knowledge of the Meſſiah ſhall cover the earth as the waters cover the ſea,” and a pure ſacrifice ſhall every where be offered to him.

IV. “The Lord hath ſworn, and will not repent, thou art a prieſt for ever, after the order of Melchizedek.”

In this verſe we have ſome account of the prieſthood of Chriſt. Your time will not allow me to handle it fully, therefore I ſhall only ſhortly unfold what is held forth of it in that illuſtrious type of him, Melchizedek, which is ſo much celebrated in the epiſtle to the Hebrews; and the moſt noticeable things here are,

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1. The original of Melchizedek, “without father, and without mother, without descent.” We have no account left us upon record of his birth or parents: so that his priesthood was not derived from others, and hereditary as was that of Aaron; but resided in his own person. And, from what is said of Melchizedek in the old testament, he looked as if he had immediately descended from heaven, and dropt down thence amongst men; and so eminently typified Jesus Christ, “who came down from God and his throne:” and, being born of the tribe of Judah, had no pretensions to a successive hereditary priesthood, which was confined to the house of Aaron.

2. Melchizedek is said to have “neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like the Son of God, abideth a priest continually.” His death is as uncertain as his birth, and there is never any mention made of a period to his priesthood; there were none to succeed him, and all the designs of his order, as a type, were accomplished in his own person: which put a great difference betwixt that and the order of Aaron, where there were daily changes of their high priests, for “they were not suffered to continue by reason of death.” And herein Melchizedek typified the Messiah, who, “because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood, and, by once offering of himself, for ever perfected them that are sanctified.” And this seems to be particularly designed in this verse, “Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.”

“The Lord hath sworn and will not repent.” This shews the great importance, awful solemnity, and infallible certainty of what is confirmed by the divine oath, whereby he the more abundantly shews the immutability of his counsel: and  
this

this was so peculiar an honour done to the Messiah, to have his priesthood confirmed by an oath, that the apostle lays great weight upon it, Heb. 7. 21.

“ For those priests were made without an oath,  
 “ but this with an oath, by so much was Jesus  
 “ made the surety of a better testament.”

I shall propose two inferences, which the apostle draws from this place of scripture.

I. That our Lord Jesus did not usurp the dignity of priest, and intrude himself into that office,  
 “ And no man taketh this honour unto himself,  
 “ but he that was called of God, as was Aaron :  
 “ so also, Christ glorified not himself to be made  
 “ an high priest ; but was appointed by God,  
 “ not after the law of a carnal commandment,  
 “ but after the power of an endless life.” So that we may securely rely upon him for peace and pardon, and “ they may have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to this hope set  
 “ before them.”

2. From this verse we may see a plain proof that the Jewish œconomy, and the Aaronical priesthood, were not designed by God to be perpetual, as the Jews foolishly imagine ; but that they were to be succeeded by more perfect ordinances ; for the psalmist expressly asserts here, that God was to “ raise up a priest for ever after the  
 “ order of Melchizedek.” And it ought to be very agreeable and pleasing to us, to take a view of this harmony betwixt the doctrines of the new testament and the prophecies of the old. The consideration whereof should strengthen and confirm our faith.

V. “ The Lord at thy right hand, shall strike  
 “ through kings in the day of his wrath.”

VI. “ He shall judge among the heathen, he  
 “ shall fill the places with the dead bodies : he  
 “ shall

“ shall wound the heads over many coun-  
tries.”

VII. “ He shall drink of the brook in the way ;  
“ therefore shall he lift up the head.”

In these three verses, the psalmist addresses himself to God the Father ; and celebrates the glory of the Messiah as a triumphing conqueror over his obstinate foes, as, in the second and third verses, he had shewed forth the honour and majesty of his kingdom by the conquests of a willing people.

“ The Lord at thy right hand.” This seems, without any just ground of dispute, to be meant of the Messiah, who was sitting at the Father’s right hand : and hence we see that the end of his doing so, “ that his enemies should be made his “ footstool,” shall be accomplished, for he “ shall strike through kings.” No order or rank of men are beyond the reach of his rod of iron, wherewith he shall “ dash them in pieces as a “ potter’s vessel ;” the wisdom of the philosopher, and the power of the prince, shall equally fall before him ; and by one touch of this rod, the strongest monarch shall be tumbled down from his throne. “ He will strike them through,” give them a total overthrow, pierce into the very bowels of their strength, and push it all down before him.

The time of this awful appearance is “ in the “ day of his wrath ;” that is, either, in general, when he goes out to take vengeance of his enemies ; he shall always ride prosperously and succeed, nor will he ever make any vain attacks : or it may be referred to some more remarkable seasons, wherein the Messiah will cause a notable destruction in Satan’s empire, and pull down some of the stoutest and firmest pillars of that kingdom of darkness ; such as that prophesied of, Rev. 6. 15. when “ the kings of the earth, and “ the chief captains, and the mighty men, cal-  
“ led

“ led upon the rocks to hide them from the wrath  
 “ of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath  
 “ is come, and who shall be able to stand?”

“ He shall judge among the heathen, he shall  
 “ fill the places with dead bodies. He shall  
 “ judge;” that is, punish, or execute justice,  
 as the word is sometimes used, upon the nations  
 that were subject to the kings he had stricken  
 through. And to shew that this judgment shall  
 be fatal to all his enemies, and as universal as there  
 are foes to destroy, “ he shall fill the places with  
 “ the dead bodies:” there shall be a great num-  
 ber of slain, the field of battle shall be so entirely  
 covered with their carcases, that the dead corpses  
 shall be as thick upon it, as all his enemies while  
 alive were; for none of them shall escape. We  
 have a like expression to this of a victorious army,  
 Nahum 3. 3. “ The horseman lifteth up both the  
 “ bright sword and the glittering spear, and there  
 “ is a multitude of slain, and a great number of  
 “ carcases; and there is none end of their corpses,  
 “ they stumble upon their corpses.”

“ He shall wound the heads over many coun-  
 “ tries.” That is, either, he shall not only lop  
 off a member from many nations, but he will crush  
 the strength or the head of their government. Or,  
 by “ the head over many countries,” we may un-  
 derstand a prince who has an extended empire and  
 large dominions; and that either the devil, who  
 rules in the children of disobedience, the God of  
 this world, and prince of the power of the air;  
 or it may refer to antichrist, that “ whore who  
 “ sitteth upon many waters, to whom the kings  
 “ of the earth have given their power and great  
 “ authority,” when the Messiah should pour out  
 his wrath upon the throne of the beast, destroying  
 him with the breath of his mouth and the bright-  
 ness of his coming.

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“ He shall drink of the brook in the way.” That is, say some, the blood of his enemies shall run down as a torrent, whereof, in token of victory, the Messiah shall drink: but this exposition seems a little too harsh and inhumane, wherefore others think that the humiliation of Jesus Christ and his obedience to death are signified hereby; for his sufferings lay in the way to his glory, and are often expressed by “ drinking of the cup that “ the Father hath given him.”

But, though this has nothing very disagreeable in it, it does not seem to me so natural an explanation of the phrase, especially since the whole context speaks of the greatness and triumphs of the Messiah’s kingdom, and does not seem to make mention of the darker side of the cloud, his sufferings: this phrase then, is rather a representation of the Mediator as a laborious unwearied general, that would not be diverted from pushing his victory by the allurements of ease and begun conquests; but who would endure all the fatigues of a quick continued march; he would slip no occasion of giving the other stroke to the enemy, by delaying it till the coming up of unnecessary provisions, that might serve for luxury and pleasure. But “ he would drink of the brook by the way,” he would press forward, and give his enemies no time or leisure to rally, though he might not have the conveniencies of a fixed camp; and all the entertainment that a hasty and warm pursuit of the flying army would allow him, should be to refresh himself with the first brook that came in the way: like those heroes fitted for war, who could abandon the inglorious blandishments of a soft effeminate general, and not lose one moment of action to gratify their ease. And “ he would “ drink of the brook by the way,” every thing would be employed against the enemy, and there

should not be found with his army a train of horses, loaded with rich wines and delicious meats for the palate, or an empty magnificence, while they might be successfully employed in fight. And because of this martial hardiness of a good soldier, invincible patience and diligence, "he would lift up the head," easily overcome his enemies, and leave no place for their hopes of ever prevailing against so active and vigorous a general.

The inference I would draw from this whole Psalm, is, Think upon it, sinner, whom thou opposest, in resisting Christ and joining with the enemies to his holy kingdom. Thou fightest against him who sits at God's right hand, and who, though he may endure thee for a little, yet will at length overturn the kingdoms, "and strike thee through in the day of his wrath:" how infinite folly must it then be, to contend with his armies, or to harden thyself against him? Thou seeest thy assured fate, thou shalt be one of those "dead carcases that shall fill the places." Consider therefore "while it is yet called to day," be no more found amongst the tents of the rebels; but return to thy king, and embrace the righteous cause, which has power as well as justice to support it. Now unto this always victorious general, who "fights those battles of the Lord; and hath redeemed us to God by his blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hath made us unto our God kings and priests, that we should reign upon the earth: even unto God which sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, for ever and ever. Amen and Amen.

## LECTURE III.

## PSALM cl.

1. *Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power.*
2. *Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness.*
3. *Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp.*
4. *Praise him with the timbrel and dance: Praise him with stringed instruments, and organs.*
5. *Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high-sounding cymbals.*
6. *Let every thing that hath breath, praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord.*

**T**HE writer of this psalm, and the particular occasion which give a rise to it, are both uncertain; the title not affording us a discovery of either: only this much in general seems to be determined by the subject and composition thereof, that it hath a regard to some eminent favours bestowed by God upon the Jewish church, or remarkable victory over their enemies, which the inspired pen-man had in his view, when he wrote it: and that he was inflamed by such a glorious prospect, with a grateful love to him, whose protection was Israel's assured guard from all the

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dangers

dangers which threatened them ; and the beauty of whose excellencies, with the amiableness of his never-failing goodness to them, furnished inexhaustible matter for their songs of praise.

It is observable, that as this and the four preceding psalms are entirely consecrated to joy and praise, without the least mixture of any subject that hath not an immediate influence upon this grateful employment ; so all of them both begin and end with Hallelujah, which is the distinguishing character of the most elevated song, and the most raised devotion. But the psalm, which I have now read, seems to point with peculiar strength at praise ; the exhortation to this acknowledging and adoring of the divine perfections being no less than thirteen times repeated in it : which speaks forth, so loudly, how full the psalmist's own breast was of thankfulness to the God of mercy, whose compassions overflow ; and how ardent his desires were, to kindle every heart about him with the same heavenly flame.

Nor does it afford us an unpleasant subject of meditation, that this noble system of practical religion, and the experiences of saints in the paths of life, which we have in the book of psalms, after having laid before us so great a variety of circumstances, which providence sometimes placeth them in, with the different duties which ought to be the employment of their thoughts and time upon such occasions ; having shewn us the saint flourishing in outward prosperity, and made joyful by the happier serenity of a peaceable conscience and a reconciled God, and represented him also to our view in the melancholy appearance of a troubled, persecuted and contemned lot, with a mind filled with perplexing doubts and distracting fears, an awakened conscience and a withdrawing God ; having led us through the devices of Satan, and  
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the numerous arts, whereby that envious enemy to our happiness endeavours to fright or flatter sinners into the ruin of their souls, is at length concluded, and a close put to this instructive system, by unmixed gladness and praise; pointing out thereby, as it were, to our thoughts, the nature and end of the Christian life, which is diversified with interchanges of griefs and comforts; fiery darts of the devil and a doubtful war are mixed with quieter days and an inward calm; and after all that noble and wise variety of the methods of divine grace, whereby the Messiah's subjects are rendered meet to become citizens of Zion, all their doubts and fears are swallowed up in the light of God's countenance and the rivers of his pleasures, their tears and sorrows exchanged for immortal satisfaction and heavenly joy, their sighs, complaints, and, in a word, all the melancholy groans and wrestlings of their Christian exercise, are, like the book of psalms, finished in the praises of their King and Redeemer, and in the Hallelujahs of the harmonious consort above, which will be the ravishing employment of a happy eternity.

I need not spend your time by giving a formal division of the psalm, which is so simple and easy. You see it begins with an exhortation to "praise the Lord," which is followed by arguments to support it in the first two verses: he is represented clothed with the loveliest excellencies, and swaying a sceptre of grace "in his sanctuary;" guarded by the terrors of his mighty arm, and shaking his rod of iron, as he appears "in the firmament of his power," awful by the sovereign and uncontrouled management of providence in his mighty acts, which, being sweetened by tender compassions and goodness, make up an excellent greatness. In the third, fourth, and fifth verses, we have the numerous instruments of musick which

ought to be employed in these praises. And in the last verse, we have the diffusive extent of the duty to every creature, whose very breath laid it under an obligation to this work. I shall, thro' divine assistance, shortly explain these verses, as they ly in order, and improve them, by exciting us to the cheerful practice of this duty.

I. " Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power."

" Praise ye the Lord." Praise is the hearty acknowledgment of the excellencies of a person, and of the benefits which we owe to his goodness; and thus the praising of God must be founded upon esteem, and animated by gratitude: it consists in our minds being filled with the highest veneration of the adorable perfections of him, the best as well as the greatest of Beings; and touched with a quick sense of his amazing love to sinners, and of the numberless endearing obligations, whereby so good a God, and so tender a Father hath allured us to all the returns of duty and gratitude. And thus, the principal foundation and distinguishing property of these praises, which the psalmist exhorts us to, is, that they take their rise from a heart that entertains notions of God worthy of his glory, and suitable to the admirable benefits wherewith he every day crowns us.

But it is not enough, that we silently adore the fountain of good in the bottom of our hearts, but we must openly acknowledge his excellencies; our mouths must be filled with the songs of praise, as our souls are of esteem and wondering love. Praising him includes in it our embracing all proper opportunities of declaring, as loud as we can, to all about us, how high God is in our thoughts, how admirable the beauty and amiableness of his

nature is, and how infinitely endearing these bands of a man, whereby we are tied to a willing obedience: and when thus the tribute of our lips is given to God, he is then, in the most proper sense of the word, praised.

But we perform this duty also no less acceptably, when we by any of our actions, desires and pursuits, manifest that we esteem and love him above every other pretender to our affections, that his laws are the reins which curb and manage our lives, and that a regard to his glory is the spirit which quickens and animates the whole of our conversation. And thus a holy practice and vigorous endeavours to imitate our God and Redeemer, and to be still growing liker to him, though it be not the most noisy, yet of all others, it is the incomparably strongest and most grateful method of praising the Lord, and the most powerful argument of an inward veneration.

After this general exhortation, the psalmist, in this and the second verse, proposes some things to our thoughts, that afford matter for songs, and and shew how reasonable it is, that God should ever be the chief subject of our praises. “Praise God, saith he, in his sanctuary:” this is generally understood to be meant of the temple, or, if the psalm was composed before its building, of the tabernacle, that illustrious symbol of the divine presence, which was the peculiar habitation of Israel’s God; others raise our views higher to heaven, that kingdom of righteousness, where the glory of the divine presence shines with a superior brightness, and hath its constant dwelling-place: but these are easily reconciled, since the house built by Solomon, was an emblem of the nobler temple above, and God’s typical habitation in it, naturally leads our thoughts to these pure regions of peace and joy, where God is present

in a more raised sense than he is to be found upon earth. Some think the psalmist, by this phrase, calls upon the priests who served in the temple; or upon these flaming ministers of divine pleasure, the angels, who surround his throne in the sanctuary above, to join with him in celebrating the praises of their common Lord.

But I think it is much rather the psalmist's purpose to give a reason of his exhortation, and to point out to us those lovely excellencies of God, the views whereof would inspire our praises with vigour and life, and which were to be discovered in his sanctuary, which here comprehends all the ordinances of divine revelation, whereby the church is instructed in the knowledge of God, and hath open access to him through the Messiah: and thus by looking to God in his sanctuary, we will be furnished with exuberant matter for the most elevated songs. Agreeably hereto, after the psalmist had mentioned many glorious proofs of divine power, wisdom, and greatness, which are every where scattered through the universe, Psal. 29. he says in the ninth verse, "In his temple doth every one speak of his glory:" and it is his chiefest desire to God, Psal. 27. 4. that "he might dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life, to behold the beauty of the Lord;" for it was in his sanctuary that this appeared with a distinguished lustre.

I can speak but a very little upon this endearing subject. We Christians, to whom life and immortality are brought to light in the sanctuary, may easily, by beholding God in it, be filled with whatever can heighten a rational esteem, or kindle love into a vehement flame, and make both these express themselves in the loudest songs of praise; for there he appears with all the awful majesty of an almighty king, and the condescending grace of a

merciful Redeemer in the sufferings and righteousness of Jesus, which are the brightest ornaments of this sanctuary. God is manifested as surrounded with the beauties of holiness, and the terrors of inexorable justice, while at the same time compassions overflow in him: in the sanctuary we may look at sinners “lying wallowing in their own blood, and no eye to pity them,” beside an offended injured sovereign, who covers them with the garment of an eternal loving-kindness, and “says to them, Live:” there appears a God, whose right hand is so full of power, that at the very rebuke of his countenance all his enemies perish: and yet “slow to anger, who waits to be gracious,” and seems to contend with apostate men, that his goodness and long-suffering may not be exceeded by their ingratitude and provocations. Can we look at such a glorious and amiable being, and not love, and not praise him?

With how strong an emphasis does the psalmist exhort us to “praise him in his sanctuary,” which is all hung round with the trophies of a conquering Redeemer, and whole armies of aliens put to the flight by him; sin and death subdued by the blood of his cross; and of finished transgression, and an everlasting righteousness, whereby lost sinners are cleansed and justified? And I am sure, every groan and tear of him who “left the bosom of his Father, and was made acquainted,” for our sakes, “with sorrows and griefs,” should be enough to warm our affections, and put life in our songs. Let us then, when we look to the sanctuary, be incited to have all our hearts filled with a wondering love, and our mouths with the loudest praises to him who redeemed us by his blood, and conquered us by his power, who delivered us from the tyranny of Satan, and the terrors of an eternal death. In a word, who sub-

mitted to all the miseries and shame of life, and suffered on the cross, to make us happy, that he might raise us from hell, the greatest evil, and exalt us to heaven, the noblest and most valuable good.

And when we cast up our eyes a little higher, to him now seated in the sanctuary above, and take a view of that "fulness of joy" and satisfaction, which his presence spreads over all the inhabitants of that glorious temple, whereof he gives us also the assured hope; and when we behold his throne crowded with an innumerable multitude of fervent adorers, who throng in to contemplate and praise his excellencies, we, for whom he died, must have very cold and stupid hearts, if they are not stirred up to join, as loudly as they are able, with these exalted hallelujahs of the redeemed. Since then we have such an inexhausted subject of praises to him who is so excellent in himself, and so good to us, let our mouths be often employed in this work: and, not content with these expressions, let our whole conversation upon earth be one continued song to him; and every pursuit, every action of our lives, speak forth that it is God who reigns in our hearts, and is the spring of all our motions, that he is the only object of our highest esteem, and the centre of our affections.

The next view in which the psalmist proposes God, in order to our praising of him, is his infinite mightiness: "praise him in the firmament of his power." Some translate this phrase thus, praise him in the extension of his power, which is not, like the little dominion of pitiful monarchs, confined to narrow limits, and terminated by a few years of a fading life; but diffuses itself thro' every part of the vast universe, both worlds, and is stretched out as long as eternity. But there is

no reason for receding from the natural meaning of the word *firmament*, by which is to be understood, all those immense spaces through which the heavenly bodies are scattered: thus God is said, Gen. 1. "to have made the sun, moon, and stars, and set them in the firmament;" and it is said, Psal. 19. 1. that "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work;" and consequently they afford matter for praise.

But it is a peculiarly noble and emphatical expression of the psalmist's here, when he calls it "the firmament of his power:" for tho' a skilful observer of the heavenly bodies will easily find proofs of wisdom and art in them also, and admire their wonderful situation, and their different and regular motions, all adjusted by the nicest rules to the several purposes which we can guess they were designed to promote, and thereby demonstrate, that the builder of this world must be excellent in wisdom; yet infinite strength is the chief attribute which amazes our thoughts, and appears most illustriously in that firmament. The divine wisdom and contrivance there are much hid from us, because we know but little of the uses and designs, even of the bodies that are nearest us; and the fixed stars are removed beyond our inquiries this way: but, on the other hand, all of them are so far within our reach, as to be astonishing instances of the strength of that arm, the fingers whereof made the sun, and fashioned the stars, those numberless, vast, bulky globes, to which our earth, that we make such a bustle about, is but like a little mole-hill.

With what a dread and awe of the power of the Creator must the considering person be affected, when, looking up to these prodigious masses of fire, each of them many thousand times  
bigger

bigger than our whole earth, and yet one touch of God's finger whirls them about with the greatest ease, as one frown of his countenance would turn them to nothing. And indeed there is no argument will sooner convince us that God's arm is full of power, than for one that is any ways skilled in the studies of nature, to meditate upon those huge bodies wherewith the firmament is stored: and how little and contemptible a notion must it give him of all the greatness and majesty of men, of the folly and emptiness of the vain-glorious monarch, who may boast of the largeness and strength of his empire, when all this earth is not so much as a few miles of a barren desert, if compared with the immense regions, which compose the large and great dominion of him "who made the firmament by his power." And this consideration should elevate the joyful praises of saints; for all this strength is theirs, and the same everlasting arm, which upholds the heavenly bodies, is underneath them to secure their happiness and safety. I shall say nothing further upon this subject; only consider, sinner, whom thou opposest in fighting against God and his laws, and what an enemy thou hast to deal with: look up to the sun, a few drops let fall from which, would, in a moment, set our earth on fire, and burn it up with its inhabitants, and their vanities: and take a view of the firmament, and think if the power which is there will not be able, by one touch, to crush all its adversaries; and if it be not then your wisest course to lay down the weapons of your rebellion against it, and embrace the righteous cause, which, you see, hath power, as well as right to support it.

II. "Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him  
"for his excellent greatness."

The

The psalmist, having mentioned the power of God manifested in the heavenly bodies, next proposes to us the proofs of it in the management of his providence upon earth, "praise him for his mighty acts." There may be a particular regard here to the many glorious appearances of Israel's God in their behalf, "who rebuked kings for their fakes," and gave a check to the insolent pride of Pharaoh, led them through the Red Sea by his glorious arm, and ever after protected them by a train of miracles, and made them triumph over such as hated them. And the man must be very ignorant, or stupidly unattentive, who does not take notice of the mighty acts of God in all ages, which are a demonstration, that "his kingdom ruleth over all:" where can we cast our eyes, but they will see the greatest monarchies crumbled into nothing by his power; the overthrow of kings in the day of his wrath, and the shattered remains of such as exalted themselves on high? The safety of his church, and the vain attempts of its enemies, are all illustrious evidences hereof; and they call upon us to praise him, for the working right arm which doth ever valiantly.

But our songs should be enlivened, in a special manner, by the mighty acts of a conquering Redeemer. Your time will not allow me to insist upon this noble argument; I shall only say, that the legions of darkness are put to a shameful flight: their scattered forces and baffled contrivances, sinners plucked out of the jaws of that devouring lion, and set in safe places, lusts that are subdued, and passions curbed by his grace, the strong holds of Satan in the hearts of men demolished, and a willing people in the day of his power, sin spoiled of its usurped dominion, death deprived of its sting, and the grave of its victory, are all trophies.

trophies which “Jesus made a shew of openly  
“upon his cross,” and the ornaments which  
grace his triumph. These are fit subjects for the  
songs of Christians, praise ye him then for his  
mighty acts.

The psalmist adds, “praise him according to  
“his excellent greatness.” This teaches us,  
that our devotions should never be faint and lan-  
guishing, but that the vigour of our praises ought  
to bear some proportion to the glory of the excel-  
lencies they celebrate. The words may be tran-  
slated, “according to the multitude of his great-  
“ness,” the inconceivable variety of the proofs  
he hath given us thereof: but, as it is in our ver-  
sion, they are very elegant, “his excellent great-  
“ness.” Men are very apt to entertain false no-  
tions of greatness, and to abuse it. Princes are  
ready to dote so much upon power, as to forget  
goodness and love, and, while they are fond of  
an absolute authority, and of occasions to exer-  
cise it, they neglect to sweeten it with amiable-  
ness and condescension: and, in that case, there  
is indeed a shadow of greatness, but little that is  
really valuable; something that may frighten a  
coward, or be flattered by slaves, but nothing  
that is a source of inward esteem, or cheerful  
praises. But it is God’s having a heart as full of  
love, as he hath an arm of power, and his pos-  
sessing an uncontrouled dominion, beautified by  
goodness and compassion, that renders the maje-  
sty of his empire an excellent greatness, and a fit  
object of willing and lively adorations.

III. “Praise him with the sound of the trumpet:  
“praise him with the psaltery and harp.”

IV. “Praise him with the timbrel and dance:  
“praise him with stringed instruments and  
“organs.”

V. “Praise

V. " Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high-sounding cymbals."

In these verses, the psalmist exhorts to the use of several musical instruments in the praises of God, some of which we find were very early made use of in divine worship; we are told that Miriam praised Israel's deliverer, Exod. 15. with timbrels: and his mentioning here such a variety of instruments, expresseth his own ardour in the praises of God, and flows from a heart that thought the great Jehovah could never be fervently enough adored, that it was not possible to exceed in our acknowledgments, what was due to such amiable excellencies, and that it was suitable for men to take all the methods they can to add to the solemnity and raisedness of their praises.

I shall not now pretend to discuss the question, how far the exhortation of the psalmist in these verses, and the custom of the Jewish church, render it suitable for Christian assemblies to use instrumental musick in the worship of God: the examining the different pretensions of the contending parties, would both consume more of your time than can be spared upon it, and perhaps not be so agreeable to the nature of this discourse: I shall therefore only take notice in general, that the great difference betwixt the worship and ordinances which prevailed under the law, and these which take place since the better reformation of things by the gospel, consists principally in these two particulars. First, During that state of the church, when it only hoped for a Messiah, the deliverer from evil, promised to the fathers, and " saw his day afar off;" the person, work and sufferings of the Redeemer, whereby he was to accomplish the salvation of his followers, were pointed out to them by a variety of types and shadows, which gave a dark representation of these impor-

important truths ; and such, in particular, were all the sacrifices appointed to the Jewish church : but when “ the mediator of a better covenant ” appeared upon earth himself, and, “ by one offering, for ever perfected them that are sanctified,” he thereby necessarily abolished these typical ordinances, which, after that, could be of no significancy.

But secondly, Besides this kind of ceremonies, which belonged to that state, you will easily observe, that there was a great deal of pageantry and shew in the Jewish worship, which was managed with the utmost exterior pomp and solemnity : hence they had a temple, which, for its riches and magnificence, exceeded the proudest structures of the neighbouring nations ; nothing could be more splendid than the garments of their high priest ; and they had all the harmony of musick to enliven their devotion. And of all these this seems to be the plain account, namely, during that weak state of the church, men had but faint views of the spirituality and native beauty of religion ; they saw little of the glory and grace of a Redeemer, and the love of the Father, or the joys of the heavenly happiness : hence we see they are represented as then very much under a cloud, “ subject to bondage for fear of death ; “ and life with immortality are said to be brought “ to light by the gospel,” as if they had been utterly unknown before it. Now, because of these weaknesses and defects, God afforded them mear helps, and sensible objects to assist them in their worship. Thus the surprizing magnificence and splendor of their temple, tended to raise their veneration of the God who inhabited it, and the harmony of their instrumental musick, amongst other things, in some measure, might be designed to enliven their spirits in these low devotions.

But,

But, methinks, we need no other argument to convince us of the undecency of these outward sensible helps now, beside the superior genius of the gospel worship, which is animated by nobler views: now, the inward beauty of holiness is clearly discovered to charm all our affections; the mysteries of divine love and compassions, and the glories of a happy eternity shining with so amiable a lustre in the Redeemer's face, take up the place of the outward pomp and shew of the temple service, and are, instead of them, to put life and vigour into the devotion of Christian worshippers. And must such arguments, think you, be propped up by sensible supports? no, those external ordinances were indeed suitable enough to the "law of a carnal commandment," but they are unworthy of "the power of an endless life:" and this is the notion our Saviour gives of the excellency of gospel worship to the woman of Samaria, telling her, that the temple service, and, according to all rules of interpretation, its whole pageantry, of which instrumental musick was a part, were to be abolished, because "the time is coming, says he, when men "shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth;" when spirit will come in the place of sense, and gospel worship, stripped of outward ornaments and sensible helps, will be rendered more suitable to the dignity of an immortal soul, and worthier of God who is a spirit; when our devotions will need nothing to quicken them, but the love of a dying, and the triumphs of a conquering Redeemer. I shall not deny, but these trumpets and timbrels were helps to devotion, and tended to elevate the affections: but then the Jewish church, being in her infancy and nonage, as the apostle assures us, was treated like children, who, not having strength enough of thought, to be moved

purely

purely by duty and the reasonableness of obedience, are allured, by their parents, to these, by rattles and play-things; which childish arguments, tho' of use then, are naturally despised in a manlier age.

To conclude this subject, tho' we ought never to be uncharitable, or contemptuous of sincere Christians, who may differ from us as to these things, yet, I think, it cannot but be an agreeable reflection to us, who embrace the simplicity of gospel ordinances, tho' it be less pleasing to the sense, that hereby our worship becomes the more like to these raised devotions of saints and angels in heaven, of which it is expressly given as a distinguishing character, that "there is no temple there," nothing but spirit and life.

VI. "Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord."



## LECTURE IV.

## ISAIAH xii.

1. *And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.*
2. *Behold, God is my salvation: I will trust, and not be afraid; for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song, he also is become my salvation.*
3. *Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.*
4. *And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted.*
5. *Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth.*
6. *Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.*

**O**UR blessed Saviour, when upon earth, commanded all his hearers to search the scriptures, as being the readiest way to come at the knowledge of eternal life, which was revealed in them: and to discover him, the Messiah, of whose character and office there were so plain accounts

accounts contained in it. And indeed whither else shall we go for the discoveries of God's commands to us, and the way how we may live acceptably to our Maker, and at length attain to that happiness which is in him? for "they alone  
"are able to make us perfect and wise to salva-  
"tion." Hence it was an high commendation of Apollos, that he was "mighty in the scrip-  
"tures;" and a glorious character which Paul gives of his beloved Timothy, 2 Tim. 3. 15. "That from a child he had known the holy scrip-  
"tures:" for they are admirably calculated to the attaining of their end, the "bringing life and im-  
"mortality to light," and engaging men to pursue such methods as lead to them. What is confirmed to us by argument in them, is pressed home upon us from the examples of those, whose histories are for our instruction recorded in our Bible: and this should be our improvement, when we read an account of impenitent sinners, who rebelled against God, and departed from him, or of eminent saints who were pulled out of the consuming fire of their lusts and vices, and enabled to live to their Maker, and tread the paths of his commandments. The flames which consumed Sodom ought to put us in mind of the fearfulness of God, and of that everlasting fire, of which it was but an emblem; that so we may "flee from the wrath which is to come:" and the most obstinate enemies to God being sometimes conquered by his grace, and made willing in the day of his power, should engage us to make vigorous efforts in our spiritual race; knowing, that stronger is he who worketh in them that believe, than he who tyrannizes in the children of disobedience. And thus we are to improve not only what has already been accomplished, but even those great events which are foretold by the prophets,

prophets, and yet hid in the womb of providence; of which, the conversion of the Jews, who have been so long declared enemies to our Jesus, and unto the sceptre of his kingdom, to which they shall then bow their necks and become obedient, is one of the most remarkable, and calls for our particular regard and meditation.

The chapter I have now read, is a representation of the happy change wrought upon that people, and of the noble temper they shall be in, when God will again have mercy upon Jacob and restore Israel: it is a triumphant song, where, in a very elevated strain, they celebrate the glory of the divine perfections, which shine so brightly in the bringing about this new increase of subjects to Messiah the king; and make their acknowledgments of love and praise to God for his infinite goodness towards them. I own, many have assumed too great a freedom in determining the meaning and circumstances of some obscure prophecies; vanity and curiosity have been over much gratified in such enquiries, which makes them so hazardous: but this is far from proving it unfit to take a view of the future glories of the Redeemer's kingdom, and of the great changes which God shall make as to the enemies of it, so far as the sacred oracles plainly reveal them to us; for hence we may receive many excellent instructions, as we shall afterwards have occasion to remark the manifold use the apostle Paul makes of this noted prophecy, in the eleventh of the epistle to the Romans.

There is no event that is more celebrated by the inspired Penmen of the Old Testament, set off with greater variety and beauty of the loftiest expressions, than the happy restoration of Israel, after all the calamities and desolations which their iniquities should bring upon them; and after the  
gloomiest

gloomiest and most terrible night that is threaten'd to darken their excellency and glory, there follows a promise of a brighter day that should succeed in its place. A great many of which promises, tho' they may immediately refer to the delivery of the Israelites from their captivity in Babylon, and God's bringing them safe to their own land; and others of them may well enough be applied to the Gentiles, and all those who should become subjects to the Messiah, who are the true Israel of God, and frequently go under that name in scripture: yet there are several passages which seem more naturally to be designed of the Jewish nation in particular, to have a further prospect than Babylon and Chaldea, and to extend to the times of the Messiah, those happy days, when the Jew and the Gentile should be joined in faith and love in their Redeemer, when Ephraim should no more envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim. And these predictions occur no where more frequently, than in Isaiah, who, of all the prophets, gives the noblest and clearest account of the latter times, and of the Saviour promised to the fathers.

I do not purpose to give, any way, a full account of the different arguments that are urged to prove the remarkable conversion of the Jews that is yet to be accomplished, far less to examine into the circumstances of this great event: but proposing something concerning it seems absolutely necessary, in order to a right understanding of the chapter now read; seeing upon this depends the period to which the prophet principally refers, "that day wherein Israel shall say, O Lord, I will praise thee:" and this glorious accession to the gospel church, is what true Christians continually pour out prayers to God for, and what sensibly affects them; so that it is not a curious or useless speculation. I shall now only propose

two or three of the most noticeable places which conduce to this purpose, Isa. 65. where, having foretold the calling of the Gentiles, and the horrid impiety of the Jews, in rejecting the Lord Christ, with the grievous plagues that God should pour out upon them, adds, ver. 18, 19. “ But  
 “ be you glad and rejoice for ever in that which  
 “ I create: for behold, I create Jerusalem a re-  
 “ joicing, and her people a joy: and I will rejoice  
 “ in Jerusalem, and joy in my people, and the  
 “ voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her,  
 “ nor the voice of crying. And chap. 59. ver.  
 “ 20, 21. And the Redeemer shall come to Zi-  
 “ on, and unto them that turn from transgression  
 “ in Jacob, saith the Lord. As for me, this is  
 “ my covenant with them, saith the Lord, my  
 “ spirit that is upon thee, and my words which  
 “ I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out  
 “ of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy  
 “ seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seeds seed,  
 “ saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.”

Though these might be understood of true believers in general, yet, why may not we also interpret them of Israel in particular? especially seeing other places cannot so well be explained without doing so, as Ezek. 34. 13, 23, 28. where the prophet is reproving the sins which prevailed in his own time, and exposing the priests who were then amongst the Israelites, and so directly speaking of the Jews, he says of them, “ And I  
 “ will bring them out from the people, and ga-  
 “ ther them from the countries, and will bring  
 “ them to their own land. And I will set up one  
 “ shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, e-  
 “ ven my servant David; he shall feed them, and  
 “ he shall be their shepherd: and ver. 28. And  
 “ they shall no more be a prey to the heathen,  
 “ neither shall the beasts of the land devour them;  
 “ but

“but they shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid.” Now these are too noble expressions to be answered by the temporal delivery from Babylon: besides, it was not true, that they were never after that exposed to the power and rage of their enemies; for they were subjected to the Persians and Greeks, and at length entirely ruined by the Romans, and have not yet recovered any of their former excellency; yea, so far as I can remember, after their restauration from Babylon, they were never altogether a free nation, and independent of some foreign power.

But the apostle Paul clearly answers this question, and gives us a solid hope for that resurrection of the dead, which will be such a joy to all the churches, Rom. II. 25. “For I would not, Brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery (lest ye should be wise in your own conceits) that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and so all Israel shall be saved;” and for this he quotes a passage out of Isaiah: now this can no ways be applied to the converts of Israel, that did in the first ages embrace Christianity, because these had been as numerous before Paul wrote this epistle, as ever after, and it was no mystery to them, for they were sufficiently informed thereof.

Having thus proposed a few places, which seem to give a foundation for belief, that there shall be a more general conversion of God’s ancient people the Jews, and a glorious remarkable accession made thereby to the kingdom of our Saviour, we may with less difficulty apply ourselves to the explication of the chapter now read.

In the foregoing chapter, the prophet had foretold the coming of the Messiah, and given some account of the excellency of his government, which should always be managed with justice and judgment;

ment; of the happiness and peace that should attend his reign, when “the wolf would dwell with the lamb, and the leopard ly down with the kid,” and of the enlarged extent of his dominion, when the Gentiles should seek to it: from the eleventh verse, to the end of the chapter, he gives a very clear prediction of the deliverance, wherewith God would at length bless the Jews, from the miserable accursed state they would bring themselves into, by rejecting the Messiah. These verses, when compared with the other passages which I have quoted, make this so plain, that I shall not spend time by giving a comment upon them: but only observe, that Assyria and Egypt being here expressly mentioned, does not at all argue, that the Israelites being gathered from these places in a literal sense, is the thing referred to by the prophet; for there is nothing more ordinary in scripture, than to express the enemies to the church in all ages, and the places amongst which Israel should be scattered, by the nations which were at that time their most noted adversaries, such as Assyria and Egypt. On the contrary, the preceeding part of the chapter, to which this is immediately joined, being evidently spoken of the Messiah, this deliverance of the Jews must refer to a period after his coming; so that we have all the reason that can be expected, to understand by that eminent day, mentioned in this chapter, wherein Israel should say, “O Lord, I will praise thee,” those glorious times when “God shall gather the outcasts of Israel,” and again restore that obstinate nation to the true church, and the hope of their fathers, when their deliverer shall come out of Zion, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

I. “And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord,  
 “I will praise thee: though thou wast angry  
 VOL. I. U “with

“ with me, thine anger is turned away, and  
 “ thou comfortedst me.”

In this verse we have first their work and exercise at that time, and the influence which their amazing deliverance would have upon them, their souls would be employed in the praises of God's perfections, which were now in so amiable a manner displayed towards them. It would be their resolution and vow unto God, to make this the business of their lives, and that the tribute of their lips should be constantly rendered unto their gracious deliverer.

Praise supposes a knowledge and esteem of the divine excellencies: an ignorant admiration and wonder can never be acceptable to our God; that only ought to be offered to him, which is the result of a rational view of his glory. Praise includes in it the deepest sense, and the truest gratitude to the Lord of our being and life, whose goodness we admire, and thankfully remember: and this we declare by open direct acknowledgments, and a continued course of shewing forth his praises, by a doing what may please him, and is agreeable to his honour. Now, such a management will necessarily follow upon God's conquering the Jews to himself and Messiah their king: they will have very special reasons for their being thus employed, and will be then thoroughly convinced of their greatness and weight; for what must be the transports of wonder and praise to God, from a people who had been overwhelmed for so long a time, with spiritual and temporal plagues? who shall then be sensible of that fatal blindness and ignorance of mind they were under, in departing from the faith and hope of the ancient church, and turning giddy with the dream of temporal greatness and dominion, fondly imagining that their promised Saviour was to conquer the nations by blood

blood and war, and exalt the Jewish monarchy above the empire of the Romans, and were really “without God and hope in the world,” though they fancied that “the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants still remained with them.” Now, when this people shall see the greatness of the divine mercy in enlightening their minds, by comparing it with the fatal consequences of their former deluding notions, as to their most important concerns, how active and vigorous will all the powers of their souls be, that they may, with raised and admiring thoughts adore the author of this blessed alteration in their condition?

The further view we take of the other considerations, which heighten the amazing graces in this love and goodness of God towards the Jews, which were more peculiar to them, the more we will see the force of what the prophet asserts, that “in that day they should praise him.” I cannot stay to enlarge upon this, and shall only take notice, that as a sinner in whose soul the life of God was begun upon earth, but a little before its being finished in heaven, as was the case of the thief upon the cross, will, in a particular manner, be ravished with a pleasing wonder, when he find himself amongst “the spirits of just men made perfect,” who, a few moments before his death, was a child of wrath, and a notorious debased sinner; so, how agreeable a surprise will it be to the Jews, who were the most obstinate enemies of Christianity, and continued to hate and abominate it for so many ages, and that, not from want of means of knowledge, for they gloried in their shame of being the children of those who crucified our Saviour, and abhorred the thoughts of ever embracing his religion, to find themselves, all of a sudden, light and life in the Lord, and faithful subjects of Jesus Christ, and converts to his doctrine, united in the sin-

cerest love to their fellow-christians, whom, a little while ago, they detested as followers of an impostor? It is no wonder, that in that day, moved by these views, they shall exclaim, “ O Lord, I will praise thee.”

We see here they speak as one person, “ I will praise thee,” which is ordinary enough, they being one nation, and a joint body: but this much may be remarked from it, that this happy state, and these astonishing mercies which they here celebrate, will be in some measure universal as to the Jewish nation, and not confined to a few of that people, else I cannot conceive how they could speak thus in their praises, as the united society and people of Israel. It may also hint to us the harmonious concord of their praise, their souls should all conspire in it with the same unanimity and agreement, as if they had been but one person, and all their tongues moved by the same spirit: they were to become as cordial and unite in their submission to the Messiah, as they had, not long ago, been in their opposition to his government. What the prophet here foretels, was the usual practice of the people of God, after remarkable deliverances: so when God had led them thro’ the red sea by his glorious arm, Moses exclaims, “ I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously, the Lord is my strength and my song.” This we may observe in the practice of Deborah, Barak, and a great many others.

2. We have the particular occasion and matter of their song, “ though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away.” God’s favours bestowed upon the most innocent of his creatures, who never displeased him, are the effects of unmerited goodness, and make it their duty to praise him; for the righteousness of the purest spirit, a cherub or seraph, doth not profit him: yet it  
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is certain, that this obligation is heightened, and new ties are laid upon those to praise God, to whom he extends his bounty, though they have rebelled against him, and so rendered themselves utterly unworthy of the least kind regard from him. Now, God is never displeas'd but with sinners, and therefore his anger against any person supposes them to have been workers of iniquity; which makes it reasonable in returning Israel to use this as an argument, for the louder praising of God, that though "he was angry, yet his anger was turned away." It will be a subject of the adoring admiring saints to eternity, which will add force to their wonder and love, that though they were once the vilest sinners, they are now "holy in the Lord;" though God was then angry with them, "yet his anger was turned away." And the Jews upon earth will have a more special reason for having this in their mouths and hearts, than other nations.

The Jews speak in this chapter as one people and body of men; for, beside God's anger with all the particular persons of that nation, because of their severally rejecting the only Saviour Jesus of Nazareth, there is a national publick curse entail'd upon them. Christ tells them that the kingdom should be taken from them, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof; upon them was charged all the righteous blood of the prophets, from Abel to Zechariah; and because they would not be gathered by Christ, their house was left unto them desolate, for wrath was come upon them to the uttermost, the blood of the Son of God being upon the heads of them and their children: so that God has inflicted upon them the punishment of Cain, in a literal sense, that they should be "fugitives and vagabonds upon the earth." Now all this shews what peculiar reasons the converted

Jews will have to praise the Lord, because, tho' he  
 "was angry with them, his anger was turned away."

It is added, "and thou comfortedst me." I think the force of this expression may be conceived to ly in this, when the Jews shall have their eyes opened, and be convinced of their infinite baseness and ingratitude, of the contempt and hatred wherewith they had all along treated their Saviour; this sight might not only make them at first despair of obtaining mercy, but, even after real conversion, would fill them with such shame and sorrow, as to take away all peace and joy from them: now, God will comfort them by his love, and the joys of his spirit, and, giving them the sense of his mercy, which triumphed over the mountains of their provocations, he will then declare them "a land married to him, and that they shall never be again termed forsaken."

II. "Behold, God is my salvation: I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength, and my song, he also is become my salvation."

Behold, apply your minds with the deepest attention and consideration to it, or *certainly*, as the word may be translated, "it is an undoubted truth, that God is my salvation." Israel goes on to ascribe the whole of this work to God: no other had any title to be a partaker of this praise, which ought to be appropriated to him, the great author and fountain of it, he wrought it for them. Besides, this salvation chiefly consists in knowledge of the true God, and the religion of Christ, whereby alone he will be acceptably worshipped by men; and in their reconciliation to him, their being again in his favour, and at peace with their offended Lord.

But, beside this in general, there seems to be something very remarkable pointed at in this phrase,  
 which

which deserves our consideration: they are much the same words with those of Moses, Exod. 15. 2. "The Lord is my strength and my song, he also is become my salvation." When the Israelites had just before passed through the red sea, which was altogether miraculous, and God had delivered them from the Egyptians, thrown the horse and his rider into the sea, without any human assistance, his own right arm wrought that salvation, without the concurrence of inferior agents: and this was what made Moses cry out, as returning Israel in our text, so pathetically, "Behold, God is my salvation." Now, though I would be far from a positive determination as to the circumstances of this great event, the conversion of the Jews; yet it appears probable from the scriptures, that God will in like manner, by his own strength, bring out Israel from spiritual Egypt, and convert them unto Christianity: that people have been hitherto obstinate against all the calls of the gospel, and though many of them live in the midst of its light, yet very few have been converted; and the glorious conquest that God shall one day make over them, is represented to be done upon a sudden, and to be so general, that I can scarce think that the ministry of men will be much used in this work, but rather that God will reserve this as a special triumph to his powerful grace, when "he shall send the rod of his strength out of Zion, and in his majesty ride prosperously." Besides, several passages of scripture seem to affirm, that the Jews shall be gathered from out of the heathen nations; and that not only those who dwell amongst Christians, shall be restored to the church, but the remnant from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, &c. by which the enemies to true religion are commonly expressed in the old testament: which shews, that there must

be something very miraculous and extraordinary in the accomplishment of these prophecies. And in the last verse of the foregoing chapter, it is expressly said, that “there shall be a high-way for  
“the remnant of his people, which shall be left  
“from Assyria:” like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt, as eminently and immediately owing to God, and in as surprizing a manner as their deliverance from that temporal bondage. What has been now said, may conduce to let us into the just extent of these expressions, “God is my salvation, my strength,  
“and my song.”

They rejoice in God, and express their courage and confidence in their Lord, “I will trust, and  
“not be afraid.” Though they had been for so many ages ruled over by others, and scattered amongst the nations; and their own lusts and infidelity had maintained dominion over them, and the God of this world blinded and enslaved them; yet now they had surmounted fear, and would not be frightened by danger, and the stoutest enemies, because God was their strength, he was now their protector and defence: and they had so firm faith of his power and readiness to support them, from what he had already wrought, that they doubted not though “vain was the help of  
“man,” yet, that through God, Israel should do valiantly; for he it was who would “tread down  
“their enemies,” and they would never more  
“flee to the hills for strength,” or to Egypt for protection.

The word, the LORD JEHOVAH, in this verse JAH JEHOVAH, are remarkable, and do not often occur joined together. Some learned men refer them to Christ Jesus the Messiah, and interpret them thus, “the Lord of God,” eternally begotten by him; which, if agreeable to  
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the rules of criticism, is a pious and useful observation; since it is certain, that it is God in Christ who will be the subject of Israel's song.

III. "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out  
"of the wells of salvation."

In this verse we have the great benefits that would accrue to them from this happy state, and the improvement they would make of it: they would be overflowed with the graces of God's spirit, and be daily watered with that heavenly dew of which there would be then a plentiful effusion. Water is universally beneficial to mankind, and its usefulness spreads itself into every part of nature: it is the source of the beauty which adorns the spring, and the fruits of the harvest which preserve our life. Without this element the world would soon turn into a scorched desert, an uninhabitable wilderness, and must be soon desolated of its inhabitants; for it is absolutely necessary to our living upon this earth. Hence, in scripture, the grace and powerful mercies of God are frequently represented by water, they being as necessary for a spiritual life, as the other is for a natural: without this grace we cannot advance one step in the way to glory, or come nearer this salvation; without "drawing water from these wells of salvation," we shall soon decay and wither: but from them a believer may receive what will answer all his wants and weaknesses, they will never fail him; for they are not decaying, but abiding wells, an eternal source and spring of salvation.

Some understand by these "wells of salvation," the light of the gospel, which, then shining upon Israel, she would improve by growing in grace, and the knowledge of the Redeemer: but, as the words may be rendered, "the wells of the Saviour," others think it directly refers to Jesus

Christ; and then the meaning is, that they should “receive out of his fulness grace for grace,” and growth in it. But one of these senses doth no ways contradict the other, and we may include both of them. We may observe hence, that it is the duty of all, upon whom God bestows the means of light, and turns unto himself, not to rest satisfied with what degrees of grace they have attained to, but to be constantly employed in drawing more of it; bestirring ourselves, that, with vigour, chearfulness and joy, we may press forward to what remains, and not let ourselves languish into a lazy inactivity in the pursuit of heavenly glory, salvation.

IV. “And in that day shall ye say, Praise the  
 “ Lord, call upon his name, declare his do-  
 “ ings among the people, make mention that  
 “ his name is exalted.”

V. “Sing unto the Lord, for he hath done ex-  
 “ cellent things: this is known in all the earth.”

We have already represented the employment of these new converts to Christ, in praising and rejoicing in God. In these verses we find they do not contain themselves within the boundaries of Judea, their own country, but incite others to join with them in praising and adoring God, and celebrating his perfections; and stir up one another to sound his praises as far as they were able, and propagate the glory of his goodness and power in their deliverance. It flows both from our grateful impressions of the divine favours, and love to our fellow-creatures, that we endeavour, that all, whom we can have any influence upon, should be convinced of the excellencies of God, especially as manifested in his management towards us; that thereby they may be engaged also to trust in this God, and to magnify and exalt him.

him. We ought not to confine our sense of God's favours within our own breasts, but try if we can inflame the hearts of others with love to our benefactor, from a consideration of them.

The returning Jews enforce this exhortation to the adoring and praising God by two arguments, 1. Because "he had done excellent things." And indeed what can be a nobler and more amiable work than to forgive iniquity and sin, that were heighten'd in them by the most dreadful aggravating circumstances? this is the unbounded freedom of the divine mercy and compassion, which never was more plainly held forth, than they will be in Israel's being saved. And what can be more excellent than the divine wisdom and power, in setting his kingdom up in the hearts of his most inveterate irreconcilable enemies, in bowing such obstinate wills to his holy law, as those of the Jews were, and making the stiffness of their necks pliable to all his precepts?

2. "This was known in all the earth." The Jews, when brought in to David their king, will not be a small society, "hid under a bushel, but "a city set upon an hill, which cannot be hid:" this glorious event will be observable, make a noise in the world, and be taken notice of by all its inhabitants.

VI. "Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the holy One of Israel in the midst of thee."

In the last verse there is again a return to "the inhabitant of Zion," who was peculiarly interested in this matter, and so under particular obligations to be moved with joy and gratitude upon this great occasion. There is nothing necessary for the explication of this verse beside what has been already hinted at; wherefore I shall conclude

this.

this discourse with two or three observations from the general strain of this chapter.

1. From the falling off of the Jews, and their rejection for so long a time, which is presupposed to this conversion, and from God's being angry with them, we may observe the infinite folly of relying upon external privileges, how great soever, in the business of our salvation. Can we have a more lively instance of their vanity and usefulness, if not attended with a spiritual life? Never was there a people that had higher claims to the divine favour than the Jews: they were protected by a train of miracles, and chosen out of all the nations of the earth to be the true church, while the rest of the world was left without the pale of it; with them were the law, the glory, and the covenants, but they relied too much upon them, trusted to their own righteousness, and their being the seed of Abraham, and, turning vain in their imaginations, were left of God to their wicked hearts, and, at length, cut off and desolated. Loud professions of religion and zeal for God's glory, without an holy life answerable to them, are so far from profiting, that they injure the person who makes them, and proves him more a child of wrath, to forget God, and never to think upon him to whose honour our thoughts and our all should be dedicated, is a fearful state; but to meditate upon God, as if he were an imperfect finite being, and thus to ascribe to him what is dishonourable, is still worse: but such is the case of all who confide in the temple of the Lord's being among them, without having inward purity. And God must account it the highest affront in us, to behave so, as if he, who "is so pure that the heavens are not clean in his sight," would be put off by the deceitful addresses and flattery, or the bodily services of those, who

within

within are enemies to goodness and virtue. Let us shun this rock upon which so many have split their all, and, thinking upon the Jews, follow the apostle's advice, Rom. 11. 20, 21. "Well, " because of unbelief they were broken off, and " thou standest by faith; be not high-minded, " but fear: for if God spared not the natural " branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee."

2dly, When we meditate upon this subject, let us be thankful to God, that, tho' we have been hitherto too much partakers of their sins, we have not as yet been made partakers of their plagues, but that the tender mercies of God still overshadow us. We have abused the highest goodness, and been unfruitful under the noblest light, and, tho' more covertly, yet no less certainly, we have " troden under foot the blood of " the Son of God," by refusing to be cleansed by it. God will call us to an account for all the opportunities he hath given us of being wiser and better: and this very instance of his severity towards the Jews, and of his goodness towards us, if not noticed and improved by us, will heighten our sin and folly. But let us shew forth the praises of God in all manner of holy conversation; let us walk as those who value our mercies, and believe them blessed who hear the joyful sound, by laying up a good foundation for the time to come, and taking hold of eternal life by a compliance with the offers made us in the gospel.

3dly, We may here see the unbounded mercy of God; it is, as himself, without limits: no provocations, tho' attended with the most aggravating circumstances, and of the longest continuance, are so great as it is. That God should have given to any of the posterity of Adam, " access to " the grace wherein they stand," is a subject of condescension, worthy of the contemplation of  
angels

angels who search into it: but there shines a peculiar lustre and beauty in it, as it respects the conversion of the Jews, who seemed to be utterly forsaken, and had all the marks of final rejection; for when God had of old crowned them with his goodness, and, with a plentiful hand, scattered his favours of all sorts, every where in Judea, so that they were “loaded with his benefits,” they abused and despised his goodness, waxed fat and kicked, and forgot their Saviour. And when, at last, he put the greatest honour upon them that a nation could well be capable of, that “of them, as concerning the flesh, Christ “came, who is over all God blessed for ever;” they were so far from joyfully receiving their Lord, that they treated him with all the ignominy and disgrace they could invent, mocked and derided him, preferred a thief and a robber to him, and, at length, “with wicked hands, crucified the “Prince of Life;” and their envy and malice have not been abated by time, but rather increased in their posterity. O the love of God, and the incomprehensible grace of Jesus Christ! that will have thoughts of peace to them, and will, at length, put such a song in their mouths, as we have in this chapter, and wash them with the blood they shed: here is encouragement to the greatest sinner, if he be willing and obedient. Any who are resolved to turn to God, and forsake every wicked way, but are so pressed with the load of transgression, that they are afraid God will never receive them, let them think upon Israel, and see if their guilt can be greater than the Messiah’s mercy and merit.

4thly, We may hence observe the irresistible power of God’s grace, not in that stupid sense which some falsely fix to it, but by his persuading the reason, and, in the sweetest and most amiable

ble.

ble method, engaging the will and inclinations of men to his laws. When he resolves to erect his kingdom in the hearts of men, and be the governor in the midst of them, all the powers of darkness, and those lusts which cleave fastest to their souls, will not be able to resist his arm: "his enemies shall bow down before him, and lick the dust." Let this support us in our spiritual warfare; when we make often unsuccessful endeavours and efforts to advance in religion, when the devil, by his power and cunning, turns us faint and languishing, and our impetuous passions carry us down the stream, let us remember, that "Israel, through God, shall do valiantly:" for I do not think it unreasonable arguing, that, if from Christ's raising the dead, we may conclude he can cure the blind, by the same reason, from his overcoming the obstinacy and prejudice of the Jews, we may conclude that he is able to carry on his work in other sinners, and to subdue all things to himself.

5thly, We may here admire the wisdom of God's conduct, "surely his understanding is infinite." Moses argues with God against his destroying Israel upon their making the golden calf, because, however they deserved it, yet it might be a reproach to him, and open the mouths of the Egyptians. Now what seemed less for God's honour than to throw off Israel at length, and that they should not rather have embraced the Messiah? and yet we see here that it will be the occasion of the greatest glory to God, and of such elevated praises as are given in the chapter now explained. The apostle speaking of the Jews, says, Rom. 11. 32, 33. "For God concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches both  
"of

“ of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! how  
“ unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways  
“ past finding out ! ”

Lastly, Let us contribute our endeavours particularly by fervent prayers to God, that he would accomplish these predictions: the glory of Christ will be augmented by it, which ought to be our chiefest care and joy. It will be a source of true pleasure and satisfaction to all Christians, when they shall embrace their elder sister in Christ: “ the receiving of them will be life from the  
“ dead ; ” and if, as the apostle reasons, “ the fall  
“ of them will be the riches of the world, and  
“ the diminishing of them the riches of the Gen-  
“ tiles, how much more their fulness ? ”



## LECTURE V.

## 2 THESSALONIANS, Chap. i.

1. *Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians, in God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ :*
2. *Grace unto you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*
3. *We are bound to thank God always for you, Brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all towards each other aboundeth :*
4. *So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure.*
5. *Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer.*
6. *Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you :*
7. *And to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,*
8. *In*

8. *In flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ :*
9. *Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.*

“ **A**LL scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:” and I shall, by the assistance of God, without any introduction, endeavour to expound the part of this chapter now read, and shew how it conduces to these ends, and how it ought to be improved by us, in order to our being “ perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

- I. “ Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians, in God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Silvanus was a person of considerable reputation in the church; we have mention made of him by the apostle Peter, as “ a faithful brother,” 1 Pet. 5. 12. and he was a fellow-labourer with Paul in preaching the gospel, 2 Cor. 1. 19. “ For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me, and Silvanus, and Timotheus.” Nor is it improbable, that he is the same person who makes so great a figure in the Acts of the apostles under the name of Silas, and is known there to have been an endeared companion of Paul’s; both because of the likeness of their circumstances and names, Silas being a contraction of this other, and more agreeable to the Hebrew, as Silvanus was to the Roman language; and also from there being no

account in the Acts, of Silvanus's being an assistant of this apostle's, which would be very improbable, except Silas be he. And as for Timothy, it is plain how illustrious a character he had amongst Christians, and by how strong ties he was always engaged to Paul: we see from the seventeenth chapter of the Acts, that both he and Silas laboured amongst the Thessalonians; and we are informed of this also, with regard to Timothy, in the first epistle to this church, iii. 2. "And sent Timotheus our brother, and minister of God, and our fellow-labourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith." which shews the probable reason of their being joined with Paul in the writing of this epistle, they having been employed with him, in laying the foundation of the church to which it was sent. The design hereof was to express their hearty consent to what the apostle had written, and their approbation of the exhortations he gives to the Thessalonians in this epistle, to assure them, that as they had delivered the same doctrine while they were present with them, so now they were still united in the common faith contained herein; which tended to confirm them in the belief of the divine authority of this epistle, and to recommend it with the greater power to them. Besides that we may justly impute this custom of Paul's to his modesty and humility, who, notwithstanding of the superiority of his personal character, and the dignity of an apostle, was willing that Timothy, and others who were under his direction in the work of the ministry, should also join with him, in such letters as he wrote to the churches where they had been helpful in propagating the Christian name. But we are not to imagine that these two were, in the same sense, penmen of this epistle with the apostle

apostle Paul: for besides that in such a case it might as well be called the epistle of Silvanus or Timotheus to the Thessalonians, as of Paul, plainly contrary to the title and the constant opinion of the church; there are several instances, where our apostle speaks in the singular number, and in his own person, even in such epistles as have others joined with him in the direction of them: so that, as I have already mentioned, I think the thing principally intended hereby, is to signify the hearty concurrence of Silvanus and Timotheus with what the apostle had written in this epistle.

It is directed unto "the church of the Thessalonians," that united society of Christians which dwelt in Thessalonica, the Metropolis or chief city of Macedonia, where we find that, notwithstanding of the opposition which Paul met with from the enraged Jews, and the baser sort upon whom they had influence, he founded a Christian church, Acts 17. 4. "And some of them believed and consorted with Paul and Silas, and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few."

This church is said to be "in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ;" namely, that they were established in the faith and obedience of God the Father, and of Jesus the Saviour, which was taught in the gospel, in opposition both to the idolatry of the heathens and the infidelity of the Jews. They adored and served him as their Father, being made partakers of the glorious privilege of his children through the Redeemer: a church which considered God under the amiable and endearing notion of a Father, who had shewed so much tenderness and care of them, and had bowels of paternal compassion and pity for them, and therefore gave him the honour and fear which were due to him from children; who were not  
dragged

dragged or only frightened into his worship and service by the terrors of his greatness, but who cheerfully obeyed his commandments, and took pleasure in the homage they paid to him, who had the alluring character of a Father: and this, in a peculiar and distinguishing manner, is the duty and happiness of Christians, to whom life and immortality, the love and grace of God, are brought to so clear a light. During the Mosaick dispensation, the sources of divine mercy, and the mystery of love were not so fully opened; and God then governed the church rather with the majesty and awful greatness of an omnipotent king, than by the tenderness of a condescending father, and kept them in much bondage and fear by the law: but love triumphs under the gospel of Christ, and the loving kindness and compassion of a Father are the prevailing motives to a cheerful obedience in a willing people. Christians are “no more servants, but sons;” for, as the apostle tells us, Rom. 8. 15. “They have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father:” and Zechariah, in his song of praise to God, for the glorious promises, concerning the happy state of the church under the Messiah, which were then about to be accomplished, gives us one design of these blessed times, Luke 1. 74. “That we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear.” So that we see how emphatical, lofty and just this part of the account of a Christian church is, that it is “in God our Father.”

It is added, “and in the Lord Jesus Christ,” a church which embraced and relied upon him as the Messiah, the only deliverer from evil, by whom alone they could ever look upon their Maker

ker with comfort, and come to him as their chiefest joy. This is the great and momentous principle of our holy religion, that God can never be our merciful father otherwise than in Jesus, by whose powerful merits and complete satisfaction alone we can ever call him ours; that without this mediator he must be a consuming fire to the workers of iniquity, all the divine excellencies being filled with terror to sinners, but when they shine graciously in the Redeemer's face. This title of Lord, being given to Christ as he stands related to the church, may also signify to us, that these Thessalonians considered the Messiah as king over Zion, and a priest upon his throne, by whose laws they were to be governed, as well as to be saved by his blood; who had a right to rule in their hearts and lives, and to purify them from all iniquity, as well as to screen them from the wrath of an angry God, and abolish death the curse of the law: so that they were not only to believe, but to obey and bow their necks to this king.

I have the longer insisted upon the persons to whom the apostle writes, because this description of them, that they were "a church in God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ," affords us so very noble hints of the nature and excellency of the gospel church. And now, can we lift up our eyes to heaven; and take a view of that inaccessible light, honour and majesty wherewith God is clothed, the might and power of his irresistible arm, and the unbounded extent of his understanding, the perfection of his purity, upon the thoughts whereof the angels themselves cover their blushing faces with their wings; can we look at the glory of his kingdom, the beauty and strength, the zeal and activity of his ministers, these flames of fire which stand always ready to do his pleasure; and consider on the other hand,

our

our weakness and disgrace, that we not only dwell in the tabernacles of clay, but are slaves to them; yea, have debased our immortal spirits as low as hell, and are become vile; and yet not be amazed, filled with wonder and with praise, when we hear the joyful sound, that this God is become ours, even our Father? How infinitely must our highest thoughts, yea, those of the noblest seraph, fall short of the glory of the divine condescension? Incomprehensible goodness! how little a portion of it can we possibly know, that he, whom we had so provoked to anger, instead of the terrors of a consuming flame, should discover himself shining in the fire of love to a church upon earth? how should we be engaged, if we have the smallest spark of generosity, and be not more brutish than the beasts, to love with all our strength such a God, and to be obedient when under the government of a Father? how monstrous and abominable must sin be, which is committed against such riches of mercy, and so endearing a relation? how vile those who are not drawn from their transgressions by these cords of love? I am sure, every time we read in the holy scriptures, and consider God as our Father, the thoughts hereof ought to cover our souls with shame, that ever we should have so ungratefully rebelled against him; and should animate us with vigorous resolutions to be active in his service, to have hearts ever kindled into the divine fire of his love, never again to languish or turn cool. And what a source of joy and comfort is further opened to us, from Jesus Christ's being also the Lord? how cheerfully may we obey, when he who governs us, is the same Redeemer who saved us from destruction and death, who washes us in his blood, and by his power conquers our enemies, and hath done so amazing things to make us happy?

This

This church's being here said to be "in our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ," may also express this meaning, that it is God and Christ to whom the establishing of a church is intirely owing; that this house is of his building, it being God who lays the foundation thereof, and preserves it from being overturned by the furious storms which so often blow upon it: and that it is he who begins this good work in every particular member thereof, and also carries it on to perfection.

II. "Grace unto you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."

In this verse we have a prayer which the apostle puts up to God for the Thessalonians, of the same nature with what we find in all his other epistles. Grace is the favour and friendship of God, in his being appeased and reconciled to us from the riches and freedom of his undeserved mercy. And as this is the divine excellency which is so gloriously exalted in each part of the redemption of mankind, and which runs every where through it; grace is often taken in a very extensive signification, and the whole of the gospel is named by it, Tit. 2. 11. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men; teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world:" and agreeably hereto, the grace which the apostle here prays for to them, may comprehend all those valuable blessings that are purchased by the blood of the Redeemer, and offered to sinners in the gospel, the word of grace; such as the pardon of sin and the finishing their transgressions, their having an interest in the everlasting righteousness brought in by the Messiah, a freedom from the tyranny of Satan

Satan and death, a victory over that last enemy; and at length an abundant entrance into that kingdom wherein dwelleth righteousness and peace, a drinking of the rivers of immortal pleasures which overflow there, and a dwelling in the midst of these divine joys, together with such influences of grace as are necessary for carrying them on in the Christian race, and for enabling them to advance in the paths of life, and to endure in it to the end.

Tho' it be not altogether absurd to include in *peace*, the other benefit here prayed for, a freedom from the rage of those external persecutions, which are mentioned in the following verse, the bestowing of which blessing he ascertains them of, when Christ should come to take vengeance of all his enemies; yet this seems to be, by far, too low and mean a sense, to make it the principal design of the apostle, in a benediction which we find so often repeated in all his epistles: we are then chiefly to understand by it, reconciliation with our offended God, who is so dreadful when an enemy; and a being restored to the favour and almighty protection of our Maker, which is the only guard from danger and death, and the alone foundation for undeceiving peace and security; together with such views of their being in this happy state, as might afford a calm serenity to the quiet conscience, and a composure of mind, that so their joy might be full, and they animated hereby to diligence and cheerfulness in their duty.

And these blessings he prays may be poured down upon them "from God our Father," the inexhausted fountain of happiness and good, from whom every perfect gift descendeth: and "from the Lord Jesus Christ," in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead, the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; and from whose fulness, all the redeemed receive, and grace for grace.

III. "We are bound to thank God always for  
 " you, brethren, as it is meet, because that  
 " your faith groweth exceedingly, and the  
 " charity of every one of you all towards each  
 " other aboundeth:"

IV. "So that we ourselves glory in you in the  
 " churches of God, for your patience and  
 " faith in all your persecutions and tribulations  
 " which ye endure."

In these verses, the apostle, by a just commendation of the considerable progress they had made in religion, and some Christian virtues for which they were eminently conspicuous, insinuates himself into their love and affection: and, at the same time, lays before them a very powerful motive to perseverance in these ways of the Lord; since it is certain, that every step we make in them, is an argument to continue to the end, and shews the infinite danger and folly in drawing back. The apostle, as every minister of the gospel is, was under peculiar obligations to give thanks to God, for the success he had in persuading sinners to repentance, and an accepting of the great salvation, and for the advances and growth in grace which these converted by his ministry made: since this is really one of the most valuable blessings which can be bestowed upon himself, whereby he hath a title to the noble reward of being like the stars, with the brightness of which, "they  
 " that turn many to righteousness, shall shine for  
 " ever and ever." And it is easy to conceive, how great a pleasure it must be, to a person who has any love and pity for his fellow-creatures, who knows the value of a soul, and the excellency of the change which the grace of God makes in it, and how much the bringing of a son into glory tends to the honour of his Lord, to find that  
 he

he hath been instrumental in this noble work, and that God hath made his endeavours a mean of bringing any from the kingdom of Satan to that of his dear Son: so that you see how meet it was for the apostle to have his mouth filled with praises, because of these commendable qualities of the Thessalonians, since the more they grew in grace, his joy and honour were the further advanced; for, as he tells them, 1 Theff. 2. 19. "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? for ye are our glory and joy." And indeed it is impossible, that any who love the Redeemer should not rejoice and be glad, to see him governing a willing people in a flourishing church, who were diligent in his service, and still went on to more exalted degrees of love and obedience.

The grounds of this thanksgiving of the apostle's were, 1. "Because that their faith grew exceedingly." By *faith* here, we may understand both their knowledge of the doctrines of Christianity, which was mightily enlarged, they piercing still deeper into these mysteries of grace; together with their belief of, and credit given to the sacred truths, which was more firm and rivetted, took still deeper root, and became steadier, and not so liable to be "shaken and tossed about by every wind of doctrine," or any of the various arts of our cunning adversary the devil, in turning men away from the truth and unhinging their belief of it: and also the acts of saving faith, an accepting of the Redeemer, and a relying upon his righteousness and perfect satisfaction to divine justice.

A second ground of his thanksgiving, was one noble effect of their "true faith which wrought by love, and the charity of every one of you

“all towards each other aboundeth.” This grace of charity or love, is powerfully recommended to our practice by the gospel of Christ, and hath, of all others, the most universal and diffusive influence upon every part of the Christian life; so that the apostle tells us, Rom. 13. 8. “That he who loveth another, hath fulfilled the law;” for, as it is in the 10th verse, “Love worketh no ill to his neighbour, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” And indeed, from the defect hereof flow all the transgressions we can be guilty of with respect to our neighbour: why do any exercise the arts of trick and deceit, oppress or over-reach others; but from want or coolness of love to them, conquered by their stronger affection to sordid gain? and did we “love our neighbours as ourselves,” we would naturally shun to sully his character by misrepresentation and reproach; love would banish from the soul, where it were an inhabitant, the first beginnings of envy and revenge, or coveting what is not our own; it would make us tender, compassionate, ready to forgive injuries and overlook weaknesses: and charity would inspire with greater pleasure in covering and remedying the defects of others, than the malicious can possibly have in exposing them; yea, our Saviour tells us, that upon the great command of “love to God and our neighbour, hang all the law and the prophets.” So that the apostle could not have an higher reason of thanks to God, than the abounding of this noble grace amongst his converts.

But besides, there are very peculiar motives to engage Christians to the exercise of charity. Love reigns in the mystery of the redemption of sinners, and is gloriously exalted in it above all the other works of God; he himself is love, says John, 1 epistle, 4. 8, 9. “In this was manifested the  
“love

“ love of God towards us, because that God sent  
 “ his only begotten Son into the world, that we  
 “ might live through him :” and how just is the  
 inference he makes from hence in the 11th verse ?  
 “ Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to  
 “ love one another.” And indeed the absence  
 hereof, with the contrary vices, uncharitableness,  
 hatred and strife, are the highest contempt and af-  
 front that can be offered to God and our Saviour ;  
 and are a direct vilifying of all the great things  
 he hath done to seek and to save us, which are  
 all the effects and demonstrations of the noblest  
 and most generous love.

And now, when we consider these things, and  
 how much the apostle here rejoices upon the view  
 of charity’s abounding among the Thessalonians,  
 how affecting must it be to all who have any sin-  
 cere regard to the honour of Christianity, and the  
 laws and example of the Redeemer, to behold so  
 little of this grace, and so much of a contrary  
 temper raging amongst those who “ have one faith,  
 “ one baptism,” and may be united by what ought  
 to be the most endearing tie, being “ members  
 “ of that body whereof Christ is the head ?” let  
 us be engaged, by the solemn commands, and the  
 moving example of our Saviour, to put on bowels  
 of tenderness and compassion to all men, to have  
 enlarged souls, that study the interests and advan-  
 tages of all we can have access to be serviceable  
 to, to be more severe and harsh upon ourselves  
 than upon others ; and rather expose our own  
 than their imperfections : and, like Jesus, to have  
 a constant pleasure in forgiving our enemies, in  
 going about always doing good ; and, principally,  
 in contributing what we can to the advancing the  
 eternal interests of others, by engaging them to  
 abandon their folly and become truly religious.  
 And, above all, these who love the name of Christ,

should be united to one another by the sincerest affection, notwithstanding of such differences which will always be in this imperfect state. And may we strive to imitate, as far as we can, that thrice happy church above, who, seated in the regions of light and love, enjoy the divine pleasure of perfect unity and eternal agreement with one another; who, free from dispute and debate, without the smallest remain of an alienated or angry mind, harmoniously conspire in the love and service of God and Christ, and there feel how great is the bliss, and how inestimable the excellency of charity, which shall reign and triumph whenever faith and hope shall be swallowed up by enjoyment.

The last virtue he makes mention of, is their “patience and faith under persecution.” They were not moved cowardly to quit their profession, or abandon the post which providence had placed them in, however dangerous; nor did their sufferings canker and sour their minds, or make them fret against the divine conduct towards them: and indeed this was a very bright proof of the sincerity and vigour of their faith, and shewed that they were established upon the rock, since they stood firm and unmoved, tho’ violently beat upon by these winds and rains. And they were so eminent for this grace, that the apostle “gloried “in them,” which signifies the highest kind of esteem and commendation. He boasted of them, and valued himself upon his labours amongst them that had such happy success: he also proposed them as an example to other churches, to excite emulation in those who had not advanced so far in the divine life. It is a noble and commendable ambition, to strive to let none go beyond us in religion, in the service of God and love of Christ; and not to be content with low attainments here:

for,

for, tho' the greatest mischiefs have arisen from persons endeavouring to outdo one another in "the form of Godliness," none ever followed from an emulation about the "power of it."

V. "Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer."

VI. "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you."

In these verses the apostle shews, that in being thus patient, they had acted a wise and reasonable part, and insinuates some arguments to persevere in this happy temper. Some understand the 5th verse thus, that their "patience under sufferings" was a proof of a future judgment; because that God would certainly never fail to reward them, and to avenge himself of those that had persecuted Christians, who deserved another treatment, and had so exalted virtue as to be submissive in such heavy circumstances. But I think this rather to be the design of the apostle, namely, that the blessed effects of their sufferings, patience and faith, were a clear vindication of the righteousness and wisdom of the divine conduct, in exposing his faithful followers to the rage and cruelty of wicked men; since these events, however seemingly cross and disadvantageous, really wrought for their good, by making the trial of their faith precious, discovering the firmness and vigour of their grace, and thereby affording themselves and others ground to account them worthy of the kingdom, the heavenly happiness, for the hope of which, and their profession of that religion which taught the only way to it, and for their subjecti-

on to the Messiah who reigns therein, they were then persecuted by their enemies.

“Worthy of the kingdom of God,” that is, prepared and meet for it, endued with that faith and holiness which are necessary to our partaking of the “inheritance of the saints, and which evidence that the persons, with whom they are, have a right to it; so that I need not take up your time, by answering the argument which the Papists bring from this phrase to support their doctrine of merit: for indeed any creature’s meriting that kingdom from God, and much more a sinner’s dreaming of merit, is, at the same time, so impudent and stupid a notion, that it can never be entertained, but in such a church which “exalts itself above all that is called God,” and which is “abandoned to strong delusions to believe lies.”

In the 6th verse, the apostle proposes a very convincing argument, to prove the certainty of the destruction of their cruel persecutors, and the peace and rest which they should be possessed of, namely, that besides the many positive threatnings and promises of God to this purpose, it was righteous, just and equal for him so to do. Nothing is more certain than that there is a moral proportion betwixt sin and punishment: nor can there be a greater absurdity, than to suppose, that “the Judge of all the earth,” who must always do right, a being infinitely holy and pure, should ever suffer such a monstrous disorder and confusion in his government, as must happen if the workers of iniquity should for ever enjoy peace and safety in their wickedness; and those who trouble others unjustly, should miss of having tribulation poured out at last upon them: so that their punishment being founded upon the nature of things, and the unchangeable perfections of God, which are more  
stable

stable than the heavens, it is certain that it must take effect; and that God will “recompense tribulation” to such, when the terrors of hell shall fill their souls with everlasting confusion and despair, and eternally banish the smallest measure of peace and rest, which the sinner shall never be able to flatter himself into for one moment. The way that their punishment is here phrased is very elegant and remarkable, “tribulation to them that trouble you,” whereby the exact proportion betwixt the nature and degree of the crime, and that of the torment and sorrow to be inflicted on the guilty, is pointed out to us. Thus God is said to shew himself “froward to the froward:” and “the voice from heaven,” Rev. 18. 6, 7, speaking of the great whore, says, “Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works. How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her.”

VII. “And to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,”

VIII. “In flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:”

IX. “Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.”

“And to you who are troubled, rest with us.”

Though there can be no such proportion of merit betwixt the obedience of saints and their reward, as there is betwixt the sins of the damned and their punishment; yet since the faithful God hath promised the kingdom to such as press through many tribulations unto it, and that these blessings are purchased by the blood of a Saviour, whose

services and sufferings are equal to all the weight of glory that is in heaven; the justice of God requires that he should be “the justifier of them who believe in Jesus.” And hence we may be assured, that the Lord, the righteous Judge, will, in that day, give the crown of righteousness to all who love his appearance. And then the persecuted followers of Christ shall enjoy a rest of pleasure and peace, never again to be disturbed, where devils or wicked men can raise no storms or lessen the serenity; for it is a rest in Zion, that city which can never be moved, because God in the midst thereof himself establisheth her.

In these verses, the apostle gives an account of the time when these things were to be accomplished; upon which occasion we have a very elevated and affecting description of several remarkable circumstances of the last judgment. I designed to have discoursed, at some greater length, on this momentous subject, which is of infinitely the highest importance to us who are then to be judged: but, because I have already too far encroached on your time, I shall very shortly touch at some things in them.

“When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven.” His coming unto judgment is frequently expressed in scripture, by his revelation or appearance: the principal reason whereof I take to be this, that though the Messiah be indeed the king of the world, and the Lord of angels and men, and “the government of them be laid upon his shoulder:” yet, since now he directs all events, and over-rules them invisibly, and the universal influence of his management is discerned only by the eye of faith, and the carnal minded have no thoughts of his powerful government, and want suitable impressions of what their senses do not bring them to the knowledge of; they see not, and therefore do

not believe. And in this state things remain till the solemn appearance of the Redeemer, which will put them in a quite different light, and take off the scales from the eyes of sinners: then his glory and greatness will be revealed to the very senses of mankind, and every eye shall behold him, the mighty God, the great king: when the heavens will then be opened, not only a devout Stephen will discern his glorious majesty, but his enemies, in whose thoughts he never was, shall not be able to cover themselves from his presence; but he will reveal himself by his terrors, in the most retired recesses of their souls: how dreadful a surprize and confusion will then seize upon the stupid sinner! and where shall he go for refuge!

“With his mighty angels.” He will then come in the glory of his Father, and be attended by these noble ministers of the divine pleasure. They have the character of *mighty* in several places of scripture, and are said to “excel in strength,” they being very powerful beings, and vastly exceeding mortals therein: the doleful experience whereof so many thousands of Sennacherib’s army had, when in a night slain by one of them. And this epithet seems to be given to them in this and the parallel places, to heighten the awfulness of his appearance, and strike terror into his enemies; since “there is not any number of his mighty armies.”

He is said in the eighth verse, to come “with flaming fire.” This dreadful element is generally in scripture represented as one of the attendants of God, when he comes to take vengeance of his adversaries. And what is said here, seems to be spoken in allusion to the practice of assured conquerors, who came against their rebellious subjects, provided with instruments of their punishment. The debates whether there will be mate-  
rial

rial fire in hell, can be of no great use, or to any valuable purpose; since, on the one hand, it is beyond dispute that there will be sensible torments, arising from a body that shall be raised and framed for destruction; but on the other, what will be the means of exciting these pains, is without our view, and is hid in obscurity; nor indeed is it possible for us to comprehend the excess and the nature of them: only as the joys of heaven are held forth to us by such things on earth as are most valued, a crown, sceptre, and kingdom; so the torments of hell are represented by Fire, because there is nothing on earth can give us more lively notions of their terribleness, though, both in the one case, and the other, these things are but faint emblems of what is to be felt in the other world.

It not being necessary to explain any other thing in this verse, I shall only speak a little to the ninth, which is extraordinary remarkable, and filled with a thousand inconceivable terrors to an ungodly sinner. I need scarce mention, that we are not to imagine that by destruction here is intended an annihilation of the soul; since, as it is usual in scripture, to express the most valuable blessings and pleasures under the notion of Life; so the extremity and fulness of misery, are represented by death or destruction. But in this verse we may take notice, 1. Of the immense duration of hell-torments. Everlasting destruction, the word is to be here taken in its most extensive signification; namely, for these ages that shall never, never be at an end. This is plain from the natural interpretation of the word in this place; and that many other passages of scripture assert this in the strongest terms, that there  
 “ the fire is not quenched, and the worm dieth  
 “ not, and that there is no more sacrifice for sin:”  
 and

and this truth might also be demonstrated by convincing reasons, if your time did allow.

And now how inconceivably terrible a view does this give us of the punishment of the damned; they can have no, not the smallest glimpse of comfort or hope to abate the present pains; but, instead thereof, utter despair: and an infallible assurance that their destruction is to be everlasting, must fill the soul with the most exquisite torture, and, as it were, bring on it at once the whole eternity of their miseries, which they will still anticipate by the lively prospect of their being for evermore. O inconceivable eternity! how are our thoughts lost in the views of thee! the greatest number of years we can imagine are but a point or moment, when compared with the duration of hell's torments; amazing thought! as long as the eternal God remains, he will live to make this destruction everlasting. Would we but at all consider this boundless eternity, how would this vapour of our life disappear, and how would the vain amusements and pleasures of a perishing world, on which we so stupidly dote, be wholly swallowed up as disguised nothings?—we should hence be convinced, that every contrivance and business is trifling and foolish, except to “flee from everlasting destruction.”

Then, secondly, in the verse we have the exceeding intenseness, and the excess of hell's torments. 1. This destruction is “from the presence of the Lord.” Some understand hereby, what is ordinarily called “the punishment of loss,” a being banished from God, the only fountain of blessedness and good; to be separated from whom, must be indeed a very great unhappiness. Yet I think the true sense of it still more terrible; namely, that the miseries of the damned, and their eternity, flow from the divine presence

in hell, who uninterruptedly pierces their souls with the poisoned arrows of his almighty fury: for, as the gracious presence of God is what spreads fullness of joy over every inhabitant of heaven, so his omnipresence in hell leaves no place, but what is filled with torment and wrath: for wherever he is, there he will be an enraged enemy, and “ a consuming fire. 2. From the glory of his power.” The plain sense whereof seems to be, that the torments of hell will be so great, as to be a bright illustration of the glory of that power that is able to inflict them: that God will shew how mighty he is, by what he can and will make transgressors suffer. Dreadful state of an impenitent sinner! whom God will make the more and more miserable, that his power may thereby grow the more illustrious; and he will shew the infinite strength of his arm, by the weight of the lashes which they shall be laid under. And indeed this seems to me, of all others, the most frightful notion of hell, that, as it is, Rom. 9. 22. “ God will make his power known in the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction.”

I shall conclude with this one inference from what hath been now the subject of our meditation. Consider and think, sinner, whom thou opposetest, in rejecting Christ, and fighting against his holy kingdom by unbelief and wickedness. The hardiest sinner might be frighten'd, if he would but look at that time, when this earth, where his portion is, shall be “ burnt up with fervent heat,” and the heavens all in a flame: when the voice of the trumpet will rouse him from his grave; and he dragged to see Jesus whom he despised, revealed from heaven, his enraged enemy ready to tear him in pieces, and surrounded with flaming fire, the least flash whereof is sufficient to pierce into his bowels, and consume him for ever; and

exerc-

exercising dominion in that morning of the resurrection, over devils and damned spirits, whose slave he impenitently continued to be, how terrible will the sight be! and how exceedingly will he fear and quake! to behold the crucified Redeemer, attended with so many myriads of mighty angels, all armed against him, and the saints whom he persecuted and undervalued, made partakers of their Redeemer's victory and triumphs. How will those heroes of sin, who now make so much vain bustle and noise, who glory in their shame, and banish God from their thoughts, ridicule the religion of Christ, and make sport with the great concerns of another world, then shrink with the most abject cowardice, and "seek to the hills to cover them from his presence?"





## LECTURE VI.

## 2. THESSALONANS, Chap. i.

7. *And to you who are troubled, Rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels,*
8. *In flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ :*
9. *Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.*
10. *When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.*
11. *Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power :*
12. *That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

**T**HIS portion of the holy scripture which I have now read, contains an account of several remarkable circumstances of the last judgment, of the glory and terrible majesty wherewith the Redeemer of mankind shall then appear

appear clothed; the measures whereby he will govern himself in determining the unalterable state of rational creatures; and the final issue of the different management and actions of men; namely, the endless misery of impenitent transgressors, and the immortal peace and satisfaction of those who made it the principal study of their lives to know God, and obey the gospel of Jesus Christ. And consequently it must be of the last importance to all of us, who are then to be judged, to understand and improve it to suitable purposes: and for this end I shall, through divine assistance, endeavour, at this occasion, to explain its meaning, and press home the power of it upon our souls. And, that I may save your time as much as may be, I shall not spend it in giving any general account of this epistle, nor enlarge upon the preceding verses: but apply myself directly to those which I have now read.

VII. “ And to you who are troubled, Rest with  
“ us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed  
“ from heaven, with his mighty angels.”

The holy apostle having mentioned the great pleasure and ground of triumphing, which the Thessalonians had afforded him, by their steady submissive patience and lively faith, during the numerous calamities and persecutions which a wise providence had exposed them to, from the hands of their cruel enemies, he takes occasion to support their courage, and maintain the vigorous exercise of these graces, by pointing out to them that vast alteration which should at length happen in the state of things, when the righteous judge of all the earth should change prospering wickedness into the vilest and most abject misery; and these who employed their power and authority upon earth, to disquiet the lives of sincere Christians, and render  
them

them uneasy, should be fully recompensed by that endless tribulation, whereby God would toss about their troubled souls, without the smallest possibility of their ever being able to flatter themselves into a moment's calm. And when, on the other hand, they who had enjoyed but little quiet upon earth, and had often groaned under the cruel tyranny of their persecutors, should feel a happy change of their circumstances; when, being seated in the regions of light and love, above the clouds and storms which darken or shake a vain world, they would be possessed of an everlasting repose, a divine serenity, beyond the power and rage of devils, or the cruel malice of wicked men to disturb it, or ruffle the perfect calm.

A "Rest with us," says the apostle; in the midst of an inviolable union, and uninterrupted fellowship with all the members of that illustrious assembly of those whose names are written in heaven: amongst whom love, ever flowing from God the great fountain of divine love, is the strong and pleasing cement which keeps all of them in perfect peace and rest with one another; and the mighty power of the king of Zion preserves that city, that it can never be moved from without.

And this leads us to the first thing contained in these verses, which I design, at this time, to explain; namely, that remarkable period when these noble events should begin to be accomplished. "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven." Our Redeemer's coming unto judgment, is frequently expressed in the holy scriptures by his revelation or appearance: the principal reason whereof I take to be this; namely, that tho' the government was always laid upon the shoulders of the Messiah, yet, during this present dark state of things, he manages it invisibly to the carnal eyes of sinners; and it is faith alone which discerns that

that secret and diffusive influence, whereby he turns all the confusions here below, the counsels and labours of men, to his wise purposes. Men do not now behold his excellent majesty by their outward senses, and therefore they do not believe or consider his government, that is like a hidden spring, which, tho' it be the chief manager of a vast machine, yet may ly altogether unperceived by one who sees no further than the outside. And things will remain in this posture, till the solemn appearance of Jesus Christ, which will set them in a quite different light, and tear away the scales from the eyes of sinners: his glory and greatness will then shine forth with so illustrious a brightness, that it will not be in the power of the most stupid not to discern them. He will then be revealed to the senses of mankind, and "every eye shall see him," the mighty God and the great King. Heaven will then be opened, so that not only a devout Stephen will behold the glory of his majesty, but those enemies of his, who banished him from their thoughts, shall not one of them be able to cover themselves from his presence, or blind their own eyes, but his power will open them, and he will reveal himself and his terrors in the bottom of their hearts, and push them into the retired recesses of their souls. How amazing a sight will this be to foolish transgressors, who never think upon the invisible world, nor the almighty king of it, but ridicule religion, and make these awful truths the subject of their mirth, when they shall no more be able to amuse themselves with vanities, nor stupify their consciences, and when he whom they never thought of, shall be intimately revealed to them with an irresistible force! how dreadful a surprize and confusion, that shall last to eternity, will the views of him cover them with!

“ With.

“ With his might angels,” or, as the Greek is more exactly translated, “ with the angels of his power:” which points out to us, either, that they are frequently the instruments by whom he exerciseth his power, or, that being such mighty spirits themselves, they are an illustrious argument of the superior majesty and power of him whose servants they are. These noble ministers of the divine pleasure are almost in every place, where the last judgment is spoken of, mentioned as attendants of the great judge, to heighten the honour and solemnity of his presence, when he shall then “ come in the glory of his Father.” They often in scripture get the character of *mighty*, and are said to “ excel in strength;” since they are indeed very powerful beings, and vastly superior to us in strength, as the Assyrians were effectually convinced, when so many thousands of them had, in a night, their days cut short by one of them.

And there seems to me to be a particular emphasis in this attribute’s being ascribed to them, upon this occasion, as exceedingly heightening the awfulness of the Judge, when so many powerful executioners of his sentence waited his commands. The views of them cannot miss to strike a terror into the souls of his enemies, when they shall be dragged before his tribunal. With what trembling and tormenting despair of ever being able to resist him, will haughty scornful sinners, who now boast of their courage and bravery, howl and sigh it out, “ Is there any number of his mighty armies?”

VIII. “ In flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

“ In flaming fire.” This dreadful element is usually represented in scripture, as another awful attendant of God, and one of these terrors where-  
with

with his majesty is clothed, when he comes to take vengeance on his adversaries. Some think, that in this place, the phrase hath a particular relation to what we find, 2 Pet. 3. 12. when at the “ coming of the day of God, the heavens being “ on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall “ melt with fervent heat:” but, whatever be in this, I think that it seems most probably to be mentioned with a particular allusion to the practice of assured conquerors, who came against their rebellious subjects, ready provided with chains and halters, and other instruments of their punishment; so the Judge is here held forth as surrounded with that fire, the flashes whereof will for ever scorch his enemies, and pierce into their bowels.

The debates that have been raised concerning this question, whether there will be material fire in hell? seem to me to end, for the most part, in idle speculations which can tend to no valuable purpose. This may satisfy us, that it is certain there will be sensible pains, infinitely sharp, arising to the damned from bodies that are raised to destruction, the whole frame and contexture of which, and every minute part of them, seem, according to the scripture account, to be solely calculated for intense suffering. But the means whereby God will excite these pains, whether by something like fire acting from without, or if rather they will flow from the very internal constitution, the frame and make of those bodies, are hid from our views; and we should leave them in that obscurity which providence hath wrapt them up in: for indeed it is not supposable, that we should be able to comprehend the nature and excessive torment of them. Only this much may be noticed, that as the joys of heaven are recommended to our pursuit, under the notion of a crown, sceptre, and kingdom, because these are the highest wishes of ambition,  
and

and the things upon earth which are reputed of the greatest value and excellency; so the torments of hell are represented by flaming fire, that being the most terrible devourer and extreme torture upon earth; though, both in the one case and the other, these are but weak faint emblems of the superior joys, or the sorer punishments which dwell in the invisible world.

The end of Christ's being "thus revealed from heaven is to take vengeance on them that know not God:" upon such persons as remain stupidly ignorant of the supreme being, when they had so many proofs every where scattered of his excellencies; and neglect all those witnesses which he affords all men of his eternal power and Godhead: such, who, while the beautiful fabrick of heaven and earth so loudly proclaims his glory, deafen their ears, that the voice of the sun, moon, and stars, which from day to day utter the praise of their great Creator, may not reach them: who, while they themselves are preserved by his right hand, and every moment crowned with his goodness; yet will not see the amiableness of that love and grace, to which alone they owe the smallest enjoyment; nor look up to the bountiful hand that maintains them in being, and feeds them with his good things. The "not knowing of God," also frequently signifies irreligion in general; because indeed ignorance of him, how mighty a king, how good a master he is, must be the great reason why any are found who do not love and serve their God.

"And that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:" such who "refuse him that speaketh from heaven," and neglect to embrace that excellent salvation, which the blood of the Redeemer purchased for men; who prefer their lusts to their Saviour, and are not careful to "purify themselves"

“ themselves from all iniquity,” as the grace of God teacheth them. Such persons Christ will take vengeance on; he will have a care, by a just punishment, that his merciful offers be no more exposed to scorn and contempt, nor his laws be insolently trampled down by rebellious subjects; and that flaming fire which surrounds him, will effectually maintain the dignity and honour of his government, and repair the injuries and affronts done to it by those workers of iniquity.

IX. “ Who shall be punished with everlasting  
 “ destruction from the presence of the Lord,  
 “ and from the glory of his power.”

In this verse, the apostle gives some account of that vengeance which the Messiah would then take of rebellious sinners; and every word of it is big with terrors to such who obey not God: for I know no place in scripture which gives such a short, and yet infinitely affecting description of hell-torments; and there are these four considerations in it, which shew their inconceivable greatness.

I. The nature of the punishment of the damned, it is Destruction. By which we are not to imagine, that the annihilation of soul and body is signified, this, beside the unreasonableness of it, being so expressly contrary to many places of scripture: and with what joy would these accursed spirits throw themselves into the arms of nothing, and cheerfully embrace it! But, as the most valuable blessings, and the highest pleasures are very elegantly represented under the notion of Life; thus the psalmist, when he asserts, that men should be “ abundantly satisfied with the fatness  
 “ of God’s house,” gives this as the proof of it, Psal. 36. 9. “ For with thee there is the fountain  
 “ of life;” so, in like manner, the fulness of  
 misery,

misery, the extremity of wo, which shall be the portion of them who forget God, are very forcibly held forth by Death and Destruction. Of which I humbly take this to be the import; namely, that the damned shall have no other being but what will conduce to greaten their torments, and that every thing in existence, that is valuable and can tend to any desirable purpose, all the sweets of being, will be utterly destroyed and lost to them. They will indeed have bodies, but such as are absolutely fitted for punishment, and can never occasion the smallest pleasure to the soul. They may indeed have eyes, but then they will be only to behold the terrors of their prison, and be frightened by the doleful looks of one another: they possibly shall have ears, but then it is only that they may be ever grated with the melancholy sound of the howlings and groans that are there: and their sense of feeling will, without doubt, be exquisite; but all its quickness will only serve to heighten their pain. And as to their spirits, all the powers of them, every thought and reflection, will conduce to the same dreadful purpose. So that you see what the meaning of Destruction is; namely, they will lose every thing in being that is desirable, and nothing will remain but what they would earnestly wish were annihilated also.

But, 2. We have the immense duration of their punishment, "everlasting destruction." It seems to be plain, that this word ought to be here taken in its largest and most extensive meaning, for these ages that shall never be at an end, both from the genuine signification of the word in such circumstances, and because the same thing is frequently expressed in the strongest terms in other places of scripture, that "in hell the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." And how dreadful a view does this afford us of the wages of  
sin!

sin! A man's spirit may bear up under heavy pressures, if he have assurance of being at length freed from them: but these enemies of God, instead of having the smallest glimpse of comfort and hope to support their sinking courage, and abate their present pains, must, by an utter despair, and an infallible assurance that their destruction shall be everlasting, have their souls filled with the most exquisite tortures. And, beside that their misery will be really endless, how dreadfully must the soul be put upon the rack, when it shall bring upon itself, at once, the whole eternity of its torments, which it shall anticipate constantly by the lively prospect that they will endure for evermore! Amazing thought! oh boundless duration! as long as the eternal God lives, he will live to make the torments of those who disobey his gospel everlasting. Would we but seriously look at this dreadful prospect, how would these disguised nothings, the pleasures, riches, and honours of a vain life, upon which we so fondly dote, disappear! how little would we be allured by these fatal charms, to make this God our enemy! Oh the infinite madness of fools, that are so bewitched by the enchantments of sin, to buy a little short satisfaction, that in a moment leaves us, at the expence of everlasting destruction!

3. We have the exceeding intenseness, the great extremity, as well as the endless duration of hell-torments: this destruction is "from the presence of the Lord." Some understand hereby, that which divines ordinarily call, "the punishment of loss;" namely, a being utterly banished from God, the only fountain of life and of light, and for ever deprived of that favour which is the highest good, when Christ shall pronounce, "Depart from me:" but though this be a very great unhappiness, yet what I take to be the true

sense of the words is still more terrible; namely, that the miseries of the damned, and their eternity, will immediately flow from the divine presence in hell. And this is very agreeable to the use of this particle, which frequently denotes the cause of the thing spoken of; thus it is, Rom. i. 7. "Grace to you, and peace from God our Father." As the presence of God in heaven is the source of that "fulness of joy," and of these "rivers of pleasures" which overflow there: so his omnipresence in hell scatters torment and wrath every where, and leaves no place but what is full of them; for God is intimately present to every retired corner and recess of the soul, and wherever he is in that accursed place, there he will be an enraged enemy, and a consuming fire.

And then lastly, This destruction is also "from the glory of his power." The plain meaning whereof seems to be, that, as God will be, in a great measure, the immediate author of hell's torments, and will, with his own hand, uninterruptedly pierce their souls by the poisoned arrows of his almighty fury; so the miseries of the damned shall be so excessively great, as to prove a bright illustration of the glory of that power that is able to inflict them. And indeed, of all others, this appears to me the most terrible account of the dreadful state of an impenitent sinner, that God will shew, not only how just, but how mighty he is, and will manifest the strength of his arm, by the severity of the lashes which they shall endure; and that he will be animated to make them more and more miserable, that his power may thereby in proportion become more illustrious: and the apostle assures us, Rom. 9. 22. that "God will make his power known in the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction."

X. "When

X. “ When he shall come to be glorified in his  
 “ faints, and to be admired in all them that be-  
 “ lieve (because our testimony among you was  
 “ believed) in that day.”

In the former verses we have seen the terrors of the Lord, and in this we may view the amiableness of his love, and the happy state of such as are faithful in his service. One end of the solemn coming of Christ, was, that he might be honoured, and triumph in the everlasting ruin of ungodly men, who scornfully refused the offers of his grace, and would not be saved by him: and the other end is, that “ he might be glorified in his “ faints.” These who separated themselves from the pollutions of an evil world, that they might be consecrated to the service of their Redeemer, who gave him their hearts, dedicated their all to his praise, and endeavoured to answer these vows by a holy conversation; in these Christ will be glorified in that day; namely, by exalting them to a participation of that excellent state which he himself is possessed of, and the doing of which must redound to his honour. His followers shall then be so beautified with the divine lustre of holiness and purity, and shall be so adorned with the noblest qualities of immortality, that they shall enjoy such an excess of heavenly pleasure and undisturbed satisfaction, that he must necessarily be highly glorified in them thereby: his power, in exalting them from the lowest hells, and working such an amazing alteration in their state: his goodness and love must shine forth with the brightest evidence, in so noble effects of free unbounded grace towards those who were once polluted and rebellious: and his faithfulness will be honoured, when the children of the resurrection will appear fully possessed of a happiness equal to all his promises,

mises, and beyond their highest expectations. The head of the redeemed will, in that day, be “glorified in his saints,” when all that illustrious assembly shall behold him, the amiable Lord of so many thousands in whose hearts he reigns, and sways the sceptre of a love that is sacred to him alone, and will be so to eternity, tho’ they were once enmity and disobedience.

And indeed it is not easy to imagine how the apostle could give an higher and more comfortable account of the future happiness of saints, than by telling them, that “Christ would be glorified in them in that day:” for consider, that the more holy and pure, the more happy and excellent the servants of Christ shall then be; the greater their blessedness, and the higher their honour be, the love, grace, and power of their Redeemer will become in proportion more conspicuous: so that, though a very small happiness would be more than suitable to our faith and obedience, yet, blessed be God, these are not to be the measures of our portion; for, you see, God must fill you with joy to the brim, because your Saviour will thereby be glorified. His love to his Son will make him brighten your crown, that he may be honoured by its lustre: and as his complacency in Christ, and the glory he desires to put upon him, are beyond every bound, so no bounds, but what our several capacities make necessary, will he set to the dignity, honour and bliss of saints, because in them and their happiness Christ is glorified in that day. And I am sure their love to him will then be so perfect, that it will accent their pleasure, and raise their satisfaction to the highest pitch: when they know that their Saviour, whose honour they regard and endeavour above all, is glorified in them.

“And to be admired in all them that believe.”  
The redemption of mankind by the Son of God,

is the most wonderful illustration of divine perfection that ever was made manifest: and tho' the holy angels had, no doubt, very elevated notions of divine goodness, yet I do not question but they were surpris'd, that ever God should have extended it in such a manner to rebellious men. Now the grace of a Redeemer does not fully appear, and how great his goodness is, till the finishing stroke be given them at the resurrection: but when these that believe shall in that day come forth clothed with immortality, shining with a lustre equalling the brightness of the sun, when in its strength; when they will appear so beautiful and glorious, and every way, both in soul and body, purified into a fittedness for heaven: how will they then, when looking at themselves and their new state, with a wondering love admire their exalted Saviour, and be astonish'd that ever he should have redeemed them by his blood, and conquered them by his power? All the holy angels, when they shall behold these their fellow-servants, who were once ignorant and vile, and see them as holy and happy as themselves, burning with as flaming a love and purified a zeal, and beyond the danger of any more languishing in their duty or wandering from their way, how will they then admire all the methods of grace, and celebrate the amazing praises of him who first planted this seed in the soul, who nourish'd it in its tender years, that it might not altogether be choked by lusts and passions, and at length gradually advanced it to that manly state of perfection wherein they now behold it? And how will all that assembly admire, to see those who were heirs of wrath, and slaves to satan, now joining with their glorified head in the judging of angels; and to look at persecuted Christians, sentencing and triumphing over these haughty tyrants, who oppress'd them in the land of the living: so that.

you see how emphatically it is said, “ the Lord Jesus  
“ will then be admired in all them that believe.”

“ Because our testimony among you was be-  
“ lieved.” The apostle seems here to apply what  
he had said about saints in general to the Thessa-  
lonians: and the sense may be, that, because they  
had embraced the gospel which he preached to  
them, they should, amongst others, make up that  
happy number in whom Christ would be glori-  
fied. This also may be mentioned as one parti-  
cular reason, why Christ would then be admired,  
namely, because his grace had proved so power-  
ful and victorious, as to engage them to believe  
and obey the gospel, notwithstanding of their  
strong corruptions, and the great hazards of death  
and persecution they ran by becoming his follow-  
ers. Some learned men think, that the word here  
translated *believed*, may be rendered *established* or  
*ratified*; and that the preterit tense is put for the  
future: and then it will run thus, that “ Christ  
“ will be admired in all them that believe, because  
“ our testimony among you will be ratified in that  
“ day.” It will then appear to the most stupid  
sinner, that all that we the apostles proclaimed  
concerning the glory and grace of the Messiah,  
and the awful truths of a future state, were cer-  
tainly true, and no cunningly devised fables. But  
I do not find that this interpretation is confirmed  
by authorities sufficient for our translating the  
word so.

XI. “ Wherefore also we pray always for you,  
“ that our God would count you worthy of  
“ this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure  
“ of his goodness, and the work of faith with  
“ power.”

This calling seems plainly to relate to the pre-  
ceding verse, and so it expresses that excellent hap-  
hap-

happiness and glory, these noble purposes, to which the gospel had called them. And it was the earnest prayer of the apostle, who had so sincere a love to their souls, and so vigorous a zeal for every thing, that the honour of his Saviour or their good was so much concerned in, that "God might count them worthy of," that is, suitable and meet for, such exalted hopes as these were. And might "fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness," namely, all the gracious designs of his mercy towards their souls, that he might enable them to persevere in the divine life, and run in it without wearying, making full vigorous advances in grace and the knowledge of the Son of God, till they should "grow up to a perfect man in Christ;" in a word, that he might "prevent them from falling, and, at length, present them faultless before the throne of God's glory:" and thus, having all the purposes of divine grace accomplished in them, they might be fitted to be of that number, in whom Christ should in that day be glorified and admired. And the apostle very elegantly calls this, "the good pleasure of his goodness," to point out to us that all this was entirely, wholly, owing to unmerited grace, and that we can never entertain raised enough thoughts of the riches, freedom, and sovereignty of divine compassions, which overflow towards men.

"And the work of faith." This phrase hath much the same signification with the former, and all I shall take notice of from it, is, that faith is an active grace, which "worketh by love," and springs forth in all manner of holy conversation. Let us never be so foolish, as to flatter ourselves, that we can ever sincerely believe in Christ, rely on his merits, and be saved by his satisfaction, if

we

we be not also careful to obey his laws, and purify ourselves from all iniquity. This work is said to be “with power:” it requiring an illustrious effort of divine power, to raise a dead soul unto a spiritual life, and to make them who were sometimes darkness, life and light in the Lord.

XII. “That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ  
 “ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, ac-  
 “ cording to the grace of our God, and the  
 “ Lord Jesus Christ.”

This verse contains the great end and design of all this, pretty much the same way as it is expressed in the answer to the first question of our catechism, “That the name of our Lord Jesus  
 “ Christ may be glorified in you.” The honour of God ought to be the chief aim of all our endeavours, and our most earnest desire: and this, as it is our duty, so it will be the native result of purified affections; for if we love him above all, our highest delight must necessarily flow from his being glorified. \* \* \*





The Author of the preceeding discourses preached a sermon on the *torments of hell*, whereof the introduction only is found amongst his papers: and it is printed here to fill up the blank in the end of this sheet.

MATTHEW XXV. 41.

*Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.*

THE eternal condition of mens souls is of so infinite consequence to them, that it must appear, at first view, of what importance the subject I have pitched upon at this time is: and that either of these vastly different states, in one of which all the inhabitants of the world must for ever remain, can never fail of being a necessary and useful subject of our meditation. And an endless hell, the dwelling-place of God's wrath, where he is surrounded by death and terrors, is so large a subject, and so full of instruction, that I shall not take up any of your time by a further introduction, or insist upon the context; but apply myself to the consideration of the words now read.

Our blessed Saviour gives an account of the irreverfible sentence, he would pass upon the obstinate enemies to his glory; and all those hypocritical pretenders to religion, whose noisy profession is not sanctified by purity of heart and holiness

liness of life: and opens up to us something of the frightful nature of that terrible place, where divine fury and wrath are poured out upon his irreconcilable foes. The text may be divided into these three things.

First, We have a general representation of hell torments under the notion of *fire*, "Depart ye," says our Lord, "into everlasting fire." Whatever may be said concerning the question, whether there will be material fire in hell? from other places of scripture, it seems beyond doubt, that it cannot be immediately inferred from our text; because the *fire* being said here to be "prepared for the devil and his angels," it cannot necessarily import any torments, but what spiritual substances are capable of, such a fire as can rage within a spirit, and burn a soul. It is very usual in scripture, to shadow forth the things of eternity by such earthly representations, as afford us either the greatest pleasure or pain while in this world; because our understandings are too weak, and our thoughts too narrow, to comprehend, either what the glory and joys of Zion, or the woes and sorrows in the prison of the damned, are in reality. Upon which account, *fire* being the most terrible devourer on earth, and the instrument of the most dreadful torments, it is often used in scripture as a metaphor, to signify the much sorer punishments that impenitent sinners shall be thought worthy of; not as if the raging of the most vehement flame, bore any proportion to the superior violence of the anger of an almighty enemy, but because there was nothing amongst men more dreadful to represent it by. So that the meaning of such metaphors, when applied to hell, seems to be, that the pains of the damned are so incomparably exquisite, that we can never imagine them so dreadful as they shall be felt, nor  
can

can ever form terrible enough emblems of them in our thoughts.

2dly, We have the duration of these torments. It is "everlasting fire," which, according to the natural signification of the word, and its frequent use in other places, instructs us, that that fearful state will really be endless, and can admit no period, even of the greatest length, nor will ever diminish in its fury: for God is the immediate author of that "everlasting destruction," where-with they that know him not shall be punished; and when the inexhausted treasures of his wrath furnish the fuel, and his powerful anger blows up the flame, the furnace can lose none of its heat, nor the fire of its rage and violence; for while the eternal God lives, he will live to be the kindler and nourisher of this devouring and unquenchable flame.

3dly, In the text we have the dreadful nature, and endless horrors of the seat of enraged justice further held forth to us, from a remarkable circumstance thereof: "the fire is prepared for the devil and his angels." Those accursed spirits are every where, in scripture represented as the most insolent and implacable enemies of their Maker, and whose hellish projects are ever animated by an irreconcilable hatred to his glory; and therefore they are the chief objects also of the divine displeasure and vengeance, whom he will pursue with an unrelenting justice, and swallow up by an un pitying anger, that is blown up into the most vehement flame. And consequently it cannot but be a fearful part of the final state of wicked men, that their prison, and the instruments of their punishment, are the same that God will employ against the devil himself; that their abode must be in that melancholy society, and the despair and rage of a devil be possessed of their souls; and,

and, as they made themselves partakers of their sins, so God will render them partakers of their plagues.

It is with a remarkable emphasis here said of this *fire*, that it is *prepared*, to point to us that God is so incensed against impenitent sinners, that he, as it were, takes time and thought to contrive the severity of their torment; upon whom he will not only at once let out a torrent of inexhausted misery, but he will be laying up in store, providing, beforehand, instruments of torture, and sharpening the arrows of his wrath, that they may reach the deeper, and give the sorer wounds to a soul; it is “fire prepared.” So that you see the plain design of the several phrases in our text, is to represent the terrible extremity, and inconceivable excess of these sorrows and tortures, that will fill up the final state of every impenitent sinner.

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L E C T. VI.

2. T H E S S. i. 7, — 12. 496

A Fragment of a Sermon on Matth. xxv. 41. *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.* 513

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

TO THE HONORABLE CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO  
FROM THE PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

RE: [Illegible text]

[Illegible text]

RESOLUTION

APPROVED

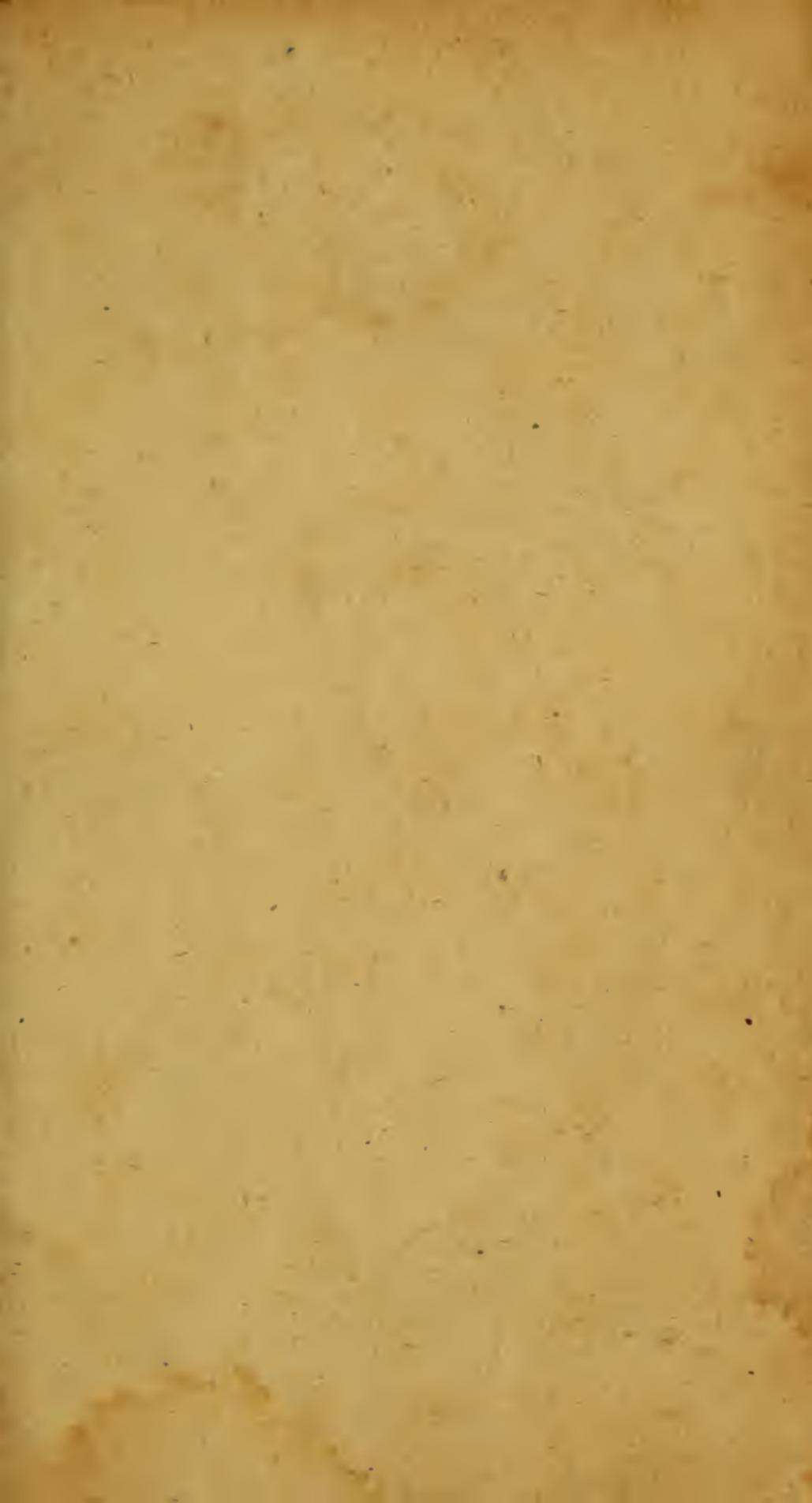
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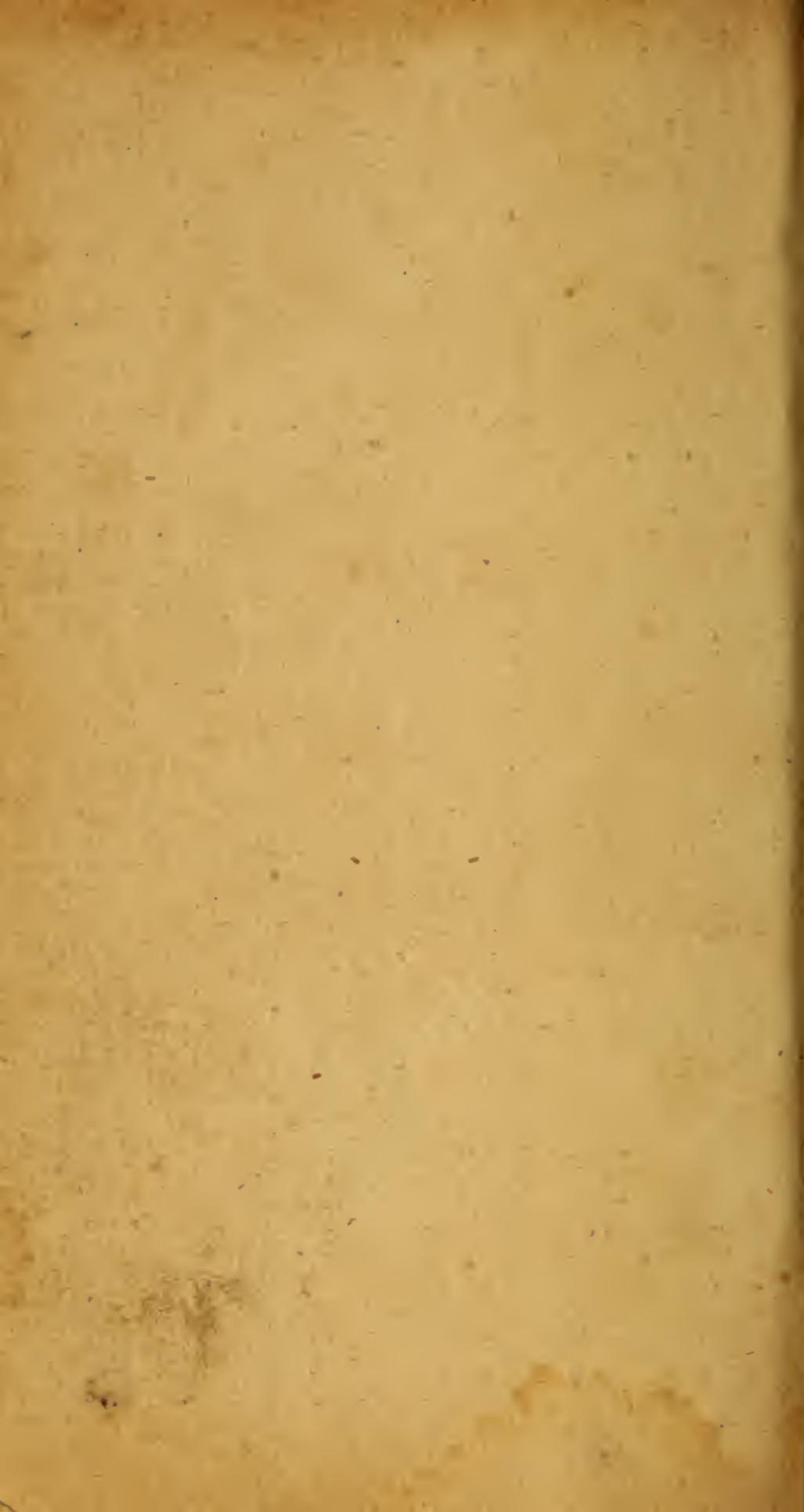
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