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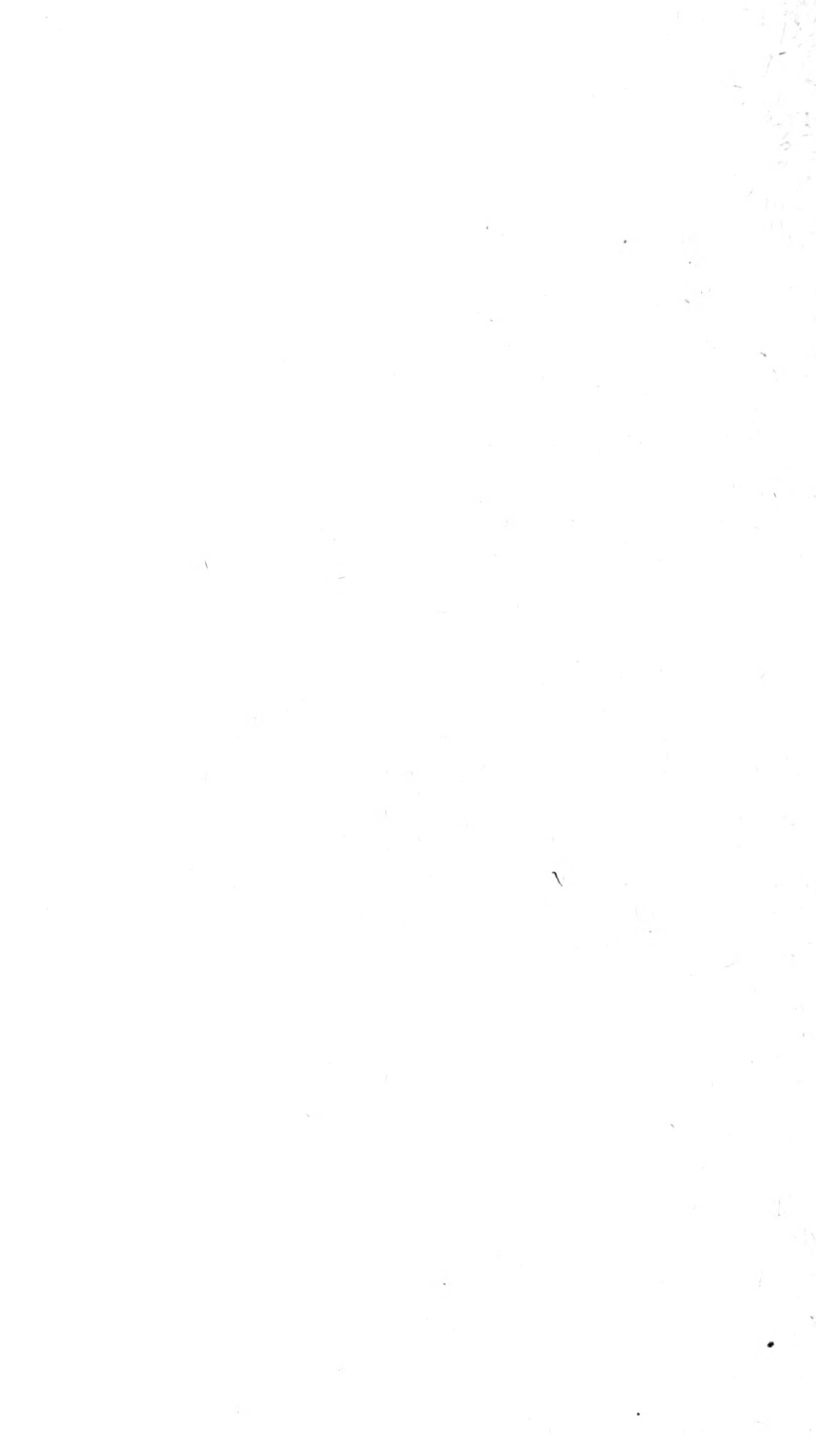


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SERMONS.



SERMONS

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BY

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PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CEDAR-STREET,
NEW-YORK.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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SERMON I.



THE CONSTRAINING INFLUENCE OF CHRIST'S LOVE.



2 CORINTHIANS v. 14—17.

For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

FESTUS, the Roman governor, when Paul defended himself against the charges of his enemies, said unto him “with a loud voice, “Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.” In reply “he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but “speak forth the words of truth and soberness^b.” The great apostle of the Gentiles spake what he knew, and testified what he had seen. Because he was not deceived himself, he could not deceive others. His testimony, however, though it could not be disproved, was rejected. The Roman governor descended to the use of invective—of calumny—of ridicule. Similar views and feelings influenced certain persons in the Corinthian Church, to exhibit Paul as a weak zealot. His spotless integrity, his disinterested activity, repelled the suspicion of fraud. They therefore charged him with being “beside himself.” He acted so con-

^b Acts xxvi. 24, 25.

trary to the principles of worldly wisdom, that there appeared some plausibility in the charge. But the moment he speaks and unfolds the motives of his conduct, that plausibility vanishes. We look for it, and wonder what it was, that for a moment made it in the least credible amongst professors of Jesus. "The love of Christ," saith he meekly, in answer to the malice of his foes, "constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Thus, by manifestation of the truth, he commended himself, not only to the understanding, but to the conscience of every man in the sight of God. The appeal which he makes is irresistible, for the reason which he offers is irrefutable.

The love of Christ was the spring which set in motion all his affections, and gave rise to those astonishing displays which he exhibited of almost every virtue. This spring operated in the hearts of the other apostles, and still operates in the heart of every sincere minister. The love of Christ is the burden of his exhortations, as well as the principal motive which he offers for holy living. Every Christian feels this motive; it destroys selfishness; it produces holiness. It is the grand principle of a new life; of a life of religion, and of the purest morals.

The Gospel ministry which dwells much on this love, is not unfrequently blamed, as tending to loosen our obligations to morality. So far is this from the fact, that, on the contrary, a Gospel ministry, which loses sight of this love, or does not enlarge on it, and often bring it into view, really injures the interests of morality. The love of Christ is the great and truly constraining motive to the exercise of all those virtues which, whilst they meliorate the state of man, adorn and dignify his character. In this view, as completely justifying the importance attached to it by a Gospel

ministry, it will at this time, be illustrated and enforced. To do this aright, your attention is solicited to the following topics of discourse :

I. To the motive itself ;

II. The manner in which this motive operates upon the heart ; and,

III. The effects which it produces on the life and conversation.

I. The motive itself is the love of Christ.

This is either the love of Christ for believers, or their love for him. The first always produces the last. " We love him," saith the apostle, " because he first loved us." He loved us, and gave himself for us, a sacrifice unto death. He is the great Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep. Greater love than this has never been displayed. Influenced by this, he left his Father's bosom, abandoned the glories and honours of heaven for a season, became an infant of days, made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, was numbered among transgressors, and finally died the accursed death of the cross. How strong this love ! how noble ! how disinterested !

how godlike! It has a length, and breadth, and depth, and height, which passeth knowledge. It is unparalleled in the history of the world, and cannot be adequately conceived by the greatest imagination. As to its originating cause, it is unmerited; as to its nature, it is pure, steady, free from caprice; as to its duration, it is everlasting.

In the exercise of this love, Christ may be considered as a Friend, and a Master. As a Friend, he is the Son of man, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. He was made like unto his brethren in all things, sin excepted, and that for their sakes. He is not ashamed to own them as brethren; he calls them friends. As a Master, he is the God who made them, and the Lord who bought them. To him they are indebted for their existence, preservation, temporal mercies, and covenant blessings. His friendship they do not merit by their virtues, and against his authority they have rebelled. Such is the love of Christ in its simplest view, as experienced by the apostle and all believers.

II. The manner in which this motive operates upon the heart, is the next thing in order to be considered. This the apostle

unfolds, when he says, “ The love of Christ
“ constraineth us; because we thus judge,
“ that if one died for all, then were all dead :
“ and that he died for all, that they which
“ live should not henceforth live unto them-
“ selves, but unto him which died for them,
“ and rose again.”

The love of Christ is exercised towards sinners. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Those for whom he died were dead in trespasses and sins. Human nature was once perfect, but is now corrupt. Man was once a noble temple, in which dwelt the divinity, but now that temple is in ruins, and the divinity is retired. “ You come,” says an eloquent writer^c, “ amidst all this confusion, “ as into the ruined palace of some great “ prince, in which you see here the fragments “ of a noble pillar; there the shattered “ pieces of some curious imagery; and all “ lying neglected and useless amongst heaps “ of dirt. He that invites you to take a “ view of the soul of man, gives you but “ such another prospect, and doth but “ say to you, ‘ Behold the desolation, all

^c Howe's Living Temple, vol. 1. p. 156. folio ed.

“ things rude and waste.’ So that, should
“ there be any pretence to the divine pre-
“ sence, it might be said, ‘ If God be here,
“ why is it thus?’ The faded glory, the
“ darkness, the disorder, the impurity, the
“ decayed state, in all respects, of this tem-
“ ple, too plainly show the great Inhabitant
“ is gone.” Such is the state of man as he
comes into the world, confessedly ignorant
of God, and an enemy to him. As such, he
is exposed to his justice, and abhorrent to
his holiness. To rescue him from this state,
is the object of Christ’s love. He offered
in the councils of eternity to rebuild the
ruined temple of human nature, and to
make it fit for the great Inhabitant to return
to it, and cheer it with his presence. For
this purpose he came into our world, and
humbled himself unto death, even the death
of the cross.

We laid in the open valley, with none to
pity or to save. Can these slain live? was
a question which none could answer. Jesus
alone has brought life and immortality to
light. Through him the dead can live, and
do live. This was his design ; not that man
should remain spiritually dead, but that he

should be made spiritually alive ; not that the temple of our nature should remain in ruin, but that it should be rebuilt, amidst the shoutings of Grace, grace unto it.

But how did he rebuild this temple ? Not by human might or power, but by his Spirit. How does he cause the dead sinner to live ? By opening his eyes to see his condition ; by opening his heart to receive the truth as it is in Jesus. His Spirit breathes upon the slain, and they live. Man is restored to the favour of his God ; he is no longer a sinner, but a saint. His sins are pardoned, and he is accepted, for Christ's sake.

Christ did not become incarnate for himself, but for us : he did not satisfy the law for himself—he had not broken it—but for us ; we had broken it. He did not reconcile himself to God, for he was his well-beloved Son ; but he reconciled us to God. If the Gospel be true, “ Christ died for our “ sins,” he was our Surety, the Mediator between God and man. This is the simple testimony of Jehovah concerning Christ. Faith accredits this testimony, and rests on it as the foundation for pardon and holiness.

Suiting our wants exactly, it approves itself to our judgments. Unfolding the most exalted friendship, and most unmerited favour, it excites our warmest and purest affections.

Recollect what has already been said, that the love of Christ is the love of a Friend and of a Master : of a Friend, who is not captivated by any real or imaginary excellence in us ; of a Master, whose laws we had broken. The testimony of God concerning Christ exhibits this love. It says, “ Christ, who needed not your love, and “ might justly have punished your hatred, “ has died for you.” This testimony, addressed to the hearts of sinners, by the Spirit, has resistless energy. They feel that they are dead, prone to evil, unable to do good. They feel that they deserve wrath, and expect it as their due. In the utmost distress at the discovery of their state, their hands hang down, their knees become feeble. They are sinking into the pit, when the Saviour is revealed to them, in the simple testimony of the Gospel, as able and willing to save them. They hear the voice, “ This is my “ beloved Son.” They look to him, and

believe on him ; that is, they believe he is such a Saviour as they need. They believe that he has satisfied the broken law, and appeased the wrath of Jehovah ; that he is abundantly able and willing to save them, vile and miserable as they are. They love him as a Friend, and honour him as a Master. Their faith, that is, the cordial credit which they give to God's testimony concerning Christ, produces this love and this honour.

Love to Christ, as the Friend of sinners, is connected with gratitude and devotedness. Honour to Christ, as the Master of his people, is intimately allied with reverence and submission. Such is the case, even in common worldly matters. Where we have a friend who has benefited us, we are grateful for the favour, and devoted to the interests of that friend. Where we honour a master, who has pardoned our offences, and restored to us his good will, we will reverence him for his magnanimity, and submit cheerfully to his authority. This is the manner, then, in which the love of Christ operates on the heart. It gives a completely new direction to all its affections, and that in perfect subordination to an enlightened

understanding. The love of Christ has dispelled spiritual darkness from the mind, and, as a necessary consequence, introduced spiritual light, with its inseparable attendant, purity of heart.

This love constraineth^d believers; it fills their whole soul; it binds them to Christ, as with chains; it bears them away in his service, as by a torrent; it transports them: and what shall I add? There is a force, a meaning in the apostle's language, which baffles description. Believers, however, feel and realize it. It is the spring which regulates the machinery of their hearts. Its power never diminishes, unless the heart grows cold through temptation and sin. Wealth, honour, pleasure, fame, are weak motives to their votaries, compared with the love of Christ, where it is experienced in its power. It swallows up every other motive: “ Many waters cannot
“ quench” the “ love” which it excites, “ nei-
“ ther can the floods drown it; if a man would
“ give all the substance of his house for love,
“ it would utterly be contemned^e.”

^d *συνεχισι*. See Doddridge's Note on the text. Schleus. Lex.
^e Solomon's Songs viii. 7.

I pass on now to the

III. And last particular proposed, which was, to unfold the effects of this love on the life and conversation. These effects are thus described by the apostle : “ He died for all, “ that they which live should not hence- “ forth live unto themselves, but unto “ him which died for them and rose “ again. Wherefore henceforth know we “ no man after the flesh : yea, though we “ have known Christ after the flesh, yet “ now henceforth know we him no more. “ Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is “ a new creature ; old things are passed “ away ; behold, all things are become “ new.”

To live to ourselves, is to live in sin ; to live to Christ, is to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. He came, we are expressly told, “ that he might re- “ deem us from all iniquity, and purify unto “ himself a peculiar people, zealous of good “ works^f.

To know any man after the flesh, is, in other words, to be swayed by personal re-

f Tit. ii. 14.

spect, or the prospect of favour and the like, in our intercourse with men.

To know Christ after the flesh, is to view him as a temporal prince, according to the opinions of the Jews, or as is evinced among professing Christians, to call him Lord, but in works to deny him. The love of Christ prevents believers from living to themselves, or from knowing Christ or any man, after the flesh. It is founded upon a true knowledge of Christ, of ourselves, and of others. It therefore constrains believers to live to Christ, who died for them, and rose again.

Recollect what has been already said. We are dead in sins ; our nature is in ruins. Jesus Christ has died that we might have life ; has become Emmanuel, God with us, to restore our nature to its original honours. Believers, realizing their natural state, receive the testimony of God concerning Christ with their whole heart.

The love of Christ unfolded in this testimony excites love, with its attendants, gratitude and devotedness, all felt towards Christ, as the Friend of sinners. It produces honour, with its attendants, reverence and submission, all

felt towards Christ, as a magnanimous Master. Does this love spend its force in the heart? No. The heart regulates the life; as the first is, so the last will be. This love and this honour are both exhibited in the public walk and conversation of believers. They are devoted to his service, and submit to his authority. His personal excellence is their delight; his government is their joy. Has he died to redeem them from sin? Love and gratitude, and devotedness to his cause, lead to a hatred of sin, and an avoidance of it. Has he commanded them to maintain good works? Honour, reverence, and submission to his law, lead to fruitfulness in well-doing.

The love of Christ, like an exterminating angel, annihilates the dominion of sin now, and it will hereafter annihilate its very existence in the hearts and lives of believers. Hence it follows, that if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are done away, all things are become new.

To be in Christ, is to be a sincere follower of Christ. A sincere follower of Christ is a new creature. He has undergone a new creation: he is regenerated. This great

change is spiritual in its nature, and universal in its effects, affecting the whole man. It is a renovation of the temper; a renewal of the whole soul, after the image of him who created him. This image consists in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness.

He who is regenerated is a new creature in his knowledge; it is a spiritual knowledge, sanctified to his heart—in his righteousness; it is a righteousness flowing from the righteousness of faith—in his holiness; it is a holiness originating in the cleansing efficacy of Christ's blood. Thus his understanding is enlightened, his will is renewed, his affections are sanctified. He has no new faculties imparted to him, but a new direction is given to all his natural faculties. Old things are done away. What he once loved is now hated; what he once hated is now loved. Thus all things are become new.

This great moral change, originating in the love of Christ, is not merely a reformation. It is more: it is truly and emphatically a new creation! As much power as was exercised in making something out of no-

thing, is exercised in making of a sinner a saint.

This new creation is visible to beholders. It is visible in the objects of desire, in the subjects of conversation, in the tenor of life. It produces a new life: a virtuous, a moral, a holy life. The love of Christ felt in the heart constrains to universal obedience of all God's precepts. To detail them, would be to detail the whole system of duty. A brief sketch of them will be attempted. God commands us to love him and serve him. This is the primary, and radical precept. The next is love to each other, as to ourselves. The former includes all religion, strictly so called, or the obligation we are under to serve God. The latter includes all moral duties, as they relate to the individual, to families, to states.

As individuals, we must do to others as we would be done by ourselves. We must guard our virtue, our health, our reputation, our happiness; avoiding temptation, and striving against our sinful passions and appetites; being kind, affable, sociable, patient, temperate, chaste, honest, industrious.

In families, masters must treat their servants justly, and servants must obey their masters; parents must not provoke their children to wrath, and children must honour their parents; husbands must love their wives, and wives reverence their husbands.

In states, the magistrate must be a terror to evil-doers, and a praise to them that do well; subjects must submit for conscience's sake, praying for their rulers. Law must be respected, crimes must be punished.

In the performance of these duties, self must be denied; and a calm, deliberate courage, which eyes duty as its object, must be displayed.

Such is an extremely brief sketch, a hasty outline of all those moral duties to which the love of Christ constraineth. It is a principle which overcomes the passions, and gives stability and excellence to right reason. It operates in families to keep alive mutual love, and mutual forbearance, thus cherishing mutual happiness. It operates in states, clothing justice with mildness, preserving to the ruler his dignity, to the subject his obedience, and to nations their consequence. Where it is realized, it makes a

faithful servant, a kind master, an affectionate child, an estimable parent, a tender husband, an endearing wife, an upright magistrate, a peaceable subject, a sober, temperate, honest, industrious citizen, an obliging neighbour, a brave soldier, and the best of friends.

It was the love of Christ, that effected such a change in the ancient heathen who embraced the Gospel. Besides the testimonies of the apostles, we have the apologies of ancient fathers, who confidently appeal to this very fact. “ Among
 “ us,” saith one, “ men in the lower sta-
 “ tions of life, and who by manual labour
 “ support themselves, and old women, though
 “ they cannot explain the utility of their
 “ profession in a discourse, make it evident
 “ by their conduct. They do not recite,
 “ but shew their good works ; when smitten,
 “ they smite not again ; when spoiled, they
 “ do not prosecute the offenders ; to those
 “ who ask they give, and love their neigh-
 “ bours as themselves.” “ We keep not
 “ back,” saith another^f, “ that which hath

e Athenagoræ Legatio pro Christianis. Coloniae. 1686.

f Tertulliani ad Scapulam.

“ been deposited in our hands, we violate
 “ no one’s marriage bed, we deal conscientiously with our wards, we help the needy,
 “ and never retort evil for evil. Let those
 “ who untruly give out that they are of our
 “ sect, look to themselves; we know them
 “ not. In a word, *who* is there that hath
 “ ought to say against us, and *when* is a
 “ Christian called to answer at law, unless
 “ for his religion? A religion which, after
 “ so long time and inquiry, no man hath
 “ evinced to be incestuous, or defiled with
 “ blood. For behaviour thus harmless, and
 “ for such integrity, for righteousness, for
 “ modesty, for faithfulness, for truth, for the
 “ living God, are we burnt.” “ You punish crimes committed,” saith another,
 “ but with us to devise sin, is sin; you dread
 “ the conscious knowledge of your associates, but we our own solitary conscience
 “ necessarily inherent in our being. And to
 “ say no more, the prisons are crowded with
 “ criminals of your religion; but no Christian is *there*, unless he be either accused
 “ on account of his faith, or be a deserter
 “ from his faith.” In another place he says,

g Minucii Felicii Octav. Sect. xxxv. a J. Gronovio.
 Lugd. Bat. 1709.

“ The best offerings are good dispositions,
“ a pure soul, and sincerity of speech. He
“ therefore supplicates God, that studies to
“ be harmless ; he makes oblations to God,
“ that abstains from every dishonest prac-
“ tice ; and he slays the most eligible vic-
“ tim, that rescues a human creature from
“ jeopardy. These are our sacrifices, and
“ the rites with which we worship our God :
“ and thus amongst Christians, he is the
“ most religious man who is the justest^h.”

Thus conspicuous in their moral virtues, they were no less so in the fortitude with which they practised them. The love of Christ had made them moral, and that same love made them bold. Their fortitude was not constitutional ; it arose from principle, was temperate and determined. They resisted temptations, and displayed a noble contempt of death. “ These fourscore and six years,” cried Polycarp, when tempted with the offer of life to abandon Christ, “ These fourscore and six years serve I him, and he never wronged me. How then can I blaspheme my King and Saviour ?” But when the Proconsul persisted in requiring

h Sect. xxxii.

him to swear by the fortunes of Cæsar, he said “ Since thou ostentatiously requirest me
 “ to swear by what thou stylest the fortune
 “ of Cæsar, as if thou wert ignorant of what
 “ I am, hear me boldly speak, I am a Chris-
 “ tian^h.”

This fortitude was not confined to leaders : it was common to the company of believers, male and female, children and adults. The love of Christ imparts a courage which nothing can destroy. “ The soldier of God is
 “ not abandoned amidst his sufferings, or
 “ brought to an end by deathⁱ.”

Such, without enlarging, are the effects of the love of Christ on the life and conversation of those who feel it in their hearts. In vain will you look for such a motive in morality of deportment, in the beauty of virtue, in a sense of the fitness of things, in a feeling of responsibility to God. These matters read well in books, but affect not the heart. Self-interest, passion, prejudice, the fear of reproach or death, will destroy the force of any one or all of these, in the majority of those who profess to be influenced by them.

^h Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. 4. cap. 15.

ⁱ Min. Fel. Octav. xxxvii.

A few may think that they feel their influence, and live accordingly. But which of these motives, I would ask, restrains the sins of the heart? Which of them destroys selfishness, engenders real hatred of vice, and a love of virtue? The truth is, virtue and vice, out of the Gospel, have no determinate meaning. Ancient and modern philosophers have all differed in their views on this subject, and that according to their passions and prejudices. I could mention names and quote opinions of those who have been considered first in the schools of philosophy, as a confirmation of the above assertion, did time permit, or inclination prompt. Let it suffice to remark, that there is scarcely a vice, however gross, which has not been dignified with the title of virtue, by one or other of these characters^m. In the Gospel alone, the line of difference is accurately drawn, and the love of Christ constrains to a real hatred of one, and love of the other.

This was the theme upon which Paul delighted to dwell, both in his preaching and writings. He was not ashamed of proclaiming

^m The reader will find abundant proof of this in Dr. Dwight's two Sermons on Infidelity.

and enlarging upon that love which passeth knowledge. In thus doing, he has set an example which all ministers ought to follow. They may preach the fear of punishment, and the hope of reward, till they are blind and deaf; but if they do not unfold the love of Christ, sinners will remain sinners. This is the grand motive, the sole persuasive to a holy life, a life of godliness; as well as the great mean of softening the heart, and constraining sinners to cast down the weapons of their rebellionⁿ.

Without it, the ruined temple of our nature cannot be restored; and unless it be restored, God cannot dwell in it by his Spirit. Man must be pardoned and accepted, before the fruits of the Spirit of God can be displayed. And to what other source can we trace these fruits, but to the constraining love of Christ?

ⁿ "You have at least taught me, that to preach Christ is the only effective way of preaching morality in all its branches; and out of your humble cottages have I gathered a lesson, which I pray God I may be enabled to carry, with all its simplicity, into a wider theatre, and to bring with it all the power of its subduing efficacy upon the vices of a more crowded population." *Chalmer's Address to the Inhabitants of Kilmarnock*, p. 43.

This is the object I now propose to your attention, and the prize I hold out for your exertions. It is worth all other blessings, for it includes them all. Seek then this best of gifts ; seek after it as hidden treasure. This love, if once shed abroad in the heart, will overawe your passions and appetites, those troublers of man ; will appease conscience ; will diffuse contentment through the soul ; will animate in the discharge of duty ; will influence to the practice of every virtue ; will soothe the soul in afflictions ; will invigorate it in danger ; will cheer it in the prospect of death. The love of Christ constraineth in every situation and circumstance. It is the only effectual remedy for the corruptions of our nature, and the disorders of our fallen state.

May we ever feel its power in our own souls. May the consolations which it imparts support us through life ; and may we realize the hope it here produces, in our Father's kingdom. AMEN.

SERMON II.



THE REDEEMER'S TEARS OVER LOST SINNERS^a.



LUKE XIX. 41, 42.

And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

As our Lord was God manifest in the flesh, so in his conduct were discernible, evident marks of divinity and humanity. His humanity, however, was perfect, void of sin; and his divinity was veiled, so as to prevent

^a I have availed myself, in these two Sermons, of Mr. Howe's discourse on the text.

its glory from dazzling the beholders. Of this we have a striking instance, in his triumphant entrance into Jerusalem, of which an account is given in this chapter. Instead of the awful emblems of sovereign majesty, meekness and humility adorned his presence, and marked his royal state. "He is just," saith the prophet, predicting this, "and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass^b." This he did amidst the shoutings of the people, who sang hosannas to the Son of David, and strewed branches of palm-trees as he went along.

Though here was pomp, it was the pomp of him who was meek in heart, and humbled himself to assume the form of a servant. His mind was employed about more important concerns, than the acclamations of a fickle multitude. He was approaching Jerusalem, that great city; and, foreseeing its approaching fate, was troubled in spirit. Its inhabitants had for ages discovered a peculiarly impenitent and hardened disposition. They had killed the prophets, and stoned them which were sent unto them. Towards Christ himself, they had conducted

^b Zech. ix. 9.

themselves as enemies. He was in the midst of them, and they knew him not. He came to his own, and his own received him not. In the course of a few days, they were to add to their other crimes, the aggravated one of murdering the Prince of life. Their punishment was to be proportionably great. Their state ruined, their city and temple destroyed, and they themselves slain, or banished, or sold for slaves, would manifest the aggravated nature of their guilt, as requiring such exemplary vengeance in this world. Nor was this vengeance to terminate here; we have reason to conclude that it extended to eternity. For, according to the command of Christ, when Jerusalem was about to be invested with the Roman armies, the Christians fled to the mountains for safety. They, therefore, who remained within the city, remained in opposition to the warning of Christ, and in rebellion against the God of heaven. The temporal judgments which they experienced, were only the preludes of that tremendous wrath, which awaited the enemies of our Lord in a future state. The disposition of mind which prompted the in-

fatuated multitude to cry, "His blood be
"upon us and our children," prompted
them to resist the Roman arms, and to rush
madly to their own destruction.

These were the topics of reflection, which
crowded into our Lord's mind, as he drew
nigh to Jerusalem. He wept over it. In these
tears was seen the man ; but the man holy,
harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners ;
the man who, though injured and slighted
by them, still pitied them ; though rejected
by them, still wished them well. He wept
over the temporal calamities which awaited
the city ; but chiefly over that spiritual
blindness, that awful hardness of its inhabit-
ants, which occasioned their ruin in this life,
and fitted them for destruction in the life to
come. He wept, because the time of re-
pentance for their crimes was past, and the
time of punishment was at hand. He wept
over his enemies, his bitter enemies, that
they did not know the day of their visita-
tion. "If thou hadst known," said he,
"even in this thy day, the things which
"belong to thy peace ; but now they are
"hid from thine eyes." In his manner of
expression, we see the sensibility of his na-

ture. "If thou hadst known,"—he does not conclude what might have been the happy issue, for such an issue is past, irrevocably past, hid from their eyes; and therefore they could look only for heavy judgments. The prospect of their fate filled him with sorrow, and caused him to mourn. Need I say that that fate must be awful, which produced such sorrow in the Son of God!

As we possess a nature equally depraved with that of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and are in danger of not knowing the day of our merciful visitation, in consequence of that depravity, the Redeemer's tears over Jerusalem demand our solemn attention. He therefore that hath an ear, let him hear the following truths, taught us in Christ's words:

I. That there are certain things which belong to our peace.

II. That these things may be known at a certain day.

III. That this day may terminate, and the things belonging to our peace be hid from our eyes.

IV. That the state of those who have past this day, is unutterably awful.

My hearers, the topics of discourse are all important. Concerning too many of you, I am constrained to say, as Christ did of those whom he addressed, “ I know you, “ that ye have not the love of God in you ;” and I tremble when I think that I might possibly say of some of you, in the language of the text, “ If thou hadst known, even “ thou, man or woman in this assembly, “ the things which belong to thy peace, but “ now they are hid from thine eyes.” Give me then your patient hearing, for I have a message from God, which relates to your eternal interests.

I. There are certain things which belong to our peace, not merely our temporal tranquillity, but also our eternal happiness.

The term here used, from the connexion, evidently refers to that reconciliation of our hearts with God, which is the foundation of all our happiness, and the cause or spring of all our obedience to God. Naturally we are enemies of God, and thus destitute of real peace. The curse follows us in all our ways, and conscience embitters all our enjoyments.

Reason teaches us that we are obnoxious to the justice of God, and therefore guilty; for God, who is good, would not punish us, if we were not transgressors. The heathen are convinced of this solemn truth; for in every place they use certain rites to propitiate heaven. The use of sacrifices in ancient times, and the remains of it in the present day, among them, abundantly prove the general impression which they then had, and still have, that they are sinners, and therefore that God is displeased with them. They feel the want of solid peace; they sigh for assurances, that God is willing to forgive. They have some vague, undefined opinions, that he is placable; but are not certain of the fact, and know not the manner in which they can make their peace with him.

Traverse the earth from the Cape of Good Hope to the Frozen Ocean, and you will find a general belief, that *something* is necessary to secure peace with heaven; for there is a general acknowledgment of sinfulness, in some more full, and in others faint; and a general fear of punishment, on account of that sinfulness. This general sentiment

of mankind, like all general sentiments, which point to some truths, refers us to the truth which has been stated, "That there are certain things which belong to our peace." These things are not matters of mere opinion; for, in that case, the result of different expedients adopted by men would have been successful. But as the contrary is fact, as experience proves that the various attempts which have been made to obtain peace have utterly failed, we must conclude, that the things necessary for this desirable object are to be found only in the revelation of God's will. What confirms this conclusion is, our consciousness of the character which we sustain in the sight of God. We are sinners; we cannot conceal the truth, we cannot destroy it. As sinners, we must make satisfaction to the justice which we have offended, and must be qualified for re-admission to the favour of God, which we have lost. Pardon, therefore, and a right disposition of heart, are two grand, indispensably requisite things for our peace with God. Accordingly, we find that among the ancient heathen, sacrifices were offered, to avert the stroke of divine justice, and

procure pardon ; and the cultivation of pure morals, including such motives as were deemed correct, and such conduct as corresponded with these motives, was enforced by their sages, to make them acceptable to heaven.

Every rite of religion, among all those who are destitute of the Bible, if closely examined, will be found to have a specific reference to the obtainment of pardon ; and every moral action, to the cherished hope of its rendering him who performs it worthy of the countenance and blessing of the Power above us. This unanimity, as to the ultimate design of their religious ceremonies and their moral actions, is not the fruit of superstition, but of conscience witnessing to the truth, and of reason supporting its testimony. Conscience, in the name of God, accuses every sinner, and puts him under the arrest of justice. Reason, examining the state of the sinner, and his obligations to God, declares that he who acts as the sinner does, is worthy of death. Before conscience can be silenced, the arrest of justice must be remitted, pardon must be obtained, and a provision secured against

the effects of future transgressions. Reason assents to the demands of conscience, as right, and as affording the only grounds for peace.

The question then arises, Can God pardon the sinner, and receive him to his favour? And if so, in what manner? On these points, reason can give no information: she may afford some obscure hints about the possibility and the probability of such interference on the part of heaven; but all is conjecture, and conjecture built upon the slightest foundation. Hence conscience, being unappeased, troubles the sinner, and gives him no rest. To this cause was it owing, that the ancient heathen flew from altar to altar, and added rite to rite, but found peace in none. This also accounts for the varieties in the worship of those who in the present day are without God and without hope. Without a satisfactory knowledge of the way of pardon for sin, and of acceptance into the favour of God, there can be no solid peace of mind. So long as we have any doubt, however trifling, that the Lord of heaven and earth is our enemy, we must be restless. His displeasure follows

us as the shadow does the substance. In the midst of the feast, oft-times the secret hand-writing on the wall will terrify us; or the imagination, goaded by conscience, will perceive embodied the sins which we have committed, calling for vengeance.

It is an eternal truth, that there is no peace to the wicked; for they have no sense of pardon, no hope of heaven. There can be no peace, while we are under the condemning sentence of divine justice; whilst the law, in the name of God, denounces us cursed. In vain do men resort to refuges of lies, for these fail them in the hour of trial. In vain do they adopt theories of their own, for these can do them no good. It is pardon they need; and pardon they must have, or care nestles in their bosom, and expectation of judgment corrodes their frame. They may strive to banish reflection; but reflection will return, an unwelcome guest, sometimes in the midnight hour of retirement; sometimes at the side of a friend's sick bed or at his death; sometimes in unusual providences; sometimes in seasons of temporal misfortune; sometimes when they themselves are brought down in the midst of

their days, and shaken over the grave. The stoutest of them, when they grapple with death—when they feel his damp, cold, benumbing grasp, would give worlds to experience peace. They may not be convulsed with horror, but they labour under the awful effects of doubt or ignorance about their own state beyond the grave; and this doubt relates to salvation; this ignorance is ignorance of the favour of God. Can there then be any thing like comfort in the soul? No; the Comforter is gone, and the conscience is oppressed with the weight of unpardoned sin.

I will not attempt to describe scenes, the recollection of which still chills my blood, of the deadly anguish, the horrible pains, which doubts about the favour of God, and fear of his wrath, have produced in dying sinners. Over them I would rather cast a veil, beseeching the God of mercies to save every one of you from such an end. To do this, recollect that the things which belong to your peace, are the pardon of your guilt, and the renewal of your nature. On these subjects, you are not left in the dark. You need not ask in despair, How shall

sinful man be just with God? You enjoy the revelation of God, and the means of his grace. This brings me to the

II. Truth taught in the text, which is, That the things which belong to our peace, *may* be known in a certain day.

The day to which Christ refers, when he calls it in the subsequent verse, “the time of the Jews’ visitation,” is that period in which God “by his Son last of all” warned them of their danger, and exhorted them to repent. They professed to be the Lord’s people, and cherished the hope of Messiah the Prince. Yet when he came, they rejected him; when he called, they refused. The time of our Lord’s ministry was emphatically their day, because he preached to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He went from place to place, making known the will of Heaven, and inviting his rebellious people to come to him. As the truths which he taught were afterward published in his name by his apostles, and constitute his Gospel, so we may safely say that the day in which the things belonging to our peace may be known is the Gospel day.

In a more restricted sense, as in the

ease of the Jews addressed in the text, the term *day* may refer to a particular season of grace, which is mentioned in other parts of Scripture; as “*Now* is the “accepted time, now is the day of salvation.” As the Jews enjoyed such a day during Christ’s personal ministry, so also all who enjoy the light of the Gospel have their day, or special season, in which the things necessary for their peace may be known. Both the extensive and the restricted sense of this term will be explained in order.

1. The day in which the things belonging to our peace may be known, is the Gospel day, or that period of time in which the truths of the Gospel are made known to a people, or to individuals.

These truths include all that belongs to our peace; for they exhibit to us the source from whence our want of peace has sprung, and the remedy by which that want can be supplied. To be more particular,

First. The Gospel exhibits to us the rise, the nature, and the fruits of that rebellion against God, which has deprived us of our peace.

We have fallen in Adam. He was con-

stituted by God, the covenant head and representative of all his posterity. To fulfil the duties of his responsible character, God gave him every necessary qualification. He was made after the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures. He was placed in Paradise, and had the privilege of using all that it afforded, with but one exception. Prompted by Satan, he disobeyed God, and entailed sin and misery upon our whole race. All have sinned in him, and become obnoxious to the divine displeasure. His children were born sinners, and their children were born sinners. From parents to their offspring, the corruption of his nature, through disobedience, has been transmitted down through all successive generations, and will be transmitted to the end of time. Go where we will, we find men to be sinners. All have fallen short of the glory of God; all are involved in the ruins of our father's apostacy.

The corruption which we have inherited from him, has affected both parts of our constitution. The soul, as well as the body, is included. The understanding is darkened,

the will rebellious, the affections disordered. The members of the body are vessels of dishonour, slaves of unrighteousness. All our faculties and all our powers are depraved.

The descriptions which are given in the revelation of God of our natural state, are mournful, calculated not only to humble, but to fill us with shame and remorse. We are dead in trespasses and sins, revolted from God, enemies to him, under the influence of evil lusts, captives of Satan, walking according to the course of this world. We have forsaken the Fountain of living waters, and hewn out to ourselves broken cisterns which can hold no water. We are helpless and fatherless; under the curse, but unable to rescue ourselves; degenerated, but loving our debased state. There is neither health nor strength in us; from the crowns of our heads to the soles of our feet, we are corrupted. In all our relations, we discover our corruption; and in all our enjoyments, feel its poisonous effects. Such is the information which the Gospel gives us, concerning our character and condition.

Secondly. It exhibits to us a remedy abundantly effectual to heal our maladies, and to restore to us our peace.

This remedy is to be found only in the Lord Jesus Christ, who, uniting the divine and human nature in his adorable person, is Mediator between God and man. He alone has paid the price of redemption for our sins, and thus satisfied the justice of God on our account. In him are to be found pardon for our guilt, and the renewal of our nature. Of this mercy, the light of nature gives us no information. The utmost exertion of the human intellect, was incapable of proving that it was possible, much less that it was probable, that God could receive sinners into his favour. Reason, though it teaches in the most explicit manner the goodness of God, also inculcates his justice. How to reconcile these two attributes, goodness and justice, it knows not. To do this is the work of God; and for the knowledge of this work we are indebted to revelation alone.

On this subject, the Gospel affords us the fullest information. It reveals to us a Saviour, *able* and *willing* to save sinners; a great High Priest, who is holy,

harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens. In the character which he sustains, in the work he has done on earth, in the authority he exercises by virtue of his exaltation to the right hand of God, we have the fullest warrant for trust in him, and for confident expectation of future blessedness through him. He is exhibited to us as God essentially; but by appointment, voluntarily accepted, made of a woman, made under the law, that he might redeem those who were under the law. Thus, then, he unites the two natures, which are requisite in a Surety for sinners. As Man, he appears in their nature for them; as God, what he does in their stead, is infinitely worthy and accepted on their behalf. Uniting humanity with divinity, he teaches sinners as their Prophet; atones as High Priest for those who receive him as Prophet; governs them by his law as a rule of conduct, and by his power in providence as their King. He has performed for his people all that the law of God did require from them, both in obeying the precepts and suffering the penalty thereof; so that in him there are righteousness and strength. In

him we can obtain redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of God's grace.

Thirdly. The Gospel exhibits to us the manner in which sinners can be interested in and saved by the remedy which it reveals.

The abstract proposition, that Christ hath died for sinners, will be of no avail to any of our race. The fact of his death must be applied to the heart and conscience of every sinner. But how is this to be effected? How shall they who hear the Gospel, which unfolds Christ's redemption, be saved? By believing in that redemption, and repenting of their sins. The nature of both faith and repentance is unfolded in the revelation which God has given us. The former is a cordial trust in the blood of Christ for pardon and complete salvation. The latter, a departure from the love of sin in the heart, and the practice of it in the life. Both faith and repentance are the gifts of God; the fruits of the operation of the Spirit of God. He is the Agent in the œconomy of redemption, whose work it is to apply the remedy of the Gospel for sins, to the hearts and conscien-

ces of sinners, by opening the eyes of their understandings, and changing their hearts. He makes them willing to surrender themselves to the blessed Saviour. By his power, they give themselves up unto the Lord, in the bonds of the everlasting covenant. This Spirit is as much promised in the Gospel, as Christ was under the Law. All who ask him of the Father, in sincerity and truth, shall receive him. He convinces of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He takes of the things which belong to Christ, and shows them to us.

Thus, without enlarging, you see the propriety of calling the Gospel period a day in which the things belonging to our peace may be known. For in the Gospel we find our actual situation exhibited to us, and the cause of our want of peace explained. Here also we find a remedy adequate to our wants, by which we can regain our peace. Here we are informed in what manner we can avail ourselves of the remedy, so as actually to obtain peace.

This Gospel you enjoy, my Hearers. You, then, in this your day, may know the things which belong to your peace. Re-

Having a particular application to the afternoon, I merely wish now to remind you of your privilege, and the necessity of improving it aright. You are not left in the dark on any subject connected with your salvation. The Gospel addresses itself to the understandings, and approves itself to the hearts of men. You therefore have no excuse which reason or conscience can sanction, for neglecting so great salvation. Your all, for time and eternity, is at stake, and depends upon your knowing the things belonging to your peace. AMEN.

SERMON III.



THE REDEEMER'S TEARS OVER LOST SINNERS.

(Continued.)



LUKE XIX. 41, 42.

And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

WE now pass on to the more restricted sense in which the term “day” is used.

2. All who hear the Gospel, enjoy a season which may emphatically be called their day. This day is, when the Gospel is

preached with peculiar clearness and force of reasoning; or when the preaching of the Gospel awakens conscience; or when multitudes around them are pressing into the kingdom.

First, They to whom the Gospel is preached with peculiar clearness and force of argument, enjoy a day in which the things belonging to their peace may be known.

The treasure of the Gospel is committed to "earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." The ministry of reconciliation is committed to persons of various talents. Each is fitted for a particular niche in the temple of grace. One is persuasive, another vehement: one is argumentative, another pathetic: one is eloquent, another didactic. He, however, who expresses himself with the most clearness, exhibiting the truth in a manner level to the capacity of the feeblest hearer, as well as satisfactory to the best informed: he who, with this clearness, combines vigour of reasoning, so that he can

establish truth victoriously, and carry conviction to the understanding, more especially may be considered as affording the people who hear him a special season for knowing the will of God. Such a ministry penetrates the darkness of human intellect, and dispels the mists of human passions; so that, whilst light is conveyed to the mind, a glow of feeling, arising from that light, is communicated to the heart.

Such was the ministry of Christ, emphatically and pre-eminently. He spake as never man spake, confounded his adversaries, and constrained many to ask, "Is not this the Christ?" Such was also the ministry of Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles. Such, in later times, was the ministry of Calvin, Owen, and Edwards.

Secondly, When the preaching of the Gospel awakens conscience in any person, he enjoys a day in which the things belonging to his peace may be known.

I readily give my assent to their opinion, who consider that every person who sits under the ministry of reconciliation enjoys such a day. There is no one of this description who does not, sooner or later,

feel dissatisfied with himself, and desirous of a change in his situation. The common or providential operations of the Spirit of God are experienced in all lands, and in all ages, to a greater or less degree, according to the knowledge which men possess. As this knowledge, in Christian lands, and under the preaching of the word, is infinitely greater than in places destitute of the light of revelation, so the ordinary strivings of the Spirit are more powerful among those of the former, than among those of the latter class. I cannot conceive of a heart so hardened, of a conscience so seared, of affections so perfectly corrupted, as not once in a whole life to be softened, or awakened, or moved, by the solemn and all-important truths which God has revealed to the children of men. However short that period may be, in which these truths have produced some effect, it answers the idea affixed to a day of grace, and an accepted time. The sinner is then in the situation in which the maimed and halt were, when the angel troubled the waters of the pool of Bethesda. It is a critical season; it may be the only one he will ever enjoy. The effect, though par-

tial, is an indication of divine mercy ; an evidence that he is not abandoned by God ; an affecting and awfully solemn admonition to seize the opportunity thus kindly afforded.

Thirdly, When multitudes in every direction are pressing into the kingdom, they who are still without, ought to consider it a day in which the things belonging to their peace may be known.

The stately steppings of God are then seen in the sanctuary. He then proves, beyond a doubt, that his word is truth. He addresses not merely the understanding and the conscience, but the very senses of men. The conversion of sinners in numbers, is one of those arguments which God uses, that defy the sophistry, the cavils, and the reasonings of enemies to refute. Take a case like that of Saul. From a persecuting Pharisee, he became a minister of the cross. Take the case of the three thousand on the day of Pentecost. “ They were pricked in their
“ heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest
“ of the apostles, Men and brethren, what
“ shall we do^b?” But why should we

b Acts ii. 37.

resort to cases so remote? Take the case of those who, in neighbouring States; in neighbouring places; in this city; nay, in this congregation, have embraced the faith which they once neglected, or despised. How will you account for the fact, that men who, as you know, once were careless about their souls, now are careful; who once preferred their own pleasure to God's glory, now sacrifice that pleasure for the cause of Christ? They were once persons devoted to the world, as others are: but now they have forsaken the world. They are as moral, according to the standard of morality which is current in the world, as they ever were; but, in addition to this, they have become religious. They are changed, and that in important respects: not for the worse surely; the slander cannot be conceived, and, because there is no foundation for it, cannot be uttered. They are changed for the better; because, in addition to the duties they owe to others, they strive to perform those which they owe to God.

Such a change, effected not in one, but in many—in many of both sexes—of all ages, characters, and situations, is an evidence su-

perior in force to that which supports a mathematical proposition. I speak as unto wise men. Judge ye! To those who reject such evidence, I would say, yet not I, but God says, and may his awful declaration sink deep into their hearts, “ Beware, “ therefore, lest that come upon you, which “ is spoken of in the prophets. Behold, ye “ despisers, and wonder, and perish ; for I “ work a work in your days, a work which “ ye shall in no wise believe, though a man “ declare it unto you^b.” But though we thus speak, we hope better things of you, brethren. We trust in God, that none of this description are within these walls. Of them we must say, “ Though one rose from “ the dead, they would not believe ;” for the evidence of such a resurrection is not greater than that of the moral resurrection of which we have been speaking ; a resurrection from the death of sin to holiness of life. They who witness such changes, such resurrections in numbers, enjoy a special season, a day in which they may know the things belonging to their peace.

^b Acts xiii. 40, 41.

We proceed to consider,

III. The fearful truth, that this day may terminate, and the things belonging to our peace may be hid from our eyes. As it had its beginning, so it will have its close, or end; and that end may come before it has been so improved as to qualify us for eternal happiness.

Generally speaking, the day, both in its restricted and extensive sense, terminates with death. They who do not then know the things which belong unto their peace, will find no opportunity to acquire this knowledge. As death leaves us, eternity will find us. Whatever our hands find to do, we must do with all diligence, “as there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave;” to which we are hastening. This truth is inculcated, in the most solemn manner, by our Lord in the parable of the ten virgins. The foolish virgins, who had slept and slumbered until the midnight cry was heard, could not enter with the Bridegroom. Their day was spent in folly, and the night overtook them whilst the things belonging to their peace were hid from their eyes.

But, brethren, it is a solemn fact, calculated to make the stoutest sinner tremble, that the day of grace may be past before death. Thus it may be past,

1. When, in the course of Divine Providence, the external dispensation of the Gospel is taken away from a people, before they have properly improved it; or when individuals are removed from such a dispensation, to places where there are silent sabbaths, and closed sanctuaries, without being previously made partakers of God's grace.

Both people and individuals, in such a case, may not have another season of mercy. God may, in just judgment, deprive them through life of the means of grace. They may never again hear the voice of mercy in the messages of the Gospel. The instructions which they have received, will soon be lost; the power of corruption, unrestrained by the word of God's grace, will become greater and greater: and they grow more and more careless; more and more alienated from God; more and more fitted for destruction. Nay, the effects of their conduct; the fruits of their abuse of God's

mercy, may extend beyond them, to their posterity.

The history of the Church furnishes proofs sufficient of this solemn fact. Where now are the flourishing Churches of Asia, to whom John addressed his seven epistles? The Lord Jesus removed their candlesticks, and from generation to generation the darkness consequent on that removal has been perpetuated. Where once God was seen in the sanctuary, Mahometan superstition reigns. Many of the posterity of those who, in former times, served Christ, now deny him, acknowledging an impostor as the Prophet of God. The glory is departed!

Thus individuals who, from worldly motives, have removed to places where the Gospel is not known, have not merely forgotten God themselves, but have been the agents of ruining their children, and their children's children also, by depriving them of the day of grace.

2. This day may be past also, when the Spirit of God does not bless the Gospel to the salvation of sinners. As in the natural day there is light and life from the influence of the sun, so in the day of grace there must

be not merely knowledge, but also spiritual life.

A people or individuals may harden themselves against the power of the Gospel, so as to draw down upon them that judicial sentence, "Let them alone." Then their day is past. Conscience is scared, the judgment thoroughly perverted, the affections are wedded to sin, and the whole soul is resolutely bent on opposition to God and his cause.

This is especially to be feared on their part who reject experimental religion; for such there are, even under the light of the Gospel, who deny its life. They call Christian experience mysticism or fanaticism; and ridicule, or at least disbelieve, the doctrine of regeneration, or a radical change of heart. Such expressions as these, "A new creature," "The life of God in the soul," "Our life hid with Christ in God," "Christ living in us," "The Spirit testifying to our spirits," "Living in the Spirit," "Walking in the Spirit," "Having fellowship with the Father, and the Son," according to these persons, are unmeaning expletives. They pretend not to comprehend

them. But, blessed be God, there are those who know what they mean, from their own experience. The Spirit of God has enlightened them. I avow the truth. I do not hesitate to declare my firm belief, that there is no real religion, but that which these persons call mysticism. If this be not the religion of the Bible, according to its letter and its spirit, I shut it up for ever. Never will I enter this or any other sanctuary to hear the doctrines of this volume explained, or its duties enforced. I hesitate not to pronounce the system contained in it an imposition, and the Ministers who preach it deceivers. I fling my faith in it to the winds of heaven, and consign my hopes to the chillness of the grave. I have done with the religion of the Bible. I wish no more to hear of it, no more to think of it, no more to respect it.—But I am sure I am not deceived concerning the nature of religion. God knows that I am not. However deceived I may be about myself, about his truth in this respect I cannot be deceived. His religion is experimental, and they who oppose this religion, or sport with it, do despite to the Spirit of

God. They grieve him, so that he ceases to strive with them. Thus their day is past.

Instances of such effects, resulting from such conduct, are not wanting in the history of the Church.

You perceive, in both these respects, that the day may be past to a people and not to individuals, and so it may be past to individuals, and not to a people.

3. Besides these general cases, there are particular ones, in which there is cause for apprehension. Such are the following :

(1.) When the consciences of sinners, having once been uncommonly awakened, have become silent through the cares or enjoyments of the world, so that they no longer testify against them, they have reason to apprehend that the things which belong to their peace are hid from their eyes.

(2.) They who feel pleased that their consciences trouble them no more ; who delight in their exemption from their former alarms, yet live in sin and in estrangement from God, have reason to fear that their day is drawing to a close.

(3.) They who, contrary to the remonstrances of conscience, engage and persevere

in a course of sin, to stifle reflection; they who fly to forbidden pleasure to ease their minds, and allay their fears; who with Felix say to the truths which have affected them, "Go thy way," may well tremble lest these truths should no longer affect them.

(4.) If a Gospel ministry, which once awakened the attention of some, has no longer any influence over them, so that hearing they do not hear, and seeing they do not understand, the terrible conclusion may follow, "They are left to themselves."

(5.) They who are displeased with a faithful exhibition of the whole truth which the Scriptures unfold, whether that truth be unquestionably drawn from the Scriptures or not, having itching ears, cannot tell but they may belong to those of whom the apostle says, that "they have pleasure in unrighteousness," and "whose end is destruction."

IV. The state of those who have past their day is unutterably awful. "The things which belong to their peace *are hid from their eyes.*" They perish, that is, they are lost in soul and body, for time and eternity.

The loss which they sustain is infinite. It is the loss of all that is excellent, valuable, and interesting. The soul is lost! It has no more happiness or comfort left for its enjoyment; but receives, as its deserved portion, tribulation, wrath, and anguish. Consider its nature. Its faculties bespeak its origin, and its capability of high enjoyments. The body is lost! It suffers the most fearful and tremendous pain. Consider its intimate union with the soul. Together they constitute the person of a man. The sicknesses of the body affect the soul, and the anxieties of the soul affect the body. Their union will add inconceivably to their mutual misery, in those who perish.

They are excluded from heaven, the place of happiness, joy, blessedness, rest, and glory; and are cast into hell, the place of sorrow, anguish, debasement, and torment.

They thus perish, having had a day of grace. Salvation was offered to them, and they were invited to accept of that salvation. They perish, whilst others are saved from among their companions and friends; some of them more, and others less vile than they

were. A consciousness that their ruin has been their own work, and a perception of the wise choice which others, especially those whom they knew, and with whom they had associated, had made, together with the blessed effects of that choice, will aggravate the fearful sufferings of their awful fate.

Their loss is not only infinite, it is irreparable. The place of their abode is not intended for their reformation, but for their punishment. The natural effect of punishment, where no higher causes prevent that effect, is to harden in sin. Hence we are informed, that they who perish blaspheme God day and night. Of them it may be said, and will be said for ever, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and they are not saved.”

This loss drew tears from the Redeemer's eyes. He knew full well what was lost. He gave his life a ransom for many. He suffered so as man never suffered. His work of redemption made him to undergo unknown and indescribable agony. In the review of his life and death, the question presents itself with irresistible force to our

minds, “ If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?”

Knowing these things, he wept. His tears speak more than volumes on this subject. Language cannot describe, nay, the imagination cannot conceive, the fearful condition of those from whose eyes the things belonging to their peace are hid.

I forbear enlarging on a topic so full of horror. It has not been introduced on this occasion because it is congenial to our feelings; but because, “ knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men.” The message which has been delivered combines whatever can and ought justly to alarm us, on account of the righteousness of God, with every thing that is calculated to inspire hope in our bosoms, from the revelation of God’s mercy and grace. Though we have forfeited his favour, he respites us from the consummation of the curse, by giving us the day and means of grace. Lest we should waste this precious season, he warns us that it will close ere long, and may close before we are saved.

If any one is disposed to cavil at the

import of this discourse, or to neglect the admonition which it gives, let him be warned by the example of the Jews. Their case illustrates the Redeemer's words, and gives to his tears the weight of ten thousand times ten thousand irrefragable arguments. Let all beware that they tamper not with God's justice, or sport with his mercy, thus provoking his indignation. Let none dismiss the subject as too gloomy, or reject the exhortation as unnecessary in a Christian land. The right improvement of the subject will promote cheerfulness, will produce real happiness. And the fact that, in Christian lands, men are born sinners, makes the exhortation a duty imperative on all the ambassadors of Christ.

Thus thought and thus acted the reformers in the old world; the pilgrims of New-England: Tenant, Davies, Rogers, Laidlie, Coleman, and the host of worthies who held fast the faith once delivered to the saints. They taught the truths which we preach; they prayed for God's blessing upon these truths to them and their posterity. From their graves proceeds a

voice addressing us, and saying, “ Be ye
“ followers of them who, through faith and
“ patience, inherit the promises^f.” Who
then desires to have his soul gathered with
theirs? Let him, without delay, attend to
the things which belong to his peace. To-
day, if ye will hear the voice of the Son
of man, harden not your hearts. Remem-
ber that solemn admonition, “ He that, be-
“ ing often reprovèd, hardeneth his neck,
“ shall suddenly be destroyed, and that
“ without remedy^g.”

The day is coming which will try our
principles, and determine our fate. Then
they who have neglected or despised the
things which belong to their peace; they
who have resisted the workings of con-
science; they who have refused to receive
instruction, will depart under a cloud of
melancholy, and in all the agony of fearful
expectation: whilst they who have attend-
ed to the things which belong to their
peace; who are washed in the blood of the
Lamb, will be supported and cheered by
the hope of eternal blessedness.

^f Heb. vi. 12.

^g Prov. xxix. 1.

To which of these classes, Men and Brethren, do you belong? Examine your views, your conduct, your hopes. Remain not in ignorance about your state. Be not ever learning and never coming to the knowledge of the truth. "Give diligence to make "your calling and election sure^h."

Ere long the factitious distinctions of life will be no more, and every one will be treated according to his moral worth. Ere long the partiality of attachment will in vain seek to cast its veil over the deficiencies of friends in relation to moral character. Ere long the soothing accents of kindness will no more be poured forth to quiet the heart, racked with pain on account of its own estrangement from God. Ere long your fate and mine will be determined. The shadows of our days are lengthening; the darkness of the grave is descending.

Time is short. Presently the curtain of life will be drawn, and eternity disclosed to your view.

Time is short! The foundation on which the earthly house of your tabernacle rests,

is tottering with years: presently it will give way, and you will be ingulphed in eternity.

Time is short! The clock which marks the progress and duration of your pilgrimage in this world, is fast running down: in a little while, a very little while, its hand will point to that which its striking will announce—"Eternity!"

AMEN.

SERMON IV.



GOD'S CONTROVERSY WITH HIS PEOPLE.



MICAH VI. 3.

*O my people, what have I done unto thee?
and wherein have I wearied thee? tes-
tify against me.*

WHAT a train of overwhelming ideas do these words originate in the mind of every reflecting person! Jehovah, the Sovereign of the universe, permits his subjects to plead their cause before him. He who needs not their praises or obedience to increase his glory or his happiness, condescends to place himself at their tribunal, and appeals to their judgment for the

equity of his government. Truly we have reason to rejoice, that he is thus gracious and merciful, thus slow to anger and of great kindness; but we ought to rejoice with trembling. When he stoops so low, "his forbearance is almost exhausted, and the day of his merciful visitation near its close; for, as he does not want power to punish, or provocation to justify such punishment, he thus acts to make our condemnation consistent with his mercy^a."

With mingled emotions of gratitude for the divine patience towards us, and of fear lest we should sin against it any longer, let us at this time enter upon the consideration of these words. Although addressed to the children of Israel in the first instance, they are strictly applicable to the professing people of God in all ages. Two leading truths are contained in them, which require our attention, and will in order be explained.

I. That the people of God sometimes grow weary of him.

II. That such conduct on their part, in all cases, is unreasonable, iniquitous, and condemnable.

^a R. Walker's Sermon on the text.

“ O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.”

I. The people of God sometimes grow weary of him: that is, they act as if they were weary of his service.

This was eminently the case with Israel, especially the ten tribes, though they were indebted to him for their national existence, their country, their privileges civil and religious, their blessings temporal and spiritual. They forsook him repeatedly, even the Rock of their salvation, and followed after dumb idols, those lying vanities of the heathen. Though acquainted with God's acceptable worship, they devised a worship of their own, which dishonoured him. They broke his laws, trampled under foot his ordinances, and assimilated, in their whole deportment, to the nations who knew not God.

Thus also the professing people of God under the Gospel œconomy, in various ways, act as if they were weary of his service. They do so,

First, When they are careless about their growth in grace.

This is a talent committed to us by

God for our improvement. It includes in it the possession of all those virtuous and holy principles which dignify our nature and qualify us for heaven. The cultivation of these, to their highest degree of maturity, is an important and indispensable duty. To fulfil it, requires all the attention, diligence, watchfulness, and perseverance, of which we are capable. When we consider our natural proneness to evil, the number of our enemies, the art they use and the power they possess to seduce us from the ways of the Lord, we cannot but see at once the danger as well as folly of carelessness about our own advancement in the divine life.

Men, in worldly matters which they conceive interesting and necessary for their temporal benefit, set us a good example. With what eagerness and assiduity do the son of science, the slave of ambition, and the votary of pleasure, press on, each in his pursuit, that he may enjoy more of what he loves! If one or other stop in his career, without being disabled from going on, it is an evidence that such have become weary of their idols. So with the professed followers of Jesus Christ, to halt when they ought to ad-

vance, displays a state of mind which is alarming. It is halting in knowledge, in righteousness, in holiness, in moral excellence. It is neglecting the things that are true, that are honest, that are just, that are pure, that are lovely, that are of good report. Thus to do, manifests an indisposition to be more perfectly reconciled to God in heart, to love him more ardently, and trust in him more firmly. It indicates the strength of indwelling sin, and the prevalence of temptations from without. The flesh sighs, What a weariness it is to be always watching, always fighting, always labouring! The spirit listens to the flesh, and, seduced by it, ceases to act as master, and becomes servant. Now improper thoughts arise, which are not checked with promptness; desires are excited, which meet no sufficient resistance; passions begin to rage, which heretofore were tame; appetites are awakened, which long had lain dormant. Spiritual perception is obscured, and spiritual taste vitiated. The disorder of the mind soon affects the deportment in a sensible manner. The closet is almost deserted, or entered with reluctance; self-examination

is neglected, or performed in haste and slightly; the word is read or heard with listlessness, and little profit; and the whole service of God appears a weariness.

Secondly, When professing believers, in their public conduct, keep out of view the discriminating features of the Gospel, they act as if they were weary of God's service.

He has plainly pointed out, in his word, the path of duty for them, as well as revealed to them the subjects of their faith. They are as lights in the world, and should so shine before their fellow-men, that others seeing their good works, may glorify their Father who is in heaven. Their example ought ever to be worthy of the cause they advocate, and of the Master they serve. How inconsistent would it be for a wise man to act as a fool, or an old man as a child! Equally inconsistent is it for a believer to act as an unbeliever, or a traveller to heaven like one whose views and hopes are confined to earth. Every description of men have a character to sustain, and a part to act on the theatre of life. The character of a believer is that of an heir of glory; his part is to live godly in Christ Jesus. The line of conduct

he ought to pursue in his intercourse with the world, is such that all may take notice of him that he has been with Jesus. Moral honesty is not alone sufficient, nor temperance, nor chastity, nor generosity, nor any of those virtues which men without grace externally display. In addition to these are virtues which the world derides, and of which the unbeliever can form no distinct or correct idea; such as, “glorying in the cross of Christ, crucifixion to the world, looking to the things which are not seen which are eternal, poverty of spirit, lowliness of mind, patient continuance in well doing,” denying selfish principles and feelings, mortification of the desires of corrupt nature, simple dependance upon the naked promises of the living God, with others of the same nature. These are Christian virtues, which men calling themselves Christians ought to practise openly and boldly, at all times, and under all circumstances, over and above the moral virtues. When they, on the contrary, satisfy themselves with the latter, omitting the former whenever they can without outraging their profession, wherein do they differ from

worldly men of integrity? They discover the same worldly propensities, are bent on gain, seek after honours, and, as they prosper, indulge themselves more and more in ease and in worldly modes of living. They converse like the men of the world, adopt their maxims, apparently are influenced by their principles, and assimilated to them in their whole deportment. This deportment is indeed, externally, strictly correct. No blame can be attached to their moral character: but we look in vain for their Christian virtues. Some thus act from fear, others from a mistaken policy; some from a culpable pliancy of temper, others from actual seduction, being surprized into an abandonment of their peculiar duties. Let the reason, however, be what it may, they give just cause to gainsayers to say, “These persons, notwithstanding their high pretensions to sanctity, love the world as much as we do, and seek the things which are in it after our manner, and with an avidity equal to ours.” They conduct themselves as if the practice of the Gospel virtues was a burden, as if the service of God was wearisome to them.

Thirdly, When the professed people of God go to the utmost verge of lawful worldly enjoyments, as if hankering after those which are unlawful, they manifest a weariness in his service.

Although they are commanded to deny themselves, and mortify their members which are on earth, yet God has granted unto them the sanctified use of his creatures for their happiness. In these, however, unfortunately they too often seek their chief pleasure, instead of seeking it in him, and in obedience to his most perfect will. Thus they act like the children of Israel in the wilderness, who, when they had manna from heaven for food, lusted after the flesh-pots of Egypt. Forgetting that many things, though lawful, are not expedient at all times, and under all circumstances, they convert their liberty into a plea for indulging in them, further than prudence or propriety will admit. Hence worldly pleasures, innocent in their nature, become criminal in their hands by their abuse of them. This prepares the way for their participation in such as are condemnable in their nature. They first go to the utmost verge—to the extreme boun-

dary of those which are lawful; then tamper and dally with those which are doubtful; casting, in the mean while, a wishful, longing eye upon those that are improper and ruinous, until their offensiveness wears away from the mind, and they become familiar to conscience; when, finally, these professing Christians yield to the temptation which they themselves have invited, and to which by their imprudence they have given resistless power. Soon their example is urged by others, in defence of vain amusements, of sinful chance games, of immoral sports, of feasts where God is not known, and where the operation of his hands is disregarded. What is such conduct but a practical declaration, that they have become disgusted with the ways of the Lord; that they are weary of his service?

Fourthly, When the professing people of God murmur or fret under adverse providences, they act as if they were weary of his service.

That consists in suffering as well as doing his will. The statute law of his kingdom in the world is, that through much tribulation we must enter into glory. The

experience of his saints approves this, and with one voice declares, It is good for them to be afflicted. Against this, corrupt nature enters her protest, and would, if possible, make us believe it is unjust, and unnecessary, and cruel. By the aid of Satan and the world, she too frequently prevails, so far as to excite discontent and disaffection towards the government of God, in those who ought to say, under all circumstances, “ The Lord “ reigneth, let the earth rejoice.” What he does, is according to that plan which, with infinite wisdom, he devised in eternity. No one event, however trifling, happens by chance, but by the will of God. Whatever then befalls his people, must be just, holy, and good, because a part of his determined counsel and purpose. If they suffer, he has seen fit to apportion out to them that lot; it is no new thing, no contingency; it is the eternal will of their heavenly Father. To be dissatisfied with affliction, is to be dissatisfied with the government of God: to murmur under its smarts, is to murmur against infinite perfection. The language of such conduct is, “ God ought not to reign; “ he does not act justly; afflictions are im-

“ properly dispensed.” How shocking is this to every person who has any serious impressions of the truth! Truly they who are impatient under the divine rebukes, who are willing to receive good from the Lord, but not to receive evil, act as if they were weary of God’s service. They do so,

Fifthly and lastly, When they relax their diligence in the cause of God in the world ; when they make no attempts, or very feeble ones, to break down the kingdom of Satan ; to arrest ungodly sinners in their mad career ; to spread the savour of Christ’s name in the circle of their friends ; to assist in sending his precious Gospel to the heathen who walk in darkness, and dwell in the land of the shadow of death.

Such are some of the principal ways in which the professing people of God manifest a weariness in his service. They thus bring practical objections against the perfections of God’s nature, against the excellency of his law, the wisdom and equity of his providence. These objections he is ready to meet. He challenges his people to substantiate them. “ Testify against me,” he says. And well he may ; for such conduct as they display

is, in all cases, unreasonable, iniquitous, and condemnable. To prove this, is the

II. Leading truth in the text which requires explanation.

And here arguments, various and infinite, press into the mind, so that the great difficulty will be to select the most obvious.

First, then, Hath not God manifested himself the best Friend of his people? Has he not borne with their infirmities, passed by their transgressions, and given them the strongest assurance of his loving kindness? Consider, ye who act as if you were weary of God, that he has spared you, and continued his favours towards you. From him you receive all your blessings, the greatest as well as the least. They are freely given, with nothing on your part to merit them in the least. Consider, further, the astonishing gift of his Son, for sinners like you, to redeem you from death! How vast your obligations, that you have been born in a land of Christian light and liberty; of Christian parents; that you have been brought, by divine mercy, into the bosom of

his Church, and have been called with a holy calling. Greater love has never been displayed than this, that God should not spare his only begotten Son, but freely give him up for us all, and that while we were enemies. Where is there an earthly friend that has done for you what God has done? How unreasonable, then, to grow weary of his service! how iniquitous! Testify against him, if you can. Has he ceased to be your friend? Are not his mercies fresh every morning, and renewed every evening? Do you not still enjoy the day and the means of grace? Are you not still invited to come to Christ's fulness? May you not still plead the divine promises in faith, and cherish the hope of everlasting life? But,

Secondly, Doth God require any thing from any of his creatures, but what is just, holy, and good? His laws remain the same; for he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. The same perfection is still in them. They are calculated to make all who obey them happy. He is not a hard Master, for his "yoke is easy, and his burden is light." Why, then, do any act as

if the contrary of all this were true? Let them bring forth their charges, and testify against God. Are his laws too strict? They forbid nothing save sin, and sin must be destroyed in your hearts, or you are miserable. Do they not provide for the well-being of society? They demand all those virtues, without which mankind would be converted into furies, and our world into a place of torment. Do they abridge individual enjoyment, so much as to impair individual comfort? They require from you a denial of all those passions and appetites, which tyrannize over your reason, and render you by nature slaves of unrighteousness. They prescribe such actions as God himself displays in his government of the world. They are actions which your very creation and preservation bind you to perform. Redemption by Jesus Christ imposes yet stronger obligations on you. “What, know ye not that ye are not your own, but bought with a price? Therefore glorify God in soul and body which are his.”

Thirdly, What do you merit, if weighed in the balance of justice? Look to the rock from whence you were hewn, and the hole

of the pit from whence you were digged. Are you not sinners by nature? Are not your hearts deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked? Is your conduct such as gratitude requires? Now, compare this view of yourselves with what God has done for you, and is still doing. Do you deserve any thing but afflictions and sorrows at his hands? If he thus acts towards you, ought you not to say, “It is well, I merit the indignation of the Lord.”

Fourthly, Is not God the overflowing Fountain of happiness? In his favour is life, and in his loving kindness that which is better than life. Where shall we look for pleasure, if not in conformity to his nature, and in fulfilling the duties of his service? In his communion his people find all that their hearts can desire; a fulness of joy, an excess of delight, which no language can describe, nor imagination conceive. His ways are strictly ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace. The very practice of religion affords them a satisfaction, a relish of which the world can form no idea. They may be outwardly afflicted, but they are inwardly supported, “because the love of God

“ is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy
“ Ghost, which is given unto them.” This
Comforter cheers them in sorrow, guides
them in darkness, and animates them with
the foretastes of future glory. How unrea-
sonable, how iniquitous, how condemnable,
for any to be weary of the service of that
God, who grants such happiness here, and
the prospect of greater hereafter !

Thus it is, my brethren, that God pleads
with his people who are weary of him, who
have declined in their love, diligence, and
faithfulness towards him.

Are there any such here present ? The
Lord has a controversy with you. What
can you say against God ? You who
are guilty worms of the dust before him ?
His glory brightens the heavens, and fills
the earth. Dazzled with the splendour
of its beams, angels veil their faces be-
fore him, and, with extatic rapture, cry,
“ Holy, holy, holy art thou, Lord God Al-
“ mighty.” If he unveil it full on your
view, you perish ; for no mortal eye can be-
hold it and live. Oh ! cast yourselves at the
feet of his mercy ; acknowledge your trans-
gressions, lest he swear in his wrath, “ Ye

“ shall not enter into my rest.” He charges you with want of suitable respect for him, of uniform obedience to his will, and of devoted attachment to his ways. Are you not guilty? Remember, he knows the heart; his eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. Can you bear his searching inspection? Approach, then; draw near, and order your cause before him. He is ready to hear and answer. Testify against him who obscures the sun by his superior radiance, who is without spot, or wrinkle, or blemish; ineffably perfect in his nature, laws, and government. No, you cannot. Struck with amazement at your folly and depravity, in ever becoming weary of his service, or manifesting any disrelish to his ways, you are constrained to lay your hands on your mouths, and your mouths in the dust, and, like the lepers of old, cry, “ Guilty, guilty.” He asks you, “ What have I done unto thee?” You readily answer, “ Thou hast made us, preserved us, clothed us, and fed us, redeemed us; thou hast done great things for us, and glorious. Wo, wo to us, that we have ever declined in thy statutes!” Instead of testifying against him,

you must testify for him, that he has been to you a most affectionate Father, a tender and compassionate Master, a merciful and kind God.

Well, then, repent of your ways. Be watchful over your growth in grace; be exemplary in your public conduct as Christians; make a sanctified use of the creatures of God in the world: bear afflictions with patience and thankfulness; be diligent in promoting the cause of Christ in the world. Do these things, and do whatever else evinces engagedness in the service of God, and his controversy with you will end. But if you persist in your course, he will rebuke you in his anger, and chasten you in his hot displeasure. If you continue assimilated to the world, are neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm in your Christian course, he will, according to his threatening to the Laodicean professors, spue you out of his mouth. Remember, brethren, you have to deal with God, who is jealous of his honour, and whose glory he will not divide with another. Return unto him, and say, "Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously; so will we render the calves of

“ our lips. Asher shall not save us ; we
“ will not ride upon horses, neither will we
“ say any more to the work of our hands,
“ Ye are our gods ; for in thee the fatherless
“ findeth mercy.”

God now pleads with you in mercy ; but he will, on another occasion, plead in indignation. He will say, “ What could I have done to you which was not done ? Wherefore, when I looked for good fruit, did you bring forth evil fruit ? ” On the day of judgment he will testify against you, against all who have persisted in displaying weariness in his service. Before him, at that time, we must ere long undergo a strict examination ; every secret work will be brought to light, and every thought of the heart made manifest. The Judge standeth at the door ! The time is drawing near. What your hands find to do, do it quickly. Seek to be more and more qualified for heaven. The Lord grant that we may meet there with those who have gone before us, and have entered into the rest of their Lord. AMEN.

SERMON V.



THE ONLY SAFETY IN THE HOUR OF DANGER^a.



HEBREWS XI. 28.

Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them.

THESE words refer to a memorable period in the history of God's chosen people. They were in the land of Egypt, and in the house of bondage, sorely afflicted by Pharaoh and his servants. The four hundred years, to which this state of oppression was restricted

^a Preached at the administration of the Lord's Supper.

according to prophecy, were, however, just expiring^b. “The children of Israel,” saith the sacred historian, “sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried; and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them.” He raised up Moses to be their *deliverer*, commissioning him to appear before the Egyptian king in their behalf, that they might be permitted to depart for the promised land. The king hardened his heart against the Lord, and refused obedience to the command of Jehovah. Then it was, in the language of the Psalmist, that Moses his servant, and Aaron whom he had chosen, “shewed his signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham. He sent darkness and made it dark; and did they not rebel against his word^c? He turned their waters into blood, and slew their fish. Their land brought forth frogs

^b Gen. xv. 16.

^c Ex. ii. 23—25.

^d Horne, P. cv. 28.

“ in abundance, in the chambers of their
“ kings. He spake, and there came divers
“ sorts of flies, and lice in all their coasts. He
“ gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire
“ in their land. He smote their vines also,
“ and their fig-trees; and brake the trees of
“ their coasts. He spake, and the locusts
“ came, and caterpillars, and that without
“ number, and did eat up all the herbs
“ in their land, and devoured the fruit of
“ their ground.” In all these various ways
did God punish the Egyptians for disobey-
ing his command, each of them having a
particular design, inasmuch as they bore an
analogy to the crimes and idolatry of that
people^f. But the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s
heart, and he would not let Israel go. Then
it was that “ the Lord said unto Moses,
“ Yet will I bring one plague more upon
“ Pharaoh, and upon Egypt: afterward he
“ will let you go hence.” The plague is
thus described: “ About midnight will I go
out,” saith the Lord, “ into the midst of

^e Ps. cv. 27—35.

^f Bryant’s Observations on the Plagues inflicted on the
Egyptians.

^g Ex. xi. 1.

“ Egypt: and all the first-born in the land
“ of Egypt shall die, from the first-born of
“ Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even
“ unto the first-born of the maid-servant
“ that is behind the mill; and all the
“ first-born of beasts^h.” “ But against any
“ of the children of Israel shall not a dog
“ move his tongue, against man or beast:
“ that ye may know how that the Lord doth
“ put a difference between the Egyptians
“ and Israelⁱ.”

To the mean by which the latter were preserved from the desolation of the former; the manner in which this mean was used; and the success which accompanied the manner of using the mean, our attention is directed in the text.

A few remarks, explanatory of each of these particulars, will first be offered; after which such a use will be made of the text as is suitable to the solemnity of the present occasion. May HE who has the hearts of all men at his disposal, sanctify instruction to our hearts at this time, that his name may be glorified, and our salvation promoted!

^h Ex. xi. 4, 5.

ⁱ Ex. xi. 7.

First, The explanatory remarks will be made. And you will observe,

1. That the mean by which the Israelites were preserved from the desolation of the Egyptians was, “ the keeping of the *pass-over*, and *the sprinkling of blood.*”

The passover was a lamb slain and eaten by the Israelites, according to the divine command. Particular directions were given for the choice of the lamb, its preparation for death, and the manner in which it should be eaten. “ Speak ye,” says God to Moses and Aaron, “ unto all the congregation
“ of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this
“ month, they shall take to them every man
“ a lamb according to the house of their fa-
“ thers, a lamb for an house: and if the house-
“ hold be too little for the lamb, let him and
“ his neighbour next unto his house take it
“ according to the number of the souls: every
“ man according to his eating shall make
“ your count for the lamb. Your lamb
“ shall be without blemish, a male of the
“ first year: ye shall take it out from the
“ sheep, or from the goats: and ye shall
“ keep it up unto the fourteenth day of the
“ same month: and the whole assembly of

“ the congregation of Israel shall kill it in
 “ the evening^k.” “ And they shall eat the
 “ flesh in that night, roast with fire ; and
 “ unleavened bread, and with bitter herbs
 “ they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor
 “ sodden at all with water, but roast with
 “ fire ; his head, with his legs, and with the
 “ purtenances thereof. And ye shall let
 “ nothing of it remain until the morning ;
 “ and that which remaineth until the morn-
 “ ing, you shall burn with fire : And thus
 “ shall ye eat it ; with your loins girded,
 “ your shoes on your feet, and your staff in
 “ your hand ; and ye shall eat it in haste :
 “ it is the Lord’s *passover*^l.” The sprin-
 kling of blood, is the sprinkling of the blood
 of the lamb, as God directed them. “ They
 “ shall take of the blood, and strike it on the
 “ two side posts, and on the upper door
 “ post of the houses, wherein they shall eat
 “ it^m.” This blood thus sprinkled was to
 be for a token upon the houses where the
 Israelites were, that thus they might be dis-
 tinguished from the Egyptians”. The rea-
 son which God assigns for this will more

k Ex. xii. 3—6.

l Ex. xii. 8—11.

m Ex. xii. 7.

n Ex. xii. 13.

particularly illustrate the nature of the pass-over. “ I will pass through the land of “ Egypt,” saith God, “ this night, and will “ smite the first-born in the land of Egypt, “ both man and beast.”—“ And when I see “ the blood,” viz. that sprinkled upon the door posts, “ I will pass-over you; and the “ plague shall not be upon you to destroy “ you, when I smite the land of Egypt.”

Such then was the mean by which the Israelites were preserved; “ the keeping of “ the passover, and the sprinkling of blood;” that is, the blood of the lamb which was to be slain and eaten.

II. The manner in which this mean was used, was *by faith*.

X “ Now *faith*,” saith the apostle, “ is the “ substance of things hoped for, and the evi- “ dence of things not seen.” In both these respects was it exercised in keeping of the passover, and the sprinkling of blood. That which was hoped for, was deliverance from the destroyer: and the deliverance, thus hoped for, was a thing not seen as yet. *Faith* gave the thing hoped for an actual existence in the mind of Moses and Israel,

so as to save them from fear ; and it was to them such a demonstration of that which was not yet seen, as to produce a certain conviction of its reality.

Such was the nature of their faith : it had respect to God's declaration concerning the destruction of the first-born of Egypt, and their deliverance from it by the passing over their houses by the destroyer. This declaration rested entirely on the divine veracity for its fulfilment, or the contrary. Moses believed the declaration ; that is, he gave full credit to it, such a credit as affected his heart, and produced a corresponding line of conduct. He directed the children of Israel to comply with the command of God. They, believing the declaration already noticed, obeyed the command. Moses and the people of Israel thus honoured God's veracity, and obeyed God's authority. They did eat the passover and sprinkled the blood, in full and unhesitating confidence that they would be saved ; that he who destroyed the first-born would not touch them, as they had been assured by the word of the Lord. Hence,

III. The success which accompanied the

manner of using the mean, as has been noticed, was complete. It realized fully all their expectations—those expectations which sprung from, and were strengthened by, their faith.

The night in which God was to pass through Egypt came. The sun had gone down, and the shades of darkness gathered around the land. The inhabitants, having finished the labours of the day, had retired to rest. The cattle had ceased their lowing.

“ Still’d is the hum that through the hamlet broke ;”

and the noise of the busy city is lost in silence. At this time, when

“ Mortals the sweets of forgetfulness prove,”

the Egyptians are suddenly awakened by a fearful, a tremendous judgment. Throughout the land, in the same instant, the first-born child is snatched from the embrace of its fond parents, and made the prey of death. Oh, who can describe the agonies that were experienced during this disastrous night! Every family was visited by the destroyer, so that each one could only sympathize with his neighbour and friend, by

lamenting his own loss. “ The chief of all
“ their strength” in a moment was laid low, so
that the pride of the nation was humbled, and
its triumph over Israel converted into sadness
and wo. The king himself, that obstinate
rebel, (for the calamity was experienced as
well in the palace as in the cottage,) the
king himself “ rose up at night. he and all
“ his servants, and all the Egyptians: and
“ there was a great cry in Egypt; for there
“ was not a house where there was not one
“ dead?” Dreadful indeed must have
been the scene then exhibited: a scene of
justice on the part of God, and of *deep an-*
guish on the part of the Egyptians! Then,
if Pharaoh’s heart was not as rebellious to
the claims of humanity, as it had been to
those of God, he must have felt the accusa-
tions of conscience, like the stings of a scor-
pion, tormenting him in such a way, and to
such a degree, as to make him a terror to
himself. The desolation which his people
suffered was owing to his wickedness and
his oppression of an innocent people. What
aggravated their misery, and added force to

q Ex. xii. 30.

the reproaches of conscience, was, that not an Israelite was cut off.

The destroyer passed over *their* houses, because they were marked with blood. They heard the cry of the Egyptians, but were themselves saved. In their windows death did not find his way, and therefore sorrow for their first-born did not fill their habitations. The Lord did not call them by his providence to lamentation and wo, but to thankfulness. They were not endangered, nor hurt, nor so much as touched. What a contrast now between their state and that of their oppressors! As strikingly marked, but more deeply felt, as that between the land of Egypt and of Goshen, when the former was enveloped in thick darkness, and in the latter there was light. Whilst the hearts of Egyptian parents are torn with anguish, the Jewish fathers and mothers embrace their first-born in safety, and give them their blessing. On the one side is bereavement; on the other is continued enjoyment. Among the children of Ham, the curse of Jehovah; among the descendants of Shem, the blessing. There is death,

blasting expectation ; here is life, looking forward to some good yet in store.

So successful were Moses and the children of Israel in escaping the destroyer, by keeping the passover, and the sprinkling of blood.

But, surely, Brethren, there was no natural virtue in the blood of the sacrificed lamb, whereby the family on whose doorposts it was sprinkled might be preserved from the plague ; nor can we for a moment suppose that Jehovah needed any such sign, to distinguish between the Egyptians and the Israelites. For what purpose, then, can we conceive such a ceremony to have been instituted, but as a sensible token of the fulfilment of the divine promise of *protection* and *deliverance* ? And was not this intended as a typical sign of protection from the divine justice by the blood of Christ, which, in reference to this, is called “ the blood of “ sprinkling ? ” Indeed the analogy is so forcible, that we need not hesitate to unite in opinion with those who consider “ the “ slaying of the paschal lamb, in its first in- “ stitution, to be an expiatory sacrifice ; the

r Magee on the Atonement, vol. 1. No. 35. 3d Lon. ed.

s Heb. xii. 24.

“ blood of the lamb sprinkled on the door
“ posts being the appointed means of pre-
“ servation, by Jehovah’s passing over. In
“ confirmation, also, of the typical nature
“ of this ceremony, we may notice a very
“ extraordinary passage quoted by Justin
“ Martyr, in his dialogue with Trypho, from
“ the ancient copies of the Bible; in which
“ Ezra expounds, in a speech made before
“ the celebration of the passover, the mys-
“ tery of it as clearly relating to Christ;
“ and which Justin concludes was at a very
“ early period expunged from the Hebrew
“ copies by the Jews, as too manifestly fa-
“ vouring the cause of Christianity. The pas-
“ sage is this: ‘ This passover,’ saith Ezra to
“ the people, ‘ is our Saviour and refuge; and
“ if you can feel a firm persuasion, that we
“ are about to humble ourselves, and desire
“ him in this sign, and afterwards should
“ place our sure trust and hope in him, then
“ this place shall never be made desolate,
“ saith the Lord of Hosts: but if you do not
“ believe in him, nor listen to that which he
“ shall announce, ye shall be a derision to
“ all nations.’ ”

l Magee on the Atonement, vol. 1. p. 304—307.

Allix, in his judgment of the Jewish Church, says, that

Scripture supplies us with decisive testimonies, that the paschal lamb was a type of Christ. The beloved disciple, in his Gospel", directly asserts it, by applying to Christ on the cross the fulfilment of the declaration concerning the Lamb; "A bone of him shall not be broken." The apostle Paul says, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us"; thus calling the type, and the thing signified by the same name: and the Redeemer himself seems to teach the same doctrine, in his institution of the Lord's Supper^r.

With this information concerning the typical nature of the passover, let us pass on to make such a use of the text as is suitable to the solemnities of this day.

The passover, and the sprinkling of blood, which Moses kept, exhibited the great sacrifice which Christ offered up, once for all, for sin. The deliverance which accompanied the keeping of this passover, and the

when John the Baptist speaks of the Lamb which takes away the sins of the world, the type of the paschal lamb is alluded to, and that this appears the more clearly, from two things taught amongst the Jews: 1. That the Shechinah, or visible glory of Jehovah, delivered Israel out of Egypt; 2. That the Shechinah was typified by the paschal lamb. Magee, Vol. i. No. 35.

^u John xix. 36.

^x 1 Cor. v. 7.

^y Matt. xxvi. 26.

sprinkling of blood, typified the great deliverance of sinners from death, through the blood of the everlasting Covenant. Every thing belonging to the Legal dispensation, was a shadow of good things to come. Israel prefigured the company of the elect, redeemed by the death of Christ; Israel's freedom from Egyptian bondage, the freedom of God's elect from the dominion of Satan; the blood of the paschal lamb, the blood of the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world; the sprinkling of the blood of the paschal lamb, the application of the blood of Christ by the Spirit to the hearts and consciences of sinners; the taking of a branch of hyssop to dip in the blood of the lamb, the exercise of faith in the atonement of Christ, and all the blessings which are connected with him and his work.

All that was thus typified by the keeping of the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, is signified in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. The latter holds the same place under the Gospel, which the former did under the Law. As the blood of the everlasting Covenant which was typified by the

former, has actually been shed as a sacrifice for the remission of sins, so the latter signifies that sacrifice of blood, offered once for all, by emblems of a nourishing, refreshing kind—emblems suited to its nature as an Eucharistic feast, consequent upon a sacrifice. The broken bread, and the wine poured out, represent the same Lamb of God, slain for sin, who was typified in the pass-over. And as then the blood of the lamb could only save by its being sprinkled upon the door posts, so now the blood of the Lamb of God must be sprinkled upon the hearts and consciences of sinners, to procure their salvation. The mere participation of the bread and wine will no more procure exemption from the curse, than the mere eating of the paschal lamb could protect the Israelites from judgment. The thing signified by the lamb in the one case, and the bread in the other, must be possessed and enjoyed. The typical possession was the sprinkling of the blood; the real possession, is the participation by faith of the righteousness wrought out by the shedding of this blood.

To this righteousness, received by faith, the Lord's Supper directs our attention. And all who by faith partake of it, will be protected from all such dangers, present and future, as threaten their salvation. Not that the Lord's Supper, any more than the pass-over, possesses an inherent virtue. It is the thing signified, the broken body and the poured out blood, apprehended by faith, that is relied upon, or trusted to, as sufficient for our salvation, and that protects. In this ordinance, as in that, Christ is exhibited as the *Redeemer*, who once in the end of the world hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Both represent him as the "propitiation for sin, through faith in his blood." Both direct to his obedience and death, as the meritorious cause of salvation; and both encourage faith and strengthen hope, by affecting views of the compassion and veracity of God, as also of the consummation of blessedness which is provided for all the followers of Christ, by the compassion of God, and secured by his veracity.

Let us, then,

Secondly, Make such an application of the text, as is suitable to this occasion.

For this purpose, I shall show,

I. How this sacrament is used in faith;
and then,

II. Unfold the safety of those who by faith use it, from all such dangers, present and future, as threaten their salvation.

I. This sacrament is used in faith,

1. When we feel and acknowledge our own miserable state.

As the high priest laid his hand on the head of the victim, and over it confessed his own sins and those of the people, so we must, exercising faith in Christ the Ransomer, confess that we deserve to be led to the altar for a sacrifice, and not to sit down at his table, to be fed with the provisions of God's grace. We must mourn over the corruption of our nature, and the disobedience of our lives. We must repent of all our transgressions, in sincerity and truth. We must not cherish any sin, but loathe and abhor all sin, even our besetting sin; feeling, and feeling deeply, that sin is an accursed thing. The language of our hearts, with such views of ourselves, and such exercises in relation to sin, will be, "God be merciful to us sinners."

2. The Lord's Supper is used in faith, when we discern the efficacy of sacrifice.

The atonement is made by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. In this way sins are covered, hid from God's eyes, through the righteousness of Christ. Our obligation to punishment is cancelled, and the condemning power of the law annihilated. These things faith beholds in this ordinance; for in this ordinance, Christ the hiding place, the Lamb of God taking away sin, and the peace of Jew and Gentile, is unfolded. The believer recognizing the way of salvation through a crucified Redeemer, acknowledges that in the thing sacrificed is found his deliverance. By means of it the destroying angel has passed over him. In this way of salvation he finds a sufficiency adequate to his wants and wishes; for Christ is "able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Thus he believes Christ to be a refuge, a safe, as also an only refuge.

3. The Lord's Supper is used in faith, when we apply the blood of Christ, and receive his atonement.

That blood being offered to us for our salvation, we must embrace the offer, and actually hide ourselves, both in soul and body, under the refuge which it affords. As the bread is eaten, and the wine is drunk, so there must be a real spiritual participation of the atonement effected by Christ's sacrifice. The thing signified in this ordinance is not a distant but a present good ; not a good to be merely admired for its greatness, and desired on account of its suitableness to our wants, but to be used by us as ours in the offer of the Gospel. Such an appropriating act belongs to the essence of saving faith.

4. The Lord's Supper is used in faith, when we devote ourselves to him whose death is commemorated, willing at any time to seal our testimony with our blood.

Having renounced the devil, the world, and our sinful hearts, we must follow the Lord fully, suffering as well as doing his will. We must steadfastly support his truth in its purity, against all error and corruption : attend upon all the ordinances of his

appointment, publicly acknowledging, by such attendance, his rightful sovereignty over us; and obey all his commandments which he has given us for the rule of our lives. In thus following him, we must not be seduced by prosperity, or overawed by difficulty. We must trust to his power and faithfulness to hold out unto the end. And in the whole of our conduct we must have special regard to Christ's rule; "By this shall all men know
" that ye are my disciples, if ye have love
" one to another^a." The love which he requires, is inseparably connected with that
" holiness without which no man shall see
" the Lord^b."

5. The Lord's Supper is used in faith, when we spiritually taste and relish the sweetness of Christ, and of all his blessings.

He must be enjoyed as Jehovah our righteousness and strength. We may not separate, in our use of Christ, these important relations which he sustains towards us. The only evidence which we can have of his being our righteousness, is the fact that he is our strength. To experience his power in subduing us to himself, and making us

a John xiii. 35.

b Heb. xii. 14.

more holy, is emphatically to enjoy him. The great object which we ought to have in view in this ordinance, is our spiritual strength and refreshment. The last depends upon the first. As the body of sin and of death is decaying, the life of righteousness is maturing; and, with its maturity, brings along with its own delights. The more we taste that the Lord is gracious, the more ability we acquire to resist temptations, and to conquer at the last.

We proceed to unfold,

II. The safety which the believing use of the Lord's Supper affords from all such present and future dangers.

I. It saves us from the condemnation of sin.

The blood of the Covenant, apprehended by faith, is a covering for our guilt, and a cleansing of our pollution. God looks upon us, in that case, as one with his Anointed, and therefore accepted in him. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." They have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus

Christ. They walk in the liberty of the sons of God, enjoying the comforts of the Holy Ghost

2. A believing use of the Lord's Supper, will save us from casting in our lot with those who are strangers to God and his Christ.

We shall separate ourselves from their iniquities, that thus we may escape their judgments in this world. The command is, "Be not ye therefore partakers with them^e." Connected as we are in social intercourse with others; insensibly adopting their maxims, and assimilating to their manners, few commands are more difficult to be obeyed than this. Hence you perceive the importance to Christian character and conduct, of partaking of the Lord's Supper in faith, that the evils to which we are exposed from our relations in life may be avoided or rectified.

3. A believing use of the Lord's Supper will save us from the dispiriting and injurious effects of adversity and sorrow, as also from the power of all our enemies.

Here we have sealed to us his favour, who is God in providence, as well as King in Zi-

on; Lord of angels, as well as men; Conqueror of principalities and powers, as well as Protector of his chosen. He will hide us in the hollow of his hand from every storm. Or, if the storm be permitted to burst over our heads, he will protect us from its injuries. Whatever afflictions may befall us, the curse being taken out of them, he will convert into blessings, for our growth in grace. Every thing shall work for our good. “Neither—angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus^f.” Death itself will be converted into our unspeakable gain, our everlasting glory.

Communicants! suffer not the thoughts of God’s wrath to obscure your view of his love, as exhibited in this ordinance. Believe with your whole hearts in him who is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Take him by an especial act now as *your* God, and the God of your families.

f Rom. viii. 38, 39.

Cast all your care, for yourselves and yours, on the Surety of the covenant. Leave yourselves with him, in this day of calamity^z, that he may order your case. Only be careful that ye so commune, that from adversity, if it should befall, the curse may be removed. See that ye are marked with the blood of the Covenant, that, as the destroying angel is passing over the land, and pouring the plagues of God's wrath in the habitations of sinful men, ye may be safe. AMEN.

^z This sermon was preached during the late war.

SERMON VI.



THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BELIEVERS
AND THE MEN OF THE WORLD.



NUMBERS XXIII. 9.

Lo! the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.

THESE words were spoken by Balaam, the son of Beor, who had been sent for by Balak, king of Moab, to curse Israel. In their literal meaning, they refer to the peculiar separation of God's chosen people, under the Mosaic œconomy, from other nations, by their laws, religion, and character, as a holy people. Hence they may be fitly applied

to the people of God under the Gospel œconomy, as distinguished from the rest of the world. In this light they will now be used, and a suitable explanation of them given.

I. The people of God, all believers, are distinguished from the men of the world, in God's electing love.

It is this, and this alone, that is the source of their blessings in this world, and of their hopes of eternal happiness. From eternity he viewed them in the face of Jesus, the appointed Mediator of sinners. In the fulness of time, he called them by his grace, justified them through the merits of Christ, sanctified them by his Holy Spirit, and preserves them by his almighty power, through faith unto salvation. Thus the apostle addresses believers: "By grace are ye saved, through
 " faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the
 " gift of God: not of works, lest any man
 " should boast. For we are his workman-
 " ship, created in Christ Jesus unto good
 " works, which God hath before ordained
 " that we should walk in them." "Not by
 " works of righteousness," saith he in another

place, “ which we have done, but according
“ to his mercy he saved us, by the washing
“ of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy
“ Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly,
“ through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that, be-
“ ing justified by his grace, we should be
“ made heirs according to the hope of eternal
“ life^b.”

These declarations of Scripture are explicit, unfolding the sovereignty of God’s grace or free favour. If his special call of sinners is not owing to any merit in them, it must be owing to his own most free and unbiassed determination to save them. This is what is called the decree of election, of which we have repeated mention made in Scripture, especially in Christ’s priestly prayer^c.

Of this truth we have the fullest proof that is necessary in the nature of things, and all who repent and believe do most unfeignedly acknowledge that their salvation is of grace; or, in other words, that God chose them, and not that they chose God. He met them when they were wandering from him, and, constraining them by his power, made them willing subjects of his kingdom.

b Tit. iii. 5, 6.

c John xvii.

Thus the Christian poet^d describes the truth in his own case :

“ I was a stricken deer that left the herd
 “ Long since : with many an arrow deep infix’d
 “ My panting side was charged, when I withdrew
 “ To seek a tranquil death in distant shades.
 “ There was I found by One who had himself
 “ Been hurt by th’ archers. In his side he bore,
 “ And in his hands and feet, the cruel scars.
 “ With gentle force soliciting the darts,
 “ He drew them forth, and heal’d, and bade me live.”

If this conversion is the effect of God’s free grace subduing the sinner, the exercise of that grace must necessarily be the effect of a previous determination. But as the perceptions of God’s understanding, and the determinations of his will, had no beginning, and are capable of no change, from his eternal existence, and immutable nature ; so what he sees to be fit and determines in time, he saw to be fit and determined in eternity. “ New determinations can only
 “ arise from some prior defect of wisdom, of
 “ power, or of goodness ; but to suppose
 “ such defect in God would be blasphemous.”

The people of God, the company of believers, therefore, are a chosen generation,

^d Cowper.

^e Dr. J. Erskine’s Sermons, vol. 1:

selected from the rest of mankind by the sovereign love of God. What was said of Israel of old applies to them: “ You only
“ have I known of all the families of the
“ earth’”—known namely as his beloved people, partakers of his grace here, and heirs of his glory hereafter. Thus they dwell alone, and are not reckoned among the nations of the earth in the love of the Father giving them to his Son; in the love of Christ, dying for them as their Surety; in the love of the Holy Spirit, sealing them to the day of redemption. Their covenant Jehovah speaks to them as he did to Israel of old: “ Yea, I
“ have loved thee with an everlasting love;
“ therefore with loving kindness have I
“ drawn thee^g.”

II. The people of God are distinguished from the men of the world, in their temper and disposition.

They are made new creatures in Christ Jesus. From aliens, they have become citizens of the New-Jerusalem; from enemies, they have been made the children of God, through faith in Christ. The Spirit which animates them is totally different from that

f Amos iii. 2.

g Jer. xxxi. 3.

of the world. The latter is the spirit of rebels, of apostates, hostile to God, and averse to all that is truly excellent. The former is the spirit of loyal subjects, of regenerated sinners, who are the friends of God, and love true holiness. Their standard of right and wrong is that which infinite wisdom has devised, and infinite purity established.

With this standard their spirit essentially agrees, and they study to make it agree more and more in all particulars, that they may, in their degree, be like God. Hence it is heavenly, being the fruit of the operation of the Holy Ghost. It is noble and dignified as its Author, despising and avoiding what is sinful and base. It is constantly looking upwards, regarding eternal realities more than temporal shadows, and preferring God's favour to every other consideration. It is a spirit baptized in the blood of Christ, making its possessors like-minded with him. It is mild and unassuming; humane and charitable; friendly and hospitable. It is meek and lowly, or humble, disclaiming all praise, and glorying in the cross of Christ as the source of all its virtue. It is sincere in all its professions, true in all its

acknowledgments. It is uniform in public and private, among foes and friends. It is bold to discharge duty, at every risk and hazard, but fearful of sin; this it dreads, but not death: death has no power over it; it triumphs over the grave; it is immortal. It is honest, rendering to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour. It is peaceable, patient, gentle, easy to be entreated, forgiving, never revenging injuries real or imaginary, and readily appeased when insulted. It is a spirit of supreme devotion to God, and ardent love to man; a spirit of resignation under adversity, and thankfulness under prosperity; a firm, decisive spirit, unawed by dangers, and unseduced by temptation; rising above opposition, and triumphing over enemies.

How different from this is the spirit of the world! Light and darkness are not more opposite than these two. The spirit of the world is false, dissembling, crouching under dangers, revengeful under injuries, haughty, fretful, dissembling to obtain advantages, changing for interest; and what shall I add?

Contemplate the character, the man whom the world most admires, who is the idol of his cotemporaries, and the wonder of posterity. Is the spirit which he displays that of the Gospel? Can they who admire him love the follower of Christ? Take up the historian, and read his laboured panegyric on the man whom the world calls great. Enter into his description, catch the feelings, and then take up the Gospel, and read the character of Jesus Christ, of the apostle Paul, or any saint. Is not the difference of spirit between the two, palpable? is it not evident beyond doubt^h?

Believers seem not inhabitants of this world; they are truly strangers in it; they seem the natives of another clime. They truly dwell alone, and are not reckoned among the nations, in their temper and disposition. Like Caleb, they have another spirit with them, emphatically a spirit of life unto righteousness.

III. The people of God are distinguished from the men of the world, in their daily conduct.

^h Foster, in his last Essay, has admirably illustrated this contrast.

This is a necessary consequence of the preceding particular. The spirit of a man, his temper, his disposition, gives the complexion to his walk and conversation. Believers, differing from the world in the former, cannot but differ in the latter. They live godly in Christ Jesus, having that mind which was also in him. They are evidently crucified to the world, and the world to them, as a leading object of their attention. They use it as not abusing it, knowing that its fashion soon passeth away. They do not strive for honours, or riches, or temporal pleasures, as their chief good; but for the favour of God. Him they serve in sincerity, with ardour and universality of obedience, whilst they renounce Mammon. They seek not personal ease or reputation, but the glory of God, and the welfare of sinners. They spend and are spent in the cause of their exalted Master, the blessed Redeemer.

They do not act according to the maxims of human wisdom, but according to the directions of the Word of God. They walk not by sight, but by faith, as seeing him that is unseen. They perform their duty, though

they suffer in this life losses, disgrace, and ruin by it, having “respect to the recompense of “the reward” in heaven. They depend, in every exigence, upon the mere promise of God for support, rejecting the counsel of flesh and blood. Low intrigue, vile chicanery, wilful falsehood, ignoble equivocation, they carefully avoid, as contrary to their duty, and hostile to all their feelings. Among them, so long as they retain their characteristic features, you will never find the supple courtier, the fawning flatterer, the crafty politician, the factious subject, the tyrannical master. Their ears are open to the cries of distress, and their hands stretched forth to the relief of the unfortunate. They “do justly, love mercy, and walk “humbly with their God.” They deny themselves in those matters of which the world boasts, take up their cross daily, never use undue means to escape it, and follow Christ through evil as well as good report. They are, in their degree, as their great High Priest was, “holy, harmless, un-“defiled, separate from sinners.” They walk not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the

seat of the scornful. They are nobly singular in the leading outlines of human conduct.

To this singularity they are called in their vocation. Into this singularity they are baptized with water, renouncing the world, the flesh, and the devil. The renewing of the Holy Ghost, their growth in grace, their fitness for heaven, all combine to keep them thus singular in their conduct. The moment they lose this singularity, and coalesce with the world, they cease to be God's "peculiar people." They no longer constitute that glorious Church, whose essential, discriminating properties are, to "be holy" "and without blemishⁱ."

This may bear hard upon modern Christianity, but no harder than it merits. Understand me rightly. I inculcate no monkish seclusion from the world. Believers must mix with the world, and perform their social duties; but they must do both, as believers, and not as men of the world. How does the man of extensive erudition act when he falls into the company of the illiterate? as illiterate? Or the man of polish-

ⁱ Eph. v. 27.

ed manners with the vulgar? as vulgar? No. Both these retain their discriminating properties, as learned and well bred. So believers must retain their peculiar attributes as believers, in their intercourse with others. Their conduct must be, in the very nature of things, different from that of the world, if they truly have the Spirit of their Redeemer. Like him, they must exhibit a moral loftiness, an heavenly sublimity, which will constrain all men to say, "These are not of the world."

If such a decidedly singular conduct be impossible, the Gospel, which clearly demands it, and in no one instance lowers that demand, cannot be what it pretends. But it is possible. In past ages, and in modern times, instances are sufficient to prove that it is possible. They prove that the people of God dwell alone, and are not reckoned among the nations, in their daily conduct.

IV. The people of God dwell alone, and are not reckoned among the nations, in the general lowness and despicableness of their external state.

They are, according to Christ's declaration, "babes^k," and distinct from the wise and prudent. In consistency with this, the apostle, addressing Corinthian believers, says, "Ye see your calling, brethren, how
" that not many wise men after the flesh,
" not many mighty, not many noble, are
" called: but God hath chosen the foolish
" things of the world to confound the wise;
" and God hath chosen the weak things of
" the world to confound the things which
" are mighty; and base things of the world,
" and things which are despised, hath God
" chosen, yea, and things which are not, to
" bring to nought things that are^l." The fact, thus avowed by Christ and his apostle, as well as taught in other Scriptures, has been frequently adduced against Christianity. Its enemies, like the Pharisees of old, scornfully ask, "Have any of the rulers, or
" of the Pharisees believed on him^m?" Not that all believers belong to the humblest class of men; for among the Jews and Gentiles, in primitive times, and in all subsequent ages of the Church, many in exalted stations, and of noble descent, have been followers of

^k Matt. xi. 25. ^l 1 Cor. i. 26—28. ^m John vii. 48.

Christ. The mass, however, of Christians, are to be found in the middle and lowest walks of life. Worldly consequence and affluence are hostile to that self-denial which the Gospel requires. They foster human corruption, and are unfriendly to Gospel holiness. It is truly as the Redeemer said, "How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God".

How many professors, who started fair in the Christian race, and walked humbly before God, apparently, whilst they were poor and unknown, have shipwrecked their profession, and turned back to vanity, when God blessed them with wealth, and exalted them to honour! Unless we have grace granted to withstand temptation, prosperity is injurious to an extreme, if not ruinous. Few believers under it, exhibit the same godly simplicity, unaffected humility, persevering zeal, holy deadness to the world, which they did when struggling with adversities. I can appeal, and do appeal with confidence, to

every one in this assembly of this description, for the truth of the remark. This is the reason why, comparatively speaking, so few of the higher classes of society are real followers of the Lord Christ. And in this reason we see the wisdom and justice of God, in the dispensations of his grace, since he acts towards us as moral agents, and not as “stocks and stones.” His people, generally, are according to the description of the prophet, “an afflicted and poor people^o,” left in the midst of those places which are enlightened by his truth. For such persons his Gospel is peculiarly calculated, as supplying them with adequate consolations to support them under their distresses, and powerful motives to excite them to do their duty in spite of every difficulty. They thus dwell alone, and are not reckoned among the nations, being every where spoken against, as persons of no worldly consequence or excellence.

V. and lastly, The people of God are distinguished from the men of the world, in the fewness of their numbers.

n Zeph. iii. 12.

They constitute but a small proportion of human beings, inhabiting this earth. “ By
“ estimates lately made, the whole population
“ is supposed to amount to eight hundred
“ million of souls. Of these, 481 millions
“ are sunk in the most deplorable darkness
“ of heathenism, and idolatry: 140 millions
“ are Mahometans: 9 millions are Jews:
“ and only 170 millions are nominal Chris-
“ tians! But of these so called, there are
“ 90 millions Roman Catholics: 30 mil-
“ lions Greeks and Armenians: and 50 mil-
“ lions only remain to bear the name of
“ Protestants. Granting that this calcula-
“ tion may not be perfectly exact, (for how
“ is it possible to be so on such a subject?)
“ yet what an affecting picture of the state
“ of mankind does it present to view! More
“ than the half of the globe are totally desti-
“ tute of the means of grace; and of the
“ other half, but a very small portion of
“ them can be said to enjoy these means in
“ any degree of purity. The multitude of
“ the nations know not the true God, but
“ blindly worship stocks, and stones, and
“ devils. The healing beams of the Sun of

“righteousness have never visited these habitations of darkness and cruelty^p.”

Similar to this has been the state of the whole world from the earliest ages. Equally small, in proportion to the number of unbelievers, has been the number of believers. So true it is, as Christ hath said, “Many are called, but few are chosen^r.” Are there then few that will be saved? The question was put to our Lord, who waved answering it directly. From the tenor of his answer, however, we clearly collect, that the majority of those who enjoy the light of the Gospel, having arrived to years of discretion, will seek to enter into heaven, but not through the strait gate, and therefore will not be able. Will Satan’s subjects, then, exceed those of the Prince of Peace? Will the monuments of divine wrath be more numerous than those of divine mercy? No, by no means. “In the multitude of people is the king’s honour,” saith the wise man^s. This is a maxim which will apply to the

p Pringle’s Prayer for the Revival of Religion recommended, p. 25.

q Matt. xxii. 14.

r Luke xiii. 23, 24.

s Prov. xiv. 26.

present subject. The redeemed, we are informed in the visions of John, constitute “ a great multitude which no man can number.” From whence will these be collected? Bear with me, whilst I state the result of a serious and careful examination of the subject.

1. They who die before they can exercise their reason, infants who are incapable of distinguishing their right hand from their left, I believe, so far as I can believe, where there is no positive or decided information, are included in the gift of God to his Son Jesus Christ. Although their original guilt is such as would fully justify God in rejecting them, yet, not having sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, it seems most agreeable to the spirit which pervades the whole œconomy of redemption, to conclude that they belong to the redeemed of Christ, literally, out of every kindred, and people, and nation, and tongue. The words of Christ seem to convey the same meaning, in his address to his disciples, who rebuked them that brought little children to him. “ Suffer little children,” says

he, “to come unto me, for of such is the “kingdom of God;” that is, they compose the largest part of my redeemed people. This is a more natural view of the meaning of these words, than to consider them as explanatory of the temper of mind requisite for being a follower of Christ; or even to suppose that they constitute so large a proportion of the visible Church, as properly to be called the kingdom of God.

Besides, infants, never having had the opportunity of improving or abusing the law of nature, cannot be judged by that law; and, never having enjoyed the offer of the Gospel salvation, cannot be judged by the Gospel; and, never having been capable of moral action, cannot be judged according to their works, which, the apostle teaches us, is to be the rule for judging. I conclude, therefore, on these grounds, that they constitute the greatest number of the elect, and that to them all, of heathen as well as of Christian descent, the blood of Christ is applied, in that manner in which we know that it was applied to Jeremiah and John the Baptist, who were sanctified from the womb.

2. Among the most degenerate Christian Societies, there still is a remnant whose garments are undefiled.

I mean those societies who do not deny the only Lord God who bought them. They who do, are not Christians; they come not under the name; they belong not to the family. The reason why this remnant are not known, is because they are in obscurity. When iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold, true believers are generally found in the humble, obscure walks of life. They therefore attract no notice, but remain in retirement, like the flower

“horn to blush unseen,
“ And waste its sweetness on the desert air.”

In their circle, they possess the spirit and display the conduct of believers; but are happily removed, through God's favour, from the noise, and bustle, and persecution of the world. Such were the seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed unto Baal, and whose mouth had not kissed him, though Elijah thought that he alone was left to serve God. These believers, thus unknown, when collected together, will form a mass, and will swell the number of the re-

deemed. Amongst them, I have no doubt, will be found many from those denominations whom we justly think erroneous, who have been kept from the pollutions of their brethren^u.

3. In the Millennial period, the number of the redeemed will be vastly increased. Then Satan will be bound. Nations, and kindreds, and tongues will acknowledge Christ, to the glory of the Father. The power, prevalence, and extent of sin will be abridged. In consequence of this, the causes which diminish the human species will be fewer. It is most probable the atmosphere will be more salubrious. Undoubtedly there will be no oppression, and no wars; comparatively little sickness and sorrow. The earth will easily, if not spontaneously, produce her fruit. The nature of wild beasts will be altered, and literally there will be

^u In these two particulars, I cordially agree with the venerable Mr. J. Newton. See his *Messiah*, Ser. 43. With his view about the heathen, I cannot concur. The reply to a question on this subject, made by an excellent professor of divinity in Scotland, is admirable, and contains all that can or ought to be said. If we are so happy as to be received into heaven, we will be pleased to see Socrates, Plato, and other heathen there. But if we do not find them there we will be perfectly convinced that God will be able to give a good reason for their exclusion.

nothing to “hurt or destroy in all God’s “holy mountain.” All these particulars will add, beyond calculation, to the number of the inhabitants in our world; and, as by far the greater part will be believers in deed and in truth, will add to the number of the redeemed. Perhaps the aggregate of population in the thousand years will equal that of all the preceding period^y.

From these different sources, the myriads of the blessed spirits of just men made perfect will be made up, and these conjoined will form a mass superior in number to that of the condemned and rejected. Thus that blessed company, which is the least in number in this world, at any one period of time, will ultimately, when gathered together in one, be the most numerous. Let no one, then, be discouraged at the small number of believers. Even should they always be the least, it is better to be excellent with a few, than sinful with the sinful multitude.

You have heard a scriptural description of the people of God in some leading particulars, all tending to prove their separation, their distinctness from the rest of mankind,

^x Isaiah xi. 9.

^y See the Sermon on the Millennium, in vol. 1.

in all the essential parts of human character and conduct. From it we may each of us form some determinate opinion concerning ourselves. There is a false Christianity prevalent, which, like adulterated corn, may impose upon the unwary and thoughtless, but cannot stand the test of Scripture. We ought to beware that our Christianity be not of this kind, for then we are ruined. Let no one be misled by the opinion of men. One is our Master, that is, Christ. Consult his word; read it with care; examine it for yourselves, by the aid of his Spirit. Bring every sentiment of your own and others; the principles of every book that you read, and every sermon that you hear, to this test. Try by it also your conduct. Do you, in the sense explained, dwell alone? Are you not reckoned with the world? Are your life and conversation Christian? This is to be something more than moral.

A Christian life includes all moral duties, but, beyond them, reaches after perfection. A Christian life is the commencement, the first beginning of the life of God upon earth, to be consummated in heaven.

If it be something more than merely a

moral life, it unquestionably is more than an immoral life. Such a life is hostile to faith. An immoral man can be no Christian. What shall we say, then, of those professing believers, who not only are always like the world, but, in many respects, outstrip the men of the world in worldly conduct? But especially what shall we say of those who give the enemies of religion occasion to blaspheme, by reason of their sins? We must say of all these as the apostle did weeping, that they are “enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.”

Professors of the Lord Jesus! beware that these things be not said of you. You are Christians in name: be so in deed likewise. You stand on an eminence, like a city built on a hill: hide not then yourselves amidst the pollutions of sinners. You are lights in the world: obscure not your shining by the vapours and mists of corruption. Always display a pre-eminence in virtue and holiness, worthy of your vocation. Always let your light shine before others, that they,

seeing your good works, may glorify God. Although here you dwell alone, and are not reckoned among the nations, you will, if you are faithful unto death, be admitted to the thousands of Israel, in the City above—to the kindreds, people, and nations, who dwell there, and with them shall be happy for ever. AMEN.

SERMON VII.



THE NATURE AND CONSEQUENCES OF SPIRITUAL IDOLATRY.



HOSEA IV. 17.

Ephraim is joined to idols ; let him alone.

THE ten tribes of Israel are here called Ephraim, not only because this was a principal one among them in numbers and courage, but also because it gave birth to a number of their kings, and contained in its boundaries, Tirzah and Samaria, successively their seats of government. They revolted from their allegiance to the house of David, under Rehoboam, and erected themselves into an independent kingdom, under

Jeroboam the son of Nebat. The character given of this man in Scripture is pre-eminently infamous. He did evil above all that were before him ; for he “ took counsel, and “ made two calves of gold, and said unto” the people, “ It is too much for you to go to Jerusalem : behold thy gods, O Israel, which “ brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. “ And he set the one in Bethel, and the other “ put he in Dan. And this thing,” saith the sacred historian, “ became a sin : for the “ people went to worship before the one, “ even unto Dan^a.” Thus he did sin, and caused Israel to sin. Being a self-willed, rebellious people, they readily fell in with his views, and became idolaters like unto the heathen around them.

Against such conduct they had been admonished to guard themselves, under the penalty of Jehovah’s hottest displeasure. No one sin is so frequently and unequivocally forbidden in Scripture, as that of idolatry. It is “ saying to a stock, Thou art my “ father, and to a stone, Thou hast brought “ me forth.” It is ascribing that glory of praise to perishing vanities, which is due

^a 1 Kings xii. 23—30.

only to the God of heaven and earth. Whilst it displays the debasement of our nature, it proves the malignant hatred of our carnal minds against the true God. It is an outrageous insult cast upon his matchless perfections, to call dumb idols by his name; and an unprincipled contempt of his law, which forbids such conduct, to bow down and worship these idols as gods.

In admirable strains does Scripture repeatedly ridicule the folly of idolaters, and with awful severity does it denounce their guilt. “ They lavish gold out of the bag,
 “ and weigh silver in the balance, and hire
 “ a goldsmith; and he maketh it a god:
 “ they fall down, yea, they worship. They
 “ bear him upon the shoulder, they carry
 “ him and set him in his place, and he stand-
 “ eth: from his place shall he not remove:
 “ yea, one shall cry unto him, yet can he not
 “ answer, nor save him out of his trouble^a.”
 “ They shall be ashamed and also confound-
 “ ed, all of them, they shall go to confu-
 “ sion together that are makers of idols^b.”
 “ Confounded be all they that serve graven
 “ images, that boast themselves of idols^c.”

^a Is. xlvi. 6, 7.

^b Is. xlv. 16.

^c Ps. xcvii. 7.

Such is the nature of that crime with which the prophet in the text charges Israel. It was not a transient act in them; it was their deliberate, their determined, their persevering conduct, to make gods of their own. They were, in the strong language of Jeremiah, "mad upon their idols," furiously attached to them; and, in the words of the text, "joined to their idols," closely connected with them, loving them as they did themselves, serving them and adoring them. For this crime they were repeatedly threatened with the wrath of God. Seeing their obstinacy in it, he gave them up to themselves, commanding all his agents and instruments, by which he effects his purposes, to let them alone. His restraining grace being withdrawn, they fearfully transgressed in their wickedness, adding iniquity unto iniquity, until the measure of their guilt was full. Then Jehovah abandoned them to a foreign foe, who destroyed their nation, overturned their government, ruined their country, and carried them into captivity to distant lands. There have they remained, unknown, alienated from God and ignorant of the word of his

grace, scattered abroad, wanderers and outcasts among the nations. Thus have they been punished, according to the threatenings of God, in the most exemplary manner for their sins. “ Being joined to idols, “ they have been left alone” to work out their own destruction. In them we have a striking example for our warning and improvement.

What Israel was as a nation, you and I, Brethren, are by nature ; idolatrous in our disposition and conduct. What Israel as a nation now suffers, we shall individually suffer, if joined to idols.

Such is the use I intend to make of these words, and such the order of discourse which will be pursued.

I. We are all by nature idolatrous in our disposition and conduct.

Though we do not bow before stocks and stones, yet we love and honour the creature more than the Creator. In this consists the essence of idolatry, which is also called spiritual whoredom. It is a breach of our obligation to the God who made and preserves and blesses us, originating in ignorance of his nature, and cherished by hatred of his

real character. That this is its true description, will appear evident to any who read with attention the prophecies of Ezekiel and Hosea, together with the epistles of Paul to the Corinthians, and the first epistle of John.

To the testimonies of Scripture, we may add the assent of reason. Idolatry is false worship, or worship paid where it is not due. Worship, being a religious act of reverence, includes in it supreme love of and obedience to the will or spirit of the object of worship, so far as the same is known. Now we are uniformly called upon in Scripture to love God alone supremely, and honour him by obeying his will, in opposition to every other will. Whenever, therefore, our highest affection and most implicit homage are given to any thing but God, we are guilty of that which essentially is idolatry; that is, we pay it religious reverence; we make it our god, the source of our happiness, and the regulator of our lives.

Every sinner naturally hates God, and disobeys his will. He has all the powers of his body, the qualities of his heart, and the faculties of his mind, the same, as to their

existence, that he would have if he was at peace with God. But all these are directed, in their operation, into channels contrary to what they ought to be. They are defiled by sin. Having all his passions which must be exercised from the nature of man, we find them unruly and exercised towards improper objects. He hates what he ought to love, and loves what he ought to hate. He fears what he ought to delight in, and takes delight in what he ought to fear. Hence, hating God, he loves what is hateful to God; and, as our affections impel to action, what he hates he will dishonour; what he loves he will honour. Hating God, he disobeys his law. Loving what is hostile to God, he lives according to its spirit, whatever it may be. What he thus loves and honours is his idol, or, in other words, the object of his worship.

The idols of a sinner are himself, others, and the world. Each shall be briefly noticed in detail.

1. The sinner idolizes himself.

“Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil^b,” was the temptation of Satan to our

^b Gen. iii. 5.

first parents. "We will be gods to ourselves," is the practical language of their sinful offspring. Selfishness characterizes our whole deportment, whilst we are strangers to the grace of Jesus. Even the good which we do originates, more or less remotely, in selfish motives. Our understanding we exercise in judging decisively of Jehovah's word and providences, and when we cannot discern the import of either, we ask contemptuously, "How can these things be?" Our will we oppose to the divine will, doing as we please, instead of doing what is commanded by Heaven. The gratification of our own passions and appetites we study and seek to promote in all possible ways, though that gratification should dishonour God, and affect our fellow-mortals. A regard to character restrains the more civilized and moral; a fear of punishment, the more vulgar and uninformed. But how often do both break through these restraints, carried away by their selfish feelings!

We all naturally seek our own, more than the things of others, or of Jesus Christ, being lovers of ourselves more than of others,

and of God. Such is the spirit, and such the tendency of sin. It arms us against God, makes us affect independence of him, excites self “with a giant-like pride to climb up into “the throne of the Almighty, and to establish an unbounded tyranny, in contradiction to the will of God.” What is this but idolatry? The sinner would judge all things at his own tribunal, making his opinions the standard of right and wrong; prescribe laws to all enjoyments but his own, establishing his interests paramount to all others.

2. The sinner idolizes his fellow-mortals.

He transfers to them the fear and love which he ought to feel for God, though they are mere worms of the earth, poor creatures whose breath is in their nostrils, whose days are few, and whose end is death. He pays his steady homage to the great ones of the earth, courting their smiles, and dreading their frowns, as if they were the supreme arbiters of his happiness. He applies unto the physicians in the time of sickness, as Asa king

c Smith, of Cambridge, on True Religion, p. 229 of his works.

of Israel^d did, trusting to them as if they were gods; placing his life, as it were, confidently in their hands. He regards ministers as angels of God, yea, as Jesus Christ, as the Galatians regarded Paul^e. He is supremely attached to his friends and his family, placing all his happiness in their welfare, and seeking from them what he ought to seek from God alone.

In this idolatrous attachment to others, of which the sinner is guilty, there is nothing inconsistent with his idolatrous attachment to himself. Through the instrumentality of others, he seeks and finds the gratification of his selfishness. Does he idolize the great ones of the earth? It is to increase his own importance, by a connexion, however disgraceful, with them. If men in power and affluence suppose all who pay homage to them to be their sincere admirers and friends, they are the dupes of their own self-love. These flatterers would as soon worship a golden calf as them, if it could only confer offices, and give inheritances. Does the sinner idolize physicians? It is because he thinks they can restore

d 2 Chron. xvi. 12.

e Gal. iv. 14.

health, and secure life. How cautious ought they to be not to cherish such delusion, but to impress the minds of their patients with the absolute necessity of God's blessing to make the means effectual! Are ministers idolized? It is because they are supposed, from their profession, to have great interest at the court of Heaven. The best token of affection which can be given to a sincere minister, is to love his Master, and lose sight of himself. Are friends and families idolized? It is because they gratify self-importance, or contribute largely to our self-enjoyment.

Thus you see selfishness produces idolatrous attachment to others.

Let no one mistake my meaning. I am illustrating that attachment to the creature, which is inconsistent with attachment to the Creator. We are bound to respect those whom God honours: to use the aid of physicians and ministers with thankfulness, and to love our friends and families with warmth: but all this must be subordinate to that respect and love which are due to God.

3. The sinner idolizes the world, and the things which are therein.

By the world, here, is understood the earth which we inhabit, and the state of existence which we enjoy. The earth was originally good; but, in consequence of sin, has been cursed. Our present state of existence was once a state of innocence and happiness, but it is now become a state of sin, of sorrow, and of death. The earth we are obligated to till and use for our support, and our present existence we are bound to preserve by all lawful means. When we do this, we use the world as not abusing it. But when we so highly love this earth, and our abode on it, as to forget God, we abuse the world.

This the sinner does. Earth, though a vast field of moral corruption and infamy, is to him a delightful paradise. Life, though a scene of iniquity and distress, is his all. He would wish always to toil on earth, always to live here below. Though God offers himself and heaven, and bids him live in glory, through Jesus Christ, his debasing appetites, his perverted desires, make him reject the offer, and disobey the command. He has no wish to soar aloft, if he may be permitted to grovel among the clods of the ground.

Heaven would be to him a hell, if he could not take earth along with him. The present state of all things, however miserable in the main, is yet, in his view, preferable to a change for another state. He would be pleased with a change for the better if it was of an earthly nature; but, as the change is spiritual, he loathes it with disgust.

All sinners, indeed, with very few exceptions, desire to enter into heaven after death; but then they do not desire this because heaven is a holy place. Far from it. They desire merely to escape torment. Hell, if it was no place of torment, they would prefer to heaven. Their views of things are sensual, for their minds are carnal. They here dislike, nay, hate holiness, and the company of holy men, as also holy employments. How, then, could they be pleased with these things hereafter? How could they relish heaven, in an unsanctified state? When a sinner, as a sinner unrenewed, desires to be saved, he does not desire for a salvation from the guilt and power of sin, but only from its punishment. The world, this present life—

this he loves, this is his idol—he walks according to its course.

But more especially the things which are in the world, are the idols of the sinner, or those things on which he has set his affections. Under these are included all the objects which please the eye, the ear, or the feelings of man; as also those objects of intellectual attention which are not religious in their nature. Do not think these things are sinful in themselves; they are only made sinful by being preferred to God.

This earth, though cursed through man's sin, and become a region of sorrow, still abounds with many things agreeable and delightful to our best feelings. Thus the beauties of nature, such as a variegated landscape, sublime mountains, and lovely flowers, excite admiration and pleasure. If from earth we turn our eyes to the heavens—the sun, moon, and stars heighten our admiration and pleasure. These emotions, when they excite in us reverence for Him who made all these things, are lawful. The sinner, however, does not “look through nature up to nature's God.” as he ought to do. He loves the beauties and sublimities of

nature for their *own sake*, and *his* pleasure; not for their *Maker's sake*, and *his* glory. He does not admire them as exhibiting the greatness and goodness of the Creator, but because they fascinate his feverish sensibility, a sensibility originating in enmity against God, and cherished by a love of sin.

Thus also honours, riches, literary fame, and suitable recreations, are lawful objects of pursuit in themselves; but when they become principal objects of pursuit, banishing God from the mind, they are sinful, because idolized. All the creatures of God are good, if used to promote his glory; but if not so used, from blessings they are converted into curses. They will eat away substantial comfort, as a canker in the body wears away life.

Having made these general observations, it is time to descend to a few particulars. The things which are in the world the apostle John ranges under three classes, “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life^f,” which may be considered as so many idols which the sinner loves and honours.

f 1 John ii. 16.

First, “The lust of the flesh” is the abuse of the natural appetites of the body. These appetites, such as hunger, thirst, and the like, are innocent in themselves; and their innocent gratification is a law of our nature, and a duty incumbent on us for self-preservation. But the abuse, or unlawful indulgence of them, is sinful. In the suitable use of them we honour God, but in the abuse of them we dishonour him. In the suitable use of them we manifest our love for him, and obey his will as supreme; but in the abuse of them we manifest our love for them, and obey their impulses as the supreme directors of our conduct.

Among the lusts of the flesh, thus explained, we must include all intemperance in eating and drinking, by which the body is abused and the soul defiled; all allowed unchastity and licentiousness in thought, conversation, or conduct, which are incompatible with holiness of heart and life: all fondness for useless and pernicious amusements, which distract attention, and engender levity; all immoderate indulgences in personal ease or lawful recreations; all cherished idleness in

our daily employments, neglect of our business, or hiding of the talent given unto us by God for our improvement. These, and such like, constitute the lust of the flesh, of which the apostle speaks.

Secondly, “The lust of the eyes,” means the irregular desires of the bodily organs of sight for whatever they behold. The use of our eyes, for our guidance and innocent pleasure in life, is lawful, but the abuse of them is unlawful.

The lust of the eyes includes covetousness, or an insatiable desire after more wealth than is necessary for the convenience or comfort of life, and which can only be hoarded up, without passing into that general circulation which encourages industry, and softens the horrors of poverty: concupiscence, or libidinous desires, whose gratification is hostile to the laws of God, and destructive of individual as well as domestic felicity; envy at the visible prosperity of others; studied extravagance, notoriety, or indecency in dress, for the gratification of a love of admiration, or singularity, or impurity; immoderate care of personal beauty, or personal address, to

captivate the affections of beholders, or to mislead their judgments.

Lastly, By “the pride of life,” is meant an immoderate love of every thing calculated to cherish and inflame pride, or inordinate self-esteem.

Of this description are honours, dignities, preferments, fame, influence for selfish purposes; together with the adoption of every mean, and the use of every intrigue, to acquire them. With this must be connected a useless parade in houses, equipages, and attendants for personal services; pride of family, and an overweaning fondness for literary and professional eminence.

Such are, briefly detailed, the idols of the sinner. Such are the things which he loves and honours; and according to whose spirit he converses and lives. His attachment to them characterizes his whole deportment, and shows the alienation of his heart from God. They are his gods; those things to which he looks for support, and from which he draws his happiness. He loves them supremely, *because* that love is contrary to his duty and the will of God.

God permits him to use the world, but he abuses it. God permits him to gratify natural wants, but he adds drunkenness to thirst, and impurity to love, seeking for the gratification of corrupt desires. God permits him to use his eyes for the purposes of life, but he covets with them. God permits him to esteem the honours and dignities of the world, if honestly within his reach; but he searches for them unlawfully, and feeds his pride with them. In all these respects, he transgresses the rule of God himself. “Whether,” such is his language, “whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God^g.” “We are debtors, not to the flesh to live after the flesh^h.” “They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lustsⁱ.” Instead of doing this, the sinner forgets God, forsakes his ways, rejects the Saviour, dallies with divine justice, tramples upon divine mercy, despises the joys of heaven, and braves the torments of hell.

Where this course of life is pursued, after repeated warnings; where it is systematic-

^g 1 Cor. x. 31.

^h Rom. viii. 12.

ⁱ Gal. v. 24.

ally and determinately persevered in ; where it is warmly loved, and for its continuance every exertion is made ; the sinner is then “ joined to his idols,” and the fate of Israel awaits him.

II. “ Let him alone !” is the proclamation of Almighty God, to all his instruments and agents, in providence and grace.

How awful is this language ! To be left alone to our hearts’ desires ; to be deprived of God’s restraining grace ; what, Brethren, can be imagined more truly terrible, save eternal banishment from the presence of God, and the joys of the righteous ?

The sinner, thus abandoned by God, unable to take care of himself, works out his own ruin. The means of grace no longer affect his heart ; he even avoids the use of them. The Spirit ceases to strive in him ; his conscience becomes callous. Providential mercies or judgments are viewed by him with the utmost indifference. He rejects the admonitions of Scripture, and despises its threatenings. The world becomes more and more dear to him. His affections are more immoveably and ardently attached to it. Eter-

nity grows daily more terrible to him. Death is carefully banished from his mind. His selfishness increases; his propensities rage with more violence, and more imperiously call for gratification. His eye habitually ranges, lawless, impudent, and unrestrained; ever desiring, and never satisfied. His pride of life, his self-importance, like a torrent swollen with rains, overflowing its banks, bursts every restraint, scorns every subordination, and looks with contempt upon all around him.

Thus the sinner progresses in his evil course. His sins become habitual; his habits of sinning become rooted. Being joined to his idols, so connected with the objects of his supreme love that he cannot be separated from them, he is left alone by God to act as he pleases. Does not the drunkard add iniquity to iniquity? The debauchee shames the night by his carousals, and scares the day by his pollutions. The miser, shrivelled wretch, like the horse-leech, cries, "Give, give^k," though buried, as it were, in wealth; and in the agonies of death, grasps

^k Prov. xxx. 15.

his bags of gold, with the utmost intensesness of desire'. The ambitious man, rather than not mount the ladder of preferment, will, in his way to it, wade through a rival's blood. He hesitates not to sacrifice natural feeling and moral justice to his ungovernable appetites. He who idolizes his literary fame, prostitutes his talents to the increase of his own vanity. Too often he poisons the sources of information in society, and produces a moral pestilence among men, which, walking in darkness at first, ere long wastes at noon-day the virtue and happiness of man.

But I forbear enlarging.

Look abroad, throughout the world, and you will find the truth which I have been explaining, confirmed. They who are joined to idols are let alone by God, and become worse and worse in the career of sin. "The father corrects not the rebellious son any more, when he determines to

l At a fire in the island of St. Thomas, some time back, a miser, when the flames reached his habitation, seated himself on his chest, in which was contained his money. The last cries which he was heard to utter, were, "O my dollars!" The bones of his hands were found fastened to the iron handle of his chest, after the fire was extinguished.

“ disinherit him. Those that are not disturbed in their sins, will be destroyed for their sin^m.” They may in the mean time congratulate themselves, that their consciences are at ease : but “ their drink is sour : they have committed whoredom continually : her rulers with shame do love, Give ye. The wind hath bound her up in her wings, and they shall be ashamed because of their sacrificesⁿ.”

Be then warned, I beseech you, Brethren, against the sin of loving the creature more than the Creator. Give not way to it in the least : it will grow with your growth, and ripen into maturity with inconceivable haste, if it be not nipt in its bud ; if you do not struggle against it in earnest on its first discovery. Make God your all, your source of enjoyment and happiness. Sacrifice your idols upon the altar of the cross of the Son of God. Let his love, which was stronger than death, command your love. Divide not your hearts between him and your idols. He will have the whole heart, and he richly deserves it. You can place your affections on none better. Your idols will not pro-

^m Henry on the text.

ⁿ Hos. iv. 18, 19.

mote your happiness, or protect you from dangers. The things that you supremely love and honour, are vain, and will be found so on trial. Love God with your whole soul, strength, might, and mind. Honour him above every thing else. He is a jealous God, and will have no rival. Receive cordially that testimony which he has given of his Son, and set to your seal that he is true. “ Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them; but the transgressors shall fall therein^m.”

m Hos. xiv. 9.

SERMON VIII.



THE CHARACTER OF LOT.

—————

GENESIS XIII. 10—13.

And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zour. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east; and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward So-

dom. But the men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly.

THE Scriptures instruct us by examples as well as by precepts. In them nothing is extenuated, or aught set down in malice; but human nature is faithfully and plainly delineated. Hence, whilst they exhibit excellencies of character for our imitation, they also unfold defects, even of good men, for our warning. To contemplate the latter as well as the former with attention, is the more necessary, because, as sinners, we are prone to evil.

On this account, the character of Lot is richly worthy of our examination. An inspired apostle has called him righteous, though his mistakes and sins were many and great. The circumstance recorded in the text, as it gave the complexion to his future fortune, constitutes an important era in his life. From it we learn at once his ruling passion, and the source of all his calamities and misconduct.

Lot was the nephew of Abraham, the illustrious father of the faithful, with whom he

left his native land, and sojourned in Canaan. From him, no doubt, he acquired the knowledge of the true God, and in his company and friendship enjoyed inestimable privileges. The benefit of pious friends, and especially pious parents or guardians, is incalculable. Many, under the divine blessing, owe to them their salvation, as well as their temporal comforts. Had Lot remained in the neighbourhood of Abraham, and under his patronage, his day would have ended, as it commenced, in peace and honour. But prosperity called into action his besetting sin, and injured him. He, as well as Abraham, had grown rich, having flocks, and herds, and tents. On their return from Egypt, whither famine had driven them for a season, to the south of Canaan, at Bethel, their herdmen fell out with each other, because the land was not able to bear them. On this occasion, “ Abram said unto Lot, Let
“ there be no strife, I pray thee, between me
“ and thee, and between my herdmen and
“ thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not
“ the whole land before thee? Separate
“ thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt
“ take the left hand, then I will go to the

“right: or if thou depart to the right hand,
“then I will go to the left.”

This offer, on the part of Abraham, was generous, and worthy of himself. Although the elder, and one specially blessed by God, and known to be such by Lot, he relinquishes his right to the younger, and one greatly indebted to him. In Lot it ought to have produced a conduct different from what he displayed. It ought to have created in him a most earnest desire of still remaining connected with the patriarch, and of settling the differences between their herdmen without separating: or, if Abraham insisted upon the separation, which does not, from the history, appear probable that he would have done, he ought to have declined the choice, as belonging to the elder. Wealth, however, had corrupted the heart of Lot; he heard the proposal with indifference, a proposal which contemplated his banishment, as it were, from the friend of God, and from the means of religious instruction. Rather than restrain his herdmen, rather than yield his consequence, he coolly, as it appears, and deliberately, consents to leave

the guide of his youth, and perhaps the instrument of his salvation.

How treacherous is the human heart! Little did Lot think, when he left Haran under the guidance of his venerable relation, that he would ever with indifference have parted from that relation. No doubt, in the first sojournings of the two families, Abraham's tent, like the paternal roof, was to the nephew the object of his fondest attachment. To it, now that his father was dead, and he a stranger in a strange land, his views were directed, and in it his hopes of comfort and happiness, such as a parent can bestow on his child, centered.

What more natural for a child, on leaving his father's home to settle in the wide world, than to look back to that home with fondness, and, in prosperity or adversity, to wish for a parent's smiles to heighten the charms of the former, and lessen the miseries of the latter! Such feelings, however, wear away in the bustle of life, and with the cares of the world. Nothing so soon paralyzes their power, as a continued series of prosperity. Wealth has a natural tendency to destroy the finest feelings of the heart, by exciting

selfishness. It creates imaginary wants, which nothing but an increase of it can satisfy. No wonder, then, that Lot forgot his obligations to Abraham; no wonder that he cared so little about leaving him: he had grown rich, had become important, and felt himself equal with the patriarch. I do not say, that he *actually displayed* such pride in his conduct on this occasion; but his indifference at parting with his guide and more than father, can be accounted for on no other principle, satisfactorily, than the influence of such pride in the heart. To suppose that he was proud because he was rich, is what daily experience renders credible. Even men who, like Lot, in the main are upright, from the same cause too frequently display the same temper. At least they act as if their wealth had destroyed their humility, and made them think more highly of themselves than they ought to do.

Lot not only consents to the separation without one feeble struggle to prevent it, but even accepts the offer which was generously made him. Instead of acting as he ought to have done, he assumes the place of Abraham, and acts as if he were the elder, and the father of

the faithful. For youth to attempt taking precedence of age, even though age magnanimously offers it, is highly improper. To venerate age, especially if it be connected with moral excellence, is a sacred duty, which even pagans practise. A suitable expression of this reverence Lot omitted to make on this occasion. He, who discovered no reluctance at leaving Abraham's family, and the ordinances of his house, discovered no hesitation to choose before Abraham. His choice was wretched and miserable! It was made under the influence of a worldly spirit, and *regardless of spiritual advantages*. “ Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld
“ all the plain of Jordan, that it was well
“ watered every where, before the Lord de-
“ stroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as
“ the garden of the Lord, like the land of
“ Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then
“ Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and
“ Lot journeyed east: and they separated
“ themselves the one from the other. Abram
“ dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot
“ dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitch-
“ ed his tent toward Sodom. But the men of
“ Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the

“ Lord exceedingly.” Notwithstanding the odious and detestable character of the Sodomites, which Lot must have known, he chose their land because it was fruitful and pleasant to the eye. The sacred historian compares it to “ the garden of the Lord,” which may either mean Paradise, or, according to the use of the Hebrews, the most excellent kind of country. It is also said to resemble Egypt, at that time under the greatest improvement, and exhibiting a delightful scenery of natural beauties.

In this short description, great room is left for the exercise of imagination to form a suitable picture in the mind of the plain of Jordan. The landscape must have been indeed interesting to the eye. Over the plain, highly cultivated and well watered, were scattered, at suitable distances, the rich and populous cities of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim, and Zoar. Had this country been inhabited by a virtuous and holy people, what a rational prospect it afforded of real earthly happiness! But a race of vile and ungodly wretches possessed it. Their character is strongly drawn, it is pre-emi-

nently execrable. These were the men with whom Lot chose to dwell, because their land afforded him the prospect of gain. It was well adapted to the service of his flocks, calculated to promote their increase. It was not only fertile, but wide and ample. Over it his herds might range, under the eye of his herdmen, without molestation.

Such was the motive that prompted Lot to dwell in the cities of the plain. Who could have supposed that one who left his native country for the sake of religion, would ever, regardless of that religion, fix his abode among abandoned sinners? “Where
“ was his zeal when, not from necessity, but
“ from lucrative views, he took up his habi-
“ tation there, where wickedness seemed to
“ have attained its highest pitch^b?” Where were his love and attachment to the religion of the true God, when he willingly settled himself in a place where that religion was unknown, nay, ridiculed and persecuted; and that not as a preacher of righteousness, but as a lover of gain? His wealth, as it had impaired his affection for Abraham, very seriously injured his affec-

^b Robinson's Scripture Characters, vol. 1. ch. 6.

tion for God. It had enthroned an idol in that heart, which ought to have beat exclusively for Him who had called him out of darkness into his marvellous light. To Sodom he goes—Abraham's company and fellowship he leaves. What a contrast is here! Abraham's family was like the outer court of heaven, Sodom like the inmost recesses of hell. In the one were heard prayer and praise; in the other profaneness and blasphemy. In the one were seen order, regularity, justice, and benevolence; in the other, every vice reigned rampant. According to the prophet, the iniquity of Sodom was, "pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. They were haughty, and committed abomination before" the Lord. Their crimes were unnatural, beastly, shocking. They were countless, aggravated, reaching to the heavens. Such crimes naturally flow from pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness. Any of these will produce immorality; but the three combined bear down all restraint, sweep away all morality. Of the three,

abundance of idleness is the most fruitful source of mischief and evil in society. Oh that proud and rich parents would realize this, and by timely exertion, spare their offspring from that curse, "abundance of idleness!"

With Sodomites Lot now associates, but associates with sorrow. Their filthy conversation, as also their unlawful deeds, vexed his soul^d. Had not this been the case, had he not been grieved at their conduct, he could not have been a good man. No doubt he remonstrated with them, and bore testimony against their sins. This excited their merriment or indignation, and rendered his situation more uncomfortable. He had, however, brought all this evil upon himself, and had none to blame but himself. Whilst Abraham was blessed with divine revelations, and honoured with divine interviews, by which the life of God in his soul was nourished, Lot was suffering the punishment due to him for his voluntary banishment from the means of grace. He had wilfully invited temptation, and risked his everlasting happiness, for the sake of his

^d 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8.

worldly substance. Desiring to be more wealthy, he fell into temptation and a snare. He exposed himself to the influence of bad habits, and the seductions of bad men. He thus not only exposed himself, but his family also, his wife, and his daughters. Where was parental affection, when he chose his abode in Sodom? It was swallowed up in the predominant love of gain. This made him act like one regardless of domestic happiness, as well as his salvation. What evils, what miseries does this passion produce in men! What injury it occasions in believers! It deadens their love, and cramps their obedience.

Lot, though vexed with the inhabitants of Sodom, remained in that place, no doubt, from the same unworthy motive which influenced him to choose it as his abode. Because he grew in substance, like many a "prudent Christian" of the present day, he conceived it his duty to tamper still longer with temptation. The procurement of a competence for his family was the plea by which he silenced conscience; and, without fleeing for his life, he continued the spectator of unequalled crimes, of unpa-

ralleled bestiality. In Sodom, and with Sodomites, he permitted some of his daughters to marry. This might naturally have been expected, and ought to have been avoided.

Such a connexion was necessarily injurious to his daughters. A virtuous woman, marrying a profligate and abandoned wretch, can promise herself but little comfort. His course of life, and his companions, will more probably ruin her virtue, than her virtue reform his vices. The daughters of Lot seem to have assimilated to their husbands, and to have become Sodomitish women in principle and practice.

Religious parents cannot be too careful in superintending and directing the matrimonial connexions of their children, especially of their daughters. Their first inquiry ought to be into the moral and religious character of those who seek such connexion. If they wilfully approve of and consent to a union with vicious and debauched persons, however elevated in their stations, and affluent in their circumstances, they are accessory to the sorrow and misery of their offspring.

Whilst Lot resided in Sodom, the first war of which we have any account in history, took place between Chedorlaomer with his allies, and the kings of the plain. In an engagement which they had with each other, in the vale of Siddim, the latter were defeated by the former, and Sodom and Gomorrah taken, with their inhabitants, goods, and victuals. In the captivity Lot was included, as well as his goods and family. Thus, in a moment, by an unforeseen event, he was stripped of his possessions, and dragged a prisoner towards a foreign land. How sadly was his worldly spirit here rebuked! his love of gain disappointed! He did not, however, remain long in bondage. He was rescued by Abraham, who, hearing the misfortunes of his nephew, pursued Chedorlaomer and his allies, “unto Dan,”—“and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus. And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people.”

Here Providence opened a door for Lot's return to the neighbourhood of Abraham. God had, in the capture of Sodom, bid Lot "behold his idol," and had punished him with the loss of that which had caused his settlement there. But he was not yet sufficiently taught. He was not yet cured of his besetting sin. The lovely and fertile fields of the plain of Jordan still presented a temptation too strong for resistance. Besides this, he had now formed connexions and acquaintances in that place, towards whom the cords of attachment strongly drew him. To his companions, his fellow-citizens, he returned, to be once more vexed with their filthy conversation and unlawful deeds.

Amidst his temptations, the Lord in mercy supported him from eventually backsliding and perishing, though he visited his transgression with the rod, and his iniquity with stripes. Thus it is that God acts towards his people, permitting their errors, that he may display his perfections. Lot, in Sodom, through grace, exhibited a noble spectacle of singularity. Though in it, he was not of it. The love of gain separated

him, indeed, from the family of Abraham, but not from the favour of God. His religious principles were indeed weakened, but not destroyed. Had he lived in a moral place, he would have been scarcely discriminated from the crowd; but in Sodom he was pre-eminent in morality and holiness.

Such was the wickedness of this place, that its punishment could not long be delayed. The measure of its iniquity was full, and its destruction fast hastening. Had there been but ten righteous persons in it, it would have been spared: but these could not be found, even with Lot's family included^f. The probability is, that Lot himself was the only individual of this description. How awful the fact, that, in such a large and populous city, such universal profligacy prevailed! Old and young, rich and poor, honourable and vulgar, parents and children, male and female, all had corrupted their way!

When the time of its desolation was come, Abraham was notified of it first; and, on his account, it appears, Lot was saved; for

f Gen. xviii. 32.

the sacred historian says, “ It came to pass,
“ when God destroyed the cities of the plain,
“ that God remembered Abraham, and sent
“ Lot out of the midst of the overthrow,
“ when he overthrew the cities in which Lot
“ dwelt.”

Lot was sitting in the gate of the city at even, when two angels came to “ So-
“ dom: and Lot seeing them rose up to
“ meet them; and he bowed himself with his
“ face towards the ground; and he said,
“ Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray
“ you, into your servant’s house, and tarry
“ all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall
“ rise up early, and go on your ways. And
“ they said, Nay; but we will abide in the
“ street all night. And he pressed upon them
“ greatly; and they turned in unto him, and
“ entered into his house; and he made them
“ a feast, and did bake unleavened bread,
“ and they did eat.” In this manner Lot displayed a suitable attention to strangers. Wicked example and the love of gain had not destroyed his hospitality. His doors were open to the traveller, who was fed from his full table. From this part of his conduct, it

g Gen. xix. 29.

h Gen. xix. 1—3.

seems that he did not accumulate wealth, like a miser, for its own sake; but to live well himself, and to have wherewith to entertain others handsomely. The strangers who were lodged in his house soon perceived they were in Sodom, from the manner in which they were treated by the inhabitants. Lot endeavoured to ward off their violence towards his guests, by an offer which, whilst it evinced his sacred regard to the rights of hospitality, discovered a most lamentable defection in his duty as a parent, and a follower of the true Godⁱ. Had *his* offer been accepted, the sin consequent would have been *his*. Had *their* violence succeeded, the sin would have been *theirs*. We have no right to prevent one crime, by the commission of another. God, however, interposed, and struck the licentious Sodomites with blindness, so that they could not find the door^k.

The angels communicated their message; a message full of terror. Sodom is to be destroyed, and that in an awful manner; but Lot must first be out of it. “Hast thou here any besides?” say the men unto Lot, “son-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters,

ⁱ Gen. xix. 8.

^k Gen. xix. 11.

“ and whatsoever thou hast in the city, “ bring them out of this place^l.” Thus beneficial is it for wicked men to be connected with the people of God. Had Lot’s sons-in-law, with their wives, listened to his warning voice, when he went forth according to the angels’ word, they would have escaped: but he seemed to them “ as one that mocked.” “ Sodom destroyed! impossible!” they think and say. “ Our father must be “ beside himself, or he could not have dreamed of such an event.” It is thus that the remonstrances of piety are treated by the profane and ungodly. Scoffers, in Scripture, are introduced as asking, when threatened with judgment, “ Where is the promise “ of his coming^m?” All scoffers are actuated by the same spirit, and act in the same manner towards God and his cause.

The obstinacy of his sons-in-law seems to have made Lot loth to quit Sodom; at least we must ascribe his lingering to that, as the least exceptionable cause. The angels, however, hastened him out, laying “ hold upon “ his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, “ and upon the hand of his two daughters; the

^l Gen. xix. 12.

^m 2 Pet. iii. 4.

“ Lord being merciful unto him ; and they
“ brought him forth, and set him without
“ the city. And it came to pass, when they
“ had brought them forth abroad, that He
“ said, Look not behind thee, neither stay
“ thou in all the plain ; escape to the moun-
“ tain, lest thou be consumed.” At Lot’s
pressing request, one of the five cities of the
plain, called Zoar, was saved for his sake,
and he was directed to flee to it for safety.
“ Haste thee, escape thither,” said the Lord,
“ for I cannot do any thing till thou be come
“ thither.”

“ The sun was risen upon the earth, when
“ Lot entered into Zoar.” It was morning ;
nature was revived ; man and beast were
refreshed by sleep. In Sodom the bustle of
the day was commenced. “ They did eat,”
saith Jesus Christ, “ they drank, they bought,
“ they sold, they planted, they builded.”
Careless and secure, they each attended to
his own business, his own pleasure, and his
own sin—when, suddenly, in a moment,
they were overtaken with destruction ! The
heavens from above poured down upon them
streams of fire and brimstone ! Their houses

n Gen. xix. 16, 17. *o* Gen. xix. 22. *p* Luke xvii. 28.

and property around them were enveloped in desolating flames! The earth beneath them changed its nature, and became a lake of fire! What a moment was this! how full of terror, of horror, of agony! Where now are the stout-hearted, the mockers whose hands are strong, the sons of Belial? Cut off, as cumberers of the ground, by the signal and unexpected vengeance of Almighty God; their cities reduced to ashes; their country sending up a smoke, like the smoke of a furnace; and they themselves perished from the earth, present an example terrible beyond description, to all who should live ungodly. In that place, where once existed the lovely and fertile plains of Jordan, the Dead Sea now presents to view its stagnant and offensive waters^q. What an awful catastrophe was this! It baffles imagination to conceive its horrors!

Lot did not long remain in Zoar: the spectacle of desolation before him in the plain of Jordan, and the conduct of the inhabitants of Zoar, who were as wicked as those of Sodom, and were only spared on

^q An account of this Sea will be found in the *Travels* of Shaw, Volney, Chateaubriand, and others.

Lot's account, influenced him to remove to the mountains. But why did he not return to Abraham? It is to be feared, that a proud shame at his destitute state, and a fear of contempt on account of it, from those who had seen him in more prosperous days, were the reasons which prevented. He, however, in thus doing, forsook his own mercies. Abraham would, no doubt, have gladly received him, and assisted him to retrieve his condition. That he was poor now, is evident; for he left all his property behind him. His herdmen perished with the rest of the inhabitants of the cities. He was even deprived of his wife. She had left Sodom with him; but, contrary to the divine command, she looked back, most probably with a desire and intention of returning. At all events, her motives were as criminal as her conduct was fatal. She was converted into a pillar of salt. Thus reduced in his family, having lost his wife and his married daughters, by reason of their rebellion against God; beggared in his worldly situation, being stripped of his substance, he settled in the mountains with his two daughters.

But even here, in a cave, removed from the seductions of society, as well as its enjoyments, his misfortunes followed him. His family had been too long in Sodom, had been too long exposed to temptation. The effects of this displayed themselves in his retirement. Unawed by the recent punishment of ungodliness, unrestrained by the checks of conscience, his two daughters, having first intoxicated him, committed an evil and an abominable thing with him. With the account of this crime, ends the Scriptural history of his life. From what the apostle Peter says of him in his second epistle, we have undoubted reason to believe he repented of his crimes, and died in the Lord. Of his daughters, however, we have no such assurance. The probability is, that they died as they had lived. Solemn warning to all parents, that they take heed of exposing their offspring to the influence of evil examples!

Thus ended the days of Lot! They began with a prospect of happiness—they closed with a retrospect of misery. From his example, we learn many important lessons, which have been incidentally introduced

in this discourse, and which it may be profitable to collect together in the conclusion.

The cause of his misfortunes was his wealth. This excited self-importance and the love of gain. Christians ought to remember, in their attention to worldly concerns, that wealth corrupts the heart, naturally deceitful, and desperately wicked, if it be not strictly guarded. Whenever it makes us think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, or excites in us a thirst after more, it becomes dangerous. If it destroy Gospel simplicity, and humbleness of mind, and trust in Providence without immoderate carefulness, or produce an affectation of worldly pomp, and an assimilation to worldly manners, it has already injured the life of God in the soul.

Lot's love of gain prompted him willingly to separate from the family of Abraham, and to settle in Sodom. Here commenced his sorrows and his trials. Christians ought never, for the sake of amassing property simply, to leave those places where the Gospel is regularly preached, and the ordinances administered, to go to places where

neither are or can be enjoyed for any length of time ; or to places where both are universally despised, and wickedness generally prevails. The calls of nature, and the pressing wants of an increasing family, may make a removal necessary on the part of a Christian, from a place where his soul may be built up in faith and holiness ; but he ought to make religion the first object of attention in a new settlement. If this be neglected ; if fertile plains be chosen for their own sake, regardless of the means of grace, his spiritual interests will inevitably decline.

The same remark will apply to the profession or calling which a Christian chooses, by which he is to support himself and family. If he contemplates gain merely, without a regard to religion, he must suffer in his spiritual estate. His love of gain will be his injury, if not his ruin. Religion, the worship of God, the means of grace, ought ever to be uppermost in our hearts ; and we ought to choose our abode and our business with an eye to these, that they may not be neglected, and our attention to them not impeded or embarrassed by our place of abode, or our daily occupation.

Lot chose to remain in Sodom, though his righteous soul was vexed with what he there saw and heard. He formed connexions there for his daughters, or permitted them to form them for themselves. He struck his roots deep in the soil of that accursed city. Christians when they perceive that they have made a mistake in their first step in life, ought to correct it. If their place of abode, or their calling expose them or their family to temptation, they ought to abandon the one and the other. Especially in the connexions which their children make, they ought to regard morality and religion more than wealth, or family, or personal accomplishments. Parental affection ought to urge them, if possible, to save their children from temptation and ruin.

Lot's family became tainted with the corruptions of Sodom: at least, the daily examples they saw wore away the deformity of vice, and familiarized them to its grossest excesses. The families of Christian parents who act as Lot did, choosing their habitation from such motives, must necessarily resemble Lot's family. In vain do they attempt to instil sound principles into the minds, and

produce sound habits in the lives of their offspring, if the current of example be against them. The multitude amongst whom they have pitched their tent, will bear their families along with them. Ah! how necessary to keep from the infection of a corrupted public, those whose hearts are pliable and easily deceived. Even Lot's wife was ruined by the infection of Sodom, and is held up as a beacon to all who, like her, disobey God's commands, loving what he hates. She was nearly allied to one who, with all his defects, was a good man, but herself a stranger to his religious principles. The wives of Christians ought to remember Lot's wife, to avoid cherishing those worldly affections which she did, lest they incur the wrath of God.

Lot himself had abode so long in Sodom, and become so connected with some of its inhabitants, that it was with difficulty he could leave it. He lingered as long as he could. Christians ought never to be so attached to any place, much less a wicked one, as to delay leaving it when it is their duty. They ought especially to live in this world, as those who must soon leave it

for another and better world. When the command comes to remove, they ought not to linger, but gladly to depart.

Lot, after escaping the gross pollutions of Sodom, fell by means of his children into an awful crime. Let Christians who think they stand, take heed lest they fall. Let Christian parents beware of introducing their children into abodes of temptation, lest their children in return prove a snare unto them.

Oh, how pernicious, how ruinous is a worldly spirit in Christians! This was the cause of Lot's misfortunes and crimes. And this is the cause of countless mischiefs in the Church of Jesus Christ. Christians, beware of the love of gain! It is a growing passion, and hostile to the life of God in your souls. You are exposed to its influences from the spirit of the times, and from the fashions of the day. Deceive not yourselves under the semblance of a commendable prudence, or regard to your families. The heart is deceitful. Trust it not. It will mislead you. Trust in God, and he will grant you all you need.

Finally, How depraved is human nature, how degraded, since even a good man may fall so low, and commit so many errors as Lot did! Let us deeply realize this, and seek for grace to correct our corruption, and lead us in the path of duty. Instead of proudly censuring Lot, let each tremble for himself, and feeling his own weakness, confide in Him on whom help is laid, and who is able to save all who come to him.
AMEN.

SERMON IX.



THE EXAMPLE OF THE BEREANS COMMENDED.



ACTS XVII. 10—12.

And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea : who, coming thither, went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed ; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

THERE is no fact recorded in the pages of history which is calculated to excite more surprise in the minds of reflecting persons,

than this, that the Jews, the chosen people of God, to whom were given the oracles of God, and of whom, according to the flesh, Christ was born, did reject him when “ he “ came to his own,” and oppose as well as persecute his followers. And yet, Brethren, it is a matter of equal surprise, that in the visible Church of the Redeemer, the same conduct is displayed towards him, by men calling themselves Christians: nay, by the very men who are astonished at the infatuation of the Jews. The fact is, human nature is now exactly the same that it has ever been from the time of the fall. The spirit of revolt against God, which was there engendered, still governs the children of men when left to act as their inclination prompts. The compliment which our pride and vanity influence us to pass upon ourselves, as if we were naturally better than those of old, when brought to the test of facts, and of facts as they daily transpire, ought to make us blush at the violation of truth with which that compliment is justly chargeable. The only difference which there exists between man and man, is produced by the providence and

grace of God, counteracting or sanctifying the corruption of human nature.

Of such counteraction and sanctification we have many instances upon record, which relieve the painful feelings produced by the multiplied and aggravated cases of disobedience to the truth and rejection of the Saviour. The contrast thus existing between the natural effects of sin and the triumphs of God's common, but particularly his special grace, is like that which exists between the darkness of night, and the resplendent and vivifying light of day. Such a contrast the sacred historian furnishes, in the conduct of the Jews of Thessalonica and those of Berea.

Since "that which hath been is now; and "that which is to be hath already been^a," such contrasts attract our attention in the present day, and will attract the attention of generations yet unborn. The province of sound wisdom, unquestionably, is to examine them with care, that we may ascertain the sources of the degradation of the one and the excellence of the other, so that each for himself may choose that which is right, and avoid that which is wrong.

^a Eccles. iii. 15.

To aid you, my hearers, in this important matter, the subject of our present discourse has been selected. It presents to our view, the following topics :

I. The conduct of the Bereans, which the Spirit of God has eulogized ;

II. The causes of the conduct of the Thessalonians :

III. The important consequences springing from the conduct of the former, which illustrates the fatal mistake of the latter.

IV. The practical lessons for regulating Christian conduct, which the commendation of the Bereans suggests.

I. We are to examine the conduct of the Bereans, which the Spirit of God has eulogized. " These were more noble," says Luke, " than those in Thessalonica, in that " they received the word with all readiness " of mind, and searched the Scriptures dai- " ly, whether these things were so."

In order to understand fully the conduct of these Bereans, let it be remembered that they were Jews, as well as those of Thessalonica : and that the *word* which the apostles preached to them, was professedly drawn from the Jewish Scriptures. To

these Scriptures, containing the books from Genesis to Malachi, as you find them in our Bibles, they constantly referred as their authority. They quoted Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the other prophets, again and again, specifying the places in the manner of their quotations, so that their hearers could not be mistaken. They insisted upon this great truth, that Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified in Jerusalem, was the Messiah, promised to their fathers, who was to deliver and save Israel. They shewed from the Scriptures, that he was to be a suffering Saviour, and that by his death and obedience, he was to bring in everlasting righteousness. They declared that he was risen from the dead, and ascended up on high to the right hand of God, where he reigns and governs all things. They contended that his kingdom was to be spiritual, and would include Gentile as well as Jew. They illustrated and enforced the nature and necessity of faith in him as “the Christ,” the only name given under heaven whereby we can be saved. They confessed that the miracles which they wrought, in confirmation of their doctrines, were by his power.

Their salvation, they, with one accord, ascribed to his grace. On all these points, they stoutly, and at the risk of their lives, maintained that they taught nothing but what had been taught concerning the Messiah, among their fathers, and believed to be the word of God by them. They preached the word “from the Scriptures,” and challenged a full, free, close, and rigid examination of that word by the Scriptures. The word thus preached to the Bereans, we are told,

First, That “they received with all readiness of mind.”

They *attended*^b to the word with promptness and alacrity, as deserving their notice. It addressed itself to their hopes and fears, as involving in it their eternal peace. It claimed for itself a divine authority, and therefore it claimed from intelligent crea-

^b ἐδίξαντο. This cannot mean that they assented to the word, or believed it, or embraced it, or approved of it, as Schleusner and others suppose; for then the sacred historian is guilty of a tautology in the subsequent verse, where he says, “Many believed” the word. To a speculative, but especially a saving faith, all the meanings given to the word by Schleusner, &c. consequently belong.

tures a candid and dispassionate hearing. Such a hearing the Bereans gave it, divesting themselves of prejudice, bigotry, and pride.

Methinks I see the apostles, but especially Paul, standing in the midst of them, declaring unto them the testimony of God; unfolding Christ and him crucified, the power of God and the wisdom of God. His speech and his preaching are “not with
“enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in
“demonstration of the Spirit and of power;
“that their faith should not stand in the wis-
“dom of men, but in the power of God.”
The hearers listen with profound reverence. They may have heard before the eloquence of Greece and Rome, but now they hear the eloquence of truth, powerful in argument, astonishing in the exhibitions of human character, irresistibly persuasive in its appeal to the feelings of the heart. Alternately, the paleness and affright of dismay, or the mild smile of hope, and the deepened flush of pleasure, mark their countenances. Oh, who can tell, but they who have felt them, what effects the orator of God, who com-

mends himself to each man's conscience in the sight of his Sovereign, produces, when he speaks the truth in the love of it! The thunders of Sinai which he pronounces make sinful men to quake through fear lest judgment overtake them; whilst the melodies of Zion which he pours forth, lull to quiet their alarms, and allure them to the indulgence of the delightful anticipations of hope, that it shall yet be well with them. Such were the topics upon which the apostle of the Gentiles dwelt, to those audiences who gave him their hearing, and such the feelings which his addresses excited in their hearts. The lighting up of his eye, under the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, like the electric fluid, communicated commotion from hearer to hearer; and the strains of his eloquence, poured forth, sometimes in terrible majesty, and sometimes in soothing and attractive tenderness, made them to feel that he was no common person, and that his message required their deliberate and strict scrutiny. Hence we find,

Secondly, That "they searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were so."

As they disclaimed connexion with those who rejected without examination whatever is proposed to them, so also they are far removed from that poor, contemptible, degraded race of persons, who receive without evidence, any thing which they hear, for truth. The former are hardened bigots, the latter credulous simpletons. Both act contrary to good sense, and the word of God. Both sin against their own souls, and their God.

The Bereans, whilst they attended to the words of the apostle with candour and promptness, brought his preaching to the standard to which he had referred them. As he professed to expound their Scriptures, and apply them to Christ, they took him at his word, and searched these Scriptures to ascertain the truth or falsehood of his appeal. The manner of expression used denotes diligence and perseverance, as well as honesty, on their part. Convinced that, if the apostles were correct, their salvation was at stake, they commenced and prosecuted the work of examination with fidelity. Unlike many in the present day, who take up the word of God to see what it teaches,

whether agreeable or contrary to the preachers whom they hear ; and, finding a passage or two which speaks, as they think, a contrary language, they stop and go no further, concluding that the preacher is wrong ; these Bereans compared Scripture with Scripture, examined each passage in its connexion, gave to its words their obvious meaning, and kept steadily in view the analogy of faith. They avoided rashness of decision on the one hand, and credulity of reception on the other, in any of their decisions.

They were not satisfied with the ordinary daily reading of the Scriptures to their families, to which their standing, as members of the Jewish Church, obligated them ; but they embraced every leisure moment which they enjoyed to employ in this work. They not only searched individually, but compared the result of their individual examinations, in social meetings. They took nothing for granted, received nothing upon the mere testimony of the apostles. They used the intelligent nature with which God had blessed them, to examine his own word. Their previous views, their habits, their occupations, the opinion of others, the risk of being

abused and slandered for attending to these men “ who turned the world upside down,” did not deter them from searching the Scriptures whether these things were so. In thus doing, the Spirit of God has eulogized them.

Thirdly, They were *more noble* than those of Thessalonica.

“ There is,” says Whitby, “ a peculiar spirit and propriety in this expression, as the Jews boasted they were *free and noble* by virtue of their descent from Abraham and other *patriarchs*. These Bereans, imitating the rational faith of their great progenitor, were *his more genuine offspring*.” Two leading ideas are included in the eulogy which the Spirit of God pronounces here upon the Bereans.

(1.) They were *more open to conviction*, than the Thessalonican Jews; “ willing to hear reason, to admit the force of it, and to subscribe to that which appeared to them to be truth, though it was contrary to their former sentiments’.”

(2.) They conducted themselves with *more candour towards those who were not*

d Henry on the text.

of their mind; regarding them as entitled to respect and to attention, reluctant to condemn them because they were opposed, and disposed to give them full justice so far as they could, though it might be at the expense of their former prejudices.

To understand more fully the noble spirit of these Berean Jews, it ought to be remembered, that "this sect," to which the apostles belonged, was every where spoken against; that it was proscribed by the chief priests and rulers at Jerusalem, and that its triumph was connected with the destruction of the Jewish polity and worship. They who are in the habit of contemplating the influence of political and religious attachment will readily perceive the propriety of the praise which is given to the Bereans. In them we have a rare, but most sublime instance of men rising above the prejudices of education, the force of habit, the bigotry of sect, the current of opposition; and upon principles of sound wisdom, as well as religious equity, rendering to men that which is their due; hearing them advance doctrines contrary to their own; and examining those

doctrines by the test to which their advocates have referred them for trial.

This conduct, the Holy Spirit informs us, the Jews at Thessalonica did not display. This brings me,

II. To unfold the causes of their rejection of the doctrine of the apostles.

They did so immediately, giving themselves no time to think, or examine, or deliberate, or judge. Although they professed to believe the Scriptures, they did not resort to those Scriptures for their own information. They had been, no doubt, instructed in the religion of the Jews, as it was then regarded by the multitude. The prevalent mistakes of their countrymen had been embraced by them. They had much zeal for the law, but scarcely any for the real honour of God. They knew little of the meaning of their ceremonies, though they were slaves to them. The whole of their worship had degenerated into a senseless superstition. The more circumscribed their information concerning the substance of the Scriptures, the more determined was their attachment to the external ritual, pre-

scribed in the law given by Moses. They acted under the influence of prejudice, pride, presumption, and sin.

1. Prejudice is a judgment which the mind forms upon a subject, without suitable examination, or whilst it is partially inclined to one side of a question which the subject originates. Under its influence no man can become really wise or great. He will remain ignorant of many things truly useful, and display some of the most humiliating defects of human character. Its effects in religion are injurious to a person's comfort, if he be a believer, and to his hopes of future happiness, if he be an unbeliever. Many are the examples which the Scriptures, especially the history of Christ and his apostles, afford us, of its deleterious effects upon the best interests of men. Guided by its dictates, the Jews of Thessalonica would not search their own Scriptures to ascertain the correctness of the apostles' doctrines; and cherishing the mistaken view of the perpetuity of the legal dispensation, they rejected the claims of the Gospel.

2. Pride is an unreasonable and inordinate self-esteem, accompanied with insolence and rude treatment of others, who do not think so highly of us as we do ourselves.

“ It does not consist in the bare *consciousness* that we have some accomplishments, as for instance, good sense, beauty, great abilities; but in that *exultation* of mind, which is consequent upon that consciousness, unallayed by any self-dissatisfaction arising from a survey of our sins and frailties^d.” Under its influence we love the praise of men more than the praise of God, and view things not as they really are, but as ambitious feelings discolour them. Proud men universally think too highly of their own opinions, and therefore fall into grievous and most ruinous mistakes, not merely in principle, but in practice^e.

^d Seed's Sermons, vol. 2. serm. 1.

^e Men who are blessed with great intellectual talents, and have made extensive literary acquirements, would promote their reputation and increase their usefulness, if they imitated the example of the celebrated Mr. Harris. “ He had not” says his son, the Earl of Malmsbury, “ any of that miserable fastidiousness about him, which too often disgraces men of learning, and prevents their being amused or interested, at

The pride of *religionists* is always in proportion to the exclusiveness of their pretensions to the favour of God. The Jews, considering themselves as the chosen people of the Most High, despised the Gentiles, and manifested the utmost indignation at the offer of salvation to them by the apostles. Thus the Roman Catholics look with contempt upon the Protestants; and strange to tell, yet too true! these Protestants, who claim for themselves exclusively the character of an apostolic Church, and the possession of an apostolic ministry, display the same pride.

3. Presumption is an unreasonable confidence in the divine favour; a confidence not founded upon sufficient evidence. It therefore springs from ignorance of God's demands and our own character, and is always connected with deliberation, contrivance, and obstinacy. In the low state of

“least their choosing to appear so, by common performances, or common events.” “He thought, indeed, that the very attempt to please, however it might fall short of its aim, ‘eserved some return of thanks, some degree of approbation; and that to endeavour at being pleased by such efforts, was due to justice, to good nature, and to good sense.” *Harris' Works*, vol. i. *Life by his Son*.

practical godliness among the Jews much of this presumption necessarily prevailed. They boasted of themselves as the children of Abraham, though they did not walk in his steps. They supposed their birth, their circumcision, and their observance of Legal ceremonies, were sufficient for their acceptance with God. They therefore rejected the authority of the apostles, as commissioned by God, because the recognition of that authority annihilated the grounds upon which their presumptuous confidence rested.

4. The actual commission of sin, always accompanies error in principle. Prejudice, pride, and presumption, as they naturally produce mistaken views of truth, so they lead to greater or less transgressions of God's law. Such transgressions, where grace does not interfere, inflame the passions, darken the understanding, debase the heart, causing it to fix its affections upon low and mean objects, and depriving it of the love of truth and right. They who commit these transgressions, wish there was no difference between good and evil, no providence, no future punishment of wickedness, no God.

The conduct of the Jews at the commencement of the Gospel dispensation, proves that they were grossly depraved. They displayed hardly any thing like morality, much less like holiness, in their lives. The testimony of their own historian establishes the fact of their awful and dreadful wickedness. They therefore could feel and manifest but little if any regard for a religion which condemned them. On the contrary, their whole deportment constrained them to reject the Gospel, and cling, with more than ordinary obstinacy, to their Legal œconomy, which, according to their mistaken conceptions, allowed them to cherish and practise sin, whilst they strictly observed those outward ceremonies which God had prescribed.

All these causes, which the history of the Jews abundantly and satisfactorily proves to have existed at this time, operated upon those of them at Thessalonica, so as to make them reject the Gospel. Fatal rejection! for it produced their destruction, whilst the Bereans were saved. This brings me to the

III. Head of discourse, which is, To un-

the important fruits, resulting from the conduct of the Bereans. “Therefore,” says the sacred historian, “many of them believed: also of the honourable women which were Greeks, and of the men not a few.”

“Therefore,” refers to *the reception* of the word by the Bereans, and *their searching* of the Scriptures. Both these things are indispensable to the production of faith; for the apostle asks, “How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?” “So then,” such is his conclusion, “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God^f.” What, then, is the faith of which mention is made? how is it originated? and what are its effects? The answer to these questions will unfold the all-important consequences which spring from the conduct of the Bereans.

1. Faith, in its original signification^g, is that state of mind in which a person is who is

^f Rom. x. 14 and 17.

^g Πείθει, from the 3d per. prat. pass. πείθεισται, of the verb πείθειν, to persuade. Schleusner.

persuaded by another. This state of mind, however, includes both a *conviction of the truth* of the assertion made by the other person, and a *compliance with the design* for which the assertion has been made. If either of these be wanting, it is evident that the mind is not persuaded; and that there is, in fact, no faith. When one reveals to another that of which he was previously ignorant, with the declared design of inducing him to acquiesce in its purposes, *his conviction* will be in proportion to his estimation of the credibility of the witness, and *his compliance*, to the desirableness of the end proposed. The discovery which the witness makes is his testimony; and faith is the admission of that testimony as valid, to the very end for which it is given.

These remarks illustrate the nature of that faith which the Bereans exercised. The apostles made known to them, in their preaching, the testimony of God concerning Jesus Christ; a testimony revealed for the express purpose of persuading lost and perishing sinners to embrace the salvation which he had purchased with his own blood. The Bereans were convinced of the truth of

the testimony, and complied with its declared purpose. They assented to the doctrine contained in the testimony, and accepted of the salvation which it offered^h.

Such is the faith that God requires in his word, without which “it is impossible to please him.” From its very nature, it must precede all the Christian graces; for, so long as unbelief or a rejection of God’s testimony concerning Christ prevails in a person, so long he cannot exercise repentance towards God, or cherish that love to him which is his due. It is faith that worketh by love, that purifies the heart, and overcometh the world. As a principle it is implanted in the moment of regeneration, and displays itself by continual exercises during the whole of a Christian’s life, as the varieties of his state require.

2. This faith is originated by the Holy Spirit applying to the hearts and consciences of men the testimony of God concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone can enlighten the eyes of our understand-

^h See an Essay on Faith, in the Christian’s Magazine, vol. 4. p. 244, 245.

ⁱ Heb. xi. 6.

ing, that we may know what is the hope of God's calling, and what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints^k. He must shine in our hearts, "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ^l." Until his powerful operations are experienced by us, we find that the testimony of God concerning Christ is like "the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I cannot: for it is sealed: and the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned^m." The necessity of the illuminating and sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit is revealed to us in the Scriptures with the utmost plainness, so that he who runs may read and understand.

The means which He uses to produce faith in the testimony of God concerning Christ, is the testimony itself; not the dispensations of his providence, or the demands of his own most perfect law. The former may excite serious reflections, and the latter acts as a school-master to lead sinners to Christ; yet

^k Eph. i. 13. ^l 2 Cor. iv. 6. ^m Isaiah xxix. 11, 12.

it is the exhibition of Christ himself, in his grace and glory, as the Redeemer of sinful men, by which sinners are begotten unto God.

As this exhibition is found in the Scriptures alone, so the Holy Spirit originates faith in those, and those only, who enjoy the Scriptures. They have the best right to expect a blessing, who search them with that care and diligence which their importance demands from intelligent and sinful creatures.

3. The effects of this faith, thus wrought in the Bereans by the Holy Ghost, were conspicuous in their conversation and conduct. Being introduced into a new world, and viewing every thing through a new medium, they thought, felt, and acted as new creatures. In one particular, this appeared pre-eminently striking. They, who heretofore had despised the Gentiles, and, no doubt, before they heard the apostles, with the rest of their countrymen, clamoured against the offer of salvation to them, now received them as brethren. The distinction of Jew and Gentile was lost in the new relation which they sustained to each other as believers. They recognized each other as children of God, and heirs of the heavenly inheritance.

Being “justified by faith, they have peace
 “with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ;
 “by whom also they had access by faith
 “into this grace wherein they stood, and
 “rejoiced in hope of the glory of Godⁿ.”
 They now also “gloried in tribulations:
 “knowing that tribulation worketh patience;
 “and patience, experience; and experi-
 “ence, hope; and hope maketh not asham-
 “ed: because the love of God was shed
 “abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost
 “which was given unto them.” They
 “followed peace with all men, and holiness,
 “without which no man shall see the Lord.”
 “Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts,”
 they “lived soberly, righteously, and god-
 “ly, in this present world; looking for that
 “blessed hope, and the glorious appearing
 “of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus
 “Christ^o.”

Such were the all-important consequences which sprung from the faith of the Bereans. Who does not discern in their conduct the wisdom of the just? Whilst, in the conduct of the Thessalonians is displayed the fearful infatuation of fools!

ⁿ Rom. v. 1, 2.

^o Rom. v. 3—5.

^p Heb. xii. 14.

^q Tit. ii. 12, 13.

IV. The practical lessons for regulating Christian conduct, which the commendation of the Bereans suggests, are the following:

1. The necessity of exercising liberality towards all professing Christians.

I mean not by this liberality, an *equalization* of all religious principles; but rendering to every denomination its just due. They all avow the doctrines which they have embraced, and the foundation upon which they consider these doctrines to rest. In our intercourse with those who differ from us, we ought to imitate the noble Bereans. They attended to the things which the apostles unfolded to them. They did not believe without evidence; they did not reject without examination. Thus we are bound to act towards all men, but especially Christians. Such liberality of feeling and conduct does not imply, that they who display it, “are ever learning, and never coming to “the knowledge of the truth.” It does not reduce them to their level, who are indifferent about the belief of one God or twenty gods, because the belief does not break our bones or pick our pockets.

The liberality which is now recommended, is closely and inseparably connected with independence of opinion, and decision of conduct. It is not a tame surrender of our own views, and an abandonment of that deportment which those views have produced, but merely treating every class of men as they deserve. Others are frail as well as ourselves. We may be mistaken as well as they. Examine, therefore, with care and diligence, their pretensions. They have a right to claim such examination from you : or if you reject their right, unquestionably they upon the same ground may reject your right to have your doctrines examined by them. The exact rule of righteousness in this, as well as in all other cases, is, “ Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them : for this is the law and the prophets.” This rule, which is the rule of liberality that we are enforcing, is too much neglected and openly violated by the different denominations of Christians, in their intercourse with each other. Did they adhere more strictly and *honourably* to the spirit, as well as

a Matt. vii. 12.

letter of this rule, there would be, comparatively, little of that hostile spirit and conduct, which now disgraces their name and profession. But unfortunately, they act in too many instances, as if their *morality* and *religion* were to be determined, not according to the high and lofty standard of revelation, but according to the low, the intriguing, and sinful standards of human corruption. Against such conduct, it is both a duty and privilege to protest.

2. Ministers of the Lord Jesus are bound to make their discourses, illustrations, and defences of the contents of the Scriptures.

Thus the apostles acted, and have left their example for the imitation of their successors, the pastors and teachers in the house of God. Had they always acted thus, we would have had but few heresies, and those of little consequence in the Church. But, unfortunately, soon after the days of the apostles, “philosophy and vain deceit” superseded the Word of God. ‘The authority of the schools was substituted for the authority, ‘thus saith the Lord.’ Instead of regarding the Scriptures as the only standard of information concerning the truths

which we must believe concerning God, and the duties which God requires of man, the ministers of the Gospel adopted other standards, in addition to the Scriptures. Hence as we always love our own inventions more than the revelation of God, respect for the latter rapidly diminished, and the traditions of men became the law of the Church.

It is to be regretted that, even after the reformation, too much of this spirit was displayed by the ministers of the Gospel. The first reformers and their immediate successors, were, it is true, powerful in the Scriptures. But a race of men soon sprang up, who introduced the philosophy of Plato and Socrates in the pulpit, in place of the Scriptures. Would to God none of them were left to mislead and ruin poor sinners! But the Church of God still suffers from multitudes of this class. These are they who preach morals, not in connexion with the doctrines of the cross, but as a sophist would teach them. Christ crucified constitutes no part of their discourses: or if he be introduced, it is as they would introduce the head of a sect, the author of a new

scheme of philosophy. These ministers, like the ancient heathen, have become vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart is darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they have become fools, and changed the glory of God, as it appears in the face of Jesus Christ, for a phantom of their own creation.

3. Nothing, which ministers preach, ought to be received for truth, if it accords not with the Scriptures.

Since there are ministers who corrupt the truth, as we have already stated, congregations ought to be on their guard, so as not to be seduced by them. How can they avoid this consequence, if they do not compare the sermons which they hear with the Scriptures. Your salvation, my hearers, depends upon your receiving *the truth* in the love of it. If, instead of receiving the truth, you receive error, and die under the influence of that error, your ruin is inevitable. Remember that the treasure of the Gospel is committed to earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are frail creatures as you are, to whom we

administer in holy things. Depend not entirely upon our exhibitions of Scriptural doctrines and precepts. We are, unquestionably, to be respected for our works' sake: but this respect ought never to prevent you from exercising your intelligent nature in examining the correctness of our preaching. It is one of the most dishonourable traits of human character, to relinquish independence of thinking and action in religious matters, from personal attachment to the ministers of the Gospel. We deprecate such relinquishment on the part of any of you, as an evil of no ordinary magnitude. Let our preaching be brought constantly and strictly to the test of the Holy Scriptures. We ask no more credit, no more faith, no more obedience, than what they require. If from them our doctrines and precepts cannot be supported, reject them, whatever affection you may cherish for us: "Let God be true, but every man a liar."

4. Those who constantly and faithfully compare the sermons which they hear with the Scriptures, are entitled to the same commendation with the Bereans.

They are more noble than others who neglect this duty. What an honour is it to be thus dignified by the Spirit of God! Such an examination of the Scriptures, more than any other exercise, reflects credit upon human character, because it furnishes, under the sanctifying operations of the Holy Ghost, matter for regulating human conduct, so as to make us serviceable to our fellow-men, and acceptable to God. In these Scriptures there is alimnt to invigorate and ennoble our intelligent nature; a remedy for all the sorrows and miseries of our sinful condition; and a hope which maketh not ashamed of eternal happiness in soul and body beyond the grave.

In every point of view the neglect of the Scriptures by individuals, as also in schools and families, is truly lamentable. The rejection of the Scriptures in a higher, and their perversion in a lower degree, deteriorate the intellectual powers of man, as well as impart a terribly deleterious effect upon his moral habits. The study of the Scriptures produced that lofty and commanding spirit, which stamped the puritan character in England, before their civil wars. The same

cause produced the same effects upon the pilgrims of Leyden, from whom most of you are descended. After all the deductions are made on the score of contractedness of views, or bigotry of conduct, they were a race of men, of whom the world was not worthy. O! that the mantles of these Elijahs had fallen upon the Elishas sprung from their loins, that thus, instead of the fathers, might be the children, as a seed to serve the Lord.

Ye young and old, who aspire after nobleness of character and nobleness of conduct, search the Scriptures. Therein you will find the principles of eternal truth, the rule of holy conduct, the assurance of immortal blessedness. Search them with diligence, with fidelity, with perseverance, looking up to God for his blessing upon your endeavours. If he fashion you in their mould, you will be truly great and really noble, shining as lights here on earth; and hereafter shed around you among the inhabitants of the City of God, the splendors of his own image, the glories of his own grace. AMEN.

SERMON X.



THE DUTY OF WELL-DOING EXPLAINED
AND ENFORCED.



GALATIANS VI. 9.

*And let us not be weary in well-doing ;
for in due season we shall reap, if we
faint not.*

WELL-DOING, of which the apostle here speaks, is the same in meaning, with “ sowing to the Spirit,” mentioned in the preceding verse, and “ doing good to all,” in the subsequent one. The expression evidently refers to that course of life which has saving faith for its principle, the law of God

for its rule, and the divine glory for its end. Thus to live is the duty of all men: for all men are bound to credit the testimony of Jehovah, to obey his will, and promote his honour. To this they are urged, not only from motives of gratitude, as he made them and grants them all the blessings they enjoy, but from motives of interest, for in his glory is involved their happiness. The ruin of his authority, were it possible—the diminution of his honour, would produce the most disastrous effects in the world.

The believer, then, above all other persons, by endeavouring to promote the exaltation of the divine character as an object most worthy of his attention, consults his best interests, his highest good. Yet alas! he is not able always thus to live, for he meets with difficulties and trials, which are calculated to weary him, to terrify him, and divert him from his course, if not to make him abandon it altogether. Against these he is warned by the apostle, and animated to overcome them by the prospect of a glorious reward. “Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”

Let us at this time, for our improvement, attend,

I. To the exhortation of the apostle.

II. To the argument he uses to enforce it.

I. The exhortation given, is, “ Let us “ not be weary in well doing.”

What a lamentable proof is this, of our corruption! For were we not sinners, would we ever be weary in doing our duty? The fall has destroyed our ability to do good, and the effects of the fall cleave to the best of men. There is in all believers a “ body of sin and death,” on which Satan and the world operate, in a variety of ways, to prevent them from doing good. Thus to do is easy in itself, and pleasant; for God requires nothing but what is holy, just, and good; and, of course, obedience to his commandments would bring with it its own reward. Yet corrupt nature not only suggests, that the law is severe, but also, by its opposition, produces weariness in fulfilling its demands. The grand adversary of souls, and this present world which lieth in wickedness, strengthen the influence of corrupt nature, so as to make the performance of duty, a

difficult task. The ways in which the enemies of God and his Christ operate so as to succeed, are as various as the tempers, the conditions, and the habits of men. A detail of them cannot be given in one or two discourses. A mere outline can only be sketched at this time, and that necessarily imperfect.

Sometimes the difficulties attending duty, arise from the charms and allurements of the world, and sometimes from its frowns; sometimes from the atheistic and blasphemous suggestions of Satan, which he, with consummate skill, pours into the soul. To do well, is a great, a noble, a divine work. As such, in a world like this, and among men fallen and degraded, it is necessarily attended with trouble and sorrow. The motives which prompt to it, will be suspected and misrepresented. The deed itself will be construed into a libel upon themselves by many, and produce their ill-will and reproach. The finger of scorn will be pointed at him who performs the deed, and he will be ranked among the men who turn the world upside down. He will find the cry of the multitude against him, as it was against his Mas-

ter in Jerusalem when they crucified him. His own passions will reluctate against the self-denial, the mortification of the members on earth which well-doing requires. His appetites will rebel, and there will be a war in the soul; the spirit lusting against the flesh, and the flesh against the spirit. The struggle is powerful, its consequences wearisome. The more so, because the reward is deferred. The evil experienced is present, while the good expected is future, and to be enjoyed at a distant day. Notwithstanding all these difficulties, we are exhorted not to be weary in well-doing. Or, in other words, we are exhorted to oppose all these difficulties, to hold out unto the end, to resist even unto blood. The exhortation implies industry, fortitude, and perseverance; virtues which, each and all of them, stand opposed to the weariness of which mention is made.

1. The exhortation implies industry in well-doing.

We must be diligent in body and mind, to fulfil our various duties. Activity is the law of universal nature. You see it displayed in inanimate creation; it discovers itself to your view in the various

tribes of brutes which perish. May man, then, made a little lower than the angels, slumber in supineness? No, by no means. He is bound to labour, as well as the other works of God. This was his duty while innocent; for he was placed in Paradise, to dress it and to keep it. His fall did not release him from this duty; but made the performance of it, before a delight, now burdensome and fatiguing. In the sweat of his face, he now eats his bread.

None of our race may be slothful or indolent with impunity; for by such conduct he impairs his health, and prepares for himself all the miseries of want. He also exposes his reputation to ruin; for his wants, which are many, impel him to dishonourable, and oft-times unlawful means of support. But this is not all. His mind becomes debased; for industry is necessary to call into exercise, and mature his intellectual powers. These by proper cultivation, are capable of high improvements; but, by neglect and sloth, they become utterly unfit for any worthy, great, or noble purpose. The possessor of them, in such a case, is but one grade removed

from the beasts of the field. How necessary then, is industry, for the mind as well as the body! It is necessary to obtain, under providence, a respectable and comfortable standing in life. No man can be useful or great without it. And I add, no one can be happy; for in a temporal view, a constant course of labour, besides procuring a competent support, prevents those cares and that lassitude which, originating in indolence, always destroy peace of mind.

If we look beyond time to eternity; if we regard our spiritual, in addition to our temporal interests, the necessity of industry becomes more evident. It is necessary for establishment in the divine life; for if we are not diligent in attending to what belongs to that life, how can we grow in knowledge? How can our faith be strengthened, our love increased, and our hope confirmed? Hence you find, one apostle exhorts, "Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure," and another, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," and Christ himself, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." All these passages urge upon us the duty of industry

in the things pertaining to our everlasting peace. We may not, we must not, be slothful in business, for in so doing we invite temptation; weaken our power of resisting sin; unfit ourselves for usefulness; and ripen fast for destruction. We must be diligent in promoting the glory of God, the best interests of our fellow-men, and our own happiness for time and eternity. Each of these particulars constitute so many great classes of well-doing, which in their turn are divided into smaller classes, according to the relations we sustain, or the circumstances in which we are placed. To sum up the whole in a few words: we must be diligent in our temporal and spiritual duties: we must not be weary in doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God. This is one leading idea included in the apostle's exhortation.

2. It implies fortitude in well-doing; not mere constitutional boldness, for this no diligence can acquire; but that courage which is the offspring of principle, and may be displayed by the helpless female, and the feeble youth, as well as the vigorous and hardy man.

Such fortitude the apostles and martyrs possessed. They were strong in the Lord, and the power of his might. They were armed with a consciousness of integrity, and supported by the grace of God. They could not, therefore, sink in despondence or yield to despair, though the world was combined against them. Nor can any who possess similar resolution—a resolution not peculiar to them, but attainable by all who, like them, put their trust in the Lord. “They shall be as mount Ziou,” saith the Psalmist, “which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.”

Whence then arises that hesitation in the discharge of duty, and that apprehension of dangers, which we find in some believers under certain circumstances? Chiefly from two causes, the one producing the other. The first is, the weakness of their faith; and the other, which flows from this, is the preponderance of the fear of present evil above the hope of future good. Against both these causes the exhortation of the text guards us. If we would not be weary in well-doing, we must be full of faith and

strong in hope. We must fear God more than any thing with which we can meet in the world. In this way only can we be truly brave in fulfilling our duty. We will thus avoid rashness on the one hand, as well as cowardice on the other—two extremes equally inconsistent with true, genuine fortitude. How often are they mistaken for it, by an unthinking world; a world which lieth in wickedness. In spite of its judgment, however, the man who rushes into danger without reflection, and uses no lawful precaution, when it can be used, to guard against consequences, is rash. And he who deliberately exposes his life, in single combat, to satisfy what is falsely called honour, while he is violating all his relative and social duties, is a moral coward.

Neither the one nor the other of these characters can act upon principle; for principle requires the exercise of reflection, and coerces to the performance of duty. The fortitude which springs from it, is cool and deliberate, but fearless. It is under the government and control of reason, and reason is directed by the word and Spirit of God. Hence the admirable reply of Colo-

nel Gardener, when challenged to fight a duel. "I fear sinning," said he to his opponent, "but you know I fear not fighting." Such fortitude as he evinced, resists the attack of ridicule as well as violence with success. Cherished by the smiles of God and the approbation of conscience, it can bear the revilings of men, and triumph over all the malignity and power of enemies. Thus it was, when Darius the king forbade the offering of a petition to any god or man save himself, for thirty days, under the penalty of being cast into the lion's den, that Daniel "went into his house; and his " windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his " knees three times a-day, and prayed, and " gave thanks before his God, as he did " aforetime." Under the influence of the same spirit, Luther, when conjured not to attend the Diet of Worms, on account of the risk he would run, answered his friends, 'I am called in the name of God to go, and ' I would go, though I were certain to meet ' as many devils in Worms as there are ' tiles on the houses.'

To the exercise of such a fortitude the text exhorts ; whatever the difficulties or dangers may be which we are called to encounter, we must brave them. We must still do good, though scorned by men ; though opposed by devils ; though stripped of our property ; drawn from our homes, in pain, in disgrace ; still, still we must not be weary in well-doing. Ostentation of fortitude we must avoid ; but when duty calls us, we must be bold, by faith seeing him who is invisible. To yield to an enemy when we are able to resist, is disgraceful in human affairs. To abandon an enterprise on account of the difficulties attending it, affects a man's reputation. How much more disgraceful to cry, " there is a lion in the way," when God says, " Go on, it is the right way ; I am with you ! " Let us not be weary, then, in encountering difficulties, in braving dangers, in opposing enemies, whilst we are doing our duty. This is the second idea contained in the exhortation of the text.

3. It implies perseverance in well-doing.

Our industry must never relax, our fortitude never unbend. We must unceasingly labour, and unceasingly be resolute and firm

in that labour. We must never be seduced from duty by temptations, or driven from it by threatenings. There is no period in our lives, when we may discontinue in well-doing; for piety, justice, charity, and the like, never cease to be duties. We may never sit down supinely, saying, "Our work is done;" for one duty follows short upon another. As long as we are in the world, we have something to do, and that ought to be done agreeably to the will of God.

By perseverance in duty, the habit of well-doing becomes more and more permanent, and the practice more easy. The more diligent we are in the service of God, the more pleasant that service becomes. The more good we do to others, the more we desire to do. The passions and appetites become more manageable, temptation loses its power, our knowledge increases, our love to God and men becomes more and more intense, so that, instead of being weary in well-doing, we pant after and strive for growth in grace, and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We "give all diligence," according to the apostolic precept. "to add to" our "faith, virtue: and

“ to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge,
“ temperance; and to temperance, pa-
“ tience; and to patience, godliness; and
“ to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and to
“ brotherly-kindness, charity.”

Such is our obligation, thus to persevere in well-doing. growing more and more industrious, more and more courageous. This is the last idea included in the exhortation of the apostle: “ Let us not be weary in well-
“ doing.”

What a lesson does it teach us! what a duty does it enjoin! A lesson of admirable wisdom, suited to our case, and necessary for our weakness; a duty which calls into exercise every noble and generous feeling, and is calculated to mature every virtue. He who learns this lesson, and performs this duty, cannot fail to excite the admiration of mankind! How interesting and grand the spectacle which he exhibits! How worthy of imitation by all!

But his reward is not confined to the applause of his cotemporaries, or even of posterity. It is not confined to a world whose fashion passeth away. His reward

is on high ; it is with his God. This brings me,

II. To the argument which the apostle uses to enforce his exhortation. “ In due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”

As well-doing, in the previous verse, is expressed figuratively, by “ sowing to the Spirit,” so here the reward is expressed figuratively, by reaping in due season. This season, which will be the harvest to all who labour in God’s field, is eternity. Perhaps that reward which, in this life, awaits those who do well, may be included. Though God defers this often, for the trial of their faith, yet, in due time, he is pleased, in a variety of instances, to grant that they may see the fruit of their labour in this world. Their great reward, however, is that which they will receive, after death has closed their eyes on the scenes of this life. They will then enter on that state which is unchangeable, and reap “ eternal life.” This is the reward to which the apostle refers, as appears from the preceding verse. It is that rest which remaineth for the people of God ; that joy at God’s right hand, and those pleasures for evermore,

which they shall taste in heaven. Though perfect, as to its quality, immediately after the dissolution between soul and body, it will not be perfect in degree till the resurrection, when soul and body will again be united, never to separate. It is a reward in which both parts of their constitution will share, according to their respective natures. They will not be disappointed in their expectations of it ; it will exceed their imaginations ; they will enjoy it for ever.

1. They will not be disappointed in their expectations of it.

“ God is not unrighteous,” saith the apostle, addressing the believing Hebrews, “ to forget your work and labour of love, “ which ye have shewed toward his name, “ in that ye have ministered to the saints, “ and do minister. And we desire that “ every one of you do shew the same “ diligence, to the full assurance of hope “ unto the end ; that ye be not slothful, “ but followers of them who, through “ faith and patience, inherit the pro- “ mises. For when God made promise to “ Abraham, because he could swear by no “ greater, he sware by himself, saying,

“ Surely in blessing I will bless thee, and
“ multiplying I will multiply thee. And
“ so, after he had patiently endured, he ob-
“ tained the promise. For men verily
“ swear by the greater, and an oath for con-
“ firmation is to them an end of all strife.
“ Wherein God willing more abundantly
“ to show unto the heirs of promise the im-
“ mutability of his counsel, confirmed it by
“ an oath; that by two immutable things in
“ which it was impossible for God to lie,
“ we might have a strong consolation, who
“ have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the
“ hope set before us; which hope we have
“ as an anchor of the soul, both sure and
“ steadfast, and which entereth into that
“ within the veil: whither the forerunner
“ is for us entered, even Jesus, made an
“ high-priest for ever, after the order of
“ Melchisedec^b.” Surely words cannot be
more explicit than these, to show that the
reward of those who do well is *certain*,
unless indeed the promise and oath of God
both fail. They will not—they cannot be
disappointed in their expectations. “ Their
“ hope maketh not ashamed; because,” says

^b Heb. vi. 10—20.

the same apostle we have already quoted, addressing the saints at Rome, “the love
“ of God is shed abroad in our hearts by
“ the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.
“ For when we were yet without strength,
“ in due time Christ died for the ungodly.
“ For scarcely for a righteous man will one
“ die: yet peradventure for a good man
“ some would even dare to die. But God
“ commendeth his love towards us, in that
“ while we were yet sinners, Christ died for
“ us. Much more then, being justified by
“ his blood, we shall be saved from wrath
“ through him. For if when we were ene-
“ mies, we were reconciled to God by the
“ death of his Son, much more being re-
“ conciled, we shall be saved by his
“ life.” The reasoning is conclusive, Be-
lievers shall reap in due season, if they
faint not—if they become not weary in
well-doing.

2. The reward of those who continue well-doing, will exceed their imagination.

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, to conceive its magnificence, its blessedness,

its glory. They who receive it, will find that it infinitely more than compensates for all their toils, and labours, and perils, and sufferings in this life. It will be far, inconceivably greater than any, even the heaviest and most terrible affliction experienced here. It will be worthy of his nature who grants it; for it is the gift of his love; the product of his wisdom and power; the purchase of the blood of his only begotten Son. The sacred writers, when they mention it, seem lost; they accumulate epithets; they labour in description. The beauties and glories of nature are called in to aid imagination. The works of art are also pressed to contribute their share: but neither nature nor art can give the full, the adequate idea. The vastness of the reward overwhelms the mind—it is infinite! How then can finite man comprehend it? Seen by faith through a glass darkly, oh, how transporting! But when seen with the eye, when possessed in actual fruition—then, then, believer, unutterable will be thy rapture! You will be constrained to acknowledge that the half was not told you. You could not have

formed, by the utmost stretch of your imagination, any idea worthy of it.

3. This reward will be everlasting.

To all that glory, all that blessedness, all that joy, which the redeemed of the Lord shall experience in due season, there will be no end; yea, no diminution, nor the least failure. On the contrary, they will become more and more susceptible of the impressions of pleasure, the emotions of delight, the perfect happiness of their state. For ever will they serve God, for ever shout his praises, for ever taste the fulness of his love, for ever be in his presence, for ever rejoice in his smiles. When ages, succeeding ages, have passed by, their blessedness will hardly be begun. What a thought! how vast! and yet how exhilarating! how animating! Who would not for the things of eternity relinquish those of time? Who would jeopardize the rewards of eternity for the baubles of a day? What madness, what infatuation prevails among men, to prefer things temporal to things eternal—the gratification of their passions to the will of God!

Let me, then, press upon you, believers, the exhortation of the apostle, “Be not

“weary in well-doing.” Recollect the command of your Lord, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven^d.” Guard carefully and strenuously against slothfulness on the one hand, and timidity on the other. Be not seduced by any temptation, or diverted by any danger, from well-doing. Press onward in your course, and still onward. Be doing more, and still more, for your God and Saviour. In this way you will afford the strongest and most irrefutable evidence of the excellency of the religion which you profess; and will, moreover, be growing in your conformity to God, and ripeness for the heavenly inheritance.

Though well-doing is the duty of all men, yet no one can discharge this duty who is destitute of the saving grace of God. That grace is freely offered to all who enjoy the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Flee, then, to Him who stands ready to receive and bless you, my hearers, who have heretofore neglected the great salvation. Flee to him, under a sense of the awful corruption of your nature, and the evil of your doings.

^d Matt. v. 16.

Remember that he, who is now infinitely kind, will be the inflexible and inexorable Judge of quick and dead, on the last day. Then no excuse will be of avail. We must now give our hearts to him, and live according to his commandments. Be persuaded and urged to do this without delay, because your lives are as a vapour, and the *due season* is rapidly hastening, when you and all flesh shall reap the fruit of your doings. Oh, sow to the Spirit, that you may of the Spirit reap everlasting life! AMEN.

SERMON XI.



THE ETERNAL INHERITANCE OF BELIEVERS.



II. CORINTHIANS V. 1—9.

For we know that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the

Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:.) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

IN the preceding chapter we have an interesting and affecting contrast between the outward trials and inward supports of the apostles. "We are troubled on every side," says Paul, "yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." All these trials, he assures the Corinthian believers, and through them other believers, were for their sakes, "that the abundant grace might, through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God." The supports which they experienced under these, sprung from this great truth, that "their light afflictions, which were but for a moment, should

“ work out for them a far more exceeding
“ and eternal weight of glory ; because they
“ looked not at the things which are seen
“ which are temporal ; but at the things
“ which are not seen which are eternal.”

As the principle which influenced the conduct of the apostles, was the same with that which governs all believers, so we find, that the same truth which supported them in their trials, possesses equal power to comfort and strengthen these under all the sufferings, however great and frightful to natural feeling, which their Heavenly Father dispenses to them. Afflictions of every kind, by the tenor of the covenant of grace, are sanctified to the followers of Christ, so as to render them more meet for the heavenly inheritance. On this inheritance, this future good, this exceeding and eternal weight of glory, the apostle dwells with fondness and perseverance in the text, unfolding *its nature ; the manner in which believers regard it ; the ground which they have for expecting it ; and the effects of such expectation upon their conduct.* To these subjects of discussion your attention is solicited on this occasion.

I. We shall illustrate the nature of that exceeding and eternal weight of glory, of which the apostle speaks. This is described in the following parts of the text: “ If our earthly house of this tabernacle
“ were dissolved, we have a building of
“ God, an house not made with hands,
“ eternal in the heavens—clothed upon
“ with our house which is from heaven: if
“ so be that being clothed, we shall not be
“ found naked—clothed upon, that morta-
“ lity might be swallowed up of life—ab-
“ sent from the body, and present with the
“ Lord.”

The language used, you observe, is figurative, and some of it obscure. Our body, here called “ this tabernacle,” in which our souls reside, is compared to “ an earthly house,” which in time must dissolve, i. e. be destroyed. In contrast to this, mention is made of “ a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” As this house must correspond with the constitution of man, it includes in it,

The state of *the souls* of believers after death, and that of *their bodies* after the resurrection.

This house from heaven, is represented as *the clothing* of believers, after their earthly house is dissolved, by which we are taught that their souls do not sleep after death in a state of insensibility, and that their bodies are not annihilated by death. The former, though “absent from the body,” “are present with the Lord.” The latter will exist in another state, though in a different form; for, as it is afterward explained, “mortality shall be swallowed up of life;” or, as this same apostle expresses himself in another place, “this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” Thus clothed upon, believers shall not be found “naked,” i. e. destitute of happiness, or exposed to misery.

From this brief explanation of the apostle’s metaphorical language, the conclusion is evident, that the exceeding and eternal weight of glory, of which he speaks, includes in it every thing that relates to the perfect happiness of a believer’s person and state after death. To be convinced of this, we need only for a moment attend to the contrast which he exhibits between the

militant and triumphant saint. The former has a house properly called a *tabernacle*, either in reference to the Jewish tabernacle, which was a moving temple, or to the tent of a soldier, a shepherd, or traveller, and denotes its frailty and liability to changes. The latter has a *building*, a name expressive of majesty, loftiness, and grandeur, and therefore not given to mean structures. The house of the former is *earthly*, made of the dust, sustained by the fruits of the earth, and abiding upon it. That of the latter is *in the heavens*, in the immediate presence and full enjoyment of the favour of the Lord God and of the Lamb, with all the blessings of the society above. The house of the former must be dissolved; it will crumble into dust, and mingle with its kindred elements. That of the latter is eternal, subject to no vicissitudes nor termination. How great the difference! On the one side are imperfection, frailty, uncertainty, death: on the other, purity, stability, eternal health, and immortal life.

Let us for a moment attend to those particulars which the apostle suggests, as belonging to the believer's future happiness.

1. Whenever he is dismissed from the body, he is admitted to the presence of his Lord. His soul exists in a disembodied state until the morning of the resurrection.

Of such a state we have satisfactory proof in the Word of God. Christ, in rebuking the Sadducees, quotes God's declaration, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob;" and then adds, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." The patriarchs must, therefore, have lived in a separate state. Christ told the thief on the cross, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise," which can be explained in no other way, than by the doctrine of a separate state. If this doctrine be not true, how can the apostle be justified in saying, that for him it was far better to depart and to be with Christ. And in the text, the words "absent from the body, and present with the Lord," necessarily require the admission of the doctrine. Besides the authority of Scripture, we cannot imagine, "that a soul, which carries with it into the other world a promise of inheriting all things, that is the offspring of God in its spiritual

“ nature and holy quality, that is united to
“ its head Christ Jesus, Lord of all the
“ upper world, that this soul should be a
“ vagabond spirit, without house and home,
“ as it must needs be, if upon the dissolution
“ of this tabernacle, it does not enter some
“ building of God.” It enters into a state
as blessed as it can enjoy, disunited from
the body. It is made perfect, and tastes
the pure and unalloyed happiness spring-
ing from its inheritance in light.

2. At the resurrection the bodies of the
saints will be made like unto Christ’s most
glorious body.

The same body which was sown in corrup-
tion shall be raised in incorruption; which was
sown in weakness shall be raised in power;
which was sown in dishonour, shall be raised
in glory; which was sown an earthly, shall
be raised an heavenly body; which was sown
a natural, shall be raised a spiritual body.
There will be a total and eternal freedom
from all weakness, decay, suffering, or im-
perfection in the body. It will be no more
liable to sickness, sorrow, pain, corruption,
weakness, or death; for it will no more be

the same crazy, tottering, troublesome body that we now carry about with us. The saints awaking from the dust, shall be satisfied with their likeness to Christ. Their spirits will be united to such bodies, bodies fitted for their reception by the process of corruption, and the quickening power of His Spirit, who is the resurrection and the life. In soul and body they will enter into the possession of the exceeding and eternal weight of glory, allotted unto them by their Father. These two parts of our constitution will resume their influence upon each other: but that influence will be exercised in promoting their blessedness and glory. There will be no law in the members of the one warring against the law of the other; but a perfect harmony, which will produce corresponding effects.

3. At the final account saints will not be found naked.

They will be separated from the wicked, and put in possession of complete happiness of body, soul, and state, without apprehension of its diminution or decay. The faculties of the soul will be enlarging in their power and expansion; the powers of the

body in their activity and capacity for usefulness; the state of the beatified believers constantly improving in every thing that is interesting to holy beings. This enlargement of the faculties of the soul and powers of the body, together with this improvement in their state, will be unchangeable, subject to no diminution, no alloy, no interruption.

II. The manner in which believers regard this exceeding and eternal weight of glory, is now to be explained.

The apostle describes it in these words: “For in this we groan, earnestly desiring “to be clothed upon”—“for we that are in “this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: “not for that we would be unclothed”—“therefore we are always confident”—“we “are confident and willing rather to be “absent from the body, and to be present “with the Lord.” Three things here demand our attention.

1. Believers are *willing* to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord.

That fear of death, that reluctance to leave this world which is natural to us as sinful men, are both destroyed in them. They are thoroughly reconciled to this

event, willing to meet it: not because they cannot avoid it, but because it meets their approbation. They discern in the death of the body, the righteousness and graciousness of God. His righteousness in punishing the remains of corruption in their members, by dissolving the parts thereof. His graciousness by making this dissolution the means of purging away this corruption for ever. They admire the wisdom and power of God in thus making that event which is the abhorrence of natural feeling, the instrument of producing the highest and most perfect happiness of which they are capable; in constraining the king of terrors himself to be the agent to introduce them into the temple above, where they shall never go out.

Their willingness to die, therefore, is the result of principle, not of necessity. They are willing even in time of health and prosperity. They are willing, with deliberation, distinctly understanding the nature of death. In the language of the great Dr. Owen, each in the exercise of living faith can say to his body, “ Die then, thou frail
“ and sinful flesh, dust thou art, and unto

“ dust thou shalt return : I yield thee up
“ unto the righteous doom of the Holy One.
“ Yet therein also, I give thee into the
“ hands of the great Refiner, who will hide
“ thee in thy grave, and by thy consump-
“ tion purify thee from all thy corruption
“ and disposition to evil. And otherwise
“ this will not be. After a long sincere
“ endeavour for the mortification of sin, I
“ find it will never be absolutely perfect,
“ but by this reduction into the dust. Thou
“ shalt no more be a residence for the least
“ remainder of sin unto eternity, nor any
“ clog unto my soul in its actings on God.
“ Rest, therefore, in hope ; for God in his
“ appointed season, when he shall have a
“ desire unto the work of his hands, will
“ call unto thee, and thou shalt answer him
“ out of the dust. Then shall he by an
“ act of his Almighty power, not only re-
“ store thee unto thy pristine glory as at
“ the first creation, when thou wast the
“ pure workmanship of his hands ; but en-
“ rich and adorn thee with inconceivable
“ privileges and advantages. Be not then
“ afraid : away with all reluctancy : go into

“ the dust, rest in hope, for thou shalt stand
“ in thy lot at the end of the days^b.”

2. Believers are *desirous* of being clothed upon with their house which is from heaven.

Their desires are not to be *unclothed*, that is, separated for ever from their bodies, but to have their mortal and corruptible frames become immortal and incorruptible. These desires spring from a deep sense of their present infirmities, and a believing apprehension of their future glory. They groan, being burdened whilst in the flesh. They suffer so much uneasiness, pain, trouble, fatigue, care, as to make them exclaim, each for himself, “ O wretched man that I
“ am ! who shall deliver me from the body
“ of this death ?” Their desires for deliverance are ardent, because with deliverance is connected glory. This glory, including in it every thing which the understanding approves and the heart chooses, is a good for the enjoyment of which they long and pant. Oft-times they cry out to the Saviour, “ Why are thy chariot-wheels so long in

^b Owen's Med. and Disc. on the Glory of Christ, the Preface. Edin. ed.

“ coming?—Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.”

Such desires are perfectly consistent with resignation to God's will, and patient waiting for death. They also accord with the great principle of self-preservation, which grace sanctifies and directs to a proper object in all believers. The highest and most perfect good is before them, and they look towards it with steadfastness and affection. To be put in possession of it, they must pass over the Jordan of death. The passage is to them desirable, for beyond the cold stream is heaven. In no other way can they enter into the rest which remaineth for the children of God. They therefore fearlessly encounter the darkness, the chillness, the terrors thereof.

3. Believers are *confident* that when they die they shall be happy. “ *We know,*” says the apostle, “ therefore we are always *confident.*”

They know it as an indubitable truth; they are confident about it, satisfied that they are not and cannot be deceived. Their knowledge of it is as much a reality, as their knowledge of any other matter; and

their confidence, as well founded—as rational, as their confidence in any thing which is the object of sense. Their understandings are enlightened and convinced; their affections are captivated and directed towards that which the understanding approves. In this there is not the least delusion or fanaticism. They are as rational, as sober, as intelligent, as deliberate in their confident expectation of the exceeding and eternal weight of glory which they shall receive, as any of you are in the discharge of your various duties in life; yea, more so, infinitely more so, than you can be.

I do not say that all believers, at all times, have this confidence. But this I maintain, that it is an attainable privilege, and ought to be sought after with assiduity and perseverance. When gained, it has inherently all the essential attributes of a sound understanding, a correct judgment, a chaste imagination, a pure heart. Fanaticism cannot be ascribed to it, without charging good sense, profound wisdom, and irreproachable conduct with insanity.

III. We shall now examine the *ground* which believers have for expecting this glo-

ry. From whence do they derive their knowledge of it, and their confidence of obtaining it? The answer to this question will unfold the ground of which we speak.

1. The revealed word of God makes known to believers this glory.

Many are the passages of the Old and New Testament on this subject. Thus we have Job's declaration: "For I know that
 " my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall
 " stand at the latter day upon the earth:
 " and though after my skin worms destroy
 " this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:
 " whom I shall see for myself, and mine
 " eyes shall behold, and not another; though
 " my reins be consumed within me^f." To the same purpose, David says, "Therefore
 " my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth;
 " my flesh also shall rest in hope: for thou
 " wilt not leave my soul in hell: neither
 " wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to
 " see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the
 " path of life: in thy presence is fulness of
 " joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures
 " for evermore^g." Christ himself, in a passage already quoted, establishes the testimo-

^f Job xix. 25--27.

^g Ps. xvi. 9--11.

ny of both these persons. God, he says, is “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob;” but adds, “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” In perfect agreement with his Master, the apostle of the Gentiles informs us, that Jesus Christ “hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel:” and, in giving an account of the resurrection of the dead, writes, “Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; (for the trumpet shall sound;) and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.”

But why should I add any more to these proofs? The language of the text clearly

h 2 Tim. i. 10.

i 1 Cor. xv. 51--54.

establishes the truth, that the word of God makes known to believers, the exceeding and eternal weight of glory reserved for them. The apostle and his associates, holy men of God, spake as they were moved of the Holy Ghost. They published the will of Jehovah, and revealed the gracious rewards of faith in his Son after death.

2. Believers are persuaded of the truth of God's revealed will, and comply with the design of the revelation.

This is the faith of which we have already spoken, and therefore requires no additional explanation^k. Its importance cannot but strike every person of reflection. By faith believers walk, and not by sight. Faith and sight are two different principles of human conduct. The latter regulates all who are without God and without hope; the former, all who know God and keep his commandments. By this faith believers receive the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. Future glory, revealed to them in the promise of God, is thus spiritually perceived by them

^k See Ser. ix. "The Example of the Bereans commended," for the nature of faith.

as an undoubted reality, and they in this perception have the fullest proof that they shall enjoy it after death. They thus by faith know that all the revelation of God in his word on this subject is true, and are confident that they shall be made partakers of the heavenly inheritance.

3. They are made believers for this self-same purpose by God, who also gives unto them the earnest of his Spirit.

An earnest is a part of what is to be given or paid, or some less thing that is given to secure somewhat that is more or greater, in the same or another kind. In a way of sovereign grace and bounty, God gives his Holy Spirit unto believers, with the distant information that he will give them *much more* in time to come. He is here represented as the earnest of future glory. Many things are implied, on which I can only touch, as time forbids an enlargement.

First, Believers receive the Holy Spirit immediately as the Spirit of Christ, to make them conformable unto him, and to give them a participation of his gifts, graces, and privileges.

Second, Man by sin had forfeited all right to the ends of his creation, both on earth and in heaven. *The inheritance provided, however, was not to be annihilated.*

Third, Christ purchased this inheritance for those who should believe on his name.

Fourth, The way in which any of our fallen race become interested in the redemption of Christ, is by the participation of his Spirit, who alone can change the heart, and unite us to Christ. Hence it follows, that by the Spirit sent down into the hearts of believers, they become co-heirs with Christ.

He is thus the earnest unto the redemption of the purchased possession. His dwelling in believers secures unto them, in soul, and body, and estate, the whole inheritance. Before this inheritance can be enjoyed, they must sustain many spiritual trials and conflicts, and their bodies must die; nay, their bodies must be rescued from the dust, and united again to their souls. Thus, then, as the Lord Christ himself was made heir of all things by that communication of the Spirit which anointed him to his office, so the participation of the same Spirit from him

and by him makes believers co-heirs with him. In this manner, he is the earnest given by God of the future glory. By him God moulds and fashions them to this end, working them in that faith which unites to the Son of God^k.

IV. We proceed to consider the effects which the expectation of this glory has upon the conduct of believers. This the apostle describes, when he says, “Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.” This labour includes in it both the doing and suffering of the will of God.

1. To do the will of God, is to perform the duties which we owe to him, to our fellow-men, and to ourselves.

Of these duties he has given us the fullest information in his word, so that he who runs may read and understand them. I shall not now endeavour to unfold them to you, even in a brief detail, having given you a summary on another occasion^l. Suffice it to say, that these duties include every thing which is calculated

k Owen's two Discourses on the Holy Spirit, dis. 1. ch. 7.

l Ser. i. The Con-training Influence of Christ's Love.

to promote our individual benefit, the real happiness of our fellow-men, and the glory of God.

These duties the apostles, and all believers anointed by the same Spirit, perform with industry, fortitude, and perseverance. On these particulars I shall not detain you, as you cannot but recollect that they have already been illustrated and enforced^m. Your attention is more particularly solicited,

2. To suffering the will of God, which is an important part of the labour of which the apostle here speaks.

This suffering constitutes a part of the believer's cross, which he must take up and bear, not with stoical apathy, but with resignation, with cheerfulness; yea, with joy. Many are the predictions of the Redeemer to his followers, that in the world they should have tribulation. But with these predictions he connected assurances of his presence and support. "Be of good cheer," said he, "I have overcome the world."ⁿ Nay, he says, "Blessed are ye, when men

^m Ser. x. The Duty of Well-doing.

ⁿ John xvi. 33.

“ shall revile you, and persecute you, and
“ shall say all manner of evil against you
“ falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be
“ exceeding glad ; for great is your reward
“ in heaven.”

The history of the Church abundantly proves both the truth of the predictions, and the reality of divine support in the hour of trial. Not to say any thing about the internal conflicts of believers, how sadly have they suffered in their external state, in all ages ! They have every where been spoken against as the men who turn the world upside down. They have trod the same painful, wearisome, and afflicting path with their Master. They have always been the smallest number in any one portion of time, and have experienced the opposition and hatred of a world in arms against its Maker and Sovereign. They have been repeatedly called to contend with principalities and powers, and spiritual wickednesses in high places. They have “ had trial of cruel
“ mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover,
“ of bonds and imprisonments. They were
“ stoned, they were sawn asunder, were

“ tempted, were slain with the sword : they
“ wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-
“ skins ; being destitute, afflicted, torment-
“ ed : they wandered in deserts, and in
“ mountains, and in dens, and caves of the
“ earth^d.”

Under these accumulated sufferings they did not sink into despondence or despair. They displayed those virtues which adorn and dignify human nature. They refrained from murmurings against God, and cherished forgiveness towards their enemies. They manifested a loftiness of spirit, with a holiness of life, which astonished the world.

What was it, then, that supported them in their trials ?

They had not the interest or the affection of the world to encourage them ; for their interest was hostile to that of the world ; and instead of its affection, they were the innocent victims of its most direful and implacable hatred.

They had not the expectation of being cherished in the recollection of the multitude. On the contrary, they well knew that the multitude would malign and revile their memory.

^d Heb. xi. 36—38.

They were heartily despised and insulted ; their motives were misrepresented, and they themselves considered as fools and madmen ; nay, as the offscouring of the earth, utterly unworthy of the least attention.

They were actually, without regard to sex, age, or condition, dragged to the stake, the gibbet, the block ; deprived of life in the most painful and ignominious manner. Every ingenuity was exerted to aggravate the tortures of bodily feeling, and the anguish of the mind.

They had, therefore, none of the supports which the warrior, the patriot, and the statesman enjoy. No place in a Roman Pantheon was to be allotted to their remains, or monument in a Westminster Abbey to be erected to their memory. No earthly splendour emblazoned their names. No earthly crown encircled their brows. No earthly reward awaited their victories. Every motive which can operate upon the unrenewed heart, was entirely wanting in their case. Whatever the motives were which influenced their conduct, they did not partake of the nature of those motives which actuate the majority of man-

kind. The whole of their conduct was directly opposed to the acknowledged and accredited wisdom, judgment, prudence, and policy of the world. In the opinion of the most grave, and learned, and virtuous of the men of the world, they were considered as fools. Jews and Gentiles, in other matters hostile to each other, united in this, that the followers of Christ deserved pity for their weakness and hatred for their impiety. The high-priest, the Scribes and the Pharisees, though for different reasons, adopted the same language concerning them, and conducted in the same manner towards them, as the Pagan historians, Suetonius and Tacitus, and the sophists, Celsus and Porphyry. That astonishing combination which took place in the trial of Christ, between Herod and Pilate, is a specimen of what afterward took place, at different periods, between bitter foes, when Christians were to be persecuted, and their cause to be ruined.

What then, I repeat the question, supported them? What were the encouragements which the religion they embraced and defended afforded them? Unquestionably those which spring directly from the hope of

a remuneration in a future and everlasting state. They had respect to the recompense of reward which awaited them beyond time. Enlightened by the Spirit of God, they compared this life with that which is to come; earthly honours with those that are heavenly; acceptance with Christ, with acceptance among men; heaven, with all that the world could give them. The Redeemer's solemn question had its proper effect upon them: "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Every thing in time, when compared with eternity, being weighed in the balance, was found wanting.

The reward which they anticipated; the exceeding and eternal weight of glory which they expected, includes in it every thing that the understanding can approve, or the heart can desire and love. The imagination itself cannot form any adequate conception of its greatness, its suitableness to our constitution, its exquisite and infinite delights, its eternity. With the eye of faith steadfastly fixed upon this reward, the glory and felicity of earth faded to the view of Chris-

tians. The latter, like the glow-worm, emitted a dubious, intermitting, feeble light, whilst the former, like the king of day, poured forth a steady, uninterrupted, resplendent light. They could look on the one and behold its poverty, whilst the other dazzled them with its fulness, and blinded them to every other object. No wonder, then, that they fainted not; but that though their outward man perished, yet the inward man was renewed day by day. No wonder that they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance. No wonder that they, with cheerfulness, and oft-times with triumph, as confessors of their Lord, gave up this short and unsatisfactory life, for immortal, eternal glory.

This subject corrects a mistake of some believers; administers a solemn warning to unbelievers; and addresses a seasonable exhortation to all believers.

First. The mistake under which some believers labour is, that it is not lawful to regard our personal interest, in matters of religion, any further than the value which

we possess in the scale of being; or, in other words, that we must be willing, if our value be so low, to relinquish our personal interest, and with it our all, for those who possess more value than ourselves. As the graduated scale to estimate such value has not been put in our hands by the Lord, it is impossible for us to judge correctly; and the more so because the direct effect of the grace of God upon the heart is to make every man think lowly of himself, in honour preferring others. Just in proportion to the power of grace will be his want of impartiality in his own favour, and his partiality towards those whose value in the scale of being is far inferior to his own. How, then, must he act? His modesty, his knowledge of his own corruption, his ignorance of the corruption of others, his desire to render to every man his due, prevent him from giving that credit to himself which he really deserves. Or, if on a fair, impartial examination of the pretensions of others and his own, he is constrained to judge that he is of more value than others, and claims his rights as such, he will be considered vain, assuming, and arrogant, by all who under-

stand human nature. In this dilemma, the constitution of grace never has placed, and I venture to say, never will place, any person.

The mistake of which I am speaking, originates in the idea that virtue or holiness consists, not in choosing and performing every duty in its place, but merely in the love of being in general, or the good of the whole system of being. As, however, *this good* “embraces such an infinity of “relations, that before we could be cer- “tain what action it prescribed, the sea- “son of action would be past; to weak, “short-sighted mortals, providence has as- “signed a sphere of agency less grand and “extensive indeed, but better suited to their “limited powers, by implanting certain “*affections* which it is their duty to cul- “tivate, and suggesting particular rules to “which they are bound to conform. By “these provisions the boundaries of virtue “are easily ascertained, at the same time “that its ultimate object, the good of the “whole, is secured; for, since the happi- “ness of the entire system results from the “happiness of the several parts, the affec- “tions, which confine the attention *imme-*

“ *diately* to the latter, conspire in the end to
“ the promotion of the former.”

But since the interest “ of any limited
“ number of persons may not only not contribute,
“ but may possibly be directly
“ opposed to the general good, (the interest
“ of a family, for example, to that of a province,
“ or of a nation to that of the world)
“ providence has so ordered it, that in a
“ well-regulated mind there springs up, besides
“ particular attachments, *an extended regard to the species*,
“ whose office is two-fold: not to *destroy* and *extinguish*
“ the more private affections, which is mental
“ parricide; but first, as far as is consistent
“ with the claims of those who are immediately
“ committed to our care, *to do good to all men*;
“ secondly, to exercise a jurisdiction and control
“ over the private affections, so as to prohibit their
“ indulgence, whenever it would be attended with
“ *manifest detriment* to the whole. Thus
“ every part of our nature is brought into
“ action; all the practical principles of the
“ human heart find an element to move in,
“ each in its different sort and manner
“ conspiring, without mutual collisions, to main-

“tain the harmony of the world and the
“happiness of the universe*.”

Since then it is obviously impracticable to ascertain the precise value of different persons, why should we tamper with the moral sensibilities of our nature, by making our impartial love to them the test and evidence of a gracious state? It is granted, without hesitation, that supreme love to God chiefly for his own sake, as he has revealed himself to sinful men, constitutes the discriminating feature of character in believers. Whenever this is wanting, though there may be a profession of godliness, its power is wanting; and without the power the profession leaves him who makes it a slave of unrighteousness, sold under sin.

But I ask, is this supreme love to God inconsistent with a desire to promote our personal happiness? Are we bound, in seeking our personal happiness, first to ascertain the value of other beings, so that we may not

* R. Hall's Sermon on Modern Infidelity. This subject is more particularly examined in a note to the sermon, in which the acute and able author, after stating the similarity between this definition of virtue and that which Godwin and other skeptics give, proves its incorrectness.

give an undue preference to ourselves above them? Why then is the principle of self-preservation interwoven in our very frame? Why does God allow us to use means for the continuance of life, though it may be at the expense of the lives of others, as in cases of defensive war, or sudden attacks of murderers? Why does God, in his own word, address our hopes and fears, thus directing his instructions, his warnings, his invitations, to the principle of self-preservation, which he himself has implanted in us? Self-preservation is a natural right which we possess, and it is our duty and privilege to promote it. Sin has caused us to seek its promotion in ways where we meet with constant disappointment, and which God condemns. Having forsaken the fountain of living waters, we have hewn out unto ourselves broken cisterns, which can hold no water. In this consist our error and crime, that we look to the creature for our happiness, and not to the Creator; not in our seeking after our own happiness apart from the happiness of other persons. I say apart from, not opposed to, the happiness of others; for opposition cannot take place where the nature of happi-

ness is understood. It does not, and it cannot consist in any thing but the favour of God, which is life, and his loving kindness, which is better than life. We cannot be happy so long as we do not glorify God, and we cannot glorify God without being happy. How then can they who glorify God be opposed to each other in their pursuit after their individual happiness? There are no points of collision to produce opposition among them. Aiming at the same object, they cannot in their course delay to ascertain which of them promotes this object most; but are in their places, without speculating, doing, so far as they can, the will of God. All cannot equally glorify God; but on that account he who cannot glorify God to the same degree with another, is not to cease glorifying God as he can, in order that he may give precedence to the other. And besides, as we are speaking of believers, he cannot relinquish his own happiness, which is only obtained and preserved in glorifying God, for the sake of any who may possess more value in the scale of being. He who is willing to sacrifice that happiness which he has experienced in glorifying God, even

for the glory of God, commits a moral and spiritual suicide, which is as condemnable as natural suicide.

To glorify God and to seek our own happiness, distinct from, but not opposed to, the happiness of others, is not contradictory. The Redeemer sought not his own glory, but that of his Father; yet for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross. Moses, seeing him who was invisible, and regarding his glory, had respect to the recompense of the reward. The apostles, acting according to the example of their master, whilst they exerted themselves to advance his cause, looked to, and were influenced by, the exceeding and eternal weight of glory which awaited them. And in this regard which the saints of old and the apostles had to the reward before them, it appears that they acted upon the principle of self-preservation. They had respect to their own happiness: their personal enjoyment abstracted from, but not hostile to, the happiness and enjoyment of others. It is true their temper of mind prompted them to desire, and so far as they could effect it, to produce the happiness of others. But this feeling was the re-

sult of their own happy state, which engendered such benevolence in their hearts. For let it never be forgotten that personal misery, unsanctified by the grace of God, is the enemy of benevolent affections. The devils are strangers to their influence: and had the curse been consummated upon our race, we would never have possessed or displayed them. The hope of acceptance with God has originated in the human family the exercise of love for our fellow-men, and mercy towards them in their afflictions.

Secondly, The warning which this subject gives to unbelievers is, that they should prepare for death.

What are *your* prospects, *who* live without God, and without hope? When you die, and die you must, whither do you expect to go?—to heaven or to hell? Have you made provision for the great change which awaits you? Have you an house not made with hands eternal in the heavens, when the earthly house of your tabernacle shall be dissolved? What? knowing that you must die, are you living without any regard to your future welfare? Infatuated men, you are preparing for your-

selves tribulation and anguish for a dying hour. When you come to the verge of life, and are compelled by a powerful hand that you cannot resist, to take the fearful leap, what will support you? In looking back upon your past lives, a long black catalogue of sins will present itself to your memories: in looking forward, the horrible prospect of eternal destruction will break in upon your dismayed spirits. No comforter will then be near to speak peace, applying to your hearts the blood of the everlasting covenant, and opening to your view the blessedness of an infinite inheritance. Alone, unaided, conscious of your deserts, and expecting wrath, your heart and flesh failing you, how will you be able to grapple with the king of terrors?

Sirs, God warns you now, and you ought no longer to trifle with the warning. God threatens you now, and you ought to fear his threatnings. God exhorts you now, and you ought to say, “speak Lord, for thy servants hear.” Immediately hasten to Christ, the resurrection and the life, in whom there is redemption through his blood. Why should you delay any longer to secure the

favour of your offended God? That you may more speedily and certainly perish? for perish you must, if you die without being reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. Be ye then reconciled to God, that ye may live. To-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Thirdly, The exhortation which the subject addresses to believers is, give all diligence to make your calling and election sure, that so you may be more and more qualified for the heavenly inheritance.

Brethren, live by faith in Him who is the Lord, your righteousness and strength. Rely upon his covenant faithfulness at all times, especially in the day of affliction, and in the hour of death. Honour him by your prompt and cheerful obedience to all his will, and bear the chastisements of his hand with patience and resignation. You have every encouragement to persevere in following your Lord fully. Now he dispenses to you his grace as you need it—hereafter he will put the crown upon your head.

Thus far you have advanced in your journey to the eternal world, where the reward of your labour of love and work of faith

awaits you. What is before you, God only knows; but whatever it is, he will help you in adversity, and sanctify prosperity to you. The space between you and the grave is not great. You are drawing nearer to the heavenly temple. The world is behind you; heaven is before you. From behind you hear the groans of misery and the cry of despair. Before you, from above, you will presently hear the voice saying, Come up hither. Obedient to the call, you will hasten to join kindred souls. They are waiting for you, ready to welcome your entrance into the Holy City. Ere long its spires will glitter in your view—ere long the melodies of its inhabitants will fill you with rapture—ere long you will mingle your hosannas with those of others ransomed by Christ. What if you have yet to cross many a mountain, traverse many a valley, encounter many an enemy, the Lord will help you. Nay, when you come to the Jordan of death, its waves will roll back. The Lord will help you to pass over it in safety; and on the other side you will join in the shout of victory, in the acclamations of Hallelujah.

AMEN.

SERMON XII.



CHRIST THE ONLY FOUNDATION.



I CORINTHIANS III. 11.

*For other foundation can no man lay, than
that is laid, which is Christ Jesus.*

THE Church in Corinth was the seat of discord soon after its formation. Forgetting that One was their Master, even Christ, they split into parties, calling themselves by the name of Paul and Apollos. Against this ungodly conduct the apostle remonstrates with holy warmth, asking them, “ Who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but

“ ministers by whom ye believed, even as
“ the Lord gave to every man ?” He pro-
ceeds to inform them that, in converting the
world, the ministers of Christ had different
parts assigned them. “ I have planted,”
says he, “ Apollos watered ; but God gave
“ the increase.” The whole depended on the
divine co-operation and blessing. They
were, however, all one with respect to the
end for which they laboured. They were
joint-labourers employed by God. The
people were God’s field which they were to
cultivate, and God’s building or temple
which they were to rear. He then assures
them that, as a wise master builder, he had
laid a good foundation for this temple, this
building of God. Every one, therefore,
coming after him, was bound to take heed
how he builded thereupon ; for he declares,
“ Other foundation can no man lay, than
“ that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

These words not only contain a warning to
ministers for the regulation of their conduct,
but also unfold a solemn and important truth,
for the benefit of all who hear them. In
this last view they will now be used as the

subject of discourse. For their explanation, we shall consider,

I. In what sense Christ is the foundation of the Christian temple, or the whole Church, and each believer in particular.

II. Endeavour to demonstrate, that no other foundation can be laid.

I. The idea of good men being a temple, was familiar to the ancient Heathen, as well as common in the Scriptures. Two things concur in the constitution of a temple, and both apply to all believers :

First. That the Divinity should either dwell in, or give some tokens of his especial presence there. Hence was the temple of Jerusalem called the house of God's *habitation*, and the tabernacle, the place of the *habitation* of God's glory, from whence he is said to shine forth when he gave the Jews a testimony of his gracious presence. Now the Holy Spirit being that in the New Testament which answers to the Schechinah in the Old, he dwelling in the bodies, and being present in the assemblies of the saints, doth make them a spiritual habitation of the Lord.

Second. To constitute a temple, it must be a place dedicated and appropriated to God's use. Hence are the temple and tabernacle so often called the house and temple of *the Lord*. Therefore, also, saith the apostle, addressing believers, "Ye are *not your own*^b."

In both these particulars, which illustrate sufficiently the propriety and suitableness of the figure used, is Christ the foundation of the whole Church, and of each believer individually. For,

1. Through him God dwells in them, and gives them especial tokens of his presence.

Disconnected from Christ, they are alienated from God and enemies of his government. This is the uniform language of Scripture, when it describes the natural state of all men, believers as well as unbelievers. They are dead in trespasses and sins, walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; being by

^b Whitby.

nature children of wrath. In this state, God cannot but view them with abhorrence, for he loves his own perfections, and whatever is conformable to them. Before he can love any of our race, it is therefore evident that they must undergo a great and radical change. This change, we are informed, cannot be effected by our own powers, because we see no necessity for it, and therefore will remain as we are, without even a sincere desire after a change.

Every unrenewed person is in the situation of a lunatic, who fancies himself a monarch disposing of kingdoms, whilst he is ignorant of his true character and pitiful situation. Where there is no conviction of sin, *there* the impression on the mind is self-complacent. The sinner thinks himself spiritually rich and increased in goods, and in want of nothing. He does not feel condemned, because he sees nothing in himself to condemn. If the tenor of his life be free from external transgressions, he looks forward to future happiness as the reward of his merit. Had he the power therefore of creating himself anew, he would not do it, for he has no inclination to be holy.

How then do any become new creatures? By being in Christ Jesus. How do any turn from what they once thought right to views and actions diametrically different? They are quickened together with Christ. How can God look on them with favour? Through Christ, by whom he is reconciling the world unto himself. How can God dwell in them, and bless them with his presence? Through Christ, by whom they have access, or introduction into this grace wherein they stand, viz. to have peace with God and joy in him.

Christ is the grand medium of intercourse between heaven and earth. By him God has made all things friendly in him, making peace between them by the blood of his cross^d. He is a propitiation for sin, being made a sin-offering for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Faith in him as such, is the mean or instrument of acceptance with God. It is counted for righteousness to them that believe, and by it they become the children of God, enjoying the spirit of adoption, whereby they cry Abba, Father. God thus dwells

^d Whitby on Col. i. 20.

in them by Christ, and walks in them. He is their Father, and they are his children. Christ is their bond of union and communion—his merits the ground on which both depend. Remove him, if possible, from believers, and alienation will once more be introduced into their minds. They will become enemies of God, by evil works. Through him, in the body of his flesh, by death, they are reconciled to God. He becomes their Father, and calls them children. Satan is dethroned in their hearts: God, by his Spirit reigns there, bringing every thought and power to the obedience of Christ. Instead of a darkened understanding, there now is spiritual illumination; instead of an obstinate will, a cheerful subjection to the divine law in every particular; instead of disordered affections, the whole soul purified and filled with divine love. As lively stones, they are built up a spiritual house, for the special abode of God, Jesus Christ being the chief corner-stone.

In time past they *were* NOT a people, but now *are* the people of God. As a bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so God rejoices over them. He never leaves

them, nor forsakes them. They are honourable in his eyes, and he loves them. They are one with Christ, as he is one with the Father: and as the Father is well pleased with the Son, who is heir of all things; so he is well pleased with those who are joint heirs. He comforts them in their tribulation, and supports them in the prospect of death, with the hope of the Gospel, which is Christ in them, the hope of glory. As through him they obtain the divine favour in this life, so through him they must enter into the heavens. Thither he has passed as their forerunner, and from thence they look for him again, a second time, that he may receive them to himself.

2. Through Christ believers, as a temple, are dedicated and appropriated to the divine service.

They are separated by their baptism from the world which lieth in sin: from the love of sin in their hearts, by their regeneration: and from the practice of sin in their lives, by their uniform and genuine good works. They are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *unto good works*. They are called to be holy in all

manner of conversation, as God is holy. Redemption imposes on them the obligation of presenting themselves living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, which is their reasonable service. They are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, to show forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light. To glorify God in soul and body is the great object of their desires, the mark they aim at in all their actions. By the Spirit of God dwelling in them, they are fitted for a spiritual life. They look not at the things which are seen, which are temporal, but at the things which are not seen, which are eternal. They lay up their treasures not on earth, but in heaven. They live not unto themselves, but unto the Lord, whose they are. To him they have yielded themselves, as their master, and for his service they exert themselves. To do otherwise would be as inconsistent as to convert a temple of God into a haunt of riot and debauchery.

As Christ, by his grace, qualified them for God's indwelling, so he also qualifies them for his service. They are not their own, for they

are bought with a price, even the precious blood of Christ; therefore they must glorify God. The foundation of their dedication to God, as well as of God's dwelling in them, is Christ. He is thus the foundation of all that constitutes them believers. He is the object of saving faith; the giver of evangelical repentance; the efficient cause of holy obedience. From him love flows, and on him hope rests. His blood is a fountain which cleanses from all sin; his death has procured pardon for guilt, and comfort for wretchedness.

In a word, remove Christ, and you annihilate believers, according to the idea which the scriptures afford of them. They no longer exist. You may have serious persons, persons externally moral; you may have decent citizens, and obliging neighbours; you may have theists, persons believing in the existence of a God, and a future state, but you look in vain for scriptural believers. These are temples of God whose foundation is Christ. Do they believe in God? they believe in Jesus Christ, who is one with him, and the Saviour of sinners. Are they moral, performing their duty? It is through Christ

strengthening them. Their obedience is Christian. They serve Christ in all that they do, in word or deed. Do they expect to be happy after death? It is through Christ, who is the resurrection and the life. Do they love God? It is as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is, in short, the foundation of the doctrines which they believe, of the obedience which they manifest, and of the hope which they cherish. I pass on now,

II. To the second general head of discourse, which is to endeavour to demonstrate that no other foundation of this temple than Jesus Christ can be laid.

This is the uniform language of Scripture. Therein we are taught that there is but one Saviour, one method of acceptance with God, one baptism, one faith, one hope of our calling, even as there is but one God. It is expressly and positively declared that there is no other name given under heaven among men, whereby we can be saved. To this truth reason suggests no opposing arguments, no insurmountable difficulties. Keep in view the nature of the figure. Believers are a temple of God, and

as such, must have a foundation. From the nature of the temple, we may satisfactorily learn the nature of its foundation. As the temple is peculiar, so is its foundation: as it is but one, composed or built up of lively stones, so is its foundation but one: as the temple is ample and extensive, the foundation must be strong, able to bear it: as it is the only one of its kind, the foundation must be suited to it, and be exclusive, the only one that fits it. To drop the metaphor, believers are by nature guilty and rebellious, and polluted creatures, as you have heard. By Christ, the Scriptures teach us, that they are reconciled to God, and made new creatures. Now, the question is, whether they can be made new creatures, holy and obedient subjects of God, in any other way than through Christ. If they cannot be accepted by God in any other way, God cannot dwell in them, or give them tokens of his presence. They cannot be dedicated or appropriated to his service.

Now that they cannot be thus regenerated in any other way, is assumed, not as a theory, but as a matter of fact. The enemies of religion, with all their labour and ingenuity.

are not able to bring forward one solitary instance of a complete radical change effected in a person, without the grace of Christ. A partial reformation has been produced by other means ; but the religion of Jesus claims, beyond dispute, without the shadow of contradiction, the exclusive power of so altering the prevailing disposition, and so regulating the general conduct of a person, as to make him truly a new creature. The systems of human wisdom reach not the heart. Though they may modify the life, pride still reigns within, and unworthy motives prompt to action. In not one of them is man represented as he really is, a fallen creature, totally corrupted in his nature. Our sins are only considered as frailties, which it is taught can be remedied by our own exertions.

If man be not a totally corrupted creature, a complete radical change is unnecessary. Hence all these systems which deny the first, are silent as death about the last. As man, however, is totally corrupted, a radical change is necessary. This change must be the work of a higher hand than ours. The Scriptures teach us that it is the work of God, and as you have heard, is produced

by the grace of Christ. If the Scriptures then be given by inspiration from God, we must conclude that we cannot be made new creatures, except by Christ. The wisdom of God selected him as our Saviour, and he possesses every perfection requisite for his office. Unless we deny that wisdom and this perfection, we must believe Christ to be the only Saviour. If there be any other mode of acceptance with God than by him, that by him is useless, and as such, unworthy of God. There is no escaping this dilemma, if we believe the Scriptures to be the word of God; and, that they are, we have the fullest evidence.

The declaration of the text, then, is a solemn truth. Without Christ there is no atonement for sin. The separating wall between God and the sinner frowns upon us, and we in vain seek to penetrate it, that we may behold and enjoy the smiles of a Father. Human nature lies in ruins. Before it can be made a temple of God, it must be raised from its ruins, and prepared for the abode of the great Inhabitant. In Christ alone God can be just, and justify the ungodly. By his death he has vin-

dedicated the divine honour, and satisfied the divine law. The merits of this death apprehended by faith, qualify the believer for the favour of God, and constrain him to a surrender of his heart and affection to God.

In this way, and in no other, are believers made the temple of God. In no other way can they be converted, and raised from sin and uncleanness. Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus. It is a foundation which has withstood the storms of nearly 6000 years, and therefore has been fully tried. Whoever has rested on it has never been deceived. Ask the patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles, the martyrs. They all died in the faith. Nothing could seduce them to build on another foundation. This is a Rock firmer and more immoveable than the everlasting hills—firm and immoveable as God himself.

As such, according to the apostle's charge, I desire to exhibit it to you for your benefit. You may try other foundations, but you build on yielding sand—the winds and waves will sweep it away. On this you may build with confidence. You may rest upon it your whole weight—it will bear

you—nay more, it will save you. Be persuaded, ye who have hitherto neglected it, be persuaded to make the experiment. Ere long you may wish to do it, but will not have the opportunity.

This foundation is laid in Zion, in the Church of God. To rest upon it, you must become believers in Christ. To become believers, you must be made new creatures in Christ Jesus. Do you not see the necessity of this? Sin hath blinded your eyes. Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. Your danger is not the less for your insensibility. You are dying mortals, hastening to the grave, and after death is judgment. Before God's bar you must appear; and how can you bear to think of appearing without being prepared to give to him an account of your stewardship? In your present state you are sinners; as such you must be rejected, if you do not become saints. You may dream of heaven in store for you, though you walk as you please; but remember it has been told you, you will be fearfully disappointed. In the blackness of darkness you will for ever bewail your sad mistake and awful folly

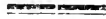
The heaven which the Bible reveals is accessible only to regenerated, sanctified sinners. Of any other heaven, as a place of real happiness, we have no knowledge. Christ alone has brought life and immortality to light. They who reject him must reject a future state, for they have no ground to believe in it, save unsatisfactory arguments. They who believe in it, and yet disbelieve in Christ, are chargeable with infatuation.

How sad the reflection, that thousands are careless and secure, though they have no interest in the salvation of God! Oh! that the voice of mercy, like the voice of the archangel and the trump of God on the day of judgment, reached these dead, and awoke them to life. Be alarmed by your danger, and constrained by the goodness of God, to betake yourselves to Christ. Build your hopes of happiness in both worlds on him. Be not gainsaying, but believe. Look to the cross of Christ, and be ye saved; for he who hung there died for the redemption of sinners like you. His grace is sufficient, and will not be withheld if you ask for it in sincerity, and seek it with perseverance. God grant you his blessing, for the sake of his dear Son. AMEN.

SERMON XIII.



THE DUTY OF AMERICA IN THE PRESENT CRISIS^a.



HOSEA V. 14. VI. 1—3.

I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early. Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us; in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. Then shall we know, if we follow on to

^a Preached during the late war with Great Britain, Jan. 12, 1815, on a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer, recommended by the President of the United States of America.

know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.

EVENTS such as those which have occurred during the last twenty years, in the civilized world; events unparalleled in the history of former times, confounding the calculations of the wisest and most profound statesmen, and baffling the researches, again and again repeated, of the best qualified student of prophecy; events involving in them social, political, and religious interests of the utmost importance to men; events, whose final issues are not yet developed, but trembling in the balance of fearful ominous uncertainty—such events, we might naturally suppose, would have produced corresponding moral fruits among the vast multitude concerned in them, either as agents or witnesses.

On an attentive examination of this multitude, we find that they are divided into the two great classes of the thoughtless and the desponding. The former regard these events in no other light than they have been accustomed to regard other events. Some-

times they are startled by the suddenness of an event, or its uncommon magnitude; but they very soon relapse into their habit of indifference. They love not to think seriously and soberly on any subject, much less upon one which in its nature is calculated to destroy their ignoble repose. I call it ignoble, because it is a repose merely of an animal nature, which dishonours both the understanding and the heart of a man. The other class view these events through the medium of their fears, and thus being unable to exercise their judgments, sit down under the influence of a depression of spirits, giving up all for lost, and saying there is no hope. Their despondence is as unmanly as the thoughtlessness of the others is stupid. Both are chargeable with practical atheism: the one, because they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hand; the other, because they do not confide in the wisdom and rectitude of the divine government, as displayed in these events, and refuse to be comforted by the word of his grace, assuring them that the Lord reigneth. Neither of these classes have therefore brought forth such fruits as the events to

which I referred were calculated and intended to produce.

Are there none then, it may be asked, who view these events aright, and seek to improve them to His glory who ordered these events, and to their benefit who have been either agents in them or witnesses of them? There are a few; they constitute a remnant, who are wise, and understand these things; prudent, and know them. To these, Brethren, the civilized world is indebted for whatever good has thus far been brought out of evil; and also for whatever hopes we are permitted to cherish, that the issue of the past and the present events may be the establishment of peace among the nations, upon principles of eternal justice, so that wars may cease to the end of the earth.

These few to whom I refer are not the rulers of the nations, with their statesmen and warriors, whose efforts to regain what they had lost, Jehovah has crowned with success. No! Brethren, no! Not more fatally are the fruits of the earth blighted by the mildew, than would my fondest hopes of the future be blasted, did I look to these men as the instruments through whom God will

usher in the day of the Lord's redeemed—the day of the glory of Zion. The instruments he will use are his own people, whom he regards in mercy ; for whom the world itself is preserved ; who are witnesses for his truth ; and whose interest is the central point to which all the dispensations of his providence tend. The increase of their numbers is thus desirable, not only for the sake of sinful men individually, but for the sake of nations themselves. To them under God we must look ultimately for national safety, and true national glory.

With this great end in view, I have selected the subject of discourse from the prophecies of Hosea. His principal topics are “ the guilt of the Jewish nation in
“ general, (including Judah and Israel)
“ their disobedient refractory spirit, the
“ heavy judgments that awaited them, and
“ their final conversion to God, their re-esta-
“ blishment in the land of promise, and their
“ restoration to God's favour, and to a con-
“ dition of the greatest national prosperity,
“ and of high pre-eminence among the na-
“ tions of the earth, under the immediate
“ protection of the Messiah in the latter ages

“ of the world. He confines himself more
“ closely to this single subject, than any
“ other prophet. He seems indeed, of all
“ the prophets, if I may so express my con-
“ ception of his peculiar character, to have
“ been the most of a Jew.” “ His country
“ and his kindred is the subject next his
“ heart. Their crimes excite his indigna-
“ tion ; their sufferings interest his pity ; their
“ future exaltation is the object on which his
“ imagination fixes with delight^a.”

In the text their guilt is introduced in general terms, Hosea having in the preceding part of his prophecies exhibited the same in the most minute detail. This guilt had caused God to act towards them the part of a lion, even a young lion. He tore them as his prey, visited them with his wrath, distracted their counsels, suffered their territory to be invaded, gave them up to their enemies ; and then, as a lion making off with his prey to his lair, Jehovah returned to his own place, withdrawing the tokens of his presence from the Jewish temple. His conduct in this matter he himself explains, when he says, “ In their affliction they will seek me.”

^a Horsley's Hosea. Preface, p. vii. viii.

His design was merciful: he tore them that he might heal them on their repentance; he smote them that he might bind them up. The effect of his visitation, the prophet informs us, in the end would be salutary. They themselves, constrained by their sufferings sanctified to them, would exhort one another to return unto the Lord, encouraging themselves by his former promises of good towards them.

The meaning of the text thus far is obvious; but there is some ambiguity about "the two days and the third." Some consider that they denote three distinct periods of the Jewish people. The first day, say they, is the captivity of the ten tribes by the Assyrians, and of the two by the Babylonians, considered as one judgment upon the nation; beginning with the captivity of the ten, and completed with that of the two tribes. The second day is the whole period of the present condition of the Jews, beginning with the dispersion of the nation by the Romans. The third day is the period yet to come, beginning with their restoration at the second advent of Christ^b. Others explain them a meaning merely a certain period; and ad

^b Horsley's Hosea. Note in the text.

duce as their authority, the usage of the sacred writers, in other instances, where a definite time is put for an indefinite duration, of the termination of which they give us full assurance, but leave us in the dark as to the conclusion of the period, for the trial of our faith and obedience. In either sense, the prediction, as it respects the Jews, will be fulfilled.

These words, thus referring to the Jewish nation, suggest to the consideration of every nation which respects the authority of the Scriptures, the following important truths :

I. God will assuredly punish national guilt with national judgments.

II. By national judgments God calls for national reformation.

III. The duty of a people suffering national judgment, is to obey the call, by returning to God.

IV. God affords to such a people the greatest and strongest encouragements, urging them thus to return.

These topics are not only proper in themselves, as mere subjects of examination, on an occasion like the present ; but will naturally lead to such an application of them to

the heart and the conscience, as, with the blessing of Jehovah the Spirit, shall increase the number of them who understand the signs of the times; and enable them to avoid thoughtlessness, on the one hand, and despondence on the other, in the midst of the judgments with which it has pleased God in righteousness to visit us.

First. We shall attend to the truths suggested by the text.

I. God will punish national guilt with national judgments.

This general proposition includes the following principles, illustrating God's government of the world.

I. God exercises a particular superintending providence over nations, as well as individuals.

Nations being composed of individuals, if he exercises such a providence over the individuals, he must necessarily do the same over the nation composed of these individuals. I am aware that this doctrine is opposed by many; but I am certain that it is taught in Scripture, and that every view which we take of the perfections of God, proves its truth. To what cause are we in-

debted for our preservation and our mercies? Unquestionably to the constant care of God. The objection made against the exercise of such a care on his part militates more against the perfections of his nature, than the objectors seem to be aware. If he does not exercise this care over all the works of his hands in their simple and combined state, how do they continue in existence? Not surely by their own power; for if so, they must be independent in themselves, and thus are *not made*. If, by his power, the question arises, does he exert this directly through means, or has he established general laws, which, without his interference, operate to produce all that he wills? If the latter, two conclusions cannot be avoided; the one is that these laws are clothed with the attributes of Jehovah; and the other is, that Jehovah himself, as it respects the exercise of his own intelligent, perfect nature, is a mere spectator of the works of his hand. These conclusions it is impossible for us to avoid, if the particular providence of God is rejected. Both afford the strongest evidence for a particular providence to all who believe in the existence of God; for both favour atheism,

since they both take from God the constant exercise of his perfections, which is essential to his nature. These perfections he cannot exercise if he be a mere spectator of his works, or if he has put these works under the government of general laws, so that his interposition is not necessary.

Besides, this doctrine of a general providence contravenes the directions of the written word. Why should we pray to God, if he has invested these laws with authority to produce certain effects? Of what benefit are the means of grace to any, since these laws are invariable, and uniform in their operation? The worship of God in all its parts, the business of this day takes it for granted that he superintends and directs all events. His acknowledged perfections demand such a providence; for why is he every where present, if not every where employed? Why is he infinitely powerful, if he does not constantly exert his power? Wherefore is he infinitely wise, if he does not steadily and always exercise his wisdom? Of what benefit to us are his goodness and justice, if they are not displayed in corresponding actions?

If they who support this doctrine speak with understanding, they must be convinced that these laws are nothing but God himself managing and governing his works according to a particular manner ; or which is the same thing, according to a wise, regular, and established mode, in which *he* conducts *his* operations. It is impossible for us, according to the philosophy of the human mind, and the information of the Scriptures, to conceive of an active intelligent being, such as God is, who does not *always* exert his activity and intelligence ; but this he does not, if he has *imparted* to his own works certain laws at their creation, by which they manage themselves, and keep themselves in existence. If these laws are under his control, and subject to his alteration, as he sees fit, we would not object to the position ; for then God himself would be directly acknowledged as the supreme disposer of every event. This is the principle for which we contend, and, in opposition to this, the doctrine of a general providence can only be supported upon the grounds already mentioned, that the laws which God has given to his works prevent his direct interpo-

sition in the control of these works: and this I do not hesitate to brand with the epithet, atheistic.

Proofs in support of the particular providence of God, exercised over individuals, are abundant in Scripture. Time will not permit me to adduce them. The subject, however, requires that some proofs should be offered of his special providence over nations. The history of the Jewish nation affords a multitude of these; so that he must be more than blind who denies that such a providence was exercised over them. If this be granted, we ask, why is it not exercised over other nations? I know that a reason may be given, arising from the peculiarity of their relation to God; but it is unquestionable, that if the same providence in kind be not exercised over other nations, which was exercised over the Jews, there is an uncertainty in the dispensations of that providence, utterly inconsistent with the lessons of God's word on the subject. If no such providence be exercised over them, they cannot be *responsible*, as nations; but we know that they are responsible. Again and again, it is said that God is governor of the nations. In the

most explicit manner we are assured that Christ is Prince of the kings of the earth. If so, are not kings and nations responsible to God and his Christ? If responsible, they must be in their official and national capacity the subjects of his care and his government. In the prophecies of Daniel, not to quote the other prophets, the rise, the conduct, and the termination of the four great empires of the world, the Babylonian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman, are exhibited to us as originating in and directed by the special providence of God. He is expressly said to remove kings, and to set up kings. He destroys nations, and is the author of the means of their destruction. Indeed all his promises to the Jews, all the threatenings to the nations introduced in prophecy, prove the existence of this providence. If this providence does not exist, the predictions of his word concerning nations, lose their authority, because they sink to the level of sage conjectures, and no more.

2. Nations sinning against God are punished in this life.

They exist as nations *only* in this life. The judgment to come relates to men per-

sonally. Here the political body to which individuals belong, is judged. The judgment is administered according to righteousness. To all flesh originally God made known his law. The nations, however, soon corrupted their ways. He, therefore, selected a peculiar people as the depositaries of his will. That people, when they sinned, were severely chastised: other nations, when they sin, are punished also; for no nation is to be found among whom there is not some knowledge of right and wrong. The rule by which God measures nations is the same with that by which he measures individuals.

As violations of his law provoke his indignation against the latter, so the same cause produces the same effect against the former. He has but one rule by which he judges in all cases the conduct of his intelligent creatures in all the various relations in which they are placed. Of this rule some have more full, and others more partial information; but all have sufficient information to make them guilty. God, from his nature, must punish them in that capacity in which they sin. Individual sins meet with individual punishments: family sins with family

punishments: national sins therefore must meet with national punishments. These punishments affect the community at large. They are so inflicted that the body, as a whole, in their social capacity, suffers. In consistency with this, you find God visited the transgression of Judah and Israel, and poured out the vials of his wrath upon Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome.

3. The punishments are adapted to the sins of a people, and in proportion to the mercies received.

Of this you have a remarkable instance in the plagues inflicted upon Egypt; they were all suited to the idolatry which they practised^d. Thus also when the Jews forsook God, he withdrew from them; when they resorted to foreign alliances he made them the sources of increased misery to them. As they were more highly favoured than the rest of the nations, so they were more signally and fearfully punished. The judgments of God are the most awful where his mercies have been best known and most openly despised.

The history of modern times furnishes us

^d Bryant, on the plagues of Egypt.

with abundant proofs of the truth of this remark. You find them in the dispensations of divine providence towards Europe during the last half of the past century. The nations from Naples to Russia, from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean and Adriatic seas, had become sensual. The love of pleasure prevailed among all classes of the community, in a greater or less degree. The higher orders being less restrained than others, displayed this passion in a most unblushing manner. The history of the courts of the continent of Europe is merely the history of sensuality, in some more refined, and in others more gross^c. The effects of such a passion upon the human constitution and the habits which it produces, were destructive of domestic happiness, social order, and all moral obligation. Men were prepared by their reigning principles, for a great and an awful convulsion. The links of the chain which bind men together were broken; the finer feelings of their souls were blunted. Their external manners were more refined.

^c Memoirs of Marmontel. Segur's Frederic William II. Tooke's Catharine II.; and other works of the same kind afford full and satisfactory evidence of the above assertion.

In their external intercourse with each other there was more polish and guarded decorum than heretofore: but the heart became callous. Every consideration was swallowed up in the gratification of sensual desires. Conscience had lost its power, and morals and religion were considered merely as matters of expediency and convenience. No wonder then that the civilized world has been so fearfully scourged. At no period has God poured out the vials of his wrath in greater abundance, and inflicted heavier judgments upon the nations than in our day. They were fitted for the slaughter by their sensuality; for let it be remembered that sensuality is intimately and inseparably connected with cruelty, insensibility, hardness of heart, revenge, savage barbarity, and indiscriminate destruction. And among the nations who have suffered the most, you will find Protestant Germany and Holland. Their guilt was the more aggravated because their spiritual mercies were greater than those of the others.

Thus it is that God punishes national guilt with national judgments.

II. The second truth suggested by the text

is, that God, in inflicting national judgments, calls for national reformation.

To understand this proposition aright, it will be necessary for us to make some explanatory remarks on the nature of God's punishment of sins. The old division of punishment, as it respects its design, appears to me, on every view which I have taken or can take of the subject, to be correct. This division is vindicative, corrective, and monitor. The first is the most important and the other subordinate in importance to the first. The most important design of divine punishments I have said is *vindicative*. In proof of this I merely ask, why does God punish any of us? On account of sin. What is sin? A transgression of his law. What is the tendency of this transgression? To destroy the existence of God, and overturn his government. Is not then sin high treason against God? As such, must it not be punished by God, in vindication of his own righteousness, and in support of his own government. The sinner is a traitor against him; and if not pardoned, must die—must be punished to vindicate the perfections and authority of Jehovah.

God has provided a remedy for the evil of sin. He can, through Christ, pardon the sins of individuals and nations, because Christ has vindicated his perfections and authority, in suffering the penalty of death. By repentance through the application of Christ's blood to the heart, they are restored to his favour. To lead *them* to repentance, therefore, or to warn others through them, is the great design of God in punishing sinners in this life. Hence his punishments until the measure of their guilt be full, are corrective and monitory. They embitter sin, and warn of still heavier judgments. In these judgments God addresses the understandings of the people whom he judges, bidding them examine their ways, and inquire into the causes of his controversy with them. He presents in these judgments matter to awaken their fears, lest he should be more strict to mark iniquity, and to excite their hopes that he might yet return to them in mercy. His design is expressed in these words, "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness^f."

f Is. xxvi. 9.

III. The third truth suggested by the text is, the duty of a people suffering national judgments, to obey God's call in inflicting them, by returning unto him. This duty Israel, by the prophet, is described as fulfilling, when their language is, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord."

This returning unto God is what is called in the New Testament repentance; not merely "a change, whether it be to the better or to the worse," but "properly a change to the better;" not a change expressing "only a present uneasy feeling of regret or sorrow for what is done, without regard either to duration or to effects;" but one which displays evidences of its durability, and is productive of "fruit unto holiness:" a reformation, rather than what we in common language call repentance^c. It presupposes, that we have wandered from God, and cannot return unto him without some information concerning his *willingness* to

^c Campbell on the Gospels, Prelim. Dissert. disser. 6. p. 3. *Μετανοεω* and *Μεταμελομαι*. The word here used, *חשוב* is translated in the Septuagint, *επιστρέψωμεν*, both of which answer to *μετανοια*. See Taylor's Concor. (פ. 1888. 85. of this word.) and Trommii Concor. in *επιστρέφω*. 18.

receive us, and the way in which he *can* receive us, consistently with the perfections of his nature. On these points God has been pleased to remove every doubt, by the revelation of his own grace. Following this sure guide we shall unfold, in a very brief manner, the nature of the duty to which God calls by his judgments, and the sole manner in which it can be acceptably performed.

I. The nature of the duty involves in it two leading ideas :

First. The rectification of the understanding in the perception of divine truth.

Of this, sinners, so far as they are personally concerned, have very erroneous conceptions, which cause them to lead ungodly lives, and thus produce the most disastrous effects upon their present comfort and their eternal interests. Not more correct is the knowledge which nations, yea, and Christian nations too, possess of this truth, so far as their national duty and happiness are concerned. They have adopted a different rule for regulating national conduct, from that which God has established to regulate the conduct of individuals. Political expe-

diency has usurped the place of God's most perfect law. To this source, the grievous offences which so many nominal Christians have committed and are committing against their God and their Saviour, may be traced. By acting according to this profligate system, I mean the system of political expediency, they become criminal in the sight of their master. His indignation they must expect, if they do not rectify their fearful error in this matter.

Secondly, a return unto God includes a rectification of the heart in the choice of that which the understanding perceives to be good.

Those mistakes which affect the political conduct of men so far as to make them sinful, being detected, and the opposite truths recognized, men will dislike the one and love the other. As a general rule, they will love all those precepts, regulating their conduct as members of society, as well as those which relate to them personally, of the existence of which in the Scriptures and their consequent authority, they have become convinced. There will take place an entire and

radical alteration in their deportment, corresponding to the alteration produced in their minds.

2. This duty can only be performed acceptably through faith in the offering of Christ, which is the appointed way of approach to God.

The only authority which we have to expect that God will receive us on our return, is his own testimony, given unto us by Christ. The belief of that testimony is essential to the success of our return to God. “For he that cometh unto God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” That merely the being of God, and the rewards and punishments which he dispenses as sovereign, cannot be meant by the Apostle, is evident, from the definition which he himself gives of faith. It “is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Therefore it must be God, as he has revealed himself unto us sinful creatures, a Redeemer, mighty to save, and the reward of grace which he dispenses to them who seek him through the sacrifice of the Redeemer, that is the object here pre-

sented to faith^g. Without the exercise of faith in God in this view of himself which he has given us, there is no coming unto God. Our way to his throne is hedged up, and we can never expect either audience or acceptance. Indeed none of our fallen race would ever have dared to attempt drawing near unto God, if God had not encouraged them by the revelation of his grace. And they who have been made partakers of that grace are the only persons who can find him as their portion.

The same rule which is thus given to individuals, is binding upon a nation. To find acceptance for their repentance, they must receive the word of God, as true, that in Christ *there is* redemption through his blood; even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. Upon the footing of that redemption alone can they obtain the divine favour.

IV. The last truth suggested by the text, is that God affords to a people suffering national judgments the greatest and strongest encouragements, urging them thus to return. These encouragements are,

^g Owen, on Heb. xi. 6.

1. His willingness to receive them on their return.

Of this he has given the fullest information in different parts of his word. He is ready to forgive, and has never said to the house of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain. Indeed he stands pledged, from the nature of his covenant, to exercise mercy towards them who return to him in the appointed way. Of this willingness he furnishes us with proofs in the text, when he says, that he will return to his place *till* they acknowledge their offence. And also with the assurance that as he *had* torn, so he will heal, as he had smitten, so he will bind up. He will revive after a *certain* period; He will raise up, and give life. All these expressions denote God's readiness to return to, to restore, to revive those who repent.

2. The blessings consequent upon his receiving them on their repentance.

Here I avail myself of the translation of Bishop Horsley, "*We shall live in his presence, and attain to knowledge. Our object of pursuit will be the knowledge of the Jehovah. His coming forth is fixed as the morning; and he shall come upon*

“ us as the pouring shower, as the harvest
“ rain, as the rain of seed-time upon the
“ earth.” He connects the last clause of the
second verse with the first of the third, “ the
“ attaining of knowledge with the living in
“ his presence, as the effect with the cause.”

To live in God's presence is to live in the communion of his Church, receiving the instruction of the divine word, and the comfort of the sacraments. The attainment of knowledge, that is the true knowledge of God, and a right understanding of his word, is the effect of thus living in his presence. And a further effect of the attainment is, a taste and a liking for the knowledge so attained; a desire of perpetual proficiency in it, and a voluntary pursuit of it. And no wonder; for God is known as the universal benefactor, the giver of the most general and useful benefits, and comes forth at fixed seasons, and at a season when his appearance is expected. The benefits he confers are compared to the *harvest rain, the rain* of seed-time. The last making the fruit to spring, and the first maturing the crop. Thus the blessings consequent upon God's receiving individuals or nations who repent, are suited

to every situation, and to every time. They more than counterbalance the evils which have resulted from their sins, and spread their influence over all the relations of society, making them sources of constant and increasing personal enjoyment and usefulness unto others.

I proceed to the application of the subject. In making this application I shall now, as I have ever endeavoured to do, bring men and measures to the test of God's own truth, and let that truth decide on their merits or demerits. The directions and instructions of God's word upon political subjects I have never shunned to state to you, nor shall I now, bitter as the spirit of party is, and widely separated as the parties are. To both I mean to exhibit what appears to me to be the truth of Scripture, whether it affects one part of the community or another. Lend me then your candid and Christian attention, whilst I endeavour in the application to unfold our *national sins*, our *national judgments*, our *national prospects*, and our *national duty*.

I. *Our national sins* call for attention on this day. They are the following, viz.

I. The nature of our political constitution.

The particular part of it to which I refer, is its defect in regard to religion. That I may not be misunderstood, I think it proper to state, that the people of this country are avowedly a Christian people. This is especially the case with the inhabitants of this state. And I am the more bold to say this, because I have no less authority than the official declaration of the Supreme Court of the State. The declaration was made not long back, on a trial for blasphemy, by the Chief Justice^k. “The people of this state, in
“ common with the people of this country,
“ profess the general doctrines of Chris-
“ tianity as the rule of their faith and prac-
“ tice; and to scandalize the Author of these
“ doctrines, is not only in a religious point
“ of view extremely impious, but even in
“ respect to the obligations due to Society,
“ is a gross violation of decency and good
“ order. Nor are we bound,” he adds, “by
“ any expressions in the constitution, as
“ some have strangely supposed, either not
“ to punish at all, or to punish indiscrimi-
“ nately, the like attacks upon the re-

^k Now Chancellor Kent.

“ligion of Mahomet, or of the Grand La-
“ma: and for this plain reason, that the
“case assumes that *we are a Christian*
“*people*, and the morality of the country is
“deeply ingrafted upon Christianity, and
“not upon the doctrines and worship of
“these impostors.”

As a Christian people, then, the inhabitants of the United States have the right to regulate their own political compact, and no one can consistently object to such regulations. To no people has God given such an opportunity to govern themselves, as he has to us. All our acts, therefore, must be considered the acts of our choice. This is peculiarly the case with the federal constitution. The United States adopted it deliberately, of their own accord, in time of peace, with no foreign power to compel them. Though it be thus the choice of a Christian people, in it are not recognized even the existence and government of God, much less the authority of his revealed Word. The head of a family would not allow a system of conduct to be introduced into his family which permitted blasphemy, idolatry, or atheism; and we

must yet learn that a head of a family has greater power to suppress irreligion and error than the head of a nation.

Understand me rightly in these remarks. I dislike and reprobate the modelling of churches by civil power, and the exclusive establishment of any particular denomination. Such establishments I hope will never take place in this country; for I consider them a grievous evil. But I do not hesitate to say, that propriety, reason, and the Word of God require from us, as a Christian people, two things,

1st, The recognition of the existence and providence of God, and,

2d, The acknowledgment of his revealed truth.

No persons ought to be eligible to any offices of trust among us, who cannot stand the test in these two things. This remark, you will recollect, is founded upon this acknowledged principle, that every people have the right to regulate their concerns as they see fit or choose. Now, as the people of these United States profess to be a Christian people, they, by regulating their concerns as they saw fit, have given the lie to their profession. Their political consti-

tution is *atheistic* as well as unchristian. Professing themselves to be a Christian people, the adoption of such a constitution, as it contradicts their profession, makes them chargeable with irreligion.

A nation as such can only be known through their government. As no provision has been made to secure a nominally Christian government, or even a government recognizing the existence and providence of God, the nation are guilty of indifference to the truths of God's Word. In this indifference we see plainly their ignorance of these truths, and their departure from God. He has taught us that civil government is his ordinance. The form he has left optional to us ; but the character of the magistrate he has described with minute accuracy. We have minutely attended to the form about which God says nothing in his word, and have utterly neglected the qualification of the men who administer government, though He has given us line upon line on that subject.

2. Our political conduct as a people, under our constitution, is another national sin.

The principal fact in our conduct, to which I refer, is our choice of officers. In no coun-

try is the right of choice so free and undisturbed. How have we exercised this right? Consistently with the atheistic spirit of our constitution, we have acted in an atheistic manner. The first question to be answered previous to our elections is, what are the candidate's political sentiments? The inquiry into his moral and religious character, if ever instituted, is made *after* the previous question is answered. Political principles, and not moral or religious character, constitute the test of a man's fitness for an office among us. We ask not, as God has commanded us to ask, Is the man just? Will he rule in the fear of God? But, is he a federal, or a republican? By thus substituting our opinions in the place of God's own rule, we have subjected ourselves to his righteous displeasure.

Recollect what I have already observed, that God says nothing about *forms* of government in his Word: but is particular even to minuteness about the character and qualifications of those who administer government. Is not our conduct in this respect then a gross national transgression? We have cast off fear, and despised his directions. The nation are to *blame*, if at any

time men govern them who neglect the authority of God's Word, and cast contempt upon his grace. If such men are chosen, their *infidelity* and *immorality* are chosen by the people ; for it is impossible to separate between the intellectual and moral qualifications of men, in our choice of men.

3. Our abuse of past mercies and judgments dispensed towards us, is another national sin.

Of the former we have had abundance since the revolution. Need I remind you of our prosperity, and the unparalleled increase of our wealth ? Nor have we been left without warnings. The pestilence which walketh in darkness and wasteth at noon day, has invaded many of our principal cities, and thinned the ranks of our estimable citizens. These mercies and judgments have been dispensed to the nation at large. The parts of it which have more immediately experienced them, have been memorials to the rest of God's goodness and beacons of his justice. But how have we improved the one and the other ? Prosperity has made us proud, and adversity has not inclined our hearts to the Lord. You know

full well that when we waxed fat, we kicked back, and forgot the Rock of our salvation. And you know as well, from what you have seen, that many of the very inhabitants who fled on account of the yellow fever, whilst they were abroad, displayed the most brutal indifference to the sufferings of their fellow-citizens, indulging in riot and folly; and when they returned hied with increased eagerness to the theatre—the haunts of revelry, to make up for lost time, and without delay to assure the god of their devotion that the judgments of Jehovah had not had any effect upon them. We have in this country, richly as God has blessed us, done comparatively little for him. Immense sums have been expended on schemes for the accumulation of property; but how small a portion has been given for the promotion of Christ's cause? Our prosperity produced a taste for dissipation. It increased habits of intemperance, and the number of amusements. We had, in a word, become a vain, selfish, and luxurious people.

4. The manner in which we have regarded God's judgments to the nations of Europe,

for the last twenty years, and his present mercies to them, is another national sin.

We are chargeable with carelessness and indifference about them, as well as blindness about their nature. Our conduct has been similar to that described by the prophet Zephaniah, "I have cut off the nations, (God speaks); their towers are desolate: I made their streets waste that none passeth by: their cities are destroyed, so that there is no man, that there is none inhabitant I said, Surely thou wilt fear me, thou wilt receive instruction: so their dwelling should not be cut off: howsoever I punished them. But they rose early, and corrupted all their doings^h." Thus have we perverted the right ways of the Lord. We have considered the nations of Europe greater sinners than we were, and have persisted obstinately in disregarding his monitory voice. The great national inquiry, as it respected our practice, was, how shall we improve these judgments to our commercial advantage? In what way can we, by reason of the distress of others, make the most money for ourselves? The idol at whose

^h Zephan. iii. 6, 7.

shrine we have sacrificed is Mammon; he has blinded us as to our danger, and hardened our hearts whilst our European brethren were bleeding and dying.

I proceed to

II. *Our national judgments.* They are suited to our national sins, and spring from them.

I. The first great judgment is the disregard universally displayed to the sanctity of the oath, the disposition to evade the laws of our country, though constitutionally enacted, and the profanation of the Sabbath.

I have connected these things under one head, which may very properly be called the deterioration of our morals and religion. Perhaps you may be surprized that this should be considered as a judgment of God upon us, rather than one of our national sins. The surprize, however, will cease, when we reflect for a moment upon the character and conduct of the people of this country, previous to the revolutionary war, and after its termination, until the two great political parties were organized, and introduced their antichristian standard for the choice of officers

to administer the government. As that standard has become more and more the test of eligibility to offices, a disregard to the great and essential principles of pure morals and sound religion has become more and more prevalent. Time was when there was little temptation to perjury, or the evasion of laws; but that time is past by. Time was when open infractions of the Lord's day, by men in authority, were rare; for public opinion restrained them from such infractions. I do not mean to say that the Lord's day was not profaned; would to God I could say this! but the profanation was not connected with an unnecessary public insult upon the feelings of the Christian community. Nor do I wish to be understood that there were no cases of perjury, or evasions of law. That they did occur, is true; but it is as true, that they were few, and did not invite general observation by their commonness and publicity. Now, however, our land mourneth by reason of the multitude and aggravations of these crying sins. At no time since the first settlement of the country has there been so much deliberate ingenuity

exercised in evading the laws of the land, as for the last ten years. Such conduct, besides its own immorality, is necessarily connected with other and more gross transgressions, such as deceits, falsehoods, perjuries. And these transgressions are not confined to a corner: but they glare upon the public eye in every direction. They who commit them, instead of being ashamed on account of them, appear rather to glory in them.

Ever since the adoption of the federal constitution the Lord's day has been profaned by the carriage and opening of the mail. But now, in the day of our sorrow, as if to provoke the Highest to more displeasure, that holy day is profaned by the gross insult of Christian feeling, and the flagrant violation of Christian principle, on the part of men in authority, by reviewing troops for mere parade. To have men for rulers who thus transgress God's Word, is a judgment, a righteous judgment, upon the nation; for the national sin of making political opinions the test of eligibility to office. Men who are governed by no fear of God, will violate his law when it suits them. A Christian people, electing

such men, encourage them to such violation. And by the encouragement which they afford them, lay the foundation for their own increasing immorality. For let it be remembered that a government gives to a people a moral as well as a political character, and has a most important influence upon their moral as well as their political habits. Hence an irreligious, immoral magistracy, will not merely introduce, among the people over whom they are exalted, a system of political principles subversive of truth and honour, but will give currency to irreligion and immorality in social intercourse and domestic life.

2. The spirit of party which prevails among us is another national judgment, which God inflicts upon us on account of our national sins.

A difference of opinion on political, as well as on other subjects, must necessarily take place between members of the same community. We cannot all think alike, from the variety of views, feelings, and habits, which exist among men. But this difference of opinion ought never to prevent any from

acting in political matters according to the Redeemer's rule, "Whatsoever ye would
" that men should do unto you, that do ye
" unto them, for this is the law and the
" prophets." In direct opposition to this rule, party spirit has introduced another rule subversive of every thing which is calculated to preserve peace, and maintain integrity of conduct between those who differ in their political opinions. Oh, it is a BITTER and BASE spirit! hostile to every generous, noble Christian feeling. It has established an interest, and empire of its own, in the midst of us; but its interest is the interest of iniquity, and its empire the empire of irreligion. On this subject I speak fearlessly and confidently, because I speak from my own knowledge of facts which have fallen under my observation, and not from conjecture or speculation. I know, and I blush whilst I state the fact, that there are men, and Christian men too, who have broken friendship with Christian men, and have endeavoured to injure the usefulness of Christian Ministers, *on account of difference of opinion in political*

matters, whilst they have gone hand in hand with men who never had publicly honoured their Redeemer; nay, with men who are more than suspected of hostility to his cause and interest; I may add, with men who are known to profane God's name, to break his Sabbaths, and to reject the Gospel of his Son. With such facts daily occurring, I ask, is not the spirit of party iniquitous and irreligious? And do not they who act under its influence, act iniquitously and irreligiously? The truth cannot be concealed; it ought to be published—published with a voice of thunder, that Christians separate from Christians, merely for political reasons, whilst for the same reasons Christians associate with and countenance blasphemers of their Redeemer.

Moreover, party spirit has introduced amongst us that most profligate and flagitious principle that the end sanctifies the means. Hence we find the foulest libels upon private character to issue from the press; the most abominable falsehoods in relation to matters of fact, to be circulated; the grossest misrepresentation of conversa-

tions to be deliberately given, and the sacred recesses of social intercourse to be violated by wanton breaches of trust. Many partizans appear to forget the elementary principles of truth and integrity, and to consider every deviation from them venial, provided such deviation promotes the success of their party. One of the most extraordinary phenomena in morals has been produced by the spirit of party, viz. the creation of a new conscience, which approves immorality, if immorality is necessary for political purposes, and condemns morality, if morality contravenes these purposes. I call this a most extraordinary phenomenon, because it occurs not among avowed infidels or pagans, but in the midst of a people professing Christianity; and therefore acknowledging that the only standard of right and wrong in all cases is God's law.

It is in this view that party spirit is so fearful and condemnable. It is decisively hostile to the law of God. No apology ought, therefore, to be offered for it from the examples of Greece and Rome. Their conduct cannot, without criminality and guilt, be fol-

lowed by us, because they were pagans. We are Christians, and therefore must act in a different manner from them. The spirit of the Gospel is peaceful, forgiving, honourable, and therefore opposed to the spirit of party as it displays itself amongst us. No arguments drawn from the experience of heathen republics can have any authority now, in a country avowedly Christian, and ought, therefore, to have no weight with us.

If it be alleged that party spirit, as it appears among us, is necessary for the preservation of our civil liberty, I do not hesitate to say, that civil liberty if this were true, is a curse. O, that the inhabitants of our country would listen to the voice of reason and of Scripture, and cease from their shameful, their ungodly conduct in political intercourse!

3. The destruction of property is another national judgment.

On this subject I will not enlarge, for it will only recall painful scenes to your minds, and excite anew the feelings of sorrow. I only remark that in this judgment, though experienced largely by you, yet not exclusively, God has dealt with us as he did with

the Egyptians in the plagues which he inflicted upon them. God has taken from us our national idol.

4. The scourge of war is the last judgment which I shall notice.

My opinion of the commencement of this war, and of the measures of our government which led to it, are unaltered. As I have never from this place obtruded upon you that opinion in time past, you yourselves bearing me witness, so I will not now do it. Shortly after it was declared, on a fast day, I observed that as it respected its moral and religious effects, considering its relation to the interests of the Church, I did view it to be one of the most deplorable wars which had ever occurred. Its character I dislike; its issues I dread—not as it respects our temporal consequence, but our moral and religious habits. Temporal losses may soon be regained; but immoral and irreligious effects can be corrected only in a succession of years. It is in this light that it is a judgment; and, Brethren, dispensed as it is by a righteous God, I take the opportunity of observing, that as a nation we were ripe for it, or we would never have suffered it.

Whether our rulers were guilty in declaring the war or not, the conclusion is the same. If we had not merited God's displeasure we would never have had an administration, who have, as their opponents say, plunged us in a war; nor would we have been subjected to the insults and oppression of a foreign power, so as to make it necessary for us to resort to arms, as the friends of the administration assert. The conclusion, I repeat it, is that we have merited the scourge of war. Its effects we deeply feel in the different relations of life, now whilst we suffer from its pressure; but God only can tell what incalculable mischiefs may result from it, to the spiritual interests of thousands. War always demoralizes a people, and the effects of our revolutionary contest upon our moral habits are sufficient to awaken the most lively anticipations of evil in this respect from the present conflict.

III. Our national prospects now demand our attention.

They are gloomy indeed, but cheered with the rays of hope. The present state of affairs cannot but depress every mind. There are, however, considerations to in-

spire courage, and produce no ordinary expectation about the future state of this country.

I. The manner in which our country was settled, is one of these considerations.

With few exceptions, the soil was purchased fairly from the natives. A great proportion of the first settlers emigrated to this new world for conscience sake. The ancestors of the New-England states were men of whom the world was not worthy. They left their all, and came to this continent that they might worship God without molestation. Other parts of our country are filled with emigrants, who came hither to escape oppression, slavery, degradation, or the children of such emigrants. The character of these first settlers, and the manner in which their settlement was effected, give the pledge that the Lord will preserve us in future, as he has done in times past.

Nor have we any reason for despondence, when we take into consideration the character of the *other first settlers* of our country. On comparing them with the ancestors and founders of the greatest part of the present European nations, they will not suffer in

their claims to moral worth. It is true a very small number were convicts from Britain; but, if their character is to be alleged against them, the blame must rest upon the then mother country, who from motives of mere political expediency, sent to her colonies those who had forfeited their lives or their reputation at home. With this exception, an exception which in fact militates not against us, but against her, we shrink not from the comparison. Let that person judge who is acquainted with the history of France, Spain, Italy, but above all, of England, first subdued by the Romans, then by the Saxons, afterwards by the Danes, and lastly by the Normans. If ancestry afford any foundation for national respectability, ours is incomparably better than theirs. Our forefathers had passed from barbarism, were become civilized, had embraced the Gospel. Theirs were uncultivated, rude, fierce, unpolished, savage. Where is the European nation to be found that can look back upon such an honourable origin as the State of Pennsylvania? I have singled out this part of our country, next to the soil occupied by the pilgrims of Leyden,

on account of the pre-eminent worth of its first proprietor, William Penn. I forbear descending to more particulars. The very convicts sent over to people this western world were better members of civil society than the Goths, the Vandals, the Saxons, the Scandinavians, those forefathers of the greatest part of the European continent.

Taking all the circumstances connected with the colonization of our country; a colonization not effected by mere rapine, blood, injustice and conquest, but by means more consistent with the Spirit of the Gospel; I confess that, while my heart is sad at our present condition, I look forward to the future with high anticipations.

2. Our nation, though irreligious in its political constitution, has never given its power to antichrist. We have never recognized the authority of the Roman Church, therefore are not included in the grand apostacy.

On this subject I may be unfashionable in my opinions, but I am convinced that these opinions are according to truth, even the truth of God's Word. No one is a more decided friend of religious liberty: but at the

same time a more determined opponent of religious indifference, than I am. My creed in this matter is formed upon the Redeemer's words, "He that is not with me is against me." Yet let no man libel me as an enemy to free inquiry on religious subjects, or to the privilege of worshipping God as his conscience dictates. The motto which I have adopted is, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

No one ought to be molested in his religion; but at the same time no man ought to be considered as innocent who equalizes all religions. Whilst, therefore, a protest is given in against the authority of the civil magistrate ever to invade the rights of conscience in religion, by temporal penalties, let it not be considered that the protest in any degree justifies the error, that in the sight of God all the various forms of worship and systems of religion are entitled to the same respect. But one form and one system can be right, and the rest must be erroneous.

On this ground, whilst I cheerfully grant to the members of the Roman Church the right which they possess to avow and defend

their opinions, without suffering civil penalties, I claim the right which I possess as a protestant, to declare my firm conviction that they constitute the religious society denominated in Scripture, "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH," without being maligned by them as their persecutor. An opponent I confess that I am: the weapons of my warfare, however, are not carnal, but spiritual.

With this view of the antichristian Church is inseparably connected the belief, that all who have not come out of her will partake of her judgments. If the belief be well-grounded, it is certain, we shall not be punished as a branch of that antichristian empire, never having given our national power to her.

3. We, as a nation, have shed no righteous blood.

On this head, enlargement, for the purpose of adducing proof, is needless. No man has ever yet lost his life, or forfeited his temporal ease, in this country, for his religion. All classes of Christians are equal-

ly protected and countenanced. In our country, the rare and pleasing spectacle is exhibited, of every man sitting under his own vine and fig-tree, with none to molest him, or make him afraid. Nor has this state of things introduced more religious divisions, or less respect to religious ordinances, than exists in Europe. There are not a greater number of religious sects here than there are in Britain. The Ministers, as a body, are as well supported, and, wherever the regular administration of the Gospel is enjoyed, the attendance upon public worship is as good. As to the power of religion, I do not hesitate to say, that, in proportion to the population of the two countries, we have more real believers, persons living under the influence of grace, than they have.

The contrast between Europe and America in this respect is striking, and affords us a useful lesson. The religious establishments of the former, being incorporated with the state, have in all countries, not excepting Holland under the government of Maurice, and Britain, given rise to persecutions, and authorized the infliction of death on account of dissent. In the United States, neither

persecution nor death has ever been experienced on account of religion. This single fact speaks more against such ecclesiastical establishments as they have in the old world, than volumes could; and the testimony which it affords against them, gives a decided preference to our conduct, to leave the Church to herself, without coercing her to promote secular purposes.

4. We have not fought for, nor contributed to the upholding of the Man of Sin in these latter days.

As we never have been members of his apostate communion, so we never have aided him. The very war in which we are engaged, so far as it does, or can produce an effect upon his interest, is hostile to it: for it is opposed to the power of Britain, which is exerted to support those nations who are slavishly devoted to him.

5. God is prospering his work among us.

Since the commencement of our difficulties with the two great belligerent powers of Europe, there has been an increase of seriousness in a large proportion of our Churches. Especially since the declaration

of war, has the Spirit been poured out from on high copiously upon many of the parched parts of the Redeemer's vineyard. The judgment of war seems to have awakened many to reflection ; others have been excited by the pressure of present suffering to attend to eternal concerns. The ordinances of worship have thus been better observed than heretofore, and multitudes in various places have been brought to the knowledge and acknowledgment of the truth. Thus, though there has been a deterioration of morals and religion in the nation at large, we have especial tokens that God is still in the midst of us ; that whilst he is inflicting temporal punishments richly merited, he is dispensing spiritual blessings. This revives us in our bondage and fills our hearts with gladness. Though we have abundant cause for regret and sorrow, and deep humiliation, on account of our grievous national sins ; we have also cause for thankfulness and praise on account of God's remembrance of us in our low estate. Whilst, therefore, we are called to mourn over judgments, we must acknowledge that God has enabled us to sing of his mercies.

These are the considerations which fill me with hope as to the issue of our present contest. The contest itself is shameful, and causes me to blush. It is a contest between protestants and protestants, as well as between members of the same common family, by descent. Its course must be, and will be, distressing to us, so long as it lasts: but of its issue I have little apprehension. Our prospects are better than those of Britain in a moral and religious calculation. She is a part of the Latin earth, which constitutes the antichristian empire. The Church, though protestant, is completely secularized by her government, and made subservient to state purposes. Much blood, even the blood of the saints, has been unrighteously shed by her, since the reformation, for which no national repentance has ever been professed. She has been fighting for the Catholics of Spain, and has succeeded: and thus, for merely political purposes, by her military prowess, upheld the Man of Sin. Under her auspices, the Bourbon family, a family devoted to the Roman see, has been restored to the throne of France. By her test law she is daily profaning an holy ordinance

of her avowed Redeemer, perverting its design, so as to bring the body and blood of Christ into disrepute, and cause the name of God to be blasphemed, thus accumulating her guilt, treasuring up for herself wrath against the day of wrath.

Far be it from me, by giving this brief detail of facts, to attempt increasing our feelings of animosity against her. They are too much excited already ; and far, very far, exceed the bounds of Christian propriety. Equally remote from my wishes is any design to depreciate the value of her exertions for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. God has pre-eminently honoured her, by making her the instrument of doing more for his cause than any other nation. Her Missionary and Bible Societies, her varied exertions for the diffusion of truth and the melioration of misery, have stamped upon her name imperishable glory. Generations yet unborn, will rise up, and reading her history, will call her blessed. I feel it a duty, and consider it a privilege, that I am enabled to discharge the duty of rendering to her this deserved tribute of respect.

The facts which have been adduced are brought to your view, merely as affording matter for religious calculation, as to the prospects of Britain, in the course of divine providence. The sins with which we are chargeable do not partake of that offensive character, which is indelibly impressed upon her sins. Our prospects, therefore, I repeat the remark, are better than her prospects.

IV. Our national duty is the last topic of discourse to which I shall call your attention. This is to return unto the Lord in the way which he has revealed unto us in his Word.

The nature of this duty has been explained, and the encouragement which God gives to them who repent, has been unfolded. I now proceed to urge upon you, Men and Brethren, an immediate performance of the duty. God, by his judgments which he has inflicted, and is still inflicting, calls us to repentance. By his mercies, which are not clean gone for ever, he invites us to his throne of grace, that we may obtain forgiveness at his hand. Be persuaded to listen to the voice of his displeasure, and to accept the offers of his clemency.

It is a solemn inquiry, which every person ought to institute, how far he has been accessory to our present calamities by his private offences, and his political conduct?

You who have hitherto rejected the great salvation, have unquestionably, by your unbelief, and continuance in arms against the God of heaven and of earth, added largely, and are still adding to the amount of national guilt. The enmity of your carnal minds against God, unfits you for honouring him, and promoting his interest in the world. It also unfits you for discharging, acceptably to him, or profitably to yourselves and others, your various relative duties. In a day of darkness and trial, of suffering and of sorrow such as this, where can you go for relief? where can you find comfort? On the earth to which your views are confined, and in whose concerns your hopes are centered, on the earth there is nothing but confusion, overturning, disappointment, and peril. To heaven you refuse to look for aid: and yet from heaven alone can you receive aid. From heaven the voice of mercy now addresses you, warning you of your danger, and exhorting you to improve the judg-

ments which are abroad in the earth. In those judgments you cannot but see the instability of every thing which you have chosen as your chief good. Your hearts before now have responded amen to the wise man's testimony, vanity of vanities: all is vanity. Disappointed and chagrined, they have cried, give, give, at every failure. With such experience of the insufficiency of these things, you have now the superadded experience of their instability. Did they even satisfy you, they last but a day, and then are no more for ever. Now therefore, in the light which God's judgments shed around you, survey your inheritance here: and if you have nerve enough, cast your eye beyond the grave, and by the light which revelation pours upon the invisible state, survey your portion in eternity. And is it for this that you baffle with God? waste your time? spend your strength? destroy your souls? Verily, "the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead." It is time for you to awake out of your slumbers; it is high

time to return unto God. “Seek ye the
“ Lord while he may be found, call ye
“ upon him while he is near. Let the
“ wicked forsake his way, and the unright-
“ eous man his thoughts: and let him
“ return unto the Lord, and he will have
“ mercy upon him: and to our God, for he
“ will abundantly pardon^x.” Whilst the
tempest of his wrath is breaking upon our
land, and spreading its desolations through-
out all her borders, hasten to the refuge
which he has provided, and hide yourselves
“ in the strong hold,” where, though you
may hear its roaring, it will not come near
you; though you may behold its ravages,
it will not touch you.

To you also, Believers, God’s judgments
administer a most fearful rebuke, and call
for the exercise of unfeigned and univer-
sal penitence. Your sins have in no com-
mon degree contributed to our present cala-
mity. Had there been ten righteous men in
Sodom, it would have been spared. Con-
sidering the number of those in our land who
fear God, we may be well assured that had
they been faithful, keeping their garments

^x Is. lv. 6, 7.

unspotted from the world, we would still have been safe from the scourgings of our Heavenly Father. His indignation is far greater against the sins of his people than against those of his adversaries. Judgment first begins with his house, which he purges by the fire of sufferings, and then that judgment terminates in its force and ruinous effects upon the ungodly.

Believers, you have displayed too much of the spirit of the world—you have acted too much according to its maxims. You have conformed too much to its sinful habits. Your love has become cold; your faith has lost its power; your holiness of life is cramped, confined to the closet, rather than expanded throughout your social intercourse. You have conducted yourselves like politicians, rather than like Christians. This has been lamentably the case with multitudes of professing believers, in discharging their duty as members of civil society. They have adopted the ungodly and atheistic system of political expediency. They have tampered with their consciences, and sacrificed the interests of their Redeemer to the interests of their party. They

have compromitted the honour of their God for the honour of political chieftains. In the souls of many of them God has sent barrenness, and upon their religious worship has written, *Thou art found wanting.*¹

Where now, in this day of rebuke, are the professing believers who, like Caleb, follow the Lord fully? Where those who sigh for the iniquities which prevail, and have boldness to plead God's cause? They are clamorous for their party: but the tongue of too many cleaves to the roof of their mouths when called upon to speak for their Redeemer. Such are the bitter fruits of that accursed spirit of party, which has not merely spread its deleterious power among worldly men, to the injury of social intercourse, but has found its way into the Church, as Satan did in paradise, and erected on the very walls of Zion, the holy city, the standard of revolt from Zion's God. "Ye that make mention of the Lord," be then warned by God's controversy with us. It is righteous on his part, and merited by ourselves. On the household of faith in the course of providence, depends our escape

and safety. You have experienced enough of the goodness and faithfulness of your God to encourage you to arise, and return unto him, confessing your sins. Thus doing, he is faithful and just to forgive you your sins, and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

Hearers, whether you are yet in the world, or through grace made members of the Church, let the signs of the times enforce upon you the duty of repentance—not merely a sorrow for sin, but reformation of your evil deeds. I might enlarge upon other motives, but in the present state of the world, this appears to me the most important. Look to Europe. Survey the wrecks of former thrones, the fragments of former greatness. Kings are permitted again to breathe and exercise their royal power. But how do they improve God's solemn pause in his judgments? By establishing the right of the most powerful to oppress the weakest; by parcelling out countries and their inhabitants, to be disposed of to another master, as they please. But this is not all. They have restored to the throne

of France, and uphold the Bourbon family, whose ancestor was an APOSTATE from the truth, and whose successors have been notorious for their perfidy and cruelty to Protestants, as well as their personal profligacy, and their corruption of the morals of their subjects. This family has been thoroughly devoted to the interests of the antichristian Church, and more deeply marked with all the characteristic features of crime before God, in relation to his law, together with his Gospel, than any family who ever possessed royal authority^e."

Can this state of things continue? Is it probable that no change will take place? If the Bourbon family, that faithless and bloody family, keep possession of the throne, it will be a paradox in the moral government of God. If every thing in Europe returns quietly to its former state; if the Pope be again seated in his chair, and the inquisition restored in Spain, how grossly erroneous have

^e Sully's Memoirs. Gifford's France, during the reigns of Louis XIII., XIV., &c. Laval's history of the Reform in France. Robinson's Mem. of Reform. in France, contained in the lives of Claude and Saurin.

been all our calculations of the effects which the discoveries and information of our age would produce! But this state of things cannot last! If it does, it will afford a phenomenon in history, far more extraordinary than any that has occurred in this age; of wonders! But, I repeat it, this state of things cannot last. The nature of the events which have occurred; the character of the actors in these events; the turbulent spirit and military taste which these events have produced; the lateness of the time; but, above all, the utter disregard manifested towards the Lord and the works of his hand, by the governors of the nations—all forbid such an issue, and forbode still greater calamities to be in store for Europe. No such moral and religious improvement of the providence of God has been made as to warrant even the shadow of hope that the peace of Europe will be permanent. I speak not as a politician, though a sound politician must perceive more than ordinary grounds of apprehension of a new convulsion; but as a Christian, taking the word of prophecy and the dealings of God's providence in all ages, for my guides. Greater judgments

and still heavier sorrows are in store for Europe. And in them we must expect to be more or less involved. Prepare then for the worst, by returning unto the Lord with your whole heart. Then you will be safe in every situation, having God for your helper, your refuge, your portion. AMEN.

LECTURE I.



THE CONVERSION OF LYDIA.



ACTS XVI. 13, 14, 15.

And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made. And we sat down and spake unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there. And she constrained us.

“**F**AITH cometh by hearing,” saith the apostle, “and hearing by the word of God^a.” As salvation is connected with

^a Rom. x. 17.

faith, so God orders the events of his providence, that the heirs of eternal life shall hear the word, and receive it in the love of it. Being infinite in his wisdom and power, he never can be disappointed in the exercise of his grace. Having the hearts of all men in his hands, he uses them as his instruments to promote his own purposes, which he purposed in Christ Jesus before the world began. Wherever the lot of his chosen is cast, he will either bring them to the place where his word is known, or he will send his word by suitable messengers, to the place where they reside.

The Acts of the Apostles furnish us with many instances of the truth of these remarks. Among these, that which is contained in the chapter from whence the subject of our discourse is taken, is not the least remarkable. Paul and Timothy having gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in the province of Asia. Being thus diverted from thence they came to Mysia, another adjoining province, intending to go from thence into Bithynia; but the Spirit suffered them not.

Leaving these places, they went under the direction of the Holy Spirit to Troas, which was near the place where the celebrated city of Troy had stood, on the Ægean Sea. Here a vision appeared to Paul in the night. “ There stood a man of Macedonia and “ prayed him, saying, come over into Macedonia and help us^b.” From this he and his companion, together with Luke, who seems to have joined them here, concluded with certainty that the Lord called them to preach to the Macedonians. They accordingly crossed the sea from Troas in Asia, and landed at Neapolis on the European side, from whence they proceeded to Philippi. This was, says the sacred writer, the chief city of that part of Macedonia^c. It was originally a city in Thrace, but Philip the Father of Alexander the Great, having conquered Thrace, and added a part of it to Macedonia, changed its name to Philippi, after himself^d. It was situated upon the river Hebrus, which appears to have been navigable^e. A colony of Romans was plant-

b v. 9.

c See Bishop Pierce, on the correctness of Luke’s account.

d Well’s Sacred Geography.

e Acts xx. 6.

ed here by Julius Cæsar, which was afterwards augmented by Augustus Cæsar: so that Philippi became a great city, and enjoyed the privileges of Romans^f.

To this place the Holy Spirit directed the Apostle and his companions to go, that they might preach the word to the heirs of life. Here the Lord Jesus had some of his people, who were to be delivered from the bondage of corruption by his grace. The time for such deliverance was arrived, even the appointed time, and therefore Paul and Timothy could not remain in Asia, but must pass over to Europe. In Philippi a Church was now to be gathered by the power of the Spirit, applying the Word of truth to the hearts of sinful men. Here victories were to be achieved far more splendid than those of conquerors of nations; victories over the corruptions of human nature; over the influence and arts of the prince of darkness. The means were apparently inadequate; the first successes, upon human principles of calculation, not the most encouraging. But here, as elsewhere, God chose “the foolish
“ things of the world to confound the wise;

f Doddridge's note on Acts xvi. 12.

“ and the weak things of the world to con-
“ found the things which were mighty, and
“ base things of the world, and things which
“ are despised, did God choose, and things
“ which are not, to bring to nought things
“ that are, that no flesh should glory in his
“ presence.”

After abiding in this city certain days, says the historian Luke, v. 13, *On the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down and spake unto the women which resorted thither.* It appears that there was no Jewish synagogue in Philippi, for the apostle and his companions would have gone to it, as they invariably did in all places in which there was a synagogue. From this fact we may conclude that there were but few Jews in this place, and these few not very zealous, or exemplarily pious. There were, however, some who observed the worship of God, according to his appointment. With them some proselytes were joined, who kept their garments unspotted in an idolatrous city. The whole company at best must have been small, and consisted chiefly of women. These assem-

bled on the Sabbath, i. e. the Jewish Sabbath, our Saturday, out of the city at the river side. There “prayer was wont to be made,” says our translation: it should rather be, “An house of prayer was allowed to be by law^s.” These houses of prayer, or oratories, as they were called, were different from the synagogues. They were without the towns and cities, and were places compassed with a wall, or some other inclosure, but open above. Their principal use was for prayer. The synagogues on the contrary, were within the cities and towns. They were covered houses, where not only prayers to God were offered up, but the law and the prophets were read and expounded. One of the former houses, an oratory, was in Philippi allowed by the law of the Romans to be used according to the custom of the Jews and proselytes.

This oratory, situated by the river side, appears to have been well known in this place. Hither the pious women resorted on the day which God had sanctified. No mention is made of men. Either business

ἡ ἐνομιζέτο προσευχὴ εἶναι. Bishop Pierce and Doddridge, on the text.

had engrossed their attention too much, or they had become contaminated with irreligion. Let the cause be what it would, the fact was incontrovertible. The worship of God was attended to only by women. This is one among a multitude of facts which prove that as a general rule the female sex are more religious than the male. Examine the proportion between the sexes in the communions of different Churches, and you will find women far exceed men in numbers; perhaps they are double the number.

How shall we account for this difference? Some ascribe it altogether to the domestic habits of the female sex, which are more peculiarly suited to the influence of religious principles, than the occupations and exposure of the males. That there is plausibility and even weight in the remark, is granted; but the domestic habits of females constitute only a secondary cause of their pre-eminence in religion. The grand cause is to be sought in their minds, the characteristics of which correspond more particularly with the nature of religion than those of the males. Whilst men pride themselves upon the vigour of their intellect and their laborious

patient research after knowledge, women are entitled to all the praise which belongs justly to love, gratitude, generosity, pity, and other affections of the same class. Religion consists in a very great degree in the excitement and direction of the affections. Not that the understanding is to be neglected; far from it. Excited affections, without the government of an enlightened understanding, only urge on men to folly and extravagance. The understanding must be enlightened, that thus the affections may be excited. Religion, which communicates light, imparts heat, and by the combined operation of light and heat quickens to activity. Hence, though you find more enlarged religious knowledge among men, among the female sex you will always find more enlarged religious practice. The great truths of religion meet in the affections of women, if I may so express myself, a soil which is more congenial to their nature, more adapted for their reception than the state of mind in men. In this their constitution, the goodness as well as wisdom of God appears. They readily, through the grace of God, receive the Word, which pe-

cularly qualifies them for acting the part, and discharging the important duties of mothers, which supports them under all the trials they are called to sustain, and in the frequent solitariness of domestic life, from the absence of a husband or the bereavement of children, constitutes their solace and joy. God has often made them the honoured instruments of promoting his cause. In Philippi he used them for keeping alive attention to religion, and preparing the way for the introduction of the Gospel. They had assembled on the Sabbath for the purposes of devotion, without any male with them. No doubt some one or more officiated for the rest.

For women to pray with women is proper. And it is most devoutly to be desired that pious females would associate more with each other for this great and important duty. The direction of the apostle, “ Let your women keep silence in the churches : for “ it is not permitted unto them to speak ^h,” does not militate against such associations. For a female to rise in a mixed assembly, to address them, is forbidden by the apostle,

h 1 Cor. xiv. 34.

because indecorous, and contrary to that natural modesty of the sex, which shrinks from unnecessary public exposure. The same objection cannot possibly be made against female associations for prayer and praise. Nor, I add, can it be made against a believing wife, when connected with a husband who is not joined to the Lord, if she officiates in prayer for the family. On the contrary, in both cases the line of duty appears plain, so as to forbid mistake or doubt, where opportunity offers, to discharge the duty.

Wherever devout women thus honour God in the ways of his appointment, there they have a right to expect a blessing. To the women who were met in the oratory at the river side near Philippi, God sent Paul and his companions. Whether they had heard of this place of resort, or wandering out of the city for retirement, were drawn to this place by some appearances attracting their notice, we know not; but to it they went, and sat down in it, *and spake unto the women which resorted thither*. To them was explained the great truths of the Gospel of salvation with plainness, with force,

with tenderness ; for all these qualities were displayed by the apostles, and first preachers. On this occasion, as on others, Christ was the topic of these disciples. The dignity of his person, the greatness of his love, the completeness of his atonement, the evil of sin, the corruption of human nature, the freeness of forgiveness, the necessity of holiness, and fitness for heaven, were the branches into which the topic was divided. How interesting to imagine these illustrious disciples in the midst of these devout women, dwelling upon truths which arouse the fears, and attract the hopes of sinful creatures ; truths on the reception of which eternal life depends ! Nor did they labour in vain, for in the 14 v. we are informed that, “ *A certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us : whose heart the Lord opened.*”

Whether this woman was a Jewess or a proselyte, we cannot tell. The latter seems most probable, however, from the manner in which she is described, “ *which worshipped God.*” This would hardly be said of a Jewess ; indeed would sound strange : but

ἡ σεβομένη τὸν Θεόν. Pierce, on Acts xiii. 43.

spoken of a heathen convert, is natural and satisfactory. She was born in Thyatira, a city in Asia Minor, where there was afterwards a Church, to which John addressed one of his Epistles. Her occupation was merchandise, and the particular article in which she dealt, one of the most famous and costly in all antiquity. She was a seller of purple, either of purple goods or of purple dye.

Purple is celebrated in the prophecies of Ezekiel. Tyrian purple was in high estimation among the ancients, and was almost peculiar to kings and emperors. The colour was produced by the blood of a species of the shell fish. The process of dying was laborious and expensive, from the number of fish needed. Two kinds of this fish were used, sometimes separately and sometimes together. By different mixtures of these, varieties were obtained, according to the changes of fashion^k. These remarks are the more necessary, because some writers have described Lydia as poor, whereas the contrary appears the fact. For assuredly from the demand for and the price of purple,

^k Swinburne, in his travels through the two Sicilies, gives a particular account of this dye. Sec. xxxi.

it is evident that the sellers must have been persons of considerable property.

The notice taken of Lydia's occupation suggests an observation of a practical nature. Purple was an article not of necessity, but of ornament. As Lydia's conduct is not condemned; as it does not appear that she abandoned her occupation after her conversion, we may safely conclude that a Christian may engage in an occupation which has for its object the supply of articles merely ornamental. Every employment is consistent with faith, which does not administer to the vices or sins of men. Ornaments, in themselves, are perfectly harmless. They only become causes of transgression when they foster pride, and produce an idolatrous love of our own persons, or a desire of attracting the notice and admiration of others. These effects spring from an improper use of ornaments, and are chargeable on those who wear them, not on those who dispose of them.

Lydia's occupation, though it related to such matters, did not affect her conduct. "She worshipped God;" she professed her faith in the God of the Jews, and the re-

ligion which he had established among them. To all the ordinances of his appointment, she attended so far as she could. Her temporal concerns did not operate as a snare to make her neglect her spiritual duties; nor did the ornamental and costly article in which she dealt, draw off her heart from God. In this she has set an example which professing believers would do well to follow. Alas, how many, on the contrary, let the business of life interfere with the service of God, during the week! And what is worse, how many make no scruple of sacrificing the duties of the Sabbath to their temporal advantage! Not satisfied with six days, they sacrilegiously rob God of his time, and, by the occupations of the week, invade the seventh day, which he has commanded to be kept holy. Instead of worshipping God in the assemblies of the saints, or in their houses, they are reading newspapers, strolling along the streets, collecting at post-offices, lounging in their houses, as if to teach their children and servants how God's commands can be put at defiance by sinful men! Oh, the breaches of the Sabbath alone are enough to draw down God's ven-

geance on this land! Would to God that professing believers were not chargeable with them, as well as others. The Sabbath is holy time, and must be spent scrupulously in acts of religion, works of necessity, and exercises of charity. It is utterly unlawful on this day to attend to our temporal employments, or partake of those temporal pleasures which are lawful and proper in the week. On this subject Christians cannot cherish too tender a conscience, for he who suffers worldly concern to supersede his attention to the duties of the Sabbath, will soon feel the effects in his religious state. Thus also, he who during the week neglects the regular worship of God in his family, on account of his worldly occupation, will suffer. They need not interfere. Each is entitled to a place in our attention; but each in due order, God first, then the world: the world in subordination to God.

Thus Lydia acted; she attended to her occupation, and she worshipped God. On the present occasion she had met with the other women, for observing the Sabbath day, as commanded. To her, as to the others, the disciples spake. Paul was here, we find

from the 15th v. as usual, the chief speaker. Though, like one born out of due time, he was admirably qualified by the Holy Spirit to preach Christ. He could adapt his instructions to the humblest and feeblest, as well as raise them to the level of the mightiest intellect, and the most extensive erudition. He shone in the Areopagus in Athens; made Felix tremble on his judgment seat in Cesarea, and constrained an apostate Jewish King to exclaim, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. This was the man who exerted all his powers now for the benefit of the devout women of Philippi, assembled in the oratory on the river side. And the Lord accompanied his preaching with a blessing to Lydia. She only is mentioned on this occasion. *Her heart was opened by the Lord.*

The manner of expression used is significant and instructive. We are taught,

First, that Lydia's heart was closed to the truth of God by nature. She was an externally devout woman, who attended to the duties of religion; but her heart was the seat of enmity against God. Such is the condition of every one previous to regeneration.

Every thing evil is cherished in the heart; every thing truly good is excluded. Pride, prejudice, the love of sin, and the love of the world, all operate as keepers of the heart, to secure it against the reception of Christ. Nor must we omit unbelief, that crowning sin of our nature. Unbelief of God's threatening made our first parents transgress God's command; unbelief of God's gracious offer of pardon keeps sinners from salvation and heaven. By this sin the heart is barred against the word preached, against judgments and mercies in providence, against the remonstrances of conscience.

Secondly, To open the heart, Almighty power is necessary. The Lord opened Lydia's heart. She had not the inclination naturally to open her heart; and when she felt the inclination, found herself unable to do it.

Every convinced sinner feels this truth; a truth taught us as with a sun-beam in the Scriptures. We are described as dead in trespasses and sins; as helpless and under the curse. From this state we cannot, by our own exertions, deliver ourselves: Can a lame man walk straight, or a blind man

see? Equally impossible is it for a sinner to open his heart. The Law, by its terrors, will not do it; prosperous or adverse providences will not do it; the Gospel of itself will not do it; the Lord must do it.

Thirdly, Lydia's heart, naturally closed to divine truth, was *opened* by the Lord. This operation of Almighty power was upon the faculties of her soul. Her whole heart was opened. Her understanding was enlightened, so that she perceived the nature and excellence of divine truth, as unfolded to her in the preaching of the apostles. To the demand of this truth, her will, without hesitation, yielded obedience, and chose the truth, which her understanding approved. Her affections being revolutionized by this illumination of her understanding, she loved the truth which she had chosen, sincerely and supremely.

Thus her heart *was opened*. The operation was completely successful, though gentle and mild. She appears to have felt no terror; to have undergone no heavy law work. Sweetly, but irresistibly, was she drawn from sin to holiness, from darkness to light. The change was *real and astonish-*

ing, and discovered itself in characteristic effects, which are noticed in the close of the 14th, together with the 15th verse, “*She attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there. And she constrained us.*”

Here we have three things, subsequent to the opening of Lydia’s heart, which require our attention.

First, she attended unto the things which were spoken by Paul. The word rendered here “attended unto’,” expresses more. It means “both to believe and obey,” and therefore includes Christian principle and practice.

To the Gospel, preached by Paul, Lydia thus gave full obedience. She was persuaded of the truth of what he stated, and embraced and rested on Jesus Christ, as he was offered to her in the Gospel. Her faith was the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. It worked by

ἰπροσίχειν Parkhurst’s Lex. and Kypke’s Obser. Sacr. tom. 11, on the text.

love to God, to Christ, to Believers, to the Law as a rule of life, to the Gospel as the great instrument of her regeneration and salvation. It purified the heart, enabling her to cleanse herself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit; filled her with hatred of sin, and loathing of self; as also with love of holiness, and desires after greater conformity to God. Her faith being living, produced corresponding fruits. She obeyed the things which Paul spake: her credit to his testimony affecting her heart, produced a corresponding deportment in her life. She now discharged the moral duties of life, from a principle of faith, and with an eye to God's glory. She moreover performed the Christian duties of self-denial, taking up her cross, and following the Redeemer through evil as well as good report. No sacrifice was too great for her, now that she was become an heir of glory. Denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, she henceforth lived not unto herself, but unto him who loved his people, and gave himself for them an offering unto God. She also attended to the positive ordinances of worship which the Redeemer had established in his house, being thorough-

ly convinced that such was both her duty and privilege. Thus, we are informed,

Secondly, That “ She was baptized and
“ her household.”

The Redeemer, in the commission which he gave to his apostles, commanded them to baptize as well as teach all whom they disciplined. They, therefore, who profess to be his disciples, fail in their duty if they neglect to partake of the ordinance of baptism, and deprive themselves of an inestimable privilege, designed to strengthen their faith, and confirm their hope. Those who were converted under the preaching of the Apostles and Evangelists, were baptized, thus receiving God’s token of his own most gracious Covenant. That same token we find in the case of Lydia, as well as of the Jailor in Philippi^m and Stephanas of Corinthⁿ, was administered to her household, though we read not that any one besides Lydia professed faith in the Lord Jesus. Thus it was that upon the profession of Abraham’s faith, “ every male among the men of Abraham’s
“ house” was circumcised, according to the command of God^p. As my object is not to

m Acts xvi. 33. *n* 1 Cor. i. 16. *o* Gen. xvii. 23. *p* Gen. xvii. 10—14.

illustrate or defend the particular view of the doctrine of baptism, maintained by our Church, I only remark, that this is not the only point in which baptism resembles circumcision; for in fact the one has come in the place of the other, and therefore all the essential spiritual features belonging to the one are found in the other. The apostle asserts the truth that baptism is Christian circumcision, when he says, addressing the Believers in Colosse, “In whom,” i. e. Christ, “are ye also circumcised with the
“circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh,
“by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with
“him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen
“with him through the faith of the operation
“of God, who hath raised him from the
“dead^q.” In no other way that is satisfactory can we explain the fact of households being baptized by the apostles, except this, that baptism has come in the place of circumcision.

Thirdly, Lydia besought the apostle and his companions, saying, “If ye have judged
“me to be faithful to the Lord, come into

^q Coloss. ii. 11, 12.

“ my house, and abide there ; and she constrained us.”

Having, through the instrumentality of these men, become a partaker of eternal life, she could not be contented till they had partaken of her bounty. She no longer put that value on worldly possessions which she had done before ; she viewed them in a different light. As she was the Lord's, so were her house, her gold, her servants, her accommodations. Here she grounds her request on her sincerity, “ If ye judge me to be faithful to the Lord,” which means, If ye think I have truly believed and obeyed what the Lord by you has made known unto me, then come into my house. She desired their company,

First, To display her gratitude. They had been the honoured instruments of bringing her to the knowledge and acknowledgment of the truth. Having become an heir of glory, she felt her heart drawn out in love and gratitude to God and his people. She had expressed these feelings in her obedience to the call of the former by his ministering servants, and now expresses the same feelings to the latter, by entertaining

the apostle and his companions. Whilst gladness filled her heart, joy lighted up her eyes, as she discharged the duties of hospitality towards her guests. Thus it is that the grace of God felt in the heart, displays itself in corresponding actions. As God has done good to those who are saved, and deals kindly with them, like as a father pitieth his children, pitying them that fear him, remembering that they are but dust and ashes, so they in return do good so far as they can to others, and deal kindly with them in every situation of life. Little credit is due to that profession of faith, which confines its fruits to sighs, tears, prayers, or attendance upon the ordinances of worship, whilst it is unaccompanied with liberality in the appropriation of our worldly substance, for the cause of Christ, or the assistance of suffering followers. There is a religion, and, O how lofty are its pretensions! which passes current with multitudes, that never yet has softened the hearts of its advocates, or opened their purses. They are clamorous for the rights of God, but freezingly cold to the rights of humanity; I may add, to the claims of moral honesty. They are very wil-

ling to let God take care of their souls, but insist upon taking care of their money themselves. Hence they are abundant in their professions of homage to God, but grossly deficient in acts of benevolence towards men. They will go from sermon to sermon, from one meeting for prayer to another, but if you come to them in the name of Him who is Lord of the universe, for a part of what he has given, to promote his cause, they are restless, think you are troublesome, and afford merely a pittance. They grant cheerfully that their souls are the Lord's, but maintain that their gold and silver are their own. Not so acted Lydia, nor the other converts in the primitive Church. They considered their worldly

r Instances, in the present day, of the same kind are not wanting. Among them the Hottentots at Bethelsdorp, in Africa, deserve especial notice. From a letter of Mr. Read, dated April 9, 1815, it appears that they paid the tax which was laid upon them by the government of the colony, amounting to 3,600 rix dollars, about £ 700. The day after the tax was paid, they formed an Auxiliary Missionary Society, and subscribed 398 rix dollars, about £ 180, to be paid before the end of November. What feelings of shame ought this fact to produce in multitudes of professing Christians ! What a cutting refutation does it afford, of the libels of Lichtenstein and other slanderers of the Missionaries in Africa !

substance as only granted for the purpose of glorifying the Giver.

2. Lydia desired to entertain the messengers of Christ, that, whilst she was dispensing to them in temporal matters, they might dispense to her spiritual good.

Having, according to the direction of the Redeemer, been baptized, she was anxious, agreeably to the same direction, to be taught whatsoever he had commanded. She had perceived so much of the excellency of divine truth, that she was desirous of knowing more and still more of its height and depth, length and breadth. Like many who sat at Christ's feet, she sat at the feet of Paul and his associates, listening with profound attention, and drinking in their instructions as the parched earth drinks in the showers of heaven. The more she heard, the more she was convinced of her need of additional information. It is true, she was not connected, by her conversion, to that miserable class of persons who "are ever learning and never coming to the knowledge of the truth;" but it is as true she did not fall into the snare of the devil as a novice, thinking more highly of herself than she ought to think, and

assuming all the *authority* of age and experience, without the advantages which age and experience afford. Being young in the divine life, she considered herself a scholar, and desired to receive instruction not as a disputant, but as a scholar. Hence we find her name recorded among the worthies of faith, with approbation, whilst the vain disputers of this world, if mentioned at all, are mentioned with disapprobation.

The account of Lydia's conversion teaches us the following important lessons :

1. That terror or the fear of punishment is not an indispensable appendage to the work of conversion.

The law is indeed a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ, but Christ himself must receive and save us. We are all born under the law, as a covenant of works which is broken, and of course are subject to the curse as the penalty of our disobedience. As a rule of life we cannot obey it, until we are made partakers of the grace of the gospel. Previous to conversion, therefore, as it offers us no pardon, it inspires no hope in our hearts, and must therefore from the very nature of our corruption terrify us with the fear of

punishment. Its demands, which we cannot fulfil, drive us further and still further from God. Upon unrenewed unsanctified nature it operates, when disconnected from the gospel and the hope which the gospel has originated, as it does upon those miserable beings who are shut up in the prison of despair. Hence fearful alarms and even convulsing terrors may be suffered, without experiencing the grace of God in the least degree. Such was the case of Judas and multitudes in later times. It is not the view of the condemnable nature of sin which constitutes an essential characteristic of the saving work of the Holy Spirit, but of its odious, defiling, and hateful nature. There may be a heavy and distressing law work in the soul without conversion. Natural conscience under the publication of the curses of the law, or the intimation of God's displeasure in providence, oft-times is awakened and writes bitter things against the sinner. His countenance will turn pale, his knees will smite one against the other and his heart fail, whilst he remains unreconciled to God and far from righteousness. It is Christ alone, unfolded in the preaching of the gos-

pel as the end of the law for righteousness that affords such a view of sin as fills the heart with self-loathing and abhorrence of sin, and thus gently draws out the affections after Christ as a Saviour from sin, as well as from its punishment. When sin is thus hated for its own sake as intrinsically vile and execrable, it will be avoided and its consequences dreaded.

2. The history of Lydia's conversion teaches us the honour which God puts upon his own institutions.

These institutions are his appointed means to bring sinners to the knowledge of the truth. Though he is an absolutely sovereign God, yet he deals with us according to our intelligent nature. Hence he has given us a revelation of his will, which we are commanded to search. He has commissioned certain men to preach his word, to which we are directed to attend. He has made it our duty to seek his favour and blessing by prayer and supplication, and to improve our social intercourse by conversing of the things which pertain to salvation. These and other means possess no inherent virtue; but by attending to them we are in the way of

receiving his grace and eternal life*. They who neglect them, on the contrary, have no right to expect his blessing. Let me not, however, be understood as teaching that all who use the means shall be saved. Far from it. Multitudes perish in their sins because they do not use them aright. They either mistake them for religion, or they depend upon their own power to make them efficacious. God alone can enable us so to attend upon his institutions, as to meet with his approbation and secure his blessing.

3. The history of Lydia's conversion proves the absolute necessity of God's agency in changing a sinner.

As he opened her heart, so he must open the hearts of all sinners, or they will remain at enmity with him and die in their sins. In the work of conversion the sinner is passive. He receives the grace of God given to him, which grace makes him alive unto righteousness. Of himself he cannot even think one good thought; how then can he do any thing which is acceptable to God? He is under

* Dr. Lawson has an excellent discourse on the condition and duty of unconverted sinners, in his volume of Lectures on Ruth.

sentence of death by reason of his revolt from his Sovereign. How then can he escape that death, unless his Sovereign remit the offence? His heart is at enmity with God. How can he change himself, so long as his heart is in this state? And who but God can change him? Such are his character, condition, habits, feelings, and attachments, that unless an entire revolution takes place in them all, he must remain under the righteous indignation of God: and such is the dominion of sin over him, that nothing short of the exercise of Almighty power can subdue him. The infatuation of sin alone prevents every one from feeling and confessing this truth; and accordingly look to God alone for strength and salvation.

4. This history teaches us the affecting truth that persons may be worshippers of God, devout in their conduct and regular in their external obedience to divine ordinances, and yet unrenewed and unsanctified.

Thousands of this description were found from time to time in the Church under the Mosaic dispensation. Not less is their number under the Gospel dispensation.

Multitudes following multitudes cherish the hope of eternal life upon no higher or more substantial grounds. They have a name that they live, but are dead; and their death is the more awful, because they think that they are alive from the dead. The words of Christ concerning such persons, have a fearful import, and ought to alarm every one of us, lest we belong to the number; Verily, I say unto you, publicans and harlots shall enter into the kingdom of God before you. There is no way in which an approach to their hearts and consciences can be opened. Wrapped up in their good opinion of their safe state, they see no danger and feel no necessity for alarming themselves. And yet even such persons yield to the Almighty power of the Grace of God. Hopeless as their case seems to human judgment, they are not without the reach of mercy. As Lydia's heart was opened, so their hearts can be opened by the Holy Spirit.

Lastly, Lydia's conduct, whilst it illustrates the effect of real religion upon sinners, shows the inseparable connexion between faith and good works.

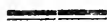
By their fruits, Christ has told us, shall ye

know them. In no other way can we prove the reality of our conversion than by doing the will of God. And our conduct must be moral as well as religious. We must do justly and love mercy, as well as walk humbly with our God. The duties which we owe to our fellow men must be performed, as well as the duties which we owe to God. God requires mercy, and not sacrifice. No attendance upon the ordinances of religion, however punctual, will or can compensate for a neglect of the offices of kindness, the gifts of benevolence, the displays of gratitude. We are stewards of the *gifts of Providence*, as well as of *the Grace of God*. Let this truth be deeply impressed upon our hearts, and whilst we strive to be abundant in religious duties, let us strive equally to be abundant in moral duties. Thus we shall in our several relations and situations adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. AMEN.

LECTURE II.



THE CONVERSION OF THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH.



ACTS VIII. 26, 39.

And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise and go toward the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went: and behold a man of Ethiopia, an Eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning, and sitting in his chariot, read Esaias the prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man

should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter: and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water. And the eunuch said, See, here is water: what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out

of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more ; and he went on his way rejoicing.

EVER since the fall of man, there has been a constant warfare between the Church and the World, according to God's prediction. " I will put enmity," said he to the Serpent, " between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed." The seed of the serpent are those who are in their sins, strangers to God and aliens from his family. The seed of the woman is the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ, together with all who are the subjects of his grace, redeemed by his blood out of every kindred, nation and tongue. Together they constitute one mystical body, of which *he* is the Head, and they are the members. They have nothing but the word and faithfulness of God to support and encourage them ; whilst their opponents, the seed of the serpent, can call in to their aid the wisdom, the power, the allurements, the riches, the frowns of the world. The latter see their resources ; the

former exercise faith in theirs, though unseen.

In this conflict between faith and sense; between the children of this world and the ransomed of Messiah the prince, the latter are always ultimately victorious. They may for a season be depressed; they may be called to encounter persecution for the sake of their Master, but all these sufferings inflicted by their adversaries, only tend to promote the increase of their graces and of their numbers. The serpent, according to God's prediction, has the power of bruising the heel of the seed of the woman. He assailed, and for a season apparently triumphed over, the human nature of Christ, when on the cross he yielded up the ghost. And thus he is permitted to vex and harass the mortal part of Messiah's people, and at times to produce disquietude in their souls. But Messiah, in his resurrection and ascension, bruised the head of the *serpent*, broke the power of Satan, and destroyed his reign.

In the victory of their Prince, believers partake. Weeping on their part may endure for a night in which the prince of dark-

ness, and his adherents, prevail; but joy cometh to them in the morning, when their Master appears in their behalf. Looking in the morning watch, as he did when the Egyptians pursued Israel, through the pillar of fire, and of the cloud, upon his enemies and theirs, he troubles the host of them, and they are dismayed. Their devices he confounds, and glorifies himself in the salvation of his chosen.

The history of *the Church*, which is the history of the seed of the woman and his ransomed people, is replete with facts confirmatory of the triumphs of faith over sense; of the company of believers over the world. The subject of our present lecture furnishes us with one such fact, striking and encouraging. By recurring to the commencement of this chapter, you will perceive that the death of holy Stephen, and the consequent persecution of the disciples of Messiah in Jerusalem, scattered them abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. In this persecution we see the serpent *bruising the heel* of the seed of the woman, wounding him in his weakest part. But mark the issue! The scattered disciples took the

Gospel with them, and preached it every where. Philip, one of the deacons, of whom mention is made in the 6th chap.; but who also was an evangelist, as we find in the 21st chap. 8th v. went down to Samaria, and in his character of evangelist, not of deacon, preached Christ unto them. Philip's preaching was blessed, so that in Samaria, the seed of the woman bruised the head of the serpent, destroying his power.

Whilst in this city, he received his commission, the fulfilment of which terminated in the victory of grace over sin, and the spread of the gospel among the regions of darkness. Of this commission mention is made in the 26 v. with which our lecture commences, "*And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go towards the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.*"

Here the instrumentality of an angel is used to promote the purposes of God. Such an instrument we find from the Scriptures he has often used. We know nothing of the being and nature of angels, except from God's own revelation. It is probable, they

were formed the first day of the creation—for the Lord informs us, that when he laid the foundations of the earth, “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy^a.” They are incorporeal creatures, possessing intellectual and active powers, and originally made holy. A part of them, however, fell from their holiness, and became devils. The chief of them is called Satan, or the Adversary, and was the old Serpent, who tempted Eve to her ruin. When they fell, is not revealed; but as “God saw every thing that he had made,” on the sixth day, “and behold it was very good^b”—it is probable, they did not rebel until after that day. These fallen spirits are incessantly engaged in opposing God, and harassing his people. On the other hand, those spirits who have kept their first estate are God’s ministers, to do his will. Their number is exceeding great, and they seem, from some parts of Scripture, to differ in rank and power^c. Let it be remembered, however, that not one of them is an archangel. I know the idea is common that archangels are a superior grade of angels;

^a Job xxxviii. 4. 7.

^b Gen. i. 31.

^c Coloss. i. 16.

but the Scriptures mention but one archangel, and that only in two places^d. In the one place^e, he is called Michael. By turning to Daniel you will find this is the name of Messiah, the Great Prince who is to stand up for the children of the prophet's people^f. That he is the only archangel, you will perceive by recurring to one of the passages already quoted^g, where the archangel and the Lord and God are one and the same person^h.

The holy angels of whom we speak are represented as surrounding the throne of God, and engaged there in praising him. They also fulfil his purposes of vengeance to his enemies, as in the case of Sennacheribⁱ; and of mercy and kindness to his people, as in the case of Peter^k. To the Lord Jesus they performed many services, while he was on earth^l; and to his people they are said to be ministering spirits, by the apostle to the Hebrews^m. One of them, in the execution of this office, *spake* to Philip, while in Samaria. Let this not be

d 1 Thess. iv. 16. & Jude 9. *e* Jude 9. *f* Dan. xii. 1.
g 1 Thess. iv. 16. *h* Horsely's Sermon, on the Watchers.
i 2 Kings xix. 35. *k* Acts xii. 7. 10. *l* Matt. iv. 11. Luke
 xxii. 43. *m* Heb. i. 14.

considered incredible; for assuredly God, who made both angels and men, can qualify the former to convey instruction or warning to the latter, though the former be spirits, and the latter possess bodily organs. God enabled an angel to *speak* audibly, without bodily organs, to Philip; so that Philip heard him, and knew well that the message delivered was from the Lord.

By this message the evangelist was directed to go south of Jerusalem, to Gaza, “which is desert.” This city lay at the south west point of Judea. This is the city whose gates Samson took away, and whither he was carried when he was taken prisoner, and where he pulled down the house of their god Dagon upon the lords of the Philistines. “It was destroyed by Alexander the Great, and so *made desolate*, “as the prophet,” Amos, “had foretold; and “is therefore called, and, saith Strabo the “heathen geographer, continued, desertⁿ.” To this place, as commanded, the evangelist arose and went. He knew not why he was thus sent to a distance from Samaria, at the very time his labours there were blessed.

ⁿ Well's Geogr. vol. 2, p. 2, chap. 2, sect. 6.

He only knew that the Lord had made it his duty to go. He therefore cheerfully and unhesitatingly obeyed. When arrived at the place, he was made acquainted with God's design, and received his reward in being made the honoured agent of adding one more subject to the Redeemer's kingdom.

Behold, says the sacred historian, v. 27, 28, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, and was returning, and sitting in his chariot, read Esaias the prophet.

The country to which the evangelist refers here, is not the Asiatic Ethiopia, or part of Arabia mentioned in the Old Testament, but more properly Cush, or Cushan. This was situated on the borders of Egypt, and extended along the eastern shore of the Red Sea. The Ethiopia meant was in Africa, now called Abyssinia, on the south west of the Red Sea, and south of Egypt. In a part of this country, called Meroe, heathen writers inform us that Candace had long

been the name of their queens". Of this country the eunuch was a native, and in it he possessed great authority under the queen. He was one of her chief officers, in whom she placed the highest trust and confidence, inasmuch as she committed to his care "the charge of all her treasure." *This nobleman had come to Jerusalem to worship.* He must therefore have been a convert to the faith of Israel, one who had embraced the religion of the Jews.

The name given to such converts was proselytes of righteousness. These were distinguished from proselytes of the gate. The former were those who, though descended from Gentile parents, were circumcised, and submitted to the whole law of Moses: and so were regarded as Jews, there being but one law to both^p. The latter, which were called strangers within the gates of Israel^q, were uncircumcised Gentiles, who nevertheless were distinguished from the idolatrous Gentiles by their worshipping the true God of Israel, and submitting to what

^p Clarke and Doddridge, on the text. *p* Exod. xii. 48, 49.
^q Exod. xx. 10.

were called the seven precepts of Noah^r.
These,

1. Forbad idolatry,
2. Commanded reverence of God's name,
3. Forbad murder,
4. Adultery and incest,
5. Theft,
6. Commanded the exercise of justice,
and,
7. Forbad eating things strangled, and
blood.

To this latter class, Cornelius the devout centurion belonged. And as he was the first fruits of the Gentiles, there can be no doubt but that the eunuch belonged to the former class. If not, would not Philip have been as backward as Peter was? And would not a special revelation have been necessary for Philip as well as Peter, to remove his scruples?

The eunuch had been converted to the Jewish religion no doubt through the instrumentality of the Jews in Egypt, who were numerous, and under the Ptolemies had been patronized, even so far, as nearly two hundred years before the conversion of the

Ethiopian nobleman to Christianity, to have been permitted to build at On, or Heliopolis, a temple similar to the one at Jerusalem^s. The intercourse between Egypt and Ethiopia lying next to each other as they did, was easy, and must have been constant. No doubt many of the Jews from Egypt removed to Ethiopia. Certain it is that at an early period Judaism was the religion of this country, introduced, it is said, by the queen of Sheba; and now, according to the accounts of travellers^t, the religion of this country is a strange mixture of Judaism and Christianity.

Thus we can satisfactorily conjecture the manner in which the eunuch became a proselyte of righteousness. That he was a sincere one cannot be doubted, when we consider his office, and the journey he had now taken. He was the treasurer of a nation, and thus combined in himself the possession of affluence and honour. How many temptations must he have undergone, from pride,

^s Prideaux's *Connect.* p. 2. v. 4. This temple was built An. 149, before Christ. The eunuch was converted An. 34, after Christ.

^t Particularly Bruce.

the love of ease, the contempt of the world, and the flattery of *courtiers*, that *supple, cringing, unprincipled, vile, contemptible* race, who are “all things in an hour,” as their master dictates! But he overcame them all! He left his native country to journey to Jerusalem, the holy city. He might have excused himself, had he wished so to do, on account of the nature of his public trust. He was an officer of government, and might have acted as such characters generally have done in matters of religion: especially in countries blessed with the light of revelation. For it is a remarkable fact, that among the heathen even skeptical, irreligious magistrates have paid external respect to the religion of their country. In Christian lands alone the awful spectacle is to be found of magistrates daring, by their deliberate neglect, to cast contempt upon the public institutions of religion. And it seems that this neglect is displayed in proportion to the degree of civil liberty enjoyed. Do you ask a proof? Look to the officers of government in our land, and tell me where are the men in the general or state government, who pay a steadily decent res-

pect to the ordinances of divine appointment? What is more common for them than to travel on the Lord's day? And how few, very few, regularly attend upon the means of grace on that day! Many of them display a studied, deliberate profanation of this holy time.

How different from such conduct was that of the treasurer of the Ethiopians! He felt that his duty to God was first to be discharged. Thankful that he had been made acquainted with the true religion, he strictly conformed externally to the requirements of the faith which he had embraced. He went regularly to the Holy City, and on this occasion had been to celebrate the feast of pentecost. The extraordinary occurrences of that day when the Spirit was poured out from on high, and each man of different tongues heard the apostles speak in his tongue, must have been the topic of conversation in Jerusalem. The doctrine taught by the apostles could not have escaped notice. The eunuch no doubt must have heard of the strange event, and of the new doctrine. It does not appear from the history that the report of these things had any particular

effect upon his mind. Having finished the worship prescribed, he had now left the Holy City, and bent his course homeward.

The impressions which the exercises of religion had made on his heart, he strove to retain, and to make them deeper. The temple was behind him; but he still recollected the service thereof. The sensations produced by devotion were sweet and pleasant. That he might cherish them, he was engaged in an employment characteristic of an honest professor of religion. He read *Esaias the prophet*. The word of God was the companion of his journey, the solace of his cares, the delight of his heart. By this word he sought to have his mind enlightened, and his affections purified. He did not think it enough to use the word when engaged in public worship, or on any public occasion. He esteemed it too highly thus to act. His Bible, you perceive, was with him in his chariot, and he sought to improve the opportunity afforded, for his benefit. If all our journies were thus improved, the happiest effects might be expected. If all who profess themselves to be Christians thought as highly of their bibles

as this eunuch did, how different would be their lives! It is enough to make an angel weep to see the neglect with which this precious volume is treated by so many who avow their belief of it! They despise their own mercies; for this volume is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness. God blesses those who honour it; for in honouring it, he is honoured, inasmuch as it is his word. This the eunuch found to be the fact in his own case; for while he was reading, God was preparing the way for his salvation.

Then, says the sacred historian, v. 29, 35, the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readeest: and he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away; and

who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself or some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

At the time when Philip saw the eunuch, the Spirit of God in that way which he was accustomed to use, directed the evangelist to approach the traveller. Had he not received the command of the Spirit, he might either have hesitated, on the score of propriety, or been apprehensive of evil consequences, through fear. Now, however, as the path is distinctly marked out for him, he walks in it without shrinking. He perceives the design of his journey—the reason why he was directed to this corner of Judea. No doubt he felt his heart enlarge with the blessed hope of making this stranger of distinction, as he appeared to be, a partaker of the faith of the Gospel.

This hope, next to the actual experience of God's grace, in the heart, is the strongest stimulus for ministerial exertion, and the

highest reward for every care, and sigh, and fatigue. Under its influence what have not the preachers of the Gospel sustained! They have not counted their lives dear, so that they only could make known the mercy of God to perishing sinners. What a contrast between them and the men who abuse them or speak evil of them! The latter display no self-denial, nor feel the interests of others as of sufficient moment to forego their own. How many—Ah, too many, even among those who profess respect for religion, are there who let no opportunity escape to denounce the motives, to underrate the labours, and misrepresent the actions of an honest, conscientious minister; and that at the very time when he is praying for them and exerting himself for their eternal interests.

Of all persons, he who in a country like this, where there is no establishment, and where the clergy, as a body, have individually hardly a support comparable to the upper servants in affluent families, strives to hold up the ministers of reconciliation to public or private obloquy or ridicule, is to be pitied for his weakness, if his conduct be the result of a defect of understanding; or to be

dismissed from the fellowship of high born and honourable spirits, if it spring from perverseness of feeling. Blessed be God, who hath established the ministry of reconciliation, that he is pleased himself to honour them, by making them successful; or otherwise granting them special tokens of his favour. They are his servants, and labour for him. This gives them boldness, and makes them unwearied. They are his servants to win souls for him. This makes them earnestly desirous of success, and gives them the highest satisfaction.

Under the influence of such motives, with views so noble and generous, as it respected the stranger, and so devoted and loyal, as it respected God, Philip ran to him, and hearing him read the prophecy of Isaiah, he asked, Understandest thou what thou readest? To which he answered, "How can I, except some man should guide me?" There appears to have been as little surprise on the part of the eunuch as there was of embarrassment on the part of Philip. Indeed the eunuch's mind was so intent upon the matters of which he read; he felt himself so deeply interested in them, and at the

same time involved in so much doubt about their meaning, that the question was a relief to his labouring bosom, inasmuch as it gave him the opportunity of making an appropriate inquiry. He desired Philip to seat himself by him in the chariot, and then asked whom the prophet meant in the part he was reading, himself, or another? As this Scripture afforded Philip the opportunity to preach Christ, so it demands particular notice. The passage quoted from Isaiah, chap. liii. 7 and 8 verses, is according to the Greek translation, called Septuagint, then in use, as follows: He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and like a lamb dumb before his shearer; so he opened not his mouth. In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. This passage, Philip declared, applied to Christ".

u As this is denied by the mass of modern Jews, it may be well to state, that some of them, not only do own that their ancient Rabbins did, with one mouth, confess, that those words were spoken of Messiah the King; but also speak thus of him, as Dr. Whitby has quoted in his Paraphrase: "The holy blessed God began to covenant with the Messiah when he created him, and said to him, The sins of those who are laid up in secret with thee, will make

From it he preached Jesus to the noble Ethiopian. He dwelt on his sufferings, and the temper with which he endured them.

thee to come under an iron yoke, and make thee like to this young heifer, whose eyes are dim, and fill thy spirit with anguish: and because of their iniquities thy tongue shall cleave to the roof of thy mouth. Wilt thou, then, undergo this condition for them? The Messiah said, I undertake it with the joy and exultation of my heart, on this condition, that not one of Israel may perish, and that not only they may be saved who live in my days, but also they who are dead from the days of the first man, to this very day. And again, when God created the world, he held forth his hand under the throne of glory, and created the soul of the Messiah, and his company, and said to him, Wilt thou heal and redeem my sons after 6000 years? He answered him, Yes. God said to him, If so, wilt thou bear chastisements to expiate their iniquities, according to what is written, Is. liii. 4. Surely he bore our griefs? He answered, I will endure them with joy." In these quotations, given fully, we perceive, as the learned writer mentioned observes, three things acknowledged by the Jews,

1. That God has made a covenant with Messiah.
2. That Messiah was to make atonement for the sins of Israel.
3. That he was to be the salvation, not only of those who were to be alive then, or to live after him, but of all men from the beginning.

Let this suffice to show the application which the Jews themselves make of this passage. The Evangelist, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, has removed every doubt about its just application.

He showed the greatness of the former, and the meekness, inoffensiveness, and resignation of the latter. He placed before his auditor, the Priests and the Pharisees thirsting for blood ; and Pilate, irresolute, fearful, convinced of Christ's innocence, but apprehensive of losing his place, by denying to the people the crucifixion of this Man of Sorrows. Now he unfolded the scene of agony in the garden ; then he spake of the piercing, the terrible cry of dereliction on the cross. His humiliation was so great ; he appeared so mean and abased a person, that his enemies unrighteously judged him fit to be sacrificed to their rage. He seemed a person of so little importance, that though Pilate was convinced of his innocence, he did not think it worth while to hazard any thing on his account. Enlarging on his sufferings, the evangelist described in glowing colours the obstinate infidelity and barbarous injustice of that generation of men among whom he appeared, and from whom he suffered such things. Finally he came to the dying scene on Calvary, and told of the disappointed expectations of the disciples. They thought he would have redeemed Israel :

but now he is no more ; the grave encloses his body.

But did Philip stop here ? No. He *began* with this Scripture and preached Christ. He explained the reason why Christ ought to suffer and die. He exhibited the evil of sin, and the misery of the sinner. He proved that it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect, through sufferings. He passed on thence to the dignity of Christ, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. From his dignity he established the perfectness of the work of atonement. He spake of his resurrection, ascension, and session at the right hand of God. Having explained the doctrines of salvation through Christ, he exhorted and commanded his auditor to repent and believe in Christ, and be baptized in the name of Christ. He illustrated the nature of baptism ; dwelt upon its value as a sign, and enforced its importance for the confirmation of faith.

Thus it was that he preached Christ ; for all these topics you will find in the 53d of

Isaiah and the connexion. Nor did he preach in vain; for the sacred historian informs us, v. 36—38, that *as they went on their way they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, see, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered, and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.*

Behold here, the power of truth upon the heart of man, when blessed by the Holy Spirit. This Ethiopian, it is highly probable, nay, almost morally certain, must have heard of Christ in Jerusalem; but no doubt his Jewish friends, especially the priests, those enemies of Christ, had endeavoured to discolour facts, and to prepossess him against Christ. If, however, this was not the case, and as has already been mentioned, no particular effect appears to have been produced on his mind, he was unquestionably ignorant of Christ, as the Messiah; and, from his questions to Philip about

the person whom the prophet meant, ignorant even of the great Redeemer typified by the sacrifices of the temple. Though a proselyte of righteousness, he appears to have been destitute of the faith of faithful Abraham; and therefore, notwithstanding his circumcision, yet in his sins. The Lord had excited in his mind serious desires after the knowledge of the truth, and constrained him for that purpose to read his word. In this mood and frame of mind the Gospel was preached to him by Philip, and sanctified by the Holy Ghost. He knew, he believed, he loved, and resolved to obey the Lord Jesus.

Observe the confession he makes with the mouth. It is that Jesus Christ is the *Son of God*. This title the Jews considered as expressing supreme divinity¹. And they were right. The apostles uniformly convey the same idea. As the *Son of God*, the attributes of Jehovah are ascribed to him; as the *Son of God*, he does the works of Jehovah; as the *Son of God*, he receives the worship due to Jehovah; as the *Son of God*, therefore, he could not die; and the design of his death

¹ 2 John x.

was to redeem sinners. He died as the Son of Man. He was Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Mary. His human and divine natures were united in the person of the Son of God. As this view is given by the prophet Isaiah, and must have been given by Philip, preaching Christ, so the confession of the eunuch embraced this view.

Philip required faith ; but in what ? What was unfolded as the object of faith ? Christ's atonement, in all its parts. This includes in it his divinity, our helplessness, his redemption, our obligations. All that Philip had said was believed by the eunuch ; not speculatively, but experimentally. Christ and him crucified was not merely a doctrine received with confidence by his understanding ; but a great essential truth approved, felt, cherished, and obeyed by his heart. He gave such credence to the preaching of Philip, who unfolded the testimony of God concerning Christ, as directly produced corresponding affections of heart, and prevailingly regulated his future deportment. His faith was of the vigorous, efficient kind. He knew in whom he believed, and was convinced that he would keep that which was

committed to him. His whole soul was changed. He found himself in a new world, and moved in a new sphere. Having obtained mercy, he applied for the seal of God's covenant; and on his confession was baptized.

The place where this baptism was administered is not known. Wherever it was, *there was a certain water*^v. The expression used is diminutive, and intimates that it was not water of any depth. And Jerome, one of the primitive Fathers, with Sandys, a traveller of modern times, and others, speak of it as a certain spring, or fountain, that rises at the foot of a mountain in the tribe of Judah or Benjamin, whose waters are sucked in by the same ground which produces them. *Into* this water, says our translation, they went down both, and from out of it they came up. That no argument in favour of immersion in baptism can be drawn from this, will appear from this simple fact, that the prepositions rendered *into* and *out of*, frequently signify *unto* and *from*, as all who understand the Greek language will allow. But, supposing we

here understand them as signifying *into* and *out of*, the pious Mr. Henry says, Philip and the eunuch did not strip off their clothes and go naked into the water ; but going barefoot, according to the custom, they went perhaps up to the ankles or midleg into the water, and Philip sprinkled water upon him, according to the prophecy which this eunuch had probably just read ; for it was but a few verses before those that Philip found him meditating upon, and was very apposite to his case, “ So shall he sprinkle many nations : the kings shall shut their mouths at him,” i. e. submit to him : “ for that which had not been told them shall they see ; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.”

The rite of baptism being administered, they came up both out of the water, and parted, v. 39. “ *The Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more : and he went on his way rejoicing.*” The manner in which Philip was taken away was miraculous. The same Spirit who bid him join the eunuch’s chariot, now separated them, so that they saw

each other no more for ever on this side of the grave. Philip prosecuted his work of preaching the Gospel in different places.

The eunuch returning homewards went on his way rejoicing. His frame of mind was pleasant and cheerful. How could it be otherwise?

He had now obtained the saving knowledge of God, and his Son Jesus Christ. He was now intimately and inseparably related to the family of the Redeemer. He carried with him the glad tidings of great joy to his benighted countrymen^a. He now could worship God acceptably at home as well as in Jerusalem. He now hoped confidently in the glory of God, that everlasting life would be his.

The subject teaches us,

I. The watchfulness of the Great Shepherd of the sheep, as well as his diligence in seeking out his own, and bringing them within the reach of his grace, or bringing his grace to their doors.

He directed the course of the eunuch, and the steps of the evangelist. Is a chosen vessel to be called into the fold? Every ob-

^a Jerins Rem. Vol. 2. p. 34.

stacle is removed, and the way is prepared. Remarkable is the instance of an Indian female of rank, who dwelt on Martha's Island, narrated by Mr. Mayhew in his *Indian Converts*. Her husband and herself had buried their first five children successively in spite of their exertions to save them. A sixth was born to them a few years before the English settled on the island. The mother being then greatly distressed with fear that she should lose this child, as she had done the former, and utterly despairing of any help from such means as had been formerly tried without any success, as soon as she was able, with a sorrowful heart took him up, and went out into the field, that she might there weep out her sorrow. But while she was there, musing on the insufficiency of human help, she found it powerfully suggested to her mind, that there is one Almighty God to be prayed to; that this God hath created all things that we see, and that the God that had given being to herself and all other people, and had given her child to her, was able to preserve and continue his life. On this she resolved that she would seek to God for that mercy, and did so accord-

ingly. The issue was that the child lived, and afterwards became a Minister of the Gospel. His mother finding her prayer thus answered, dedicated her son, thus spared to that God to whom she had prayed. After doing this, she early informed him of it, and did as far as she could, educate him accordingly. She was, however, a heathen, who had never heard of the true God; but she and her son were chosen vessels. In God's own time the Gospel reached the island, and she was one of the first converts to the faith.

The history of the Church abounds with cases equally strong. Thus, in Corinth, God encouraged Paul, and supported him, because he had much people in the city. He sends the Gospel to the heirs of life, or brings them to Christian lands.

2. The subject teaches us the connexion between the *use* of means, and God's blessing.

The Eunuch was reading the Scriptures, when he was met by Philip. His employment fitted him more particularly for listening to the preaching of Christ and him crucified. Thus it is, that all the means of God's institution, in their nature, are calcu-

lated for producing attention and obedience to the word of God. Having explained my views on this subject on another occasion^b, it is unnecessary to enlarge here.

3. We see in the conversion of the Eunuch, that the direct tendency of real religion, is to produce cheerfulness and joy. He went on his way rejoicing.

His case was not a singular one. The grace of God, exactly as its power is experienced in the heart, fills the believer with gladness. But there is in him still a body of sin and death, which mars his comfort, and impairs his enjoyment. His sorrow, however, you will recollect, is the result of sin, not of grace. "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." The believer alone knows, in his own experience, the meaning and force of the poet's words, "the joy of grief;" grief for sin, but joy in redemption from sin. The world can behold only the trials of the children of God. They cannot enter into their hearts, and see their consolations and enjoyments. Nothing but real religion can impart happiness to man, because nothing

b Lecture i.

else is suited to his constitution and intelligent nature. He is composed of body and soul, and exists not merely for a day, but is destined to exist beyond the grave throughout eternity. The grace of God alone can satisfy his boundless desires, by making him a partaker of immortal glory. Well then may they who have this hope rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of their salvation. What though they are called to suffer in the world, their reward in eternity is sure, and will more than counterbalance their sufferings. In the mean time their fellowship is with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. They walk in the liberty of the sons of God, and enjoy the comforts of the Holy Ghost, They have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but the spirit of adoption, whereby they cry Abba, Father. As children, they can come with boldness to the throne of grace, to obtain mercy and find grace to help in every time of need. Goodness and mercy follow them all the days of their lives, and they shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. AMEN.

ERRATA.

Page 28, Note, for Minucii Felicis, read Minucii Felcis.

114, line 5 from top, for *in this way sins are covered*, read *in this way our sins are covered*.

117, line 8 from top, for *brings along with its own delight*, read *brings along with it its own delight*.

149, line 9 from bottom, for *transgressed* read *advanced*.

309, for Hosea v. 14. read Hosea v. 15.

367, line 7 from bottom, for *baffle* read *trifle*.



