



33-1-

LIBRARY

OF THE

Theological Seminary,

PRINCETON, N. J.

Case, ..... Division, .....

Shelf, ..... Section, .....

Book, ..... No. ....

SCC  
2332  
v. 3

Theo. Seminary

Princeton

N. J.



## S Y S T E M

O F

*Divinity and Morality ;*

I N A

## SERIES of DISCOURSES

On all the essential Parts of

## Natural and revealed Religion :

Compiled from the Works of the following eminent Divines of the Church of England, viz.

ATTERBURY,	DORRINGTON,	MOORE,
BALGUY,	GIBSON,	MOSS,
BARROW,	GOODMAN,	PEARSON,
BENTLEY,	HICKMAN,	ROGERS,
BEVERIDGE,	HOLE,	SHARP,
BLACKHALL,	HOPKINS,	SYNGE,
BUNDY,	HORT,	STANHOPE,
BURNET,	JACKSON,	STILLINGFLEET,
BEN. CALAMY,	IBBOT,	TILLOTSON,
CLAGETT,	LITTLETON,	WAKE,
CLARKE,	LUPTON,	And others.

To which are added,

Some OCCASIONAL DISCOURSES.

The Whole REVISED and CORRECTED

By FERD<sup>o</sup>. WARNER, LL. D.

Rector of Queenhithe, London.

Is addressed to his Grace the M E bishop

V O L. III.

L O N D O N :

Printed for R. GRIFFITHS, in *Pater-noster-row*.

M,DCC,LVI.

M 1 0 2 8

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

A

# T A B L E

O F

## C O N T E N T S.

Disc. LXXIX.	<i>ON the Lord's supper.</i>	Mr. Benj. Calamy.	page 1
LXX.	<i>Of the fear of God.</i>	Dr. Rogers.	16
LXXI.	<i>The duty of trusting in God.</i>	Ditto.	28
LXXII.	<i>Of submission and resignation to the will of God.</i>	Dr. Lewis Atterbury.	38
LXXIII.	<i>Of faith, hope, and charity.</i>	Dr. Clagett.	50
LXXIV.	<i>The great benefit of consideration.</i>	Abp. Wake.	62
LXXV.	<i>The heavenly conversation.</i>	Dr. Clagett.	75
LXXVI.	<i>Of the great care of our souls, and the great danger of losing them.</i>	Abp. Tillotson.	92
LXXVII.	<i>St. Peter's fall and repentance an argument against presumption and despair.</i>	Dean Stanhope.	103
LXXVIII.	<i>Of the danger and deceitfulness of sin.</i>	Abp. Tillotson.	121
LXXIX.	<i>The great duty of self-knowledge.</i>	Bp. Hickman.	133
			Disc.

# C O N T E N T S.

Disc. LXXX. <i>The duty of minding our own business.</i> Dr. Barrow.	148
LXXXI. <i>Of humility and the sin of pride.</i> Dr. Clarke.	161
LXXXII. <i>On the passions, and how to govern them.</i> Bp. Hickman.	175
LXXXIII. <i>On the government of the tongue.</i> Dr. Barrow.	189
LXXXIV. <i>Against evil speaking.</i> Abp. Tillotson.	202
LXXXV. <i>Of temperance in eating and drinking.</i> Bp. Gibson.	214
LXXXVI. <i>Of a religious fast, and how to keep it.</i> Abp. Tillotson.	228
LXXXVII. <i>The great duty of doing good.</i> Abp. Sharpe.	241
LXXXVIII. <i>The great duty of universal love and charity.</i> Dr. Clarke.	256
LXXXIX. <i>The golden rule or law of equity.</i> Dr. Goodman.	269
XC. <i>Of imitating the life of Christ.</i> Abp. Tillotson.	286
XCI. <i>Character of an upright man.</i> Abp. Sharpe.	303
XCII. <i>Of sincerity, and the sin of lying.</i> Abp. Tillotson.	315
XCIII. <i>Of regeneration.</i> Abp. Sharp.	329
XCIV. <i>The Christian life described.</i> Abp. Hort.	343
XCV. <i>Of predestination and election.</i> Dr. Clarke.	358
XCVI. <i>Of a good conscience towards God and man.</i> Abp. Tillotson.	372
XCVII. <i>Of religious melancholy.</i> Bp. Moore.	388
XCVIII. <i>The parable of the rich man and Lazarus.</i> Dr. Clarke	401
	Disc.

# C O N T E N T S.

- Disc. XCIX. *The parable of the prodigal son.*  
*Abp. Sharpe.* 417
- C. *The due improvement of our talents.*  
*Dr. Rogers.* 433
- CI. *Diligence and industry enforced and  
applied.* *Mr. Balguy.* 445
- CII. *The nature and influence of the gos-  
pel promise.* *Abp. Tillotson.* 460

Discourse



Discourse LXIX. Mr. *Benj.  
Calamy.*

On the LORD'S SUPPER.

I Cor. xi. 29.

For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily,  
eateth and drinketh damnation to himself,  
not discerning the Lord's body.

**T**HE sacrament of the Lord's supper is undoubtedly the most solemn part of Christian worship; an institution of our Saviour's, of mighty use and advantage to us, if we duly partake thereof. And yet there is scarce any part of religion so little understood and practised by the generality of Christians, as this duty: which sufficiently appears from the great number of those who constantly join in all other offices of divine worship, and yet wholly neglect the receiving of this sacrament, or, at least, communicate but very seldom. I do not mean the profane contemners of God and religion, but those who pretend to fear God and value their souls, who do yet live in the notorious omission of this duty. And amongst the many pleas or excuse with which men satisfy themselves in the neglect or disuse of this holy communion, that which most generally prevails, and perhaps with some honest and well-meaning persons, is the consideration of St. Paul's words; "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself." So dreadful

is the threatenng and punishment here denounced against those who receive this sacrament unworthily, that men are apt to think it much the safer and wiser course, not to venture on a duty, the wrong performance of which is attended with so great mischief. Damnation is so terrible a word, and to be guilty of the body and blood of Christ is so heinous a crime, that it may seem most prudent for a man to keep himself at the greatest distance from all possibility of falling into it. I hope therefore, it will be of some service to entertain you at this time with a discourse on these words; wherein I shall endeavour to give you the full meaning of them, together with the true and just inferences and consequences that may be drawn from them. In order to which I shall shew, what is here meant by damnation; what by "eating and drinking unworthily;" how far this text may reasonably frighten people from this sacrament; and what consequences may truly be drawn from these words, "he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself."

The original word, here translated damnation, signifies no more than judgment, or punishment in general. So that there is no necessity of translating it here by the word damnation; nay, there are two plain reasons, why it ought to be understood only of temporal evils and chastisements. 1. Because the judgments inflicted on the Corinthians, for the profanation of this holy sacrament, were only temporal. "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you and many sleep." 2. Because the reason assigned for these judgments is, "that they might not be condemned in the other world; but when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we might not be condemned with the world." That is, God inflicted these evils on the Corinthians, that being reformed by these stripes,  
in

in this life, they might escape hereafter that vengeance which was reserved for the impenitent; and therefore it could not be eternal damnation, that was either threatned or inflicted upon them for their unworthy receiving. But what the apostle means, seems to be this, that by profaning this holy sacrament they would draw down some remarkable judgment upon their heads. Of this, saith he, you have notorious instances among yourselves, in those various and mortal diseases, that have prevailed in your city, and this God doth to warn you, that you may be awakened to avoid greater and worse judgments, such as are future and eternal. This punishment was extraordinary and peculiar to that time. God doth not now suddenly smite all unworthy communicants with some grievous disease or sudden death. Nor indeed are men afraid of any such thing, though it is very plain the apostle here means, that by such profaneness they would bring down some remarkable temporal judgment upon themselves. I shall not insist longer upon this, but take the word damnation as we commonly understand it, to signify, that by our unworthy participation of the sacrament, we incur God's heaviest displeasure, and render ourselves liable to eternal misery. And this brings me

To enquire, who those are that run this great danger; namely, they "who eat and drink unworthily." As this phrase of eating unworthily is only found in this chapter, we ought to consider, what the faults were with which the apostle chargeth the Corinthians; and we shall find them to be very heinous disorders, that had crept in amongst them, occasioned by their love-feasts; at the end of which the Lord's supper was usually celebrated: which disorders therefore were peculiar to those times, and are not now to be found among us. "First of all, (says the apostle) when ye come together in the

“ church, I hear that there be divisions among you,  
“ and that in eating every one taketh before ano-  
“ ther his own supper.” It was a custom when  
they came to commemorate Christ’s death, to fur-  
nish a common table, where no man was to pretend  
any propriety to what he himself brought, but he  
was to eat in common with the rest ; this charitable  
custom these Corinthians wholly perverted. For he  
that brought a great deal, begun to eat as if it was  
at his own house and table, and so fed to the full ;  
whereas another that could bring but a little, remain-  
ed hungry. With such irreverence and disorder  
did they behave at the Lord’s table, as if it had  
been at a common feast. This the apostle calls  
“ not discerning the Lord’s body :” That is, they  
made no difference between that heavenly food, and  
common bread. They did eat the sacrament as if  
it were their ordinary meat. What (says he) “ have  
“ ye not houses to eat and drink in ? You may as  
well stay at home, for there is nothing of religion in  
this ; nor is this to celebrate the sacrament according  
to Christ’s institution ; whereby we ought to repre-  
sent his death, to commemorate his love, and to  
devote ourselves to him in new and better obedience,  
and not to meet only to fill our bellies. But this  
was not all ; for they were also riotous and in-  
temperate in these love-feasts. And this was so  
notorious a profanation of this holy mystery, in mak-  
ing it an instrument of debauchery, that we can-  
not wonder God should so severely threaten and pu-  
nish such open violation of his sacred ordinance. No  
judgment could be too great to vindicate our Sa-  
viour’s most excellent institution, from such impi-  
ous contempt. But then this is not to be extended  
to every little failure or omission in this duty, or in  
our preparation for it, as if that did render us  
such unworthy receivers as these Corinthians were,  
and

and instantly to consign us over to the same punishment.

Those scandalous irregularities, here called "eating and drinking unworthily," were heard of only in the first ages of the church, when the sacrament was always joined with these love-feasts, which were therefore afterwards wholly abrogated; and to prevent that intemperance and abuse they had introduced, it generally prevailed to receive this sacrament fasting. But whatever faults may be found now amongst our communicants, yet they cannot be charged with these mentioned in this chapter. The worst of men, if they communicate at all, do it with greater reverence and more suitable deportment than these Corinthians did. So that neither the fault here reproved, nor the punishment denounced, hath place now amongst us. What reason then is there, why this text of scripture should frighten any people from the sacrament, when there is neither the same fault committed, nor punishment inflicted? But tho' this be the just meaning of the words, yet because this plea of unworthiness to receive is often insisted on to excuse our neglect of this sacrament, I shall farther consider it under the next head I propose to discourse of; which is to shew, how far this danger of receiving unworthily may reasonably frighten people from coming to this sacrament. And here I shall offer these few things to the thoughts of all such as are seriously disposed:

In a strict sense then, we are none of us worthy of so great a favour, so high a privilege, as to be admitted to this sacrament. For after all our care, and all our preparation to make ourselves fit, yet still we must acknowledge, that "we are unworthy even to pick the crumbs that fall from our Master's table," much more to sit and feast at it. If we are not to receive this sacrament till we think

ourselves really worthy, the best men, the more holy and humble they are, the more averse would they be from this duty. But,

This unworthiness is no bar or hindrance to our receiving this sacrament. We are not worthy of the least mercy, either spiritual or temporal, which we enjoy ; must we therefore starve ourselves or go naked, because we deserve not our food or raiment : We are not worthy so much as to cast up our eyes towards heaven, the habitation of God's holiness ; but shall we therefore never make our humble addresses to the throne of God's grace, because we are not worthy to ask, or have our petitions heard and granted ? Shall we refuse any favours the kindness of heaven offers to us, because they are beyond our merits, or more than we could challenge or expect ? It is not said, he that is unworthy to eat and drink of this sacrament, if he doth eat it, " eateth and drinketh damnation to himself ;" was it so, then indeed we might all be justly afraid of coming to this royal feast ; but it is only said, he that eateth and drinketh unworthily. And there is a great deal of difference between a man's being unworthy to receive this sacrament, and his receiving it unworthily ; which I shall thus illustrate. He who hath grossly wronged, maliciously slandered, or without any provocation treated me very ill, all will grant is utterly unworthy of any kindness or favour from me. But yet, if notwithstanding this unworthiness, I do him some considerable kindness, and offer him some favour, his unworthiness is no hindrance to his receiving it ; and if he accepts it with a due sense and a grateful mind, and is thereby moved to lay aside all his former enmity and animosity, and heartily repents him of his former ill-will against me, and studies how to requite this kindness ; then, tho' he was unworthy of the favour, yet he hath now received it worthily, that is,

after

after a due manner, as he ought to have done; and which hath had its right effect upon him. And thus we are all unworthy to partake of this holy banquet; but being invited and admitted, we may behave ourselves as becomes us at such a solemnity; and if we thankfully commemorate the death of our Lord, renounce all our sins and former evil ways, give up ourselves to be governed by him, vow better obedience, and are affected with a true sense of his love; then, though unworthy of so great a favour, yet we have worthily, that is, after a right manner (as to God's acceptance) received this blessed sacrament. But if undeserving of this great honour and favour, we receive it unworthily, that is, after a profane and disorderly manner, not minding the end, use, or design of it; without repentance for sins past, or resolutions of amendment for the future, and without any grateful affection of love towards our Saviour dying for us; then we do by this means highly provoke God, and justly incur his displeasure. Indeed,

Those who are unworthy, and truly sensible of their own unworthiness, are the very persons for whom this sacrament was appointed, and for whose benefit it was instituted. Were we not all sinners we had no need of such means of grace as sacraments are, nor of such instruments of religion. "Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. They that are whole need not the physician, but they that are sick." For a man to be afraid to receive an alms, because he is miserably poor, or to be unwilling to take physick, because he is dangerously sick, is very weak. But if we are truly sensibly of our unworthiness, and duly affected with it, this is a great argument and motive to engage us not any longer to delay the use of these means; but to hasten to the sacrament, there to receive supplies and assistances suitable to our wants and necessities.

The more unworthy we find ourselves, the more we stand in need of this holy sacrament, whereby our good resolutions may be strengthened and confirmed, and divine power and grace communicated, to enable us by degrees to subdue all our lusts and passions, and to resist all temptations; that so by often receiving this sacrament, we may every time become less unworthy to partake of it.

There hath been a great dispute, whether the sacrament of the Lord's supper be a converting ordinance, or no; as prayer and hearing of the word of God read and preached are allowed to be. And there are many who believe, that it is a duty or privilege belonging to none but great and exemplary saints, to strong and well grounded christians; that this sacrament is not food proper for those who often fail in their duty, who are weak in faith, still wrestling with their lusts, but have not got the mastery or victory over them. That we ought first to be fully assured of our salvation, before we come to this holy table; that this ordinance serves only to strengthen and confirm our faith and repentance, and all other christian graces and virtues, but not to beget them in us. Indeed, it must be observed, that this sacrament belongs only to baptized christians, who publicly own their faith and christian profession; that it is no means of converting Jews or Infidels; and that even Christians, by notorious evil lives, whereby they become scandalous to their brethren, may justly forfeit all their right and title to this sacrament; nay farther, that it is a bold profanation of our Saviour's institution, for any wicked person, resolved to continue such, to presume to bless God for that mercy and love of a redeemer which he doth not in the least value. Thus far we are all agreed; but then I can see no reason, why to one that is really  
 fen-

sensible of his sins and miscarriages, and makes some kind of resolution to forsake them; why this sacrament, as well as prayer, or any other duties of religion, may not be reckoned as a means of begetting true repentance in him, of turning him from sin to righteousness, from the power of Satan to God; and for this plain reason, because if the death of Christ itself, his bitter passion, his whole gracious undertaking for us, was designed by God to convince us of the evil and danger of sin, to make us out of love with it, and to engage us to a new and better life; surely then the consideration of the same things represented to us in the sacrament, the commemoration of his death and passion there made, may also serve for the same great ends and purposes.

If Christ died that we should die unto sin, certainly then the memory of his death may justly be accounted a proper means of killing sin in us; nay, what in the nature of the thing can be imagined a more likely instrument to turn us from a life of sin to the practice of holiness, than the frequent consideration of what our blessed Lord hath done and suffered for us? And if so, it cannot be necessary that the change should be compleatly wrought in us, before we ever solemnly commemorate his bloody passion; for that were to suppose it necessary that the end should be obtained before we use the means. It is not therefore absolutely necessary, that we should be fully assured that we are in a state of grace, in God's favour, and have truly repented and forsaken all our sins, before we venture to receive this sacrament; it is sufficient that we heartily and sincerely resolve against them, that we approach the Lord's table with honest and devout minds, that we be really willing and desirous

to use all means to become better : And if thus disposed we come to the sacrament, I doubt not but we shall find it a most effectual means for the enabling us to forsake our sins, and to lead a better life. It is not our unworthiness, but our resolving to continue in that state, that makes us unqualified for this sacrament.

If therefore by unworthiness we mean that we are resolved to live in sin, and so dare not come to the sacrament for fear we should farther provoke God ; even supposing this to be acting prudently and warily, yet then I would advise such for the same reason, to leave off all other duties of religion as well as this : for if they would act upon the same grounds, they ought to think it the safest way never to pray to God any more, nor ever again to appear in any religious assemblies, nor to join in any part of God's solemn worship ; for God hath often declared, that he doth far more abominate all such formal hypocrites, and will more severely punish them, than the open bold contemners of his authority and laws. " The prayer of the wicked man is an abomination to the Lord." He hates the addresses of those who call him Father and Master, and in words acknowledge him, but yet continually do the things that are displeasing in his sight. He rejects all the services of impure worshippers : For such do but mock God, and impudently flatter him, when they present themselves before him, as his servants, and yet secretly hate him. Nay, for the same reason they forbear the sacrament, they should lay aside their whole Christian profession, openly renounce their baptism, deny their Saviour, and disown his religion, for that is the safest course, whilst they resolve to continue in sin and disobedience ; for God's wrath shall in the first place be executed against wicked Christians, who were called by Christ's name, and yet did

did not depart from iniquity. If such go out of the church when the sacrament is to be administered, thinking lest they should farther provoke God by unworthy receiving it; for the same reason let them keep from the church altogether, lest they as highly provoke God by being present at those prayers they do not heartily join in, nor ever intend to live according to them. Alas! such need not be afraid of this text; it seems indifferent to them whether they receive or not. Damnation cannot be supposed to frighten him from the sacrament, who runs the constant hazard of it by living in a known sin. This can be no such terrible word to an habitual and resolved sinner. He that can swear and talk profanely, live intemperately and loosely, and without any fear or regret commit sin, in vain pretends fear of damnation, for not doing that which is indeed his duty; for it is most ridiculous to be afraid of doing what our Saviour hath commanded, when we are not in the least afraid every day to do what he hath forbidden. How strange is it for men, out of a dread of damnation, to neglect the sacrament, and yet at the same time not to be afraid to live carnal and sensual lives? Their constant practice confutes this pretence, by their notoriously breaking his laws, violating his authority, and scandalizing his religion. They pretend fear of damnation; but the true reason of their abstaining from this sacrament is, they are afraid that it will engage them to leave those sins they have no mind to part with; and put them upon the practice of those duties which are inconsistent with their profit, pleasure, or secular interest. Such are not afraid of displeasing God, but of being too strictly tied and bound to please him: they fear lest that solemnity should raise some scruples in their minds,  
which

which they have no leisure to consider of ; they would not be troubled with such a serious business, thinking they shall not be able to sin so securely and quietly after it as they now do. Let not such therefore as neglect this duty, invent any such poor excuses, but confess plainly, that they love sin and the world, more than the benefits purchased by Jesus Christ ; that they resolve to continue in their wickedness, and therefore will not come to this sacrament. This is the secret thought of many men, though a very foolish one ; for they are much mistaken, who think themselves at greater liberty to do evil, whilst they abstain from this sacrament : Since Christians are engaged by receiving this sacrament to no other obedience than they were before by their baptism ; it doth not so much oblige us to new duties, as engage us to make good those obligations, which our profession of christianity hath already laid upon us. Lastly,

If the receiving this sacrament was an indifferent rite or ceremony, that might be done or omitted at pleasure, then indeed the great danger there is in receiving it unworthily, might, in some measure justify our omission of it : But what if the danger be as great, and the hazard equal, of not receiving it at all, as of receiving it unworthily ? Where then is our prudence or safety, when to avoid one danger we run in to another equally great, and when for fear of displeasing God, we disobey a plain command ? It is not very easy to determine which is the greatest affront to God, or doth most highly provoke him, never to perform our duty, or to perform it after a wrong manner ; never to pray at all, or to be present at prayers, but not to mind or regard what we are about ; never to receive this sacrament, or to receive it often, but make no difference between what we eat and drink there, and what we do at our own houses.

How-

However, he that receives this sacrament, although it be after an undue manner, seems to me to shew somewhat more respect to God and his commands, than he who wholly neglects it. And besides, there is hardly any wicked man, that dares come to the sacrament without some good thoughts and resolutions; or who is not for a little time before and after the receiving of it, more careful of himself and his actions: and tho' this may not last long, but he soon returns to his former wickedness, yet this is something better than continuing in sin and wickedness without any intermission or cessation. For such an one uses the best means of becoming better, which by God's grace may prove effectual; but he that casts off all these duties, is in a more desperate and irreclaimable state. In short, were there neither sin nor danger in omitting this sacrament, and so great hazard in receiving it unworthily, prudence and interest might engage us to chuse the safest side, and not to meddle with it at all; but if we expose ourselves as certainly to God's anger and displeasure, by wholly neglecting this duty, then these words of the apostle can be no pretence or excuse for our abstaining from the communion. For, because intemperate eating and drinking is very prejudicial to our health, and often breeds mortal diseases, is it therefore better never to eat or drink at all? Would it not be madness, lest we should kill ourselves by a surfeit, to resolve to starve ourselves by obstinate fasting? This brings me to the last thing I proposed to consider, which was

To shew what is the true and just consequence of these words of the apostle; "he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself." And since our Saviour hath plainly commanded all his followers and disciples to do this

this in remembrance of him, and yet that there is so great danger in doing it unworthily, we should then resolve, neither to omit the duty, (for that would be a plain transgression of our Saviour's command) nor yet be careless in the performance of it. And this is the inference which the apostle himself makes; not that the Corinthians, whom he blames for their unworthy receiving this sacrament, should forbear coming to it any more, but that for the future they should examine themselves, and partake of it with greater reverence and devotion than they used to do. Let the danger of receiving unworthily be never so great, this ought only to make us so much the more careful to receive it after a right and acceptable manner, and to put us upon greater watchfulness over ourselves for the future. The use we should make of these words, is not rashly, without due preparation or consideration to rush upon this holy sacrament, but seriously to mind the end and design of it; and so duly to affect our spirits with the things here represented, that they may make lively and lasting impressions upon us, and we may bring forth the fruit of an holy and unblameable conversation.

To conclude, I would not have any thing I have now said, so interpreted or understood, as in the least to take away from the reverence we should have of this institution; or to lessen the awe and dread of receiving it unworthily. I would not have men afraid of, or scruple doing their duty. A due preparation and good dispositions of mind are required for prayer, and the right performance of other religious duties as well as this of the sacrament. We ought therefore only to be afraid of these things. Of neglecting to receive this sacrament, for that is

to live in disobedience to a plain command of our Saviour ; of receiving it unworthily without reverence or attention to the meaning of it, or without hearty repentance and sincere resolution of amendment ; for that is to affront and profane our Saviour's most excellent institution ; and of turning to our evil courses after receiving it, for then our having taken this sacrament will be a greater aggravation both of our sin and condemnation.

Discourse

Discourse LXX. Dr. *Rogers*.

## Of the FEAR of GOD.

Pfal. xxxv. 8.

Let all the earth fear the Lord; stand in awe of him, all ye that dwell in the world.

**O**UR passions are the springs which actuate the powers of our nature. And since the fear of God is a passion of the first and principal influence in religion, it is of the greatest importance that we rightly understand the nature of it.—Fear in general is that passion, whereby we are excited to provide for our security, upon the approach of evil. Not that God can be the author of evil; for his severest inflictions are acts of justice and righteousness, and flow from the perfections of his nature; but with respect to us, they have the evil of punishment, and demand our fear. The frequent mistakes of men, as to this object of their fear, and the respect due to God, has occasioned the distinction of a servile or superstitious, and a filial or religious fear. The former is a dishonour to God; the latter we are in duty obliged to, as it is the spring and motive of our obedience. To represent the divine nature, as a being averse to our happiness, and armed with power only to destroy; as an austere, rigorous master, easily provoked, and always ready to take vengeance, must naturally raise in our minds a dread of, and aversion to him. But such a fear is  
not

not required by God. This the devils do, who believe and tremble. This is like that forced respect which a captive pays to his conqueror, or slave to his lord. But such apprehensions of the divine nature, are a blasphemous affront to his perfections.

The fear which is acceptable to God, is a filial, religious fear. An awful reverence of the divine nature, proceeding from a just esteem and regard to his perfections, which produces in us an inclination to his service, and an unwillingness to offend him. This is a duty which all inferiors owe to their superiors; a respect which implies a mixture of love and fear. For tho' religion demands our reverence to God, as that sovereign power from whom we derive our being, the judge of our actions, the author and disposer of our happiness; and represents him adorned with majesty and honour, to whose authority all things in heaven and earth do bow and obey; yet it teaches us also to adore him as a mild and merciful Being, of infinite love and affection to his creatures, as a tender father who supplies our wants and defends our impotence; to whose favour we owe all our present happiness, and from whose compassion in Christ, we hope for eternal glory. This is God's proper character, whose goodness forbids us to dread him as slaves, tho' his majesty commands us to reverence him as sons. But yet there is a very necessary fear of God, which attends the conscience of a sinner converted from a course of wickedness; which fear in its first impressions must be attended with uncomfortable views of the divine nature, till God's anger be appeased, and he reconciled to the sinner upon his repentance; this the schools calls an initial fear of God, a disposition of mind no way offensive to him, but what seems very proper for a broken and contrite heart, labouring under the conviction of sin, to be possessed of when he looks upon God as his judge. The nature of the

fear of God being thus explained, I will propose some considerations, that may be necessary to raise in us suitable affections of fear towards the deity.

And every one of the divine perfections are proper arguments for this reverence towards God. For can we reflect on his infinite knowledge and omnipresence, and not stand in awe of that Being, who sees our failings and infirmities, is about our bed and path, observes and records every word and action of our lives, and from whom our most secret thoughts and intentions are not concealed? His infinite justice must also give us a religious concern, for the event of that day, when we must appear in judgment before God's impartial tribunal. His goodness, holiness and mercy, tho' the immediate objects of our love, yet when we consider the nature of these qualities in God; that the heavens are not pure in his sight, and that he charges even the angels with folly; this will teach us to bow our souls with lowly reverence before so excellent a Being, and adore his divine perfections. But the attribute which more especially demands this affection from us, is his power; for none can resist or interrupt the execution of his will. Our happiness and misery, our souls and bodies are in his hands; he has power to save and destroy, nor is he accountable to any one for it. If he is angry, unless his wrath be appeased, he is ready to execute his vengeance, with an eternity of torments. And tho' a just confidence in his goodness, should prefer us from a servile dread of his power, or despair of his mercy; yet so unlimited, irresistible an authority cannot be reflected on, without the most awful reverence, even by those, whose piety assures them of his favour.—But these arguments will be yet more effectual, if we also reflect with a just humility on ourselves. That we are indigent, defenceless beings, the creatures of his power, the dependants of his

his providence ; whose strength is weakness, and whose wisdom is but folly. And what is yet much worse, we have provoked this almighty power by our sins, affronted his goodness, despised his laws, and rebelled against his authority. And if prophets and apostles with reverence fell down at the feet of his angels ; if Moses, tho' honoured with the character of God's friend, was struck with exceeding fear and trembling at the glory of his perfections ; if the holy angels veil their faces and bow down before his majesty ; with what awe and reverence should we sinful dust and ashes, approach that infinite power we have so highly offended ; and with what profound humility implore his pardon ?

And as the fear of the Lord is a strong confidence to good men, a sure refuge to his children, and the best preservative from all those temporal fears that disquiet and embitter the lives of men ; so the malice or power, the wills and passions of men, are to be considered as only instruments in God's hands, and no farther to be feared, than as made use of by him to punish us.

The effect of this fear should influence us to a sincere, universal obedience to all the commands of God. But then let it be observed, that if our observance of the divine laws proceeds merely from an opinion of God's design to make us happy ; then when his providence or justice thinks fit to afflict us, he will no longer appear that kind benevolent being we before worshipped ; consequently, the motive of our submission will lose its force. Indeed, were the divine laws proposed to us with no other motive than the advantages attending it, they would have a very weak influence on the greatest part of mankind ; who are more inclined to pursue their happiness, in the satisfactions of this life, than to wait for distant promises : 'Tis therefore necessary to engage also the fears of men, by annexing

such penalties as will over-balance the persuasions of temporal pleasure.

On the other hand, if our obedience be only a dread of God's power and vengeance, it would be no better than the submission of a slave, to the tyranny of an insolent master; and must want that affection which alone can make our obedience acceptable. As God requires submission to his laws, so he expects it to be accompanied with an intire trust in his goodness and love to his service; by the former we adore him as our Lord and governor, by the latter as our father which is in heaven. The proper motive therefore of our christian obedience is, that fear which is perfected by love; that filial reverence before described and recommended, which has a mixture of both these affections, and acts upon our lives with equal force. This is a principle adapted to every passion and faculty of our nature, to every state and condition of life; and when rightly framed will direct us to the due performance of all our duties, and equally prepare our patience for the day of adversity, or engage our gratitude for God's mercies; it will suggest tears to our repentance, hallelujahs to our praise, make us receive his favours as the blessings, or his punishments as the corrections of a father. The awe of his majesty will keep us from presumption, the promises of his mercy from despair. If this principle was fully fixed in the minds of men, we should be ashamed of hypocrisy and tremble at profaneness. Our secret actions would be as regular as our public; our devotions as great in the closet as in the temple. The least of God's commands would appear venerable to us, and the most difficult not grievous. This affection will give warmth to our zeal, and spirit to our devotions; it will animate our faith, enliven our hope, extend our charity, deter us from sin, and encourage us in our duty.

As

As this is the true principle of Christian obedience, the only foundation on which religion stands, we must labour to form in our minds such just apprehensions of the deity, as may possess our souls with reverence towards him. Such as are our conceptions of God, such will be our affections to him; and such as is the affection of the heart, such will be the service and obedience of our lives. We must take care not to affront the Almighty by want of reverence, nor yet dishonour his goodness by a servile dread of his power: Both are defects equally destructive of true religion; the one tending to extinguish it by a contempt of God, the other to corrupt it by superstition. As the reflection on his goodness should reconcile us with delight to the duties he enjoins; so must we remember also to serve him with fear. When we contemplate the wonders of his love, we must not forget the honour due to his majesty, but rejoice before him with reverence; and while we approach him with the confidence of sons, we must humble ourselves to him with the resignation of creatures, and the contrition of sinners.

And let us not be discouraged, if our conversion from a state of sin be attended with terrible apprehensions of God's severity and power, since this is not that slavish dread which destroys religion, but the beginning of wisdom; an impression, if duly cultivated, that will end with confidence in the mercy, and with pleasure in the service of God. The divine nature will gradually appear more amiable; the mercy of his pardon will endear him to us, and we shall love much, for having much forgiven. Let us then be careful so to fear God here, that we may behold him without dread and astonishment hereafter: That we may stand before our judge at his awful tribunal, when the sinner shall desire the mountains to fall on him, and the hills to

cover him from the terrors of his presence ; that we may be able to approach the throne of his majesty with the confidence of sons, and be received among the redeemed of the Lord, into that eternal state of happiness, where all our fears and labours shall cease ; where everlasting love and peace shall be our employment and reward.

From what has been said we may observe, that the fear of God is the foundation of religion. But tho' virtue is in its own nature amiable, and that the world could be supposed to subsist without the being and government of God, as the nature of good and evil would be still the same ; yet the great support of virtue among men, is the sense upon their minds of a supreme governor and judge of the universe, who will finally reward what is essentially worthy of reward ; and punish what deserves punishment. To a perfect unerring mind, who is exalted above all temptation ; to such an one the reasons of things, the excellency of truth and right, is always a sufficient motive of action. But men, who when they know, and approve of what is right, yet at the same time find another law in their members, warring against the law of their mind, urging them with strong passions and unruly appetites ; who are also perpetually tempted with allurements of pleasure and profit, with baits of power and ambition, with examples of a degenerate and corrupt world : To such infinite, changeable, and fallible creatures as these, 'tis very necessary, that the eternal reason of things, that the excellency of truth and right, considered as a motive of action, should be supported by a constant and lively sense upon their minds, of an universal, supreme governor, the fountain of all perfection ; who will as surely reward and punish vice, as it is certain that there is a difference between good and evil. And a firm persuasion of the reality of this great truth,  
that

that we are continually under the inspection of such a supreme governor and judge, in whom we live, move, and have our being, and who knows our very thoughts as well as actions; cannot but possess the mind of every considerate person, with a just awe and fear of him; “when I consider I am afraid of him.” Afraid, not as of an arbitrary and tyrannical power; but as of a just, powerful, and wise governor, whose laws are reasonable and necessary to be obeyed, and from whose just displeasure none can be protected.

The true ground of this fear is reason and consideration; and yet profane atheistical men suppose this fear proceeds from timorousness of temper, superstition, tradition, or political fiction. It will be therefore of great moment to determine, which of these two is the truth. For this reason, I will distinctly consider the different grounds, characters and effects of religion and superstition. And first,

As to the ground and foundation of religion: That there is an essential difference between good and evil, virtue and vice, every man as clearly discerns by the natural perceptions of his own mind and conscience, as his eyes see the difference between light and darknes. 'Tis not a man's particular timorousness of temper, nor customary tradition from his ancestors, nor the imaginary speculation of philosophers, nor the political fiction of governors, that makes him see when he is oppressed, defrauded, cheated, and ill treated; that these actions are, in their own nature unrighteous, and the person guilty of them, worthy of punishment, every man of any capacity, age, and nation, knows to be true in the nature of things; and that no variety of temper, no tradition, no philosophy, or form of government can alter or abolish these notions. The reasonings and speculations of men do

not change the nature of things:—Nor do laws make virtue to be virtue, nor vice to be vice; but only enforce or discourage such things, as were of themselves fit or unfit, before the making of the law. Was there in nature no real and unalterable difference between moral good and evil, it would follow, that whole nations might possibly, and with a full inward persuasion, determine virtue to be vice, and vice to be virtue, as we think we with reason determine the contrary? Nay, 'tis as easy and as natural they should so determine, as for nations to differ in the fashion or colour of their clothes, or in any other indifferent circumstances. So that it is undeniably true, that the first ground and foundation of religion, the essential difference between virtue and vice, is laid in the nature and reason of things; whereas all superstitions, various as the motion of winds and clouds, are founded in accidental temper, tradition, or political fiction. Again,

That there is an invisible power presiding over the universe, (which is another prime part of the foundation of religion) finally to support virtue and punish wickedness, is a belief arising from reason and consideration, and directly contrary to superstition. The more extensive any man's observations are, the more evidences will he find, of the reality and greatness of this invincible power; even to the meanest capacities, God has not left himself without witness: The wonderful works of nature, the regularity and uniformity of them, shew the greatness of this power, acting and directing every where. And this universal governor, who directs the whole frame of nature, cannot be insensible of the difference between moral good and evil. To expect therefore that this supreme being will judge according to right, or the necessary nature of things; or, in other words, to fear that he will punish us if we act unreasonably, and to hope for his favour, if we follow

follow truth and right, is the voice of reason and not superstition.

Superstitious apprehensions, arising from timorousness of temper, teach men to be afraid of God, they know not why; to fear him, not as a just and righteous judge, but merely as vested with irresistible power; to fear him, not so as to be thereby deterred from wicked practices, but so as to be perpetually commuting for a vicious life, with the repetition of unprofitable ceremonies without number. Superstition, founded upon tradition, teach men to be afraid of things or beings that have no existence, no power and dominion over us; to place religion in practices which have no tendency to virtue; to rely upon opinions and things that have no sense or truth in them; so that no rational account or answer can be given by such, to any one that "asketh a reason of the hope, or the fear, that is in him." Superstitions derived from political fiction, make religion to consist in parties and factions, in things contrary to each other in different countries, and in the same country at different times; and sometimes in things destructive both of truth and charity.

Thus did the heathen world superstitiously worship false deities, instead of the great God and governor of the universe; mixing barbarous, cruel, and impure rites among their religious performances. The general superstition of the Jews, was their relying on outward forms and ceremonies (which indeed ought not to be left undone) but they laid the stress of religion upon them, more than upon the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, and fidelity; of which all external purifications were but shadows and memorials. In the Christian world we have no less shameful instances of superstition: Some men instead of worshipping him "that made heaven and earth," setting up the worship  
of

of the host, of the blessed virgin, of angels, of saints, of relics, and images ; also relying upon indulgencies, pilgrimages, processions, masses for the dead, and the like ; and practising the most inhuman persecutions and barbarities under pretences of religion ; all which things are destitute of reason, or any command of God. The true religion of Christ has nothing of this in it ; his religion only requires of us a reasonable service, that in expectation of a judgment to come, we continually worship the God of the universe ; that we live in sobriety, righteousness, and charity towards all men ; and make constant acknowledgments of the divine goodness and mercy, in receiving sinners to repentance, thro' the atonement and intercession of Christ. A doctrine this most firm in its foundation, and most excellent in its effects.—And as religion and superstition entirely differ in their ground and foundation, so do they in their effects : “ By their fruits ye shall “ know them.” Religion, which is founded in truth, always makes men impartial and inquisitive after truth ; lovers of reason, meek, gentle, patient, willing to be informed ; superstition, on the contrary, naturally makes men blind and passionate, despisers of reason, careless in seeking after truth, censorious, contentious, and impatient of instruction. Religion teaches men to be exactly just, equitable, and charitable ; but superstition, on the contrary, frequently puts men upon undervaluing the eternal rules of morality, preferring sects and parties, uncertain opinions and needless ceremonies, before the unalterable precepts of the everlasting law and gospel. True religion, the religion of nature and of Christ, by securing the belief of a future judgment, tends to promote the happiness of nations and good government, in obliging men to real fidelity and justice, and the sincere practice of every virtue, which human laws can but imperfectly

ly secure: But superstition, on the contrary, frequently produces wars and tumults, persecutions and tyrannies without end; there being nothing so wicked, which men of superstitious principles will not think pious and necessary, and men of no principles will not submit to.

I shall conclude with observing, that the true religion taught by Christ, (for the religion professed by many nations is nothing but superstition) has been objected to in two particulars, as encouraging superstition, by men who receive not the gospel; one is, that it teaches men to be obstinate and wilful, in parting with all advantages, even life itself, for the sake of religion: The other is, that by teaching men to despise the world, it hinders them from attending to the public good. The answer to this is not difficult; without a stedfastness not to be moved by temporal inconveniencies, there is no virtue to be depended upon in natural religion, any more than in the Christian. Is therefore all virtue nothing but superstition? And as to the despising the world, so as to withdraw from business; christianity no where teaches this, except in times of general persecution. In other cases, despising the world does not signify the slighting of business, or neglecting the public good; but despising all temptations to the wickedness of the world, the temptations of lawless pleasure, the temptations of unjust gains and corrupt ambition; these only are, in scripture sense, that world which is an enemy to God, and therefore what we ought to despise.

## Discourse LXXI. Dr. Rogers.

## The DUTY of TRUSTING in GOD.

Jerem. xvii. 7.

Blessed is he that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.

**T**RUST in God is a duty we owe him as our creator, and the supreme governor of the world; and it is a great degree of idolatry to place it on any other being. This duty implies an intire resignation to the wisdom, a dependance on the power, and a firm assurance of the goodness and veracity of God; On him we must rely to supply us with all things needful and proper; to give food to our bodies, pardon and grace to our souls. Should our temporal projects be full of danger, or the days of sorrow actually overtake us, yet we must still repose ourselves on God, who loves us as his children; and when he corrects us, does it with the mercy of a father; and will, in the end, make all things work together for our good. "Tho' he slay me, says Job, yet will I trust in "him." Nay, if we have offended him by our sins, provoked him to withdraw the comforts of his Holy Spirit, and to hide his face from us; yet still we must place our whole trust in him, and depend on the promises he has made thro' Christ, that he will forgive the truly penitent, and again receive him to mercy and favour.

This duty also implies, that we should not confide in any inferior beings. In order to this, we must put off all trust in ourselves, in our parts, abilities,

lities, or acquisitions, how great soever they may be; nor yet, solely confide in the friendship, assistance, or services of other men. For no man, how mighty, good, or virtuous soever he is, must be suffered to rival God, as to our trust and confidence in him. For the Holy Spirit hath pronounced him accursed, “who trusteth in man, and “maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth “from the Lord.” And tho’ the blessed angels far excel man in power and wisdom, and whose goodness and benevolence towards us we may be assured of, yet we must not trust in them; because these glorious beings are to be considered as our fellow servants, and only instruments in the hand of God, who governs all their actions, disposes their wills and affections, according to his good pleasure. But to place our confidence in bad men or evil spirits, is the highest offence against this duty. If we pay this regard to the angels of God, we become guilty criminals, in honouring the servant, tho’ of great dignity, before the master; but to have recourse to the powers of darkness, we associate with professed rebels against God and Christ, and deliberately renounce our allegiance to both. For tho’ we are permitted to cultivate the friendship, and engage the benevolence of men and angels, yet our confidence must terminate in God, from whose bounty we receive, and at whose pleasure we enjoy every blessing; whose appointment every creature, good or evil, is bound to obey, who only is the mighty Lord, that hath power to save and to destroy. But it will be proper to consider, when this trust is well founded, and what is required from us to assure our confidence and reliance on the favour and protection of God.

For, with respect to the duty of prayer, the proper means of obtaining the blessings we trust in God for; as there are certain qualifications on our  
parts

parts necessary to render our prayers successful ; so likewise, tho' our trusting in God, be an homage due from us to him, as his subjects and creatures, yet unless we are duly qualified for his favour, our trust will be a vain and sinful presumption. The great and important qualification for our success in these duties, is a sincere obedience to the laws of God, an unfeigned devotion of the heart, a steady adherence to the faith, purity and holiness of life, agreeable to the precepts of our religion. We must examine our lives, and be assured that our ways please the Lord, before we can hope for his favourable interposition : " For his eyes are over  
 " the righteous, and his ears are open to their pray-  
 " ers ; but the ungodly, and him that delighteth  
 " in wickedness, doth his soul abhor. If our heart  
 " condemns us not, then have we confidence towards  
 " God." But if our conscience reproach us with unmortified sin ; if we have neglected God's service, and despised his authority, all our hope will be that of an hypocrite ; we may call, but none will answer ; and no other refuge remains to the sinner, but to put away the evil of his doings, and humble himself by a speedy and sincere repentance : and if he returns to God whom he has forsaken, God will return and take him again into his protection ; he will be reconciled to him thro' Christ, and restore him to the confidence of a son.

Would we draw an abstract of human happiness, and give a minute description of it, we must fix on the wise and religious short sentence in the text as the sum of all ; " blessed is he that trusteth in the  
 " Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." Every other scheme we can form, will, upon examination, appear weak and defective, perplexed and intricate ; full of difficulties in the execution, and precarious in the issue ; depending for success on beings frail in  
 their

their nature, confined in their power, or uncertain in their will and inclinations: And if any of these fail us, our scheme is broken; the pains we have taken, the skill and address we have shewn in the attempt, are all lost, leaving us nothing but disappointment and despair. But he who can reasonably confide and trust in God, is secure from these contingencies. He relies on infinite wisdom, goodness and power, which nothing can obstruct; a God who has promised never to fail those who trust on him; and if he be with us, who or what can be against us. But then if he be angry, all our other dependencies will not avail us; our strength will be weakness, and our wisdom folly; every other support will disappoint and deceive us, in the day we want it most. And,

If our enquiry be only after present felicity, how much better is it secured to that man who trusts in God, than to him who depends on the creature? The hope of the former is founded on a rock, his soul dwells at ease, secure in the power and affection of his governor, calm and unconcerned in his pursuits. He commits the event to God, who perfectly knows, and is both able and willing to do what is best for him. He cheerfully and contentedly enjoys his present blessings, without any solicitude for the future. If things happen contrary to his expectations, he considers that it is the allotment of infinite wisdom and goodness, and therefore submits to the disappointment without murmuring. In times of danger his heart standeth fast, neither fearing the rage of men, nor the malice of devils; knowing that all things are under the direction of him, whose power ruleth over all; who can in a moment restrain their wills, and with his favourable kindness defend him as with a shield: **Nay**, in the severest afflictions, he is full of comfort; he knows that all the powers on earth or in hell

hell cannot distress him beyond God's ability to deliver him, nor exclude them from his presence, or prevent his having recourse to God. He considers that God does not willingly grieve his creatures, but has wise and gracious ends in all his dispensations, tho' they may not presently appear so to us. He believes that God afflicts him either to exercise and improve his virtue, his patience and fortitude; or to convey thereby some other advantage of greater value; so that he relies on his God either to remove the burden, or to enable him to bear it, or to make him amends for what he suffers.

But how different from this is he, who trusts in the creature? Uneasiness and vexation attend him in every stage and event of life; for he is in perpetual fear, lest those he relies on should deceive, or be disabled from serving him. And when danger becomes imminent and ready to fall upon him, he then finds the vanity of his confidence; fearfulness and trembling seize him; he is distracted, irresolute, and diffident of every recourse. But when the day of adversity actually overtakes him, he is then compleatly miserable; he flies from one dependance to another, but finds all either weak or treacherous. The riches and honours in which he gloried avail him nothing; and even the friend on whom he most relied, proves false and forsakes him, or looks on with an useless pity, and cannot help him. "He is like a man distressed with thirst in the parched places of the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited." He searches every pit, but finds no water; cries for help, but none can hear him; so that defeated and overwhelmed with trouble, he sinks into dejection, and all his hopes end in despair. This is the man who has not God for his hope, but trusteth in the multitude of his riches, and strengthens himself in his ungodliness. Thus weakly provided with regard to temporal happiness;  
thus

thus foolish and miserable, in comparison with him whose trust is in God. If we also consider their different conditions with respect to futurity; here the worlding gives up the argument, and will not dispute the advantage of religion. All his schemes terminate in things temporal; and if there be an eternal state, he knows that he has made no provision for it, but is lost and undone for ever. A prospect which is enough to embitter every pleasure; for with what horror and agonies must he reflect on the dreadful scene, whenever he will give himself time to consider?

From the comparison then it appears, that he who trusts in God has much the advantage as to present felicity; and as to futurity he stands alone in his hope and pretensions. And such an hope as is also the surest foundation of his present happiness; for from hence it is, that he derives content in his enjoyments, satisfaction in his expectations, support and courage in calamity. His views are to another world, and therefore regards this with the indifference of a guest, whose stay is uncertain; but still enjoys that peace of conscience and confidence towards God, which affords a perpetual spring of comfort to his soul. He triumphs over death, disarms it of its sting, and even longs to appear in the presence of that God whom he has trusted, and thro' whose mercies in Christ, he hopes to receive a blessed immortality. We see then, that a confidence in God is the only sure foundation of our present or future happiness; and the obedience of our lives is the only sure method to obtain that confidence. But to approve ourselves to God, by righteousness, holiness and purity, and to persevere in the duties he hath prescribed, must be the groundwork of our happiness. This will enable us to look up to God, with a firm trust in his providence; a trust that will support us in all events of life; and

when we pass thro' the vale of the shadow of death, the light of God's countenance will be our consolation, and open a prospect to our faith, into those regions of bliss and glory, where our labours, our fears and sorrows, shall cease, and be no more.

And from what has been observed we may infer, how vain it is to place our trust in any thing but God; and yet this, all those persons do, who depend on riches, honours, great parts, and natural abilities; expecting deliverance, by their means, from all the troubles and calamities of life. This, indeed, is too frequently the case of most men, when under trouble and affliction. For, when we lie upon a bed of sickness, do not we chiefly depend upon the medicines prescribed by the physician for our recovery? Do not our fees fly faster than our prayers? Is not God's minister the last person called in to our assistance, if at all, and perhaps not till the person is reduced to the last extremity? The great work of providing for eternity, is thought to be the employment only of some languishing moments; and when all other helps fail, then we begin to fly to God for his assistance. It is no doubt our duty, in times of sickness, to make use of those means God has appointed: but then, we must also apply to God by prayer, confide and trust in him, and he will bless and sanctify the means we use, and render them effectual. The husbandman, when he cultivates and tills the ground, uses all his skill, labour and industry; he sows his seed, in the sweat of his brow, and takes the most proper, convenient seasons; and yet for a blessing on these his endeavours, he must trust in and depend on that God, who gives the former and latter rain. And thus also it is, with the word of God, sown upon the hearts of men; the preacher must diligently perform his duty, in dispensing the word, the hearers must fit and dispose

dispose their hearts to receive it ; but still the success will depend on God's blessing ; if Apollos waters, it is God who gives the increase.

From hence we may also learn the weakness and folly of making use of unlawful means to accomplish any of our designs. They who act thus, so far from trusting in God, do enter themselves into the devil's service. For sin is the work of the devil ; and we are his servants, if we do his work. If we make use of sinful means to attain our ends, when God allows only such as be lawful, we in effect declare, that we will not trust and confide in him, but in the devil. God has assured us in his word, that if we observe the means he has appointed, will fear and obey him ; that he will protect us in all calamities, support us under temptations, and deliver us in all our straits and necessities, if we will trust and depend upon him. But if we will not hearken to his voice, and obey his laws, it will be just for God to leave us to ourselves, to withdraw that help and assistance of his, which we slight, and to suffer our enemies to destroy us. Again,

From hence we may learn, how it happens, that so many of our designs and undertakings prove unsuccessful ; it is because we trust too much in our own wisdom and strength, and do not rely on God's assistance. And the reason why so many temptations prevail over us, is, because we think to subdue them by our own power ; we also sink under the weight of affliction, because we depend upon ourselves, and will not trust in God. He will therefore blast our designs, defeat our best projects, and make the weak things of this world, to confound the mighty. So that if we would have our undertakings prosper, we must have recourse to such means as are just and lawful, and having placed our trust and confidence in God, to resign our-

selves to God's will, and leave the success to his wise disposal.

Lastly, we may from hence observe, how happy that man is, who has led a holy life. Such an one may trust in God, on all occasions. No calamity can happen to him, against which he is not prepared; no affliction which he is not able to undergo; come life or death, all is alike to him. He can say with "Job, tho' he slay me, yet will I trust in him." In a time of public calamity, when dread and destruction approach near; or when the greatest of all troubles seize him, a wounded spirit, or a misgiving confidence; he can then rely on his blessed Saviour, and plead the merits and sufferings of the crucified Jesus. Even in his last hour, when death, the king of terrors, sets all his forces in array; when his mind is filled with horror and dismay, when the wicked shall call for the mountains to fall on them, thinking to escape the anger of an offended God; then will the soul of every good man be filled with comfort, and self-complacency, and have the pleasing satisfaction to know, that he has made his peace with God, and got an interest in the merits of his crucified Saviour; that the sting of death is taken away, and a crown of glory prepared for him. As a good conscience was a continual feast to him, in his life-time, so will it more abundantly be so, at the hour of his death. But a wicked ungodly person has no such comfort to support him in a day of affliction; so that his condition must be extremely miserable, who has so much to fear, and nothing to hope for.

Let me then intreat and beseech every one, seriously to consider, that shortly a time will come, we know not how soon, when we must resign up our breath to him that gave it; and then, of all the time we now lavish away, none will bring us any satisfaction, but those happy moments which

we have spent in the duties of religion ; in the business of our lawful callings, and in acts of charity to our neighbour ; in informing the ignorant, reproving the sinner, visiting the sick, and administering to all the spiritual and temporal wants of our indigent brother. Nothing will then bring us any comfort, but that we have led sober, honest, and devout lives ; that we have feared the Lord, and obeyed the voice of his word ; and therefore have good reason to trust in the Lord, and to stay ourselves upon our God.

Discourse LXXII. Bp. *Atter-*  
*bury.*

OF SUBMISSION AND RESIGNATION to the  
WILL of GOD.

Mat. xxvi. 39.

—Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.

**W**HEN our blessed Saviour was going to offer himself a sacrifice for the sins of mankind, he retired with his disciples, to prepare himself for the dreadful conflict; in which he was not only to “wrestle with flesh and blood, and the powers of darkness,” but to suffer the displeasure of an incensed God, justly provoked by sinful men; not only to bear our infirmities, but the punishment of our sins was to be inflicted on him, even that bitter death and passion, which he endured, to atone for the sins of the whole world. The appearance of these sufferings, made our blessed Lord “exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: so that he sweat great drops of blood, falling to the ground.” This holy and innocent person, the beloved son of God, was grieved to lie under the displeasure of his offended father, and human nature recoiled at the approach of so great misery; wherefore he prayed, “O my father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.” Which words, were chiefly designed to express the submission of our Saviour’s will to God’s;



“ sickness, poverty, and all other evils and calamities ; yet if thou art pleased to order it otherwise, I most humbly submit myself, and all my concerns to the direction of thy good providence. I will endeavour, by mortifying my unruly lusts and passions, by taking off my affections from transitory enjoyments, to obtain such a disposition of mind, as may dispose and incline me to be wholly resigned to thy will, and to behave quietly and contentedly under thy afflicting hand. And let not any thing be as I will, but as thou wilt.” This is that submission to the will of God, recommended in the text, to our imitation. But then,

Our wills must be intirely submitted to God’s ; we must resign ourselves to his disposal, without the least reserve ; we must not say with Naaman, in this one thing pardon thy servant : or, I could willingly suffer any cross or misfortune, so the Lord would remove this affliction, which is greater than I can bear ; but we must be prepared to submit to whatever he is pleased to lay upon us ; and patiently to endure it, tho’ we are touched in the most tender part. For a partial obedience is very imperfect, and is only a submission to our wills, and not to God’s. Again, we must practise this duty on all occasions, during the whole course of our lives. We must repose ourselves under God’s protection, continue quite and contented in adversity, as well as prosperity ; when God writes bitter things against us, as well as when we enjoy the light of his countenance. It is a duty but of low attainment, to submit our wills to the divine, only when we enjoy all our hearts can wish ; but can we take contentedly the spoiling of our goods, the loss of our children, the ingratitude of our friends, a painful and acute distemper, and then say with Job, “ the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, “ blessed

“blessed be the name of the Lord?” And yet we ought cheerfully to submit to the will of God; to rejoice and be exceeding glad, when we suffer for righteousness sake; “for whom God loveth, he chasteneth, and correcteth every son whom he receiveth.” We must be careful not to fret, or be peevish at every cross accident; but whatever misfortune befalls us, let us in patience possess our souls, and endeavour to retain that happy cheerfulness, and even composed temper of mind, which sweetens the most bitter cup, and renders every adverse condition in life tolerable. And,

The reasonableness of performing this duty will plainly appear, if we consider, that God is the great creator and governor of the world. He made us, and not we ourselves, and therefore may justly dispose of us, according to his own will and pleasure; “shall the clay say to the potter, why hast thou made me thus?” may not God do what he will with his own? Besides, God has not only an absolute, unlimited power over us, but he is also a Being of infinite wisdom, to conduct and bring about the great designs of his providence. All things are ordered wisely, and for the best: and tho’ we murmur and repine at his dispensations, imagining that God deals hardly with us; yet upon the whole, he does what is fittest for us. Indeed, God doth not always consult the present benefit of particular persons, for good men are frequently involved in common calamities with other people. But could we look thro’ the whole series of God’s dispensations, we should find, that the affairs of this world are managed with exquisite wisdom and prudence, all things conducing to the most excellent ends. How reasonable is it then, that such blind ignorant wretches as we are, should resign ourselves to the conduct of an infinite wise God? to observe his directions, execute his commands, govern our  
lives

lives and conversations by his laws, and submit all our concerns to his disposal? For,

God is not only infinitely wise and powerful, but also a most good and merciful Being, and naturally inclined to help and assist the distressed and miserable. He has bowels of compassion, and is tenderly affected towards us, ready to relieve all our necessities, to supply all our wants, and to assist us, if we will put our trust in him; and he takes more delight in satisfying our necessities, than any earthly parent can shew towards his children. So that it is certainly highly reasonable, that we should rely and depend on him. For if God is inclined to do us good, and make us happy; if he is infinitely wise and powerful, both knows and can perform, what will most conduce to our truest interest and advantage, and be best for us; we may from hence rationally conclude, that he will order all affairs of this world so, as shall be most for the good of those who fear and serve him: and tho' afflictions are not for the present, joyous, but grievous, yet, when God sees it necessary for us to taste of the bitter cup, he will so direct it, as that in the end it shall be for our real benefit and advantage. In truth, the consideration of the power, the sovereignty, the wisdom, and mercy of God has such a natural tendency to beget in us an entire resignation to the divine will, that even heathens could say, "Lead me, O Lord, whither thou pleasest, and I will follow thee; and tho' I should be unwilling, yet I am resolved to bend my stubborn will, and force it into a compliance with thy divine will." Words that ought to be in the mouths of all good Christians. Indeed, as God's will must be done, whether we will or no, it is vain and weak to think we can resist and oppose it.

The

The doing God's will actively, is in our power. It is left to our choice, whether we will obey the commands of God, and submit to those laws which he has dictated to us by nature, or revealed in his holy word; but we must also passively submit to the dispensations of divine providence. And as we cannot avoid those sufferings, which God is pleased to inflict upon us, it will be our interest to make ourselves as easy under them, as possible. Since, by a due submission of our wills, to the divine will, we shall conform to the example of our Lord and master, Christ, whose faithful servants we profess to be. Our blessed Saviour lived on earth in a miserable and deplorable condition; he was afflicted, despised, and destitute of all the necessaries of life. "The birds of the air have nests, and the foxes holes, but the son of man had no settled place of abode; he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." And, if the beloved son of God, was thus perfected thro' sufferings; why should we, his adopted children, expect to escape them? Is it not then reasonable, that we should taste of the same bitter cup our Lord did? be content with our lot and portion, and cheerfully resign ourselves to the will of God?—I proceed to shew, that an humble submission of our wills to God's, will produce very happy and blessed effects.

A due submission to the divine will, will be an effectual means, to free us from all solicitous care and concern for the enjoyments of this world. We should rest satisfied with whatever God has allotted us, considering that the great Lord and governor of the world knows what station and condition of life is best for us, and most to our advantage, and therefore we ought to submit to his good will and pleasure. But we are apt to be too inquisitive about future events; we love to search and pry into the

the

the decrees of heaven, which God on purpose has concealed from us; whereas our chief care and business is to do our duty, and to serve God in our several stations, and then to leave the event of things to the determination of divine providence. We profess to believe, that God governs the world, that his providence orders and disposes all events; for not a "sparrow falls to the ground, nor an hair of our head drops off," but with his good pleasure; and should we endeavour to wrest God's government out of his hands, and place ourselves in the throne of the Almighty? Every true disciple, should rather say, "Lord, not as I will, but as thou wilt; if thou see'st fit to give me riches or honours, and hopeful offspring, or any the enjoyments of this world, I will endeavour to receive them gratefully, to use them moderately, and to manage these talents thou hast given me to the best advantage; but if thou art pleased to deny temporal blessings, or remove them when I have them, I will endeavour to submit to thy good pleasure. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." And from such a resigned temper of mind, will proceed a perfect tranquility, and calmness of soul. Most of those boisterous passions, sensual lusts and affections, which disturb and discompose the peace and quiet of our minds, proceed from an inordinate love of the transitory good things of this life.

We set too high a value on temporal enjoyments, regard them as the principal ingredients of our happiness, and use our utmost endeavours to obtain them; and if our unreasonable expectations are disappointed, we become troubled and discontented, and murmur against heaven; like Jonah, we are wonderfully delighted with our gourds, the comforts and pleasures of life; but when they decay and leave us,

we think God injures us, and then we murmur and repine against his providence. But the man who has brought his will to submit to God's will, his happiness is so firmly established, as can never be moved, either by prosperity or adversity; and he may say with the psalmist, "my heart is fixed, " O Lord, my heart is fixed, I will therefore sing " and rejoice." He is free from all those unruly passions, such as fear, envy, malice, revenge, covetousness, which render the lives of other men uneasy and troublesome. For what has he to fear, who lives in a constant dependance on God's good providence, which rules and governs all things; and when he knows that nothing can hurt him, without God's permission, and who will allot him what is best and fittest for him, and most conducing to his interest and welfare? For, why should he envy the prosperity and happiness of others, who knows that all these things are disposed of, by a most wise God, who measures them out as he pleases, and proportions them to our real wants and necessities; as the wise allotments of the great governor of the universe? Why should he harbour any rancour, malice, or revenge in his heart, who considers all the evils in this life, as the just punishments of his sins; who when he is afflicted, does not so much reflect on or complain of the malice of him who was the instrument; but he looks up to heaven, seeking to appease the anger of God, who does thus punish and chastise him. Every wise and good man regards the cause, from whence the good and evil of this life proceeds, and rests assured, that none of these evils could happen, without the pleasure and appointment of God, and he therefore receives them with submission and resignation. Could we once bring our minds to this heavenly divine temper, of submitting our wills to God's, this would take out the sting of most of those afflictions

sufferings and calamities which befall us here ; and our lives might be full of peace, tranquillity, and happiness. And then, the end would be obtained, for which our afflictions were sent.

For one great end, why God corrects his children, is to humble their stubborn wills, and render them more conformable to his divine will ; when once this is effected, God soon withdraws his heavy hand. For he doth not afflict willingly, nor take delight in chastising his creatures ; this he calls his strange work, which he never executes, but when men compel him to it. In truth, the chief part of those calamities which afflict mankind, are the natural effects of their own obstinate and perverse wills, which he who can once master, will obtain a most valuable conquest. For the happiness of our present lives, in a great measure, depends on the right government of our sinful affections and inordinate passions.

And every one who brings his will to a due submission to God's, will have his conversation in heaven. His chief employment here, will be the serving and worshipping of God ; he will take pleasure and delight in the exercises of religion, and devotion, and thereby preserve and maintain that sweet communion, which is between God and every devout soul. For, the reason why men take so little delight in the duties of religion ; why praying to God and praising him, hearing, reading and meditating on his word, becomes so unwelcome an employment to most men, is, because there is an opposition and enmity between our wills and God's. Our wills are sensual and carnal, and therefore cannot be subject to the law or will of God. If our chief happiness be in sensual delights, these spiritual employments must needs be burthensome ; "for where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also." From hence we may easily know what  
 pro-

progress we have made in this duty, of bringing our wills into an entire resignation to the divine will; by reflecting how constant we have been in the public and private exercises of devotion; what pleasure and delight we take in praying to and praising God; whether we daily meditate on his word, and are constantly fed at his table, and can say that one day in his courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. It should be therefore our great business and employment, to bring ourselves to this divine and heavenly temper, that in every state and condition of life, we may be not only content, but able to say, "not as I will, O God, but as thou wilt." I shall now make a few inferences, and then conclude.

If we enquire into the source and cause of human misery, from what bitter spring proceeds so much complaint and disquietude to the world, we shall be forced to ascribe it all, to this one irregularity, the opposition of man's will to God's. Our creator designed us for happiness, and would we patiently attend to his directions, it would infallibly lead us to it. But vain man will be wiser and stronger than God; he will lay schemes and form projects of his own, and contend with the Almighty, for the execution of them. But alas! the counsel of the Lord that shall stand. When we have wearied ourselves in a fruitless contest, after all our struggling and reluctancy, we must submit, and gain nothing by the dispute, but to be forced in a way, where a willing compliance had led us with pleasure. In a man resigned to the will of God, we have the noble image of a soul raised above the strife and hurry of the world: safe in his fortune, and easy under every event of providence. What the bounty of his creator bestows on him to-day, he enjoys with an humble and cheerful content, unmolested by fear or desire; and he relies on  
the

the same wisdom and goodness, to provide for him to-morrow. He prays indeed for those blessings he really wants, and uses all rational methods to attain them; but still leaves it to God to determine what is best for him, and feels no uneasiness if he is disappointed. Even under the several calamities, he supports himself with reflecting, that they are sent by a just and benevolent being, who never willingly grieves his creatures, and will not afflict beyond measure. Amidst all the various scenes of life, he preserves an unshaken tranquility, slides gently on the stream of providence, secure in the affection and power of his governor, and prepared with equal pleasure, to submit to his conduct, and obey his commands.—On the contrary, all our councils, where God is not consulted, are vanity and vexation; we sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind. The mind of such is perpetually tormented with numberless anxious fears in all its pursuits, in every disappointment left to despair; unsatisfied with the present, and apprehensive of the future, without any settled enjoyment in this world, or any comfortable prospects in another.

This state would be much more desirable than it is, if the will of God was done on earth; if men were as just, as charitable, as good-natured, as ready to assist and forgive one another, as God has commanded. Whence come wars and fightings, and all the miseries that torment and disquiet mankind, but from their lusts and wickedness? it is the root of sin, that produces these bitter fruits; and the only effectual remedy is, to leave our sins, and obey the laws and will of God. To conclude,

Were we fully satisfied of the infinite wisdom and goodness of God, in the disposal of all events; were this persuasion deeply fixed in, and constantly present with us, that whatever God appoints, is for  
the

the best ; we should see reason enough not only for contentment, and a patient submission to his will ; but also for rejoicing and giving thanks in all dispensations of his providence. Let us then at all times, and on all occasions, with all patience, meekness, contentment, and resignation of spirit, be passively, as well as actively, conformable to the divine will, and demean ourselves as becomes good children, under the chastisement of a wise and good father ; let us with satisfaction of mind, not only endure, but approve of all God's dispensations, so will he justify and acquit us hereafter ; and for our patient bearing of our present afflictions, he will reveal to us such an excellent reward of glory, with which the sufferings of this present life is not worthy to be compared. To which God of his infinite mercy conduct us all, thro' Jesus Christ.

Discourse LXXIII. Bp. *Clagget*.

## Of FAITH, HOPE, and CHARITY.

I Cor. xiii. 13.

And now abideth faith, hope and charity, these three, but the greatest of these is charity.

FROM this excellent saying of the apostle, we may learn what ought to be the end of a Christian, and what means our religion affords us to attain this end. And if we duly and attentively consider the nature of the things he speaks of, it will evidently appear, that the use of faith and hope to us in this world, (for in the next, they will be useless) regards the advancing us to a higher perfection of charity; here called the greatest of the three. Whilst we are in this imperfect state and condition, faith, hope, and charity, are very needful, and of indispensable use, to conduct us to future and immortal happiness. And since these three are distinguished by their own natures, we ought to have distinct notions of them. But we are upon all accounts to ascribe the greatest excellence to charity; that it is a more perfect virtue, and hath a more immediate efficacy upon our eternal happiness, than the other two. This will better appear by explaining the distinctions, of faith, hope and charity; and by shewing the reasons and grounds, why charity hath the pre-eminence of the three.

Faith,

Faith, hope, and charity, however they differ in some things, yet agree in this; that they are all certain dispositions of the mind of man, or principles, that have a natural tendency towards one and the same pious life and virtuous practice; as will be clearly seen, if we distinctly consider them. Faith, in general, is an assent to the truth of such things upon the testimony of others, as are not evident of themselves. The writers of the new testament, by faith, or believing, always meant an assent to a proposition, that is true, or a persuasion grounded upon testimony. Faith may be distinguished into several sorts, but chiefly into human, or divine faith. The faith which the apostles in the new testament treat of, was divine faith, or believing on the testimony of God; "if we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater." The faith of most Christians is chiefly owing to education, or to the opinion they have of their teachers, or to some such method, whereby error is imbibed, as well as truth; and yet whilst they believe the doctrines of the gospel, their persuasion is true faith: It not being necessary to the nature of that assent, which we call faith, for a man to be able to give all the best reasons for his faith; [that may be produced. But tho' faith may be distinguished into several sorts, yet the general notion of faith is, that it is the evidence of things not seen, or a persuasion of the truth of those things upon testimony, which we cannot discover by any evidence of sense; and thus the faith which the apostle here speaks of, is a persuasion, that the doctrine and laws of the gospel, are the laws of God; that thro' the atonement of Christ's death, sincere obedience to those laws is the condition of the forgiveness of sins; that there is a future state when men shall be rewarded or punish-

ed, according to their works; and that all the motives to repentance and a new life, contained in the Christian religion, are divine revelations. This is that faith, which now abideth, and is of indispensable and necessary use, to work that reformation in our hearts and lives, which will qualify us for eternal happiness. For all other principles, than those of the Christian faith, are insufficient, to persuade us to the practice of religion and virtue. Indeed,

That religion and virtue have a tendency to promote our happiness in this world, is an argument insisted on by modern divines and old philosophers; but it cannot be so effectual to procure this, as a Christian's faith. For such arguments will not persuade a man to that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. They may prevail with a wise man, to avoid those vices which are inconsistent with his present advantage; but not to deter him from many sins, that are opposite to his eternal happiness. There are no doubt many whom the care of their temporal interests will restrain from some vices; but if they have no better principles, what shall hinder them from those sins, which they may so discreetly manage, as not to hurt their bodies nor estates? What shall give them courage to resist those temptations, that threaten their present welfare, if they yield not to them? What can make them dare to die, rather than break the laws of God? So that the consideration of present advantages, will not carry a man thro' the whole of religion. But if we firmly believe the promises and doctrines of the gospel; if we make that faith the principle of our lives, it will equally restrain us from all sorts of sin, whether consistent or not, with our temporal interest. A true Christian's faith will make us refrain from all manner of evil, and not to stain and defile our minds and consciences with sin: For tho' our sins may be such, as not to fasten infamy

famy on our names, or procure the hatred and envy of men, yet it will deprive us of the favour of God, and exclude us from an eternal inheritance in the kingdom of heaven ; and this is sufficient to make us fly from sin, with the greatest indignation and abhorrence. It therefore our faith abideth, and we are really persuaded of those invisible future rewards and punishments, mentioned in the scripture, this will produce in us the practice of universal goodness. The power of such a faith hath appeared in multitudes of believers, who have been raised from the lowest and most degenerate state, to become examples to others of virtue and piety. This is that faith or firm persuasion of the truth of Christ's religion, which turned the heathen world from their vices and idolatries ; that exalted men of low degree to that high fortitude of enduring torments, not accepting deliverance from death. And the same faith still abideth for us, as was at first delivered to the saints. The promises and threatnings contained in the bible, are still the doctrine of God to us, who have as much reason to believe them, and be influenced by them, as any who have lived before us. Thus much as to the nature, notion and use of faith.

That hope which the apostle speaks of, signifies in general the expectation of some good, whereof a person hath no absolute assurance ; but here it means such an expectation of eternal happiness, as in the gospel is promised to Christians, who will faithfully serve God and do their duty ; and persevere in the practice of an holy life, which is the condition of the promise. Salvation is the object of our hope, which is more or less stronger or weaker according to the degrees of piety and virtue, that we have attained. But while we are in this world, we cannot with any certainty have more than the hope of eternal happiness. It is therefore necessary that hope should abide with us, to animate our en-

deavours to please God, and obtain eternal life ; and God will not be wanting by his grace to enable us to do this, if we will do our part ; and the more diligent we are in the duties of religion, the greater will our hope be. But if it be a sad thing to live without hope of heaven, how should this engage us to a speedy repentance ? If it is pleasing to have this hope encreased and our fears lessened, how diligent should we be to attain the habits of goodness and all Christian virtues ? Is the assurance of eternal life the most valuable satisfaction we can have ; how should this oblige us to persevere in the ways of piety, by which only it can be obtained ? God hath so ordered the method of our salvation, that our hopes should not exceed the proportion of our virtues ; that we may be always excited to great diligence in a religious life : since the promises of the gospel, afford no true comfort if we are careless and wickèd, and do not persist in the ways of Christian virtue.

As to those who pretend they cannot serve God comfortably, till they are assured of their salvation, this is a most unreasonable notion. We find St. Paul, when he was near the end of his race, thus triumphing ; “ I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.” So that if assurance is to be had in this life, the Christian can only arrive to a full attainment of it, by a long and patient virtue ; by a tried love to God, a great firmness in good principles, and a constant practice of true religion. But in the mean time, if we resolve to walk as becomes the gospel, without entertaining hard thoughts of God, and believing that he will supply us with grace sufficient for us ; we shall never want so much comfort, as will be necessary to encourage us in well-doing. Having thus shewn, that hope is a comfortable expectation of eter-

eternal life, if we perform the conditions on which God hath promised it ; I proceed to consider that other principle of obedience, which being added to faith and hope, compleats the right temper and constitution of a Christian ; and that is charity, the greatest of the three ; the best and firmest principle of all our obedience and virtue.

The occasion of St. Paul's discourse upon charity, was the disorders that then prevailed in the church of Corinth ; and the branch of charity he chiefly insisted upon, was love to the church. From thence he proceeds to speak of charity, in its full latitude, as the principle of all kind of good actions, and under that notion reckons it with faith and hope. Some turbulent persons in Corinth, proud of their gifts, by endeavouring to gain followers, had made divisions in the church, and put things in great disorder. This made the apostle to discourse of spiritual gifts, and the uses to which they were serviceable in the church of God ; and then he shews them a more excellent way, than making themselves great, by boasting of their gifts. " Tho' I speak, says he, with  
 " tongues of men and angels and have not charity, I  
 " am become as a sounding brass or a tinkling cym-  
 " bal ; and tho' I have the gift of prophecy, and un-  
 " derstand all mysteries and all knowledge ; and tho'  
 " I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains,  
 " and have not charity, I am nothing ; and tho' I  
 " bestow all my goods to feed the poor ; and tho' I  
 " give my body to be burnt, and have not charity,  
 " it profiteth me nothing." That is, tho' I could speak of religion, and the doctrines of the gospel, with all the eloquence of nature or art, so as to gain the attention of all who hear me ; nay, tho' I could speak with the oratory and power of an angel ; yet if I did not use these advantages for the benefit of the church, the promoting of true piety, the strengthening of Christian love and concord ; but

should employ them to breed schisms and contentions, all my eloquence would be an empty noise, no more pleasing to God, than a sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal : nay, if I could prophesy, and interpret all the scriptures, if I understood mysteries, could resolve all difficult and doubtful questions ; or if I should give away all my goods, inflict the greatest severities and penances on my body, be content to undergo torment and death ; yet if I should use the ostentation of this wisdom and eloquence, these austerities and mortifications, only to cause discords and divide the communion of Christians, this would not render me in the least better, or more acceptable to God, than if I was ignorant of all these things. And then he takes occasion to discourse of charity, in its utmost latitude, as the grand principle of all kind of virtues.

Charity at large, is no less than an unfeigned love to God and man ; to God in the first place, as the most excellent being in the universe, infinite in goodness and all perfections : and then to those creatures of God, that bear the image of his eternal reason upon their souls. This love to mankind also includes the love of ourselves, as being part of that society, which was created for the honour of God, and the attainment of one common happiness. And this virtue of charity, consists in a lively sense of the goodness of those things, whereby the honour of God, and the benefit of mankind are promoted ; from whence arises an obligation to all Christian virtues : such as piety towards God, and obedience to his will, meekness and peaceableness towards men, sobriety and temperance in all our appetites. -- He then that is endued with an unfeigned love to God and man, and with a just sense of the honour of God, and the welfare of men, will be induced to perform such things ; and have as great an aversion to all vice and ungodliness, as any creature has, to what is destructive of its nature.

ture. "For love is the fulfilling the law;" and where an universal charity is the principle, an universal goodness of manners will certainly follow, was there no other motive to assist it. And thus I have briefly represented the different notion of faith, hope, and charity. I proceed to shew for what reasons, and upon what grounds, the greatest of these is charity; and this will appear by the following particulars.

Charity is the end of faith and hope. St. Peter makes faith the first principle, and charity the highest perfection in the Christian life. Did all men truly love God and one another, there would be less need of faith to oblige, or of hope to encourage them to obedience; but since we are degenerated from the love of God, and a just sense of virtue and goodness, it is necessary that we should be armed against temptations, secured against our sensual appetites, and restrained from evil practices, by the fear of punishment, and the hope of reward. But the end aimed at by these external motives, is to work in us an inward principle of virtue; freely disposing us to the love of God and men, to the practice of all pious and honest actions. And however difficult at first it may be for a man who leaves a wicked course, to keep God's commandments, yet by diligence in avoiding evil and doing good, when once vicious habits are broken, and that the love of sin and the world gives place to the love of God, and his holy laws, then will the penitent delight in such a life; and perform those good actions which before seemed to be against his affections and inclinations, with the utmost pleasure and satisfaction. This is the glorious liberty of the children of God, to which the gospel designs to bring us. This is that state which all the motives of religion have in view, in order to make us universally good Christians. As much therefore as the end is preferable

to the means, so much greater is charity, than faith and hope.

But this will further appear, by considering that charity is more excellent than they; for faith and hope are only motives to virtue, but charity is the noble disposition of the soul towards it. I am therefore much surprized, any should contend, that the faith by which St. Paul says we are justified, doth not include obedience; it being evident, that where he opposes faith to works as to our justification, he always opposes it to the observance of the Jewish law, or to sinless perfection: The former of which could justify no man before God; and the latter in our frail state is impossible. And therefore we must be justified by faith, that is, by believing the gospel of Christ, and living according to that belief. It is therefore apparent, that the faith by which we are justified, supposes charity and universal holiness; for to be justified by God, is to be esteemed righteous by him. Indeed, it would be very strange, that faith should have all the justifying virtue, and charity none, which yet is by far the more excellent disposition of the two; unless we can be so absurd as to suppose, that God will value and approve of that most, which is less excellent; and that less, which is more excellent in its own nature. So that the faith by which we are justified, comprehends all things necessary to the making a good Christian, and consequently charity, which is the most excellent of them all. If a man firmly believes all the promises and threatnings of the gospel, but does not love God, and keep his commandments, what commendation or reward can belong to his faith; or how is it possible, for God to esteem him a good man? From hence it is evident, that charity, as here considered, is in its own nature more excellent than faith, because without it, faith hath little or no excellence at all. Again:

Charity

Charity is a more powerful principle of goodness than faith and hope, and more certainly produces good effects, and therefore is greater. God knows, there are too many who are called believers, and have a strong confidence of eternal happiness, and yet are little better for this in their lives. But we cannot suppose a man endued with charity, that is, with the love of God and man, to be careless of doing what good is in his power; because this is a never-failing principle of all virtuous actions, which belongs to the several conditions of men. It is this that makes men true and sincere worshippers of God, just and honest, kind and merciful one towards another; liberal to the necessitous, patient under injuries, meek and gentle in their whole conversation. This make us pity the miserable, congratulate the happy, and banishes envy and malice, pride and cruelty out of the world. This makes men peaceable in their station, quiet and obedient under government, and inoffensive in all their behaviour, because these things contribute to the good of mankind. Charity makes a good man to consider, that his reason and understanding, his wit and judgment, his power and riches, his place and calling, his health and life, are not so many instruments only for his own advantage; but as-so many obligations to do all the good, of which they render him capable. By charity it is, that men are good and useful to one another, that their truest interests are strengthened, their comforts secured, human society is preserved and made happy. So that if factions and animosities grow amongst us, it is not so much for want of faith and hope, for there is abundance of that, even to infallibility with some people, and to a certain assurance with others, as the not having this divine grace of charity, to dispose men to those actions, which tend to the universal benefit of all society.

Charity is also greater than the other two, because it renders us like unto God, which faith and hope cannot do. What is the creation of the world, but an effect of the divine charity? What is our reason and understanding; what are all the benefits he hath bestowed upon us, and all the creatures he hath given us for our use, but the emanations of his love towards us? What was the giving the Son of his love to suffer death, but the expressions of an inestimable charity towards sinners? What is his patience and long-suffering? What the grace of his Holy Spirit, with which he aids us? What is our capacity to partake of that eternal life he hath promised to reward us with? What are all these and innumerable other blessings that he confers on us, but the charities of God towards men? It was charity and goodness that made the world, that governs and directs the affairs of it, in order to an universal good, the glory of God, and the welfare of his creatures.

If therefore we would imitate God, we must consider him as the great example of charity, “and be merciful, as our heavenly father is merciful.” We must be ready to do all the good we can in our generation. Our minds must be disposed to, and our lives employed in, the practice of all those Christian virtues, that will best promote the honour of God, the benefit of mankind, and the improvement of our own souls, in what is most excellent. For he that is most inclined to do good, that truly desires the glory of God, really loves his neighbour, and is kind to all men; he it is that most resembles God, the universal benefactor, the great original of charity, and fountain of all goodness. But as faith and hope cannot be attributed to almighty God, so can they have no resemblance to God. Lastly,

Charity is an immutable perfection in us, that will last for ever. Charity never faileth. It is this

by

by which God will be kind to his servants, and they forever dutiful to him. Our faith is useful to us, while we do not see the things we believe; and our hope, while we do not enjoy those rewards we expect; but these two will have no place in the other world. The love of God, and of mankind, now begun in us, by the christian faith, instead of being done away, will in the next state grow into perfection, and be for ever the life of that happiness which abideth for us in the kingdom of heaven. So that charity is as much greater than faith and hope, as the state of the blessed hereafter is superior to this imperfect life in the flesh, which we live by the faith of the Son of God. And God grant, that our faith and hope may be lively and effectual principles in us, of obedience and charity; that when this life shall be no more, we may with joy behold that kingdom, which we now believe, possess that reward we now hope for, and perfect that charity which is here begun in us.

Discourse LXXIV. Abp.  
*Wake.*

The GREAT BENEFIT OF CONSIDERA-  
TION.

Deut. xxxii. 29.

O that they were wise, that they understood this, then they would consider their latter end.

THESE words are part of that great song which Moses spake unto all the congregation of Israel, immediately before his death, and which by God's express command, he left as his last and best legacy to them and their posterity forever. In the verses before, we have a sad and terrible declaration of those judgments that should hereafter befall them for their impenitence; which was no doubt the occasion and importance of that passionate wish, into which that prophet here breaks out, in consideration of their danger and insensibility of it: "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" Whether by their latter end we are to understand that great and terrible destruction which befel themselves and their country in the loss of Jerusalem; or, whether of God's rejecting them from his covenant, and from being any longer his own peculiar inheritance; whether one or both, yet it is certain, that a greater and more amazing instance of the divine vengeance on a particular nation, has hardly been known from the beginning of the world: and the  
cause

cause of all their evils was inconsideration, a fault much more inexcusable in the Israelites, as they had received most clear and sensible proofs of the divine power and goodness. For they had seen the miracles by which God had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and conducted them near forty years thro' the Wilderness. They had beheld his majesty when in a very terrible manner he vouchsafed to give them his law from Mount Sinai. Nay, that nothing might be wanting to awaken a stupid and insensible people, they had known his judgments too, in the punishment of their sins. They had seen the destruction which their fathers had suffered, and were expressly foretold, what evils they and their posterity should undergo for their impiety. And yet all this was not sufficient to awaken their consideration, to raise in them a sense of, and care to prevent the danger that attended them. And would to God these Jews were the only persons to be charged with this neglect; and that our indifferency in doing our duty, did not equally proceed from the same inconsideration. Alas! were we to enter on a review, we should find but too just a parallel, both in danger and incogitancy. And the words of Moses may aptly be applied to us Christians, "O that we were wise, that we understood this, that we would consider our latter end." In speaking on a subject so necessary and important, I shall shew the danger and mischief of inconsideration; enquire into the causes thereof; offer some general rules for the practice of it; and lastly, draw some practical inferences from the whole.

It has been the usual method of most casuists, in enquiring into the causes of sin, to expose the mischiefs, and aggravate the danger, of those particular temptations, that are the immediate occasions thereof. Hence many run into investives against the interests and pleasures, the honours and riches

riches of the world ; assuring the good Christian, that he must resolve to abandon them, or at least quit all undue esteem, and inordinate desire of them. But the true and universal cause of all our evils, is inconsideration ; this is neglected, or but lightly and seldom touched on. There are I believe but very few who place it in the number of their temptations, or think themselves concerned to provide against it. But before I proceed to those particulars which concern the removal of this evil, I shall endeavour to convince men of the necessity of consideration ; by shewing, that of all the devil's artifices, this has been the most successful, and that all other temptations is derived from the influence of this. That riches and honour, pleasure and interest, do only seduce some ; triumph over the weakness only of some dispositions ; but that inconsideration is a general snare, which carries all before it : the one universal cause of all our sins, being no other than this, that we do not consider as we ought, what our duty is, and what our obligations are to practise it. And

It cannot be denied, but that inconsideration exposes us to every temptation, which the devil shall think fit to lay in our way ; it is often the cause that we are tempted, and always the reason of our being overcome by the temptation. How many sins do men fall into, for want of considering and knowing they were sins ? There is scarce a more general plea in the mouth of every sinner, than, that he meant no harm in what he did, that he did not know, or think it was unlawful. And this want of consideration, exposes men to infinite temptations, by keeping them in a criminal ignorance, of what they should have known and considered. Nor are the ignorant only concerned in this danger. He who knows his duty the best, is yet often times no less surprized by his incogitancy,  
 than

than the most ignorant. The Devil, who knows our weakest times, and constantly watches his advantage, then assaults us most, when he sees us least on our guard, and in no condition to resist him. And if by a diligent care and attention to our duty, we are not as readily prepared to resist those temptations he sollicit us to, as we are otherwise well instructed in our duty; our enemy will have a great advantage against us, if not sufficient power to overcome us. And that inconsideration is the real ultimate cause of all our sins, will appear, if it be observed,

That there are in our religion such motives and engagements to obedience, that were they duly weighed, it would be impossible for a man to live wickedly. Is there any among us who hath but once seriously reflected on the nature of God; how excellent his goodness is, how terrible his justice; With what an irreconcilable hatred he prosecutes sin and sinners for its sake; That he is omnipotent, and cannot be resisted; omniscient and cannot be deceived; that he is every where present, sees our most retired actions, and will one day bring them all to light, in the "day when he shall judge the world in righteousness?" Let him who has seriously considered this, say, whether the devil could draw him into sin, while he had such thoughts to oppose his temptations. But Christianity carries us yet further. It shews us a God incarnate, a God made man on purpose for our salvation; who "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity." It represents to us a covenant of grace, sealed with his own most precious blood, in which we have been solemnly initiated and sworn at our baptism; the condition whereof was, "that we should forsake the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh;" and

instead of serving these, should obediently “ keep  
 “ God’s holy will and commandments, and walk  
 “ in the same all the days of our life.” And who-  
 ever duly considers the weight and moment of this  
 one engagement, will find in it an impregnable for-  
 tress against sin, such as all the temptations in the  
 world can never overcome. For to reflect but briefly  
 thereon : What is there in all our sins, or the temp-  
 tations that lead to them, whose force and power  
 would not be frustrated by this one serious considera-  
 tion? Where is the lust that can offer any tolerable  
 inducement to comply with it, when compared with  
 our obligations to love and obey so great, so excel-  
 lent a redeemer? Is there a passion so darling, an  
 interest so valuable, that the most desperate sinner,  
 in his cool, considerate thoughts, would be willing  
 to exchange for heaven? or rather, which is the  
 case, be content for the prosecution of it, to go down  
 perhaps the next moment into hell, and there dwell  
 with everlasting burnings? So that however sin  
 may deceive us by our carelessness, yet it can never  
 stand before consideration. It may surprize our  
 passions, but cannot possibly reconcile itself to our  
 reason. Nor are our natures yet so degenerate,  
 but that a due reflection on our engagements to  
 obedience, would, by God’s grace, soon oblige us  
 to a performance of it. And the hopes of heaven,  
 the terrors of hell, the vanity of this world, and the  
 eternity of the next, were they once considered as  
 they ought to be, would so effectually stop our ears,  
 against the arts of the “ charmer, charm he never so  
 “ wisely,” as not to be able to open them to his in-  
 sinuation. Again,

That the want of consideration, is really the great  
 and true cause of all our sins ; let me appeal to the  
 common practice and experience of all mankind,  
 whether any who begins seriously to consider these  
 things, does not presently become a good Christian.

Or

Or else what is it that makes the worst of sinners; if they come into any danger or calamity, sickness or affliction, or that any thing stops them in their wild career, so as to give them time to cool and consider their duty, and their great and dangerous deviations from it? What is it but consideration; that makes such persons presently disclaim their extravagancies, to confess that they were mistaken in their notions of virtue and vice, and had therefore preferred the interests of the one, because they had not known or sufficiently considered the excellency of the other? And tho' these pious reflections may not secure their future obedience, but such persons may again return to their renounced follies, yet that is not because piety and religion have not sufficient reason on their side, and which ought to engage them to deny themselves, and forsake their sensual pleasures, and worldly interests; but only that their danger being removed, they have with it also lost their consideration; and their incogitancy again exposes them to those sins, which when they reflect on, they will be equally ready to condemn in themselves as before. Thus sufficiently evident is the great mischief of inconsideration. But I will add one reflection more, which is,

That whatever particular temptations we may by chance be exposed to, would be of no force, was it not for inconsideration. Pleasure, riches, honour, and interest, or any more powerful vanity, are not such omnipotent temptations, as our corrupt affections would represent them; on the contrary, it is certain they would have no force, but by our own incogitancy. As for pleasure; would the voluptuary pursue that as he does, did he really reflect, what, in a little time, will be the end of his debaucheries: That in a few years, perhaps it may be only months or days, all his enjoyments shall cease; his pleasures be exchanged for pain and

sickness, impotence and infirmity; those torments in this life, which are usually the sad fore-runners of his eternal punishment in the other? And as for riches; would any take so much care and labour to get them, who knows how perishing they are in their own nature, and also considers that treasure in heaven, which the gospel speaks of as so infinitely surpassing all the highest acquisitions here; and so much surer to be obtained, so easily acquired, so durable and eternal? As to honour, if there can be such a thing without virtue; if high places, and great titles, that have so long usurped the name, may be allowed the character of it; what judgment can any considering man pass upon such honour; but that Christianity apart, it must certainly be a vain thing to build a man's hopes, and expend his life, on what depends on mens opinion of, and value for us; who often give this thing called honour to the most undeserving, in exclusion of the truly brave and worthy. And then for the interests of this world; alas! what can they appear to any serious considering man, but meer vanity, who does but remember the great and wise question of his Saviour, "What is a man profited, if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Hence it is evident, that our greatest danger under any temptation, arises from the want of consideration.

And if we enquire into the causes of this inconsideration; it will appear, that the first and most fatal of all is, that men imagine they do well consider these things, when in truth they do not. If we are sometimes a little serious and reflect on religion; if we go to church on Sundays, and are not scandalously wicked the week after; if we receive the holy sacrament in its seasons, and reflect a little the week before on our sins and vanities, and  
 resolve

resolve to sin no more, this by many is called considering ; and I fear is the only religion of a great number of people. But alas ! this is far from being true consideration. It is not every slight reflection on religion, which deserves that name. He that will do it effectually, must resolve to search the bottom of his soul ; not a sin so secret, a lust or interest so dear or profitable to us, but to the best of our power must be discovered and rooted out. The danger of sin in general, all the black circumstances, and aggravations of our particular sins, must seriously be considered ; the hopes and terrors of eternity thoroughly weighed ; what the goodness of God is, if we repent ; what his judgments will be, if we continue to despise the riches of his mercy, and treasure up to ourselves wrath against the day of wrath. In short, whatever can tend to convince us of our sins, and certain danger, engage us to forsake the one, and escape the other, must be laid before us so long, till that by God's grace we be brought to such a sense of our condition, as sincerely to repent of our past sins, and stedfastly resolve to obey God's commands : Without thus considering, no one considers as he ought ; he only flatters himself, and cheats his own soul.

Another cause of mens inconsideration, in matters of religion, is the applying their minds and thoughts to other purposes. The generality of mankind regard religion, as a thing indifferent, and not as their proper business ; somewhat to entertain them when melancholy, or at some solemn times, but not to be made the subject of their more immediate thought and consideration. Thus do such reverse the maxim of our Saviour, and make, not our salvation, but the business of this world, our employments and interests, and too many even sin and vice, the one thing needful. And if then this

is the case, no wonder if we see such sad and dreadful effects ; for if men esteem the concerns of this present life their main business, we need not be surprized they consider no more of a far better country. We may indeed with Moses, wish, “ O that they were wise, that they would consider this ! ” But till this mistake is rectified, we cannot much expect, they should consider their latter end : and tho’ there is nothing more pleasing or agreeable to our rational nature, than the practice of religion ; yet there being something rough and uneasy in the first setting out, which the habitual sinner cannot without pains and difficulty get over, this is another, and no small disadvantage to religion. He who prospers by sin, who grows rich, great, or honourable by injury or oppression, by fraud and flattery, will no doubt be very uneasy to embrace a religion, that requires justice and integrity, in every action ; that forbids violence and rapine, all wicked artifice and dissimulation, and all those evil methods by which he has encreased and flourished. So that what with a prevailing interest, or real fear ; an unwillingness to forsake sin, or thinking it impossible to be overcome ; many I believe go on without considering, and hate to reflect on what they resolve never to reform. Or, lastly,

Men are apt to delay this great affair, resolving one time or other to consider, without having the heart to set about it. This is also a great, and I fear general, fault, such as perhaps has ruined more souls, than any one thing in the world. Thus some refer these kind of thoughts to old age, and yet never come to it, but go down in the grave, without having provided for it. Others fix a time, which business afterwards disappoints. At length, God’s grace is withdrawn, and conscience having been often denied, grows weary of any longer importunity ; and when we thought to have considered,

sidered, we find neither will, strength, nor opportunity for it.

But it may be of use to give some general rules for the practice of consideration. And this must be done by a serious and impartial enquiry, both into ourselves, and our religion; by a diligent and strict examination, what our duty towards God is, and how we ought to perform it. As to our duty towards God, the necessity of this, is so well understood, that however negligent all are, every one is convinced of his obligations to it. Indeed it is the fault of many, to fix their thoughts on some part of their religion, to the neglect of the rest; to run away with the promises of the gospel, without considering what they must do, to entitle themselves thereto. Others, solely regard the difficulty of its commands, and concluding it impossible to live as they ought, think it in vain to try what they can do. Some admiring St. Paul's account of faith, without considering what it is, content themselves with having a right faith, not regarding the necessity of good works, recommended by St. James. Others think themselves secure, in being members of a pure reformed church, on the one hand; or else of an unerring, infallible catholic church, on the other; as if the espousing such an interest, church, or party, was all God requires in order to salvation. Many are the mistakes of this kind; to prevent which, let me give this plain rule for the direction of all: that whosoever will consider, as he ought, must do it universally, and leave no part of his religion unexamined. That whatever consideration contributes to lessen our duty, or rather, does not promote it, is false and imperfect; and if he stops there, it will deceive and ruin him. We are also to consider our state and our duty, what God requires of us, and how we have lived, and not to defer this. For since our life is but a puff of  
F 4 breath,

breath, every day in our nostrils, and not one moment that we can call our own, it will concern us much, not to defer considering how we are provided for another world.

Repentance is a duty that cannot be discharged in a moment, nor is there any time, or place for it, after this life : and should we thro' inconsideration neglect it, we shall in vain lament our sin and folly to all eternity. Whoever has omitted so great and necessary a duty, let not such longer defer it, nor suffer " his eyes to sleep, nor his eye-lids to " slumber," until he sets about it. Indeed it is to be wished, that men would not let one day slip without this consideration ; because a day seldom passes, but that we are guilty of something that calls for repentance ; and no one knows when he lies down to sleep, whether he shall ever rise again to perform it.

To conclude : I have already observed, that want of consideration, is the great universal cause of all our sins ; and till that is removed, it will be impossible for us to repent of them. And one would think nothing more need be said, to engage any sober man to the practice of it :—but I must go farther yet. Almighty God, who has given us our understandings and wills, on purpose for his service, requires the concurrence of them in all our actions ; his service must be reasonable, or it will not be accepted. He is not pleased with what we do by chance ; where his glory is not designed, he thinks it not advanced ; and that good which is done without considering, is but a meer natural action, and deserves as little praise, as a plant for growing, or a stone for falling down to its center. It is in vain therefore to pretend to be Christians, and to desire salvation, without reflecting, what it is to be the one, and how we should live to attain the other. This is certainly such a combination of  
folly

folly and impiety, that was not sin as great an enemy to reason, as religion, no man could possibly be guilty of it. For after all the frightful ideas men are apt to entertain of consideration, it is not only one of the most useful, but the most pleasing things in the world.

Let me appeal to the experience of those pious souls, who by a due performance of this exercise have their conversation already in heaven ; who are elevated above the little passions and interests, that engage the busy part of mankind in so much labour and vanity : who live in this world, as if they were not of it ; free and quiet in the midst of its disturbances ; still the same in every state ; who love nothing but God and their duty ; fear nothing but to sin against him ; nor desire any thing but to be dissolved, and to be with him : whose well grounded hopes secure them of their future reward, and a good conscience fully assures them, that neither death, nor hell itself, nor any evils of this life, or any terrors of the other, are able to disturb the inward peace and satisfaction of their minds.

O happy state ! the blessed effects of a serious and frequent consideration ! can any sinner pretend to have found in the ways of wickedness, a pleasure like what a good Christian meets with, even in the present course of his life ? let the miser boast of his riches, the ambitious man of his honours ; let the voluptuary wallow in all sensual and unmanly satisfactions ; but what vanities are all these, when compared with the solid comfort and satisfaction of a good conscience ? a conscience, that can reflect freely on its actions ; can search into the most secret parts of its life, with joy and assurance ; and delights to compare its duty and practice, to see how the one illustrates and sets off the other. Who would not pursue the happiness of such a state, tho' there were no such thing as heaven and eternity

nity to follow after? Certainly, if pleasure be that which is to govern our pursuits, it is the good Christian that is the only wise man; and to consider, the most delightful practice. Only let us seriously consider, and as we ought; let us once in our lives be persuaded heartily to experiment a duty, which is the great business of our whole life; let us be willing to be convinced, and to do our religion and souls so much justice, as to give these things a fair and equal hearing; so shall all those blessings I have been speaking of, descend upon us. We shall only exchange, not lose or lessen our enjoyments. Whatever pleasure or satisfaction we have heretofore met with in the ways of sin, we shall find them all infinitely exceeded in the practice of religion; and when we become fit for heaven, and ripe for immortality, we shall be translated from these excellent, but imperfect joys, to those absolute and eternal blessings, which “neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, nor does it enter into the heart of man to conceive.”

Discourse

Discourse LXXV. Bp. *Clagget*:

## The HEAVENLY CONVERSATION.

Philippians iii. 20.

For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

**T**HE conversation of Christians, after the example of the apostles, ought to be in heaven; and we have great encouragement to such a life, because, if our conversation be in heaven, we may then expect that our Lord Jesus Christ will come at the last day, to “change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.” From these words, we may learn the character of true Christians; that their conversation is in heaven: and such a conversation is necessary, to our being raised to life immortal at the last day.

True Christians, altho’ they live upon earth, are flesh and blood, have the same bodily desires and wants with other men, and go thro’ the affairs and employments of this world as others do; yet they are also citizens of heaven, and their conversation is there. A man may have his chief concerns where he is not in person. He may be in a country where he is a stranger, and yet a citizen where he is not in person; and in this case, he rather belongs to the place from which he is absent, than to that, where he is present. And thus is the conversation of true Christians in heaven. For heaven is their city or country, they being only strangers and sojourners

journers upon earth. Such are born again, as from heaven; and therefore may rightly claim heaven for their country; hence it is, that they are said to be born of God, and of the Spirit, because they have received from God the principle of a new life, to live according to his will, and not after the lusts of the flesh. "As many as received him, (that is, Christ) to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them who believe in his name; which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Such were born into an heavenly life, by a doctrine from heaven, teaching them to live above this world; and by the Holy Spirit enabling them to perform what God requires. Baptism is the sacrament of this new birth; and the baptized are born of water and spirit, and from that time they belong to an heavenly country, and are only strangers and sojourners here; for our heavenly birth is much more excellent than our natural birth, and gives a title to a far better place. Hence it is that Christians ought to look upon heaven as their country, being spiritually born to a future inheritance there, if they live here, according to their new birth. For this reason, we must abstain from fleshly lusts, because we are born to an inheritance in heaven, which we shall receive at the great day, if in this state of pilgrimage, we avoid the lusts of the flesh, which are dangerous impediments in our way to heaven. To those who are "born again, he gave power to become the sons of God:" that is, they had a title, as all the children of God have, to the promise of a blessed resurrection, and of eternal life. So that by being baptised, we are born to a title to heaven tho' that place is not to be obtained till the great resurrection; when Christ shall bring us there. But it will be proper to consider, how and in what manner our conversation is in heaven. The

The conversation of true Christians is in heaven, as they yield a chearful obedience to the laws, and live after the manner of that state; their chief interest and dependance is there, and not in this world; and they observe the laws of man in subordination to the laws of God. True Christians measure good and evil, what is to be done, or avoided, not by the will of man, or the concerns of this life, but by the commands of God, and the laws of his kingdom, where their chief interests lie. Well therefore might the apostles say, that their conversation was in heaven; for this appeared by the manner and design of their lives. The power and greatness of the world were against them, whilst they were discharging the office, committed to them by their Lord and master. And tho' forbidden by all earthly authority, to do what they were commanded, yet they ventured at the loss of all things temporal, to obey and fulfil the pleasure of God; which manifestly proves, that their great concern did not lie in this world, but in a far better. And thus are true Christians citizens of heaven, because no dangers deter them, no human pleasures allure them, from their steady obedience to the laws of that place. They worship God with purity, they treat their neighbour with sincerity, and love without dissimulation. They do not use riches for covetousness or luxury, or bear afflictions with impatience, nor return injuries for injuries, as the way of this world is; because they live by an heavenly rule, that does not allow these things. The apostle says, be not conformed to this world, which would be unreasonable, if all our hopes were to be fixed on it. For men to live here, and not take the same liberties that others do, would be exceedingly hard, were this world the chief of their concern; but if their behaviour be according to the rules of a better place, where they

are going, this is a most just and reasonable singularity.

The great and substantial duties of religion, which true Christians practise on earth, are the same which angels, and just men made perfect, perform in heaven ; for they live as do the inhabitants of heaven. The reverence and love which they bear to God, their disesteem of and disengagement from sensual pleasures, their search after divine truths, and care to maintain a good conscience ; their mercy and charity to the miserable and needy, their readiness and disposition to forgive, and to do good to all, and their taking delight and pleasure therein ; all these things render their temper and life, much to resemble that of the blessed spirits in heaven, which is a state of pure and perfect bliss. Were all men endued with such qualities, this world might be a kind of heaven, because our conversation would be like the inhabitants of that happy place. And as true Christians govern themselves by the laws, and conform to the manner, and way of their heavenly country, so the design and end of their actions, and whole conduct in this world, is to be happy at last. A good Christian so discreetly orders all his affairs, as always to be promoting his eternal salvation, as well as his temporal interests: This influences a Christian, in the choice of company and recreations, in the choice of husband and wife, master and servant ; in the manner of educating and disposing children, and in all the great circumstances of life, as to what may prove best, and most fit for them to chuse. Again,

Christians have converse with heaven in several great and weighty matters. They receive all the good things of this life, as from God, the giver of them ; and daily acknowledge their benefactor, testifying their gratitude to and dependance upon him. They consider the doctrine of salvation, contained

in the holy scriptures, as originally sent them from God, and receive the holy sacrament as a divine institution ; and for these they return him praise and obedience. They send up frequent prayers to the throne of grace, for blessings of the greatest consequence ; for pardon of their sins, for strength against temptations, for patience under afflictions, for faith, wisdom and a good mind, and the aid of the Holy Spirit ; and God returns the fruit of their prayers in all things necessary or expedient for them, which they improve to the glory of God, and their own salvation. It may truly therefore be said, that the conversation of Christians is in heaven ; their thoughts being engaged upon it, as their greatest concern. It is the joyful hope of this state, that relieves them under the uncomfortable prospect of such things, as this world affords. Here they see almost every where scenes of sin and folly, flattery and deceitfulness, hard usage and oppression, malice and ill-nature, foolish ambition and senseless avarice, vanity and disappointment, mistrust and jealousy, afflictions and objects of compassion, vice and misery. And what can give them ease under such apprehensions, so much, as the pleasure of looking beyond the veil of this world, to that heavenly place, where there shall be no trouble, confusion, or disorder ; no brutish sensuality, no devilish malice, no base hypocrisy ; where God will be served with perfect purity, and man loved with perfect charity ; where power shall be without injustice, and wisdom without cunning ; where all things will be right, because none will be there, but those who are worthy to live with God for evermore. Such considerations as these entertain the minds of Christians ; and they do not think of their heavenly country as a thing only desirable, above all that this world can afford, but also as an inheritance, which they shall one day certainly possess. And this is that joy, which is unspeakable,

and

and full of glory, which makes them desire to depart, and be with Christ, and to long for the appearing of our Lord Jesus; which makes them struggle with, and at last to vanquish, the very fears of death.

The greatest concerns of Christians are now in heaven, because they live in constant expectation of going thither, to be for ever happy in soul and body. And as their affections, so will their thoughts be frequently engaged upon it, and be the object of their meditations; and it will be their support and comfort in adversity, when the world frowns, and goes against them. Well therefore may the piety of true Christians be described, by such exalted expressions as these; that their "life is hid  
"with Christ in God, that they are not of this  
"world, but dead to it, and alive to God;" that they are here but pilgrims and strangers, and that their "conversation is in heaven."

Let us then ponder these things well in our minds, and consider whether our affections and conversations, our tempers and actions, do answer such characters as these, and which our holy profession requires. Do we esteem ourselves only as strangers and sojourners in this world, and live after the manner and rules of our heavenly country? doth this appear in our sincerity, in our charity, in our patience, in our reverence of God, and dependance upon him? do we really think of heaven, as our country, expect it as our inheritance, and therefore despise the afflictions and pleasures of this life? is there that devotion in our prayers and thanksgivings, answerable to all this? or, on the contrary, are we not taken up with the cares and pleasures of this world; observing only so much of the form of godliness, and the practice of religion, as that we may escape the reproach, and other inconveniences of this life? These things are

to be considered by all of us; that those who love the Lord Jesus, and look for his appearance, may rejoice in their own sincerity: and that those who do it not, may be ashamed of falling short of their profession, dread the day of judgment, and better prepare for it, than they have hitherto done; by “setting their affections on things above, and seeking the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.”

Perhaps some may think the words in the text, “our conversation is in heaven,” were intended as a character only of the apostles, or some strict persons, who separate themselves from the rest of the world. But it is plain, that they are a description of what all the true and faithful disciples of our Lord are, and ought to be. The apostle says to all, “brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an example; for our conversation is in heaven;” which includes all persons, and not the apostles only; who were to be as an example to others. So that this is the duty and character of all faithful and sincere Christians. But we are not to think, that this heavenly mind can only be retained by retiring from the cares and business, the pleasures and temptations of a mixed conversation, into monasteries and religious houses. Our Saviour and his apostles did not direct men to run out of the world, to escape the pollutions and corruptions that are in it, thro’ lust. And if we consider the reason of the thing, is the honour of christianity and the good of mankind better provided for, by hiding the true spirit of religion in cells and monasteries, than by spreading it abroad in families and towns? we find none of this, either commanded, or practised by our Saviour and his apostles.

And, if from the description of true Christians, we are to learn the nature of Christ's religion, what strangers are the generality of us, to the true spirit of his religion? How little is there of it, amongst those who call themselves Christians? how few have their conversation in heaven, in the manner before described? There are too many professed Christians, who know they have a worldly and sensual heart, a spirit and mind estranged from God and things above, who have no relish of the other life, no affection or concern for heaven. And yet, says the apostle, "brethren, be ye followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as you have us for an example; for our conversation is in heaven." And O that every one of us could say, "this is true of me; I am of the number of such Christians as the apostle here describes. My way and course of life is agreeable to this; for tho' I live and converse in the world, transact the business and manage the affairs of it; yet such is my heart, temper, and behaviour in life and practice, that I esteem myself a citizen above, my great concern being there." But I fear, there are very few whose consciences can testify thus much of them; and who are arrived at this height of Christianity, at this heavenly mind. But how many are there, "whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things?"

But let us seriously consider the purport of these words, our conversation is in heaven; and reflect whether our practice and temper have been agreeable to the character of true Christians. Let us remember, that all who are baptised, are in the new testament said to be born of God, to be dead with Christ, to be risen with him, and to have put on Christ. The reason of these expressions is, that Christianity requires a spiritual, heavenly life,

life, and all who profess it are vastly obliged so to do; having sufficient means to enable them to perform all that is required. And therefore let us be conversant in reading the holy scriptures, in particular the new testament, wherein we find our Saviour describing the sincerity, piety and virtue of his disciples: and the writings of the apostles are so full of affectionate exhortations to practical godliness, that we may from thence see what the true spirit of our most holy religion is. And we should so digest in our thoughts, and imprint on our minds, those descriptions of Christianity, as to conform our actions to them; and in particular to practise the duty here recommended, of having our conversation in heaven. And as a motive and encouragement to such an heavenly conversation, we are assured of being raised to life immortal, when Christ shall “come to change our vile body, and to fashion it like to his glorious body.” But we can have no hope of this, unless we have our conversation in heaven; for a worldly conversation will not be sufficient for this purpose.

And here it will be very proper, to shew the difference between the secular, and the Christian life; that is, between that goodness of temper and conversation, which is required to a blessed immortality, and that which will serve for this world; whereby it will appear, that such a measure of virtue and goodness, as is enough for our worldly welfare, will not be sufficient for our obtaining the rewards and glories of the next life; that blessed hope of immortality, promised by Christ, when he shall come again to raise and change our vile body.—There are two sorts of bad people in the world, that have not their conversation in heaven. Some, who give a loose to all manner of extravagancy and debauchery, without any re-

straint on their lusts ; who work uncleanness with greediness, and take such pernicious courses, as expose them to many dangers and mischiefs ; wasting their estates, and impairing their health, which tends to shorten their days : of such lewd persons, it may be truly said, “ that their end is their destruction, their God is their belly, and their glory is “ in their shame.”

But there are another kind of bad men, who are content to observe the rules of virtue out of necessity, in order to serve their temporal interests and advantages ; and so far as the practice of religion, sobriety, and justice, will promote their worldly ends, they will put on an appearance of virtue and a civil conversation ; but such are religious, not from the principles of religion, but from the wisdom of this world. It must be acknowledged, that there is a degree or kind of well-doing requisite to render this life happy. Reason and experience assure us, that some measure of temperance and patience, liberality and fidelity, and such other virtues, is necessary to the welfare and prosperity of a worldly man : for these virtues greatly contribute to a man’s security and happiness in this life ; as they tend either to procure health, riches, friends or reputation amongst men. For instance ; he that regards his health, must not abandon himself to gluttony, drunkenness, or unbridled lust. He that would preserve his credit, must not speak falsely, insincerely, nor act unfaithfully. He who would live peaceably and quietly, must not interrupt the peace and quiet of others. He who would receive benefits from others, must be willing and ready to do offices of kindness to them. He who would procure riches with reputation, must be diligent and industrious ; and if he would preserve them, must be discreetly frugal. All which plainly shew, that some restraint is to be

be

be laid upon our appetites and passions, if only to obtain the advantages of this life. It is therefore a weak objection against religion, and the fear of God, that they check natural desires, and will not allow us many things, which nature inclines us to; because it equally holds good, against worldly wisdom, which can never attain its ends, but by restraining us from many things we should otherwise do.

For, what is it that ruins men's fortunes and families, but unbounded luxury? or engages them in dangerous quarrels, but unrestrained anger, or some other passion? whence come wars and devastations by the sword, but by the exorbitant lusts of men? there is no duty we can rightly discharge in any relation or state of life, but we must check some inclination or other; for we must live by rule, if we would live happily. A master who would be served, must use his servant well; a servant that would be well used, must serve his master diligently and faithfully. Parents and children, husbands and wives, must observe rules, if they would be easy and happy with one another. What are human laws but restraints upon the natural inclinations of men? The fear of punishment, the love of life and fortune, often keep men from theft and murder, from sedition and treason. So that if a man would maintain a tolerable reputation in this world; if he would preserve his estate, live long in health, in peace and quietness, he must keep within bounds, check his lusts, and even that sin, which doth so easily beset him.

Let us suppose a man to be covetous, ambitious, malicious, revengeful or a knave, yet if he be wise, he will be often obliged not to gratify, but to withstand these wicked dispositions of his mind, in order to prevent the ill effects they would produce, if he did not restrain himself from acting them. But

his secular wisdom will not prescribe to him the whole duty required of a Christian. The religion he may pretend to, is far from the conversation in heaven; because he may be still wicked in his heart and practice, and a great sinner in the sight of God. A cunning and observing man, may so discreetly order his vices, as to save his estate, his health and good name, tolerably harmless in a wicked way; but yet when he wants to carry his point he sticks not at any wickedness, even the worst of methods to effect his designs. But such an one is so far from being a true Christian, that all the goodness which appears in him, is grounded upon secular prudence and policy, which never carries a man further in religion, than to promote secular ends. The religion and virtue of a crafty, worldly-minded man, goes but a little way. For fleshly wisdom does not require of a man the performance of secret duties, of prayers and alms in private, which none sees but God; nor the avoiding of secret sins, such as uncleanness and debauchery, thefts and frauds, when they may be safely committed; nor the forgiving of injuries, when he can properly take a revenge of his enemy. These are so directly opposite and contrary to his main design, that they seem to him very strange doctrines of religion, from which he desires to be excused. And hence it appears that no man is truly religious, whose religion is not founded on the prospect of another world, and the blessed hope of immortality.

For, by true Christians having their conversation in heaven, it is supposed, that they are not overfond of this world; that we not only cleanse ourselves, from all unlawful lusts, but even restrain our inclinations, as to the lawful enjoyments of it; that we must not only be content with those we possess, but be content without them; that we not  
only

only suppress covetous desires of what we have not, but also an inordinate love to what we have ; not only to forbear sinful pleasures, but to avoid the too close pursuit of such as are innocent and lawful. In short, all our worldly enjoyments, must not only be lawful, but our value and esteem of them must also be lawful, and ever subordinate to the love of God, and the resolution of doing his will ; that we may live for ever with him in his eternal kingdom. The religion of a worldly-minded man differs much from the religion of a Christian, on account of the different manner of doing the same good. He that is wise only for this world, has no more in view than his own present benefit and security ; but a Christian is moved by faith in God, conscious of his duty, and the hope of eternal life. Thus a man's abstaining from drunkenness out of covetousness, because it is a chargeable vice, is not the virtue of temperance ; so a man's fasting for strife, is not the duty of abstinence ; his giving charity out of vain-glory, is not charity ; his making long prayers to devour widows houses, is not religious devotion. The character of a true Christian, is, to do things that are just and honest, and to avoid the contrary, tho' it would better promote his worldly ease, interest and security.

There is therefore nothing of that sincerity which Christianity requires, where there is no other motive to doing well, than what proceeds from worldly views. But the Christian is right in heart, and in practice ; righteous in the sight of God, as well as in the eyes of men. He not only speaks the truth, but loves it ; he is not only just, but abhors injustice ; he not only restrains evil desires, but subdues and mortifies them ; and becomes a new man, because he has a new heart, and a new nature. For the sense of God's all-seeing eye, and,

the hope of future happiness, shews him the necessity of an holy disposition, of a godly mind ; and he obtains it by constant prayer. But he that arrives at this perfection, must be born of God ; mere nature cannot reach it, nor mere doctrine infuse it. The holy scriptures send us to God for it, and we must daily pray, that he will renew us in the spirit of our minds, and sanctify us throughout in spirit, soul and body. So that the conversation of true Christians, in opposition to that which is of this world, consists in a perfect freedom from the vices of the mind, such as envy, ambition, malice, covetousness, and the like ; as well as in avoiding the actions which evil affections lead to. It consists in an universal obedience to God's laws, in having but a moderate love of this world, in governing our inclinations, even in such enjoyments as are lawful, and in performing the duties and virtues of religion, with integrity of heart, and sincerity towards God ; which Christian conversation, in the gospel is called, purity, sanctification, the being "cleansed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit ; the new man, which after God "is created in righteousness, and true holiness ; "and having our conversation in heaven."

Indeed the life of a Christian, whose conversation is in heaven, implies such a contempt of the world, such a command over our inclinations, in things lawful, as is necessary to prepare us for immortality. We must not only subdue our lusts ; but our affections to what is lawful must also be restrained. In heaven there is no worldly cares, no trade or commerce. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit "eternal life." The happiness and delights of the promised immortality, are pure and perfect, and not mixed with such mean pleasures as this world affords. But the promise of immortal life belongs  
to

to none, but such are influenced in what they do, by obedience to God, and a conscience of serving him; and not by the viler ends of this world. Sincerity of heart towards God, is that perfection, which the Christian law requires as necessary to a blessed immortality, as well as innocent and virtuous affections. To inward sincerity, the promise of future happiness is limited. He that hopes to see God, must purify himself, even as he is pure. He must be pure in heart and mind; for there “shall  
“ in no wise enter into the heavenly city, any thing  
“ that defileth.”

The use then we should make of this discourse, is seriously to examine ourselves, as to our expectations of heaven, and our fitness for it, by this; whether in that religion and goodness, to which we pretend, we are moved only by ends in this life; or are also governed by the faith of another? whether from what we do, we are men of this world, or “fellow-citizens of the household of  
“ God?” It is true, he that abstains from drunkenness for his health, from luxury for his wealth, from revenge for his ease, and the like, avoid these vices, for wise and good ends. To be moved to our duty, by reasons respecting this world, is fit and proper. The scripture persuades men by such motives, to the practice of virtue; as it tends to health and length of life; as it often brings wealth, and secures peace. “Length of days is in her  
“ right hand, and in her left riches and honour;  
“ her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths  
“ are peace. Godliness hath the promise of this life,  
“ as well as that which is to come.” And blessed be God, so much of the duty which he requires, as necessary for a future immortality, is also necessary for our happiness in this world. But then, tho’ godliness hath the promise of this life, yet we must not from thence conclude, that no  
more

more godliness or virtue is required of a man, than what tends to a worldly happiness, or a sensual enjoyment of one's self. Indeed, Christianity is in general the best way to do well in this world, and a good man commonly thrives better in a way of piety and righteousness, than others do by vice and wickedness; so that a wise man would certainly chuse it. For religion prohibits all those lusts which are enemies to our welfare here; and it also infuses those dispositions and habits into our minds, as will make us happy as long as we live; tho' we may not have the proper happiness of this world. But still our temporal benefit is not to be the measure of the duty we owe to God, nor is our obedience to him saving and effectual, without the faith of immortality. Let this truth then be impressed on our minds, that the principal reason of that piety and virtue, on which true Christianity stands, is the immortality it promises. God, without injustice, might have required that Christian duty, which is more than the world demands, without annexing such "exceeding great and precious promises, to the performance of it; but he requires this, because it is absolutely necessary to our supreme happiness, which is the supernatural reward he hath promised to all sincere Christians.

Wherefore let us not content ourselves, as being good enough to be meet partakers of the heavenly inheritance, till by diligence and prayer, we can truly obtain this character, that "our conversation "is in heaven;" till our piety and virtue exceed that of a prudent worldling; till we have purified our hearts, and overcome the world by the faith of future blessedness; till we are perfect in Christ Jesus, and can rejoice in the testimony of our conscience, "that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not "with fleshly wisdom, we have our conversation in  
" the

“ the world ;” because our conversation in this world, must be a conversation in heaven, if we expect our Lord Christ, at his second coming, “ should change our vile body, that it may be “ fashioned like unto his glorious body, looking “ for that blessed hope, and the glorious appear- “ ing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus “ Christ.”

Discourse LXXVI. Abp.  
*Tillotson.*

Of the CARE of our SOULS, and the  
GREAT DANGER of losing THEM.

Luke x: 42.

—But one thing is needful.

**O**UR blessed Saviour tells us, that there is one thing needful, one thing, which is first and principally to be regarded, as being of the greatest moment and concern, for all to know and carefully mind; and that is the care of religion and of our souls: it evidently appears, this is the one thing necessary, and what every man is concerned, in the first place, and above all other things, to mind and regard. The design of this discourse, is to shew wherein this care of religion and our souls does consist; and to convince men of the necessity there is to take this care.

The due care of religion and our souls consists, first, in the distinct knowledge and firm belief of those things which are necessary for us to know and believe, in order to our eternal salvation. Without faith, it is impossible to please God: “for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Religion, or the worship and service of God, supposes our firm belief and persuasion, that there is a God, and that he will reward those that serve him; without which belief, there would be no ground or encourage-

encouragement for any religion. This knowledge of the necessary principles of religion, our blessed Saviour calls "eternal life; this is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent." To be rightly instructed in the knowledge of "the only true God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord," comprehends all the necessary principles both of natural and revealed religion. And to the attaining this knowledge, so absolutely necessary to salvation, no such extraordinary pains and study is required; but only a proper disposition and application of mind. Since the knowledge of the true God, and the light of Christianity, are spread abroad in the world, all that enjoy the gospel may be sufficiently instructed in all things necessary to our happiness; unless such care is used, as in the church of "Rome, to take away the key of knowledge," and to lock up the scripture from the people, in an unknown tongue; and this, as they pretend, because the generality of mankind are mad, and should be kept in the dark. But supposing men to have the means of knowledge, which God affords, the great difficulty commonly lies not in our understandings, but in our wills; and when we know these things, we must attend to and consider them; that the light which is in us may have a due influence upon our lives.

The due care of our souls also consists in frequently examining our lives, and sincerely repenting of all the errors and miscarriages of them; as well all deliberate and wilful sins, as sins of ignorance, infirmity, and surprize. In the exercise of this duty, we are always to consider, that the nature of true repentance, not only consists, in an humble confession of our sins to God, and an hearty sorrow and contrition for them; but chiefly  
in

in the stedfast purpose and resolution of a better life, by actual reformation and amendment. Again,

The due care of our souls consists in the constant and daily exercise of piety and devotion, both in private and public, especially upon more solemn occasions ; by fervent prayer to God, hearing and reading his word with reverence and godly fear ; by frequenting his public worship, and demeaning ourselves in it with that solemnity and seriousness which becomes the presence and service of the great and glorious majesty of God, who observes our behaviour, and sees into our hearts ; and by receiving the blessed sacrament as often as we have opportunity, with due preparation and devotion of mind. For these are not only outward testimonies of our inward piety, but they are means appointed by God to improve and confirm us in holiness and goodness ; and whoever neglects these duties of religion, or performs them in a slight and superficial manner, plainly shews, that he does not in good earnest design the end, when he neglects the best and most proper means to attain it.

The due care of our souls also consists in avoiding those things which are pernicious to our salvation ; such in general is the practice of any known sin. And though perhaps this may be remedied afterwards by repentance, yet no man that commits any wilful sin, knows the dismal consequences of it, and where it may carry him at last ; for upon such action, God may leave the sinner to himself, withdraw his grace, and give him up to a hard, impenitent heart. So dangerous a thing is it knowingly to offend God, and to commit any deliberate sin. An inordinate love of the world, is also very pernicious to the souls of men ; because it fills our minds with earthly cares and designs ; it tempts men to forsake God and religion, when their worldly interests come in competition with them ; and be-  
trays

trays them to fraud, falshood, and all kind of injustice. And there are some so taken up in censuring error and heresy in others, that they never think of subduing those lusts, vices, and passions, which so visibly reign in themselves. Deluded people! who do not consider, that the greatest heresy is a wicked life, it being directly and fundamentally opposite to the whole design of the Christian faith and religion: For God will sooner pardon innumerable defects of our understanding, than one fault of our will.—Another great mischief which attends this temper is, that men are very apt to interpret their zeal against others, to be great piety in themselves, and as what will bring them to heaven; they think that religion consists in making much stir about the externals of religion, and that there needs no more to denominate them good Christians, but to be of such a party, and church, which they call the only true one; and then zealously hate, and uncharitably censure, all the rest of mankind. How many are there that think they have made sure of heaven, not by the old plain way, of leaving their sins and reforming their lives, but by carrying their vices along with them into another church, and calling themselves good catholicks, and others hereticks; as if a meer name would admit a man into heaven, or that any church had this privilege belonging to it, that a wicked man might be saved, because he calls himself a member of it.

The due care of our souls likewise consists in the even and constant practice of the several graces and virtues of a good life: “and in having a conscience  
“ void of offence, towards God and man.” Religion is best seen, in an equal uniform practice of every part of our duty; not only in serving God devoutly, but demeaning ourselves peaceably and justly, kindly and charitably, towards all men; not only in re-  
straining

straining ourselves from the outward acts of sin, but mortifying the inward inclination to it; in subduing our lusts, governing our passions, and bridling our tongues. The care of our souls consists, in an universal regard to all parts of our duty. For tho' religion doth mainly consist; in piety towards God; in temperance, chastity and charity; and in "truth and justice, goodness and kindness towards all men," yet no other grace and virtue of an inferior rank, ought to be neglected by us. Thus I have endeavoured briefly to shew in what instances the due care of religion and our souls doth chiefly consist. And I would not have any man think, this is an easy business, and requires but little time to perform it; that a small degree of diligence and industry will serve for this purpose; no, to master and root out inveterate habits of sin, to bring our passions under the command and government of reason, and to attain a good degree of every Christian grace and virtue; so that "faith, hope and charity; humility, meekness and patience, may all have their perfect work, and that we may be perfect and intire, wanting nothing," that belongs to the perfection of a good man, and a good Christian: This, whenever we come to make the trial, we shall find to be a work that will require time and diligence.

Some indeed would make religion to consist only in believing what Christ hath done for us, and confidently relying upon it; but this is a fatal mistake: For unless our faith works by charity, purifies our hearts, and reforms our lives; unless like Abraham's, it be perfected by works, it is but a dead faith, and will not avail to our justification and salvation. Our blessed Saviour hath no where said, that faith, separated from obedience and a good life, will save any man, but quite the contrary; for he promiseth blessedness to none but those, who live in the

the practice of such Christian graces and virtues as are particularly mentioned by him in his sermon on the mount ; such as “ humility, repentance, meekness, righteousness, purity, peaceableness and patience,” under persecution and sufferings for righteousness sake. Again, not every one, “ that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he only that doth the will of my father, which is in heaven.” And he very severely checks the vain confidence and presumption of those, who rely upon him for salvation, without keeping his commandments ; “ Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say ? This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. If you love me, saith our blessed Lord, keep my commandments.” Thus vain and groundless is the imagination of those, who trust to be saved by an idle and ineffectual faith, without holiness and obedience of life.

I proceed in the second place, to prove the necessity of our minding religion and our souls. When we call any thing necessary, we mean it is so, in order to some end, which otherwise cannot be attained. We call those things the necessaries of life, without which men cannot subsist, and live in a tolerable condition. And that is necessary to our eternal happiness, without which it cannot be obtained.

The best method I can take to convince men of the necessity of religion, will be to shew, that it is the only certain way to happiness ; and if we neglect it, we shall certainly be extremely and forever miserable.

That religion is a certain way to happiness, we have God’s express declaration and promise ; “ he that cannot lye hath promised eternal life, to them who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality.” All the

happinefs that we can defire, fuitable to our nature, is promifed us, upon the terms of religion ; upon our “ denying ungodlinefs and worldly lufts, and “ living foberly, righteoufly and godly in this pre- “ fent world.” A mighty reward for a little fer- vice ! An eternity of happinefs, of joys unfpeakable and full of glory, for the diligence and induftry of a few days. A happinefs large as our wifhes, and as lafting as our fouls. And it is certain alfo, that there is no other way to happinefs but this. He who alone can make us happy, hath promifed it to us, upon thefe, and no other terms. If we live after the flefh we fhall die, but if by the fpirit we mortify the deeds of the flefh, we fhall live ; without holi- nefs no man fhall fee the Lord ; and he who lives in the habitual praftice of any vice, “ of covetouf- “ nefs, or adultery, malice or revenge, fhall not “ enter into the kingdom of God.” And if God had not faid it in his word, yet the nature and rea- fon of the thing plainly declares it ; for religion is not only a condition of our happinefs, but a neces- fary qualification and difpofition for it. We muft be like to God in the temper of our minds, before we can find any felicity in the enjoyment of him. Men muft abandon their lufts, and thofe ill-natured, wicked paffions, of “ malice, envy, and revenge be- fore they can be fit company for their heavenly fa- ther, “ who is love, and dwells in love.”

But if we neglect religion, we fhall certainly be extremely and forever miserable. The “ word of “ truth hath faid it, that indignation and wrath, tri- “ bulation and anguifh, fhall be upon every foul of “ man that doeth evil ;” nay, if God fhould hold his hand, and inflict no pofitive torment upon finners, yet they would be their own executioners and tor- menters. The guilt of a wicked life, and the ftings of their own confcience, muft neceffarily make them miserable, whenever their thoughts are ferious, as they will

will certainly be, in the other world, where they shall have neither pleasure nor business to divert them. So that if we are concerned, either to be happy hereafter, or to avoid those miseries which are inexpressibly great and dreadful, it will be necessary for us to mind religion; without which we can neither attain that happiness, or escape those miseries.

And did we seriously consider the inestimable value of our souls, and the danger of losing them, this would by a great incitement to a religious life. The soul is of so great estimation, that the world, was it possible to be acquired, would make no amends for the loss of it. This our Saviour has determined. "What is a man profited, should he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" He deprives himself of a happiness, infinitely greater than this world can afford, and that forever; and exposes himself to a misery so dreadful, as a prudent man, for all the pleasures and enjoyments of this world, would not endure for an hour. The misery of losing a man's soul, is terrible and full of horror, the loss great and irreparable beyond imagination. For he that loseth his soul, loseth himself; not his being, for that would be a happiness; but it implies the loss of God, and of all that is desirable to a reasonable creature. It not only signifies the deprivation of happiness, but the infliction of the greatest misery and torment, without the least sparks of comfort, or glimmering of hope, without intermission or pity, and this the wicked are to endure for ever. The loss is not only vast, but irreparable; could we gain the world by the loss of our souls, yet millions of worlds can never regain them. It is a loss so great, that nothing can recompense it; so fatal, as never to be repaired. It must surely then be a strange madness in any man, for the

transitory delights of this world, to forfeit the eternal pleasures of God's presence; and for momentary joys to live in pain for ever. Alas! the prodigious folly of sinners, for such mean and uncertain trifles, to hazard their immortal souls, and everlasting happiness; what severe reflections will men make on themselves for such their folly!

When the sinner comes to reflect on himself, and seriously considers what he hath done, how will he censure and condemn his conduct? Like a man, who in a drunken fit sells his estate for a trifle, when he comes to be sober, is ready to destroy himself for so rash an action. Or should the sinner banish these thoughts whilst in health, yet when seized with sickness, and on a death-bed, he will then be sadly sensible of his past folly. When he shall stand on the confines of eternity, and wishfully look back on those pleasures he once delighted in here, and considers how much he is like to lose, for the false and treacherous advantages of a vain world; he will then want none to convince him of his error, or to aggravate his folly. He would then gladly return all his unjust gain, obtained by fraud and violence, and even give the world, could he command it, to secure his soul. This no doubt is the sense of most men when they come to die, and which if true then, is so now. Let us then whilst life remains, suffer these considerations to take place and prevail, lest otherwise they fill our hearts with anguish and despair in a dying hour. O the folly and stupidity of men! to be so transported with present and sensible things, as to have no regard to a future state, no pity for their souls, no concern for their everlasting abode in another world. To be so blinded with the pleasures of sin, which are but for a moment, as to forfeit the happiness of all eternity; when the pleasure is past and gone, and the vast price come to be paid, and our souls are

are leaving this world, and going to take possession of that everlasting inheritance of shame and sorrow, of tribulation and anguish, which we purchased by our own folly, how shall we repent the bargain we have so rashly made, but can never be released from? Let us then attend to and suffer these considerations to sink into our hearts, that no temptations may prevail on us, to do or neglect any thing, to the prejudice of our immortal souls. And when ever any present pleasure or advantage tempts or sollicitus us to any sin, let us consider, what an unequal bargain we make, how small the purchase, and how much we part with? “What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”

But how little do men live under the power of these convictions? for tho’ we are allured by the most glorious promises and hopes, awed by the greatest fears, moved by the most forcible arguments, the evident necessity of the thing; yet how faintly do “we run the race that is set before us?” How frequently and easily are we diverted in our Christian course, by very little temptations? How cold, careless, and inconstant are we in the exercises of piety? Did we act reasonably, and as we do in things of much less moment, we could not be so indifferent, in a matter on which eternity depends. Let us then shake off sloth, and resolve to make that the greatest business of time, which is our everlasting concern. And when we are immersed in the cares and business of this life, let this thought often come into our minds, that there is one thing needful, the care of our immortal souls, to be regarded by us above all others. To provide for eternity, to secure our everlasting salvation, and to prevent the endless and insupportable misery of another world, is the one thing necessary that requires all our care and endeavours.

If we are Christians, and do verily believe these things, and that after a few days death will come ; surely this thought should make us wise and serious. And therefore happy that man, who in his health hath made that careful preparation for death, and another life, as may give him so much constancy and firmness of spirit, as to be able to bear the thought and approaches of his great change, without terror and amazement of mind. Let us then make these our first and principal care, and put our souls in a fit posture and preparation for the next world ; that when sickness and death come, we may not have much to do, but only to act our part decently and without confusion.

Discourse LXXVII. Dean  
*Stanhope.*

St. PETER'S FALL and REPENTANCE,  
an argument against PRESUMPTION and  
DESPAIR.

Mark xiv. 72.

And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him ; before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice ; and when he thought thereon he wept.

**T**HE examples of eminent saints recorded in scripture are of singular benefit to us, not only by those shining graces and virtues, and that exalted piety and constant perseverance, which should provoke our zeal and encourage our imitation ; but also by those blemishes and failings, that proneness to sin even in the best men, and the painfulness of that repentance, by which they were restored to God's favour. The thought of which should abate our vain confidence, and awaken our care. Of this latter sort we have an instance, in the bitter remorse of St. Peter ; whose fault and repentance were very great and exemplary. He denied Christ to avoid being thought one of his disciples ; he persisted therein with oaths and curses. But when the crowing of the cock and his master's look had summoned the powers of reason and recollection in his mind, he immediately reflected on what he had done, went out and wept ; nay, he wept bitterly. I shall from hence represent the circumstances and aggravations of St. Peter's fall ; and also the seriousness and sincerity of his repentance.

And it was one great aggravation of this fault, in its being committed by St. Peter; a person who had enjoyed a long and familiar conversation with his lord and master; who had heard many excellent instructions delivered by him, both in public and private; who, besides seeing the infinite miracles wrought in confirmation of the truth, had been admitted to be an eye-witness, of such as more immediately gave testimony to his Lord's divine nature and authority. Such as the appearance of Moses and Elias at our Lord's transfiguration; "when there came a voice saying, this is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased." A person, whom our Lord chose to be the companion of his agonies and sufferings; and whose negligence in time of danger and temptation, he had lately so kindly reprov'd. A person, who made early confession of his being the Christ, the Son of God; for which he received a particular blessing and commendation. A person, who had that very evening profess'd himself ready to go with Christ, "both into prison and death; and to lay down his life for his sake;" nay, he declared that "tho' all should be offended" because of his master's suffering's, "yet would not he;" and he no doubt thought his resolution so secure, that he said the "more vehemently, if I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee in any wise." A person, who not only committed himself to the mercy of the winds and waves, at Jesus's command, and received a most sensible convincing proof, of his Lord's almighty power, by preserving him from sinking; but he had also just before given a rash and dangerous instance of his zeal, by wounding one of the officers who came to apprehend him. And yet notwithstanding all this knowledge and conviction, all such warning and long experience, all his boasted firmness of mind, and forward attempts to rescue so dear

a master ; this very St. Peter fell off in time of trial, denied and disclaimed all relation to, all knowledge of, that very Jesus ; and which made the fault much more heinous in him, than it would have been in another.

As to the cause of St. Peter's miscarriage, it plainly proceeded from fear. And fear is a passion so interwoven with human nature, and the principle of self-preservation, as to be the first dictate of reason ; and which is so apt to confound our judgment where it gains power, that no infirmity more strongly prevails, or is more easily excused. The best and bravest minds are not exempted from some apprehensions of danger. And God who knows our weakness, will no doubt make gracious allowances for such failings as are the unhappy effects of fear, under severe trials. But had St. Peter been in extremity of fear, by some sudden accident, of which he had no warning to have provided against, much more might have been alledged in his excuse, in abatement of his fault, than can be now done ; for St. Peter had been frequently told, that hatred, persecution, and contempt must be the portion of the first planters of the gospel. That they must follow their master in his sufferings, no less than in his virtues. That they should be brought before kings and rulers for his name's sake : nay, they were even forewarned who they should fear ; not them who kill the body, and after that can do no more, " but him only, who after he hath killed, " hath power to cast into hell." This should have inspired him with courage, tho' he had been in the utmost danger ; which yet was not his case ; for he suffered nothing, and only saw his master suffer, what he had frequently and punctually told him, must of necessity be done. But no ill-treatment was as yet begun against St. Peter. He was not so much as taken into custody, nor examined by any person

person in authority ; only some of the inferior servants put this question, which so terrified him (tho' just before he had withstood a band of armed men) that he endeavoured to clear himself with a most shameful falshood, " I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest : " that is, my being with Jesus in the garden, or belonging to him, is so far from being true, that I am an entire stranger to him.

And St. Peter did not make this denial once, but he repeated and persisted in it. After his first denial, he is said to have gone out, and to have heard the cock crow, without any concern. Nay, he returns again, and mingles with the same company, chusing rather to gain credit by fresh and more obstinate denials, than to leave any jealousy of having before said an untruth. Thus another lye was added to confirm a former, and each repeated with greater eagerness and vehemence, till three distinct denials had left him past the excuses either of forgetfulness, inadvertency, or a surprize, which a single denial might have suggested in mitigation of his crime. But what is yet a much greater degree of guilt, St. Peter bound these denials with voluntary oaths and curses, in order to have a notorious falshood believed. And what could be more dreadful, than thus to call God as a witness, and to imprecate his judgment upon his own head, in a thing so utterly false ? A thing which he ought to have esteemed his honour and greatest advantage, and to have owned his being Christ's disciple, even at the hazard of his very life. Such were the sad circumstances of this apostle's fall, every way unworthy of St. Peter's eminence, provoked thereto by so slight an occasion ; so base was he in renouncing of his master, so impious and blasphemous in his perjuries against him. All which I have represented as the evangelists have done ; not  
with

with any envious design to lessen our esteem for this glorious saint, but that by setting this action in its worst light, we may profit by his sin, be instructed by his danger, and take care to stand the faster for his fall.

This passage of scripture should convince us of the miserable frailty even of the best men, and effectually subdue those vain confidences which are apt to rise in our hearts, from our own supposed strength and virtue. For what a sad instance have we before us, of a great man, falling in the most scandalous manner? Who shall hereafter dare to depend upon the highest degree of knowledge, when one so wise, so perfectly satisfied in the Christian truth, was after the fullest convictions of his own conscience, so weak and frail, as to deny and abjure his lord, who taught and bought him? Who may presume upon his best resolutions, when he who declared so firm a purpose of adhering to Jesus, did within a few hours after, so peremptorily and solemnly disown that very person, for whom he was so lately ready and disposed to lay down his life? Indeed, there is no reason to doubt but St. Peter at that time spake the very sense of his soul; that he had an honest and sincere mind; and was stedfastly determined, and, as he thought, able to perform, what with so much piety and affection, he intended and professed. But his misfortune was, that he did not consider the infirmities of human nature, but in the warmth of his zeal, promised more than he could do. He relied upon his own integrity, thinking good resolutions a sufficient defence against the most violent temptations. But when the assault was made, and danger drew near, the event proved, that how willing soever the spirit might be, yet the flesh was at the best exceeding frail and weak. And if this great champion so soon gave ground, how shall we be able to engage in this spiritual combat?

since

since few of us have the same knowledge and wisdom, courage and resolution, zeal and love for our master, to assist us in our encounters that he had? who of us would resolve to die with Christ, rather than deny him? and yet the most serious and sincerely resolved may fail in time of trial. We have in St. Peter a sad experiment for our instruction. The opinion of his own strength proved his ruin. So dangerous and fatal is it to lean to our own understanding, to be wise, good and safe in our own conceits; when all our sufficiency, all our safety, is of God.

In the apostle we have a mortifying example of spiritual security, who undertook so much and performed so little; and his experience should admonish us, that whosoever is kept unto salvation, it must be thro' faith, and by the power of God. There is a secret hand that insensibly directs, governs, and establishes our hearts. God gives us grace and inclines our wills to do what is right. If we escape temptations, and maintain our ground when they assault us, it is because God supports us with courage, confirms our resolutions, and enables us to gain the victory in the day of trial. Sustained by these divine succours, we are more than conquerors; but without these, we become a cheap and easy prey. Had St. Peter's apprehension of danger and diffidence of his own abilities been greater, the event of his conflict had been less dishonourable. But in him we learn how wretched the best of men are, when left to stand upon their own bottom. That in all our spiritual encounters, it is the safest and most prudent way to distrust our own endeavours, and to watch and pray. To watch diligently, because we are frail and apt to be overtaken. To pray fervently because without our asking, we cannot obtain divine assistance, and must expect to be

vanquished. But we shall be able to do all things "thro' Christ that strengthens us."

Let us from this example learn, to keep as much as possible out of the way of temptation. This was St. Peter's great fault. We are commanded to pray, that God would not lead us into temptation; but then we must use our own endeavours, and not rush upon mischiefs we might avoid. There are few of so confirmed virtue, as to withstand great and hazardous encounters; we should therefore act solely upon the defensive. The approaching near to sin, is like playing upon the bank of a precipice. We should therefore run as few hazards as we possibly can. We must labour to subdue our passions, and not provoke them to rise in rebellion against us. We must ask and improve the grace of God, and if plentifully endued with it, we should not try dangerous experiments. And then, if the providence of God brings trials upon us (and which all our prayers and prudence may not be able to prevent) we may reasonably hope his grace will be magnified, in rescuing us from our difficulties. But we must not expect this, where our own indiscretion involves us, and is the cause. We are to take up our cross when our Lord commands us, but we are not to seek it; for we may honestly and with a good conscience endeavour to escape it. For all the promises of grace and our belief of them, suppose the use of proper means; the first and best of which is, to prevent our danger. No considerate Christian will lay himself open to sin, only because he knows God is more powerful to preserve, than the devil to destroy. For the dangers which we chuse, and bring upon ourselves, have no right to his protection.

We should also be careful to avoid temptations, in regard the commission of one sin, draws on to more and greater. Thus St. Peter after one denial pro-

proceeded to a second and third, and this with false oaths and horrid' curses, which greatly aggravated the crime. And it is the same in other cases; sinful acts will grow into habits, which by custom waste the conscience, and by degrees destroy the very best principles. For when men do an ill thing to escape some present inconvenience, if they find themselves pressed, and are gone too far to retreat with honour and safety; they will then endeavour to disengage themselves, by more obstinate degrees of sin: He who is forced to drudge on in a course of wickedness, from the difficulty and shame of retracting his former errors, is a most abandoned wretch. And when once the reproaches of a man's mind is broken thro', he lies at the mercy of every fresh temptation; and only wants opportunities of becoming every day more profligate. This is more especially evident in the case of lying, which sin comes nearest to this of St. Peter. What pains will men take to gain credit by repeating and confirming with lyes, what they have done amiss. This settles into a habit of falshood, till they have lost all regard to honesty and truth, the checks of conscience, or the vengeance of Almighty God. And yet the event proves like that of St. Peter's, to entangle themselves in the snare; and the more they struggle to get rid of their difficulties, the more they aggravate their sin, and expose their reputation. So that the wisest, safest, and shortest method, is always to stick fast to our duty. For truth and honesty will support us, when all the shufflings and tricks of wicked craft, will forsake and betray us. And this ought well to be considered, by servants, children, and all who are under authority.

From hence we may observe the wisdom and goodness of God, in causing the faults and infirmities of his saints, to be recorded in holy scripture,

ture, and the use we ought to make of their failings and temptations. Their eminent virtues, and their as eminent repentance where they did amiss, are remembered as a seasonable warning, and to be an humiliation to all future ages; by letting us see, that the most perfect are still but men; subject to mighty blemishes and imperfections, and that the highest and purest state, is no security from danger. This should make us very tender, how we judge and despise our Brethren; whose faults how severely soever we may censure them, might probably be our own, were we in their circumstances, and surrounded with their temptations. "For let him that thinketh he stands, take heed lest he fall." We should not then promise ourselves safety and freedom from temptation, in any circumstances in life; or so far presume on our virtues, as to think we are incapable to commit the blackest vices, should God withdraw his grace, and leave us to ourselves. But the miscarriages of such worthies should awaken our care, mortify our vanity, and remind us of our dependence upon a higher power, and to give him the acknowledgments due for all the good we do, and for not falling into evil. And as their failings admonish, so should they comfort us, by considering that God does not utterly cast off his servants when they have heinously offended him. That we ought not to despair, tho' our transgressions are many and great; for if we will return and make amends for our past offences, we shall be kindly received and freely pardoned. But St. Peter's fall will afford no just ground of comfort to any but such as are careful to rise again with him. As his sin is a warning, so is his repentance. They who blame his sin, should remember his sorrow; and if they abhor the one, let them strive to imitate the other. This leads me to consider his repentance, and to draw from thence such reflections, as may  
be

be useful to all Christians in general; more especially to such, who by a sinful course have rendered a deep and solemn repentance necessary for restoring them to the favour of an offended God.

The first thing observable in St. Peter's repentance is, that which gave occasion to this change; and this was the crowing of the cock. The first crowing made no impression on him, but the second did; and this "because the Lord turned and looked upon Peter, and Peter then remembered the words of the Lord." This glance of our Lord falling in with the crowing of the cock, awakened his mind, and made him sensible of his fault. For "he remembered the words that Jesus had said," and then perceived, how shamefully he had fallen from his boasted courage and constancy! how frail and unstable his strongest resolutions had proved! how easily he had been betrayed into a crime, of which he could not believe himself capable! how base he had been to so kind a master; how false to his own purposes; how regardless of truth, and peremptory in a most notorious falsehood? how profane in the oaths and curses, by which he had bound it on his conscience? For by this remembrance, no doubt is meant, his representing to himself the offence he had committed, in the blackest colours, with all the dreadful aggravations attending it; which proved so shocking, that he could no longer refrain from tears.

It is observable, that when St. Peter thought of his behaviour, he wept, he immediately burst out into tears; "he went out and wept bitterly: thereby intimating the suddenness and extremity of his grief. His reflection upon what he had done, produced in him a very serious and hearty sorrow. The horrors of his mind expressed itself, by the abundance of his tears. And every thing conspired to encrease the anguish of his spirit. For, besides the

the

the many particular circumstances that heightened his guilt, and embittered the remembrance of his offence; the kindness of his master, who in the midst of sufferings had a compassionate look in reserve to reclaim him, must greatly add to his astonishment and concern. There being nothing more apt to soften a man's heart, and bring him to a sense of his own vileness and ingratitude, than the receiving some undeserved kindness from a person, whom he hath heinously injured. And what higher indignity could St. Peter put upon his Lord, than to disown and abjure him? What greater kindness could our Lord shew to this revolting, ungrateful man, than by the silent, but significant rebuke of his eye, to call him back to himself? what could more inwardly affect St. Peter than such an instance of mercy and tenderness? such as declared, that tho' as a wicked servant he had disclaimed his master, yet that his master was so gracious, as not to discard and forsake him. This, no doubt, was one of the bitterest ingredients in St. Peter's sorrow.

There is another thing necessary to be observed, which is the thorough change wrought in St. Peter by this godly sorrow; and the ample amends he afterwards made, for all the dishonour this denial of Christ could possibly reflect upon himself, his master, or the Christian religion. For immediately after our Lord's resurrection, we find the same ardent affection, as bright in him as ever. This once dismayed St. Peter cast himself into the sea, impatient to get to Jesus on shore. He with undaunted zeal asserted the resurrection and divinity of that Saviour he had formerly denied. He despised the rebukes and menaces of the Jewish rulers, telling them that "God was to be obeyed rather than men," and therefore would declare the truths he had seen and heard. He persisted in his

preaching, and most willingly offered his person to scourging and imprisonment; "rejoicing that he was counted worthy to suffer shame, for the once abjured name of Jesus." And he did at last glorify God, by the same kind of tortures and death which his master underwent; nay, and gladly received the notice of it from Christ's own mouth. This settled and deliberate fidelity was a noble compensation for the infirmity, fears, and violent transport of his fall. This shewed what the man was, when himself, and supported by God's grace; as also what he was when destitute of heavenly succours, depending on his own strength, and left to his own passions. So that whatever he did amiss thro' frailty, and in a hurry, he thus undid again in cool and deliberate acts. I shall now make a few reflections upon St. Peter's repentance, and which may be of use to all Christians.

And from the consideration of this instance, it will not be difficult to form right notions of God's promises to good men, in regard to temptations God hath not engaged that virtue shall never be in danger, for this would prevent the proofs of our fidelity, and the trial of our constancy; but we are to support our spirits with those assistances of his grace, which may enable us to resist temptations. And if thro' the infirmity of our corrupt nature, and the violence of temptation, we happen to fall into sin, his grace will not be wanting to raise us again by repentance. Thus our Lord prayed for St. Peter, that his faith might not fail; or, that he might not fall finally away. Christ did not pray for the prevention of his sin, but for his conversion and amendment after it. The grace of God is never so conspicuous, and so gloriously triumphs over the power of Satan, as when it revives miserable offenders from the death of sin, to the life of righteousness. And the fatal miscarriages  
of

of good men, are often so ordered, as to turn to their greater advantage. For these failings have a natural tendency to awaken their care, to make them more sensible of their weakness and danger, and more vigilant to prevent it for the future, than they would otherwise have been. They dispose them to be more tender and compassionate to their brethren, more sparing in their censures, more ready to forgive others, and more diligent to use their endeavours to restore such in the spirit of meekness; when they reflect how easy it is to be overtaken, and how prone even the best men are to offend. They kindle in true penitents, a vigorous and active zeal, to make amends for the scandal of a bad example, by a stricter holiness for the future. So little reason then is there for us to be delivered from temptation, or secure from sinning when tempted; that the one or other is often so managed by the wisdom and goodness of providence, as to become instruments of greater good; to be more effectual to obtain our own salvation, more serviceable to the glory and grace of God, and more beneficial to religion in general, than if good men had not fell or been tempted: and as St. Peter's fall confutes the error of those who believe that men who once have true grace, cannot lose it; so his rising again proves, that such as have lost grace, may be restored and recover it again.

However, thus much must be acknowledged, for a terror to all sinners; that the more wilful any man's offences have been, the harder his repentance will be, and the greater reason he hath to dread his being forsaken and given up by God to a reprobate mind. For God may be so provoked as not to afford grace necessary to repentance, to such as have long and obstinately abused and resisted it. But he will be more easily reconciled to those, who have ignorance or infirmity to plead,

in excuse of their fault. We have a remarkable instance of this in St. Peter and Judas. For, tho' both were guilty of a heinous offence, yet the nature of them was as different as the event. The former indeed, basely and blasphemously denied our Lord, but how came he to do this? He knew he ought not, and came fully resolved not to do it; but the terror of his master's sufferings, and the violence of his own fears, so confounded him, that his thoughts and judgment were not at liberty; and yet as soon as he returned to his reason, he most severely condemned himself for what he had done. The fault was begun, ended, and lamented within the space of two hours; and this short defection was compensated by the most resolute confession of Jesus all his life after; which in some measure extenuated the heinousness of his crime, and therefore our Lord mercifully allowed for the infirmities of that nature, which he was so intimately acquainted with, and had a kind reproving look in store for him.

But no such grace was extended to Judas, who had no such moving circumstances to expect it. He laboured under no difficulties or temptations, but what proceeded from sordid covetousness. His wickedness was the effect of deliberation, long contrivance, and solemn debate. He consulted with the high priests and elders every circumstance for the most convenient execution of his villainy. He set his own soul and his master's life to sale, at a vile price; continued to attend his master, that under the disguise of friendship, and by a laboured hypocrisy, he might be the better able to destroy him. And after he had projected this wickedness, Jesus gave him many hints and warnings, of the sin and danger he was running into; and told him it had been "better if he had never been born;" but nothing would make him alter his purpose. So  
that

that this act of Judas was meer malice, a settled resolution to do wickedly. It was such an act of the will as plainly shewed he intended to reject all faith in Christ and his doctrine; and to be a devil, as Jesus called him. And the regret he afterwards felt, seems rather the effect of confusion and rage, of amazement and despair, than any godly relenting; and far from that sorrow, "which worketh repentance not to be repented of." The design of this comparison is to raise in us a just abhorrence of all wilful sin, that we may not dare to act deliberately against our reason and conscience. And if so deep a remorse, if such bitter tears were by St. Peter thought little enough, for a sin of infirmity, what measure of grief must needs be due, where the will acts freely, and the choice of evil is the effect of obstinacy, perverseness, and contempt of our duty? In such circumstances we must be careful, that none of those qualifications be wanting in our repentance, that rendered St. Peter's so successful. I shall therefore shew, wherein his repentance ought to be a pattern to all returning sinners.

And we ought to imitate him, in ascribing the disposition and inclination to repent, to the grace and favour of God. Some of the ancients compared the crowing of the cock to the outward, and the awakening look, which Jesus gave St. Peter, to the inward call to repentance. By the outward call I mean, the preaching of the word, the advice or reproof of friends, the merciful or severe dispensations of providence, inviting or forcing men to better courses. By the inward, those kind, seasonable and secret operations of the Holy Spirit, which incline and make a due impression on our minds. And as the first crowing of the cock had no effect upon St. Peter, so these outward calls are often unsuccessful, because not seconded by God's

grace, which can only make them effectual to our reformation. But where the outward means are backed with the inward influences of the spirit, they then produce wonderful alterations. What reasons God has for vouchsafing this inward call to some and not to others, is best known to his own infinite wisdom; and it is no way requisite for us to enquire. It is sufficient for us to know, that the enduing "men dead in trespasses and sins," with the principle of a spiritual new life, is what nothing less than almighty power can do. Therefore when ever we feel any desires to forsake our sins, and lead better lives, let us found our repentance in humility; meekly acknowledge our own insufficiency, "and that we are not able of ourselves, so much as to think one good thought, it being God alone, who worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure; that by the grace of God we are what we are;" and that it lies upon us to take care, that "his grace be not bestowed in vain." Again,

Our repentance, after St. Peter's example, ought to be speedy. He was no sooner sensible of his fault, but he forsook his wickedness, and betook himself to prayers and tears; and if we would become true penitents, we must not tamper with our consciences, and find out frivolous excuses to defer our reformation; but strike in with the first conviction of our minds, improve the motions of grace, and quit all occasions of sin whatsoever; or at least carefully watch against the approaches of all temptations. For the continuing to approve of our sins, is the same in effect, with repeating them; and he who is unwilling to part with his vices, only wants an opportunity to repeat them. Men may flatter themselves as they will, but he that is convinced he ought to repent, and does not immediately set about it, is not in earnest to leave his

his wicked ways, nor never heartily intends to repent.

And the bitterness of St. Peter's weeping should instruct us, how necessary and efficacious a branch of repentance it is, that we should have a deep and sincere sorrow for our sins. This is necessary, because the only satisfaction we can make to God, is the taking shame to ourselves, and the being unfeignedly afflicted for all our unworthy behaviour towards him. "A broken and contrite heart is God's sacrifice, and such an offering as he will not despise." As such sorrow is necessary, so it is of great efficacy, because our care to avoid sin will bear some proportion to our concern for having committed it. Hence we are commanded to turn unto the Lord "with weeping and mourning. Hence David washed his bed, and watered his couch with tears. And godly sorrow worketh repentance." But remember, that sorrow is not repentance, but works it; that is, it is only instrumental and very powerful to produce it.

Lastly, we must imitate St. Peter, in an effectual change of manners, and stedfast perseverance in holiness, for the time to come; or all the rest will signify nothing. And this will be the natural consequence of our sorrow for sin, if it be unfeigned, true and sincere. No man needs to be cautioned to keep at a distance from what he hates, or apprehends extreme danger and certain destruction from. If this therefore be our real sense of sin, our behaviour will be agreeable to it. But besides our own safety, we are bound in gratitude to Almighty God: for can we so well express our thanks for his inestimable mercy, in rescuing us from sin and death, as by living to him, who hath thus loved us? And this can only be done, by devoting ourselves as eagerly to the service of religion, as we have formely done to that of our lusts;

by stemming the torrent of profaneness and impiety, and endeavouring all we can to promote goodness in the world; by being eminently conspicuous in those virtues which are most directly contrary to the vices we formerly indulged; and by our active charity to our brethren, in all things conducing to the welfare of their souls and bodies.

And when we have thus far followed St. Peter's example, we must not suppose, that our pardon or good acceptance with God is owing to any desert of our own good works; or that our deepest sorrow can make any satisfaction to God. For as St. Peter's faith did therefore "not fail, because Christ prayed, that it might not;" so our restoration and the efficacy of our repentance, is entirely the effect of the merits and intercession of the same kind Saviour. He only could reconcile offended God, and sinful man. And therefore when we draw near to God, let us not forget to beg, that the intolerable burden of our sins may be removed, not in presumption of our "own righteousness," but in confidence of his manifold and great mercies;" let us humbly beseech him, "for his Son our Lord Jesus Christ his sake, that he would forgive us all that is past; and grant, that we may ever hereafter serve and please him in newness of life, to the honour and glory of his holy name, thro' the same Jesus Christ our Lord."

Discourse LXXVIII. Abp.  
*Tillotson.*

Of the DANGER and DECEITFULNESS  
of SIN.

Heb. iii. 13.

—Left any of you be hardened thro' the deceitfulness of sin.

**A**MONG the many considerations which the word of God and our own reason offer, to discourage us from sin, this is none of the least, that whoever engages in a vicious course is likely to proceed in it ; being insensibly led from one degree of wickedness to another : So that the farther he advances, the more difficult his retreat grows. All errors, as well of practice as of judgment, is endless ; and when a man is once out of the way, the farther he goes, the harder he will find it to get right. There is great reason therefore, why men should be often cautioned against the beginnings of sin ; or if they are unhappily engaged in a bad course, that they should be wanted presently to break it off, and without delay, lest by degrees they are hardened in their wickedness, and their case grows desperate and past remedy. To this purpose is the apostles advice, “ Exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened thro' the deceitfulness of sin.”

I shall therefore endeavour to represent the growing nature of sin, and by what gradual steps bad habits do insensibly gain on men, to harden them in an evil course. I will also warn every  
one

one of this danger, and endeavour to rescue them therefrom: And then conclude with a serious exhortation, to resist the beginnings of sin, and to depart from evil.

All actions which are not natural, but proceed from deliberation and choice, are somewhat difficult at first, for want of being exercised in that way, but after a little practice they become more easy; we then begin to take pleasure in them, and by often and frequent repetitions, acts become confirmed habits, which is a second kind of nature; and when a thing is natural to us, we many times do it without thought. This is the usual progress of all habits indifferently considered, whether good or bad. But vicious habits have a greater advantage, being of a quicker growth. For the corrupt nature of man, is a rank soil, in which vice easily takes root, and thrives apace. The mind of man must be cultivated and prepared with great care and pains, for piety and virtue; but vices are weeds that grow wild, and spring up of themselves. They are in some sort natural to the soil, and therefore need not be planted and nourished. So that vice having this advantage from our nature, is the reason we are so easily tempted to it. But that we may the more clearly discover the progress of sin, and by what steps vice gains on men, it may be proper to observe the several gradations of it.

No man is perfectly wicked at once, but begins with smaller sins. There are certain rudiments of vice, in which men are first entered, and then they proceed by degrees to greater and more enormous crimes. Vice hath its infancy, and several states of growth. Men are not so totally degenerated, as not to be ashamed when they first venture on a known sin, tho' but small in comparison; and are very solicitous to palliate and hide their faults,  
by

by excuses ; but after they have frequently committed them, and they become too visible to be concealed ; then they will justify, and by degrees take pleasure in them, and in those who do the same things. And after men are once initiated in these lesser sins, it prepares and disposes them for greater. A sinner by degrees will grow so desperate, as to attempt those crimes, which at first he could not think of committing without horror. Like Hazael, who when he was told by the prophet Elisha, what barbarous cruelties he should be guilty of, towards the people of Israel, when he should come to be king of Syria ; he abominated the very thought, and said, “ is thy servant a dog “ that he should do those things ? ” and yet for all this he did it afterwards. Indeed, when a sinner is first tempted to the commission of any gross and notorious sin, his conscience is apt to startle at it, and he does it with great regret ; the terrors of his mind, and the fears of damnation, are very troublesome to him ; but this wears off by degrees, and what at first was difficult, by frequent practice and long custom becomes tolerable. And when a man hath thus put off shame, which is one of the greatest restraints from sin that God hath planted in human nature, there little remains to deter him from all manner of wickedness : After this, men come to approve of their vices. For if their judgments do not command their wills, and restrain their lusts, in process of time, their vicious inclinations will put a false bias on their judgments, and then it is no wonder for men to boast of their sins, and glory in their vices, when they think them generous and commendable qualities. Nay, many have acquired such a habit of some sins, as not to observe when they commit them. To give an instance or two : Some are so accustomed to swearing, that they cannot avoid using an oath or two in every sentence.

And

And others have told an untruth so often, and averred it with so much confidence, as themselves to believe true, what they knew at first to be a lye.

When men are arrived to this pitch of wickedness, then they endeavour to draw in others, and to make profelytes to their vices ; and not content to sin on their own single account, they become teachers of sin, and ministers of unrighteousness ; they sedulously propagate their lewd practices with their atheistical principles, and make followers and disciples after them ; this discovers not only a great approbation, but even fondness for it. And when arrived to this height of iniquity, it is natural for them to hate reproof, to reject the means of their recovery, and esteem those their greatest enemies, who have so much courage and kindness to tell them the truth. Then all the wise counsels of God's word, and the most prudent admonitions, will serve only to provoke their scorn and passion. But surely that person is in a sad state, who turns the most effectual means of his amendment into the occasion of new and greater sins. And what renders the condition of such, much more deplorable is, that God, for every degree of sin, withdraws from them the grace of his holy spirit ; and the Devil (who works effectually in the children of disobedience) according as men improve in wickedness, gets a greater and more established dominion over them. For as they who are reclaimed from an evil course, are said to be rescued out of the snare of the devil, and to be turned from the power of Satan unto God ; so the more men advance in the ways of sin, by so much the farther do they depart from the influence of God's grace, his protection and providence ; and thereby give the devil greater opportunities to gain the firmer possession of them.

And

And thus by passing from one degree of sin to another, the sinner becomes hardened in his wickedness, and insensibly falls into that sad state, in which without God's extraordinary grace, he must for ever continue. For the mind of man, when long accustomed to evil, and grown old in vice, is not easily to be rectified. The scripture speaks of some, "who commit sin with greediness, and drink iniquity as the ox drinketh water," with a mighty appetite and thirst; as if they were not able to refrain from it. And to express to us the miserable condition of such persons, it represents them as perfect slaves to their vices; as having sold themselves to do wickedness, and being led captive by Satan at his pleasure. And when men have brought themselves to this pass, they are almost under a fatal necessity of sinning on. I do not mean that God hath absolutely predestinated any man to ruin; but only, that by a continued course of wilful sin, men may in a sort predestinate themselves to it, and chuse wickedness so long, till they are almost unable to contribute any thing towards their own recovery; being fettered in the chains, and held in the cords of their sins. Nay, like Sampson, not only bound by those lusts they have embraced, but also robbed of all their strength to get loose therefrom. God grant that none of us may ever have the woeful experience of it. But I am afraid it is possible for a sinner to arrive at that confirmed state of impiety, as almost totally to lose his liberty to be better. He may attain to that perfection in vice, as to continue bad, because he would not be otherwise. "Can the Æthiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" is the scripture comparison, to represent to us, how difficult it is for a man to be brought to goodness, who hath been long accustomed to do evil. One so deeply engaged and entangled in a bad course, will scarce have resolution  
enough

enough to break from it, unless he is forced violently out of it by some severe affliction, sharp sickness, or terrible calamity ; or by the present apprehensions of death, and the terrors of a future judgment : nor will even these be effectual to change such without an extraordinary degree of God's grace ; which, considering the greatness and length of his provocations, he has very little reason to expect from God. Wretched man ! to bring himself into this miserable state, out of which there is only a possibility of being rescued ; to provoke God so far, and to sin to such a prodigious height, as to have reason almost to despair of his grace and assistance for repentance, and of his mercy for pardon. I observe this, not to discourage the greatest sinners, whose case, however extremely difficult it may be, yet is not quite desperate ; but I do it to stop sinners if possible in their evil courses, and to discourage them from continuing therein, lest they are hardened thro' the deceitfulness of sin.

I shall now consider the great reason there is to warn men of this danger, and endeavour to rescue them out of it. The apostle directs this precept to all Christians, “ Exhort one another daily, lest any “ of you be hardened, thro' the deceitfulness of sin.” That is, lest you be hardened by degrees, and finally ruined. And most certain, every man is obliged to do what he can to rescue his brother from so imminent a danger. It is every one's place and duty, to endeavour to save those, whom he sees ready to perish ; much more doth it concern the ministers of God's holy word, whose proper office and business it is, to exhort and warn every man, both day and night. And if we believe the threatnings of God, which we declare to others ; if we have any apprehension of the dreadful misery of another world, any sense of our own duty and safety, any pity for perishing souls ; we cannot but be very im-  
portunate

portunate with sinners, to consider their danger, and seriously reflect on the miserable event, and issue of a wicked life. We cannot but be earnest with them to break off their sins, and give glory to God by repentance, "before darkness comes, and their feet "stumble on the dark mountains." When we are fully convinced that misery and destruction are in their ways, and plainly see the evil day hastening towards them, "and destruction coming upon them, "like a whirlwind;" heaven above threatening them, and hell beneath moving herself to meet them; can we possibly do less than warn such persons, to flee from the wrath to come; and out of a sad apprehension of the danger that hangs over them, to caution them against it, and endeavour with all our might to rescue them from the misery which is ready to swallow them up? Indeed one would think it needless to dissuade men from being miserable; and yet we see by experience, that sin is of so stupifying a nature, as to make men insensible of their danger, tho' it be near and very terrible. We must therefore have hearts harder than the millstone, if we can patiently see men perish without using our utmost endeavours to save them; which brings me to the last part of this discourse, I mean, seriously to exhort every one to resist the beginnings of sin, and to depart from all evil.

And I shall address myself to two sorts of persons on the occasion. I will endeavour to persuade those who are innocent of great crimes, to resist the beginnings of sin, lest it gain on them by degrees; and then press such as are engaged in a wicked course, speedily to depart from that dangerous state, lest they are hardened thro' the deceitfulness of sin. Vice may easily be discouraged at first; it is like a slight disease, which if early taken care of is soon cured, but grows dangerous by being neglected. The first approaches of sin, and temptations

tations to it are usually very modest ; but if not discountenanced, they will presently make bolder attempts. Every inclination to sin, every compliance with temptations, is like going down the hill ; and we cannot stop when we will. If we once let loose the propensions of our nature, we cannot govern them as we please ; if we give way to presumptuous sins, they will quickly get dominion over us. It is much easier not to begin a bad course, than afterwards to put a stop thereto. It is meer delusion for a man to imagine, he can set bounds to himself, in what is bad ; to think of sinning with great temperance, discretion, and government of himself ; that he will commit this sin, and then give over ; entertain this one temptation, and after that, admit of no more. Our corrupt hearts, when once in motion, are like the raging sea, to which we can set no bounds, nor say to it, ‘ hither shalt thou come, and no farther.’ Sin is of a very bewitching, deceitful nature, and strangely gains on men, when they give way to it. By yielding to one little vice, it disposes us to greater, and the strongest resolutions will thereby be easily broken ; for sin is very fruitful, and tho’ no blessing is annexed to it, yet it will strangely encrease and multiply. As there is a connexion of one virtue with another, so are vices linked together ; one sin draws many after it. The Devil, when he tempts to sin, does as it were lay a train of sins ; and if the first temptation takes, it fires another. Let us therefore resist the beginning of sin, because we have then the most power, and sin the least.

As to those who are engaged in a wicked course ; let me press and persuade them, speedily to depart from so dangerous a state. And this can only be done by repentance, that is, by a real change and reformation of our lives, for herein the nature of true repentance consists ; without this, all the de-  
vices

vices which men use, to get rid of the guilt of their sins, are vain and to no purpose. It cannot be done by a formal confession and absolution, nor yet by a long pilgrimage, or even the pope's indulgences. A wise man would much sooner persuade himself, that God will not punish sin at all, than so easily forgive it, and receive to favour great offenders, on such slight terms. Let us not deceive ourselves, the only plain way to heaven is by a holy life and sincere repentance. There is no getting there by tricks. And without this change of our lives, all our sorrow, fasting, and humiliation for sin, will signify nothing. For "he that washeth himself after the touching of a dead body, if he touch it again, what avails his washing? So it is with man, that fasteth for his sins, and doth the same things; who will hear his prayer, or what doth his humbling profit him?" The difference between trouble for sin, and repentance, is, that sorrow only respects past sins, but repentance is chiefly preventive of sins for the future. God therefore requires us to be troubled for our sins, that we may resolve to leave them.

And to oblige us to a vigorous and speedy resolution herein, let us consider, that we have engaged too far already in a bad course; and that every day our retreat will grow more dangerous and difficult, and our delays make work for a deeper and longer repentance. Let us also remember, that "except we repent and turn, we shall die;" and that the evil days may soon overtake us. That vice is far from being mortified by age, since a few days continuance therein, will encrease the power of it; and so much strength as we add to our disease, we certainly take from ourselves. The deceitfulness of sin appears in nothing more than in keeping us from this necessary work, and persuading men to hazard all, on the unreasonable hopes of God's mercy, and

the uncertain resolution of future repentance; a great and dangerous hazard this! Since who is fit for so serious a work as repentance, on a death-bed, when we are scarcely capable of doing any thing? How can we be assured of the truth and reality of our repentance, when there is no sufficient opportunity to try the sincerity thereof? I deny not the possibility of the thing; but it is much to be feared, that the repentance of a dying sinner is usually like the sorrow of a malefactor, when carried to execution. He is not troubled that he hath offended the law, but that he must die. So when death is ready to seize on the sinner, and he feels himself falling into destruction, no wonder if then he would be glad to be saved; and seeing he can stay no longer in this world, would rather go to heaven than hell; and in order thereto, give some testimonies of his repentance. No wonder if then, in hopes of pardon, he makes many promises of amendment, and resolutions of a new and better life. But then it is very difficult to judge, whether what is thus done under so great fear and force, is real or not? for as a sick man loses his appetite to the most pleasant food, so likewise are his sinful pleasures, and fleshly lusts, nauseous to him; sickness altering the temper of his body, takes off all gust and relish for these things. Such persons resolve against sin, just so much as a man who hath no stomach resolves against meat. But if the sick fit is removed, and the apprehensions of death abate; it is to be feared his former appetite to sin would soon return, with the same eagerness as before. Besides, how can we expect God should accept of our repentance at such a time, when we before resolved to put it off, till we could sin no longer? can we think it fit for any man to say thus to God, in a dying hour? "Lord, now the world leaves me, I come to thee. I pray thee give me eternal life, tho' I never af-

forded

forded thee one good day of my life. Grant that I may live with, and enjoy thee for ever, who could never endure to think on thee. I must confess, that I could never be persuaded to leave my sins, out of love to thee, but I now repent of them, for fear of thee. Tho' I would never do any thing for thy sake, yet I hope thy goodness is such, as to forgive all the wicked actions of my life; and to accept of this forced submission. I pray thee not to frustrate and disappoint my former resolutions of sinning while I live, and getting to heaven when I die." Can any man think it fit to say thus to God? And yet I fear, this is the true interpretation of men's repentance who defer it till they come to die.

I do not speak this to discourage repentance even at that time; it is always the best thing we can do. But I would by all means discourage men from putting off so necessary a work till then. Indeed, when it comes to this, and a sinner finds himself going out of the world, if he has been so foolish, as to put things on this last hazard; repentance then is the sole remedy, the only refuge he has left. And in this case the minister ought by all means, earnestly to persuade him to it. But when we speak to men in other circumstances, to such as are well, and in health, no encouragement should be given them, to venture their souls on so great an uncertainty. For at the best, it is a very dangerous remedy; especially where men with design contrive to rob God of the service of their best days, and put him off with a few unprofitable sighs and tears, at the hour of death. And no man, who hath any worthy apprehensions of the deity, can imagine him so easy, as to forgive men, on the least word and intimation of their minds, and to have such a fondness for offenders, as would reflect on the prudence of any magistrate or governor on

earth. Let us then sincerely endeavour to live a holy and virtuous life, that we may have the comfort of it, when we come to die. Let us never be so unwise, as to venture all hopes of a blessed eternity on a death-bed repentance. For as "God's  
" mercy is great, so are his corrections. But  
" let us hasten to return to the Lord, and put not  
" off from day to day ; lest suddenly the wrath of  
" the Lord come forth, to destroy us in the midst  
" of our security."

Discourse

Discourse LXXIX. Bp. *Hick-*  
*man.*

The great DUTY of SELF-KNOW-  
LEDGE.

Pfal. ix. 10.

Put them in fear, O Lord, that the heathen  
may know themselves to be but men.

**W**HEN God created the heaven and the earth, and distinguished the whole creation, in their several orders and degrees, he placed man in the middle region, between himself and the inferior world, that we might obey the one, and command the other. And in order to the preserving our respect towards God, and our government towards the creatures, he gave us laws to instruct and direct our conduct, in that course of life, on which all our wisdom and happiness depends. But thro' our perverseness or simplicity, many temptations are apt to divert us from the right way; for either a vain desire of greatness, or an excessive love of riches and pleasures, makes us forget our duty to God; and instead of walking in the ways of wisdom, our eyes are so blinded with ambition, covetousness, and luxury, that we degenerate into something less than man.

To prevent this fatal miscarriage, God has enforced his laws, by many gracious promises to invite us to our duty, and many dreadful threatnings to deter us from evil. When the one proves ineffectual, he will execute the other. If we are so

hardened and stupid, that nothing but judgments can awaken us, God will send his terrors amongst us, to make us know him; and his judgments to know ourselves. As therefore the knowledge of ourselves is a religious duty, I shall endeavour to shew the excellency and usefulness of this knowledge.

There are indeed some, who think for man to know himself, is of all knowledge the most delightful and easy. But this proceeds from our ignorance: For alas! tho' we can with ease gaze round us, be very intent upon remote concerns, yet all the while we may be utterly unacquainted with ourselves. Besides, It is an unpleasant thing for a man to look into himself, to rake into the filthiness of his own heart, and discompose the quiet of his mind; hence it is that so many men take up with a superficial and false account of their own affairs, and are often most pleased with themselves, when they have the least reason for it. And however we may think that this fond conceit of our own worth, is only an innocent allowable mistake; yet upon examination, we shall find it such a dangerous error and disposition of mind, as will disable us from performing our several duties; for it is giving up our reason, to be guided by fancy and humour.

He that will not take the pains to know himself, lives as it were by chance, and moves without design. He embraces vice or virtue, as they best suit his fancy or convenience; but seldom considers the excellence of his nature, or the good pleasure of his God. Thus when a conceited man has lost himself, it is impossible he should maintain his proper station in life, or observe decency and justice towards men, but he will be apt to encroach upon their rights and liberties; and we must ascribe all that insolence, imposition, and violence in the world,

world, to this ignorant self-love. We may as well expect meekness from a lion, as common justice from one conceited of his own worth, and full of himself. He that thinks himself something more than man, will not look upon others as his fellow creatures, but takes a pleasure and pride in despising and treating them like despicable worms.

From whence proceed in general, all heresies and schisms in the church, all tumults and factions in the state; but from this ignorance and carnal pride, this exalting ourselves above measure, and undervaluing every ordinance of God and man; but had we the sense to consider, or the grace to understand, what we are; we shall appear to be only a load of infirmities, a lump of flesh, wherein our spirits are imprisoned and confined. For God knows what worthless, senseless creatures we are; having nothing to boast of, but what we received from him; nothing but our humility to recommend us to God or man. For what is our wisdom, goodness, and greatness, to value ourselves upon? Whosoever does so, knows not what it is to be wise, great, or good. In short, it is nothing but ignorance that makes us so fond of admiring ourselves, which occasions all the decays of virtue, religion and government in the world; and proves how necessary a duty, and great virtue it is, for men to know themselves. In order to our obtaining this knowledge, we ought to consider, both our nature and end.

We must consider our own nature, the value and station we bear in the world; that so our behaviour may be decent, and agreeable thereto. Hence some compare this world to a stage, where every person is to act conformably to his place and character. A prince should not degrade himself to those mean performances, which are fit and proper in a peasant; nor a subject usurp the style, or affect

the figure of a prince. But much more absurd is it for ignorant man, born in weakness and sin, the son of corruption, and brother to the worms, to aspire unto the throne of God, assume to himself absolute power, and to think he is more than man? and no less shameful is it, that man, who is born lord of this world, heir of eternity, companion of angels, and representative of God on earth, should submit to sordid mean desires; make himself less than man, even level to the beasts that perish. It behoves us therefore to consider our nature and constitution, that we may seek after those things that are agreeable to them. If our souls are our better part, and immortal, it requires our greatest care; as being an eternal good.

We ought also to study our own inclinations, that we may know how to apply the advantage of religion, to the exigencies of our souls. For there is no man so perfectly virtuous, but he has a tendency to some vice; nor is there scarce any so profligate in vice, who has not some remains of virtue. If therefore we know ourselves, and our inclinations to good and evil, we may by degrees gain ground upon our vices. Some sparks of virtue that lie covered, may with a little care be blown up into a glorious flame; and we ought to cherish these remains of goodness, and propagate the seeds of virtue. If we are hardened by sin, we may find some tender part, capable of good impressions; and by degrees reduce the whole. Let us but learn to know ourselves; see how we stand affected towards the vanities and vices of the world, and we shall soon discover our failings, which is the first and great step towards a remedy; for then we are only to use our diligence and care, to subdue those vices which are most predominant, and to set a double guard on our weakest side. But if we give the devil an opportunity to assault us, when unprepared, he  
wants

wants neither subtlety nor malice, to take advantage, [and pursue it to our ruin. Our principal care and design should therefore be to conquer our favourite sins, and darling lusts, and then we shall find no difficulty in all the rest.

And yet how common is it, for men to neglect this, and bend their forces another way; to fortify themselves against remoter dangers, those lusts they have no inclination to; but as for their beloved sin, that has taken shelter in their bosom, to cherish and keep it up, in defiance of correction or reproof. Hence it is, that many men in appearance live very regular and zealous lives, and comply with all the outward exercises of religion, and yet there is no alteration in their lives, where it is most wanted. This is what turns godliness into formality, and frustrates the design of religion. This want of knowing ourselves, is the only cause, why so many people make outward profession of the gospel, and yet are inwardly never the better. **But,**

In order to know ourselves, we must consider the end we aim at; and usually there are two sorts of ends, to direct our actions, an ultimate, and an intermediate end. For every considerate man proposes to himself some principal ultimate end; some universal main design, which he pursues in all his thoughts and actions, and makes the centre of his happiness. Thus one man proposes honour for his portion, another chuses riches, a third pleasure; and but very few are there who delight in virtue and religion; for when men once fix their choice on the meaner concerns of this world, they scarce think upon any thing else. Indeed he that proposes to lead a virtuous religious life, may desire a competency of the riches, honours, and pleasures of the world; but then he quits them all, when they are inconsistent with his religion. And this last end is  
most

most desirable, because we undertake the rest for the sake of that.

And now let every man seriously ask himself this important question. What end he proposes to himself, or what his business is in the world? The ambitious man will answer, to be great and honourable. But surely to come into the world like a comet, to be admired by the vulgar, and despised by the wise, is below the dignity of a reasonable creature. Perhaps another will say, that his business here is only to take pleasure; but does not his being here depend on God's pleasure, and his well-being on the protection of the laws, and the good of the commonwealth? and if so, ought he not in gratitude, in prudence, and in conscience, to conform to the pleasure of God, and to be useful to the state, and not to make his pleasure his law, and his belly his God? Another will perhaps say, that his designs are only to grow rich; but this is a manifest absurdity and contradiction. For if he would grow rich to promote the honour or pleasure of himself, or his posterity; then honour or pleasure is his principal end, and riches are only means thereto. But if he would grow rich for the sake of riches, he is then the most indigent and despicable man alive; being poorer to all the ends of riches, than he that has got nothing. Thus we see, that neither riches, pleasures, nor honours, those idols of the world, can be the principal end which a wise man proposes to himself; for a man in the highest honours may be discontented, and not without reason; a man of pleasure may be contemned, and not to be wondered at; and a man of great riches may be miserable, even to a proverb.

Since then none of these things can be the ultimate design, the proper objects of our wishes; what is it we should desire, but to be happy? and as these  
vanities

vanities cannot be our real happiness, we must study to be wise, that we may enjoy happiness. We must leave these amusements to the world, to the heathen who do not know themselves, no more than they do the God that made them. We must find out some other end more suitable to our nature, more worthy of our pains : which can only be the service of our God, and the salvation of our souls. Here we must fix our hopes, and make all our actions tend ; there being no other way to reconcile our worldly cares to reason or common sense, but by making them subservient to religion. Then we may desire riches for the greater opportunity of doing good upon earth, in hopes of obtaining a greater reward in heaven. Then we may use innocent pleasures for the preservation and refreshment of life ; in order to obtain a better inheritance hereafter. Then we may fairly desire honour and reputation in the world ; that by an illustrious example of virtue to others, it may be the means of saving our own souls. It is this last end, that encourages and justifies all the rest. Take away the eternal weight of glory, and how frivolous, how insignificant are all these momentary pleasures ? or what will it profit us “ to gain the whole world, and lose our own souls ? ”

Having thus discovered what our proper end is, let us next enquire what progress and advances we have made, towards the salvation of our souls ? for with all the wisdom of men, too few are wise enough to do their duty. They see the glorious prize before them, yet will not run so as to obtain, but slothfully acquiesce in the formalities of religion, and in an unactive faith, as if that was enough to carry us to heaven. It is strange indeed, that we should know religion, and the value of our precious souls so well, and yet live as we do. Our Saviour speaks of taking heaven by violence, to shew what labours and difficulties a good Christian should undergo, to procure

procure the salvation of his soul ; but we, by our unconcerned behaviour in this point, seem to expect that heaven should commit a violence upon us. The apostles and primitive martyrs endure the severest persecutions, imprisonments, and deaths, as examples for our imitation, and yet we can hear all this without the least remorse. The angels rejoice in heaven, “over every sinner that repenteth ;” and yet we have no joy but in our sins. Our blessed Saviour relinquished the bosom of his father, and submitted to a most indigent life, and shameful death ; and yet we who were the cause of this, are neither ashamed nor troubled about it. Surely, he did not make himself so poor, only to make us rich ; nor bestow temporal honours upon us, only to gratify our ambition : these are below the dignity of the gospel ; prizes too mean for the Son of God to purchase, or the sons of men to desire. Much less did he take up his cross, that we might indulge ourselves in sensual delights. This is a contradiction to all religion. But he did it, that we might learn to follow the captain of our salvation, by a laborious virtue, in order by our victory to obtain a crown of glory.

Since then ambition, covetousness and lust, are those corrupted principles, from whence all vicious practices grow and increase upon us, and this chiefly for the want of knowing ourselves ; I will now more particularly consider, how it is, that these bad principles hinder this knowledge in us.

The first vice which dazzles our eyes, and hinders us from knowing ourselves, is ambition. A vice to which mankind has too natural an inclination ; and with this bait the devil tempted the first man. When our desires take their rise from proper grounds, and are directed to proper ends, there is a virtue in ambition. We may study to be like God in wisdom, if we can ; and in goodness, if we please.

please. But when we aim to be like him in power, and to be above restraint, then there is vanity in the inclination, and danger in the attempt, which makes ambition a vice. Thus the angels fell; who by endeavouring to exalt themselves, were miserably degraded, and degenerated into accursed spirits. And yet neither the angels, nor our fore-fathers fall, can terrify us from the like presumption; but we will be still bordering upon their guilt, and flattering ourselves, that we are something more than men. We first learn to despise our fellow-creatures, and from thence ambition soars aloft, and teaches us to defy our God; to value ourselves upon rejecting his commands, and to think we are very great, for daring to be very wicked. This sin of ambition, is the first inlet to vice. For the sake of this idol, this mere phantom, men are contented to sacrifice their own peace, and the quietness of the world, to build trophies on the ruins of other men, only to stand a little higher in the eye and admiration of the people.

When ambition leads a man on, every virtue must submit to him; both justice and mercy must give way to his violence. If he can but get the superiority, and appear like God, he cares not what destruction he brings on man, or how he disturbs the course of nature. From hence tumults and factions, slaughters and desolations take their rise: for when a pampered ambition prevails, hatred and malice, rancour and revenge, like a destroying army, attend its motions, and execute its designs. And can any man pretend to know himself, who ventures on such an enterprize. For alas! how easily are we crushed, in the height of all our pride? God need not with his thunder to cast us down; since one blast of his air, one breath of his displeasure will undo us. If he only withholds our breath we die, and all our enterprizes fall to the ground. Is  
this

this our glory, this our pride ! how contemptible is designing man, who mistakes his honour, and does not know himself ? does not know, that “ there is “ neither device, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither “ he is going.” Let us not then rejoice in flattering ourselves, that we are like Gods upon earth ; but that our names are written in the book of heaven. Let us not boast that we have made many men subject to our power ; but that we have overcome the perverseness of our wills, subdued our unruly passions, and are grown so wise, as to know, and so great as to command ourselves.

The second corrupted principle, which debauches our nature, and hinders us from knowing ourselves, is covetousness, or an immoderate love of wealth. In ambition, there is something of generosity, but covetousness is perfectly vile and fordid. Ambition is an overflowing of the spirit, but covetousness sinks us below the flesh. It is burying ourselves alive, and anticipating the curse which God denounced upon us, “ dust thou art, and to dust “ thou shalt return.” It is making us less than the worms, the lowest of all the creatures ; they only grovel in the dust to satisfy their nature, and provide themselves with food ; but covetous man rakes without measure, and scrapes without design, and never thinks he has got dust enough, till he returns to it himself ; his appetite is never satisfied, till his mouth is stopt. It is this that occasions all that fraud, extortion, oppression and falsehood, that is practised among us. “ Covetousness is the root of “ all evil.”

How wonderful is it then, that man should not know what it is to be a man, nor how to answer the ends of his nature ; which most certainly are to improve in wisdom, and to grow in grace, till our spirits are so refined, as to be fit to appear before God. But can this end be promoted by our growing  
ing

ing rich? all our labour of this kind, tends the direct contrary way; it is stifling our spirits underground in the mines, when our thoughts should be soaring up on high. Therefore, says the wise man, "get wisdom, and with all thy getting, get understanding; for wisdom is much better than gold, and understanding rather to be chosen than silver." So many absurdities and contradictions are involved in this one single vice, that did we not see it practised, we should scarce believe, that a man should labour for he knows not what, and save it for he knows not whom. If we view his income, he would seem the most selfish man in nature; but if we consider his expence, he is certainly the most self-denying man alive.

But there is another powerful principle of vice within us, which hinders us from knowing ourselves, and from pursuing our proper end, and that is lust, or an immoderate desire of pleasure. There is nothing so easily imposed upon, as a man of pleasure; for he judges of things only by his sense, which is the most deceitful judge in nature. How shameful is it, for a man to set aside his reason and virtue, his understanding and religion, and devote himself to a slothful, sensual life? To be so unacquainted with himself, and forgetful of his soul, as to employ all his time to entertain his body? But we are too apt to get into a habit of sensuality, before we are aware, and to like it we know not why.

However, I would not be thought to undertake so needless and unnecessary a work, as to persuade men from pleasure in general, since God not only allows, but allots it for our use; nor would I absolutely condemn even the pleasures of sense, or set nature and religion at variance. My only intention is to shew, that what we call pleasure, is not really so, but only a childish, fluttering state of life, too light and airy to build any solid satisfaction upon.

upon. We think it agreeable to our nature, but this a mistake; for it first debauches that, before we can approve it: and then what we call our nature, is nothing but our corruption; so that we are first corrupted, and then destroyed. And therefore since our pleasures are not to be extinguished in us, it is absolutely necessary, that they should be regulated and reformed; so that our pleasure may be agreeable not only to our sense, but to the principles of our reason and religion, and consistent with our happiness.

Thus we have considered the three vicious corrupted principles within us, which make us forsake the law of our nature, and the commandments of God, and keep us from knowing ourselves, namely, ambition, covetousness and lust. With one or other of these vices, every man in some measure is possessed; and it is our duty to find out which of them it is, that by knowing our darling sin, where our death and danger lies, we may correct, and put a stop to the growing evil, before it becomes desperate. And we cannot but observe of all those vices, that tho' they may divert us for a time, and give some present deceitful satisfaction, yet they can never settle us in a state of ease and happiness. An ambitious man is above, and a luxurious man beside himself. He who is truly virtuous and contented, is the only man, that under all the turns of fortune in this world, maintains his station, and stands his ground. He neither flies too high, thro' a vain ambition, nor descends too low, through covetousness or sensual lusts; but with an equal temper of mind, and a perfect indifferency to all things human, he enjoys the smiles, and despises the frowns of fortune; he is undisturbed at the course of this world, is unmoved at the chances and motions of this transitory life, because he has a dearer concern, a better portion in the world to come.

Was such a man so established in virtue, and settled in his principles, but seriously to reflect on the common practices and folly of the world; would his better thoughts, his diviner contemplations, give him leave to see with what eagerness, hurry and zeal, the men of this world strive to ruin themselves and others; how they will alike trample upon the necks of friend and foe, to promote some little poultry vile designs; how would he stand amazed at this world, and conclude, that hell itself, could not be a more wicked place? When he sees with what fury, malice and revenge, they persecute those who dare oppose the interests of their ambition, covetousness, or lust; how earnestly would he pray, that God would deliver him from such a savage race? How zealously would he wish to enjoy some private retirement where he may enjoy calmer days, and in perfect serenity of mind, taste the sweets and relish the joys of a quiet conscience and a favourable God. In this happy state, he will find riches, honours and pleasures in abundance; such pleasures as the sensual man never heard of; such riches as the covetous man never saw; such honours as the ambitious man can never possess: perfect peace and tranquility of mind, undoubted security and establishment of heart, are the certain portion of that man, “who knows himself, and fears his God.”

But if our ambition, covetousness, or lusts have so far got the ascendancy of us, as that religion can make no impression upon us; then God will find such other ways to work upon us, as we shall soon repent of. If our hearts are never so hardened, yet there are two arrows of God, that will be sure to reach us; calamity and death. Calamity is one effectual method which God uses, to make us know ourselves. When he strips us of all our gaudy plumes, and sends us despicable and almost naked into that

world, where we before took so much pride; then we shall not only know, but despise and condemn ourselves, for our past folly. When poverty and shame come upon us, and deprive us of that armour, which our ambition and covetousness had cloathed us with; then we shall wish for “the breast-plate of righteousness, and the sword of the spirit;” and confess that one grain of faith is better than many talents of gold and silver; than all that pomp which our ambition can desire; than all that treasure which our covetousness could rake up, or our luxury squander away. When our haughty looks shall be brought down, our deceitful honours taken from us, we shall no more trust to the smiles of fortune, nor believe the flatteries of men; but learn impartially to examine the condition of our souls, and see how unhappy that man must be, who does not chuse virtue for his ornament, and God for his defence. Prosperity is deceitful, but adversity gives us a full view, and free access to our own bosoms, and shews what is there amiss; it corrects the swellings of our hearts, assuages the overflowing of our pride, and plainly proves, that there is no true genuine pleasure, but in being virtuous; no solid greatness, but in being humble; that the way to be happy men, is to “know ourselves to be but men.”

The last method of providence to reclaim us, and make us know ourselves, is death. When this sad spectacle holds the glass, and shews our ghastly face; then to our sorrow we shall see of what we are made, and to what we must return. When this body of ours, upon which we have bestowed so much pains, at the expence of our precious souls, is now sinking into nothing; how will all our pride and pleasure die before us? We shall then be convinced, that we must die like men, and soon become dust and ashes. To what purpose then  
should

should we contrive mighty projects, and lay vast designs, when death may overtake us in the height of our vanity, and stifle our ambition in the birth. Alas! what a tame, inoffensive thing is man, when death has laid his hands upon him! The very apprehension of death checks our extravagance, allays our heats, subdues our unruly wills, suppresses our vicious affections, and brings our minds into temper, and our hearts into a proper frame. But then we must have these apprehensions of death in time, lest it be too late; lest it does not lead us to a new life, but carry us to a dreadful judgment, where we shall be made to know ourselves to our eternal sorrow and shame.

## Discourse LXXX. Dr. Barrow.

The DUTY of MINDING OUR OWN  
BUSINESS.

I Thess. iv. 11.

—Study to be quiet, and to do your own  
business.

**T**HO' according to the general tenor of scripture and of our religion, we are in charity obliged to be heartily concerned for, and earnestly to promote the good of our neighbour; and so far to interpose and meddle in the affairs of others, as to endeavour their good, and to instruct and advise, admonish and reprove them on occasion; as also to offer them our assistance and help: Yet St. Paul. directs and enjoins us, "to study to be quiet and mind "our own business." This seeming contradiction or difference is a difficulty that ought to be reconciled and cleared up; and which I shall attempt in the following method. I will shew when it is allowable or commendable for us to meddle with the affairs of others, and when not: then propose some general rules and proper directions in the discharge of this duty. And lastly offer some considerations to dissuade men from a criminal interfering or meddling with the concerns of others.

Superiors may intermeddle with the business of inferiors, in all things concerning the proper discharge of their duty. Magistrates may inspect the behaviour, examine the actions, reprehend and punish the offences of their subjects; parents may advise,

vise, rebuke and correct their children ; ministers of the gospel may admonish and reprove the people committed to their charge. If these things are performed with prudence, equity, and moderation, then do such mind their own business, it being the proper work which God and reason require of them, and therefore they are not culpable. Again,

Wherever the honour and interest of God is concerned, we may interpose to vindicate and maintain them. If any man dares to blaspheme God or contemn religion, we ought to rebuke him ; if any divine truth is denied, we are to defend it, and to reprove such as notoriously transgress against the laws of God ; to do this, every man is obliged as God's subject. Thus did Elias maintain the true worship of God, against the kings and the whole nation of Israel who had corrupted it ; thus did the prophets rebuke the wickedness of princes, priests, and people in their time ; thus John the baptist reprov'd king Herod for his unlawful practices ; thus did our Saviour censure the superstitious hypocritical scribes, and chastise the profaners of God's house. We may also rebuke him that slanders or reproaches our prince, and restrain or check him that breaks the peace, or would violate the laws ; for every man is a soldier against traitors and enemies of his country ; every man is obliged to defend the public against those who would ruin it ; to defend his prince against rebels, and the laws against such as would break and disturb the peace. We may also help an honest man against a thief assaulting him, and guard another's life against an assassin ; we may vindicate the reputation of an innocent person when aspersed ; we may repel those who attack our safety or peace, invade our goods, or traduce our name ; we may endeavour to defeat their designs and restrain their violence. If we see our neighbour exposing his life to any hazard, or running into

any great sin, we may by friendly admonition, advice, or reproof, even without his will, endeavour to reclaim or restrain him. It is innocent, just and laudable for us to watch over and be careful of our neighbour's welfare, so as it be done out of pure charity, after a discreet, quiet and gentle manner. If an opportunity offers of doing our neighbour any considerable good, we may lawfully, and in charity ought to embrace it; and if he is so blind as not to perceive our good will, so peevish as to dislike it, or so ungrateful as not to thank us for it; yet our kind intentions will justify us before God, and acquit us at the bar of reason; and to countenance us therein we have the example of good men, who for so doing have worthily been esteemed the friends and benefactors of mankind. For duty to our superiors, justice and charity to one another, a just regard to our own welfare, allow and oblige us in such and the like cases, to intermeddle without offending; since in these instances, we may truly be said to be quiet and to do our own business, because we thereby act agreeably to God's laws and right reason. There is no business more proper for us, than to promote God's glory and procure the good of men, this being the principal design of God's sending us into the world.

But then we should never out of ambition, covetous desire, or self-conceit, so meddle, as to invade or assume the exercise of any man's office. We must not presume to meddle with our superiors, so as to advise or reprehend them, to blame or censure their proceedings; for this is to confound the right order of things, to go beyond the bounds of our calling and station; and even worse than to assume the ensigns of their dignity. It is too common for private persons to invade the office, to exercise the duties, and to control the actions

tions of their superiors; to prescribe them laws, to murmur at, and inveigh against what they enact. But to make, alter, or reverse laws, belongs to the highest authority; and therefore to arrogate this to ourselves is the most egregious presumption. To direct our governors, is in effect to depose them and appoint ourselves; and what greater injury can we do the public? By attempting such things we confound the ranks and orders of men, and interrupt the public tranquility: than which, what more enormous mischief can we do: As God hath appointed his representatives and ministers to deliberate and conclude what is to be done, and that to him they are accountable; our duty is to submit and obey. If we act otherwise we are undutiful to God and our superiors, and forget the precepts of our religion, that where the "word of a king is, there is power; submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; despise not government, nor speak evil of dignities." There is a kind of sacredness in the secrets of government. As the mysteries of faith surpass natural reason, so those of state transcend vulgar capacity. And as God employs princes in the great work of governing the world, makes them instruments of his providence, and is not wanting to assist and direct them in the discharge of their duty; so according to the reason of things, they by means of their high station and peculiar advantages, are better able to judge of and know affairs than others; having by experience and constant practice acquired a superior knowledge in such things, and how to manage them.

Nor should we so meddle with the concerns of our equals, as to controul or direct, check or censure their proceedings, without good reason for it; since this is to usurp an undue authority, and implies self-conceit, immodesty and arrogance. For every man should have leave to manage his own bu-

ness in the method he best likes, consistent with law and justice, without interruption. This is what every man desires, and hath a right, and which all are generally capable of doing. Indeed, as every man is most concerned in the success or disappointment of his own endeavours, so it is but just and equal that he should have liberty to act as he pleases in his own affairs: especially in concerns of less moment. In matters innocent and indifferent, such as diet, dress, diversion and pleasure, it is most reasonable that every man should please himself. This all men like, and therefore we should not attempt to hinder it.

In conversation, we ought not to impose our opinions on others. When we converse with our equals, tho' we may offer our judgment and declare our reasons for it, yet if neither is regarded, we ought to be silent; to press farther is rude, to be displeas'd thereat is vain, to be angry is unreasonable. For by the law of conversation every man has a right to use his own reason; and whoever aims to deprive another of it, will be very ill esteem'd. Nor should we affect to teach others, for this implies a pretence to superiority in wisdom, which shews vanity, and is offensive to those we converse with. Indeed we may modestly dispute the case with our equals, as fellow students of knowledge; or advocates of truth; but we must not peremptorily dictate or pronounce with authority, like masters or judges. We should be cautious not to interrupt any man's discourse, or take his words out of his mouth; this is rude, as it supposes impertinency in another, or that we are wiser than they. We should not intrench on any man's modesty, by so commending or reflecting on him, as to make him blush or expose him to scorn. Sober men like not to be the subject of discourse, or the object of sport. We ought to be cautious of talking about  
the

the affairs of others, or to give characters of any one; and yet this is the practice of some busy people, who will do nothing themselves, but reflect on the actions of others. We should not be inquisitive about the designs, nor press into the retirements of men; to do so, is immodest, rude, and unjust. It is immodest to desire to know, what another is ashamed or unwilling to tell; it is rude to disturb any man in his lawful enjoyment, to interrupt his conversing with himself, to obstruct his private satisfactions; it is unjust to hinder a man from doing what he best likes, and perhaps is greatly concerned in; as that of enjoying his own thoughts, considering his affairs, examining his own behaviour, studying of truth, performing his devotion to God, and of promoting the welfare of his soul. He retires on purpose to avoid diversion, or to be master of his time and thoughts; how unkind and unjust therefore must it be, to deprive him of his pleasure and such real advantages?

To pry into the secrets of others is also very blameable, it being a most impertinent curiosity. To break open the closet of a man's breast, to ransack his mind, to pilfer his thoughts, affections and designs, is most injurious to him, and the worst of robberies. To peep into holes, to listen at doors or windows, to open letters and papers, and such like practices, is highly criminal, and which common humanity will not endure. Indeed, a wise man would not desire to know the secrets of others, but gladly shun them, that so he may be free from the burthen of keeping them, and the danger of discovering them. Lastly, we should not lie in wait to surprize or take advantage of another, to insult on his mistake or misfortune; to do thus is always ill manners, sometimes barbarous inhumanity. In such cases, goodness would rather incline

a man to support, comfort, and relieve another.  
I proceed

To give some general rules and directions, concerning our meddling in the affairs of others. I shall only mention that of advice, reproof, and interposing in matters of contest or contention. As to advice, we should not advise one superior to us in authority, dignity or age. He who offers advice, claims a kind of superiority in knowledge over another; which is not consistent with the reverence and respect that is due to our betters. Indeed, if they ask advice, we may without presumption give it; because they may desire it in prudent caution, to hear another's sentiments; but to obtrude it on them is presumptuous arrogance. Nor ought we with any appearance of superiority, to advise our equals; for this would be to exalt ourselves in wisdom above him, and imply a contemptuous opinion of his knowledge. If another desires our advice we must not obstinately press or urge it, in case it should not be liked. For if we perform the part of a faithful friend, in advising another what to us seems best, this is sufficient; as to the regarding of it, that is his concern and not ours. To be displeas'd because he doth not follow it, is to become his commander, not counsellor; which was what he never intended. No considerations except of friendship, humanity, or charity, should induce us to accept the office of an adviser, it being a critical and dangerous undertaking. For if the business succeeds according to our advice, yet the party concerned has generally the praise; his judgment, industry, and success are applauded, when little benefit or honour accrues to the adviser: But should it not prosper, the chief blame is laid on him who gave the advice, suppos'd that it would not have so happened, had he not directed it. We should therefore advise with caution and diffidence. Such

a modest discreet method, whatever the event may be, will secure us from blame, and advance our reputation for sagacity and wisdom. For if our advice fails, our giving it with some sort of doubt, will be approved; if it succeeds, the goodness of our judgment will be applauded.

As for reproof, which is a necessary duty on some occasions, it may be proper to observe these directions. We must not reprove a superior, for that is to exercise a power over him, which tends to pervert order, and confound the ranks of men; to do this, is irreverent and presumptuous, injurious and odious. What the ministers of the gospel do of this nature is by special command from God, as the prophets rebuked princes and priests; John the baptist Herod; or, as being set over us to guide and watch our souls, for which they must render an account. We should not reprove rashly, or without certain knowledge of the fact; to reprove for things not done, to suspect a man of ill, to blame him on slender pretences, or doubtful surmises, is unjust and unfair. Even those who can contentedly bear friendly reproof, like not to be rebuked without just cause. We ought not to reprove for slight matters, for such faults or defects as proceed from natural frailty, inadvertency or mistake; friendship, charity, and humanity should cover such offences. Nor yet should we do it unseasonably, when there is no probability of doing good thereby. Profligate persons will not regard reproof, but hate the reprover. To be derided, or aspersed with reproach and slander, is all we shall get by reproofing such. Indeed most men in some seasons are incapable of reproof; as in time of calamity, when their grief ought rather to be mitigated by comfort, than increased and aggravated by blame; and men in a passion have no ears to hear, reason to judge, or inclinations to comply

ply with advice. At such seasons reproof will sooner produce anger and ill-blood, than effect amendment? Public reproof also is seldom proper; by this a man's modesty and reputation suffers. When we reprove, it should be done in a mild calm manner, in gentle terms, not in a haughty, imperious way, with bitter looks or language; for such methods hinder the good effects of reproof, they inflame and disturb the person reprov'd, create envy and hatred against the reprov'er; nor is it likely to convince a man of his error, or induce him to correct his fault. Such reproofs tend rather to harden, than mend men. For if reproof doth not favour of humanity, it will never prove effectual. Nothing but a sense of duty, of friendship, of charity and good will, should move us to commence a reprov'er; for to affect reprov'ing is a sign of ill-nature and arrogance. A good man would gladly be excus'd from the office, and be most pleas'd with commending the good deeds and virtues of others.

Another kind of meddling is, interposing in the contests, and contentions of others. As to this, we should never so meddle, as to raise or breed dissensions, to create misunderstandings or differences between our neighbours, to instil jealousies or surmises; we should not interpret their words and actions to an ill sense, nor disclose the secrets of one to another; such practices produce enmity and strife, and are therefore inhuman and diabolical. We should not foment dissensions already begun, by blowing up the coals, abetting the strife, or aggravating the causes thereof; nor encrease the quarrel by siding with one party against the other; unless when one is notoriously oppress'd or abus'd, then indeed we may offer our advice and assistance. We should not interpose without request to be arbitrators of difference; our Saviour waded this  
office,

office, saying, “ who made me a divider or a judge “ between you?” If we would meddle in these cases, it should be only in endeavouring by the most prudent methods to promote peace and reconcile differences ; if by exhortation and persuasion to peace, by handsomely representing the things so as to mitigate their passions, and bring them to good terms ; this is a laudable meddling, a blessed practice. —I shall now hasten to propose some considerations, persuading men to quietness, and to refrain from a criminal interfering with the concerns of others. And this may be done to the greatest advantage, by comparing the nature and benefit of quietness, with that of a pragmatic busy temper.

Quietness signifies humility, modesty, and sobriety of mind ; that we do not think ourselves wiser than our neighbour, allowing to every man his share of discretion, to understand and manage his own affairs ; but pragmatism or self-conceit, shews great arrogance, and that we imagine ourselves the only men of wisdom, at least wiser than those with whom we interfere. Quietness is beneficial to the world, preserving the general order of things, keeping men within their proper station, attending to their own work and business, to the mutual advantage of themselves and the public ; but pragmatism or a busy meddling temper, disturbs the world, destroying the distinction between superior, inferior and equal, and renders every man’s business uncertain. Quietness preserves concord and amity, for thereby no man is disturbed or hindered from doing his business according to his own mind and pleasure ; but a busy-body breeds dissensions and differences ; by his intermeddling he provokes others to quarrel with him, every man being zealous to maintain his own liberty of acting as he likes, and will oppose those who attempt to deprive him of that right. Quietness is a decent  
plea-

pleasant thing, implying a good temper, and producing happy effects; but a pragmatic busy-body is ever disagreeable and odious. Every man would gladly be neighbour to a quiet person, who by the calmness, sweetness and inoffensiveness of his humour and behaviour, affords all the pleasure of conversation, without any trouble. But no man would willingly live by him, who is of a turbulent or furious behaviour; who on all occasions will officiously obtrude himself, prying into what is done, dictating and advising what he thinks proper, and thus usurping power and jurisdiction over the actions of his neighbour. Quietness adorns any profession, bringing credit, respect, and love thereto; but to be pragmatical or officious, brings an odium on any party or cause. Nothing hath occasioned more prejudice to religion, or more disparaged truth, than a boisterous unteasonable zeal. A quiet person, tho' mistaken, is more to be esteemed, than he that is furiously and factiously orthodox. The ornament "of a meek and quiet spirit, is in God's sight of great price," and also very estimable in the opinion of men. Lastly, to be quiet is safe, as it not only keeps men from needless business, but from being charged with its bad success; but pragmaticalness is dangerous, for if things go ill, the blame and damage will be imputed to those who meddled in the business. Men to excuse themselves will throw the disgrace on those who did project or advise the undertaking. He therefore that would be secure, let him be quiet; he that loves trouble, let him be officious and pragmatical.

We should also consider, that every man hath business of his own sufficient to employ him, to exercise his mind, to take up his time and leisure. To study and mind our own concerns, to provide for the necessities and conveniencies of life, to regard the interests of our souls, to be diligent in our  
business

business and calling, to discharge faithfully and carefully all our duties to God and man; these are what will abundantly employ us. And whoever diligently performs these necessary duties, will find enough to exercise his time, without intermeddling with the affairs of others. It is indeed observable, that those who meddle with the concerns of others, are apt to neglect their own; and that they who know others most, are least acquainted with themselves. But should it happen that we want business of our own, yet we ought not to meddle with the affairs of others; there are many very different ways more innocent, safe, pleasant, and advantageous to divert ourselves, and satisfy curiosity. Nature herself offers an inexhaustible fund to our contemplation; we may without any crime, and with much delight, survey her rich varieties; examine her proceedings, enquire into her minutest secrets; every kind of animals, of plants of minerals, of meteors, presents us with matter, innocently, pleasantly, and profitably to entertain our minds. There are also many noble sciences, by the studying of which we may not only divert ourselves, but cultivate and improve our own understandings. The histories of past ages, or what concerns foreign countries, wherein the manners and actions of men are described and reported, may afford us useful pleasure; we may thereby learn and know as much of the world, as by the most curious enquiry into the present actions of men; there we may observe, reflect on, and censure the proceedings of whom we please, without danger or offence. We have also numberless books, wherein the wisest and most ingenious of men have laid open their hearts, and exposed their most secret thoughts; in perusing them, we may innocently busy ourselves and gratefully pass our idle hours. We may meddle with ourselves, study our own dis-

positions,

positions, examine our own principles and intentions, reflect on our own thoughts, words and actions, and thoroughly strive to know ourselves. To intermeddle in such things we have an unquestionable right, and by it shall obtain much greater benefit, than we can hope to gain by interfering with the business, designs and actions of others. So that pragmatism or being busily officious, is very dangerous and troublesome, also perfectly needless. It is a sort of idleness the worst and most unreasonable of any. It was the saying of St. Gregory Nazianzen, that he would rather be idle more than he should be, than be over-busy. Tho' other considerations might be added, yet I hope these will be sufficient, to restrain us from a practice, that is so unreasonable and unprofitable to ourselves, so injurious and troublesome to others.

## Discourse LXXXI. Dr. Clarke.

## OF HUMILITY, and the SIN of PRIDE.

Luke xiv. 11.

For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

**H**UMILITY is a virtue of the greatest use in life, and yet very difficult to be truly practised, or rightly stated. True humility consists, not in mens appearing to think amiss of themselves, but in a modest prudent behaviour; not in assuming a character above their station, but by the practice of real and useful virtues. This is the behaviour of true merit; the method which tends to bring men to real honour, and an established esteem. In order to explain more distinctly what true humility is, regard must be had to the persons towards whom it is to be exercised, and to the things wherein such persons differ. The virtue of humility is to be expressed either to superiors, equals, or inferiors; and the things in which such do principally differ, are either their civil stations, their natural abilities, or religious improvements. As to superiors in general, true humility consists in readily submitting to their authority, and paying them all due honour and respect in things just and lawful; in not despising their persons, nor exposing their weaknesses, or infirmities; but making all reasonable allowances for the difficulties attending their high stations, and the temptations to which they are liable. It also consists, not in blindly and im-

plicitly submitting our understanding to theirs, but in being willing and desirous to be instructed and informed by them. With regard to superiors in religious improvements, humility consists in rejoicing to see the practice of virtue, and the advancement of God's kingdom to encrease upon earth.

True humility towards our equals consists, in a civil, affable and courteous behaviour ; in patiently permitting our equals to be preferred before us, and modestly desiring that those who are upon a level with us, may have rather a greater than less respect ; in being " kindly affectioned one towards another, with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another." For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. It further consists, in willingly submitting for peace sake, to many things we may not otherwise chuse or like. As men have different judgments and inclinations, gifts and talents from God, given to every one as he pleases, therefore to prevent confusion, the duty of humility requires, that we should be ready to submit to each other, with all meekness, patience, and good-will ; " bearing and forgiving one another, and submitting ourselves one to another, in the fear of God."

True humility with regard to our inferiors consists, in assuming to ourselves no more than the difference of mens circumstances, and the performance of their respective duties, necessarily requires. In civil stations, the humility of a governor consists, not in making his authority despicable and subject to contempt, but to exercise it as a trust committed to him for the benefit of others ; and not out of love to power and dominion. He commands without insulting, reproves with meekness, punishes unwillingly, and never without pity and compassion ; with regard to the natural or acquired abilities of others, humility consists in not despising and con-

temning

temning those, whose talents are inferior to ours, but in considering that they may have some gifts, which we want; and in being willing to communicate to them the advantages we enjoy, that they may be better for what God has blessed us with. The humility of a rich man consists, not in leveling himself with the poor, and confounding the distinctions which God and nature have established among men; but in endeavouring to make the condition of the meanest easy and supportable; by our being ready to assist and relieve their necessities. The true humility of persons abounding in knowledge and learning, does not consist in an affected ignorance, but in being ready to communicate what they know, that others may with them encrease in knowledge. Lastly, true humility towards our inferiors in respect of religious improvements, consists in being rightly sensible of our own infirmities, and sincerely solicitous for the welfare and salvation of all men; in endeavouring to influence men towards religion, by meekness rather than power; in not affecting to gain the empty applause of men, by boasting of greater piety than others, like the Pharisees, who do all their works to be seen of men; in condescending to those beneath us, and yielding to them in things indifferent; in bearing the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves, but to please our neighbour for his good, even as Christ pleased not himself; in not judging or despising those who differ from us in opinion; “for let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; nor him that eateth not, judge him that eateth;” in taking care so to behave, that by our meekness, others may be prevailed on to believe in Christ, and also to avoid all divisions; in not imposing needless difficulties upon those under our power, like the Pharisees, who bind very heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on mens shoulders,

but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. Lastly, it consists in using great gentleness even to those that have offended; “ brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”

Indeed, there are no cases, wherein the practice of humility, is more intricate, or difficult, than when men are tempted to spiritual pride, or despise those who are inferior to them in religious improvements. This is a vice that will insinuate itself into men upon many occasions; and to mention some instances thereof may be of use. And there is a spiritual pride in presuming to sin, because of other virtues we are endued with. This was the case of Uzziah, and Hezekiah, “ who had done what was right in the sight of the Lord, and had served him diligently,” and yet at last their hearts were lifted up to their own destruction. And even St. Paul, says, “ lest I should be exalted above measure, thro’ the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, an affliction, the messenger of Satan to buffet me.”

The duty of humility in this case consists in being sensible of our frailty and danger, in “ working out our salvation with fear and trembling; and taking heed lest we fall, even when we think we stand surest.” - There is also a spiritual pride of vain glory in affecting to make public such actions of ours, as are good and commendable; thus the Pharisees, when they “ gave their alms sounded a trumpet before them, and when they prayed, did it in the synagogues and in the streets, that they might be seen and have glory of men.” In opposition to this, true humility consists in so disposing our aims, as not to let our left hand know, what our right hand does; and

in avoiding all affectation and public boasting of our private virtues. Again, There is another spiritual pride of men, when they confidently justify themselves, and are wholly insensible of their own failings, while they are very censorious, in judging and despising others; as we read of the Pharisee who prayed thus with himself; “God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican: I fast twice in the week, I give tythes of all I possess. And the Publican standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me a sinner. And this man, says our Saviour, went down to his house justified, rather than the other; for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” The humility opposite to this sort of pride, is that of Job; “If I justify myself, my own mouth shall “condemn me; if I say, I am perfect, it shall also “prove me perverse;—Wherefore I abhor myself, “and repent in dust and ashes.” Good men, tho’ they should not speak or think ill of themselves, if they are innocent; yet, when they consider the infinite purity of God, and the perfection of his law, they should then humble themselves, in a deep sense of their own many follies and imperfections.

There is a further degree of spiritual pride, in pretending to merit at the hands of God; which is what the church of Rome presumptuously assumes to themselves. In opposition to this sort of pride, humility consists, in that disposition of mind, which is recorded of the good centurion, “Lord, I “am not worthy,” I have no pretence to expect “that thou shouldst come under my roof;—but “speak the word, and my servant shall be healed.” And St. Paul, “unto me, who am less than the

“least of all saints, is this grace given.” For when we have done all that we are commanded, we are unprofitable servants; we have done only that which was our duty to do. But there is yet a higher degree of this spiritual pride, in pretending to works of supererogation, which the church of Rome also lays claim to. This seems to have been the fault of the young man in the gospel, who, when our Saviour said to him, “if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments,” replied, “what lack I yet?” But true humility, in opposition to this false and proud appearance of it, consists in making not our own will, but God’s, the rule of our duty; “casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself, against the knowledge of God; and bringing into captivity every thought, to the obedience, not of men, but of Christ.” Lastly, there is a spiritual pride, in being fond of mysteries and secret things, to the neglect of our plain and manifest duty. In opposition to this, true humility is what the wise man describes, “be not wise in thine own eyes, fear the Lord, and depart from evil. Secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed, belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of the law.” Having thus shewn what true humility is, and wherein it consists, I shall proceed to offer some arguments to persuade men to the practice of this duty. And the best way of doing this, will be to represent the natural ill consequences of pride; and the advantages arising from true humility.

Pride makes men foolish and void of caution, negligent and improvident of the future, which often throws men into sudden calamities. “When pride cometh, then cometh shame; but with the lowly is wisdom.” It makes men rash and peevish, obstinate and insolent, which generally brings ruin upon

upon them. "Pride goeth before destruction, and  
 "an haughty spirit, before a fall." It involves  
 men in strifes and contentions, and those are in-  
 consistent with true happiness. It disoblige men's  
 best friends, and gives their enemies an advantage  
 over them. It makes men impatient of good ad-  
 vice and instruction, which renders them incorri-  
 gible in their vices. "Seest thou a man wise in his  
 "own conceit, there is more hope of a fool than  
 "of him." Pride hinders men from examining  
 impartially into the truth of religion, and makes  
 them incapable of religious improvements; it cau-  
 ses men to take offence at the plainness and sim-  
 plicity of the gospel, and thereby prevents it from  
 making due impressions upon them. These are  
 some of the natural ill consequences of pride, and  
 which clearly discover to us the advantages arising  
 from true humility. Again,

As pride is naturally attended with many ill con-  
 sequences, so is it in particular very hateful to  
 God. He by the prophet declares, that "the lofty  
 "looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughti-  
 "ness of men shall be bowed down; for the day of  
 "the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is  
 "proud and lofty, and upon every one that is  
 "lifted up; and he shall be brought low." "Be  
 "cloathed with humility; for God resisteth the  
 "proud, and giveth grace unto the humble." And  
 in the words of the text, "whosoever exalteth him-  
 "self shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself  
 "shall be exalted." The reason why pride is thus  
 hateful to God, is, because it usually signifies and  
 includes a presumptuous attempt to transgress in-  
 solently, and with an high hand, which is the  
 greatest aggravation of sin, and most directly op-  
 posite to that meek and humble spirit, which studies  
 God's will, and is always fearful of disobeying it.  
 Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes,

and prudent in their own sight; who say, we will walk after our own devices, and will every one do the imagination of his evil heart. And who say unto God, depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways; what is the almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him? It is generally supposed, that the original sin of the devil was pride; and which may not be improbable, if we mean thereby, the devil's presuming upon the greatness and dignity of his nature, insolently to transgress some of the divine commands; and the words of the prophet seem to allude to the fall of Satan. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the most high. Yet thou shalt be brought down into hell, to the sides of the pit. And they that see thee shall say, is this the man that made the earth to tremble? The consideration therefore that pride is hateful to God, is a strong argument to deter men from it.

Another motive to recommend the practice of humility, is the example of our blessed Saviour, who though he was Lord of all, yet he was content not to have where to lay his head: Who tho' he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we thro' his poverty might be rich: Who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatned not, but committed himself to him who judgeth righteously: Which example of universal humility in all circumstances, he proposes to our imitation; learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart. These are some of the principal arguments to persuade men to the practice of humility in general. And there are in particular as  
many

many distinct motives to practise this duty, as there are different circumstances and varieties of cases, wherein to exercise it. For without practising it towards superiors, there can be no government; without expressing it to our equals, there can be no friendship and mutual charity. And with regard to inferiors, besides the example of Christ's unspeakable condescension towards us all, there are many proper arguments to deter us from pride, either on account of our civil stations, our natural abilities, or our religious improvements.

If our civil stations tempt us to a proud haughty behaviour, we should consider, that God accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor; for they are all the work of his hands. Let us also think upon the vanity and uncertainty of those things which so puff us up; that all flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass; the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away. Let the rich rejoice, in that he is made low; because, as the flower of the grass, he shall pass away. Let us likewise consider, that if we are placed in high stations, we have a larger account to give to God; and that it will not be long before death and judgment will level all worldly distinctions; when the greatest wicked men will say, what hath pride profited us? Or, what hath riches with her vaunting brought us? All these things are past away as a shadow, and as a post that hasteth by. And if we are lifted up with our learning, wisdom, or the like; it may humble us to consider, how small a degree of these things we can attain to? And if it was possible to attain much more, yet there is something far more excellent; for knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth; and if any man think he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. Wherefore, thus saith the Lord,

Le

Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.

If any advantages in religious improvements tempt us to spiritual pride and vain-glory, to judge or despise our weaker brethren; let us consider, that all the members of Christ are useful in their several stations; that how great soever our abilities or advantages may be, yet that we are not even by the means of these “sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God;” for what have we, that we did not receive from God’s free bounty and goodness. Let us further consider, in order to abate our spiritual pride and contempt of our weaker brethren, who differ from us in matter of opinion; that there is a day coming, which will distinguish men by their works of piety and true holiness only; when mens foolish pride and arrogance shall be entirely confounded, and those who with scorn beheld others as infinitely below them, shall be placed upon an equal foot with them they despised. That how great soever our improvements be, even in real virtue and goodness, yet we have continual reason to take heed lest we fall: That while we stand the most upright, we have nothing to glory of before God. For can a man be justified with God? That the greatest and most eminently pious men have been exemplarily humble in this respect. Holy Job refused to justify himself before God; Abraham stiled himself dust and ashes; Jacob acknowledges that he is less than the least of God’s mercies; St. Paul calls himself the least of all saints; having been a persecutor of the church of God.—Again, Humility is the  
only

only means to entitle us to the divine assistance, and is the best help to our rightly understanding matters of religion. Trust in the Lord, says Solomon, with all thine heart, and lean not to thy own understanding; in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths; be not wise in thine own eyes, fear the Lord and depart from evil. Them that are meek will God guide in judgment; and such as are gentle, them will he learn his way. For God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace unto the humble.

The reason why God resists the former, and encourages the latter, is, because “every one that is “proud in heart, is an abomination to the Lord.” And he must needs be so, as being an enemy to truth, God’s essential attribute and perfection; in the maintenance of which among all rational creatures, his glory consists. Now pride is a direct violation of truth, for its foundation is laid in falsehood. The proud man thinks himself to be what he is not, and takes all possible pains to rivet the lye in his own breast. He magnifies every good quality, and winks at every bad one, hereby forming an imaginary character, that no way belongs to him. His actions, his professions, his demeanor in general, are a continuation of falsehood, and a scene of fraud. He assumes such honours and respects, as he has no right to. In short, he acts in life a fictitious part; deludes whom he can, and is in the sight of God, an impostor. And since it was God’s will, to ordain that there should be different natural powers and perfections, ranks, stations, and conditions of life among men, to answer the ends of order and regularity; so to oppose, break in upon, obstruct or interfere with this divine and beneficial regulation and order, cannot but be highly offensive to the great governor of the world; who appointed it from the beginning. And all in-  
vasions

vasions of, or oppositions to it, may be considered as acts of direct rebellion against heaven. And is not manifestly the case of pride, discontent, envy and ambition, those darling vices of Lucifer? Did they not, from a glorious angel of light, transform him to a devil? was it any wonder then that God should resist his pride, and confound his ambition, which prompted him to rebel against the most High, and withstand his most righteous decrees? That the Almighty should punish the stout heart of this grand apostate, and bring down the glory of his high looks? The same crime in man is in proportion equally odious and impious; and therefore incurs and will receive a suitable displeasure and punishment. Nay, in some respects it is attended with a peculiar aggravation.

Pride was not made for man. That is, he has so many blots in his character, so many infirmities to acknowledge, so many sins and follies to answer for; that it may seem strange, how pride could ever steal into his heart, or even enter into his thoughts. If angels might be dazzled by the lustre of their own perfections, yet surely this is not man's case. Can pride kindle in corruption? or a flame of ambition break out of sinful dust and ashes? We indeed aspire to great things, glory in our strength and worth, who are a-kin to the very worms, and destined for their prey. But can so low, so humble a condition, be a proper soil for pride and vanity, arrogance and ambition?—Since then the proud man violates the order of the creation, disturbs the harmony of the world, and resists the appointments of heaven; it naturally follows, in truth and righteousness, that God will resist, and in time effectually humble him.

On the other hand, the reason is no less manifest why he should give grace to the humble, in whatever sense the expression may be understood. If it

means

means God's general favour and encouragement, and the blessings thence arising, the thing can admit of no doubt. For what is a more proper object of his favour, or more amiable and excellent than humility? Humility and charity ever shine with a peculiar lustre, and are eminently precious in the sight of God. If any graces of the soul of man are fit to be transplanted into the regions above, it must be these, which will there find a place, and for ever flourish in perpetual bloom. Humility must be ever a proper object of divine regard; as being essential to the heavenly state, and most lovely in itself. Amidst the numberless orders and degrees of the blessed, what enjoyment could there be, for the proud, envious, and ambitious; supposing it possible for them to be admitted? Their restless minds would extract misery out of joy, and turn concord into confusion. But no difference of condition, no higher advantages, or superior glories, will ever disturb the humble-minded, or diminish their happiness. Perfectly satisfied with their own bliss, they will behold those above them without regret, and view all the blessed with perfect complacency. For in that day, they will be gloriously distinguished and exalted. Their humility shall be crowned with honour, and their self-abasement lift them up. God will abundantly and in the most conspicuous manner display his favour and esteem for them. In a word, they will receive that preeminence they never sought, and be publicly glorified, in the sight of men and angels.

But if by God's giving grace to the humble, be understood the aid and assistances of his holy spirit, conferred on such in a larger measure; this is also a fact easy to be accounted for. As humility in a peculiar manner renders the mind susceptible of the best impressions, and naturally qualifies it for virtuous improvements; so it more especially entitles

it to the succours of heaven, and the influences of divine grace. It is on many accounts best fitted for the residence and habitation of God's holy spirit; which delights to "dwell with him that is of a "contrite and humble spirit." Upon the whole then it is very evident, that humility is a most powerful recommendation to God's favour, who is ever best pleased with what most conduces to the perfections of his creatures, and the general benefit of mankind. And certain it is, that nothing tends more, either to the peace and prosperity of the public, or the happiness of individuals; nothing is more favourable and friendly to society, to the order and good government of the world. Strong is the bias of self-love, and very powerful are all its affections. To govern and keep these within the bounds of reason and truth, is a conquest glorious in itself, productive of the greatest benefits to mankind, and must needs be a sacrifice highly well pleasing in the sight of God. I conclude in the words of our blessed Lord, the greatest patron, and noblest pattern of humility that ever lived; "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for he who humbleth himself as a little child, the same shall be greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Discourse LXXXII. Bp. *Hickman*.

On the PASSIONS, and how to GOVERN them.

Acts xxiv. 15.

We also are men of like passions with you.

**T**HE great business of religion is to mortify our lusts by the help of grace, and subdue our passions, those infirmities of our nature, and bring them into subjection to the Holy Spirit, whose fruits are “love, joy, long-suffering, gentleness, “goodness, meekness, temperance;” and yet after all the advances we can make in virtue, the best proficients in grace may say with the disciples of nature, “we also are men of like passions with “you.”—These words were spoken by Paul and Barnabas to the men of Lycaonia, to convince them they were not Gods, and to restrain the people from offering sacrifices to them; a very modest, true, and ingenuous confession.

And yet perhaps it may seem strange, that an apostle, renewed by the Holy Ghost, and endowed with all the graces of the gospel, should make such an open profession of his passions, to the great disparagement of those other gifts. For as passion is a violent assault upon our reason, a turbulent motion in our hearts, if this must still take place, in spite of all the assistances of the spirit, where is that meekness, gentleness, and temperance, which are the ornaments and essentials of a Christian life? But

so it is, that the best of men are subject to passions and infirmities ; this is a truth which all good men are not ashamed to confess, and none but bad men will deny.

Indeed when we come to heaven, we shall shake off these distempers of our nature, and our souls will be purified and refined ; but whilst we are in the body, they are too deeply rooted in our senses, for either our religion or reason to extirpate. Moses, the meekest of men, slew an Egyptian in his anger ; David the devoutest of men, was in his devotion transported with anger ; our Saviour, the most patient of men, was once overwhelmed with sorrow : and even the apostles tell the Heathens, that they were men of like passions with them ; by which it appears that religion was designed only to improve, and not extinguish nature. It was this very point that raised a controversy between two famed sects of antient philosophers ; the one was for governing and keeping under the passions of man ; and their design was good : The other required, that they should be totally abolished and extirpated ; but this was impracticable. They were not contented with the nature God had given them, but were for new making man after an image of their own. By this great mistake, they rendered their lives uncomfortable, and their doctrines disagreeable ; and by their philosophy proved, that nature may be managed, but cannot be forced. And yet was it possible for a man to force his nature, and divest himself of passion, it is a question whether this be desirable ; since our souls would be very flat and insipid without them. Our reason would be too weak to support our virtue, and man would at best be a heavy unactive creature, without our passions to encourage and excite us to good works.

But to this a strict may object, that our passions incline us to evil as well as good, which betray us  
into

into sin and danger, and therefore ought to be rooted out. Indeed, it must be owned, that all our sins proceed from some misguided passion; but God made us subject to those passions for the exercise of our religion, that by a right management of ourselves, between our vicious inclinations to chuse the evil, and our religious endeavours to pursue the good, we might try our obedience, and recommend our virtue. Did we lie under a natural necessity of doing good, what honour would our good works bring to God? And if we had no temptation to evil, what praise would the avoiding it bring to ourselves? The difficulty and danger of the enterprize is what makes it honourable; for without opposition, there can be no conquest. But it may be said, that our passions make us more liable to evil, than to good; and more likely to be conquered, than to conquer. And yet this is no argument, for our passions to be rooted out, since we find it recorded in scripture, that the best men have been subject to the greatest failings, the sense of which has made them the greater saints. No man was more exemplary in his virtue, than David, and none more notorious in his vice. No man more glorious in his undertakings than St. Peter, and none more shameful in his falls. And as the excellencies of these men have done more honour to God, and service to the church, than their failings; therefore we ought not to extripate our passions, and so destroy the good and evil together.

To this may be objected, that we deserve to be punished for the evil, but not to be rewarded for the good; and as our passions occasion both, were they discarded it would be better for us. To which I answer, that God in the judgment which he passes on men, will no doubt make allowance for their different constitutions. He knows whereof we are made, and that every man's constitution inclines him

strongly to some one passion or other. And if we think that he expects the same from all persons, this would be to make him act arbitrarily by us, and not according to our ability. For instance, the scripture does not tell us, that God expects the same temper of mind, the same evenness and steadiness of temper, from a sanguine man, as he does from the cold and flegmatic; or, that he requires the same fervent zeal, and ardour of devotion, from the flegmatic, as he does from the warm and sanguine. Tho' both are obliged to struggle with their infirmities, yet nature will be nature still, and fall we shall sometimes. And we cannot but admire the excellency of the gospel above all other religions, for being so exactly calculated to the nature and abilities of men; requiring nothing of us, as necessary to salvation, but what we are able to perform. It gives us the best encouragement to be virtuous, and yet does not condemn us for every vice; it shews us the true way to subdue our passions, and then offers us a pardon for those we could not overcome.

Indeed, our Saviour's coming upon earth and dying for us, plainly intimates, that there are vicious principles within us, which cannot be subdued; for had we not lain under a moral impossibility of avoiding sin, we needed not so extraordinary a redemption. And after the gospel was preached on earth, how many frailties of the apostles do we find recorded? Frailties of men inspired by the Holy Ghost; frailties of those very men, who are proposed to us as most eminent examples of piety and religion. How many frailties has St. Peter recorded of himself, in St. Mark's gospel? How many more do we read, of him and his brethren, in the acts of the apostles? How hot was the contest between him and St. Paul, who withstood him to the face? How sharp was the dispute between St. Paul and

and Barnabas? In my text, we find them both promoting the honour of God like friends, and modestly declaring, they were subject to passions like other men; which they soon after verified, being so angry with each other, that they parted. And why do these things stand upon perpetual record in God's book, by the direction of the Holy Spirit, but for our notice, and to inform us, that there is nothing perfect upon earth; That they who have the most grace, will still retain a taint of their nature; That tho' our virtue be ever so strongly guarded, yet some passion or other will frequently creep in.

From hence we may learn, not to cast off our trust in God, nor yet be discouraged from performing the duties of religion, tho' our passions should sometimes break in upon us; for this they did on the apostles themselves. And if we could be but men of like virtues, we need not be uneasy that we are of like passions with them. We are also to take care that we do not condemn other men for passions, tho' they are not the same to which we are subject. For we are men of like passions with them, if not the same; and ought to judge favourably of their failings, as we hope God will of ours.

Another instruction we may learn from these words, is, that it is not for the reputation of our religion, to dissemble, or deny those passions we are possessed of, tho' we could thereby gain honour to ourselves. The apostles Paul and Barnabas, having wrought a miraculous cure upon an impotent man at Lystra, the people concluded they were Gods, and were preparing sacrifices for them. Had the apostles been ambitiously inclined, they had a fair opportunity to be deified. But they not only modestly and zealously disclaimed, the title of God, but proclaimed their own failings; "we also  
"are men of like passions with yourselves." Hence may those who affect to be esteemed godly men,

without sin or passion receive very proper instruction; they may here learn, that virtue and humility, modesty and piety, must always go together. Certainly there is no sin so odious as hypocrisy; no passion so dangerous, as when concealed. And yet was the dishonour, danger, and disgrace of hypocrisy, only to ourselves, it would not be so criminal. But it reflects upon religion also, and makes it despicable in the sight of men, by which God is dishonoured.

We are too apt to be puffed up with pride; God has therefore instituted a holy religion, on purpose to humble us, to shew us the vileness of our nature, to convince us of the malignity of our sins, that we may give God the glory, and take shame unto ourselves.

Our passions are a demonstration that we are men. For which reason God has inseparably annexed them to our nature, and made them a necessary condition of our mortality; and there is no living in this world without them. A religion that does open violence to our nature, can never gain credit in the world, or be thought to come from God, who gave us life and being. To bid a man throw off all his passions, never to be angry, or sorry, or afraid, is a command that never came from God. Indeed, he has given us some restraining precepts, as not to "be angry unto sin; not to be sorrowful as men without hope; not to be afraid where no fear is." But absolutely to renounce these passions, is more than God commands, because it is more than man can do; nay, more than our Saviour did. In truth, whoever pretends to be void of passion, must be either more, or less than man. But for us, who are really subject to passions, to conceal them, that we may be thought like Gods, is the only way to make us proud and arrogant, crafty and malicious. The sum of all is  
this;

this ; God has put passions into our nature, for several useful ends ; but as the best things in nature are liable to be abused, so are our passions. We must therefore endeavour to correct and keep them under ; but to extirpate them is impossible, and to conceal them dangerous.

Having thus seen that our passions cannot be rooted out, and ought not to be disguised, we are next to consider, how they may be so managed, as to be serviceable to religion. And if we would have our passions useful to us, we must take care, that they be well regulated, subdued, and governed ; or otherwise they will be of no service to us. And the best way to do this, will be seriously to reflect on the passions we are guilty of, and consider the many inconveniencies, which the excess of them expose us to. How uneasy and vexatious they are to ourselves, how reproachful and hateful to others ! how they debar us from the use of our reason, silence all the precepts of religion, run us headlong upon all kind of dangers, and so furiously assault us, as scarce to leave us the command of our senses ! Surely this is enough to make us afraid and ashamed of being blindly or madly led by them. And yet they are generally raised about trifles, or meer bubbles ; it is these we pursue with so much eagerness and affection. And is it not surprizing, to see a man restless and fretful, impatient and clamorous, for such trifling things ; to be almost as zealously solicitous, and as really concerned for them, as if his life was at stake ? Nay, were they of much greater value, it cannot excuse us, for so vehement a pursuit, so hot a contention. Tho' it be the honour of God, and the interest of religion, that we are contending for, yet even here, by an imprudent management of our passions, we may prejudice a good cause. For certainly, without moderation, we can neither do honour to

God, nor service to religion. A zeal for truth must be expressed, by such passion, as is consistent with meekness, gentleness and peace. In a word, whatever the occasion be, we must never suffer the passion to overpower our reason, but our business is, so to temper and manage it, as to keep it under. And when our passions are thus subdued, they are fit to be employed in the service of God, and may be useful to us in the exercises of religion: which brings me to consider, how our passions should be employed.

The passions of men are a sort of evil spirit within us, that is too easily raised, and may do much hurt, if we do not find them some proper objects to work upon; and these are no where to be had, but in religion. Here our passions may be of excellent use; either to promote our virtue, or encrease our devotion. Certain it is, that when our passions are well regulated and reformed, they are great assistances and encouragements to virtue. Our reason is a cold heavy principle, that slowly moves us to our work; but passion puts an eagerness into our desires, warmth into our prosecutions, and makes business go chearfully and vigorously on. Whenever therefore we find ourselves passionately engaged in the pursuit of our temporal affairs, in the advancing of our wealth, or promoting our pleasure; let us consider, how much greater work we have to do, and turn our heat and zeal that way, and then we shall have cause to thank God, for giving us these passions to assist us.

Our reason has little to do, in forming our minds, and bringing us to a virtuous, religious life; but it is our passions and affections must do this; for till they begin to move, our reason is like a chariot without wheels, that can never perform the journey. Our reason has not much to learn,  
and

and is easily taught; only our passions are obstinate, our affections perverse, and our wills crooked, so that we find it harder to be persuaded, than informed. But when once we have got our passions at command, all obstacles are removed, the difficulty of our work is over, and then there is no virtue, that we may not with ease attain.

As our virtue, so our devotion is much indebted to our passions; for a true religious zeal towards God, is only the kind workings of a pious and warm affection. There are in religion such substantial motives to piety, as are enough to make every man devout. As a passionate man's zeal is the soonest kindled, so the same warmth of constitution, that inclines him to be intemperate, may, if well managed, excite him to be devout; and therefore we have no reason to be ashamed or afraid of those passions which God has implanted in our nature; since we find by pleasing experience, that they may become the most excellent means of grace. They may, if we rightly manage them, prove encouragements to our virtue, and helps to our devotion; they may tend to promote our meekness, gentleness, goodness, and all the fruits of the spirit. What has been said of our passions in general, I will now illustrate by a few particulars. And, First,

With respect to anger. This passion bears an ill name, and is frequently a troublesome companion, by engaging us in quarrels and disputes, so that one would think, we might be better without it. And yet even this passion made be made of excellent use to us, not only by securing our persons from such indignities, as may be unreasonably offered us; but as a guard and sentinel to our virtue. It may caution us not to be surprized by vice, nor tempted to approve of those things which are pernicious to us. Nay, sometimes our anger turns

upon ourselves, and grows warm against our bosom sin: so that by the help of this passion, we may cast out an evil spirit, when our reason alone could not effect it. What has been said of anger, may in part be applied to hatred, disdain, and pride; passions which occasion much evil, and yet by prudent management, may be turned to a religious use, and do as much service. But envy, malice, and detraction can be of no good use; they being pure vice, without any mixture of virtue.

Another troublesome companion to man, is fear; a treacherous passion, appointed to give us fair warning of dangers, and yet it often needlessly disturbs us by false alarms, and representing dangers nearer and greater than they really are. It awakens our jealousy, increases our apprehensions, and anticipates our pain, so that one might almost think it might be well spared. And yet would we but set this passion right, and apply it to its proper object, there is not a more noble, a more useful principle in our nature. A Heathen poet said it was the foundation of all religion. The divine psalmist says, it is "the beginning of wisdom." And those men whose constitution inclines them to be fearful, have a great advantage on this account. For if we are afraid of a little transient pain, a touch of the lancet, or prick of the sword, how much more tenderly ought we to be affected, with the apprehensions of eternal death, and endless torments? If we are afraid of disobliging a man, because he may hurt us; how much more shall we stand in awe of God, who is ever present with us, and by the word of his mouth can speak us dead? If we are so apt to be terrified with every little accident, from the wind, the earthquake, and the fire; how can we but be astonished at the thoughts of that day, when the earth itself shall fall from under us, "and the heavens shall melt with fervent heat." If we

we are so subject to be fearful, let us be afraid of these things, and then our fear will prove our best preservative. If we set the passions in the right way, they may be made at all times useful and serviceable to us.

Lastly, I shall mention but one passion more, and that is pity. A passion that seems to be implanted in us, for the sake of that most excellent Christian duty, charity. A passion, that makes us partake of the griefs, fears and pains of other men, and is therefore properly called compassion. It was the passion of pity, which occasioned the apostles declaration in the text ; it being the cure of a poor impotent man, that made them pass for Gods ; and which forced them to declare, they were subject to passions like other men. It must be allowed, that this was the most natural error, that idolators could be subject to ; for there is nothing so apt to gain us true veneration and esteem, as the relieving the wants of others, and making their misfortunes our own. In nothing shall we appear so much like God, as by having a provident care, a tender concern for the good of his creatures. This is so kind, so humane, so generous a passion, and so religious a duty ; that it is difficult to say, whether it be most nearly allied to nature or to grace. It is in truth the top and perfection of both. It is that love which leads to all the graces of the gospel, and brings us to joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, and whatever is valuable, and praise-worthy.

Love is the tenderest affection of the human soul, the first fruits of the spirit ; therefore let us shew our love in the most natural, the most religious way ; and that is by our pity. There are many poor, many indigent persons among us, that stand in need of our relief ; and tho' we cannot assist them in that miraculous manner the apostles did ; yet silver and gold we have, and should also have

have pity and compassion, and let us give of what we have. Those who please and magnify themselves for their good temper, and think to pass for Gods, by being void of passion, will act according to their opinion; but God grant that we may shew ourselves to be men, by employing our passions agreeably to reason, as the apostles did, and then they will tend to the honour of God, and the benefit of mankind. I will now propose some means, fit and proper to be used by us, to have our passions under rule and government.

There is a great difference between those who have been long subject to the power of unruly lusts and passions, and such as have rather evil inclinations than sinful habits to overcome; because it is more difficult to reform the former than the latter; the thought of which should prevail on all young persons, to curb and restrain their affections betimes. And that our passions and lusts may not get the dominion over it, we must be careful to oppose and check them at first, before they become inordinate. We must be so vigilant as timely to rebuke and stifle all malicious, revengeful, proud, unclean, covetous or repining thoughts, at their first starting up in our minds; for we must not play with, and encourage any corrupt and impure imaginations, or wicked thoughts. When we cherish in our hearts covetous, lustful, or envious inclinations, we put our passions into a ferment, and so by degrees they rise to that height as to get the mastery of us, and then we are hurried into all kinds of sin and misery. So dangerous are such beginnings as these, that the devil, when he discovers them in us, takes advantage thereof, and brings us at last to commit the greatest wickedness, and the vilest crimes, without fear or shame.

We must therefore carefully resist the first motions and inclinations to sin, lest they break out into  
inordinate

inordinate unruly passions; for it will be much easier to do this at first, than when they have gained power over us. This advice is very proper for those whose passions are grown headstrong, and have long held them in captivity. Let such strive to avoid the temptations to his lusts, whatever it be, and oppose and weaken the first attacks, thereby to prevent the ill effects that might otherwise ensue. A little advantage is not inconsiderable and to be despised. A person who hath been long contracting an evil habit, must be content to mend by degrees; and by gradually gaining ground, he will at last obtain a compleat conquest over himself. Men of furious and choleric tempers, by constant resolution, by suddenly rebuking themselves after they have been surprized, and continuing in this good way, have at length attained a spirit of meekness and patience. And if once we gain a rectitude of temper, the government of our passions will not be difficult. In order to this we must be renewed in the spirit of our mind. A meek spirited man is not apt to break out into fury, nor a patient spirit to fall into despair, nor a philosopher of an even temper, to be extravagantly raised or depressed at prosperity or adversity. The chief difficulty lies in reforming the disposition of our souls, and renewing the inner man. It is not so hard for a bad man to abstain from one single act of sin, or to do a thing that is good, as to be converted from an evil temper, which leads him to vice, and renders him averse to virtue. Thus it is easier for a miser to give an alms upon occasion, than to be cured of that covetousness, which is ever a root of injustice and uncharitableness. It is easier for a choleric person to curb and suppress his passion and wrath now and then, than totally to subdue that hastiness of spirit, which upon any provocation prompts him to anger. It is easier for a licentious voluptuary to deny him-

self

self sometimes a vicious pleasure, than quite to throw off the power of temptation. But however difficult this may be, it must be done. We must cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of spirit, and be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

We must not forget to make our prayers to God, that he who giveth wisdom liberally and upbraideth not, would teach us the wisdom of governing our passions, and by the aid of his Holy Spirit, give us the victory over them; that he would create in us a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us, and sanctify us throughout. When an unruly passion is subdued, and a bad temper corrected, we have as it were obtained a new nature, and this is to be born anew, or of God. For these great blessings we must depend upon God, by daily and fervent prayer. And all our vigilance and pains with ourselves, and our earnest intreaties at the throne of grace, we must particularly apply against that sin which doth so easily beset us, against that passion we have least under command; for that which exposeth us to the first mischief, requires the greatest care and strength to subdue it. We must labour to set nature right where most crooked: this will give us rule over all our passions, because the government of the rest will more easily follow. And if we once keep our ground, we shall maintain the inward quiet and security of our minds, and being freed from the bondage of sin, we shall enjoy the happy liberty of the children of God.

# Discourse LXXXIII. Dr. Bar- row.

## On the GOVERNMENT of the TONGUE.

James iii. 2.

If any man offend not in word, he is a perfect man.

**T**HIS sentence the apostle places at the head of a discourse concerning the tongue, that double engine of good and evil ; wherein is represented the excellent benefits and great mischiefs it is apt to produce ; how it is both a sweet instrument of all goodness, and a sharp weapon of all iniquity ; and this is illustrated by comparisons very fit and pertinent. By not offending in word, is to be understood such a constant restraint, and careful government of our tongue, as not to transgress the rules prescribed by reason, or the law of God : not to suffer it to pervert the natural ends and proper uses for which it was framed ; such as the promoting God's glory, our neighbour's benefit, and our own true welfare. By a perfect man is meant, a person accomplished and compleat in goodness, one of singular worth and integrity, a brave and excellent man, who, in the course of his life, is free from all notorious defects, and heinous faults ; like David, " fulfilling all God's will, and having " respect to all his commandments." Thus was Noah, Abraham, and Job perfect. This is the notion of perfection in holy scripture. Not an absolute exemption from all blame in life, which is not consistent with the nature and state of man here,  
where

where none with truth and modesty can say, "I am pure from sin;" but every man must confess with Job, "If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me; if I say I am perfect, it shall prove me perverse." For "there is not a just man upon earth, that doth good and sinneth not." "In many things we offend all." There is no man absolutely perfect. But if any man offend not in word, and constantly governs his tongue well, that man is perfect; perfect in such kind and degree as human frailty admits; so eminently good, as that he may be reasonably presumed blameless in the course of his practice. So that the true meaning of the word is, that a constant government of our speech, agreeably to right reason, is a clear demonstration and convincing argument of a sincere and solid goodness. The truth of which will more fully appear, from the following considerations.

As that a right government of our speech is a strong evidence of a good, pure, and calm mind; free from vicious desires, disorderly passions, and dishonest intentions. For he, whose thoughts are commonly wicked, can never be innocently silent, nor his discourse be good and profitable. It is no less difficult to conceal fire, check lightning, and confine a whirlwind, than to keep within due bounds, the exorbitant motions of a soul, that hath lost the command of reason. Wrath burning in the breast, will have vent by the mouth; inward lust will express itself in lewd discourse. If the fountain is polluted, the streams cannot be expected clear or wholesome: "From the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things." Indeed, sometimes fair words, and a reserved temper, may conceal a wicked heart. Shame, fear, or crafty designs may often

often repress the declaration of evil thoughts and purposes. But such fits of dissimulation last not long. The intestine jars between those natural friends, the heart and tongue, cannot be perpetual, or very durable. Speech is generally deemed the truest character of the mind, and surest test of inward worth ; as disclosing the hidden man of the heart, opening the closets of the breast, bringing the dark recesses of the soul into clear light, rendering our thoughts visible, and our intentions known. For in order to form a certain judgment of the merit and ability of another, we seldom desire more than the opportunity of hearing him discourse for a little time. Such a strict affinity and connexion do all men suppose between thoughts and words.

That the use of speech hath an influence on all our actions, may be inferred from hence, that whoever governs it prudently, does also for the generality wisely order his whole life. Speech is, indeed, the rudder that steers human affairs, the spring that puts in motion the wheel of action ; the hands, feet, all the members and senses act by its direction and impulse. Our most considerable affairs are managed and conducted meerly by words ; by them princes rule their subjects, generals command their armies, senators deliberate and debate about the greatest matters of state ; by them advocates plead causes, and judges decide them ; divines perform their offices ; and administer their instructions ; merchants carry on trade and make bargains. Whatever is done in the court, or the hall, in the church, or at the exchange, in the school, or shop, is performed solely by the tongue. It is the force of this little machine, that turns about the human world, that creates and transacts such multiplicity of business. By it we communicate our secret conceptions, we instruct and advise one another, we consult what is fit to be done, we con-

t-est

test about right, and dispute for truth. The whole business of conversation, of commerce, of government, and administration of justice, of learning and religion is thereby managed. Our recreations and diversions, which fill up the spaces of time, and the wide intervals of business, chiefly consist in the use of speech. The province of which is so extensive and universal, being either immediately the matter, or by consequence the source of all our actions, that he who constantly governs it with wisdom and prudence, may justly be esteemed to live excellently well. Indeed,

To govern the tongue rightly, is exceeding difficult, requiring not only great goodness, judgment, and art, but much vigilance and circumspection, the doing whereof is an instance of great virtue. For since the tongue is a loose and nimble engine, which the least breath of thought stirs and moves any way, it cannot but demand much attention to keep it at rest, or in a right motion. And since numberless swarms of things are always roving in the fancy, and from thence incessantly obtruding themselves upon the tongue; much application of mind, and great judgment are requisite to select what are good, and reject all that is bad and improper to be spoken. Since temptations continually occur, provoking or alluring us to offend herein, every object we behold, every company we are engaged in, every accident befalling us, do continually suggest somewhat tending thereto. The condition of our neighbour, if high, moving us to flatter; if low, to insult: our own fortune, if prosperous, elating; if adverse dejecting us; any action exciting fond admiration, if pleasing; harsh censure, if disagreeable. Since then we are thus liable to speak amiss, it requires the utmost skill and caution, great industry and resolution, to manage it with prudence and discretion. For which purpose we ought to imitate

imitate the earnest and watchful care of the holy Psalmist; "I have (says he) purposed that my mouth should not offend. I said I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue." Thus to maintain a constant guard over our heart and ways; thus prudently to curb and govern our speech, must assuredly be the mark of a very good person. Because

There are more advantages of privacy, and fewer restraints attending irregular speech, than any bad action. A man can speak ill with less inward regret and dissatisfaction, and with less outward hazard, than he can act ill. Bad actions require time to observe and consider, as well as to perform them; but ill words are subtle and transient, often uttered rashly without thought before, or reflection afterwards. Bad actions have usually visible effects immediately consequent on them, but words operate insensibly, and at a distance. There are also frequent occasions of speaking ill on presumption of secrecy, which is often entertained with complacency and applause. The vile abuses of speech, such as blasphemy, treason, and slander may be safely whispered into ears, which will receive them with pleasure and commendation; and in most cases, bad language is neither strictly prohibited, nor severely punished by human laws, as is an evil action, by which means the guilt of this sin seems little or none; and persons who practise it, do often pass for innocent, in the opinion of themselves and others. Men generally think their tongue is free, and that any words may be dispensed with; "our lips are our own, who is lord over us?" So that considering how many encouragements there are to offend herein, and how few restraints we have to deter us therefrom; he that carefully governs his tongue, according to the rules of duty and reason, may justly be reputed a very good man. And,

As most of the enormities, mischiefs and troubles whereby the souls of men are defiled, the minds discomposed, and their lives disquieted, are the effects of ill governed speech ; that being what chiefly perverts justice, sows dissensions, raises passions and animosities, embroils the world with factions and seditions, makes men wrong and abuse, deceive and seduce, defame and disgrace one another ; whereby innumerable vexations and disturbances arise among men : He therefore that so well governs his speech, as to preserve himself from the guilt and inconveniences of all such evils, must necessarily be esteemed a very wise and happy, a very good and worthy person.

A tongue so prudently managed, cannot fail of producing much honour to God, great benefit and comfort to ourselves and neighbours. Such discourse will be sweet and pleasant, solid and useful ; tending to endear conversation, to cement good society, to promote love, to instruct and edify, cheer and comfort one another. Such a "tongue is health, his mouth is a well and tree of life, his lips disseminate knowledge ; others shall be satisfied with good, by the fruit of his mouth." These are the effects of innocent, sober, and prudent discourse, and where found, are a high commendation of the excellent virtue of the person ; and the rarity of the practice is a considerable argument in favour of the excellency and worth of the virtue : for we may observe many will commit horrible outrages with their tongue, who in other respects are very harmless ; we frequently see persons very punctual in their dealings, who in their language are very unjust, robbing their neighbour of his reputation by envious detraction and malicious censure. There are many who abhor shedding a man's blood, yet without scruple or remorse will by calumnious tales and virulent reproaches assassinate his credit, and murder

der his good name, though, perhaps, dearer to him than his life. There are such, as in all parts of morality are rigorously exact, yet their tongue shall be often incontinent, envious and dissolute; even mighty pretenders to godliness, and zealous practisers of devotion, cannot forbear speaking things repugnant to God's laws, and prejudicial to his honour. Thus in most instances of good life, the government of the tongue is least regarded, which evidently proves the great excellency of the virtue.

And as it is certainly our duty to aim at perfection, to endeavour the attainment of integrity in heart and life; so should we more especially labour to govern our tongue, and guide it with discretion. To which end we ought well to consider and understand the nature of those several offences to which speech is liable, with the evil and inconvenience thereof, that we may not dare to transgress. These are many and various, equal in number to our thoughts and actions. Some are committed against God and religion; others against our neighbour, violating justice, charity, or peace; others against ourselves, infringing sobriety, discretion, or modesty; and some are of a more general nature, inconsistent with all parts of our duty. In most, if not all offences of speech, there is a complication of impiety, iniquity, and imprudence, respecting God, our neighbour, or ourselves; and directly contrary to one of those capital virtues, piety, charity, and sobriety, to which all our duty is reducible. But at present I shall confine the remainder of my discourse, to such offences of the tongue, as are committed against piety. These are,

Speaking blasphemously against God, or reproachfully of religion, with intent to subvert mens faith in God, and impair their reverence of him. There are those who set " their mouth against the heavens,

“ who exalt their voice against the holy one of Israel, the God of Gods.” This of all impieties is the most enormous, expressing enmity towards God, and proclaiming war against heaven; and he that does it, is guilty of great folly and wickedness, for either he believes or distrusts the existence of God, and the truth of religion. If he believes them, is it not desperate madness, advisedly to draw down heaven’s vengeance on his head, by opposing the irresistible power, and provoking the inflexible justice of God? What abominable folly and baseness is it, thus to abuse God’s immense goodness and mercy, offering such indignity to the author of his being, and free donor of all he enjoys? What monstrous stupidity and perverseness is it thus wilfully to defy his own welfare, to forfeit all happiness, and precipitately plunge himself into a double hell, that of bitter remorse here, and of endless pain hereafter? But if he that reproaches God and religion, does it from a distrust of both, such an one is equally inexcusable; because he acts against legions of cogent arguments and clear testimonies, against the voice of nature, and faith of history, against the settled judgment of wise and sober persons, who have studied and considered the point; against the current tradition of all ages, and general consent of mankind; and whoever can do all this, proves himself guilty of the greatest indiscretion and arrogance. Nay, it is apparently insolent, in that it not only affronts and contradicts the common sentiments of mankind, but abuses the chief objects of their highest respect and affection, care and concern; namely, God and religion. And who can suffer to have his God, his best friend and benefactor, his great patron and sovereign, defamed and vilified? Who can patiently bear to have that object slighted or despised; in whom he places his greatest hopes and supreme felicity? Besides, that

a due reverence of God, and a conscientious regard to religion, most evidently tends to produce great benefits to mankind; it being the main supports of common honesty and sobriety, the sole restraints to keep men from fraud and violence, brutish lusts and passions. For religion apparently prescribes the best rules, and imposes the strongest engagements to perform those actions, which will most secure and promote the public and private happiness of mankind. It was therefore well observed by Cicero, that "piety being removed, justice could not subsist, no faith could be secured, no society could be preserved among men;" it being in vain to imagine, that without a religious conscience, any one will be a good subject, a true friend, or an honest man. Since then the credit of religion is so very beneficial and useful to mankind, he must be exceedingly wicked and malicious, who by profane discourse shall endeavour to supplant or shake it. He that speaks against God or providence, hates goodness, and would not have it prevail in the hearts of men. He that reviles religion, abhors virtue, and would not have it practised in the world. Such therefore are not to be considered as simple embracers of error, but as utter enemies to the public good. For indeed, was any man sure that religion was only devised by men, as a supplemental aid to reason and power; that it was merely an implement of policy, to make people loyal to their prince, upright in their dealing, sober in their conversation, moderate in their passions, and virtuous in all their actions; yet even then it would be base and inhuman, to endeavour to defeat such excellent designs and purposes. He that would attempt it, deserves to be reputed an enemy to the welfare of mankind, and ought to be treated as a pestilent disturber of the world.

Another offence against piety, is to speak loosely and wantonly, especially to make holy things mat-

ter of sport and mockery, to play and trifle with them. We should not without great awe and reverence, think of the great and glorious majesty of heaven, much less presume to mention his name, his word, his institutions, any thing that immediately concerns him, without the profoundest regard and veneration. "There not being a word in our tongue, but thou, O Lord, knowest it all together." God's favour and mercy, everlasting bliss and glory, the treasures and joys of heaven, the miseries of hell torments are not jesting matter. It infinitely therefore concerns us, to think and speak of such divine subjects, with great seriousness and sober attention. And as for things sacred, they were instituted by God, in order to compose our hearts, and settle our affections in a serious frame; to raise inward satisfaction, and joys purely spiritual; to exercise our solemn thoughts, and employ our tongue on the best subjects and discourses. Our speech therefore about them, should be profitable, "for the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."

Another great offence against piety, is rash and vain swearing in common discourse. A crime that strangely prevails in the world, tho' esteemed by many a graceful quality, a mark of fine breeding. Who with some is thought so compleat a gentleman, as he that hath the skill and confidence to adorn every sentence with an oath or curse, and making bold at every turn, to challenge the Almighty to damn and destroy him? And yet this vile practice of swearing is most expressly and strictly prohibited. "I say unto you, swear not at all. Above all things my brethren, swear not---lest you enter into condemnation." How monstrously wicked then is it, for any man to break laws so plain and severe; that it should pass for not only a tolerable but even commendable practice, to violate so manifest and im-  
 portant

portant a duty? What greater affront can be offered to our religion, and to all that is sacred? The very light of nature condemns this practice, and even Heathens have disclaimed against it, as derogatory to the reverence of the deity, and unsuitable to the gravity of a wise man. It is prejudicial to human society; in regard the decision of right, the security of government, and the preservation of peace, much depend on the awe and solemnity of oaths. They are the surest bonds by which the consciences of men are tied to the attestation of truth, and observance of faith. But if by common and careless use, they are rendered cheap and vile, then little serious truth can be expected from them, either at the bar, or in the church. For who will regard the testimony of God, or dread his judgment at one time and place, that is at other times contemning and abusing his sacred name and authority? This evil practice also greatly lessens the credit of him that uses it, as it renders the truth of what he says liable to be suspected. For what can engage him to speak truly, who swears vainly? We have great reason to distrust him, who thinks his own bare affirmation not to deserve belief. For if his word is enough, why does he back it with such asseverations? why unprovoked calls he God to witness, if he supposes his own honesty sufficient to assure the truth of what he says?

And this offence is more particularly aggravated by considering, that it hath no temptation alluring to it, nor yet brings any advantage with it, and may easily be avoided or corrected; there being no natural inclination nor strong appetite exciting us thereto. It gratifies no sense, affords no profit, procures no honour. The sound of it is not melodious but horrid to the ears. Therefore of all sinners, the swearer is apparently the most foolish, and makes the worst bargain; for he sins gratis,

and sells his soul for nothing. An epicure hath some reason to alledge, an extortioner is a man of wisdom in comparison of him; for they enjoy some pleasure, or acquire some gain here, in lieu of their salvation hereafter. But the common swearer offends heaven, and abandons happiness, he knows not why, or for what. He hath not so much as the common plea of human infirmity to excuse him; he cannot say he was induced thereto by any one temptation. Besides, we should consider, that as ourselves, all our members and powers were chiefly designed and framed, to serve and glorify our maker; (to do which is the greatest perfection, and noblest privilege of our nature) so our speaking faculty, the tongue, was given us to declare our admiration and reverence of him, to express our love and gratitude towards him, to profess our trust and confidence in him, to celebrate his praises, to acknowledge his benefits, and to promote his honour and service. This is the most proper, worthy and due use of our tongue, for which it was created, to which it is dedicated, and is therefore often called our glory, and the best member we have. It is that whereby we excel all creatures here below, whereby we consort with the blessed angels above, in offering praise to our creator. Therefore to use it in any impious discourse, or with it to profane God's holy name, to violate his laws, to unhalow his sacred ordinance, to offer dishonour and indignity to him, is a most unnatural abuse, a vile ingratitude to him. I shall only add, that since the faculty of speech was given us, to praise our maker, to benefit our neighbour, to be an instrument of mutual assistance, friendly commerce, and pleasant conversation; for the instructing, advising and comforting one another; let us therefore be careful not to pervert and abuse

it, to the injury or disgrace of God, or of our neighbour, which is both irrational and unnatural.

To conclude; our discourse should be decent, grave, and venerable, suitable to the profession of Christians. Gravity and modesty are the fences of piety, which being once removed, sin will easily attempt to seduce us. But as we should not be demure, so we ought not to be impudent; as we may be free, so we should not be vain; as we ought to be friendly complaisant, so we should avoid all levity. And if without injuring others, or derogating from ourselves, we can be facetious; if we can innocently and conveniently use witty jests, we may sometimes do it; so as we observe St. Paul's advice, "to beware of foolish talking and jesting, which are not convenient."

# Discourse LXXXIV. Abp. *Tillotson*.

Against EVIL SPEAKING.

Titus iii. 2.

To speak evil of no man.

**G**ENERAL persuasions to repentance and a good life, and invectives against sin and wickedness at large, are certainly of good use to recommend religion and virtue, and to expose the deformity and danger of a vicious course. But if we would effectually reform men, we must examine the great and common disorders of their lives, and represent their faults so clearly as may demonstrate the evil and danger of them, in order to effect a cure. To this end, I have made choice of a common reigning vice of the age, "calumny and evil speaking," for the subject of my present discourse. I shall consider the nature of this vice, "to speak evil of no man;" that is, not to defame, slander, nor hurt the reputation of any man.

This vice consists in speaking any thing which tends to the disparagement, reproach, or lessening of the reputation and good name of others, and this whether what is said be true or not. If false and we know it, then it is calumny; if we take it on the report of others, it is slander. If we know the thing true, yet it tends to defame and prejudice our neighbour's reputation; and to say the evil of others which is true, without good reason, is a great fault, and contrary to that charity and goodness which Christianity requires. If we are the  
first

first authors of an ill report, or relate it from others, still it is evil speaking, because the person either way is equally defamed. To speak evil of a man to his face, though it seems the most generous way, yet it is a great fault, and what we call reviling; to say it behind his back is more mean and base, and what is properly called slander, or backbiting; but whether it be done directly, and in express terms, or more obscurely, and by way of insinuation, yet it is equally criminal, if the person be actually defamed; and many times the deepest wounds are given by smooth and artificial ways of slander. So that it matters not in what manner slander is dressed up; for if it tends to defame, and diminish a man's reputation, it is the sin here forbidden by the apostle, to "speak evil of no man."

But it will be proper to consider the extent, bounds and limits of this prohibition, "to speak evil of no man;" and which is not to be understood absolutely, as forbidding us to say any thing bad of others, this being in many cases a reasonable and necessary duty; such as the preventing some great evil, or procuring some considerable good to ourselves, or others. For instance, it is not only lawful and commendable, but many times our duty to speak evil of others, in order to the amendment of the person guilty thereof; in such a case, we may privately tell another his faults, or reveal them to one who is more fit and proper to reprove him. This, so far from being a breach of charity, is one of the best testimonies of it. For, perhaps, the party is innocent of what hath been reported of him, and then it is kind to give him an opportunity of vindicating himself; or if guilty, being privately and prudently told of it, he may reform: in this case it is most adviseable to reveal men's faults; admonish a friend (says the son of Sirach) "it may be he hath not done it; and if he have,  
 " that

“ that he do it no more ; admonish a friend, it  
 “ may be he hath not said it ; and if he have, that  
 “ he speak it not again ; admonish a friend, for  
 “ many times it is a slander, and believe not every  
 “ tale.” But then we must do this out of kind-  
 ness, and free from passion ; we must not reproach  
 and revile men, under a pretence of reprov-  
 ing and reforming them, and tell them their faults more  
 to shew our authority, than our charity. It requires  
 much address and gentle application so to reprove,  
 as not to irritate and exasperate the person we in-  
 tend to reform. Again, this is not only lawful,  
 but our duty, when we are legally called to bear  
 witness against another ; a good man would not be  
 an accuser, unless the public good, or the pre-  
 vention of some great evil requires it. But when  
 he is called to give such testimony, in obedience  
 to the laws, and out of reverence to his oath, so  
 far from deserving blame for so doing, it would  
 be an unpardonable fault, was he to conceal any  
 part of the truth. It is also lawful to punish the  
 faults of others in our own necessary defence. When  
 we cannot conceal another’s fault without betray-  
 ing our own innocency, no charity requires us to  
 suffer defamation, to save another man’s reputa-  
 tion ; charity begins at home ; and we ought to se-  
 cure our own good name before others. We are  
 to love our neighbour as ourselves ; so that the love  
 of ourselves is first, otherwise it could not be the  
 rule and measure of our love to our neighbour.  
 Besides these more obvious and remarkable cases,  
 this prohibition does not hinder any from observ-  
 ing in common conversation, that ill of others  
 which is already made public ; or from speaking  
 of another’s miscarriage, where no bad use will  
 be made thereof ; so as we take no delight in hear-  
 ing, or speaking evil of others. These are all the  
 usual cases that can be necessary for us to speak  
 evil

evil of other men; and which are so reasonable, that the prohibition of the apostle, to speak evil of any man, cannot justly be extended to them; and did we only in these and the like instances, speak to the prejudice of another's good name, the tongues of men would be very innocent, and the world exceeding quiet.

I will now consider the evil of this practice, both in its causes and consequences. One general cause of evil speaking, is ill-nature and cruelty of disposition. Ill-nature frequently passeth for wit, as cunning doth for wisdom, though in truth they are as far distant, as vice an virtue. There is no greater evidence of the bad temper of mankind, than the general proneness of man to this vice; men commonly incline to the censorious and uncharitable side; and exercise their wit more in satyr and censure, than in praise and panegyric. In the way of invective, invention is a plentiful, never-failing spring; this kind of wit is most easy and acceptable, greedily entertained, and greatly applauded; every man being glad to hear others abused, not considering how soon it may be his own turn. The great and serious business of most meetings and visits, after the necessary compliments are over, is to speak evil of others, and backbite the world. It is the source of conversation, and all discourse is esteemed flat and dull, which contains not reflection on somebody. For men generally love rather to hear evil of others than good, and are secretly pleased with ill reports, which they receive with greediness and delight; though still they hate those that proagate them, concluding they will do the same by themselves in other companies. This is more especially practised in matters of religion. All parties seem to think they do God service by blasting their adversaries reputation. Such indeed pretend to be Christians, and the disciples

ciples of him who taught nothing but kindness, meekness and charity; and yet with what a murderous disposition will they attack and ruin another's reputation. If they hear any good of their adversaries, how many objections will they raise, with what caution and coldness will they receive and admit it? but on the other side, every man is a good and substantial author of an ill report.

Sometimes this vice proceeds from malice, revenge and envy. Men in heat and passion do not so much consider what is true, as what is spiteful and mischievous, and will speak evil of others in revenge of some past injury; and too many are so wicked, as to invent and raise false reports on purpose to wound the reputation of others. This is a diabolical temper, the devil having his name from calumny and false accusation, and it is his nature to be always ready to foment this evil spirit among men. Again, there are too many who look with an evil eye on the good that is in others, imagining that their reputation and commendable qualities obscure, and stand in their light; and therefore endeavour to eclipse their virtues, lest they should shine too bright, and darken their own. This makes them greedily to entertain, and industriously to publish, whatever serves to that purpose, in order to raise themselves on the ruins of other men's reputation.

And as to the consequences and effects of this sin, they are very pernicious both to the slandered, and to those who slander others. To the former, it is certainly a great injury, commonly a high provocation, but always matter of grief and trouble to them. For if the evil we say of them is not true, yet the injury is great beyond imagination, and all possible reputation. And though we should endeavour afterwards to vindicate them, yet that can make but little amends; because the vindication

tion seldom reaches so far as the reproach, and few are forward to punish their defence, or receive good impressions, after ill ones are imbibed. But supposing the slander true, and that a man's reputation is deservedly stained, still it is great harm and damage to him. Besides, the injury is commonly a very high provocation, and frequently ends in dangerous and desperate quarrels; and at the best, is always matter of grief to the person defamed. And Christianity, which is the best natured institution in the world, forbids us doing those things, whereby we may grieve one another. A man's good name is a tender thing, and a wound there sinks deep into the spirit, even of a wise and good man. And the more innocent the person, the more sensible he is, of such hard usage; because he does not treat others so, nor is conscious that he deserves it himself. And as to the slanderer, the consequences of this vice are as bad or worse to him; whoever is addicted to speak evil of others, gives a bad character of himself, even to those he desires to please; who, if wise, will conclude he speaks as bad of them to others, as he does of others to them; and often revenge goes farther than words. A reproachful and slanderous speech hath cost many a man a duel, perhaps the loss of his own and another's life, besides that of his soul; and though none of these great mischiefs should happen, yet many other ways it may be very inconvenient. For no man knows in the chance of things, and the mutability of human affairs, whose kindness and good will he may want before he dies. So that did a man only consult his own quiet, he ought to refrain from evil speaking. But there is an infinitely greater danger hanging over us from God. If we allow ourselves in this evil practice, all our religion is good for nothing. So St. James expressly tells us, "if any

" man

“men among you seem to be religious, and bridles not his tongue, but deceives his own heart, that man’s religion is vain.” And St. Paul puts “slanders and revilers amongst those who shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” And our blessed Saviour hath told us, “that by our words we shall be justified and condemned.” And the wise man’s counsel is, “refrain your tongue from backbiting, for there is no word so secret that shall go for nought, and the mouth that slandereth, slayeth the soul.”

I now proceed to offer some other arguments and considerations to dissuade men from this vice. As, that the use of speech is a prerogative peculiar to man, and bestowed on him for some excellent ends and purposes. That by this faculty we might communicate our thoughts more easily to one another, and consult for our mutual comfort and benefit; not to enable us to be hurtful and injurious, but helpful and beneficial to each other. The Psalmist calls our tongue our glory, therewith we praise God and bless men; but to bless is to speak well of any, and to wish them so. We therefore pervert the use of speech, and turn our glory into shame, when we abuse this faculty to the injury and reproach of others. And not to speak ill of any is a very cheap kindness; a good word is an easy obligation, but not to speak ill requires only our silence, which costs nothing. There is no quality that recommends us more to the favour and good will of men, than to be free from this vice. Every one desires such a man’s friendship, and is apt to repose a great trust and confidence in him, and will praise him when he is dead; and next to piety towards God, and righteousness to men, nothing is esteemed more commendable, than that he was rarely heard to speak ill of any. It was a singular character of a Roman gentleman,  
that

that he “knew not what it was to give any man an ill word.” Besides, we ought to consider how little we ourselves should like this usage. It is natural for us to desire every man’s good word, especially every good man’s; we are glad to have our faults concealed, and not to be reviled, or hardly spoken of; and with what face or reason, can we expect this from others, if we behave otherwise to them. There are few so innocent, and free from infirmities of greater faults, as not to be obnoxious to reproach. The wisest, the most virtuous, and most perfect among men, have some little vanity or affectation, which exposes them to the censure of malicious wits. We should therefore often turn our thoughts on ourselves, to see our own faults, and remember our Saviour’s words, “he that is without sin, let him cast the first stone;” and sometimes it is as great a charity, to conceal the evil we know of others, as if we relieved them in great necessity.

Lastly, I will give some rules and directions for the prevention of this great evil among men. And first, let us never speak evil of any man, but what we certainly know; whenever we positively accuse another of any crime, though in private among friends, let us speak as if it were on our oath, because God sees and hears us. This, charity, justice, and truth demand of us. He that easily credits an ill report, is near as faulty as the first inventor; for though we do not make, yet we thereby commonly propagate a lye. We should therefore never speak ill of any, on common fame, which is generally false, always uncertain; and in most cases, it is also a fault to report the evil of men which is true. Before we speak evil of any man, we should consider whether he hath not some way obliged us; if so, it will be ingratitude to speak ill of him; or if a stranger, yet possibly hereafter,

we may be acquainted with, if not related to, and obliged by him ; and how then shall we be ashamed at having thus injured him ? Again,

Let us accustom ourselves to pity the faults of others, and not to take pleasure in publishing them. This humanity requires of us, if we consider the great infirmities of human nature, how liable we ourselves are to be tempted, how severe a punishment every fault and miscarriage is to itself, and how terribly it exposeth us to the wrath of God in this world, and the next. When we hear any evil said of another, we should then speak what good we know. It is more humane and honourable to vindicate and defend, than to accuse and revile others ; or if a man is ill spoken of, it is fair and equal, that his good and bad qualities should be mentioned together, otherwise by misrepresentation an indifferent man may be made a monster. They who will observe nothing in a wise man but his over-sights and follies, and in a good man, only his failings and infirmities, may easily render a wise and good man very despicable. Should we collect all the passionate speeches, all the imprudent actions of the best man, all that he may have said and done amiss in his whole life, and present it at one view, concealing his wisdom and virtues ; in this disguise he would look like a madman. And yet if his life was fairly represented, his many and great virtues set against his failings and infirmities, he would appear to be an excellent person ; it is then but just, that with his load of faults, he should have the due praise of his real virtues.

Besides, every man ought to mind himself, his own duty and concerns. Let us but in good earnest strive to mind ourselves, and it will be work enough ; we shall then have but little time to talk of others. Let us also set a watch before the  
door

door of our lips, and not speak but upon consideration. We should use great caution and circumspection, consider well of whom, and what we are going to speak. I do not mean, that men should be stiff or sullen in company. The true art of conversation, seems to be this; an appearance of freedom and openness, without a resolute reservedness. We should endeavour to get our minds furnished with matter of discourse, concerning things useful in themselves, and not hurtful to others; a mind wise and good, will easily find matter enough for innocent conversation; such as will be acceptable without injuring others.

Having thus represented the great evil of this vice, it may be proper to say something to those who suffer by it. Are we guilty of the evil said of us? Let us reform and prevent all future occasions; and so turn the malice of our enemies to our own advantage, and thereby defeat their ill intentions. Are we innocent? we should bear it patiently, imitating the pattern of our blessed Saviour, "who when he was reviled, reviled not again, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." We ought also to consider, that though it is a misfortune to be evil spoken of, yet it is their fault who do it, and not our own. But when men speak ill of us, we should remember Plato's advice, "To live so, as that no body may believe them."

What remains, is to reflect on what hath been said, in order to practise; for all is nothing, if we do not practise what we know to be our duty. Many are so taken up with the deep points and mysteries of religion, that they never think of the common duties and offices of human life. But faith and a good life are so far from clashing with one another, that the Christian religion hath made them inseparable. True faith is necessary in order

to a good life, and a good life is the genuine product of a right belief; and therefore the one ought never to be insisted on, to the prejudice of the other. But some men, perhaps, will say, that this is meer morality. I answer, that this is scripture, and Christian morality. Nay, let me add, that no man truly believes the Christian religion, who lives in the neglect of so plain a duty, and in the practice of a sin so clearly condemned by it, as is this of evil speaking. There is scarce any black catalogue of sins in the bible, but we find this among them; "out of the heart, says our Saviour, proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, false witness, evil speaking; and the apostle ranks backbiters with fornicators, murderers, and haters of God, who shall not inherit the kingdom of God;" and which is more, they who are said to be guilty of this, and other very great vices and enormities, are noted by the apostle to be great pretenders of religion, "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." So that it is no new thing, for men to make a more than ordinary profession of Christianity, and yet at the same time live directly contrary to the precepts of that holy religion. As if any pretence to mystery, and other extraordinary attainments in the knowledge of Christ, could exempt men from obedience to his laws, and set them above the virtues of a good life. If then we believe the bible to be the word of God, we ought not to allow ourselves in the practice of a sin, than which there is scarce any that is more frequently mentioned, more severely reprov'd, and more odiously branded in that holy book.

To conclude; the sin I have been considering is plainly condemned by the word of God; the duty I have been recommending, is easy for every man to understand, and by the grace of God not hard for any one to practise, who will but resolve

to keep a guard on himself; and most reasonable for all men, especially Christians, to observe. A duty as easy, as is a resolute silence upon just occasion; as reasonable, as is prudence, justice, charity, and the preservation of peace and good will among men, can make it; and of as necessary and indispensable obligation, as the authority of God can render any thing. Let us then be persuaded to take up David's deliberate resolution, "I will  
" take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my  
" tongue; for if any man offend not in word, the  
" same is a perfect man."

## Discourse LXXXV. Bp. Gibson.

## Of TEMPERANCE, in EATING and DRINKING.

I Cor. ix. 25.

Every man that striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things ; now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible.

**T**HE apostle here alludes to those games and races that were celebrated among the Corinthians, in which the victors were rewarded with crowns and garlands ; and such were their desires after these victories and rewards, that they who strove for the prize, regulated their diet and exercise, in order to improve their strength and activity ; cheerfully submitting to the strictest abstinence, and denying themselves their most beloved pleasures. They were temperate in all things, or as the original better expresses it, they were resolutely temperate and regular, so that nothing could break their constancy and resolution ; and if they could do all this to obtain a corruptible crown, much more should we Christians willingly and cheerfully submit, to all such regulations and self-denials, as the gospel requires ; and not be tempted to any excess, when we have in our eye an incorruptible and immortal crown of glory. Though these words may be so taken, as to signify an universal government over our inordinate appetites and desires ; yet in this place, the apostle more immediately alludes to the discipline observed at the games and races, with respect to a strict regulation in

meats and drinks. But by shewing what are the proper rules and measure of a regular use of these, the great sinfulness of any irregular abuse of them, will more evidently appear both in itself, in its consequence, and effects. However, it should be observed, that the constitutions, ages, and other circumstances of men being so very different, there can be no one fixed rule or measure in this point; because the same proportion, which to one person may not be a sufficient nourishment, may to another be excess; so that what is necessary, or convenient, within the bounds of moderation, must in great measure be left to the judgment of every Christian, upon an honest and conscientious regard to the true ends of eating and drinking; namely, the preserving of life, the refreshing the spirits, the preparing ourselves for the business of that station, wherein God's providence hath placed us.

As God hath planted in every man a natural desire of life, so the first and most immediate end of eating and drinking, is for the preservation of it. But then we are always to remember, that it is life, we are to provide for, and not luxury; that the using God's creatures more liberally than nature requires or can bear, is not the way to preserve, but to shorten and destroy life; and that it is very sinful, ungrateful, and unreasonable, for us to suffer an inordinate appetite to turn those blessings to the destruction of life, which God graciously gives us, for the preservation of it. Not that we are to live by weight and measure, or were presently guilty of sin, if we exceed what will barely support life, for this is impossible; and besides, the fear of transgressing would fill the mind with perpetual scruples, and deprive us of the enjoyment of God's gifts: But the guard and caution which God requires of us, is, to keep from what will weaken and destroy life; and there is so great a difference between what will barely sup-

port, or overcharge nature, that we may by observing a due proportion, very innocently enjoy the blessings of heaven.

Another end of eating and drinking, is to repair and refresh the spirits, when wasted by thought and business. It has pleased God to clothe our souls, with bodies of a weak, heavy, and unactive constitution, which cannot endure long application of any kind, without growing faint, weary, and uneasy; and therefore he has provided meats and drinks in the nature of remedies, to revive and refresh the drooping spirits, and give new life and vigour to the whole. But then we must use them so as God intended; not to neglect or lay aside our natural strength and vigour, but only to assist nature, when faint and drooping. We must not apply these remedies but when nature requires them, either when we are hungry and thirsty, or tired with thought and labour; nor must we apply them in larger proportions, than what will fairly answer the needs and necessities of nature. But if men, out of luxury, or a desire to please the appetite, to pamper the body, or to comply with custom, and a habit of indulgence, will be continually refreshing nature, when she has no need, or overcharge her when she has; this is a direct abuse of God's blessings, clogs the spirits, instead of refreshing them, and by using nature to such needless aids, makes her lose her own strength, by craving a perpetual supply of artificial spirits; till by degrees men have no power to resist the importunity of such appetites, nor any life, any vigour left, but what they derive from those false flames, which will quickly expire, and end in a fatal stupidity. This is the most wretched state, into which man can sink; and changes the human, into a brutal nature. For what is there, that more distinguishes men from brutes, than the government of the appetite; and when that is lost, they

they are only beasts in the shape of men ; and yet so bewitching are the pleasures of taste, and so easily are men's appetites corrupted, that with a little indulgence, they will insensibly sink into this miserable condition ; and which nothing can prevent, but a serious regard to the real necessities of nature, uninfected by habit, together with stedfast resolutions, to apply these refreshments only when they are proper and needful ; and in such proportions as may make them a real refreshment, and not a burden by excess.

Another end of eating and drinking, is to fit and prepare us for the business of that station, in which God's providence hath placed us. For every man, high or low, rich or poor, hath some certain work or business to do in the world ; and by the wisdom and goodness of God, he affords us those blessings, to enable us to perform these with comfort and success ; and therefore we ought to use and apply them in such a manner, as may make them most subservient to our daily business, calling, and profession. And this we do when we make the seasons of eating and drinking, what they ought to be, only short retreats from business, and not the business of life ; when we take care in due time to return to the duties of our calling, and bring with us understanding and abilities, sufficient to pursue it : And when we unbend our minds, which is sometimes necessary, to let it be seldom, and without any mixture of excess. An enjoyment of the blessings of life within these rules, is truly a repairing of our strength and spirits, and a real furtherance in our daily business ; and being so, is a sober and temperate use of our meats and drinks, and answers the end for which God gave them. But when these refreshments are long and frequent, and consume much time that might be otherwise usefully and beneficially employed ; when men have

no other aim in invigorating the spirits, by the liberal enjoyments of God's blessings, but to spend them in mirth and jollity; when so far from designing them as preparatives to business; they cannot bear to think of returning to business, or when their excesses have left them neither sense nor reason to attend it; then is such a conduct an irregular and sinful abuse of God's creatures.

And this intolerable waste of time is greatly aggravated by the expence of treasure thereby occasioned, which in the richer sort is a defrauding of their indigent neighbours, who are to partake of their superfluous wealth; and in the poorer sort, is the robbing of their own needy families, which ought to be their daily and immediate care. And both rich and poor will find these no small aggravations of the guilt of gluttony and drunkenness, when they come to render an account at the last day. Nor will it be any excuse to say, they were unavoidably led to these excesses, by their concerns in the world; since was it not also their inclination, the business and the excess may be easily separated, where there is a sober virtuous mind. But instead of making this a pretence for their intemperance, they should be very watchful against such temptations, and earnestly pray for God's grace, to be delivered therefrom. And if we duly attend to what has been observed, we shall be able to judge, not only what are the proper bounds of sobriety and temperance, and when we exceed them; but also how great and heinous the guilt of that excess is, and how basely we abuse the blessings of God; in our forgetting their proper ends, by perverting them to purposes directly contrary thereto; in turning that to the destruction of life which God gave for the preservation of it; in our making that the means of stupifying the spirits, by which he designed to raise and refresh them; in transforming ourselves  
 into

into the state of brutes by those helps which he bestowed for the more vigorous discharge of the duties of rational creatures; and in making that the occasion of indisposing us for the business of life, which God graciously gives to support us under it. Such is the sinfulness of an inordinate use of meats and drinks in itself, as it perverts the true ends of the blessings of God, and is a shameful abuse of human nature. I shall now proceed to consider the sad effects and bad consequences of this sin.

Every sin is in some respect contrary to us. Some sins are hurtful to our bodies, others to our souls. Some waste our fortunes, others ruin our reputation. Some are very bad in their own nature, and others are attended with fatal consequences. But the sin of drunkenness is equally hurtful to soul and body; it is as bad in itself, as in its consequences; and has an ill influence on human society in general, and on those who are guilty of it in particular. Was I to describe all the ill characters of this vice, the description would be so frightful and surprizing, that one would really wonder how it is possible, that human nature should sink into so base and infamous, so hurtful and desperate a vice? For nothing so much wears the body, wastes the life and strength of man, as drunkenness. It fires the blood, weakens the stomach, and often puts a speedy end to life, by fevers, sad diseases, or other fatal accidents, to which a man is then exposed; and where a constitution is so strong as to escape this, yet the certain slow waste that these disorders bring, seldom suffer such men to live out half their days. Gouts and other infirmities are severe reckonings that they must pay for those unruly liberties they have allowed themselves. And hence arise many quarrels among men, whose passions being inflamed, while their reason is extinguished, do often end fatally. This vice is the great corrupter of young persons,  
who

who are drawn in and ensnared by the mirth and gaitly that accompany it, and from hence proceed many irregularities. The wise man elegantly describes this; "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling, who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? they that tarry long at the wine. But at the last it biteth like a serpent, it stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things." Both swearing and leudness are the ordinary effects of it. "Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of the mast." A drunken man being exposed to so many dangers, which he can neither foresee, nor prevent.

There is nothing that more wastes a man's time and fortune than drunkenness. It makes him forget God, himself, and his neighbour. The time he should employ for improving his mind, looking after his affairs, or doing good to others, is thrown away in those brutal excesses; so that, as the wise man says, "The drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty, and drowsiness (or laziness) shall clothe a man with rags." That hard drinking insensibly brings on sloth and great carelessness; by which men first neglect, and then ruin their affairs, is too notorious, to require any proof. It also makes men remiss in the concerns of their families, and wanting in all the respects due to their relations, friends, or neighbour. But the worst part of this vice appears in this, that our reason, and all the powers of our souls, fall under such disorders and unruly violences, that a man while he is under the power of wine or strong liquor, is transformed into a beast or madman. Our reason is the image of God, the glory of our nature, and the guide of our life; and God has

has plentifully supplied us with meat and drink, that by these our bodies may be rendered capable to serve our minds. But when men abuse these by excess, they not only waste and misapply the good creatures of God, but do also contradict the ends of nature, deprive themselves of the free use of their reason, and which usually produces in some, a spirit of rage, passion and cruelty; in others fullness, obstinacy and ill nature; and in most, great folly and indecency in words and actions. Hence often proceed riots and excesses, swearing and railing, fighting and murder. And all these are so many aggravations of the sin of immoderate drinking; and are such as men know by their own repeated experience, to be the usual effects of it. And thus, whereas the chief study of every wise and good man ought to be, to perfect his reason, and raise his nature to the highest pitch; a drunkard labours to debase and depress it all he possibly can.

Some men of stronger heads will perhaps think themselves unconcerned in all this, because being used to hard drinking, it has no visible effect on them. But let such seriously consider these words; "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink, that continue until night, till wine inflame them? --- And woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink." Such men are generally the plagues of the places where they live, being the instruments of corrupting all about them, tempting them to waste their strength, to ruin their families and constitutions. Thus it appears that drunkennes carries with it a complication of evils, equally destructive to soul and body. But there is another species of intemperance, that seems not so criminal, because not attended with so many fatal sym-

symptoms; I mean, those who are not quite intoxicated, and therefore think themselves free of the heavy charge that falls upon it; and yet habituate themselves to drinking of wine or strong liquor, when their bodies no way require it. Some think it a decent and hospitable way of entertaining friends to be frequently putting the glass about, without which they imagine conversation grows heavy, and that the master of the house is too frugal of his liquor. But besides the waste of time and of God's good creatures by means of such tipling, and excessive heat is raised in the blood, which insensibly impairs nature, and brings on such a habit, that they cannot refrain from drinking; and this in time corrupts their health, and enfeebles their minds.

To all these arguments against this vice, arising from the nature of our souls and bodies, there is another very strong one, which the Christian religion affords. When St. Paul reckons up the works of darkness, in which the Romans had lived while Heathens, which Christians were obliged to avoid, he begins with this; "Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness; not in strife and envy." And the same apostle, comparing the gospel to light, and heathenism to darkness, observes, "That they that be drunken are drunken in the night; but let us who are of the day be sober." And our Saviour bids us "take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life; and so that day come upon us unawares." St. Paul also reckons drunkenness among the works of the flesh, and says, "that those who do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Besides what appears from these passages of scripture, there is a more general consideration, which shews how contrary

trary this sin is, to the spirit and design of the gospel; which directs us "to mortify our bodies with its lusts and affections; to subdue our appetites, to crucify the old man, and to bring our bodies into subjection to our minds." The main design of the new testament, is to make us consider ourselves as pilgrims on earth, daily to remember that we must soon leave this world, and therefore ought to prepare for another. We are called upon to live after, and to walk according to the spirit; not to indulge our irregular appetites and desires, but as far as our state of health and life will permit, to deny all unnecessary gratifications. These are the rules, and this is the spirit of the gospel; so that if we duly consider things, we have arguments sufficient to deter us from this sin.

But what then must we think or say of our age, in which this corruption so universally prevails over all ranks and degrees of persons, so that scarce any are to be found who have escaped it? Some of a more brutal kind, are overcome with the meer love of the liquor; tho' it be so shameful an excess, that no one will own it. Others know not how to dispose of their time, being bred to nothing, and hardly capable of any thing. And because of meer idleness, to get time off their hands, they run into these extravagancies, in which days and nights are spent. And yet no man can have been so neglected in his education, but that he may find somewhat to do if he will. He may and ought to look into his own affairs, and apply himself to some sort of industry. He may find out some good company to converse with, and some occasions to do acts of kindness and charity to others; so that a man may, if he will, employ his time to many good purposes.

A pleasant conversation is no doubt very agreeable, and to have it moderately enlivened and refreshed,

refreshed with some generous liquor, can be no crime ; but cannot men have mirth and be merry without being drunk or mad ? Is there no measure to such folly ? It may therefore well be said, that the end of such mirth is madness. For to play with our health and life, our fortune and reputation, above all with our souls and eternity, is a madness beyond expression ; and yet these are the men who often pretend to wit and sense : Some indeed are carried against their own inclination, meerly by ill example and custom ; till at last habit and practice make it familiar to them. But it is a strange degree of perverseness, that men will become a sort of martyrs for their vices. They would think it extremely hard, were they obliged to endure so much in the practice of religion and virtue, as they suffer by the sin of intemperance. But dissolute habits do not change the nature of things. For tho' they may grow less shameful and reproachful, by being common, yet they are not the less evil. And that man must have a very weak mind, who is ashamed of being wise and sober, because others are irregular and extravagant. Some there are, who think they cannot be hospitable and free-hearted without sending their friends and servants home intoxicated. But this is a very unsuitable return of a civil visit ; to endeavour to destroy the health of him, who in kindness comes to see him, and perhaps to endanger his life in going home. The imputation of covetousness, which some are afraid of, may easily be removed, by acts of charity to the poor, or generosity to the afflicted and unfortunate. These are noble instances of true goodness and largeness of soul, by which others are both benefited and relieved. Thus it appears, how weak all those excuses are, which these mad sort of people make use of, to palliate such an enormous practice.

And

And among the miseries of this unhappy state, it is none of the least, that where an inordinate appetite reigns, reason and consideration are shut out ; and when men are reduced to such a thoughtless condition, they generally go on without any sense, either of their sin or danger ; and without any view beyond their present enjoyment. And nothing can awaken them out of this stupid state, but a great resolution, and serious reflection on the brutal condition, in which these indulgences have brought them ; on the shameful abuses of God's blessings, and their own rational faculties, in which it has betrayed them ; and to what dreadful miseries it will bring them at last. These reflections imprinted on their hearts, may by God's blessing produce a happy change, and deliver them from their misery and danger. For tho' custom is very powerful, especially in the present case, yet it has not force enough to make that necessary to nature, which is destructive of it, as all excess must be. But so far from this indulgence being necessary to life, that when a long course of intemperance has endangered it, the leaving that course is always the first prescription, without which all other remedies are useless and ineffectual. So that what they call necessary to preserve life, tends only to satisfy a craving and inordinate appetite ; the gratifying of which is the direct and immediate means of destroying life. And it is therefore no wonder, that an indulgence, which has been long continued, should be uneasy under the first check or restraint. But if there be a steady resolution to restrain the current of desire, the appetite will, by degrees, grow more patient and quiet, and such persons will find more pleasure in governing, than they ever did by indulging it.

Let then those who have indulged themselves in a habit of intemperance, stand still and consider, that they are in the worst state of slavery; a slavery of reason to appetite, of the human to the brutal part. Let them resolve to assert the freedom and dignity of their nature, and if they have lived like beasts, to die like men. Let them reflect how they have abused the blessings of God, to luxury and excess: With how much goodness he has borne their provocations, and waited for their amendment. And let a sense of his mercy and their own vileness, produce in them that godly shame and sorrow, which worketh repentance to salvation. But if neither the force of reason nor religion will prevail, let the terrors of the Lord persuade them, not to continue in a course that must shortly end in their eternal destruction. If the work be difficult, it is also necessary; and let men consider, whether they shall be uneasy now, or miserable for ever. The difficulty of the work should excite their resolution; and by constant prayers to God, he will strengthen and assist them.

It must be owned, that the condition of such a person, tho' not desperate, is exceeding dangerous; and the more so, as there are but few instances of any who are reclaimed from it. And a state so dangerous, should be powerful warnings to others, not to be betrayed into the same kind of slavery, by luxury and indulgence. The only way to avoid the danger, is at first to govern and restrain the appetite, to keep under the body, and bring it into subjection. Such restraints and self-denials are a necessary means to preserve and secure mens innocence, and keep them from falling into excess. So that the only way to be safe and innocent, is to keep an habitual guard and restraint upon the appetite, from a due sense of the true ends and uses of eating and drinking; of the great wickedness of abus-

ing

ing God's blessings, to the dishonour of religion; to the shame and reproach of human nature; and of the unspeakable danger and misery of living and dying in habits of excess, both as to this world and the next. And with these considerations, there must be frequent and earnest prayer to God, that he will preserve upon their minds a lively sense of these things, and mercifully afford such supplies of grace and strength, as will be needful to prevent those evil habits, and effectually to restrain all such acts of irregularity and excess, as naturally lead to them.

Discourse LXXXVI. Abp. *Til-*  
*lotson.*

Of a RELIGIOUS FAST, and how to  
KEEP IT.

Zeck. vii. 5.

—When ye fasted and mourned, did ye at all  
fast unto me, even unto me?

**I**N these words, God by his prophet expostulates with the people of the Jews, concerning their monthly fasts, whether they really deserved that name, or were rather a meer shew and pretence of a religious fast? “The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, when ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me?” That is, did these fasts truly serve to any religious end and purpose? Did not the people content themselves, with a meer external shew and performance, without any inward affliction and humiliation, towards a real repentance? Did they not still go on in their sins, and on these occasions fast for strife, debate and oppression, and were rather worse than better, for fasting; and therefore God disregarded them? For thus saith the Lord, “execute judgment, and shew mercy and compassion every man to his brother. Oppress not the widows nor the fatherless, the stranger nor the poor; and let none of you imagine mischief against his brother in your heart. But they refused to hearken, and stopped their ears that they should not hear; yea, they made their heart as an adamant stone,

stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent by his spirit, in the former prophets; and therefore came great wrath from the Lord of hosts;---and as he cried, and they would not hear, so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts." So that these outward solemnities of fasting and prayer, had nothing in them of a religious fast. "Did ye  
 "at all fast unto me, even unto me?" They were sensible of God's judgments, but would not turn from their sins, but persisted in their obstinacy and disobedience.

What God here, by the prophet Zechary, calls fasting unto him, the prophet Isaiah calls, "the fast which God hath chosen, and an acceptable day to the Lord. Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seeest not? wherefore have we afflicted our souls, and thou takest no knowledge? behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a fast as I have chosen, a day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house; when thou seeest the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy salvation shall spring forth speedily; then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer, &c." From all which passages, we may easily understand, wherein these fasts of the Jews were defective; the fault in general, which God finds with them, was, that these solemnities did not serve any real end or purpose of religion, but failed in their main

design, which was a sincere repentance and reformation of their lives; so that they were not acceptable, nor esteemed as performed unto him. My present business shall be to consider in general, what it is to keep a truly religious fast unto God. And then shew what the duty is, which a solemn humiliation and repentance doth require from us.

A truly religious fast consists in these several particulars: in the afflicting our bodies by a strict abstinence, so as to make them proper instruments to forward and promote the grief and trouble of our minds; in an humble confession of our sins to God, with shame and confusion of face, and an hearty contrition and sorrow for them; in an earnest deprecation of God's displeasure, and humble supplications to him, to avert his judgments, and turn away his anger from us; in intercession with God, for such spiritual and temporal blessings upon ourselves and others, as are needful and convenient; in giving alms and charity to the poor, that our humiliation and prayers may find acceptance with God. I do but mention these here, intending to consider them more at large.

And a day of solemn humiliation and repentance both require from us, that we should humble ourselves before God, every one for his own personal sins, whereby he hath provoked God, and increased the publick guilt, by bringing down the judgments and vengeance of God upon the nation. Our humiliation and repentance should begin with ourselves, and our own sins, because repentance is to end in reformation; but a general reformation cannot be, without the reformation of particular persons, which constitutes the generality. And this Solomon prescribes as a true method of a national reformation, and the proper effects of a public humiliation and repentance. "If there be, says he, in the land, famine, pestilence, blasting, mildew, locust,

locust, or caterpillar ; or, if an enemy besiege them in the land of their cities : whatever plague or sickness there be ; what prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel ; “ who shall know every man the plague of his own heart,” and spread forth his hands towards this house : then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his way, whose heart thou knowest ; for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men ; that they may fear thee, all the days which they live in the land, which thou gavest to their fathers. So that in case of any public judgment or calamity, the humiliation and repentance of a nation, must begin with particular persons ; who “ shall know every man, the plague of his own heart.” And they must be convinced of their personal sins and transgressions, before God will hear the prayers, and forgive the sins of a nation.

Because we cannot confess and bewail our sins, and repent of them, in the public congregation, more than in general ; it would therefore be proper, on the morning of the fast-day, before we go to the publick assembly, that we should humble ourselves before God, in our families and closets ; confessing with shame and sorrow all our particular sins and offences, with the several aggravations of them, so far as we can remember them ; and earnestly beseech God to pardon and forgive them, for his mercies sake in Jesus Christ. And when we return from church, we must again retire into our closets, to renew our repentance, and make most solemn and sincere resolutions, to reform what we have confessed and repented of. These good resolutions we should endeavour to confirm by serious consideration, and hearty promises of better obedience, and a more conscientious care of our lives

and actions, for the future. By this means, the great end of a solemn fast and humiliation, will in some measure be attained ; or otherwise, it will for the most part be lost, in a confused general repentance, which commonly ends with the public assembly, without any real permanent effect upon particular persons, who return with the same affection for their sins as before, and a secret resolution not to forsake them.

Thus it was with the people of the Jews ; they had their solemn monthly fasts, in which they made a great shew of humiliation, by “ hanging down their heads, and spreading sackcloth and ashes ;” but there was no inward change of their minds, no real reformation of their lives ; but as soon as the public assembly was over, they turned every one to his former evil course. “ I heard, says God, but they speak not aright ; no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, what have I done ? but they turned every one to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.” That is, they took not a right method for an effectual repentance. Tho’ they humbled themselves before God, and repented of the national sins in general, yet they never reflected upon, they had no sense of their own sins in particular ; without which there can be no true general repentance. “ No man repented of his wickedness, saying, what have I done ?” but as soon as the public fasting and humiliation was over, “ they turned every one to his course, as the horse rushes into the battle ;” without any consideration or sense of danger. Again,

We should on a fast-day, heartily lament and bewail the sins of others ; especially the great and crying sins of the nation, committed by all ranks and orders of men, whereby the wrath and indignation of Almighty God, may be justly incensed  
against

against us. It hath been the practice of good men in all ages, to be troubled and afflicted, and to mourn in secret for the sins of others, as well as their own ; as the prophet Jeremy did, for the obstinacy and impenitency of the Jews. Says he, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, mine eyes shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive. His book of lamentations is little else but a perpetual humiliation for the sins of that people, and for the judgment of God, which he saw inflicted, or coming upon them. Holy David also, upon all occasions, testifies his trouble and grief for the sins of others ; " rivers of tears, says he, run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy laws. I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved, because they kept not thy word." How does Daniel also humble himself before God, and mourn in the name of all the people, for their great sins ? We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly ; O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of face, as at this day ; to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. And with what trouble and confusion does Ezra, on a solemn day of fasting, bewail the sins of the people ? I am ashamed and blush, says he, to lift up my face to thee, my God ; for our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespasses are grown up to the heavens : since the sins of our fathers, we have been in a great trespass unto this day. And thus ought we, upon any day of fasting and humiliation, to set our sins in order before us, with all their heinous aggravations ; and to lament and bewail that general impiety and vice, which overspreads the whole nation, thro' all ranks and degrees of men ; both magistrates, ministers and people, as I shall more particularly observe. And,

1. As to the sins of magistrates, and those in authority ; they who make laws for others, ought to see them executed, and to be themselves strict observers of them. And yet how few of these, whose duty it is to correct the vices and immoralities of others, that are examples of virtue themselves ? and therefore no wonder, that magistrates are so remiss, in discountenancing vice and immorality, and putting the good laws, made against them, in execution. Such are those against the profanation of the Lord's day, by secular business, vain sports and pastimes, which tend to take the minds of men off from all serious thoughts of God, and religion, and the meditations of another world : and which is yet much worse, in profaning it by lewd and sinful practices, which are at all times unlawful, but on that day, are a double violation of God's law. And also by neglecting to punish such as are guilty of profane swearing and cursing, for which the land mourns ; and against drunkenness, adultery and fornication, which are so impudently committed among us. And to mention no more, by neglecting to prosecute the horrible sin of murder, so frequently committed in our streets, beyond the example of former ages, with that severity and impartiality, which is necessary to free the nation, from the guilt of that abominable sin, which cries so loud to heaven for vengeance. And yet magistrates are bound by oath, to put the laws in due execution against all these crimes, so far as they fall under their knowledge and cognizance.

2. The sins of the ministers who serve at God's altar, and watch over the souls of men, which will be required at their hands, if they perish thro' their neglect. No doubt we have a great number of faithful shepherds in the land, who watch over their flocks with great care and conscience, remembering the  
the

the account they must one day make. But yet how many fail in the faithful discharge of this high office ; who take little or no care of the souls of men, by instructing them in the knowledge of religion, or shewing them the way to eternal happiness, by an exemplary conversation : Nay, too many, even undermine the effect of their doctrine, by leading lives directly contrary to it ; who by their wicked conversation, alienate their people from the church, and so render them an easy prey to the emissaries of Rome, or to any other sect, that expresses a greater zeal for religion, or leads a more unblamable life than they do. For who will regard those teachers, who shew by their lives and actions, that they themselves do not believe their own doctrines ? The good life and manners of the preacher, are the best eloquence, and have that power of persuasion, which no words can equal. Our Saviour lived as never man lived, so innocent, so useful, so exemplary a life ; and this was what made him so powerful a preacher of righteousness. Such a preacher, and such a practice is every way fitted to reprove, persuade, and reform mankind. And,

We cannot but see how our religion and church are beset and endangered on every side ; by the assaults of seducing spirits and by our own heats and divisions. Nor can it ever be sufficiently lamented, that they whose particular charge and employment it is, to preserve men in our holy faith, and encourage them to a good life, should, for want of due instruction, or by the dissolute profligate life of too many, and by inflaming our differences about lesser things ; that they should have so great a hand in destroying religion, in promoting infidelity, in shewing such a careless neglect and contempt of all religion. When the pastors and guides of souls, by their ill conduct and management, have made the  
people

people almost indifferent, whether they have any religion or not; what can the end of these things be, but that the kingdom of God will be taken from us, and given to a nation, that will bring forth better fruit? If ever there be a public reformation among us, it must begin at the house of God. The ministers of religion must lead on this work, and be more careful and conscientious, in the discharge of that high and holy office, which is committed to them, by the great shepherd and bishop of souls. We are now to consider,

3. The sins of the people, among whom there is an universal corruption and depravation of manners. Impiety and vice have so overspread the nation, that we may apply the words of the prophet to ourselves. "We are a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers;—from the sole of the foot, even to the head, there is no soundness in us, but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores." We may justly stand amazed to consider, how the God of all patience is provoked every day, and how long he hath borne with us: with our open profaneness and infidelity, our great immoralities and gross hypocrisy, our insolent contempt of religion; our most uncharitable and unchristian divisions; our incorrigibleness under the judgments of God, which have been so severely inflicted on these kingdoms, that the inhabitants thereof might learn righteousness. So that we may say with Ezra, "and now, O God, what shall we say unto thee after this?" And may not God say to us, as he did to the Jews, "shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord? and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" But I proceed to shew,

That another duty, which we are to perform upon a fast-day, is earnestly to deprecate God's displeasure,

displeasure, and make our humble supplications to him, that he would be graciously pleased to avert those terrible judgments, which we may at any time have just cause to fear, will fall upon us; and that his fierce anger may be appeased and turned from us. This was what the people of God did on their fast-days; “sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly, let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thy heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them. Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people.” And thus did Daniel humbly and earnestly deprecate the displeasure of God towards his people; begging of him to remove his judgments, and to turn away his anger from them. “O Lord, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain; because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us.—O my God, incline thine ear and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name. For we do not present our supplications before thee, for our righteousness, but for thy great mercy. O Lord hear, O Lord forgive, O Lord hearken and do; defer not for thine own sake, O my God.” And thus also should we, upon such solemn occasions, cry mightily unto God, and with the greatest importunity, deprecate those terrible judgments, to which the great and innumerable sins of this nation, have most justly exposed us; humbly beseeching him, not for our righteousness, but for his own infinite mercy, for his own name sake, and because we are his people, and his holy truth and religion are professed among us; that he  
would

would be pleased to hear our prayers and supplications, which we have made before him, for the Lord's sake.

But our fasting and humiliation should be accompanied with our alms and charity to the poor; we must "break off our sins by righteousness, and our iniquities, by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of our tranquillity." If there be any way to prevent or remove the judgments of God, and to prolong the happiness of prince and people, a sincere repentance, and a great charity to the necessitous and distressed, are most likely to prevail with God, to respite the ruin of a sinful people, and to forgive them. David, speaking of the righteous or charitable man, assures us, that he "shall not be afraid in the evil time, and in the days of dearth he shall be satisfied." If we would have our prayers ascend up to heaven, and find acceptance there, our alms must join with them. So the angel intimates to Cornelius, "thy prayers and thine alms are gone up for a memorial before God." And the prophet makes charity and alms a most essential part of a fast: "Is it not, says he, to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor, that are cast out, to thy house; when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thy own flesh? then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, here I am."

Lastly, we should prosecute our repentance and good resolutions, till we have actually reformed and amended our lives. For in this, repentance chiefly consists. The proper fruit and effect of all our humiliation and good resolutions, is to forsake our sins, and become better for the future; more pious and devout, more sober and chaste, more  
just

just and charitable, more humble and meek, more innocent and holy in all manner of conversation. Without this, all our fasting and humiliation, all our most earnest prayers and supplications will signify nothing; either to save our own souls, or to preserve this untoward generation, and perverse nation. “If my people, says God, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear in heaven, and forgive their sin, and heal their land.” But if we will not hearken and obey, can we expect God to save us, only that we may sin without fear the remainder of our days; what reason is there for God to preserve our religion to us, when we will not suffer it to direct and govern our lives? If this be our case, what can we say, why the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, which we have so long enjoyed, and so long rebelled against, should not be utterly extinguished, or removed from us?

It is much more agreeable to praise, than to reprove. But it must not be dissembled, that the behaviour of too many in this place, and at the time of divine worship, is frequently so careless and irreverent, as ill becomes those, who are then in the more immediate presence of the great and glorious majesty of heaven and earth. Could we be prevailed upon to demean ourselves with that reverence, and to hear with that attention, which becomes the worship of Almighty God; it might then be hoped, we should consider what is said. Consideration would probably work conviction, which might produce in us, a firm resolution to perform, what we are inwardly convinced is both our duty and interest to do. Let us then observe our days of fasting, with full purposes of doing our duty; truly and earnestly to repent of our past sins, and to lead a new life for the future. Let us

fear that great and terrible God, in whose presence we have been to humble ourselves, and turn to him, lest we provoke him to punish us yet seven times more. Let every one of us with penitent Job, say unto God, "I have borne chastisement. I will not offend any more; that which I see not, teach thou me; and if I have done iniquity, I will do so no more. Oh! that there was such a heart in us, that it might be well with us, and with our children for ever."

Discourse

Discourse LXXXVII. Abp.  
*Sharpe.*

The GREAT DUTY of DOING GOOD.

Ecclef. iii. 12.

I know that there is no good in them, but for  
a man to rejoice and to do good in his life.

**T**HE book of Ecclesiastes informs us of the  
several experiments Solomon had made, to  
discover wherein the happiness of this world con-  
sists. No man had ever greater opportunities to  
find out the way to contentment, or was more in-  
dustrious to apply himself with an unusual liberty,  
to enjoy such things as are most commonly ad-  
mired, than Solomon; and yet after all his industry  
and enjoyments, he found nothing but emptiness  
and dissatisfaction. He thought to have been hap-  
py, by the study of philosophy; but on trial, he  
declared it to be vanity and vexation of spirit. He  
applied his mind to political wisdom and other  
knowledge, in which he was more successful than  
any before him; yet he confesses, that in "wisdom  
" was much grief, and he that increaseth know-  
" ledge, increaseth sorrow." He indulged him-  
self with mirth and wine, and all sorts of sensual  
pleasure, but so far from receiving satisfaction therein,  
he said of "laughter, it is mad; and of mirth,  
" what doth it?" He tried what pomp and magni-  
ficence would do; for he built stately houses, and  
made him gardens and vineyards, orchards, and  
fountains. He increased his possessions, and "ga-  
" thered silver and gold, and the precious treasures  
" of the kings, and of the provinces." He had a

vaſt retinue, and kept a moſt ſplendid court, and yet when he came “to look upon all the works that his hands had wrought, and on the labour that he had laboured to do, behold all was vanity, and vexation of ſpirit, and there was no profit under the ſun.” Wherein then is there any ſatisfaction, if not in theſe things? what is that good the ſons of men ſhould apply for, to live comfortably here? This Solomon reſolves, by ſaying, in the words of the text, “I know there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life.” He had found by long experience, that all the happineſs to be obtained from the good things of this life, is to rejoice in the enjoyment of what we have, and to do good to others, while we live.

Two things then Solomon here recommends to all who would live comfortably in this world; rejoicing, and doing good. As doing good in the order of nature goes before, and is the foundation of rejoicing, I ſhall firſt ſpeak of doing good, tho’ it is laſt named. And there can be no true joy in the poſſeſſion, or uſe of any worldly bleſſings, unleſs we do ſome good with them; it is that which ſanctifies our other enjoyments, and makes them matter of rejoicings.

But where ſhall I begin to ſpeak, either of the obligations that lie on us, or of the benefits and advantages which accrue, by doing good in our lives? or where make an end? The ſubject is ſo copious, that the ſtudy of a whole life cannot exhaust it; the more we conſider it, the more weighty arguments will preſent themſelves, to engage us in the practice; and the more we practice it, the more happy and bleſſed ſhall we be. For, to do good, is to act agreeably to the frame and make of our beings. It is to gratify thoſe inclinations and appetites, that are moſt ſtrongly rooted in  
our

our natures; such as love and natural affection, pity and compassion, a desire of friends, and a propensity to unite in society. All these are so many powerful incitements of nature, to put us on doing good offices one to another. To do good, is the end of all those acquisitions, talents, and advantages, with which God hath blessed us. If we do not so use and employ them, instead of being better, we are much the worse for them. What will our wit and good humour, our reason and memory, our wisdom and knowledge, our skill in arts, and dexterity in business, our wealth and greatness, our reputation and interest, signify, if they do not render us more useful and beneficial to others? The price and value of every worldly blessing consists in the opportunity it affords of doing good. To do good, seems to be the foundation of all the laws of nature; by it the world is supported, and without it all would soon fall into confusion. All other natural laws may possibly be reduced, and ultimately resolved into this. The virtue or viciousness of any action is to be taken in general, from the influence it hath, to promote or hinder the doing good. It is the great work for which we were sent into the world; and no man lives here to any purpose, unless he is an instrument of doing good. Let our lives be ever so busy, and full of action, yet if others receive no benefit from us, we shall be able to give no tolerable account of our time, since in effect it will be, as if we lived idle, and did nothing.

To do good, is of all services the most acceptable to God, and which the scripture enforces on us, with the most earnest and affectionate persuasives, the strongest arguments, the greatest promises, and the most dreadful threatenings. It is preferred before all sacrifices and religious worship, strictly so called; it is the best way of expressing our thank-

fulness to God for all his benefits, and of our love and devotion to him; it is what Moses and the prophets make the sum of the old law, Christ and his apostles the sum of the new: and great reason there is, why it should be so. For to do good, is to be most like God. It is what gives us the resemblance of his nature and perfections. Perfect love and goodness is the very nature of God, the root of all his other attributes. Never was there an action or work performed by him, from the beginning of time to this moment, but was an expression of his love, an instance of doing good; and if we will be the children of our heavenly father, we must do good to all, with the same universal extent, as he causes his sun to shine on the world. Of this our blessed Saviour was a most illustrious example, and is what will render us most truly his disciples. His whole life was spent in doing good; the great design of his coming from heaven, of what he said, did, and suffered on earth, was to benefit others; and the character whereby his disciples are to be distinguished from others, is this, that "they love one another, as he hath loved them;" so to love and do good, "as to lay down their lives for their brethren." To do good, is our greatest duty, interest, and advantage; no man can more effectually render his life happy and comfortable, in the ordinary course of things, let his circumstances be what they will, than to do all possible good; and however this may seem only to respect others, yet whoever so acts, will find at last, that he most consults his own benefit: For to do good, is the natural way to raise us friends, whose endeavours may contribute to promote our honest designs, to secure us in our prosperity, and relieve us under any evil, afflicting circumstances. Such is the make and constitution of this world, that no man can subsist of himself, but

but he stands in continual need of others, for their comfortable society, and necessary assistance in his affairs; and of all persons, the good man, who makes it his business to oblige all, is most likely to find the truest and best friends.

To do good, is the best way to procure a good name and reputation; a thing very desirable, and of singular advantage to a man's secular designs. It embalms a man's name, and transmits it with a grateful odour to posterity. "The memory of a good man shall be blessed." It is also the most certain and effectual means to procure God's blessing on our endeavours, and to entitle ourselves to his more especial care, and protection; so that let what will happen, the good man in all circumstances and conditions, has the greatest assurance, that all things shall go tolerably well with him, or at least, that he shall never be miserable. "Trust in the Lord, and be doing good, so shall thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." To do good, is to entail a blessing on our children after us. "I have been young, and now am old (saith the Psalmist) yet saw I never the righteous, (that is, the merciful and good man) forsaken, nor his seed begging his bread. Besides all these advantages, to do good, is most to consult our own peace, and to make the best provision possible for our pleasure and delight. Dr. Hammond used to call charity, a piece of sensuality, and the great master of voluptuousness. Epicurus would confess, that it was not only more brave, but more pleasant, to do kindness, than receive them; and every good man will certainly find it so: for as the exercise of charity and beneficence, is as truly a gratification of our natural inclinations and appetites, as any other action that causeth us pleasure; so likewise is it a gratification of the highest and noblest appetites we have; which makes the delight arising

there from, the more exquisite. And to do good, is also a permanent pleasure; a pleasure that will last as long as our lives; the memory of it will always be accompanied with delight and satisfaction, and the nearer we approach death, the more comfort it will afford us; which cannot be said of other past enjoyments. Would we then treasure up to ourselves a stock of lasting peace and joy, to support us in all conditions of life, and make easy our passage at our death, let us do all the good we can. Thus it appears, that “there is nothing for a man,” or that more concerns him in point of duty or happiness, “than to do good in his life.” I shall now endeavour particularly, to shew the several ways of doing good, by every person, though in the meanest circumstances.

Many are convinced, that it is both their interest and duty, to be doing good in their lives; but then they complain, and lament, that it is not in their power, they not having means or opportunities for it. To such, I answer in general, that there is no condition so mean and despicable, but affords opportunities of doing good; there is neither old nor young, men nor women, rich nor poor, high nor low, learned nor unlearned, but in their sphere may be useful to others, and prove instruments of much good in their generations. It is necessary there should be variety of functions and callings, degrees and conditions; some to govern, others to be governed; some more conspicuous, others more obscure; and for all to have different gifts and talents; yet not one of these but either is or may be, as useful as any that belong to society. So that “the eye cannot say to the hand, nor “the head to the feet, I have no need of you.” But it being impossible to shew in how many particular respects, every individual person, is, or may be

be useful to the public, and do good in his life ; I shall only represent so much as may be necessary under these general heads.

And none can want opportunities of doing good, who is in a capacity of performing any acts of mercy or charity, to the bodies or souls of men. The instances of doing good this way, are as infinite as the wants and necessities of mankind. To the bodies of men we do good, when we relieve and ease them under any outward pressures, wants and necessities ; such as sickness, poverty, hunger, nakedness, debts, imprisonment, or other outward afflictions ; and this, whether it be done by our purse, counsel and advice, or by our labour and pains. And there is none so mean, and inconsiderable, but has it in his power some of these ways, to benefit his poor neighbour. To the souls of men we do good, when we instruct the ignorant, satisfy the doubtful, establish the weak, correct the erroneous, reform the wicked, reclaim them from vice, and bring them to wisdom and sobriety ; all these are instances of charity to the souls of men, and whether our designs succeed or not, we shall be rewarded as those who have done good in the world. Again,

All the acts of beneficence and kindness, civility and good-nature, are to be deemed instances of doing good. A man doth good, not only by acts of charity, but by shewing his respect and good will to all about him ; by reconciling differences among neighbours, promoting peace, friendship and society ; by being generous, liberal and hospitable, according to his ability ; by forgiving injuries ; by being easy of access, sweet and obliging in his carriage, bearing with the infirmities of others ; and in a word, by contributing all he can, to make the lives of others easy and comfortable. A man is doing good, when he uses the acquaintance, friend-

ship, or interest, he has with others, to do that good, which his own circumstances, or the want of opportunity will not permit to be done by himself: this is a considerable instance of doing good, however slight it may appear. He that does it, is a double benefactor, being not only an instrument of good, to those for whom he asks any kindness, or charity; but even to the benefactor himself, whom God will not less reward, for being excited by another. We also do good, by an honest, and diligent discharge of our calling and employment. There is no art, trade, place, or business, that we are bred to, and employed in, if a lawful one, but we may therein be of great use to the public; and by carefully minding, and fairly managing it, we may render ourselves very profitable members of the commonwealth. And we do good in a private capacity, when we behave towards all, suitable to the relations wherein we stand obliged. For instance, when being subjects, we conscientiously obey the laws, submit to our governors, and promote the public peace, both of church and state; when being masters of families, we take care of those under our charge, and sufficiently provide for their souls and bodies; when being husbands or wives, we faithfully discharge all conjugal duties; when being parents, we love our children, and “bring them up in the fear and nurture of the Lord;” when being children, “we obey our parents in all things;” when being servants, “we do our work, in singleness of heart, not as men-pleasers, but as those that account they have a master in heaven;” when having contracted friendships, we are secret, faithful, and prudent, using our best endeavours to maintain and preserve them; and the same as to all other relations in which we stand. These things, however little they may appear, are a real good and benefit to mankind,

kind, and so necessary that there is no tolerably living without them. Lastly, we may do a great deal of good, by our examples, in being to others patterns of piety and prudence, of diligence and industry, of peaceableness and loyalty, of humility, meekness, and temperance; every man who is eminent in virtue, his life will be as a constant sermon to instruct the world, and himself as effectual a benefactor by his example, as others are by their counsels and exhortations. And these things considered, who among us is in such deplorable circumstances, as not to have ability, or opportunity to do good in his life? surely, a man must live in a desert, and have no communication with any one, that cannot some of these ways be useful and beneficial to others. I shall now make some application of what has been said.

And, since it appears, we are so highly concerned to do good, let us be persuaded seriously, and heartily to put it in practice. Let us propose it to ourselves, as the great business of our lives, and take all opportunities for it; so contrive and manage all our affairs, as to make them subservient to this great work. Let this be the end of our getting riches, and the measure of expending them. To heap up riches only to be rich, or to squander them on our lusts, are equally intolerable; but to do good with them, is what will sanctify the getting and spending them. Let this then direct us in our pursuit after knowledge, in our learning arts and sciences, in the management of our trades, employments, and every design that is proposed to us. Let the great enquiry be, to what good will these things tend? and how to render our designs and endeavours most useful to the world. Let this be our great rule in educating and providing for our children and relations. Let it be our first care to possess them with a deep sense of the duty

they owe the public; to furnish them with such qualities, as will render them useful members of it, and put them to such professions and employments, as that they may exercise them to advantage. If we thus provide for them, however little we otherwise leave them, yet by the blessing of God it will be a good fortune. Let this design of doing good, influence our very offices of religion; when we supplicate the throne of grace, let us ever have the public in mind, and resolve if God bestows on us the blessings we pray for, to employ them for the good of others. Let us seriously set ourselves to do good, to lay aside all selfish designs and narrowness of spirit, and with ardent love and charity, to promote the good of others, as well as our own.

If doing good is so necessary a duty, what must be said to such men, whose religion is made up of faith and knowledge of the gospel mysteries, without any regard to charity and good works; who disparage doing good, and esteem it as a heathen virtue, a poor blind piece of morality, and no way useful to promote our salvation? But how contrary is this to the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles? And is it possible, that he who went about doing good, who made it his meat and drink, the business and employment of his life, should not require it from us his followers? But we are often called "on to do good, to be rich in good works, to have fervent charity; and also told, that all faith, all knowledge of mysteries, all gifts of prophecy and miracles, are nothing; but that charity is all in all." And is it then possible, that doing good, should be an insignificant, unprofitable thing? I have said enough to reprove the opinion of such, and shall therefore proceed to consider those who acknowledge it their duty to  
do

do good, but yet think they may be religious, and serve God without it. If they are sober in their lives, just in their dealings, and come to church at usual times, this they imagine is religion enough to carry them to heaven; though all the while they are covetous and uncharitable, without bowels of pity and compassion; and make no use of their wealth, power, and interest, their labour, industry, and other talents committed to them, for doing good in the world. Now, though no man can determine what virtues, or degrees of them, are precisely necessary to salvation, yet it is certain, that charity, and doing good, are qualities as necessary thereto, as any condition of the gospel; and is what at the general judgment, we shall be examined about, and upon which our eternal state will depend.

From hence we may learn, wherein the perfection of Christianity consists. It has been much disputed, which is the most perfect life, either to serve God by following our employments, taking care of our families, doing good offices to our neighbours, and discharging all other public, and private duties; or, to retire from the world, to quit all secular concerns, and devote ourselves to prayer, meditation, and other religious exercises, so called. Among the Romanists, this last kind of life is so magnified, that none are worthy to be stiled religious persons, but those that cloyster themselves up in a monastery: but whatever excellence may be pretended in such a course of life, its certain, that he serves God best, who is most serviceable to his generation. And no prayers, fasts or mortifications, are near so acceptable a sacrifice to God, as to do good in our lives. It is true, such a retired life is the most easy and safe, as being the least exposed to temptations; but where is the praise of such a virtue? Virtue is then most  
glorious,

glorious, and will be most rewarded, when it meets with most trials and oppositions. If then we would shew true bravery of spirit, and true piety towards God, let us live; as did our Saviour and his apostles. Let us not fly temptations but overcome them; let us not sit contemplating at home, when we can be useful and beneficial abroad; let us so order our devotions to God; as to make them a means of promoting our worldly affairs, and doing good among men; let us allow ourselves fit time to retire and converse with God; but let it be only to this end, that we may appear abroad more pleasant, and better enabled to resist temptations, and to be more readily disposed to every good work. This will be to imitate and follow the example of Christ. This is a life more suitable to the genius of his religion, than retiring to cloysters, and deserts; and by such a life, we shall “make our light so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our father which is in heaven.”

Lastly, if it is so necessary for every man to do good in his life, as hath been represented; how much to be reprov'd are they, who do no good till their death? who live uncharitable and useles to the world, till they come to die, and then think to atone for their past sins, and neglect of this duty, by shewing some extraordinary bounty to the poor, or devoting some part of their estates to public or pious uses. This to me appears, just like the putting off a man's repentance to his death-bed. That a man should repent, though never so late, is absolutely necessary, and so it is that he should do good; but then the deferring either so long, robs a man of the praise and comfort he might otherwise expect here, and will greatly lessen his rewards in heaven, should his late deeds be accepted, of which he is infinitely uncertain; and

it must be a very great act of goodness and mercy in God, if he can obtain a pardon for a whole life of uncharitableness. Let us therefore labour and study to do good in our lives, and daily give evidences to the world of our kind and charitable disposition, before we discover it in our last will and testament. If God hath blessed us with temporal good things, let us prudently distribute them in our life-time, when all will see it is voluntarily done, and not stay till we can keep it no longer; for that will deprive us of the credit of our good deeds, in the esteem both of God and man.

I now proceed briefly to consider the duty of rejoicing; by which is meant, a constant habit of joy and chearfulness, of being contented and well pleased, and free from those anxieties, disquietudes, and uncomfortable reflections, which too often make the lives of mankind miserable. This is the perfection of rejoicing, the utmost degree of happiness we are capable of here. And the way to arrive to it, is first, a great innocence and virtue, a behaviour so prudent, that our consciences will not reproach us. "This (saith St. Paul) is our rejoicing, the testimony of a good conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, I have had my conversation in this world." It is in vain to expect any true solid joy, peace, or contentment, without a hearty practice of all the duties of religion, and by which we manifest our sincerity to God. Secondly, we must have a firm and solid persuasion of God's particular providence; a belief, that he not only dispenseth all events, even the most inconsiderable, but that his providence is guided by infinite wisdom, and goodness, so that nothing happens, but what is for the best. If we firmly believe this, we shall not be solicitous for the future, nor discontented, tho' things fall out never so contrary to our expectations. The consideration

deration that all things are managed by an infinitely wise and good God, and which will at last prove for the best, is a most certain antidote against all trouble and uneasiness, that can on any occasion happen to us. Thirdly, another requisite, to procure and preserve this continual cheerfulness and rejoicing, is a frequent and fixed attention to the great rewards of the other world, which God hath promised to all who truly love, and endeavour to please him. This consideration will contribute much to our rejoicing under the miseries and afflictions of this life, to think that however adverse our condition may be here, yet in a little time, we shall be most happy and glorious; and the worse our circumstances are in this world, the greater (if we are good) shall our happiness be in the next; for these "light  
" afflictions, which are but for a moment, will pro-  
" cure us a far more exceeding weight of glory."

But there is another notion of rejoicing, namely, the free and comfortable enjoyment of the good things of this life, with which God hath blessed us, in opposition to a pinching penurious way of living. And Solomon in this book of Ecclesiastes, doth frequently recommend this way of rejoicing; and tells us, that "there is nothing better for a  
" man, than that he should eat and drink, and  
" make his soul enjoy good in his labour, for it is  
" the gift of God." And there is good reason for it, since to have a plentiful portion of the good things of life, and not the heart to use them for the enjoyment of ourselves and friends, and to refresh us under the troubles of life, is the utmost folly, and makes us as really poor and necessitous, as those who want bread. When therefore we do rejoice, let us be careful not to exceed the bounds prescribed to Christians, namely, to avoid all excess, to use the creatures of God soberly and temperately, so as to give offence to none, nor "to make provi-  
" sion

‘sion for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.’ Let us then make our humble acknowledgments, and return our hearty praises and thanksgivings to God, for all the good things he hath blessed us with; confessing that whatever we enjoy, is the effect of his free bounty and goodness. Let us remember to exercise our charity towards our indigent brethren, that they may rejoice as well as we; then shall we pursue the direction of the wise man, to rejoice and to do good.

Discourse LXXXVIII. Dr.  
*Clarke.*

The great DUTY of universal LOVE and  
CHARITY.

I John iv. 21.

8:5. And this commandment have we from him,  
that he who loveth God, love his brother  
also.

**T**HE end and design of religion, is to make men wiser and better; to improve, exalt, and perfect their nature; to teach them to obey love, and imitate God; to cause them to extend their love, goodness, and charity, to all their fellow-creatures, according to their several stations and abilities; to oblige them to govern the passions of their mind with moderation, and the appetites of their body with temperance. This is the chief end and design of true religion, and whoever acts contrary to these great rules, by wilfully dishonouring God, by hating his brother, or abusing, and corrupting himself, is either a false and hypocritical professor of the truth, if he doth these things in contradiction to the plain rules, and in defiance of the laws of religion; or else he professes a false and corrupt religion.<sup>66</sup> The church of Rome is therefore a false and corrupt religion; because, as it dishonours God, by mixing idolatry with divine worship; and gives men too much encouragement to corrupt themselves, and to indulge their  
vicious

vicious inclinations and habits, by allowing them, through many superstitious rites, to reconcile a wicked life, with the hopes of heaven; so it particularly permits, and even requires men to hate and persecute their brethren. And those whom for the want of arguments of reason and truth, they cannot convince and bring over, they endeavour by violence and cruelty to root out and extirpate from among men; as if the religion of Christ was intended to divest men of common humanity, and the service and glory of God could be really promoted by the destruction of mankind. One of the greatest corruptions of an excellent institution, is, when religion instead of promoting the universal peace, happiness and welfare of men, is made to authorize such practices, the prevention whereof is the chief and great end for which any religion was instituted. Particular persons, under the profession of the best and purest religion, may be led away with some degrees of this spirit of error; thro' a false zeal, and mistaken judgment. Thus the apostles themselves were for calling fire from heaven upon the Samaritans, who refused to entertain our Saviour: But the Christian religion itself, the pure and uncorrupted doctrine of our Saviour, is intirely opposite to this spirit; and teaches us nothing but love and peace, meekness and charity, patience and forbearance one towards another. "If  
 " any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother,  
 " he is a liar; for this commandment have we  
 " from him, that he who loveth God love his bro-  
 " ther also." It shall be my present business briefly to shew the great obligation which lies upon all men in general, considered as equals, to practise this excellent duty of love and meekness, patience and forbearance one towards another; and then I shall observe some of the most remarkable variations of this duty, arising from the different rela-

tions and circumstances that men stand in one towards another,

As to the obligation which lies on men in general, to practise this great duty of universal love meekness and charity; it is evident, that by the original order and constitution of nature, men are so made and framed, that they necessarily want one another's help and assistance for their mutual support and preservation. They cannot enjoy any comfort of life independently of each other; but are manifestly fitted by the frame of their nature, to live in communities. Society is absolutely necessary for them, and the bond of all society is mutual love, charity and friendship. In this respect all men stand on a level, all having the same natural wants and desires, the same need of each other's assistance. Every man, as such, is bound by the law of his nature and common humanity, to consider himself as a part or member of that one universal body or community, which is made up of all mankind; to think himself born and sent into the world on purpose to promote the public good and welfare of all his fellow-creatures; and consequently is obliged to embrace them all with universal love, charity, and benevolence.

And as all men are obliged to this, by the necessary law and condition of their being, and by all the outward circumstances of the present state, wherein God has placed them; so they are also strongly prompted to it, by the natural inclinations of their own minds, when not corrupted by the practice of vice. For by nature men are plainly disposed to be kind, friendly, and willing to do good. Nothing is naturally more agreeable and pleasant to the mind of men, than being helpful and beneficial one to another. And, did they not suffer covetousness and revenge, or other foolish and absurd passions unreasonably to overrule this their

their natural disposition; they would universally enjoy the happy fruits and effects of it. For even in the present most corrupt state of the world, as far as their vices will permit, men still desire to keep up a general commerce and communication with each other; they love to encrease their dependencies, by multiplying affinities; to enlarge their friendships by mutual good offices; to establish societies by a communication of arts, labour and industry. And the only possible means of preserving societies in any tolerable and durable manner, being the practice of mutual love, universal charity, and benevolence; this plainly shews, what the direction and tendency of uncorrupted nature is. No man therefore, without transgressing both the plain law of his being, and also acting contrary to the reason of his own mind, and the natural inclination of his uncorrupted affections, can willingly do any injury to any man: But every one is obliged for the public benefit, to endeavour to do good to all, and to love all men even as himself. And, upon what occasion soever any misunderstandings or provocations may happen to arise, he ought immediately to endeavour to appease these with gentleness, rather than exasperate with retaliations; and put an end to all differences as soon as possible. By this means the world would become as happy as they can be in this state of imperfection. And nothing hinders mankind from actually arriving at this degree of happiness, but most perverse and unreasonable iniquity.

Nothing further is requisite to attain this universal love and friendship, and all the happy effects and consequences of it, than that men in all respects do to others, what they would reasonably desire in like circumstances, should be done to them. This is the true meaning of loving others as ourselves; and this we are manifestly obliged to, by the plainest equity, and clearest reason in the world. Every

man desires, and thinks it highly reasonable, that others should deal with him, according to the rules of equity, humanity and friendship; that they should be tender of his life, estate and reputation; that in matters of commerce, they should treat him with justice, fairness and truth; that in things wherein he stands in need of their assistance, and has reason to expect it, they should be willing to relieve him according to their power; that in case of ignorance or mistake, they should be ready to inform him; and where he has given any offence, to forgive him upon his desire of reconciliation. This every man thinks reasonable in his own case; and therefore is undeniably bound, to think it reasonable also whenever it is another man's to expect the like for him; and if he does not act according to this judgment, he is manifestly guilty of great iniquity and unrighteousness. For what is in itself fit and right to be done, every man's own conscience plainly tells him; and whenever he gives himself time seriously to consider and review his actions, it either applauds and commends him, for having answered the chief ends of his creation, and complied with the highest obligations of his nature, in endeavouring to promote the universal welfare and happiness of mankind by the practice of truth and righteousness, meekness, goodness, or charity; or else it cannot but secretly reproach and severely condemn him, for having acted the contrary part. Which judgment of conscience, however men may conceal from the world their sense of its weight, in respect of their own actions, yet it always discovers itself, in the censures they pass on the actions of others. For how much wickedness, uncharitableness, pride, or contention soever, men can overlook in themselves, yet there is no man, where his own interest and passions are not concerned, but in judging of others, will rightly enough distinguish concerning

concerning the characters of persons, and the true value of mens actions; he will give just applause and commendation to men of meek, peaceable and quiet spirits; such as delight to do good, and to make all about them as easy and happy as they can; or, on the contrary, he will freely condemn the promoters of hatred, animosity and contention. All which plainly shew, both what the law of our nature, and the original inclinations of our affections are, when not corrupted with the practice of vice.

3. And as all men are thus obliged by the necessary circumstances and conditions of their being, and also by the original and natural inclinations of their own minds, to love and do good to each other, according to their several powers and abilities; so they are still further and more strictly obliged to the practice of the same duty, in imitation of the nature, and in obedience to the will and law of God. God himself is love, an infinite and inexhaustible fountain of never-failing goodness; who being infinitely and eternally happy in the enjoyment of his own unspeakable perfections, could have no other motive to create things at first, but only that he might communicate his goodness and happiness to his creatures; and he continues to preserve them on no other account but to do them good. And because God does himself take delight in doing good; for the same reason it must necessarily be his will, that all reasonable creatures should imitate him in that excellent perfection; and by the practice of mutual love and charity, permit and assist each other, to enjoy in particular the several effects and blessings of the divine universal goodness. God cannot but be pleased with such, as endeavour to conform themselves to the likeness of his divine nature, and make it their business as far as they can, to promote the welfare and happiness of all their fellow creatures; in

like manner as the love and goodness of God is extended universally to all men. He has given us noble powers and faculties on purpose to enable us to imitate him in the exercise of these excellent attributes. He has endued us with reason and understanding, to discern good and evil, that we might choose the one, and avoid the other. He has implanted in our minds such affections and dispositions, as naturally inclines us to be kind, friendly, and charitable. He has so framed our nature, so ordered the circumstances of our present state, as to make society and friendship necessary to the support and comfort of life; on purpose that we might practise these divine virtues. He has interwoven the interest of men, and made the happiness of every individual to depend on the public welfare; that each having a sense of his own wants and exigencies, might see the reasonable necessity of making it his great business to do good to others. And we have no other way to express so acceptably our love and gratitude to God, as by loving and doing good to our brethren. Thus much is clear even from the bare light of nature. But the Christian religion carries our obligation to the practice of this excellent duty much higher. We are now obliged to love and do good to one another, not only by the ties of common humanity, as we are men, and of the same nature; but as brethren in a more peculiar and eminent manner: being all the children of God in Christ, all members of the same body, all partakers of the same spirit, all heirs of the same blessed hope of immortality. Wherefore, let us “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.” Again, We Christians have not only the example of God’s love and goodness in general proposed to our imitation, made known to us by right reason, the  
light

light of nature, and our own experience of that good providence, which presides over all, and daily does good to the whole creation; but we have besides God's goodness and loving-kindness manifested to us in a more particular and extraordinary manner, in that singular instance of the world's redemption, by the death of his Son: which exceeding great and undeserved mercy, as all our hopes of happiness are founded upon it, should lay us under the strongest obligations, to be in some proportion, kind, merciful and charitable towards our brethren, as God has been infinitely good and merciful to us. To this the apostle exhorts us, "put on therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man has a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."

Lastly, as we are Christians, we are obliged to love and do good to each other; not only by our knowing in general, that it must be agreeable to the will of God, but as being the peculiar law and command of our Saviour; "a new commandment, saith he, I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." And he makes it as the distinguishing mark and badge of his disciples; "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one towards another." He himself continually went about doing good, therein setting us an example. And the apostles declare, that universal love and charity is the end of the commandment, the principal design of our whole religion. That he that loveth his neighbour, hath fulfilled the law. And whosoever wants this excellent virtue, all his other pretences of religion, and zeal for the service of God, are declared to

be vain and of no esteem. “ If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar ; and, tho’ we speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not charity, we are as sounding brags or tinkling cymbals.” That is, all our pretences to religion are false and empty. The reason why so particular a stress is laid on the duty of charity, is, because it is that temper and disposition of mind, which is the highest possible improvement and perfection of our rational nature : It is that which makes our souls like unto God, who is goodness itself : It is that which, in the nature of the thing, is of the last and utmost importance, as being naturally and necessarily the condition and ground both of our present and future happiness : It is a qualification of mind, absolutely necessary to make us capable of the sight of God, and the happiness of heaven. For we must be like God, if we will see him as he is. We must first attain that disposition of mind, wherein the happiness of heaven essentially consists, before we can be partakers of life and glory. In a word, that frame of mind which inclines us to do good, and to take delight therein, is itself the temper and disposition of happiness ; without which it is no more possible for a rational creature to be made happy, than it is to alter the nature and essence, the necessary, eternal reason and proportion of things. This is the plain and true reason, why love, charity and goodness are constantly preferred before all other virtues ; as being the ultimate end and design of religion, and themselves a principal and necessary ingredient of the joys of heaven. Almost every other virtue, gift and excellency whatsoever, are but as means to this end ; and to be done away when that which is perfect is come. Hope is but the present expectation, and faith the firm belief, of those things which shall hereafter be made manifest. And when that

comes, these virtues, and all other gifts in order thereto, must of course cease. “Whether there be  
 “prophecies they shall fail; whether there be  
 “tongues they shall cease; whether there be  
 “knowledge it shall vanish away; but charity  
 “and goodness never fail.” These are dispositions of mind which are begun in the virtues of this life, and compleated in the glory of the next; which will grow up with the improvements of our knowledge and virtue here, to a perfect unspeakable happiness in the enjoyments of the world to come, *C.*

And could any man who seriously considers these things, and was unacquainted with the practice of the world, believe it possible; that men who professed that holy religion, which so plainly teaches this doctrine of peace, should yet, directly contrary to the whole end and design of Christ’s religion, so far indulge their passions, pride, covetousness, and ambition; as not only to be the cause of envyings, strifes and contentions, but even to make wars and fightings necessary among Christians, to the infinite scandal of our most holy religion; in the sight of Jews, Turks and Pagans, among whom “the name of God is blasphemed thro’ us?” Could we believe it possible, if it was not too manifest in experience, that men, who call themselves Christians, should oppress, bite and devour one another, and yet not be afraid, they should be consumed one of another? And is it not still much more absurd, that religion itself, that the religion of Christ, the religion of peace and love, which was intended to reconcile men to God, and each other, should be made the occasion of hatred, animosity and contention; nay, of the greatest oppressions and most inhuman cruelties? in a word, that any pretences of religion should produce in men that spirit, for the preventing whereof all religion was principally and ultimately intended?

tended? I shall conclude this head in the words of the apostle "Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you, let him shew out of a good conversation, his works with meekness of wisdom? But if ye have bitter envyings and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descended not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish; for where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits."

It remains to consider briefly some of the principal variations of this great duty, arising from the different relations and circumstances that men stand in, one towards another. And here the practice of this duty is diversified as many ways, as there are different stations, circumstances and conditions of men. And, in respect of our behaviour towards superiors; the duty of universal love, is to express itself in a willing, hearty and cheerful obedience to the commands of those whom God hath set over us; in delighting to promote their honour, and to increase among men that duty and respect, which is due to authority; in thinking them that rule, well worthy of double honour; and in endeavouring to promote all the ends and designs of good government, the execution of wise and beneficial laws, the peace and prosperity of the public.

In respect of our behaviour towards inferiors; the duty of Christian love consists in being just, righteous and merciful; in readily relieving the necessities of those that want; in delivering and vindicating the oppressed; in instructing the ignorant and those that are in error; in reproving the wicked, and endeavouring by good example and advice, to

bring

bring them to a better mind. In a word, to do all the good we can to the souls and bodies of men, in imitation of our Saviour, “ who went about doing good.”

And by how much the greater any man's power, riches, interest, or authority in the world is to do good; by so much the more glorious is he, in exercising and employing such his power and interest to that excellent and noble end. And here is the true and immortal glory of princes, that as they represent God in the exercise of power and authority in the world, so they resemble him in the application of that power, to the ends of virtue and goodness, in promoting the public happiness of mankind. Power is not desirable for its own sake, any more than wisdom and knowledge; but only for the sake of that greater good, which it enables men to do in the world. And to abuse power to the enslaving and destroying mankind, and to the serving such purposes, the preventing whereof is indeed the only good reason for which power is truly desirable, is the greatest weakness and absurdity in the world. God is the supreme governor of the universe, entirely possessed of absolute and uncontrolled power; yet he uses it to no other end than to preserve, support, and to do good to all his creatures. He is good, and does good, and esteems goodness his greatest glory and perfection; as being the title by which he most delights to be described. True greatness therefore is to imitate God in this most glorious perfection of goodness. And those whom he has endued with power and authority, to represent him on earth, are then most truly and illustriously his vicegerents, when they look upon a large extent of power, to be only a greater compass of doing good; when they imitate God, in being lovers and preservers of mankind, and making govern-

government a protection and security to all that live under it.

In respect of our behaviour towards our enemies, or those who have done us any injury; the duty of universal love and charity, is, to shew forth itself in a willing and ready disposition to forgive them, upon their repentance and desire of reconciliation. "If thy brother trespasses against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent forgive him; and if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him." This we Christians are in a particular manner obliged to, by the example of God's much greater goodness and compassion towards us; for since God has forgiven us all our ten thousand talents, nothing can be more reasonable in the nature of the thing itself, than that we should be moved by that example, freely to forgive one another our hundred pence; and to have compassion each on our fellow servants, as God has had pity on us. But besides the reasonableness of the thing itself, God has also made it the express condition of our enjoying the benefit of his most gracious pardon. For our Saviour saith, "so likewise shall my heavenly father do also unto you, if ye from your heart forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." And even in our daily prayer, we are directed to ask forgiveness of God, only upon such condition, and in such manner, as we forgive one another our trespasses. This is indeed supposing our enemies repentance; but should they not repent, yet we are obliged to love and bless them, to pray for them, and take all opportunities of doing them good, after the example of our heavenly father, who doeth good, even to the evil and unthankful.

Lastly,

Lastly, in respect of the behaviour of good men, towards those who either neglect or despise religion in general, or are so unhappy as to have embraced any dangerous errors; the duty of universal love and charity obliges us to endeavour by all the ways of gentleness, instruction, and reproof, to bring them to repentance and a better mind. Magistrates indeed, and those who are placed in authority, may and ought to make use of punishment and severity, towards those who are guilty of such crimes, as are destructive of human society; and the strict execution of good laws, is in that case an instance of the greatest love and charity to the public. But otherwise, it is the duty of "a servant of the Lord not to strive, but to be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." And our Saviour severely condemns that spirit, which some of his disciples discovered, when they desired to call for fire from heaven upon the Samaritans, who refused to give him reception. Such persons as are not yet come to a right sense of religion in general, it is our duty to persuade by reason and argument; to convince them of the being, attributes, and providence of God; of the necessity and infinite importance of religion; of the unalterable difference of good and evil; of the reasonableness, excellency and positive evidence of the Christian revelation. And those who are so unhappy, as to be involved in any particular, pernicious errors, it is our duty to inform, instruct, reprove, and by all Christian means endeavour to bring them back, to the acknowledgment of the truth. Taking care above all things, to shew them by our good examples, and by the influence of truth upon our

lives;

lives ; that we have no other design in endeavouring to convince them, but their and our own salvation. Remembering the apostles words, “ Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one do convert him ; let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”

Discourse

Discourse LXXXIX. Dr.  
*Goodman.*

The GOLDEN RULE, OR LAW OF EQUITY.

Mat. vii. 12.

Whatsoever ye would that men should do un- 8<sup>r</sup>. 5. --  
to you, do ye even unto them.

**T**HERE never was any law, human or divine, that hath been more universally received and acknowledged, than this general rule or maxim of our Saviour. It hath been admired both by Jews, Gentiles and Christians; by men of all ages, countries, sects, qualities and conditions. The reason of it is as clear as the light, the date of it as ancient as mankind, and its obligation as lasting as the frame of human nature. For there neither is, nor ever was, a precept of any religion or institution, so exactly calculated for the benefit of mankind, or for the maintaining of justice and equity, peace and love in the world as this is. It may therefore be justly wondered at, that when all men so universally allow of such a common principle of equity, that yet there should be so much uneasiness and complaints in the world; such frauds and injustice, oppressions and persecutions, animosities and differences. And surely this must proceed, either from mens acting inconsistently with themselves, contradicting their avowed principles by their practices; or that they do not understand or sufficiently consider, the force and obligation of this rule. For this reason I will endeavour to rectify some mistakes,  
by

by giving a brief and plain explication of this great law of nature, and of the gospel.

For the better understanding this maxim or sentence of our blessed Lord, we need only suppose, what no one can doubt or deny, that there is such a principle within us, as self-love; and which in itself, is both innocent, useful and necessary. God implanted this principle in us, for great and wise ends, partly to be a guard and preservative of our beings, and to sweeten life to us; but principally to be the foundation of all his laws, by which he governs us. For if we had no delight in ourselves, no concern for our own welfare, it would be needless in God to propose laws to us, and to enforce them with the threatnings and promises of rewards and punishments.

In all other instances of our duty towards God, this principle of self-love is only the motive of our obedience; but in this law of loving our neighbour, it is not only the motive, but also the rule and measure of our duty. So that here we have always a rule, how to behave in all our actions towards others. For God having made it our duty in general to love our neighbour as ourself; we need only turn our eye inward, and consult our own hearts, and we are presently instructed in all the particulars of that duty. This is a standard, a constant oracle in our own bosoms, which can never fail us, if we act impartially; unless we can hate ourselves, which is impossible. For if I give others the same measure I use to myself, who can complain? This is a rule plain and easy, full and certain, and always at hand. For it is only turning the tables, and supposing my case to be my neighbours, or his mine, and the thing is settled. I may possibly envy my neighbour, which may tempt me to give a wrong judgment; but if I change the scales, and put him in my place, and myself in his, I shall soon

soon act impartially ; for tho' I may be prejudiced against him, yet I cannot be so against myself. It is also possible that my neighbour may unreasonably desire more than is fit ; if so, let me consider, what would be equal for me to desire of him, and then render to him so much and no more. When men are in prosperity, they will too often contemn those who are in adversity ; and persons in adversity are too apt to envy and censure those in prosperity. But would we here turn the tables, and each suppose himself in the other's place, we should soon perceive what is fit on both sides. For was the rich man put in the scale of the poor, he would think it hard to be despised, because of his poverty, or to impute his calamity to him, as a crime ; but would think it just, for to be kindly and humanely treated in his adversity. And would the poor man put himself in the rich man's place, he would certainly think, that tho' a rich man is not always wiser or better than another, yet there is some respect due to his station, and that he deserves not to be called a proud man, only for keeping up his character. Thus would both judge and act in their own case, tho' they cannot discern it in another's. Hence we may observe the use of this principle of self-love, and that we have a court of equity in our own bosoms always to appeal to.

The natural and universal equity of this rule will appear, by considering the actual equality of nature, and the possibility and probability of equality of condition in all men, one time or other. It is but fit and reasonable, that we should carry an even hand between ourselves and others, because our neighbour is properly ourselves, we being all equal in nature ; for whatever difference there may be in men's outward circumstances, that is merely accidental, and when divested of these, all men are alike. All men have the same creator, and are equally related

to God. All mens bodies were produced from the same earth, cast in the same mould, are born and die alike. And as to their souls, they are also equal; all have the same divine image, the same faculties, and reason is the same throughout the world. And therefore to act by our neighbour as we would be dealt by ourselves, is an universal and indispensable law of justice. Besides, there is a possibility, if not a probability, of the equality of all mens conditions and circumstances one time or other. The rich may fall to poverty, and the poor may become rich. The man of dignity and power may be depressed, and the man of low degree may be exalted. Such changes are frequent, and he must be very vain and stupid, who considers not, that this may be his own case. And therefore he who is now in prosperity, should be humble, modest and merciful towards his inferiors, and to all who are in affliction; and those in adversity should entertain such thoughts of those above them, as they would like for others to have of them, when their condition happens to be changed. And he that doth not thus act, is neither just for the present, nor provident for the future. But however easy this rule may seem to be, yet it is most certain, that there are great and frequent mistakes in the application of it. Some take it in so large a sense, as to supersede all other laws both divine and human; and others by restraining the design of it, make it no rule at all, unless to serve a turn. It will be therefore necessary to fix the just bounds and limits of it, in order for the clearer explication of the text.

And it must be observed, that this rule before us, is only intended for the government of our actions towards men, and not as a measure of our duty towards God. And with respect to our neighbour, this maxim or sentence is rather to be considered as a measure, than a law; that is, its use is rather to prescribe

prescribe to us how much, than what we should do ; it is intended to direct us in the right discharge of such actions towards our neighbour, as are known to be lawful ; and not properly as a law to warrant what we are about to do. For otherwise, a common drunkard might justify his debauching other men into that beastly vice, under a pretence, that he doth no more than what he is content should be done to him. And a lascivious person, could he be allowed to defile his neighbour's bed, might perhaps be willing another should do as much for him. And no doubt, an expert cheat, would permit others to cheat him if they could, provided he might freely exercise his talent on them. But this maxim or rule doth not allow of evil actions, nor yet determine any to be good, merely on the mutual inclinations of mens minds. For this would be to repeal all the laws of God and man, and under pretence of making every man a law to himself, he would become lawless ; but it only prescribes the measure of our actions, in things lawful and honest.

For instance ; suppose I am deliberating how to behave towards my poor brother in adversity, as to what relief I ought to afford him. Here the thing is certainly good and lawful, in general ; and then this rule becomes necessary to direct me in the measure of my duty ; for it informs me, that I should act by this poor man, just as I would be dealt with by him, if his case was mine and mine his. But suppose I am deliberating about retaliating or revenging an injury done me ; here I must have a law to justify me in revenging myself, before I can determine what measure of revenge I am to take. For I must be first sure, it is lawful for me to avenge myself, and that I do not usurp God's prerogative, who hath said, vengeance is mine. But then, we must not only be satisfied, that the mat-

ter of the action be in itself lawful, but also that it be such, as I should think was of right due, and belonging to me, was the case mine. For I am not bound to do to another all that is lawful, or all which I could wish he should do to me; nor yet to refrain from doing to him, what I could wish he would not do to me. But I am both to do, and refrain from doing to him, all that, which after consulting my own heart and conscience, I should think him bound to do, or refrain from doing to me in the like case.

For example; if I was in extreme poverty, when my neighbour was in great affluence and prosperity, no doubt I should be easily tempted to wish, that out of his abundance, he would not only relieve my present urgent necessity, but also by a large and plentiful charity, entirely raise me out of my distressed condition. This I could wish in my own case, and no doubt it is lawful, for such a rich man so to do, if he please; but yet I cannot think him bound to this, or that he is guilty of sin, if he doth not. For I should not think it a sin in myself to do so by him, and therefore he is not obliged in duty to do thus by me. Again, it is certain, that any man would be loth to die as a malefactor, whatever his crime be; but it would be very absurd to conclude from hence, that the magistrate ought to pardon me, or for me to say, that he is cruel in putting me to that death, which I have deserved. For tho' I could wish for a pardon, and that it is in his power, yet he will not be guilty of sin, if he do not pardon me; for my own heart cannot say, I was bound to do so in the like case, and therefore, according to the rule before us, I cannot pronounce that he ought to do it. Not therefore whatsoever I could honestly wish for from my neighbour, nor every thing that is lawful, is necessary for him to do to me; but only that,  
which

which I can reasonably and impartially judge to be his duty towards me, and that because I should think it my duty towards him in the like case ; this and no more I may justly expect from him, by this rule of equity.

But it is farther to be considered, that as all men are equal in nature, consequently whatsoever treatment is due to one man, must be so to another ; and therefore this rule is to govern all men, in all their actions and intercourse, one with another, without respect of persons, be their quality or condition what it will : this being founded in nature, antecedently to the several ranks and distinctions of men, the prince is as much obliged by it, as any private man. It is a rule to be observed by men of all countries and dominions, for all mankind are our neighbours. It obliges men of different religions, as well as those of the same way of worship. Nay, an equitable behaviour is due to men of all persuasions ; for their weakness, follies, or errors destroys not their natural right to an equitable treatment. No man can be so inconsiderable, or despicable, but he hath an interest in the common charity of Christians. No man is so remote from his country, or so different from us in opinion, so weak in understanding, so vicious or ill tempered, but there is a common tie of equity between us and him, which nothing can forfeit, nor no power on earth dispense with. And therefore those who confine equity, justice, and charity to a party ; that imagine they cannot wrong one who differs from them, that no faith is to be kept with hereticks, and the like ; such revive the very dregs of Judaism, and utterly destroy the great design of Christianity, under an ignorant zeal for their own opinions. Again :

This passage of our Saviour was not intended to be a rule of retribution, or requital, but of kind-

ness. It is not said, do to other men, as they have done to you; but, as ye would they should do to you; that is, we must be so inclined to do good offices to others, as not to stay till an obligation is laid upon us, and then requite it; but we must begin to be an example of kindness to one another, and so make the world better natured. The gospel requires us, to love our enemies, to do good to them that hate and persecute us. Not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good. That is, by love, kindness and beneficence, to melt men into good nature; and by so doing, we shall heap coals of fire on their heads. The temper of a Christian is to do good without invitation, or persuasion; from the mere benignity of his nature, and a love of beneficence; and the proportion of that must be such, as he would gladly meet with from others, was the case altered. I will now specify some of the principal instances, to which this rule may be applied, and from whence will appear, the great influence it will have on human affairs.

Indeed the use of this maxim is so general, and the occasions of having recourse to it, so frequent, that experience only can shew its importance. The attending to this rule, would in a great measure prevent those wars and bloodshed, that cruelty and rapine, those desolations of countries and kingdoms, which are not more the infelicities, than the shame and reproach of mankind, and that almost destroys the distinction between man and beast. But is there no such thing as a court of conscience, or common equity? Is there no common law of reason? Are there no general bonds of human society? Is there no such universal rule, as to do as we would be done by? If there be, as we have shewn there is, then the consideration of, and application to it, might end disputes, without the

umpirage of the sword ; for princes when they put on the diadem do not put off the nature of men. And then it would not appear lawful, to involve whole nations in blood, on a punctilio of honour, or for their own glory, or for encrease of dominion, or to take advantage of intestine divisions, the minority of a prince, the corruption of ministers, or the like. But whoever examines his own court of conscience, will readily acknowledge, that he would not be so dealt with himself, and therefore ought not to act so by others. And this court of equity is always open ; written laws may be interrupted, but this is always in force. r

But if princes and great states will not be restrained by this law, yet surely it should be of authority with private persons, and be sufficient to suppress duels, and shedding the blood of war in peace ; which is a most savage custom, and much worse than war, because between princes, there is no superior court to appeal to for justice ; but in this case, there is a remedy in human judicatures. How intolerable then is it, that my own life and my neighbours should be put to the hazard of the sword, on the slightest provocations ; perhaps for a mere rash word or jest, not worth the notice of a great mind, and which a wise man would despise ? But if men consulted their reason or conscience, or any thing but their brutish passions, they would certainly make allowance for such follies and inadvertencies in others ; since they themselves are not exempted therefrom. Besides, would they like to answer with their lives, for every indiscretion which they have been guilty of ? Methinks, a man, especially a Christian, should take a more noble revenge ; I mean, to forgive the injury, and so be above his adversary. This is the best way to triumph over him. For why should I not oblige him by kindness, and heap coals of fire on his head, like a brave

Christian, rather than like a beast, endeavour to kill him, only because he may have done me some little injury?

The application of this rule to our practice, would tend much to the prevention of another great evil, namely, law-suits, which are usually managed with as much malice and envy as war itself; to the great reproach of religion, and this nation in particular. Nor is it only the expence that is to be considered, but the inflaming of mens passions, the hindrance and scandal to religion, and the entailing of quarrels upon posterity. Were these things fatally necessary and unavoidable, it would be endless to complain; but there is a remedy always at hand, would we make use of it. What, saith the apostle, is there not a wise man among you; no one that should be able to judge between his brethren? Especially, is there no such thing as conscience, or a court of equity? Is not the rule before us, sufficient to determine quarrels? Would the plaintiff put himself in the defendant's place, and he in the other's, both would easily know how to settle matters amicably. And the observation of this rule, would no less advance the interest and reputation of the Christian church, than the quiet of the world; and prevent most of those severities, which Christians too frequently use one towards another; each forgetting to do to others, as they would be done to themselves.—By persecution, religion is made odious, and loses its principal glory of being rational; for men will suspect that to be destitute of truth, which wants to be supported by force. To punish men for not believing as others do, is the way to prevent all study, all the improvement of mens understandings, and to supplant religion, by introducing hypocrisy, and an implicit faith. And yet this may be avoided, by a due application of the maxim before us. For, these blind

zealots, who are ever most forward in persecution, tho' they have but little or no conscience, yet cannot be without the principle of self-love; and did they but turn the tables, and change the scale, they would soon discover the truth of things on both sides.

For instance; suppose I would fain have another of my opinion, yet it would not become me to persecute him, if he will not; because, turning the tables, I should not be pleased to be so dealt with, in the like case; for I am no more infallible than he is; and he hath as much right to persecute me into his opinion, as I have to force him into mine. But perhaps the way I am of is publicly established, and reputed the most orthodox; be it so: yet if I look into myself, I shall find that I cannot be of what opinion I will. And was I heterodox, I should think it hard to be forced to believe what another imagines to be orthodox; therefore such usage cannot be equal towards other men. Again, the framing ourselves by this rule, "of doing as we would be done to," would produce another temper and spirit among us, in the managing of religious disputes and controversies, whether in private conference, or public writings. The heats and passions, the personal reflections, and abusive treatment of one another in these affairs, are become scandalous. A behaviour this utterly inconsistent with Christianity, which requires, and produces, wherever it effectually prevails, the most mild, innocent, and dove-like temper; and is most peculiarly indecent, in so serious and solemn an affair as religion. And whoever consults his own breast, would not be guilty of this to another, because he would not like to be so treated himself. If my adversary think otherwise than I do, yet I differ no more from him, than he doth from me. I am content he should urge his reasons against me; but I would  
not

not have him pelt me with hard words, instead of arguments; therefore I ought not to do so by him: Let him rest the point upon the merits of the cause, but not blemish my person or reputation. It is a sign a person is destitute of good proof, when passion supplies the place of reason. I will not therefore use contemptuous reflections, sly insinuations, or malicious invectives against him, because I think it unjust, that he should do so by me. Besides, if my cause be good, it wants not such artifices; and if bad, this method will not mend it, but rather make my temper appear as bad as my cause.

B-

The due consideration of this maxim would cure another great evil, that of upbraiding one another with former follies and miscarriages; a custom most uncharitable and imprudent, fatally tending to obstruct the reformation of others, and naturally rebounding on those who practise it. For, first, it is disingenuous to reproach and upbraid men for those follies and sins they have repented of and forsaken. It is hard, that no time or merit shall efface human miscarriages! that mortal sinful men should never forgive one another, who every day want forgiveness of Almighty God! and it is what almost invincibly tempts men to continue evil, because they are made to despair of ever being believed to be good; so that hope is hereby entirely defeated. And yet who is there, that hath not been mistaken in his youth; who hath not one time or other been tempted, surprized, or abused; who hath not had his prejudices of education, or been over-reached and imposed upon, by artful cunning men? besides, it is certain, that every man would be desirous, to have a veil drawn over his errors and blemishes; that an act of oblivion should pass upon his former miscarriages; and would think it very unjust, for others to charge him with the  
opi-

opinions he hath abandoned, or upbraid him with the actions he hath repented of. He would gladly be taken for what he is, and not what he was. Therefore by the rule of equity, thus should every man do by another.

And did we strictly observe this one maxim, of doing as we would be done by, it would prevent all the frauds, cheatings and oppressions, that so abound in the world, and which no laws nor punishments can restrain. For this rule detects and convicts, condemns and shames men, at a bar, which no man can appeal from, or except against. Here will want no witnesses, no inquest, no judge, but a man's own self; and he that is faulty, his own conscience will condemn him. No man who consults this oracle, will find in his heart to oppress his neighbour by power and interest, with unjust lawsuits, or base fraud; or take advantage of his weakness, simplicity, or necessity. This principle of self-love sticks close to our nature, and is ever before our eyes; and if it be but applied as before observed, it will determine us to just and righteous, fair and candid dealings; for whatsoever I would not, that others should do to me, that I must not do to them. I shall now make an inference or two from what has been said.

And tho' this maxim is not properly a rule of religion towards God, but only the measure of our duty towards our neighbour; yet it is of so great authority, that without a peculiar regard to this rule, in our intercourse with men, the most glorious pretences of piety towards God, will little avail. Men, by a mighty zeal about opinions, without regard to equity, justice and mercy, neither honour God, benefit the world, nor gain reputation to themselves. To be devout in any form of worship, without honesty and ingenuity in our dealings, is at the best but acting the part of a hypocrite,

pocrite, without any true notion, or sense of religion. To profess and espouse the best sect and party that is, without an equal regard to this rule, will at least be suspected of meer knavery. He who neglects the weightier matters of faith, justice, and mercy, can have no pretence to Christianity. God loves mercy more than sacrifice, and is better pleased with our equitable dealing with our neighbour, than with the most costly oblations to himself. "Pure religion and undefiled before God, and the father, is to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, &c." The Christian religion requires of all its profelytes, justice, mildness, clemency and equity. And certainly there is nothing like down-right honesty, to give reputation to religion; this being a most popular argument to recommend it. But when men highly pretend to devotion, and yet appear disingenuous and unjust, unmerciful and cruel, it must prove very injurious to religion. Again,

The observing this rule is so acceptable with God, that it seems the most effectual way to obtain success in our prayers and addresses to him. For it is remarkable, that this maxim was delivered by our Saviour, on that very occasion. After he had said, "ask, and it shall be given unto you," he adds, "therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you; do ye even so unto them." And in the Lord's prayer we are taught to use this argument, "forgive us our trespasses," because, "we forgive them that trespass against us. For, if we forgive not men their trespasses, says our Saviour, neither will our heavenly father forgive ours." But whatever may be the advantages of observing this rule otherwise, a man will assuredly reap the fruit of inward peace, comfort and satisfaction in so doing; nor will any event of things discompose him; for whatever may happen, so long as he has  
been

been true to his own conscience, this principle will secure him from the malice of men, from the fear and suspicion of all evil. So that a retreat into a man's self is the great refuge from troubles abroad; and the reflection upon a man's integrity in this point, is the principal consolation in human life. With this holy Job comforted himself. He elegantly represents the great support and comfort it afforded him in his adversity, that he had in his prosperity dealt equitably, and mercifully, and considered other mens cases as his own.

On the other side, it will be a sad aggravation of our trouble, when adversity befalls us, if we shall have cause to reflect, "that when I was in prosperity, I had no sense of equity and humanity towards others, and now I must justly expect, that they will have as little for me, in my adversity." And we may easily imagine, what a dreadful remorse, and sad agony Joseph's brethren were in, when they came to reflect in their straits, how unnaturally they had treated their brother? "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." Since then we know not how soon it may be our turn, to be at the lower part of the wheel, we should wisely and prudently temper ourselves with equity and moderation, whilst we are uppermost, and so do to others, as at another time, we would wish and expect they should do by us.

Discourse XC. Abp. *Tillotson.*

## OF IMITATING the LIFE of CHRIST.

I Peter ii. 21.

Leaving us an example, that ye should follow  
his steps.

**T**HOUGH the example of our Saviour is here proposed to us on a particular occasion, and with more especial regard to the virtue of patience under unjust sufferings, which so eminently appeared in our blessed Lord; yet the apostle does not limit this great pattern of all righteousness, to the single virtue of patience, but proposes it to us, as an example of universal holiness and goodness; for he so extends it, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps, who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. In this latitude and extent, I shall consider the life of our Saviour, as an example for our imitation. And,

The life of our blessed Lord is a most absolute and perfect pattern of holiness and godliness, as well as of patience under sufferings; in imitating which, there is no danger of error, no fear of miscarriage. In the lives of the best of men recorded in scripture, we may discern some speck, and blemish, some error, fall or slip; but the example of our Lord is a living law and rule, his precepts and pattern are of equal perfection, and the imitation of his life and actions, is the same thing, as obedience to his laws. For the life of Christ, was the life of God in the nature and  
likeness

likeness of man ; he was God as well as man, and the divine nature must be a pattern of all perfection. As the son of God, he was the “ brightness of his father’s glory, and the express image and character of his person.” As the son of man, he had all the moral perfections belonging to human nature, exclusive of any evil inclinations, or sinful frailties, but not without our natural infirmities ; for he was subject to hunger and thirst, weariness and pain like other men. And his human nature was assisted in an extraordinary manner by the spirit of God, above all the prophets and messengers of God, that were ever sent to mankind ; “ he had no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.” And indeed it was requisite, that he who “ was manifested to take away our sins,” and make expiation for them, should himself be without sin. We wanted an high-priest, “ who was holy, harmless, and undefiled, separate from sinners :” This was necessary both as an example, and to make expiation for sin. And,

As the life of our blessed Saviour is a most perfect, so it is a familiar and easy example ; an example of equal perfection with God himself, but more plain and level to us, as being adorned with the several virtues, that most frequently happen in human life. Nothing was ever more easy for common imitation, than his holy life ; it was perfect innocency and goodness, and his design was to do whatever good he possibly could. This he pursued with the greatest vigour and industry, courage and resolution, diligence and serenity of mind. This was his meat and drink, his great business and delight, his life and happiness. He had no affected singularities, no peculiar austerities in habit or diet, different from common men ; but his conversation was kind and innocent, free and familiar, to all persons. He was a physician, and all mankind his patients ;

patients ; he did not place religion, like some since, in retirement from the world, shunning the conversation of men, and taking care to do no one good. Nor did it consist in profound mysteries, and fine speculations, but in the honest practice of solid virtue ; in meekness and humility, kindness and charity, contentment and easiness of mind, patience and submission to the will of God, under the greatest afflictions, reproaches and sufferings. And all this is level to every man's understanding, also easy to our practice and imitation ; for it requires only an honest mind, due care and diligence to do what we know, to follow our guide in a plain way ; and in all actions of our lives, to tread in those steps, which the son of God, the best man that ever was, did walk in.

The life of our blessed Saviour is also an encouraging example. To see what God requires of us, performed by a man like ourselves, gives great life to all good resolutions and endeavours. Indeed he had many advantages above us, his humanity being so supported by the divine nature united to it, as to be free from sin, and all vicious inclinations. But then we are to consider, that God does not require perfect obedience, as the condition of our salvation and happiness ; but only sincerity in obeying his laws, and to endeavour after greater perfection, which by God's grace is very possible, even in this imperfect state ; and his grace he hath assured us shall not be wanting, if we heartily and earnestly beg it of him. Besides, as Christ was the son of God, so are we in a lower degree, by grace and adoption, for the spirit of Christ dwells in us ; and the same spirit which kept and preserved him from all sin, is equally able to mortify sin in us, and to enable us to perform God's will in such a manner, as he is pleased to accept to our justification. Lastly,

the

the life of Christ is an univerval pattern ; his example was calculated for all times and places, suited to all callings, conditions, and capacities of men ; fitted for general direction and imitation, in all sorts of goodness and virtue ; and for this reason, he engaged himself in no particular calling or way of life, that his pattern might more equally and indifferently regard all mankind. For though he was a person, most high in birth and dignity, being the only son of God, the maker and heir of all things ; yet he submitted to the lowest condition of poverty and meanness, of contempt and sufferings, in order to teach men of high degree to be humble and serviceable to others ; and for such as are in affliction, to be contented and chearful in the meanest condition, and hardest circumstances. Tho' in "him were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," yet he was not ostentatious ; he did not puzzle his hearers with abstruse speculations and sublime mysteries, but in a plain familiar way, instructed them in what was most useful and necessary to be known. Though he confounded the wisdom of the wise, yet he condescended to the weakness and ignorance of the meanest capacity ; herein "giving us an example to follow his steps." Tho' he sometime retired from company, to attend upon God, and meditate on heavenly things ; yet most frequently he conversed with all sorts of persons, even publicans and sinners, in order to reform and reclaim them from sin, and to do what good he could. So that he was a pattern both of the contemplative and active life, and this to shew us how to mix both these to the greatest advantage. But more particularly, the life of our blessed Saviour is a pattern to us, in the several following instances.

It is a pattern of the greatest and most substantial virtues ; of fervent piety and devotion towards

God ; he often retired, and sometimes spent whole nights in prayer ; his discourse was always either instructive in divine truths, or persuasive to holy living. Also of “ ready and chearful obedience to “ God’s will ;” he speaks of it with pleasure. “ I “ am come to do thy will, O God ; he delighted “ in it,” and in no instance declined it ; how difficult and displeasing soever to flesh and blood, and of perfect purity and innocency of life. The apostle tells us, “ he was a lamb without spot and blemish, “ he did no sin, he was holy, harmless, undefiled, “ separate from sinners, leaving us herein an example,” that though we cannot keep pace with him, yet “ we should follow his steps.” Also of universal charity, taking all opportunities of doing what good he could, temporal and spiritual to all men ; of which his whole life was one great and continued instance. And he that was so good to all, we need not doubt of his justice, had there been occasion for it, but he had nothing to do with matters wherein justice is concerned, having no estate of his own, and he meddled not with those of other men.

His life was a pattern of the most rare and unusual virtues. His conversation was free and open, without guile and disguise. This is no common virtue. Perfect sincerity is a great foundation of goodness, it being soundness at the heart ; but like perfect health, is seldom seen. He was also eminent in the unusual virtue of humility, without affectation and secret pride. This appeared remarkable and natural in his whole life, which was a continued instance of it, and what he proposes to our imitation ; says he, “ take my yoke upon you, “ and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in spirit.” And St. Paul, “ let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God,  
but

but made himself of no reputation (having emptied himself of majesty and glory) and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Here was humility indeed! from so great a height, the top of glory and majesty, to stoop so low as to the lowest pitch of meanness and misery. How should this shame and confound the pride of the sons of men, to see the son of God so humble? there is no virtue we have so much reason to imitate, and yet there is none we perform, with so little inclination. We know that we have no cause to be proud, for pride was not made for man, and therefore it no way becomes us; and yet we know not how to be humble. Let the example of our Lord's humility bring down the haughtiness of men, let us consider how he abased himself, and then become "vile in our own eyes, abhor ourselves in dust and ashes." Again,

His contempt of the world, the enjoyment and pleasures of it, was such, that he had not so much as a settled abode and habitation; nay, he was in a more destitute condition than the brute creatures; for he himself tells us, "the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the son of man hath not where to lay his head:" Not that he expects us to imitate him in this particular; for he might, and we may lawfully possess and enjoy the good things of life; but to teach us not to overprize them, not too earnestly to seek, nor too inordinately to love them. That as he despised them, so we should not admire and doat on them; as he possessed them not, so we should not set our hearts and affections on them; and as he preferred doing good, to all this world's enjoyments, so we should value temporal blessings, only in order to that

end. And his excessive kindness to us was such, as men rarely shew to their best friends, or the best of men, and what no man ever shewed to his enemies; peradventure for a good man one would even dare to die, but in this was God's love manifested, that whilst we were sinners, Christ died for us. And this pattern of love our Saviour recommends to our imitation. This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you; greater love than this hath no man, that a man lays down his life for his friend." The highest pitch of human friendship that ever was, is to die for his friend. But our Lord died, not for his friends, but his enemies, that he might make them his friends, by gaining them to obey his laws; "ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." Here is a pattern of the highest and most unusual love; not that every man by virtue of this example, is to lay down his life for another, it being impracticable; but that as Christ died for a common good, so we ought to bear that common affection to mankind, especially to such as are endeared to us, as to be ready by our single life, if there is occasion, to redeem the lives of many of our brethren, and expose ourselves to save them.

The life of our blessed Saviour is also a pattern of such virtues as are most useful and beneficial to others; in being ready to do good to all persons, by instructing their ignorance, supplying their wants, spiritual and temporal; by resolving their doubts, comforting them in trouble, healing their diseases and infirmities; and what he did in methods miraculous and extraordinary, we must do by ordinary means, and such as are in our power. He also used an unwearied diligence in this work; for daily he went about doing good; he took delight in this employment, he esteemed it his happiness, and a greater

greater felicity to confer, than to receive benefits ; “ he thought it more blessed to give, than to receive.” No less remarkable was his condescension to others, in considering their weakness, and complying with them in lawful and indifferent things. St. Paul urgeth our Lord’s example to Christians, “ we that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. — For even Christ pleased not himself.” Where we have liberty and can yield, we ought to abate of our own humour, for the good and edification of others ; and not stiffly insist on lesser things, to the hindrance of greater good ; even Christ pleased not himself. He who had all authority to command, who could not err, and had all right to be obeyed, yet condescended to the weakness and infirmities of others, and in things indifferent did not consult his own inclination, but their interest and edification ; and as what greatly conduceth to the benefit of all societies, both civil and ecclesiastical, he gave us the example of an obedient and peaceable temper, conforming not only to divine but human laws, “ giving to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s, and to God the things which are God’s ;” inasmuch, that being poor and unable to pay tribute to Cæsar when demanded, he chose rather to work a miracle, than appear disobedient. And in religious concerns, as to the observance of days and times, he not only conformed to all divine institutions, but to human appointments and usage in things of an innocent, indifferent nature ; with great prudence steering a middle course between superstition and faction, giving all Christians herein a pattern, how to demean themselves in like cases, with great peaceableness and obedience. And our Lord not only gave us the example of a peaceable and unifying spirit, but bequeaths it as his last legacy ; “ peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you ;” and

he prays, that God would preserve this spirit of peace and unity among Christians, to the end of the world. “ Neither pray I for these alone, meaning his disciples, but for them also which shall believe on me, through their word ; that is, for all Christians to the end of the world ; that they all may be one, as thou father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us ; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”

And our Saviour is a pattern to us of such virtues, as are most hard and difficult to be practised ; such as self-denial, meekness, forgiveness of injuries, contentment, and patience under sufferings. He denied his own life, and suffered whatever God pleased. “ I came down from heaven, says he, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.” he renounced his own will in obedience to the will of God. And when nature declined those dreadful sufferings at the apprehension of their approaching ; yet he considered his duty, and made his inclination submit to it ; saying, “ O my father, if this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.” That he might do good to mankind, he was contented to be esteemed one of the worst of men, to undergo reproach, to be called an impostor, a seducer of the people, a seditious person, and to be judged more worthy of death, than the greatest malefactor. Thus was the son of God abased and vilified, that he might be a perfect pattern to us of this difficult virtue of self-denial. Here is an example that hath both argument and encouragement to persuade us to the like imitation. And was he who had so regular a will and inclination, contented to have it crucified and contradicted ? Did he, who had an unquestionable right to all the riches and enjoyments of the world, renounce them all, and embrace poverty ? Did he, to whose deep wisdom and judgment

ment all mankind ought to submit, condescend to the weakness of others, and not please himself? Did he, who never did any thing to stain or blemish his reputation, patiently bear all sorts of slander and reproach? and shall we think much to deny ourselves in any of these? such an example is of greater force and authority than any precept. And if he thus denied himself, how ought we; since “the disciple is not greater than his master, nor the servant than his Lord?”

Meekness is also a very difficult virtue, if we consider the infirmity of human nature, and our frequent temptations to passion and anger. Moses, the greatest of all prophets, and the meekest man upon earth, fell into an irregular passion. But our blessed Lord, tho’ perpetually assaulted with the highest provocations, always maintained a meek and even spirit. The dulness of his disciples afforded a great trial of patience, yet his worst words were, “O unwise and slow of heart to believe! how long shall I suffer you?” When in the height of his sorrow and trouble his disciples fell asleep, tho’ he reproves their drowsiness, yet he immediately excuses it, “can ye not watch with me one hour? the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” In all his actions he was perfectly meek and lowly of spirit, yet lived and died almost under continual provocations to anger and resentment, not only from his friends and followers, but from all sorts of persons: for if the most spiteful reproaches and injurious usage, the most cruel persecutions and sufferings; if the contradiction of sinners, whom he came to save; if their malice, joined to the greatest ingratitude; if all these are provocations of a high nature, he was almost continually exercised with them; and yet under them all, he behaved with the utmost meekness, answering their bitterest reproaches and most cruel usage, either with calm reasonings

or meek silence; that by the reasonableness and meekness of his answers and carriage, he might convince or mollify them; and tho' it had little effect, yet this was his method to the last. And as the malice of his enemies was invincible, so was his meekness. When in the extremity of his sufferings, the high-priests and people reviled him, and insulted over his misery in a most barbarous manner; instead of rebuking them in anger, he prays to God on their behalf; "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And all this meekness and patience "he suffered, to leave us an example, that we might follow his steps." And the same, as to his readiness to forgive injuries. It is easy to give precepts of forgiveness, to bid "men love their enemies, bless them that curse, and do good to them that hate them, and to forgive our brother," without stint or limit; but the practice is exceeding difficult. We find it hard to pass by a little provocation, to suppress the thought of revenging a very small affront and indignity offered us; but much more difficult is it, perfectly to forgive, to love our enemies, to pray for and do them good: and therefore our blessed Saviour not only enjoined us in our daily prayers, to beg mercy and forgiveness of God upon this only condition, that we forgive others; but to allure us more powerfully to the practice, he hath given us an example of it, in the whole course of his life. He forgave his enemies all their ill will towards him, all their vile and malicious usage, and even at his death, when the provocations were greatest and most violent, in the very agony and anguish of his suffering, he with his last breath declared his free forgiveness of them, his perfect charity to them, by his fervent prayer, "father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

Another

Another virtue was his contentedness in a mean and poor condition. He was destitute of the necessary supports of life ; he lived generally on the charity of others, and when that failed, he maintained himself by miracle ; and yet always preserved a constant evenness and serenity of mind, without anxious care, “ what he should eat, or drink, “ or wherewithal to be cloathed.” He never murmured at the unequal providence of God, nor became discontented and envious at the plenty and prosperity of others ; no man was ever poorer than he, yet no man ever more contented : which is not only an example of contentment to those who are in the extremity of want, but to those also, who are in better circumstances. A narrow fortune is riches, in comparison of none ; a competency is plenty compared with poverty. If then the son of God, he, who was heir of all things, was destitute of all things, and yet contented to be so, shall we murmur and repine, if we are in the same circumstances ? therefore if the providence of God, should see fit to reduce us to the lowest condition of want, we have no reason for discontent ; much less, if he affords us a competency.

The last virtue I shall instance, is patience under sufferings, and resignation to the will of God ; and of this virtue, our Saviour was the greatest example that ever was ; his whole life from his birth to his death, being made up of persecution and patience ; “ never was any sorrow like unto his sorrow, wherewith the Lord afflicted him in the day “ of his fierce wrath.” His patience was greater than any man’s ever was, not only as he suffered more than any of the sons of men, but because he suffered without cause, being perfectly innocent, and free from the least guilt ; so that the greatness of our Lord’s sufferings, considered with his perfect inno-

innocency, gives his example a peculiar force and advantage above all others ; and the apostle recommends it to us, as the most perfect and powerful. “ Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about  
 “ with such a cloud of witnesses, let us run with  
 “ patience the race that is set before us, looking  
 “ unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith ;  
 “ who for the joy that was set before him, endured  
 “ the cross, despising the shame. Consider  
 “ him who endured such contradiction of sinners  
 “ against himself, lest ye be weary and faint in  
 “ your minds.” Such contradiction of sinners ;  
 such as no man ever endured ; and yet he bore all  
 this, not with a stoical and stupid insensibility, but  
 with true patience. No man had greater apprehensions,  
 and a more tender sense of suffering, than he had.  
 He was possessed, not only of the more manly  
 virtues of wisdom, resolution, and constancy ; but  
 even of the softer passions of human nature : meekness,  
 compassion, grief, and a tender sense of pain and  
 suffering ; “ he took our infirmities, and bore our  
 “ griefs.” This he expressed in his agony in the  
 garden, and by his behaviour on the cross. He did  
 not despise pain, but dreaded, and yet submitted  
 to it ; he did not outbrave his sufferings, but felt  
 and endured them decently. He had a human sense  
 of them, but bore them with a divine patience and  
 resignation to the will of God, when he saw them  
 coming ; and during their continuance, he expressed  
 a great sense of pain, without the least impatience.  
 And herein he was a perfect pattern to mankind ;  
 not giving us an extravagant example of bravery,  
 and sturdy resolution ; but what was much better  
 for us, of patient submission to the will of God,  
 under a great sense of suffering.—And now I will  
 conclude all, with a few inferences.

Such

Such then is the example of our Lord's life, as to be calculated for all capacities and conditions, for the wise and the weak, the rich and the poor; perfect as is possible, yet obvious to common imitation, and fitted for the general direction of mankind, in all sorts of virtue and goodness. A life pure, without any mixture of imperfection; humble without meanness of spirit; innocent without weakness. He was wise without cunning; constant in doing good, without ostentation; virtuous without vanity; heroic without transport; a life even and of one tenor; quiet, without noise and tumult; always employed in the work of God, and in doing the greatest benefit and advantage to men. And who would not write after a copy so perfect; and yet so familiar, so fit for our imitation? who would not be ambitious, to live the life of the son of God, when he was pleased to become and live as the son of man? This pattern now proposed to us, is the example of one whom we ought to love and reverence above any: It is the example of our Lord and master, our sovereign and saviour, the founder of our religion, the "author and finisher of our faith:" It is the example of our best friend, and greatest benefactor; of him who laid down his life for us, and sealed his love to us with his own blood. How powerfully then should such a pattern recommend goodness, kindness and compassion to us; who have received from it so much comfort and advantage? Had not the son of God commiserated our case, pitied and relieved us in our wretched condition, we had been past all remedy, and extremely miserable for ever. All the kindness, compassion, mercy, and forgiveness, which he would have us practise to others, he himself first exercised towards us. He that commands us to do good to others, was our great benefactor; he that requires us to forgive our enemies,

mies, shed his own blood to obtain forgiveness of our sins ; and while we were his enemies, he laid down his life for us, making himself the example of that goodness, he would have us shew unto others. And what remains, but this short expostulation.

Are any of us reduced to poverty and want ? Let us remember him, who, though Lord of all, had not where to lay his head ; who being rich (in glory) for our sakes became a beggar, that we through his poverty might be made rich. Are we persecuted, or exercised with sufferings and reproaches ? Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith ; who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame. Are we discouraged in well doing ? Let us consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest we are weary and faint in our minds. And if the son of God humbled, and emptied himself of all his glory, was despised and reviled of men, ought we to be puffed up with pride ? Shall we be covetous and thirst after the things of this world, when the son of God despised and trampled on them ? Shall we slight and contemn the poor, or rather not esteem them ; when the son of God became mean and low for our sakes ; and whose indigent condition in the world hath made poverty, not only tolerable, but glorious ? Can we be peevish, forward, and angry, on every little occasion ; when we consider the meekness of the son of God, with what sincerity and evenness of mind he behaved, under great and continual provocation ? Shall we be discontented in any condition ; when we consider how contented the son of God was, in a state the meanest and most destitute ; how perfectly resigned to the will of his heavenly father in all events ?

events? Shall we separate from the communion of the church of God, on pretence of something we think amiss, less pure and perfect, which always will be here; when the son of God lived and died in the communion of a church, guilty of great corruptions, both in doctrine and practice, such as with no just reason can be objected to ours? Shall we resent injuries, slanders, and calumnies so heinously, as to be out of all patience; when we consider with what meekness of temper, and how undisturbed, the son of God bore all these? Who when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously, and possessed his soul in patience. And do we expect to be better treated than he was? If perfect innocence was contented to be traduced, and evil spoken of, to be slandered and persecuted; shall we who are great and guilty sinners, think to escape better, than one who was so infinitely good and perfect? "The servant is not greater than the Lord; and if they have persecuted me, (says our Saviour,) they will also persecute you." Can we entertain thoughts of revenge, when we have such a pattern before us, who poured out his blood for the expiation of the guilt of them that shed it; and spent his last breath in charitable prayers, for his betrayers and murderers? "Lord, endue us with the like temper, but do not try us with the like sufferings."

Thus by setting the example of our Lord before us, and keeping this pattern always in our eye, we may continually correct our own errors and defects, all the distempers of our minds, the faults and the irregularities of our lives; we may from such an example be strongly excited, and sweetly led to the practice of virtue and goodness. And

let

let us not be discouraged by the consideration of our own weakness; for he who hath given us such an example of virtue, will also give us, if we seek for it, his holy spirit to assist and enable us to conform ourselves to this pattern of our Lord and master, and to follow the blessed steps of his most holy life.

Discourse

Discourse XCI. Abp. *Sharpe*.

## CHARACTER of an UPRIGHT MAN.

Pfal. cxii. 4.

To the upright there ariseth light in the darkness.

**T**HIS psalm seems to be an explication or paraphrase on the words of St. Paul; "godliness hath the promise of this life, as well as of that which is to come." And here we have a description of the pious man, and of his blessedness in this life. His piety is described in the following terms. He is one, who fears God, and delights in his commandment. He is righteous and upright in his conversation. He is prudent, and guides his affairs with discretion. He has a great sense of God, on whom his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. He is charitable, gracious, and full of compassion; he sheweth favour and lendeth; he hath dispersed and given to the poor.—His blessedness is thus represented; his posterity shall be great and happy, his seed shall be mighty upon earth, the generation of the upright shall be blessed. His fortune shall be ample and plentiful; riches and plentifulness shall be in his house. His fame and reputation shall be lasting, his righteousness remaineth for ever, he shall be had in everlasting remembrance. His honour, power and dignity shall excite the envy of the wicked; his horn shall be exalted with honour, the wicked shall see it and be grieved. Lastly, he shall be safe and secure in  
trouble-

troublesome times. To the upright there ariseth light in the darkness. Such light shall arise to an upright man in evil times, as that he shall not be moved, neither shall he be afraid of evil tidings; for his heart is established, and he shall not shrink, until he sees his desire upon his enemies; or, is delivered out of his distress.

Of these several characters ascribed to a pious man, I shall recommend to your present consideration his uprightness; and of the several instances of his blessedness, shall only observe those of safety and security, in times perilous and troublesome. To the upright there ariseth light in the darkness. The character of the person to whom the promise of blessedness is made, is the upright man, or a man of honesty and integrity. By uprightness is meant, the conformity of a man's mind to the eternal rules of righteousness, and the agreement of his actions to the principles of his mind: so that, in general, an upright man is one who in all things follows the dictates of his conscience, and makes his duty the rule of his actions. But the more lively to display his amiable qualities to our imitation, it will be proper to consider him more particularly with respect to God and men; both as to his religion, and his civil conversation.

A religious carriage towards God, is essentially necessary to uprightness. "He that walketh in uprightness, feareth the Lord." Take away religion and the fear of God, the foundation of uprightness is destroyed. He that hath no sense of God and religion, can never think himself bound to observe any rules in his actions and behaviour, but what are subservient to his private, sensual and worldly interest; and consequently whatever is inconsistent therewith, be it never so base, vile and injurious, he may act and execute without restraint, whenever a temptation offers; and yet think himself as innocent,  
and

and his actions as commendable, as if he had been truly honest and virtuous.

He therefore that is an upright man, hath a serious and hearty sense of God and religion on his mind, and is ever careful to preserve and encrease it. But then he is not contented with a meer speculative belief, an outward profession of religious truths; but he has them so impressed on his heart, as to influence his whole life and conversation. He thinks it not sufficient to be orthodox in his opinions, or a member of a true church; zealous in maintaining and promoting the right way; but he strives to live as he believes, to practise suitably to the profession he makes. As he holds fast the form of godliness, so he is careful to express the power of it, in an innocent, virtuous life. He takes not up his principles to advance his interest, or please a party; but he believes what appears true, and professes it because it is his duty. He neither chuses his religion out of worldly considerations, nor leaves it on such motives; but is resolute and constant in bearing testimony to the truth, against all opposition. He is one who thinks religion too sacred to be prostituted to mean purposes; and therefore never uses it as an instrument to serve any base end, tho' he was sure thereby to compass his designs. He is a man who does not place his religion in outward forms and services, but hath a nobler sense of God than to think such things are pleasing to him: And therefore his principal concern is about the great indispensable duties of Christianity; "the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy and faith." He hath the everlasting notions and differences of good and evil, deeply engraven in his heart; and how to practise the one and avoid the other, is his chief study. He endeavours uprightly and sincerely to observe all God's commands; calls no sin little, because his temper inclines him to it, but at all times preserves an uni-

form aversion to whatever is evil. He is an utter enemy to all factions in religion, and tho' he loves truth, is not less concerned for peace. He is better pleased with his charity to compose and reconcile religious differences, than with all his skill and abilities to dispute them; for he knows that love is more acceptable to God, than a right opinion. Lastly, he is religious without noise, and uses no little arts to make his piety known. He seeks not the praise of men, but studies only to approve himself to God; and is therefore as careful of his thoughts as of his actions. He fears God and regards his duty as much when no one sees him, as if the eyes of all were upon him. These are the great instances of uprightness as to religion. And whoever makes good these characters, may reasonably conclude himself an honest man towards God, a true Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.

If we take a view of the upright man in his civil conversation, as to his carriage and demeanor towards men; it will be proper to consider him as a private person, and a magistrate. As a private person, he will so frame and model his whole conversation, take such a prudent and diligent care of himself, and his own good, as is consistent with, and tends to promote the good and happiness of others. He considers that every man has a right to be happy as well as himself; and since none can be so, without the assistance of others, he thinks it reasonable that he should contribute his endeavours towards it. These being the main principles of his mind, he is careful that his actions and whole conversation are suitable thereto. He is therefore exactly just in all his dealings, not knowingly doing wrong or injury to any one, tho' he could gain ever so much, without being discovered. He is faithful to his trust, never taking advantage of another's credulity, nor abusing the confidence reposed in him. He is a man of  
great

great candour, of sweet and obliging behaviour; careful not to suffer by good-nature, and yet ready to be kind and assist others, unless attended with great inconvenience to himself; but what he once promises he punctually performs, tho' it be prejudicial to him. He is a man that loves, and is as tender of a good name and reputation as any one; but scorns to use any evil arts to procure or preserve it. He hates mean and servile compliances, and will not speak or act against the sense of his own mind, to humour any man. Flattery and dissimulation he abhors, envy and detraction he is above. He never lessens another to make himself greater, nor repines at his neighbour's prosperity. He puts a fair construction on men's words and actions, rather concealing a fault than report it worse than it is. He hopes and thinks the best of all men, and does the most good he can. He is plain, free and open in his carriage; his words and thoughts always go together. Though he is watchful of opportunities to do himself good, and is careful to avoid dangers, yet he never uses indirect means to benefit or secure himself. He scorns to take advantage of any man's necessities, nor will undermine another to effect his own designs. Deceit and collusion are strangers to his dealing. He esteems a cunning intriguing man no better than a knave. In a word, all his designs are honest and just, such as tend to the good of the community, as well as his own, but to no man's loss and detriment; and the means he makes use of to obtain his designs are so fair, that he cares not who knows them. This is the man that is upright in his conversation towards men. The man that to the wisdom of the serpent, joins the innocence and simplicity of the dove.

Thus much of the upright man, as a private person; let us now view him under a more conspicuous character, and as a magistrate, intrusted with

the management of public affairs. And here we shall find him actuated by the same principles, and pursuing the same designs we have before mentioned; only his virtues, having another sphere and object, require a different consideration. The great thing he proposes by accepting any office, is the glory of God and the public good; the honour and dignity of the place, and other worldly advantages are but secondary considerations with him. He studies not to ingratiate himself with men, but to discharge a good conscience. He has courage and resolution to do what is fit, just, and conducive to the public good; not discouraged from his duty, by the menaces of the mighty, nor the murmurings of the multitude. He resolves not hastily, but maturely deliberates and considers before he determines. He does nothing precipitately, but impartially weighs what is represented to him. His ears are open to all parties; he debates without passion, prejudice or prepossession. Neither profit nor friends can corrupt him, to act in matters of right, contrary to his inward sense. His care and study is chiefly employed on the public. He is ever sedulous to maintain the worship and service of God, to defend and encourage true religion; to suppress vice and debauchery, impiety and irreligion. "He is a father to the poor, and the cause which he knoweth not, he searcheth out; he breaketh the jaws of the wicked, and plucketh the spoils out of his teeth." He studiously endeavours to preserve his allegiance to his prince, and his fidelity to the public; neither invading the rights of the one, nor injuring the liberties of the other. By his prudence and moderation he will endeavour to extinguish growing flames, and not add fuel to them; but will calm and allay mens jealousies, rather than excite and encrease them. To conclude; he is a man that fears God, and honours the king, obeys the laws, and meddles

not with them that are given to change.—I shall now proceed to represent the advantages and privileges, that an upright man enjoys in evil and dangerous times. “To the upright therefore there ariseth light in darkness.” By darkness is here meant any kind of streights, difficulties or adversities. By light we are to understand either guidance and direction, safety and defence, or peace and joy, which ariseth to the upright man. And

“To the upright man there ariseth light in the “darkness,” taking light for guidance and direction. Be the times never so dark, he hath this happiness, that he is rarely at a loss how to conduct himself. He of all others most easily sees his way, it being plain, easy and strait before him; but the ways of vice and wickedness are extremely rough and crooked. Whoever pursues evil designs, and is a slave to base affections, must necessarily be entangled in perpetual labyrinths; for having many different and inconsistent ends to pursue, he must unavoidably be often at a loss how to behave himself. If he goes this way, then something will be discovered which he studiously endeavoured to conceal; if that way, then some man or party is disobliged, whose interest he stood in need of; if he takes a third way, perhaps he then destroys his main design. Such difficulties and perplexities always attend the man of intrigue, and every one who walks not uprightly. But the contrary of this is the lot of the upright man. For he has only one end to pursue, and that is, to discharge a good conscience. By this all his concerns are regulated; and of consequence, he hath no clashing of interests to perplex his deliberations; no little turns to be served; all his resolutions are easily made, and he avoids most of those difficulties which entangle others. His counsels and methods are always the same, and he is never at a loss to behave himself on any emergency. His way

is commonly so plain, that he requires little advice or instruction to find it. "The integrity of the upright shall guide him, the path of the just is a shining light." Again,

If he happens to fall into such circumstances, as to stand in need of great advice and deliberation, yet the upright man hath vastly the advantage of others. Because he always enjoys the free use of his intellectual powers, can exert his reason to its highest perfection and greatest advantage: Whereas the man who has sinister ends to pursue, by indirect methods, is sadly clouded in his discerning faculties, so as to hinder him from distinguishing rightly, whereby he commits many blunders and mistakes: For whoever frames his mind by other measures than those of honesty and conscience; whoever intemperately pursues his private ends, or is a slave to inordinate passions of any sort; these things will so bias his soul, as to render him incapable of making a true judgment of what is right; and expose him to many dangerous errors in the management of his affairs, even in matters of little difficulty. But the upright man is not obnoxious to any of these inconveniencies; for having no turns to serve, but what are good and honest, nor no private affections or passions to be gratified; his conceptions of things are according to their nature, his determinations and resolutions are reasonable and proper, such as become the occasion. As his main design is to do in all instances what is best, so that preserves him from mistaking what is so. His reason and understanding are free and at liberty, and when any difficulty arises, he of all men is most likely to get out of it with ease.

And yet if we take light for safety and security, for defence and protection; an upright man in the worst of times, may above all others, promise these things to himself; he that walketh uprightly walketh surely.

surely. And indeed this seems to be what is principally intended by the Psalmist. The light here said to "arise to the upright in darkness," chiefly respects his security from danger, in times of great calamity; as appears from what follows, "He shall not be moved for ever; he shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart shall not shrink, till he sees his desire upon his enemies." And this security in times of danger the upright man may expect, because uprightness doth in its own nature conduce thereto; and is what also intitles him to God's more particular protection. "As by wickedness a city is overthrown, so by the blessing of the upright, it is exalted." Every upright man is really a benefactor to the public. And if any one can in reason hope to escape the violence and iniquity of bad times, the man of honesty and integrity, he who is upright in all his ways, is the most likely to succeed therein; because he of all others takes the surest method to preserve himself; he is least obnoxious to the malice, envy, or rapine, of open enemies, or pretended friends. So that uprightness and integrity is a shield and protection.

The upright man conducts himself in life with so much prudence, as to avoid those rocks, on which others split and are ruined. The destruction of men, even in the worst of times, is generally to be imputed to themselves; either to the careless neglect of their own affairs, the lavishness and intemperance of their tongues, or to a busy intermeddling with the concerns of others. Such things as these commonly bring misfortunes on men, and are the foundation of all those straits and difficulties with which they are entangled, even in times of the greatest calamity. But the upright man in a great measure is free therefrom, because his principles oblige him to act directly opposite. His ways are so universally approved, that none will offer

him an injury, lest it tends to their own detriment. As he endeavours to oblige all men, and by his conduct to make every one his friend, and none his enemies; so when any difficult circumstances attend him, he will easily find those who are ready to help and assist him. His conversation is so unexceptionable, his management of affairs so prudent, that those who don't love him, will not easily find an occasion to do him injury. Such as have no acquaintance with him, yet having a good esteem for honesty and uprightness in general, will be ready to afford him what assistance they can; from a natural sense, that a good man should be protected, because his case and circumstances may one day be their own. Even those who have lost all sense of good and evil, yet in order to preserve their credit and interest with mankind, will think themselves obliged not to oppress an upright man.

But how ineffectual soever all human means may prove, to secure and preserve an upright man, in evil times; yet he has still an anchor more firm and stable to rely on, and which will not fail him; and that is the protection of God, and the care of his particular providence. Men may plot and design, order and contrive as they please, but still God governs the world; and either blasts their most fair and hopeful projects, or if he suffers them to succeed, turns them to what use and purpose he thinks best. And if God rules and disposes all things, "so  
 " that not a sparrow falls to the ground, without his  
 " will," in a more especial manner doth he engage himself to take care of those who walk uprightly before him. He hath promised to make "their righteousness as clear as the light, and their just dealing as the noon-day: That they shall not be confounded in perilous times, and in the days of death they shall have enough: Tho' they fall they shall not be cast down, for the Lord upholdeth them with his hand: That he will be their strength in the  
 time

time of trouble ; he will stand by and save them from the ungodly, because they put their trust in him. It would be endless to produce the many passages in scripture to this purpose ; I shall therefore only add that remarkable one, wherein the upright man, and his security in evil times, are described after a very particular manner. “ He that  
“ walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly ; he  
“ despiseth the gain of oppressions ; that shaketh his  
“ hands from holding of bribes ; that stoppeth his  
“ ears from hearing of blood ; and shutting his eyes  
“ from seeing evil : He shall dwell on high ; his  
“ place of defence shall be the munitions of the  
“ rocks ; his bread shall be given him, his water  
“ shall be sure.” That is, whoever walks uprightly, and makes a conscience of his ways ; such a man shall be always under the watchful care and protection of the divine providence. For God will not suffer him to fall into any great distress ; but will afford him such a portion of temporal good things, as to render his life easy and supportable. Experience generally verifies the truth of this ; honest and upright men, in the midst of public calamities, for the most part escaping better than those who are otherwise. Such, in their greatest extremities, when no prospect of deliverance from any human means have appeared, yet after a most strange, extraordinary and unexpected manner, have met with succour and relief. And thus attended by the special providence of God, they have never been miserable, however sometimes afflicted, and deprived of an ample fortune.

But it must be acknowledged, that tho’ piety and uprightness have the promise of blessedness in this life, and which is generally made good ; yet there are many instances to the contrary. God, for wise reasons, may suffer an upright man to be oppressed, and perish in a common destruction,  
without

without violating such his promises; which can only be meant to respect ordinary and common events. And even in this case, there will “to the upright, “arise light in darkness.” That is, light in the third sense we have given of the word, as implying peace, joy and comfort; according to the Psalmist, “light is sown for the righteous, and gladness “for the upright in heart.” Whatever afflictions the upright man suffers, he hath this advantage over others, that he can more easily bear them than they, without any great disturbance to himself; because he enjoys the same calmness and serenity of mind, the same peace, quiet and contentment, that ever he did. He rather rejoices, than repines and grows discontented under his present sufferings; well knowing they are so ordered by the great governor of the world, for his good and benefit. This consideration effectually supports him under all difficulties he conflicts with; that he is not only easy and quiet, but well pleased with the dispensations of the divine providence towards him, how ungrateful soever to flesh and blood. Let what will happen, he is full of peace and joy, not being disappointed in his designs. His great aim was to please God, his conscience assures him from God’s word, that he has done it; and he waits for the happy time, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, and then doubts not of receiving approbation, and praise, and great reward; and his life and death will verify the Psalmist’s observation, “mark the perfect “man, and behold the upright, for the end of “that man is peace.”

Discourse XCII. Abp. *Tillotson*.

## Of SINCERITY, and the SIN of LYING.

John i. 47.

Jesus saw Nathaniel coming to him, and saith of him, behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.

**I**T does not appear who this Nathaniel was, that our Saviour gave this extraordinary character of; but he was certainly a good man, to deserve so great a commendation. In treating of the virtue of sincerity, I shall consider it, with respect to God and man. As it respects God, it means the truth and sincerity of our piety and devotion towards him; as it regards man, it signifies a simplicity of mind and manners, in our conversation and behaviour towards one another. As this grace or virtue respects God, it imports the truth and sincerity of our piety towards him; that we heartily believe, fear and honour him; that the outward expressions of our piety and obedience, proceed from our inward apprehensions of, and affections towards him; that we sincerely love God and his truth, and readily embrace it, whenever it be fairly proposed to us. And because sincerity is the very substance of religion, it concerns us not only to endeavour after this temper and disposition, but to discover its nature and properties. I shall therefore mention some properties of a sincere piety, by which we may know the integrity of our hearts towards God. First,

Our piety is then sincere, when it proceeds from rational religious motives; that is, when the principal and prevailing motives of our piety, are a  
sense

sense of God's authority over us, and of our duty and obligation to him; a fear of his displeasure and threatenings, and the hopes of that glorious reward which he hath promised to obedience: these are properly religious motives, because they respect God, and are the arguments used by him to persuade us to our duty. And insincere piety is when we are moved merely by the regard of men, and the consideration of some temporal advantages. And a man may easily discern when these have the chief influence upon him; for if he carefully observe himself, he must know the spring and motive of his own actions. A man may be assured his heart is not right towards God, when his piety and zeal for the true religion doth either cease, cool or abate; for if we drop the profession of our religion, or neglect the practice of it, this is a plain demonstration of the insincerity of our former piety. A sincere piety must be rooted in the heart, and be a living principle within us; and without this, all acts of piety and devotion are hypocrisy; a picture of religion and form of godliness, without the life and power of it.

Another evidence of a sincere piety is, when men are religious in private as well as in public. He is truly devout, who is so in his family and closet, where he hath no witness but God, and his own soul, as well as in the church. He is a real honest man, who as readily performs his word and promise when no proof can be made, no law compel him to it, as if there had been any number of witnesses. He is sincerely just, who will not wrong any man, tho' he could do it with the greatest secrecy and safety; nor impose upon another's ignorance and unskilfulness, tho' ever so much to his own benefit and advantage. He is truly charitable, who chuses to give his alms in secret, rather than in the sight of men. He is sincerely grateful, who  
 on

on all proper occasions, acknowledges a kindness, and requites a benefit to the relations of his deceased friend, when none but God and himself knew of the obligation. The sincerity of any act of piety and virtue, may be known by this evidence; and on the contrary a man must be a hypocrite, if he is not the same before God and his own conscience, that he is in the sight of men. Again, a sincere piety consists in the constant practice of goodness, in the general course of our lives. The habits of any known sin, the wilful deliberate neglect of our duties, and even the single act of more heinous crimes, will bring our sincerity in question, and cannot be screened under the name of infirmity. And he is not truly good, who doth not seriously endeavour to be as good as he can, and to perform a sincere, tho' not a perfect obedience to the laws of God.

Another evidence of a sincere piety is, that our obedience to God be uniform and universal, equally respecting all the laws of God, and every part of our duty. We must not regard some precepts of the law, and allow ourselves in the breach or neglect of the rest; observe the duties of one table of the law, and omit the other; no, nor obey all the commandments of God, one only excepted. For, he that keeps the whole law, saving that he offends in one point, is guilty of all. That is, his obedience is not sincere to the rest. We must not therefore set the commandments of God at variance, the two tables one against another, lest we break the whole law. And yet I fear some who make great professions of piety, are not sufficiently sensible of the obligation of the duties of the second table; and of the excellency of those graces and virtues, which respect our behaviour to one another. God did not give us laws only for his own sake, but also to promote our own happiness; and  
therefore

therefore with our humble and dutiful deportment towards himself, he requires the offices of justice and charity towards others. He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God. And our Saviour commands, that he who loveth God, should love his brother also. And yet it is too visible, that many who make great professions of piety towards God, are very defective in moral duties; very unpeaceable and turbulent, peevish and passionate, conceited and censorious, as if the mere profession of godliness could exempt them from the practice of Christian virtues. Men may be devout and zealous in religion, nice and scrupulous about the worship and service of God, and yet by being deficient in points of justice and honesty, meekness and humility, peace and charity, they may be gross and notorious hypocrites. For we must not think by some acts of inward or outward piety, to compound with God, for the neglect of mercy and judgment; or to think it matter of right, to be excused from the great duties and virtues of human conversation; as if it was the privilege of great devotion, to allow men to be peevish and froward, morose and censorious in their behaviour towards others. We are not to regard the outward parts of religion, to the prejudice of inward real goodness; and so to use the means of religion, such as fasting, and outward mortification, as to neglect the main end of it. For these things, however useful and necessary, yet are only so when discreetly managed, and made subservient to the great ends of religion. Care must be taken, that whilst men are intent upon mortifying themselves, they do not mortify virtue and goodness, humility, meekness and charity; things highly valuable in themselves, amiable in the eyes of men, and of great price in the sight of God.

The

The neglect of moral duties is a great scandal, and of pernicious consequences to religion. An ill governed, ignorant, and in judicious zeal, for the honour of God, his worship, and service, hath made some men do many unreasonable, immoral, and impious things; for inconsiderate men, who give themselves up to the conduct of blind prejudice, and furious zeal, are apt to think, that any thing is lawful, which they imagine will tend to promote the honour of God and religion. Hence some out of zeal for their religion and church, think it not only lawful, but highly commendable, even meritorious, to equivocate with oaths, to break faith with heretics, and to destroy all who differ from them; as if it was piety in some cases, to lye for the truth, and to kill men for God's sake. So that if we would approve the integrity of our hearts to God, and evidence the sincerity of our obedience, we must impartially regard all God's laws, and every part of our duty, or our heart is not upright with God.

The last evidence I shall mention of the sincerity of our religion, is, if it endures persecution, and the fiery trial. The utmost proof of our integrity is to be willing to expose our worldly interest, even life itself, for the cause of God and religion. By this God tries whether we love him, and his truth in sincerity. And thus I have considered this duty, as it respects God.

Sincerity, with regard to men, signifies a simplicity of mind and manners, in our behaviour and conversation; discovering itself in a constant, plain, honest and open carriage, free from all little tricks of craft and cunning, from all deceitful appearances in word or deed; in a word, to speak as we think, to perform what we promise, to be in reality what we would be thought to be: not that we are obliged to tell every man our mind; but we are not to speak  
contrary

contrary to it. We may be prudently silent, but we must not make a false appearance, to be what we are not, either by word or action. Contrary to this virtue, is, I fear, much of that complaisant conversation among us, pretending that kindness and esteem for persons, which we have not, or to that degree our expressions import. This we call flattery, and is an odious sort of insincerity, because it abuses men into a vain opinion of themselves, and of the kindness of others towards them. Few tempers have wisdom and firmness to be proof against flattery; it requiring great consideration, a resolute modesty, and true humility to resist its insinuations. Indeed all hypocrisy and insincerity is mean in itself, having falshood at the bottom; and is often made use of, to the prejudice of others, in their rights and interests. As dissimulation is contrary to sincerity, because it consists in a deceitful representation of our virtues, qualities and character; so falshood, fraud and perfidiousness, which men too often practise one towards another, is yet of a more injurious and mischievous consequence. The former is great vanity, the latter gross iniquity.

And yet some regard these qualities, as signs of great depth, highly necessary to accomplish our designs; as if the art of managing human affairs, did consist in these little tricks and devices: but he who examines them narrowly, will find them to be great follies, and that it is only for want of true wisdom and understanding, that men have recourse to dissimulation and lyes. Solomon says, he that walketh rightly, walketh surely; but the folly of fools is deceit. That is, to play the knave, is a most egregious piece of folly. I do not deny, but these little arts may serve a present turn; but true wisdom goes farther, regarding the future as well as the present, and by looking to the end of things,

things, doth clearly discover that craft and cunning only serve the present occasion; whereas integrity will be of lasting use, and serviceable to us, thro' the whole course of our lives. Having thus explained the nature of sincerity to God and man, I will now endeavour to persuade men to the practice of this excellent quality, in all the words and actions of their lives.

Let us then, in the first place, be sincere in our religion, and truly serve God, out of conscience of our duty and obligations to him; and not with sinister respects to our private interest, or to the public approbation, and censure of men. Let us not make use of religion, to serve any base unworthy ends, to cloke our designs of covetousness, ambition, or revenge, nor with pretences of conscience, and zeal for God: but let us endeavour after the reality of religion, always remembering, that a sincere piety doth not consist in shew and appearance, but in substance and effect; that the spirit of true religion is calm, charitable, and peaceable; that a truly sincere good man does not affect vain ostentation, or a boasting of his good qualities, but rather endeavours really to be, than seem to be religious; and to conceal his piety, instead of making it public. He gives his alms privately, prays to God in secret, makes no appearance of religion, but in such fruits and effects as cannot be hid; in the quiet and silent virtues of humility, meekness, patience, peace and charity; in governing his passions, and not offending with his tongue, by slander and calumny, by envious detraction, or rash censure, by any word or action, that may injure and prejudice his neighbour. But if a man affects to make a great bustle about religion, blows a trumpet before his good works, and by extraordinary shews of religion, summons others to behold and take notice of his piety;

this is a very bad sign, and has the appearance of hypocrisy.

And with the sincerity of our piety towards God, let us join simplicity and integrity in our conversation with men. Let us use truth and plainness in all our words and actions; that our tongue may be ever the true interpreter of our minds, our expressions the lively image of our thoughts and affections; and our actions exactly agreeable to our inward purposes and intentions. The general want of sincerity in our conversation, is one of the great corruptions and degeneracy of our age. The world is so full of dissimulation and compliment, that mens words are scarce any signification of their thoughts. The old English plainness and simplicity, that generous integrity of nature and honesty of disposition, which proceeds from true greatness of mind, is in a great measure lost among us. There has been a long endeavour to transform us into foreign manners and fashions, and bring us to a servile imitation of our neighbours in some of their worst qualities: And conversation is become so full of vanity and compliment, that was a man who lived an age ago to return into the world, he would scarce understand his own language; or with a good conscience know how to converse with men upon equal terms. To hear what solemn expressions of respect and kindness will pass between men, upon no occasion; how much esteem they will profess for one, they perhaps never saw before! how infinitely obliged to him for no benefit, how extremely concerned, nay, afflicted for him, and for no cause! what hollow kind of conversation is all this? and just cause of complaint have we, that our language is running into a lye, that men pervert the use of speech, and make words to signify nothing; that the greatest part of conversation is little else but driving a trade of dissimulation, so  
that

that we may say with the prophet, Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother; for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders. One speaketh peaceably to his neighbour, but in his heart he lieth in wait. Shall not I visit for these things, saith the Lord? and shall not my soul be avenged for such a nation as this? As this character too well suits the present age, which is so wretchedly void of truth and sincerity, there is the greater reason for recommending this virtue, which seems to be fled from us; to this end, give me leave to offer the following considerations.

That sincerity is the highest commendation, and the best character which can be given a man. It is the solid foundation, the heart and soul of all piety, virtue and goodness; and in scripture, it is spoken of as the sum and comprehension of all religion: Only fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and truth. And he that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth from his heart, shall dwell with God. For blessed is the man, in whose spirit there is no guile. The rarity of this virtue is also a farther commendation of it; for a sincerely pious and good man, without any disguise, is seldom met with. Our Saviour speaks of it, as a thing very extraordinary to see a man of perfect integrity and simplicity, and breaks out into some kind of wonder on the occasion; which demands our more especial attention and regard. "Behold, (saith he) an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile." The want of sincerity will quite spoil the virtue and acceptance of all our piety and obedience, and deprive us of its reward. All our external obedience to God's laws, if not animated by sincerity, is an abomination to the Lord.

Hypocrisy and insincerity is a vain and foolish thing, and tho' designed to cheat others, is in truth

deceiving ourselves. No man would flatter or dissemble, did he think he was seen and discovered. But all his hypocrisy is open to God's eye, from whom nothing can be hid. The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he seeth all his goings; there is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves. Truth and sincerity has every advantage over insincerity; and whoever dissembles and seems to be what he is not, thinks it right to have such a quality as he pretends to. For to counterfeit and dissemble, is to put on the appearance of some real excellency. But the best way is for a man to be in reality, what he would seem to be. For it is difficult to personate, and act a false part long; because where truth is not at the bottom, nature will endeavour to return; and make a discovery. And truth carries its own light and evidence along with it; and not only commends us to every man's conscience, but to God, the searcher of our hearts. So that sincerity is the truest wisdom. For integrity hath many advantages over all the artful ways of dissimulation and deceit. It is a more plain and easy, a more safe and secure way of dealing. It hath less of trouble and difficulty, of danger and hazard; it is the shortest and nearest way to our end, and will carry us thither in a strait line. By integrity a man confirms his reputation, and encourages others to repose the greater trust and confidence in him, which is a very considerable advantage in the business and affairs of life.

But a dissembler must be always upon his guard, lest he contradicts his own pretences. For he acts an unnatural part, and puts a continual force and restraint upon himself. Truth always lies uppermost, and will be apt to bolt out; but he that acts sincerely, hath an easy task, because he follows nature, and so needs not to invent pretences before,

or excuses afterwards, for any thing he says or doth. Insincerity is troublesome to manage; for a liar ought to have a good memory, lest he contradicts at one time, what he said at another. But truth is always consistent with itself, needs nothing to help it out, and is always near at hand; whereas a lye is troublesome, it sets a man's invention upon the rack, and one lye often occasions many. Sincerity is firm and substantial, plain and open, fears no discovery, of which the crafty man is always in danger. Sincerity is the most compendious wisdom, and an excellent instrument for the dispatch of business. It creates confidence in those we deal with, saves many enquiries, and brings things to a short issue. And the inconvenience attending falsehood and dissimulation is perpetual, because it brings a man under a constant jealousy and suspicion; so as not to be believed when he speaks truth, nor yet trusted, when he may mean honestly. When once a man hath forfeited the reputation of his integrity, neither truth nor falsehood can then serve him. Indeed, were we only to live in the world for a day, and have no occasion to converse more with mankind, nor need their good word, it would then be no great matter as to this world, was a man to lose his reputation all at once; but since our continuance here is uncertain, we should make use of truth and sincerity in all our words and actions, for this will hold out to the end; this will carry us thro' the world, when all the arts of cunning and deceit, will fail and deceive us. "The lips of truth are established for ever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment." I will now proceed, shortly to consider the sin and danger of lying, and the great benefit and advantage of speaking the truth.

A lye, strictly and properly so called, is, when a man signifies that to another, as true, which he himself knows or believes to be false, and

that with a design of imposing upon him. As to the several sorts of these lyes, much needs not be said about that kind of lying, which is of all others the most generally practised; I mean, those base ways of deceiving and over-reaching one another, which are so frequently used in trade, in buying and selling. These are so evidently criminal, as that nothing can be alledged to justify or excuse it; they are so odious both to God and man. "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord. And a righteous man hateth lying." These are so manifestly hateful both to God, and all good men; they tend so apparently to the subversion of all justice and honesty, and to the destruction of all civil society, that even some barbarous nations have severely punished them. This practice is so base and mean, that men need only to have their consciences awakened, by being put in mind, that "the getting of treasures by a lying tongue, is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death." For would but men consider, that if there be any such thing as right and wrong, justice and injustice; if there be any obligation to maintain faith and truth among men, to preserve society, order, and good government in the world; this kind of lying must appear, the most unnatural and unlawful. But this will be yet more evident, by considering the nature of truth.

Every man's conscience naturally assures him, that he is under an obligation to truth, distinct from all other considerations. In the natural judgment of our minds, we cannot forbear thinking, that there is something in truth, which is great, noble, and honourable; something in falshood, that is mean and base, unworthy of a man, and which renders him vile and contemptible to others. It is a fault which always hides its head, as being ashamed of itself. Hence lying has been ever esteemed the vice of slaves and vassals, of the meanest and worst sort of persons.

persons. But men of honour and reputation, have always an abhorrence and detestation of it. This shews us the native and genuine excellency of truth, considered in itself, and that the inward sense of our conscience, is against all falshood and lyes. Indeed, it sometimes happens, that a man's speaking truth will be a hindrance to another, when falsifying would turn to his advantage; but then this arises from the unhappy circumstances of their state, into which men have brought themselves by sin. As lyes are abominable in the sight of God, so are they to all good men. "All lyars shall have their part in the lake, which burneth with fire and brimstone. A righteous man hateth lying. David would not suffer a servant, that was used to tell lyes, to continue in his house."

To conclude; when a man looks back upon his past life, and finds that in the general course thereof, he has with simplicity and sincerity obeyed the dictates of his own conscience; that his actions have not been biassed by passion or appetite, by any mean, unlawful, or private interest; but that he has done all things in obedience to the law of God, with a sincere design of promoting only the glory of God, the welfare of his neighbour, and his own true and eternal interest; in a word, that whatever particular infirmities he may have been guilty of, yet the main, the general and prevailing design of his life has always been upright and sincere; the result of this must needs be such a joy and satisfaction of mind, as is infinitely preferable to all other pleasures in the world. He can look upon death, that king of terrors to the wicked, to be only a passage into a state, where he is as sure of being for ever happy, as he is, that true holiness is acceptable to God, and will be rewarded by him. This is the state of a truly religious sincere man, at the hour of death. "Mark the perfect man,

and behold the upright ; for the end of that man is peace.”

As certainly as there is a God, who governs the world ; as certain as vice is odious, and virtue acceptable to him ; as certain as a just God will reward those who obey his laws, and punish those who affront and despise them : so certain is it, that the sincere upright man shall be justified, and fully rewarded, at the last and final judgment ; in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ. Plainness and sincerity shall then appear the most perfect beauty ; and the craftiness of men, who lie in wait to deceive, shall be stript of all its colours ; all specious pretences, all the methods of deceit, shall then be disclosed before men and angels ; and no artifice, no false colours, to conceal the deformity of iniquity, shall there take place. Then the ill designing men of this world, shall with shame be convinced, that that upright simplicity, which they despised and denied, is the truest wisdom ; and that those dishonest arts, which they so highly esteemed, were in reality perfect folly.”

Let us then be now, what we would gladly be found in that day, when all pretences shall be examined, and the closest hypocrisy of men shall be laid open ; when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, all the hidden works of darkness shall be revealed, all our thoughts, words, and actions shall be brought to a strict and severe trial, and be censured, by that impartial and infallible judgment of God, which is according to truth ; “ in the  
“ day when God shall judge the secrets of men by  
“ Jesus Christ.”

Discourse XCIII. Abp. *Sharpe*.

## Of REGENERATION.

Rom. xii. 2.

Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds.

**T**HESSE words of St. Paul are commonly understood, to mean the whole of regeneration; but in reality, they signify only the principal part of it, for regeneration, or the new birth, consists of two parts; an outward baptism, which includes a profession of Christ's religion, and an inward sanctification, or holiness of heart and life. This is expressly told us by our Saviour and St. Paul; the first said to Nicodemus, that "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." And in the next words, our Saviour explains what he means by this new birth, "except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." So that to a man's being born again, there must be the baptism of water, and the renewing of the spirit. To the same purpose speaks St. Paul: "God according to his mercies hath saved us, not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost;" the washing of regeneration is the outward part, the renewing of the Holy Ghost the inward. Well, therefore, might our church teach in her offices, that infants are regenerated by baptism, since both scripture and antiquity speak the same. The truth is, this term of regeneration,

or the new birth, cannot be properly understood without having respect to baptism.

Our Saviour seems to take this expression from the Jews, who meant by it, a man's becoming a profelyte to their religion, and being admitted there-to by baptism; which was the way of receiving profelytes into the church, but with the addition of circumcision to some. And whoever was thus admitted into the Jewish church, was said to be new born, or regenerate; and they esteemed a profelyte to be so really new born, that they judged him ever after a stranger to all his natural relations. And where our Saviour says, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven;" he means hereby, to express the absolute necessity which lies on every one, both Jew and Gentile, to become a profelyte, a disciple of his, and as such to be admitted into his church, if he intends to go to heaven. Indeed, our Saviour's notion of regeneration was more extensive than the Jews, who thought an outward baptism, or profession, sufficient to entitle a man to the name of new-born. But our Saviour requires a man's being born of the spirit, as well as of water, in order to his entering into the kingdom of heaven; that is, besides an outward baptism, and profession, there must be an inward principle of virtue and holiness wrought in the person by the spirit of God; but yet both may go together, if a man will himself: For whoever hath the outward regeneration of baptism, may also have the inward regeneration of the spirit, if he is not false to God and himself.

What the apostle means, by the being transformed by the renewing of our minds, will easily appear, if we consider the foregoing words; "be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed, by the renewing of your minds." By knowing what conformity

formity to the world is here forbidden, we may certainly learn what transformation or renewal of our minds is required; and no less is intended by this prohibition, than a sinful compliance with the custom of the world; the framing our lives and manners after the impious practices and examples of wicked men; and indulging ourselves in bad and evil courses. But the being transformed by the renewing of our minds is directly opposite thereto, and denotes our being acted with more heavenly and divine principles, and framing our conversation suitable to our profession of christianity, that is, the laws of the Gospel. If we behave "as obedient children, not fashioning ourselves according to former lusts, but are holy in all manner of conversation;" then are we not conformed to the world, but transformed by the renewing of our minds.—This is "the new creature, the being born of God, the being led by the Spirit, the being created after the image of God, the putting on the new man;" all which signify no more than this, that to our baptism, belief, and profession of Christ's religion, to an honest, sincere, and holy principle, we take care to add, a sober, righteous, and godly conversation.

Having thus in general considered the nature of spiritual regeneration, I shall proceed to answer some questions relating thereto; as, whether regeneration be so intirely the work of God's spirit on a man's mind, as that he is perfectly passive in it, and can do nothing to promote or hinder it in himself? Whether a man is inwardly regenerate, that hath not experienced in himself a real change, or transformation of mind, from bad to good? Whether this change is not so perceptible, as that a man may know, when, and how, it was wrought in him? What are the marks or characters

characters by which a man may judge of his regeneration?

I begin with the first; and though the question looks like a point of speculation, yet it really much concerns our practice. For if a man can contribute nothing to the renovation of his own mind, to what purpose should we employ our thoughts and endeavours about it? To this question I therefore answer, that as to producing in man that holy divine frame of soul, which is necessary to denominate him a regenerate man, this is intirely the work of God's spirit. But then, God always acts with men suitable to their own natures; and they being made free agents, capable of chusing and refusing, he always deals with them as such; so that it is in their power either to accept and improve God's grace when offered, or to refuse and despise it; therefore, though regeneration, or the renewing of our minds, is wholly the work of God's spirit, yet it is in a man's power to hinder or promote that work in himself. And I doubt not, but that all who profess christianity, would be made partakers of the renewing of the Holy Ghost, as well as they are of the regeneration of baptism, did not they themselves obstinately resist the motions of God's spirit, and neglect the means that he affords them, for grace and salvation. He that finds this happy work wrought in him, ought most humbly to thank God, and ascribe it to his free grace and mercy; and he that is yet in a state of sin and wickedness, should use his best endeavours, and call earnestly on God for his grace and mercy, to reclaim him, or there is little probability of his becoming a convert to virtue and holiness.

But, some will say, this account is not consistent with scripture. For there, every man in his natural state, is represented as dead in trespasses and sins.

And

And is not regeneration the infusing a new nature into man, and making him a new creature? And is it not absurd to say, a dead man can raise himself to life, or a creature new form and create himself? I answer, that however absurd it seems, yet it is the language of scripture. God calls on Israel to make themselves a new heart, and a new spirit. St. Paul thus speaks to sinners, "awake, thou that sleepest, and rise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life;" and in the words I am treating of, he desires christians not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of their minds. All which shew, that men must not be perfectly passive in this business, like stocks and stones. For though God creates the new heart, and Christ gives the life, and the spirit transforms the mind, yet man must do something in this work. In truth, the misunderstanding these phrases of scripture, and straining them too far, occasions many mistakes about regeneration. Some will take the term of regeneration, or the new birth, or the new creature, in a literal sense, though they ought to be understood figuratively; that is, we are not to imagine these words import a new soul, mind, or nature, created in man by the spirit of God, which is the literal sense; but only, that the same soul, which had a vicious inclination, is now by God's grace virtuously disposed; that the same mind, which before was ignorant, and averse to the things of God, is now enlightened, and doth more love and delight therein than before. The nature in the regenerate, and the unregenerate, is the same human nature that is common to all men; only in the one it is much corrupted and depraved; in the other, it is in some measure amended, and restored to its true perfection and liberty. Nor are these words, "we are all dead in trespasses and sins, and that God by Christ hath quickened, and  
" created

“created us again to good works,” to be strictly understood, but only metaphorically: For here is neither a proper death, a proper quickening, nor a proper creation; but the meaning of these terms is, that mankind, through their original degeneracy, were so far gone in sin, that there was no possibility of reclaiming them to holiness and virtue, by any human means. But God by sending his son, and affording them the powerful arguments of his Gospel, with the assistance of the holy Spirit, effected what nature alone could not do.

The next question is, whether some may not be truly regenerate, though they never experienced a real change from bad to good? I will consider this point more particularly, because it hath troubled some very good persons. To these, it should be observed, that by the scriptures, regeneration is absolutely necessary to salvation; that except a man be born again, created a new, and transformed by the renewing of his mind, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God; and that these expressions import a very great change in a man's mind and actions: But yet they think themselves ignorant of their condition, because they never found such change in themselves, but were always much in the same temper of mind as at present. They, indeed, thank God for having had a hearty sense of religion; they have endeavoured to serve him with great sincerity in that way of Christianity in which they have been educated; and God hath mercifully preserved them from all great and open violations of their baptismal covenant. But still where is their regeneration? For they are but what they ever were. To this I answer; if a man finds in himself all the effects of regeneration; it is no matter whether they were wrought in him with a sensible change of his mind and manners, or not; the state of man's soul, is the thing  
to

to be considered: If that be governed with holy principles, and they shew themselves in a constant course of virtuous actions, such an one may be assured he is truly regenerate; without knowing the manner how, or when he came into this state.

Indeed, at the time when our Saviour, and his apostles used these words, they did import a remarkable and sensible change in the person: And the reason is, because Christianity was then a new religion, to which the world was to be converted, and none were capable of being converted by the apostles preaching, but such as were come to years of discretion; the very notion of whose conversion, was an actual renouncing their former religion, their wicked and idolatrous practices, and entirely devoting themselves to the discipline and conduct of Jesus Christ. And none could thus exchange one religion for another, leave such practices and customs, and form their conversation after a new and stricter way, without being sensible of a great change in their principles and lives. And, therefore, the Christian state is called, conversion, transformation, and the new creature. But since kingdoms and nations have embraced Christianity, and that infants are baptized into it, the case is different. For by the advantage of a Christian education, the principles of that religion are so gradually instilled, that when we come of age, we chuse for ourselves, we embrace doctrines of Christianity rather than any other, without violence or difficulty. Many of us were sanctified, holy, and regenerate in our infancy, when we were consecrated to God; and as we grew up, his grace was not wanting, through the means of a religious education, to sow the seeds of virtue and holiness in our souls, which by degrees came to greater perfection; so that when grown to maturity, we  
found

found ourselves without any sensible change from bad to good, to have a prevailing inclination to what is good, and to bring forth the fruits of the spirit in our conversation. This is all that is meant by regeneration in such a case, though we know not when, nor how, we came into this state. This is the proper and full sense of the word; for here is both the outward regeneration of baptism, and the inward regeneration of the spirit attending it. But then this is true only as to such that have always lived virtuously and innocently, and never greatly departed from their baptismal vow. As for those, who had a bad education; or the abusing a good one have lived in a state of sin and wickedness, from the time they came to years of discretion; these are not regenerate, as to the inward spiritual part, but must some time or other undergo a real change and transformation, both in their principles and course of life, if ever they intend to be saved.

Another question is, whether the change that is made in a man's mind, in regeneration, is always so perceptible, as that he may know when, and how, it was produced in him? My answer is, that this only respects such as have formerly lived a careless vicious life, and so of necessity must have their principles and manners transformed; but concerns not those that have been well disposed from their childhood: So that it is not necessary that every one should be able to give an account of the beginning of regeneration, or conversion; and even as to those who have been vicious, and are afterwards so reformed, as to have just hopes that they are in a good condition; it is not necessary that even such should be sensible of a sudden extraordinary change in themselves, so as to date their conversion from such a time, or such a circumstance, or particular providence. My rea-  
son

son is, because it doth not appear, especially in our days, that the work of regeneration, or conversion is effected in a moment and at once, but rather gradually, by many steps and degrees. Men who have lived in a course of sin and wickedness, can hardly be imagined to put off their vicious habits on a sudden, or in a moment; but before that is accomplished, there must be many trials, and endeavours. It will require great meditation, much self-denial, and mortification; old habits must be weakened and destroyed, before new ones can be acquired; this will demand much time, study, resolution, and repeated acts of virtue, before new habits can be effectually wrought in wicked persons. For, as the poet well observed, “none  
“ ever grew extremely wicked all at once, but by  
“ degrees;” so those that have been bad, but grown good, cannot in an instant leap from one extreme to another, but must pass through several stages and states, before the virtuous principle hath conquered the vicious.

This being the case, it is not reasonable to think, that every convert to holiness and virtue, should be able to give an account of the precise time he was converted, though he may remember several particular incidents relating thereto. This will more clearly appear by the following instance; a man languisheth under a tedious distemper, but though he follows the advice of physicians, he doth not quickly mend; he is sometimes better, at other times worse: But at last, with time and the strength of nature, good prescriptions, regularity, and God’s blessing, he, by degrees, gets strength, recovers his distemper, and finds himself in a good state of health. But can the man thus recovered be sensible of the exact time he became a sound man? He may remember his taking physic, his sometimes growing better, and recovering at last,

perhaps, after several relapses, and yet not able to name the punctual minute, day, or week, when he could on good grounds say, he was cured of his disease. His health came gradually and insensibly, and when he lost all symptoms of sickness, he had cause to rejoice. But it would be idle for him to say, he became well at such an hour, or to be so confident of his health, as to lay aside all fear of future danger, or to doubt of his recovery, because he cannot name the time, manner or circumstance, with which it was effected. This instance is so plain and pertinent, that I need not enlarge on this head.

The last question is, concerning the marks and signs of regeneration. Some persons have been so forward to multiply marks of conversion or regeneration, as rather to obscure, than clear the difficulty, and have often brought needless scruples into men's heads. The point lies in a short compass, and requires no great learning, or subtilty, to discover it. For regeneration, as we now understand it, consists in an hearty sense of God and the Christian religion, and in a serious constant endeavour to live suitably to that sense in all our conversation. So that the marks of a regenerate person ought to be drawn from those effects that he feels in himself. If a man to his baptism, faith in Christ, and profession of the Christian religion, joins a serious conscientious conformity to the laws of Christ in all his actions, so far as his knowledge, the circumstances of his life, and the natural infirmities of human nature will allow him; if he heartily desires, constantly resolves, and sincerely endeavours to please God and save his own soul, in all the ways of righteousness, sobriety, and holiness, that the gospel prescribes; if he lives innocently, avoids all open, known, and wilful sin; and is truly sensible of all his frailties and omissions; if  
he

he begs God's pardon for, and strives against them, and grows rather better than worse, more inclined to good, and more averse to evil; this is the best, the only mark, whereby any one may know if he be in a regenerate condition, in a state of God's favour; and such may rest satisfied as to their future happiness. Indeed regeneration, by the numerous marks that some have set upon it, has been rendered a much more intricate and difficult thing; but there are two great inconveniences in multiplying the signs and marks of regeneration; the one is, that a man may be a very good Christian and a regenerate person, and not find in himself such marks as some give of it; the other is, that a bad man may experience such marks when good men cannot.

But it may be proper, briefly to consider a few mistakes concerning regeneration; one of which is, that regeneration and sanctification do really signify two different things, when in truth they are but different expressions of the same thing. Regeneration is a metaphor used in scripture to express our translation and change from one state to another, from a state of sin and wickedness to that of grace and holiness. And sanctification is our being made holy, purified, and cleansed from sin and impurity. Hence regeneration and sanctification are attributed to the same causes, I mean, to the spirit and word of God; we are said to be born of the spirit, to be sanctified of the Holy Ghost, to be begotten, and to be sanctified by the word of truth, that is the word of God. So that the scriptures speak of them as the same thing, which they really are; for if sanctification be the making of us holy, as well as regeneration, then they are both the same.

Another mistake is, that in regeneration and conversion, some think all the habits of grace are

infused together, and at once; that is, for men who were vicious before in several kinds, to be in a instant, by an omnipotent act of God's grace, and by a new principle infused into them, endued with the habits of the contrary graces and virtues; and to be as chaste, temperate, just, meek, and humble, as if they become so, by the frequent practice of these virtues. I do not deny, but this may sometimes be the case; for some men, by an extraordinary power of God's grace, are suddenly changed, and strangely reclaimed from a wicked and vicious, to a religious, and virtuous life. This may in some sense be called the infusion of the habits of grace and virtue together at once; but even in such, I doubt not, but that the habits of several graces and virtues are afterwards attained, by the frequent practice of them. This was common and visible in many of the first converts to Christianity, especially of those who were reclaimed from the abominable idolatry and impiety of Heathenism. The spirit of God did then work miraculously in the cures of both spiritual and bodily diseases. But to make this the rule and standard of God's ordinary proceedings in the conversion and regeneration of men, is equally as unreasonable, as still to expect miracles for the cure of diseases. And that there is no necessity it should be effected in an instant, but by degrees, plainly appears from the nature of regeneration; which is the change of a man's state from sin to holiness.

The new testament speaks of the sudden change of many, on the first preaching the gospel, but it is not of absolute necessity, nor the ordinary method of God's grace, to work irresistibly on the minds of men; the not considering which hath occasioned the chief mistakes in this matter. We find that good persons are made so, by the insensible

ble steps and degrees of a religious education ; who having being never vicious, know nothing of any sensible change. And was an irresistibile act of divine power necessary to our repentance and conversion ; then no man would repent on consideration and choice, but by force and necessity, which destroys the virtue of repentance.

Let us not then make some particular instances in scripture, as to the strange and sudden conversion of some persons, namely, St. Paul, and the jailor, the common rule and measure of every man's conversion, so as that unless a man be enlightened from heaven, frightened almost out of his senses, he can have no assurance of his conversion ; when a much surer judgment may be made of a man's sincerity therein, by the real effects of this change, than by the manner of it. The effects of God's holy spirit in the regeneration of men are sensible, though the manner and degrees of his operation on their souls are various, and not to be accounted for. If we plainly see many insensibly changed and made good by pious education ; and that others, who have lived long in a profane contempt and neglect of religion, are by the secret power of God's word and holy spirit, on calm consideration without any great terrors and amazement visibly changed, and brought to a better mind and course : It is in vain in these cases to pretend, that this change is not real, because the manner of it is not agreeable to some instances in scripture, or to our own observation ; or that these persons cannot give such an account of the time and manner of this conversion, as others can.

To conclude ; we ought not to be curious about the marks of our regeneration ; or, when we read books that treat of these things we should not be too much exalted, or cast down, whether the marks we there find to be given, do agree or not

with our state. The truest mark is that of our Saviour ; the tree is known by its fruits. If a man be baptized, and sincerely endeavours to lead a good life ; if his faith in Jesus Christ be so strong as by it to overcome the world and the evil customs thereof ; if he so conforms himself to the laws of our Saviour, as not to live in any wilful transgression of them, but in the general course of his life, walks honestly and piously, and keeps a good conscience towards God and man ; such a person, however he came into this state, and with whatever infirmities it may be attended, so as he prays and strives against them, is a good man, and gives a true evidence of his regeneration, though he may not have all the marks and qualifications that he may read in some books ; such a man, if he perseveres in this religious course, will, without doubt, at last be justified before God, and find an admission into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Discourse XCIV. Abp. *Hort.*

The CHRISTIAN LIFE described.

Titus ii. 11, 12.

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men; teaching us, that denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.

THE grace of God here, and in many other places of scripture, signifies the gospel of our Saviour Jesus Christ, which is the highest manifestation of God's grace and favour that was ever made to mankind. Here only we learn, that God "so loved the world, as to give his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." Here only we learn, that God will pardon our sins, and restore us to his favour upon our sincere repentance and amendment. Here only it is, that life and immortality, things before but obscurely hinted, are brought to light. Here only are to be found the assurances of a resurrection to a life of glory and felicity, which God, who cannot lye, hath promised to all good men. The grace of God in the gospel, bringeth salvation to all men, to every nation and country under heaven, and to every one, who "will deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." In these words, the duty of every good Christian is laid down in natural order.

He must begin with denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts; all kind of wickedness, every transgression of God's law. For all who nameth the name of Christ, and would become a good Christian, must depart from iniquity. The essential parts of the Christian life, are here distinguished according to their respective objects; with regard to ourselves, it is sobriety; with respect to other men, it is righteousness; and with regard to God, it is godliness.

The virtue of sobriety chiefly consists in the government of our sensual appetites and inclinations, which generally betray us into those irregularities that are contrary to sobriety; "every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lusts, and enticed; then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin." The principal of those sensual appetites, which are apt to draw us into excess, are these following. The appetite for meat and drink, with respect to which sobriety consists in temperance. The appetite for continuing the species called concupiscence, and here sobriety means chastity. The appetite for riches, and here sobriety signifies contentment.

The appetite for meat and drink was implanted in our nature, to excite us to take that nourishment which is necessary to preserve health and life. But the misfortune is, that these good things, which were designed to give us innocent pleasure, are through the corruption of our nature abused, and made the occasions of gluttony, drunkenness, and all kind of intemperance, to God's dishonour, and the reproach of our natures. This being the corrupt state of the world in St. Paul's time, he labours every where to prove, that Christianity is a religion that requires great purity of life and manners, and that Christians must become new creatures, "putting off the old man, which is corrupt  
rupt

“rupt according to the deceitful lusts, and putting  
 “on the new man, which after God is created  
 “in righteousness and true holiness; not living  
 “after the flesh, but through the spirit, mortify-  
 “ing the deeds of the body.” So that Chri-  
 stians must not give way to the cravings of their  
 sensual appetites, but must govern and restrain  
 them within the strict rules of sobriety and tempe-  
 rance. We must “take heed lest our hearts be  
 “overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness,  
 “and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil  
 “the lusts thereof; but constantly imitate the strict  
 “virtue and sobriety of our blessed Saviour.” It  
 is difficult I confess to fix the limits of eating  
 and drinking, because of the different constitutions  
 of people; every one must therefore judge for  
 himself, and by experience discover the bounds  
 of temperance. But in general, we must beware  
 of approaching too near to vice, for fear of our  
 own treacherous hearts, and the force of temp-  
 tation. Sobriety with respect to eating and drink-  
 ing lies within a small compass. St. Paul thus  
 describes gluttons, that their God is their belly. The  
 same he said of those who place their chief hap-  
 piness in eating and drinking, who gratify a wan-  
 ton palate at any price, even to the impairing  
 their fortunes, the ruin of their families, and the  
 utter neglect of charity.

The vice of drunkenness is more easily distin-  
 guished, being written in legible characters, in the  
 eyes, tongue and feet; besides the loss of reason,  
 and transforming a man into a brute, a wise man  
 into a fool. Indeed, drunkenness is often unpre-  
 meditated, and gradually creeps on without being  
 perceived; but this is no excuse, as every one knows  
 the bad consequences, and that it often ends in mad-  
 ness. For the reason once dethroned, and the  
 passions inflamed, they hurry a man into all sorts of  
 wickedness

wickedness and mischief. There is hardly a glutton or drunkard who does not repent the next day of his debauch; but as such repentance is only the effect of excess, it soon vanishes without any reformation. But it must at last come to a real repentance; for when the constitution is broken, the powers of nature fail, and death approaches, a man can scarce help repenting; but then it will be too late, because it cannot be proved true by amendment of life. Thus the voluptuous man in the gospel, "went clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day," and could spare nothing from his luxury for poor Lazarus, who lay perishing at his gate; but when he was in hell he earnestly begged for a drop of water from the same Lazarus, to cool his tongue. Let Christians who indulge their appetite in drunkenness and gluttony, from hence learn to prevent a late repentance, by restraining their sensual inclinations; and to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly in the present world, for these of all vices are most contrary to Christian sobriety. I proceed to consider

The appetite of concupiscence, or that of continuing the race of mankind in the world. Sobriety with regard to this is chastity. Were men left at large as to this appetite, many mischiefs and inconveniences would ensue. The alliances of families and ties of blood must cease. Inheritance and property would be confounded. The endearments peculiar to conjugal affection, and the mutual fidelity between husband and wife would be lost. The education of children would be neglected; for children would not know their own fathers, nor fathers their children, so that all parental and filial affections would be at an end. In short, the race of mankind would be so disunited and blended, that the world must soon run into infinite confusions and disorders.

disorders. For these reasons God hath wisely restrained this appetite, and ordained the holy state of matrimony, that the human race should be perpetuated this way, and all other offsprings be esteemed spurious and dishonourable. The Christian religion forbids all impure commerce under the highest penalties. "Neither fornicators, nor adulterers shall inherit the kingdom of God; and whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." No corrupt communication must proceed out of our mouths, nor foolish talking and jesting, because these are apt to inflame unlawful desires. And whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. These are the restraints which the gospel hath laid upon this unruly appetite, and are refinements of purity and chastity, which escaped the best of the Heathen moralists, being reserved for the religion of Christ.

As to the appetite for riches, with regard to which sobriety means contentment; this is a false appetite of man's making, and not implanted in us by God. The desire of whatever is necessary for the support and comfort of life is natural and reasonable, and may lawfully be gratified by all honest means. And tho' this appetite for money may not at first seem contrary to the sobriety here recommended; (for covetous men are most remarkable for their sobriety and temperance, and the reason is plain, because their sensual appetites cannot be indulged without great expence) yet it is not virtue that makes covetous men abstemious, but to save their money; this being their prevailing taste, they will deny themselves even the necessaries of life to gratify it. But as little as covetousness may in appearance be contrary to sobriety, yet in truth it is inconsistent with it, because it is a stranger to contentment, and never thinks it has enough, but is  
always

always craving more; and even old age, which abates other appetites, does but encrease this. And tho' it be free from drunkenness, gluttony and other pleasurable vices, yet it is attended with a different guilt, more injurious to men; such as oppression, exaction, cheating, want of charity to the poor, of beneficence to mankind, and of a contented spirit, the natural companions of avarice, and therefore ranked among the blackest vices in scripture. A covetous man the Lord abhors. No covetous man, who is an idolator, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of God; and which is the only inheritance he never coveted. They "that will be rich fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men into destruction and perdition; for the love of money is the root of all evil."

Under the appetite of riches, I cannot omit the love of gaming. I mean not that profligate sort, which is made a profession, but that more reputable kind, which obtains a sanction, from persons who are otherwise to be justly esteemed and imitated. The most innocent recreations may become faulty, if they take up that time which ought to be more profitably employed, or betray us into unreasonable hours, to the neglect of our families and devotions; or if they so possess our hearts, that we are miserable when a party disappoints us, and think it an evening lost, if it be not devoted to play. These are violent symptoms that the love of money is the prevailing ingredient; and that recreation is not the only thing in view. Indeed the love of money, when it is inordinate, and engrosses our affections, time and pursuits, to the neglect of our duty to God, our neighbour, or families, cannot be reconciled with the sobriety of true Christians.

The next division of our Christian duty, is to live righteously in this present world. A duty which extends

tends to all our dealings with men. For righteousness requires us to be fair and equal in all our contracts and agreements ; taking no advantage of the ignorance, weakness, or necessities of our neighbour ; but to be punctual in performing our obligations, fulfilling the mutual intention, and appealing to our consciences as witnesses for us. It requires us to render to all their dues, not only debts in law, but in equity and good conscience ; and to do this cheerfully, without compulsion, readily without delay, or having recourse to evasions, which is a real injustice ; for there is no honesty in paying debts when it cannot be helped. And yet to the great shame of our country, too much of this injustice is found among us. For when we see luxury in dress, furniture, equipage and splendid tables, supplied by poor tradesmen, who are unmercifully kept out of their money, till they are ruined and undone by supporting the vanity of those who despise them ; what is this but the greatest injustice ? --- We should also avoid contracting debts beyond what we are able to pay ; for this is to run the risque of being dishonest, and to abuse the confidence which others repose in us.

Another branch of righteousness relates to the good name and credit of our neighbour. There is a great tenderness due to the good name of every one. If a man in business be slandered, it may deprive him and his family of their bread, for the mischief is soon done ; and when once slander is out, it runs and spreads apace, and is hard to be recalled. And as we should not injure him in his good name, so neither in his life, health and limbs, for these are still more precious to him ; and no kind of injustice is so cruel, as what tends to destroy or hurt these, for which no reparation can be made. --- This leads me to speak of duelling ; a practice not to be reconciled with the principles of christianity,  
nor

nor even with moral virtue or common sense. For what can be more contrary to righteousness, than for a private man to be judge and executioner in his own cause? Not a cool and indifferent, but a passionate and exasperated judge, and where the sentence is no less than death. And tho' the vindication of honour is pretended, yet I fear it often proceeds from revenge and thirst of blood. And all persons of virtue and religion will condemn the cruelty and injustice of that man, who attempts the life of his neighbour for a rude word, or a hasty stroke; and will call it a savage and inhuman principle, contrary to justice, goodness, charity, and every amiable quality of human nature. And I could wish that our men of gallantry would consider these things, and weigh the folly and danger of giving or accepting a challenge, which may end in immediate death, or the loss of health and limbs to one if not to both. The survivor, however he may palliate his crime, is no better than a murderer. Juries may call it manslaughter; but at the grand assize, before the great judge, no such distinction will be allowed. He may indeed live to repent; but how can any wilful murderer obtain mercy, when it is out of his power to make any reparation? But what becomes of the wretch that falls? his case is truly deplorable, for he dies in the very act of wickedness, when repentance is impossible.

Almsgiving is another branch of Christian righteousness, as a debt to Almighty God. He gave us our being, and has indefeasible right in all that belongs to us; we are therefore no better than his stewards; we hold our wealth subject to his orders, and every fit object of charity that providence puts in our way, is entitled to our benevolence. Indeed the object nor quantity of our charity, is no where prescribed. These are left to every man's prudence and conscience; only let every man  
give

give not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loveth a chearful giver. He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he that soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully.

The chief branches of righteousness then, with regard to our neighbour, are, to pay to every man what we owe him in justice and equity chearfully, and without compulsion. To be tender of his credit and good name; avoiding all slander that may hurt his reputation; and to defend and justify him, as far as truth will permit. To restrain our passions, from committing acts of violence upon his person; to protect his health, life or limbs, as far as consists with prudence and our own safety. To relieve his wants by our alms, according to our abilities, and we have a rule to assist us in all cases; for whatsoever we would that men should do unto us, let us even so do unto them, for this is the law and the prophets. By consulting our own conscience, this oracle will always teach us how to be righteous in all cases.

I proceed to consider another most important article of Christian duty, which is to live godly. In general to live godly, is to have that habitual sense of the being and attributes of God, impressed upon our minds, as may upon all occasions duly influence not only our outward behaviour, but our very thoughts and designs; so as to be the governing principle of our whole lives. A good man is one who sets the Lord always before his eyes; who accustoms himself to meditate upon God, and by frequent contemplation of his infinite perfections, imprints upon his spirits an habitual regard and veneration for him. And an irreligious man is one who lives without God in the world; and has not God in all his thoughts. But more particularly,

To live a godly life, implies, a grateful sense of the many blessings we have received from God; who  
gave

gave us our beings, who so exquisitely contrived our bodies, and put into them immortal spirits, endued with the noble powers of free-will, understanding and memory; which render us intellectual and moral agents, capable of those rational pleasures and enjoyments that all other animals are destitute of; who is our daily benefactor, supplying us with food and raiment; and innumerable delights and satisfactions to gratify our senses, and enliven our spirits. And above all, who mercifully sent his only Son to save us from endless misery, and to entitle us, upon easy conditions, to new hopes of his favour and of eternal happiness.

A constant dependance and reliance of mind upon God, is another part of living godly. The experience of God's goodness naturally creates our dependence on it for the future. The scriptures exhort us to this duty, "cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee. Blessed are all they that put their trust in thee." Not but God expects that we should use all the means in our power to obtain our wants, and then to hope and pray for his assistance and blessing. This duty consists in a settled habit of mind, that will run thro' the whole course of a godly life. It will operate on the rich as well as the poor man; the former is not less dependent on the providence of God than the latter. If God should withdraw his warm sunshine, or his kindly showers and dews, what would become of the produce of his land? Soon would "the heaven over him be as brass, and the earth under him as iron." Hence the rich should learn to have an humble dependence on God, for the support and comfort of their lives, and not think themselves all-sufficient: and the poor not to despond, but to rely on the blessing of God's providence upon their honest labours and industry. And both are taught in the Lord's prayer, to ask their daily

daily bread from their common father which is in heaven. Again,

To make the glory of God one great end of our actions, is essential to the living godly. To promote his honour, to propagate the true religion and worship of God in the world; to engage men in the love of virtue, truth and goodness; to reprove all kinds of vice and immorality, all disrespect and contempt of God, all false and idolatrous worship; to use his holy name with the greatest reverence, and reprove those who use it profanely; to do all this to the utmost of our power and influence, is to make the glory of God the great end of our lives; for "whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we must do all to the glory of God." But to live godly also implies our having a continual sense of God's infinite presence on our minds, by which he perfectly knows all our actions, thoughts and desires. "His eyes are upon man, and sees all his goings. I the Lord search the heart and try the reins; and give to every man according to his ways, and to the fruit of his doings." The consideration of God's infinite knowledge should produce in us, an habitual awe and fear of the divine majesty, which will influence us to an uniform course of virtue and obedience. This single reflection, if duly attended to, will deter us from all wickedness, excite us to the practice of all righteousness, even to the denial of our most favourite inclinations. Fear is a passion of the strongest operation; it was the first passion that awakened Adam after his transgression; he was afraid, and then hid himself. When Joseph's virtue begun to stagger, his last refuge was in the fear of God: "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" It was this that saved his virtue. "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." Did we always remember that

God is ever present with us, sees what we are doing, and whose eye we can never escape; who would dare to do a wicked action, or neglect a good one? Who would not but lead a godly and religious life?

A submissive and patient resignation to God's will, under all troubles and afflictions, is also a material part of godliness. The great governor of the world has many wise and good reasons for afflicting even good men, which we cannot discover, and therefore in all the divine dispensations we must say with "Eli, let him do what seemeth him good;" and with Job, the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord. "For God does not willingly afflict, nor grieve the children of men;" but has wise and gracious ends of providence to answer, tho' we are ignorant of them. The frequent reading of God's holy word, has likewise a great tendency to a good life. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. A good man's delight is in the law of the Lord, and he doth meditate therein day and night. There is nothing necessary to be known, believed, or practised, which is not clearly revealed in these sacred volumes. To neglect therefore to read this book of God, shews a certain want of that godliness, which is the great character of a Christian. Again,

A due regard to God consists in the constant performance of divine worship, both in private and in public. The worship of God appears so evident by the light of nature, that all nations have agreed in the practice of it. As God is our creator, preserver and redeemer, this makes it our indispensable duty, to worship and pray to him. The psalmist thus

thus directs us; "O come let us worship and fall down, let us kneel before the Lord our maker. For he is our God." And our Saviour says, "thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." And St. Paul bids us "be careful for nothing, (so as to be over anxious, or distrust providence) but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving let your request be made known unto God." Prayer is both an act of religion, by which God is honoured, and is also a proper means of supplying our necessities. For to praise him for his glorious excellencies; to thank him for his great benefits; to confess our sins and implore his mercy and forgiveness; to make our humble supplications to him for the supply of all our wants; this is truly and properly the business of prayer.

But then we are to prefer public worship to private, because in the nature of the thing, it tends more to promote the honour of God, as it is performed in the presence of many witnesses, and with greater solemnity. There is a peculiar force, solemnity, and beauty in public worship, which is not to be found in what is private and secret. This is "worshipping God in the beauty of holiness, and giving him the glory due unto his name." But I must not omit another part of devotion, that of family worship. And the same arguments that establish public worship may be urged for this, because every family is a little church or congregation of Christians; and the minister of this church is the father or ruler of the family, whose right and authority is founded on the law of nature. By virtue of this trust, every master of a family is answerable to God, for the performance of divine worship within his little jurisdiction. Thus Joshua resolved, "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." The regular discharge of this duty, will

be attended with great advantages. It is the surest way to procure God's favour and protection, and to bring down his blessings upon all our undertakings. It will naturally beget in our children and servants, a reverence for God, and things sacred; it will season their minds with religion, lead them into habits of virtue, sobriety and honesty, by the frequent thoughts of God and another world, which otherwise they would seldom think of. And this duty with regard to the world, will procure credit, esteem and honour. For they who do not love religion themselves, will yet respect those who do. This constant regard to God in family worship, is a necessary branch of godly living, and will be found in every family, where the master has a true sense of religion upon his heart.

The great motive offered by St. Paul to inforce this duty is the looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Here we plainly see, that the design of our Saviour's death, was not meerly to save us from the punishment of our sins, without repentance and reformation; but to prepare us for the heavenly happiness, by the practice of all those excellent virtues he has taught us by the gospel, and his own example, and by which his followers are to be distinguished from the professors of all other religions. Christians so qualified by sanctity of life and purity of heart; who deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world, may justly look for that blessed hope, and glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ. And a blessed hope this is; as its object is the highest happiness our nature can possibly enjoy, "such as eye hath

“not seen, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.” It is also a blessed hope, in regard to the certainty of attaining it, because it is founded on the promise of God, who cannot lye; which “hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast.”

And supposing it should cost us some trouble and pains to govern our passions and sensual appetites; to live soberly, temperately, and chastely; and that by paying our just debts, and doing acts of charity, we should take somewhat from our luxury, equipage, and the pride of life; nay, that by being strictly honest and just, we should leave ourselves a smaller income; for this is to practise righteousness: Or, that we should conquer our idleness and aversion to devotion, and oblige ourselves to be constant in our private and public worship of God, without which we cannot live godly; I say, supposing that all this will require some pains and trouble, yet shall we not be great gainers in the end? And will not the blessed hope that is set before us, abundantly make amends for all this? If men will rise early and set up late, deny their sleep, their food and recreations, in pursuit of worldly advantages, and think themselves well paid if they do but succeed; and yet will take no pains to please and serve God, to deny their lusts, to live up to the rules of the gospel, and the holy religion they profess, and reject this blessed hope; what can be said, but that their eternal ruin is their own choice, and they run into it with their eyes open.

Discourse XCV. Dr. *Clarke*.

## OF PREDESTINATION and ELECTION.

Rom. ix. 23, 24.

And that he might make known the riches of his glory, on the vessels of mercy, which he had before prepared unto glory : even us whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles.

**T**HERE is no part of scripture more difficult to be understood, more misapplied by the ignorant, more wrested by the learned, and more falsely interpreted by melancholy pious persons, than this chapter of St. Paul. And tho' some have greatly perplexed themselves by picking out some expressions, concerning God's electing the children yet unborn, who had neither done good nor evil ; concerning " his loving Jacob, and hating Esau ; " his hardening Pharaoh ; and shewing mercy on " whom he will have mercy ; and having compassion on whom he will have compassion ; " and of his having the same power over mankind as the potter has over the clay, to make one vessel to honour, another to dishonour : yet it is clearly evident from the beginning and end of the chapter, that the apostle's design is not to speak concerning any decree of God, with respect to the final and eternal state of particular persons ; but only to declare both the sovereign power and justice of God, in distributing to different nations, in diverse ages, what particular advantages he pleases ; and revealing his will to them, when, and in what manner he thinks fit. At the  
begin-

beginning of the chapter the apostle expressly declares, that the aim and intention of his discourse, was, God's rejecting the Gentiles, and calling the Jews; and at the end he sums this up, as the conclusion designed. The intermediate parts, and the examples therein alledged, are nothing but similitudes and illustrations of this argument; and the words of the text are a very clear declaration of this his intention.

The apostle here expressly declares, that he does not mean, by the vessels of mercy, prepared afore of God unto glory, of which he had been treating in the former chapter, any particular persons, chosen unconditionally to eternal salvation; but the whole body of Christians, even us whom he has called, and who obeyed that call by believing in Christ; not from among the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles. They were called to receive that grace and mercy, and to embrace those advantages of the gospel, which the Jews rejected, and therefore became vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction. And tho' we are at present the vessels of mercy, yet if we live unworthy of the gospel, we can have no reason to expect, since God spared not the Jews, the natural branches, that he will spare us, who were engrafted after their fall. In the foregoing part of this epistle, the apostle had shewn at large, that the Gentiles by acting contrary to the law of nature, and the Jews by disobeying the law given them from heaven, became both equally liable to the wrath of God. For God being no respecter of persons, "as many as sinned  
" without law, shall perish without law; and as  
" many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged.  
" by the law."

That both these laws being insufficient to preserve men from sin, or to recover them to God, the apostle therefore assures us, that both Jews and Gentiles were obliged to believe in Christ; and to obey the gracious terms of the gospel, as the only

means of justification for the future. "For since all  
" have sinned and come short of the glory of God,  
" they can only be justified freely by his grace, thro'  
" the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." That is,  
all being sinners, none of them can claim salvation  
by the merit of their obedience, but merely from the  
gracious pardon of sin, freely granted to penitents,  
thro' faith in Christ. That this justification by faith  
without works, that is, by the obedience of the  
gospel alone, without the ceremonies of the law,  
was abundantly sufficient, being the same faith by  
which Abraham had been justified. That this justifi-  
cation by the faith and obedience of the gospel,  
affords much greater assurance of present peace and  
reconciliation with God, and of eternal life and  
glory hereafter, than the law could do. "For if  
when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God  
by the death of his Son, much more being now  
justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath  
thro' him." That this free justification by grace  
thro' the faith of the gospel, without the ceremonies  
of the Mosaic institution, obliges men to a stricter  
obedience, to greater purity and holiness of life than  
the law had done; Christians being now "made free  
" from sin, and become the servants of righteousness;  
" are dead unto sin, but alive unto God, thro' Jesus  
" Christ our Lord." That the law of Moses was not  
able to deliver men from the bondage and slavery of  
sin, from "the law in their body warring against the  
law of their mind, and bringing them into captivity  
to the law of sin;" but that the gospel having  
"delivered men from the body of this death, from  
" the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty  
" of the children of God;" enabled them to prevail  
over the temptations of sin, and all the persecutions  
and powers of the world. "For the law of the  
spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made us free from  
the

the law of sin and death.—And we are more than conquerors, thro' him that loved us.

The apostle having largely proved these particulars in the beginning of this epistle, proceeds in the ixth chapter to answer a strong objection, which he knew would be raised by the unbelieving Jews, against what he had said. For if his doctrine here was true, then whosoever of the Jews rejected the gospel, notwithstanding they were descended from the patriarchs to whom the promises were made; and that they were God's peculiar people; notwithstanding that to them were committed the prophecies and oracles of God, and that to them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; yet notwithstanding all this, it would follow, that they were still out of the way of salvation; tho' zealous observers of the ceremonial law, unless they believed in Christ and obeyed the gospel, which is the righteousness of faith. The Jews thought this doctrine impossible, and contrary to the promises of God, made to their fathers; and therefore imputed it to the apostle's zeal and prejudice against them, since his being converted to Christianity. To this objection, he replies, in this chapter, by shewing that there was no injustice in God, no breach of promise, no change of his will, in rejecting the unbelieving Jews, and receiving the Gentiles; since the promise was not originally made to all the children of Abraham, but to Isaac only, and of his sons only to Jacob; and all were not Israel, which were of Israel; for a remnant only was to be saved. And during the whole period of the law, God had mercy on whom he would have mercy, and compassion on whom he would have compassion. That is, not on the whole people, but on whom he pleased, who was the alone competent and infallible judge, to distinguish such

as were stedfast in their faith and fidelity to him. And whom he would he hardened : that is, he chose out of obstinate and incorrigible offenders whom he pleased, to make examples of his wrath and vengeance. Since this, saith the apostle, was the method of God's proceeding from the beginning, much more might God justly reject unbelievers, at the coming of the Messiah, who was the end of the law ; and reckon only those, the true children of Abraham, who imitated his faith and obedience ; making known the riches of his glory, on the vessels of mercy, which he had before prepared unto glory ; even us whom he has called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles.

The apostle's principal argument being thus explained, we may the more easily understand those other parts of this discourse in this chapter, which have been so often mistaken and misapplied. He begins with an apology for himself, that in this doctrine of the rejection of the Jews, he was no way influenced by any prejudice or hatred against his countrymen, since his conversion to Christianity. On the contrary, he most solemnly calls God to witness, that his grief and trouble of mind, for their impenitency and incredulity, for their rejection, and the judgments God would send them, was greater and more uneasy to him, than all other afflictions and calamities, he ever met with. I say the truth in Christ, says he, I lye not——that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart ; for I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh. Tho' this expression is highly figurative and affectionate, yet some pious, but melancholy persons, have been disturbed at it, as if St. Paul's wish was inimitable ; whose example, if a Christian can in no case follow, he may be apt to accuse himself of want of charity : and yet to follow

it in any case, seems terrible and shocking even to the strongest affection, and the most fervent zeal. For, though for a good man, one would even dare to die, yet for a man to become subject to the curse and displeasure of God; this seems beyond the bounds even of Christian charity, either to desire or submit to. The apostles meaning, therefore, has been greatly misunderstood; for his intention in this passage was not to wish for the eternal wrath of God, but to wish, that if it was possible, he, by bearing himself those temporal judgments which he saw were coming upon the Jews, on account of their being accursed from Christ, through their obstinacy and incredulity, might be a means to restore them again, to the favour of God, and to be his peculiar people. He was so far from bearing any hatred or ill will to the Jews, that he could willingly suffer for them, and in their stead, if he could thereby prevent their rejection, and being accursed from Christ. "I could wish, says he, that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." This plainly shews, that what follows in this chapter does not relate to any predestination of particular persons to eternal happiness or misery, but wholly concerns the rejection of the Jewish nation for their infidelity, and the calling in of the Gentiles by the gospel. In this sense, his apology for himself is very pertinent, and necessary to introduce a discourse, which he knew would be extremely ungrateful to the Jewish nation. But no sense at all can be made of this apology, by any other interpretation. For if he was speaking of predestinate or reprobate persons, who must be selected both from Jews or Gentiles, and yet could not be particularly known in this life; it could be of no service for him to express such heaviness and sorrow,

sorrow of heart, for the rejection of the whole people of the Jews.

This then being his true design, he proceeds to shew at the sixth verse, that there was no injustice, no breach of promise in God, for rejecting the unbelieving Jews, and receiving the Gentiles in their room; in regard the original promise to their father Abraham, by which they were entitled to become God's peculiar people, was not made to all his posterity, but to the seed of Isaac only. For God did not seem to intend, that his promise should take place in Abraham's descendants according to the flesh; but in those, who by a faith, or fidelity like his, were in a true sense his children and followers. The promise of God therefore is not made void by this new dispensation. Since according to the original intent of the promise made to Abraham, children of the Gentiles, who imitated the faith and moral obedience of that patriarch, were more truly his children, than his unbelieving posterity the Jews according to the flesh.

The apostle farther illustrates this argument, by a still more eminent example. For if, saith he, not only among the children of Abraham, but also among the posterity of Isaac, that child of the promise, God was pleased to confine the promise to Jacob in exclusion of Esau, even before either of them was born; much more may God now, without injustice, confine his promise to such only as believe in God, and obey his revealed will; exclusive of those, who continue in unbelief, and obstinately reject the salvation, which God hath offered them; notwithstanding they are the posterity of Jacob, and in other respects, equal to them who do believe; according to these words, ver. 11. "The children being not yet born, neither  
" having done any good or evil; that the pur-  
" pose

“*poſſe* of God according to election might ſtand,  
 “*not* of works, but of him that calleth ; it was  
 “*ſaid* unto Rebecca, the elder ſhall ſerve the  
 “*younger*, as it is written, Jacob have I loved,  
 “*but* Eſau have I hated.” The only difficulty in  
 this paſſage is, what is meant by the purpoſe of  
 God. Many imagine it is his chuſing ſome par-  
 ticular perſons, unconditionally to eternal life,  
 and others to eternal deſtruction. But the apoſtle  
 on the contrary, ſays, that he meant God’s pur-  
 poſe of appointing the elder of Iſaac’s ſons to ſerve  
 the younger, not ſo much in their perſons, as in  
 their poſterity ; and therefore God made this ap-  
 pointment before they were born. The uſe the  
 apoſtle makes of this inſtance, is to prevent an  
 objection of the unbelieving Jews ; who ſince they  
 could not deny, but notwithstanding all the pro-  
 miſes made to Abraham and Iſaac, that God might  
 in this ſenſe, without any injuſtice, hate and reſect  
 Eſau ; ſo conſequently they could not in reaſon  
 charge God with any unrighteouſneſs, in alſo re-  
 jecting the unbelieving Jews. “*What* ſhall we  
 “*ſay* then? Is there unrighteouſneſs with God?  
 “*God* forbid.” ver. 14.

To the ſame purpoſe he urges in the follow-  
 ing verſes, what God had declared to Moſes and  
 to Pharaoh. If God declared to Moſes, that he  
 would have mercy on whom he would have mercy,  
 and would have compaſſion on whom he would  
 have compaſſion ; that is, to ſhew mercy and com-  
 paſſion, how and in what manner he judged fit,  
 who is the only proper and unerring judge: for  
 the ſame reaſon now alſo, ſays the apoſtle, nei-  
 ther is it of him that willeth, nor of him that  
 runneth, to chuſe in what method God ſhall bring  
 men to ſalvation ; but it is of God only, that  
 ſheweth mercy, who hath right to appoint how,  
 to whom, and in what manner he will ſhew it.

For

For in human judicatories, should any one find fault with the sentence of an able judge; might not the judge, very properly say, "I will acquit whom I see fit to acquit, and I will condemn, whom I see fit to condemn?" Not that he would do it arbitrarily, but that as he had the most perfect knowledge of the law and the fact; his sentence ought not to be questioned by unskilful spectators. And of old, God did the same; he chose out of incorrigible offenders, whom he thought fit, to make public examples of his wrath and vengeance. Thus God hardened Pharoah; (as he tempted David in the same manner, by permitting Satan to do it) not by making or decreeing him to be wicked, God forbid; but he being obstinately wicked, God raised or supported him in power, and deferred destroying him, that he might shew his power on him, and that his name might be declared throughout all the earth; that so Pharoah's obstinacy and punishment might be known to the world. And if God did in former times act thus, is there, says the apostle, any injustice in God, in chusing now to make the impenitent and unbelieving Jews, (who are only the more hardened by his judgments, and his invitations to embrace the gospel; instead of being brought to repentance) examples of his severity and wrath; notwithstanding their being the posterity of Abraham; and to do this, even at the same time, that he resolves to have mercy on such of the Gentiles, as will obey the gospel he invites them to receive.

The apostle proceeds to an objection; which he knew the unbelieving Jews would make. "Thou wilt then say unto me, why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? If God resolve to reject and to destroy us, as he did Pharoah, why doth he blame us for being reject-

"ed?"

“ed?” To this he answers. First, “but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed, say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour?” That is, not that God could originally create one man unconditionally to eternal life, and another on purpose for eternal misery; but the plain meaning is, that God has as much power and right, to punish or reject one nation or people, and receive or exalt another, upon what terms he judges most fit and reasonable; as the potter has to form and mould his clay into any shape. But secondly, the apostle makes this direct reply; that the rejected Jews had no reason to murmur against the power and will of God; for though it was indeed his absolute will and power to punish when and as he thought fit; yet it was their own obstinacy and impenitency only, that made them to be rejected and punished at all. “What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?” The words with much long suffering, clearly prove, that the rejected vessels of wrath were not destroyed, till God had long waited for their repentance and amendment; which shews it was not determined before. And then he adds, “and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory; even us whom he has called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?” The vessels of mercy are not particular persons; but us, whom he has called, the whole body of Christians, in opposition to the whole nation of the rejected unbelieving Jews. Which is also further evident from his summing up the whole argument,

“What

“What shall we say then? that the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness that is of faith; but Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.” Why was this? but because they sought it not by faith, (that is, by embracing the gospel) but as it were by the works of the Mosaic law. All which he farther explains in the 10th and 11th chapters. I shall now make a few practical observations from what has been said.

And from hence let all such pious persons as are afraid, that after all their most earnest endeavours to obey the will of God, by a life of virtue and true holiness, that yet they shall not be of the number of those vessels of mercy, whom he has afore prepared unto glory; learn how to have their doubts removed, by considering that these passages of scripture, from which some have laboured to establish the doctrine of absolute and unconditional decrees, do plainly appear to have been greatly misinterpreted; and that by the vessels of mercy St. Paul means, not particular persons, chosen out of the bulk of mankind; but the whole body of Christians, the universal church of Christ, in opposition to the whole Jewish nation. On the other hand, let such as presumptuously think themselves secure, in the bare profession of Christianity, because the whole body of Christians are stiled in scripture, the elect, the election, the vessels of mercy; from hence learn and take notice, that as St. Paul, from Isaiah observes, that when the whole nation of the Jews were the chosen and peculiar people of God, yet out of them a remnant only were to be finally saved: so now, though the whole body of Christians, through God’s gracious offers of mercy to them in Christ, are stiled in scripture the election  
of

of grace; yet only those who live worthy of so excellent a profession, by the practice of true virtue, righteousness, and holiness, shall finally be made partakers of the benefit thereof. For as Christ chose, or elected twelve disciples, and yet one of them proved a devil, and the son of perdition; so notwithstanding all Christians are the vessels of mercy prepared of God afore unto glory, yet if any one draws back, he shall lose the benefit of that preparation; he shall finally be rejected, and not made partaker of the gospel salvation.

“ We may from hence also learn, that the true scripture doctrine of election and reprobation is this, that it pleased the almighty of his own free grace and mercy, to determine before the world was, to invite the Gentiles, as well as Jews, to repentance and faith, in his only begotten son, at the time appointed for his appearing among men; and it pleased him to decree, that all who should obey his invitation, should be assisted here with his grace, and obtain eternal glory; whilst those who abused and rejected his mercy, should suffer the severe punishments due to their impenitency, both in this world and the next. So that this decree is both general and conditional; it does not personally relate to any one, but in general to all, to whom the glad tidings of the gospel have been brought. And as to another life, it is not absolute, without regard to the actions of men; but conditionally founded on their faith and obedience. The divulging the gospel, to some men and nations, and not to others, is matter of meer grace and favour, and is to be resolved into the divine wisdom and goodness. No man can merit this at the hands of God, for all have sinned and offended him. But the election of those who embrace the faith, thereby to inherit the promises hereafter, will depend on their having on the wedding-garment of faith and charity; for those rewards

will be distributed to every man, only according to his works.

This interpretation has one considerable advantage, in that it makes the scriptures consistent with themselves. In this light, their invitations are merciful, their threatenings awakening, their persuasions powerful, and their promises engaging. But the contrary doctrine of a previous determination of every man's eternal state, without regard to his actions, is not only subversive of the first principles of natural reason and religion, but a direct contradiction to the whole new testament; if that be true, the blessed Jesus must have invited many to obey him, whom he knew could not; the moving eloquence of St. Paul to obedience, is empty sound, the denunciations of the apostle are vain words; and the promises of God, of none effect. For none of these can make an alteration in any man's state, if it was before predestinated; and no man will on their account be either the better or worse. If then, as our church observes, in the conclusion of her article on this subject, we are so to receive the promises of God, as they are generally set forth in the holy scriptures, then there will be no room for spiritual pride on the one hand, or despair on the other. The scriptures found the difference of our future and eternal state, on our own free choice and conduct. There is nothing in them on God's part, that favours of relentless cruelty; nothing that, if rightly understood, can give the least sanction to vice, or discountenance the lowest degrees of virtue. There is nothing in the scriptures, that can raise the minds of the virtuous to insolence and contempt, or sink the soul of the most humble Christian into desponding sorrow. There is no foundation for the best of men, to think themselves good enough, and therefore to cease from working; no authority for the worst so to give themselves up for lost, as to reject  
the

the calls and opportunities, which boundless clemency offers them, of repentance. There is nothing in them but what may justly humble the greatest saint, if he considers the example that is set before him, and how short he falls of it. Nothing but what may rejoice the heart of the sincere penitent, and fill it with admiration and transport. "O the depth  
"of the riches of the goodness of God!" how infinite are his condescensions! how unmeasurable is his mercy! how amazing his inestimable love!

Discourse XCVI. Abp. *Til-  
lotson.*

Of a GOOD CONSCIENCE, towards GOD  
and MEN.

ACTS xxiv. 16.

And herein do I exercise myself, to have always  
a conscience void of offences toward God  
and towards men.

**T**HE apostle here gives us the extent of a  
good man's pious practice. It hath regard  
to the whole compass of his duty, both to God  
and man, in which there must be constancy and per-  
severance. St. Paul exercised himself to have al-  
ways a conscience void of offence, in the whole  
course of his life. We must not only make con-  
science of our ways by fits and starts, but in all  
our actions without intermission. There are some  
who will refrain from grosser sins, and be very  
strict at some seasons; as during the time of a so-  
lemn repentance, and before the receiving the sa-  
crament; and when these are over, they return to  
their former lewd and vicious course. But religion  
requires a constant frame, an habitual temper of  
mind, influencing all our actions, during our whole  
lives, and in which we must use a very earnest  
care and endeavour; we must study to understand  
our duty, to be rightly informed concerning good  
and evil, that we mistake not the nature of things.  
We must apply our minds in good earnest, to be  
well instructed in all parts of our duty, in order  
to the practice of it; and when we know it, we  
must be very careful and conscientious in the dis-  
charge

charge and performance of it. We must not only resolve to follow the dictates and direction of our conscience, but must also be careful to inform our conscience aright, that we may not in any thing neglect our duty, or transgress the law of God. As conscience is the great principle of moral actions, and our guide in matters of sin and duty; I shall endeavour briefly to give the true notion of it. Every man is represented to have a kind of court and tribunal in his own breast, where he tries himself, and all his actions; this is called the court of a man's conscience. Conscience is the accuser, the record, and register of our crimes, in which the memory of them is preserved; and it is also the witness which gives testimony for and against us, the judge which declares the law, and what we ought to do, or not to have done in all cases, and passeth sentence upon us, by acquitting or condemning us. So that conscience is the court, the bench, and the bar; the accuser, witness, and judge. But at present I shall only consider conscience, as a principle or faculty, whereby we judge of moral good and evil, and which directs and governs our actions. Conscience then is nothing else, but the judgment of a man's own mind, concerning the morality of his actions, as to what is good, evil, or indifferent. I proceed to give some directions for the keeping a good conscience void of offence.

And first, we must never act contrary to the persuasion and conviction of our own conscience, for that is a great sin, as it offends the conscience, and renders us guilty; guilt being nothing else, but trouble in our minds, arising from a consciousness of having acted contrary to what we are persuaded was our duty. So that we should be very careful not to offend against the conviction of our own mind; as also to inform our consciences rightly, that we

may not wilfully mistake in our duty. This rule is the more necessary, because some men are apt to think, that whatever they do according to their conscience, may be justified. But this will appear to be a dangerous mistake, and fatal to the souls of men; if we consider, that men may be guilty of the most heinous sins in following an erroneous conscience. Men may do some of the worst and most wicked things in the world, with a persuasion that they do well. Our Saviour told his disciples, that "the Jews should put them to death, thinking they did God good service." Nay, they murdered the son of God himself, through ignorance and a false persuasion of mind. And our blessed Lord prayed his father to forgive them, 'for they know not what they do.' St. Paul tells us, 'that he verily thought with himself, that he ought to do many things against the name of Jesus.' And though he acted herein according to the persuasion of his conscience, yet he says, that he had been a blasphemer, a persecutor, a murderer, and even the greatest of sinners: And these sins proceeding from an erroneous conscience may prove damnable, without a particular repentance for them. Indeed,

Ignorance and mistake makes the person more capable of forgiveness; therefore our Saviour prayed, "father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And St. Paul obtained mercy, because he did it ignorantly, and in unbelief; that is, thro' a false persuasion of mind, not believing it to be a sin. But tho' the Jews, ignorantly crucified Christ, yet St. Peter exhorts them to a particular and deep repentance for it, as necessary to pardon and forgiveness. "I wot, says he, that thro' ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers, therefore repent ye, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." So that men should not be hurried  
away.

away by unreasonable prejudice and passion, without a due and calm examination of things; nor be governed by pride, humour, partiality, interest, or a furious and extravagant zeal; because the more we contribute to our error, the greater our guilt will be. Indeed where our error is involuntary and morally invincible, God will make allowance for it; but where it proceeds from our own faults and neglects, we should rectify our mistake. For we must answer to God, whatever we do, by virtue of that false persuasion, altho' we did it according to the dictate of our conscience.

In all doubts of conscience we must endeavour to be equal and impartial, and as willing to receive satisfaction of our doubts in one kind, as in another. For it looks very suspicious, when mens doubts and scruples bear all on one side; especially, if it be against charity, peace and obedience to government, ecclesiastical or civil; in this case, a mere doubt, much more a scruple, ought to be over-ruled, by the command of authority, the opinion and judgment of wise and good men, in consideration of the public peace, the unity and edification of the church. Not that a man is to act against the clear conviction of his own mind, but only when he doubts of a thing's being lawful, or unlawful, it seems reasonable, he should suffer a mere doubt or scruple, to be over-ruled by the weighty considerations before-mentioned. In truth, all pretences of conscience are highly to be suspected, which are accompanied with turbulent passion and furious zeal, it being great odds, but such a man's conscience is in the wrong. The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God: The passions of men are no proper instruments to promote religion, or that which is good. None are so likely to judge amiss, as men who are blinded by their passions, who are transported with a wild

zeal, and pretend conscience for their fury. Would men carefully observe, they might easily know when they act upon reason, and a true principle of conscience. To rage, and be confident, is a sure sign that a man is in the wrong; because this plainly shews, that his conscience is not governed by reason, but by interest, humour, or discontent. Is a man in the right? he is happy, and hath reason to be pleased, but none to be angry. If he hath reason on his side, he can desire no more; why then is he in a passion?

Of the great evil and mistake of this furious kind of zeal, the Jews are a sad example, in their behaviour to our Saviour, and his apostles. St. Paul persecuted the Christians, from a false and erroneous persuasion of his conscience. I persecuted, (says he) this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prison both men and women.—I thought with myself, that I ought to do many things against the name of Jesus. And many of the Saints I shut up in prison, and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them, and punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme, and being exceeding mad against them, I persecuted them even to strange cities. Conscience can hardly ever be right, when it transports men with such furious zeal and passion. All pretences of conscience are to be suspected, which are not accompanied with modesty and humility, a teachable temper and disposition, willing to learn, and to be informed. A proud and conceited temper is most likely to run into mistakes; because pride and self-conceit keep out knowledge, and prevent wisdom and instruction from taking place. Above all, let us be sure to mind what is our plain and certain duty; that great things wherein the life and substance of religion doth consist, and those also which make for peace, and  
whereby

whereby we may edify one another. But let not lesser matters prejudice or hinder our main duty. Let it be our great care not to fail in the two great commandments of the law, the love of God, and of our neighbour. Let us be strict and constant in our piety and devotion towards God ; chaste and temperate, just and honest, kind and charitable, humble and meek, patient and peaceable towards all men ; submissive and obedient to our superiors, natural, civil, and spiritual. A due regard to these great virtues of the Christian life, is to keep a conscience void of offence, both towards God and man. I now proceed,

To enforce the great motive and encouragement to this conscientious care of our lives and actions, which St. Paul tells us, was his belief of a resurrection, and of the rewards and punishments consequent upon it. “ I have hope (says he) towards  
“ God, that there shall be a resurrection of the just  
“ and the unjust ; for this reason, I exercise myself  
“ to have always a conscience void of offence to-  
“ wards God, and towards men.” If we believe the resurrection of the dead, and a future judgment, we must be careful now to discharge a good conscience, that we may render a good account hereafter ; that we may be sincere, and without offence, with respect to the day of Christ. For nothing will then raise our hearts so much, and make us lift up our heads with joy, like that of a good conscience, and the testimony of it, that in all simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world. On the contrary ; when we come to appear before the great judge of the world, nothing will fill our minds with so much terror, and our faces with so much confusion, as the clamours of a guilty conscience ; which will be more than a thousand witnesses against us, and will anticipate our condemnation, and pass a sentence on

us,

us, almost as severe as the judge himself. The perpetual regret and remorse of a sinner's own mind, will be one of the principal ingredients of his misery and torment. This consideration ought to have a mighty influence on us, and make us very careful, to have consciences void of offence now, that we may be free from torment and anguish hereafter.

The firm belief of a future state of eternal happiness or misery, is what gives weight and motion to those two powerful principles of human activity, the hopes and fears of men. There is no one but one time or other is very sensible of the true force of these arguments; but the misfortune is, instead of leading some men to repentance, they drive them to infidelity. For being resolved upon an evil course, since they cannot reconcile their practice with such principles as these, they will fit their principles to their practice; and so will not believe the rewards and punishments of another world; lest this should disturb them in their course. Vain men! as if heaven and hell must needs vanish and disappear, because some witty wicked men will not believe them. Such as these are infidels in their own defence, to quiet their own minds, that their consciences may not perpetually fly in their faces. A right belief, and an evil conscience, are unsuitable companions, and must needs live very uneasy together. He that believes the principles of religion, and is conscious he lives contrary to them, can have no peace nor quiet in his mind. And besides the future reward of a holy conscientious course, it hath also the present peace and satisfaction of our own minds; which will be matter of great joy, and unspeakable comfort, not only under the forest afflictions and calamities of life, but even at the hour of death; when the miseries of life oppress

press us, and the sorrows and pangs of death are ready to take hold of us.

There is certainly no such comfort under the evils and afflictions of this life, as our own innocency and integrity. When we are afflicted, it must be a mighty consolation to us, to be conscious of our own sincerity. For tho' no man can plead perfect innocency, yet as to the general course of an unblameable life, a good man may appear to God; and even when he afflicts him, may look upon him, as a tender compassionate father, not as an angry, revengeful judge. Thus did holy Job under all his calamities, in some measure comfort himself. When he had lost all he had, and was forsaken of all other comforts, even the good opinion of his friends concerning his sincerity; in these sad and disconsolate circumstances, nothing but the conscience of his own sincerity bore up his spirit. I will not, says he, remove mine integrity from me, my righteousness will I hold fast, and will not let it go; mine heart shall not reproach me, so long as I live. When every thing else was gone, his integrity supported him to the last.

As to persecutions and suffering from men, our own innocency, and the goodness of our cause, will be our best comfort; when we are not conscious, that we have deserved them, and are inwardly assured, that whatever we suffer for God and a good conscience, will one day work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. This was what supported the first Christians, the noble army of martyrs, under those cruel persecutions, which, otherwise, no human patience could have endured. Our rejoicing, says St. Paul, is this, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in this world. And thus under causeless calumnies and reproaches of men, if we can but approve our consciences to God, the uncharitable censures

censures of men are not much to be regarded. If our hearts condemn us not, we may have confidence towards God, and much more towards men. If God and our own consciences acquit us, we may easily bear the slanders and hard censures of men. Above all, the comfort of a good conscience is of the greatest service at the hour of death. The guilt of an evil conscience is then most dreadful. As nothing revives and raises the fainting spirits of a dying man, so much as the conscience of a holy and useful life; so nothing more dejects a man's spirit, and fills him with terror and anguish, than for a sinner to reflect on what he hath done, and what he is like to suffer. The wicked is driven away in his wickedness, he is carried out of the world, as it were, in a storm and tempest; but the righteous hath hope in his death, he dies calmly and comfortably. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace."

If he is conscious of having sincerely endeavoured to keep God's commandments, and to please him; if he hath lived inoffensively, in all good conscience before God and men; what an unspeakable consolation must it be to him in that gloomy time, when he is walking thro' the shadow of death, that he fears no evil; that he is able to look death in the face, with the courage and constancy of St. Paul; and to say with him, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my race, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge, shall give me at that day." A comfortable death, free from the stings and upbraidings, the terrors, confusion and amazement of a guilty conscience, is a happiness worthy of the best care and endeavour of a man's whole life. Let

us then have always a conscience void of offence towards God and men; and never do any thing to offer violence to our minds. For whoever sincerely follows the rule and direction of this guide, shall never fatally miscarry. But he that acts against the dictate and conviction of his conscience, undermines the foundation of his comfort and peace, and sins against God, and his own soul.

And that we may keep our conscience clear of guilt; we should frequently examine the past actions of our lives, and wherein we have failed of innocence, to make it up by repentance; and this we should more especially do, when we are preparing ourselves to receive the holy sacrament. And whatever we find ourselves guilty of, we should not only lament, and bewail it before God, but sincerely resolve, by his grace, to reform and amend wherein we have done amiss. But if after we repent of our sins, we return to them again, we then wound our conscience afresh, and involve them in a new guilt.---We should also reverence our consciences, stand in awe of them, and have a great regard to their testimony and verdict. For conscience is a domestic, a sort of God within us. And therefore next to the supreme majesty of heaven and earth, we should dread to offend our own reason and conscience, which, when we do amiss, will treat us more severely, than the greatest enemy we have. For nothing can give us so much comfort, or create so much trouble and disquiet to us, as an evil conscience.

And tho' the judgment of our consciences be not always the judgment of God, yet we have great reason to regard it. Because the judgment of our conscience is free from any compulsion; no one can force it from us, nor make us condemn ourselves without reason. Because the sentence of our conscience is most likely to be impartial; for  
men

men naturally love themselves, and are apt to favour their own case. Because the judgment our consciences pass on our actions, is upon the certain knowledge of their true motives and ends; we are conscious to all the secret springs and circumstances of our own actions, and can search the most retired corners of our hearts. Because the sentence of our conscience is peremptory and inexorable, and can no way be avoided. We may in vain call upon the mountains and rocks to fall on us, and hide us from the sight of God, and our own conscience. Wretched and miserable man! when thou hast offended and wounded thy conscience. For whither canst thou go to escape the eye of this witness, the terror of this judge, the torment of this executioner. The sharp accusations and stinging guilt of a man's conscience will perpetually haunt him, till it be removed by repentance and forgiveness.

Wherefore whatever we say or do, let it be sincere. For tho' hypocrisy may for a while preserve our esteem and reputation with others, yet it will not afford peace to our minds. For nothing can be hid from our own consciences. If then we would keep a conscience void of offence, let us always be calm and considerate, and examine things truly and impartially. Let us be humble, and willing to be informed. Let us endeavour to free ourselves from prejudice and passion, from self-conceit, and self-interest, which too often bias the judgments even of the best men. If we take care to keep a good conscience, we shall always be easy to ourselves; but if we act contrary to the clear dictate and conviction of them, we shall create an enemy to ourselves, in our own bosoms, and fall out with the best and most inseparable companion of our whole lives.

And

And that we may keep a conscience void of offence, we should observe these following directions. Let us endeavour to get our consciences rightly informed. For tho' ignorance may be a sufficient excuse where it is invincible, yet where it proceeds from our own default, in not enquiring what our duty is; this, so far from being an excuse, will aggravate our crime, and encrease our damnation. Let us not allow ourselves in the neglect of any duty, which the divine law commands, nor in the commission of any sin it forbids. The authority and holiness of God's laws are equally violated by a lesser breach of our duty, as by what is more heinous. And if we once esteem any sin to be little, this will bring us to believe that all are so. No man was ever wicked all of a sudden; he is at first timorous, and contracts a habit of sinning by degrees, till at last he arrives at the highest pitch of impiety. Let us encourage and attend to the first motions of our conscience. When it performs the part of an accuser, and shews us our faults, let us immediately acknowledge them before God, beg his pardon and forgiveness. When it acts the part of a witness, to convict us of any sin, let us endeavour to wash away the guilt, by a sincere and hearty repentance. When it performs the part of a judge, and condemns those actions which are contrary to God's law; let us abhor and forsake what we have done amiss. For by thus retiring into our own breasts, and regarding the admonitions of this faithful adviser; to consider what sins he accuses us of, to be heartily sorry for, and resolve to forsake them; we shall not only prevent the remorse of our consciences for the future, but also appease the wrath of our angry judge, and escape everlasting punishments. To this end, let us frequently examine ourselves how we have behaved towards God and men. Let us consider what sins we have

com-

committed, what duty we have neglected, what opportunity we have not improved, in doing good ; and what proficiency we have made in the ways of virtue and religion ; Whether we grow better or worse ; Whether our lives are more or less conformable to the word of God.

Would men every night before they go to sleep, enter into the closet of their breasts ; consult their own consciences, and take a view of what they find recorded there, concerning their actions of the day past, they would find much benefit and advantage from it. Their sleep would be more sound and sweet, and they would awake the next morning better disposed to keep a conscience void of offence, all the day after. And we should not be so easily tempted to commit sin, when we know we must account for it to God, and our own consciences. And would we thus frequently and diligently examine our own consciences, they would not rise up in judgment against us, either in this world or the next. And let us close all with fervent prayer to our good God, that he would forgive all our past offences, direct us in all our actions, help and assist us by his grace to obey all his commands, and to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and men. For by prayer, we acknowledge God to be the great creator and governor of the universe ; we beg of him those supplies we stand in need of, and render our souls capable to receive them. By a serious confession of our sins to God, we became sensible of our wants and failings ; by praising him for his benefits, we acknowledge our dependance upon him ; by interceding for the necessities of others, we fill our own breasts with pity and compassion, and encrease our charity to all men. And would we daily call ourselves to an account, carefully examine our hearts and consciences ; and then devoutly and affectionately implore God's pardon and  
forgiveness

forgiveness for the breaches of our duty, and for his grace and assistance to enable us to serve him better, for the future; it would be morally impossible, for any one to indulge himself, in a wicked life. And that I may prevail with every one, to keep a conscience void of offence towards God, and towards men, I will endeavour to excite us thereto, by the following motives.

Let us then consider the terrors and agonies of mind, which naturally flow from an evil conscience. It is certain there is no trouble or pain in this world, so grievous and intolerable as a guilty conscience. The "spirit of a man may bear his infirmities," those diseases of body and troubles of mind, which are the usual attendants of human nature; but a wounded spirit is a load insupportable, who can bear it? It is impossible to describe the dreadful fears of a guilty mind, the horror and amazement of an evil conscience; and which no earthly comfort can mitigate or assuage. When Cain had slain his brother, he wandered from place to place, fearful and distracted with his own guilt; and being left to be punished by the terrors of his own conscience, he said, "my punishment is greater than I can bear." Let us also consider the pleasure and happiness of a good conscience. The man who has it, enjoys a perfect tranquility of mind, security and quiet in his own breast, amidst the various changes and chances of this life; he possesses his soul in patience, composes it to rest, and remains master of himself; he is not afraid of any evil tidings, for his heart is fixed. He is not dismayed at losses in his estate, or sickness in his body, but resolves with Job, that he will hold fast his righteousness, and not let it go, his heart shall not reproach him so long as he lives. As long as he builds his trust and confidence on this rock of ages, he fears no evil. Let

never so great troubles and afflictions befall him ; let him be deprived even of the necessaries of life, and his body ever so severely punished ; yet he knows that his redeemer lives, that there is a God who governs the world, and when he sees fit, will deliver him out of all his troubles. Such considerations afford great comfort to him, they produce a calm within his breast, and his conscience is to him a continual feast. Such happiness, so valuable a blessing is it, to be able to reflect on the past actions of our lives with comfort and satisfaction ; to have the testimony of our conscience, that we have walked uprightly and piously towards God, in temperance and sobriety to ourselves, and in perfect love and charity, towards our neighbour ; and to the utmost of our power, have kept a conscience void of offence, both towards God and men. This will enable us to bear crosses and afflictions with courage and cheerfulness, and with resolution to look death in the face. And when our last hour approaches, we can say, with good Hezekiah, “ Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how  
“ I have walked before thee in truth, and with a  
“ perfect heart, and have done that which is good  
“ in thy sight.” Such considerations as these will be a stay and comfort to us, when all the honours and riches of this world, can afford us no satisfaction or relief. For at the great and terrible day, when the ungodly shall not stand in judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous ; when the wicked shall call to the mountains to fall on them, and hide them from the wrath of an angry God : then the great stay and support to every good man will be, the testimony of his conscience, that in simplicity, and godly sincerity, he has passed the time of his sojourning in this world. These are the fruits and blessed effects of keeping a conscience void of offence ; which are sufficient

to incite, encourage and reward our pursuits after it. Let us therefore be prevailed upon by these powerful motives, to make it our chief business in this world, to keep a conscience void of offence; and which has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.

Discourse XCVII. Bp. *Moore*.

## Of RELIGIOUS MELANCHOLY.

Pfal. xlii. 5.

Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou disquieted within me?

**M**ANY good Christians of timorous and melancholy constitutions, feeling no present comfort from their strict fasts, their earnest and often repeated prayers, are apt to think, that what they perform in the service of God, is so mean and imperfect, as neither to please him, nor profit their own souls. It may therefore be proper to consider the case of these melancholy persons, who tho' they are in a safe condition, yet greatly need to have their minds quieted and composed. Manifold are the scruples and fears which disturb them. Some suppose the reformation of their lives hath not proceeded from a sincere love to God, and desire to please him; but from a meer dread of those punishments which he hath threatned. Others finding a flatness on their minds, and want of zeal in religious duty; this makes them fear that what they do is not fit to be presented unto God, and that he will not accept it; which so dejects them, as even to tempt them to lay aside their devotions. And there are others, who have such wicked blasphemous thoughts start up in their minds, while exercised in the worship of God; that they think themselves guilty of the sin against the Holy Ghost, pronounce their con-

condition remediless, and that God hath utterly rejected them.

As to the first, I answer ; that no doubt love is a more noble principle of action than fear ; and therefore that religious service which arises from love, is more perfect, angelical and grateful to God : But still he will not disregard such service and obedience as proceeds from fear. Those who have forsaken their evil ways, lest they should lead them to the pit of hell, it may be hoped, will find a place in the glorious kingdom of heaven. For hell was made to terrify daring sinners, to reduce and confine them within the bounds of their duty ; as will I hope appear from the following considerations.

Fear is one of the passions God has planted in our souls, as well as love ; they are both implanted in us for some wise ends. When therefore the passion of fear serves the end for which God grafted it in our minds, no doubt he will approve the good effect it produces. The end for which God placed fear in our nature, was chiefly to beget in us an awful regard of his most glorious majesty ; to make us dread violating his laws, and acting contrary to his righteous will ; and when we go astray, to excite us to return to him by repentance. So that when fear prevails on a man to amend his bad life, he puts this passion to the very use which God intended. And whoever thus applies it, has no reason to doubt, but God will graciously accept his obedience. We may also observe, that God hath enforced all his laws, by threatnings as well as promises ; the one to work on our love, the other to excite our fears ; God having made the motives to our obedience, to answer the different passions of our souls. Wherefore there is not the least reason to conceive, that God should threaten punishments against the disobedient, which naturally actuates the fears of men,

and yet not be pleased with the service which these fears produce in us. God sets life and death before men, that the fear of death may make them chuse life; and he threatens everlasting punishments, that the amazement and horror thereof, may powerfully engage them, with all care and speed, to labour and fit themselves to partake of the divine mercies.

Our blessed Saviour and his disciples in their sermons, address themselves not only to the passions of love, but also to that of fear; which they would not have done, but that the sacrifices of fear will ascend up to heaven with a grateful favour. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Christ here intends to bring men to a belief of his gospel, and the obedience of his laws, as well by the fears of damnation, as the hopes of salvation. When he bids the man whom he had cured, to "sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto him;" the argument our Lord used to engage him to live innocently, was directed to the passion of his fear, taken from the danger of a calamity that would befall him, greater than that of which he was cured, did he still continue in his sins. And saith St. Paul, "knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men." The greatness of these terrors, was "that we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or evil;" which the apostle knew, if maturely weighed, would be of irresistible force to recover men from a lewd and profane conversation. Since they must be extremely obstinate and desperate, on whom an argument of such wonderful power and efficacy can make no impression.

I proceed to consider the case of those serious Christians, who complain of coldness in their devotion,

votion, and towards holy things. Such think they do not address God in prayers with such an appetite as they could wish, being destitute of earnest and fervent desires, for the success of their petitions to heaven; they suppose in themselves a great indifferency to spiritual exercises, which they apprehend is a proof of their hypocrisy, and that God will refuse their prayers and thanksgivings, as vain insincere oblations. And here it ought to be observed, that the reason why many have not more zeal and life in God's service, proceeds from themselves, and their own negligence and want of consideration. They perhaps appear in the congregation, but mind not what they are about. They consider not of what importance it is, for them to serve God in the most acceptable manner. No wonder therefore that their minds should be flat and unactive, or little concerned for the prosperous issue of their prayers. As then it is high presumption, for such careless persons to hope for any benefit, by that part they bear in the public worship; so they may cure their malady, by retiring from their business and pleasure, and reflecting in good earnest, on the great danger to which they expose their immortal souls. But as for those who frequently endeavour to remove this coldness from their souls, when they approach the heavenly throne, and yet fail in their attempt; let me desire them duly to weigh the following observations.

That the different degrees of affections, with which men serve God, often depends on their different tempers and constitutions. Some constitutions are so heavy, as that it is difficult to work on their hopes or fears; to make them sensible either of their gain or loss. But others have such a tenderness of nature, and quickness of sense, that the least thing will much affect them. A little prosperity makes their spirits overflow with joy; and as

small a cross sinks and dejects them. Persons then of such various dispositions, tho' they equally endeavour to prepare themselves, cannot serve God with equal affections; but yet he may be pleased with them alike, because he measures their obedience by the sincerity of their minds, which is in their power; and not by the difference of constitutions, which were not made by themselves. The constitutions of some men, being much warmer than others, they sooner take fire; whether they are paying homage to God, or doing business among men. If therefore men have more heat in their natural temper, it is no wonder they should have more zeal in their devotions. But God will not reject any man, because he is of a cold complexion; or disdain his reasonable sacrifice, for being offered with less vehemence of passion. Besides, they who render worship to God upon rational motives, void of passion, seem to act upon a higher and more sublime principle; for tho' they are destitute of that pleasing warmth in their passions, which provoke others to pray and be thankful unto God; yet they cease not to celebrate his praises, because reason suggests, that it is their duty to make grateful acknowledgments of his infinite mercies. Again,

It may be also observed, that the most zealous are not always the best men. Their zeal may be without knowledge, or on the wrong side, as was St. Paul's, when he persecuted the church. And all zeal without charity will profit nothing. Indeed where a man is zealously affected in a good matter, he may be a glorious instrument to propagate and promote the fear and honour of God; and enjoy a more sensible pleasure in every religious performance. But as all cannot raise their affections to this pitch, God will not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed; but he will pardon the wanderings, pity the weaknesses, quicken the affections, and make

gracious allowances, for all the defects of infirm, but honest Christians. It should be farther considered, that the most religious cannot maintain an equal warmth in their devotions, at all times; even such we find by experience, that in some seasons, an unaccountable heaviness will seize on them, while on their bended knees, supplicating the forgiveness of their sins. If therefore we sometimes perceive our minds to be dull and heavy at our prayers, it is no more than what happens to the most sincere Christians, let them use ever so much care and diligence; so that this should be no just cause of disquiet and dejection of spirit. Besides, sickness and afflictions will so disorder the passions and oppress the spirits, even of the best of men, that they cannot serve God with as much cheerfulness, under calamities and troubles, as at other times.

Tho' it cannot be expected, that those innocent persons, whose case I am considering, should meet with a compleat cure of their grief, yet let me assure them, that nothing will more enliven their spirits in the service of God, than deliberate meditations on him, and themselves, before they enter on any part of divine worship. Would they often engage their minds in contemplations about the divine attributes, and infinite perfections of God's nature; it would greatly tend to remove that drowsy stupidity, which hath so strong an influence on their actions. For frequent thoughts of almighty power will make the most sturdy temper to tremble, and the proudest heart to submit. Can any seriously think of unsearchable wisdom, without admiration, and an earnest desire to be ruled by it? And will not the meditations of infinite love, diffusing itself over the world, oblige us to adore, honour, love and praise that most glorious spring, from whence it flows? Consider how the providence of God extends

tends to the whole creation; how it preserves and delivers us from many and great dangers. This will cause us to break forth into songs and hymns of thanksgiving. And if we proceed to contemplate the deep mysteries, the inconceivable love shewn by Christ, in the mighty work of our salvation; to consider his great condescension, in leaving the heavenly regions to dwell among us; his wonderful humiliation, in taking on him our frail, mortal nature; the pains, agonies, and most dreadful death he suffered, to save us ungrateful sinners; this cannot fail to dissolve the most obdurate heart, and make us firmly conclude, that we can never sufficiently admire, love, serve, or suffer too much for this most blessed Saviour.

Can all your passions continue quiet, when you thus view your most merciful redeemer, who left his father's bosom to seek and save you; when lost in the ways of sin, in the paths leading to death! who came to procure reconciliation for you with God, whom as you had heinously provoked, so you could give no satisfaction to his injured justice. Recollect with seriousness how often God hath spared you, when your hearts told you, that you deserved punishment; how often you have highly offended him, and fearfully expected he would destroy you; yet you still live as a monument of his compassion, and he waits for your return, to be gracious unto you. Do but meditate on these mercies of our God, and try if your hearts will not melt into love and affection. Surely we cannot but fall down before the Lord, with the deepest reverence, and esteem him above all things, who hath created us after his own image; redeemed us with his Son's blood; daily assists us with the graces of his Holy Spirit; and hath provided for us a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Let such subjects as these entertain your thoughts, before you begin any religious duty;

duty ; and it will mightily conduce to fill your souls with light and life, and make you diligently study to obtain God's favour, and excite passionate desires, to live in his presence to all eternity.

Lastly, as to those unhappy persons who have wicked and sometimes blasphemous thoughts start in their minds, while they are exercised in the worship of God ; which makes them think their case is desperate, and that God hath rejected them: To give such all possible ease and relief, I will endeavour to shew, that their case is not so dangerous, as they apprehend ; and also offer proper advice for their behaviour, under these tumultuous disorders of mind.

And that their case is not so dangerous as they apprehend, will appear from these following considerations. Because these frightful thoughts do generally proceed from the disorder and indisposition of the body ; perhaps after a fit of sickness, a great disappointment, or heavy loss. And they are most commonly good people, who are exercised with them. For bad men, who are busily employed in contriving wickedness ; how to gratify their malice, execute their revenge, overreach their neighbours, or satisfy their lust, seldom complain of these kind of thoughts. But they are honest, well meaning Christians, of unhealthy constitutions, and melancholy tempers, who are so miserably harrassed with them. Nor is it in the power of such disconsolate Christians, as are tormented with these sad thoughts, with all their endeavours to stifle and suppress them. Nay, often the more they struggle with them, the more they encrease ; and when vehemently opposed, the more do they domineer and terrify men. The reason is, because by unsuccessful strivings, they feed this melancholy humour, and grow more dejected. So that there is good cause, as I before observed, to impute this to bodily distempers, rather

ther than to faults of the mind. Indeed they who labour under such complaints, are seldom betrayed into any great and deliberate sins. For they being jealous of the least temptations, tremble at the appearance of any notorious evil. Hence it is, that the sins which most easily captivate others, can scarce enter into them. They have little temptations to covetousness, who can find no satisfaction in riches. They cannot be hard-hearted to their neighbours in distress, who are so ready to beg the prayers and help of all about them. They are in no danger of being swelled with pride, who think worse of their own state than it deserves. So that it plainly appears there is more trouble than danger, in the case of such dejected Christians. And tho' the sentence they pronounce against themselves is so black and dismal; yet, no doubt but God in his own season, will in some measure quiet their minds, and bestow a large recompence on them, for all the troubles and sorrows they have sustained, out of fear that he was highly displeas'd with them.

The best advice I can give for their behaviour under these perplexing disorders of mind, is, for them frequently to observe how their thoughts are employed. If they are engaged in good matter, encourage and secure them all that is possible, from outward disturbance and diversions. If taken up in trifling vain subjects, of no real benefit, translate them to something more noble and useful. For as our thoughts are, so will be our actions; we cannot think foolishly and act wisely. There is a short and easy passage from idle thoughts to bad ones. But if they are exercised in any bad or evil design, we must extinguish and suppress them. This we must do with all our might, because it is of absolute necessity to the health, peace and innocence of our souls; and by such frequent reviews of our thoughts, we shall gain power and skill to manage  
them

them wisely, and in good measure prevent, if not cure, the trouble complained of by these melancholy persons. They should also endeavour to keep their passions within due bounds. To bring themselves to an equal, steady temper, that the affairs of this world may not sour and ruffle their minds. To be mild and gentle in their behaviour ; to avoid all needless heats and contentions ; to be ready to do every one some good. Not to set their hopes or fears too high ; not groundlessly to despair, where God has pronounced no threats ; nor fondly to presume, where he has made no promises. Let not such set their hearts too much on the world, nor suffer their passions to run out vehemently after it ; nor yet forsake their employment by reason of the trouble of their minds. For no business at all, is as bad as too much ; and there is always more melancholy to be found in a cloister than in a market place. When a man is too full of business, he is apt to forget God ; and when he is idle, his head will be a cage of unruly, unclean thoughts. Therefore let us not hide ourselves from our friends, nor quit our calling ; because people of dejected tempers never fare worse, than when they are alone, and have nothing to do. For not having company or secular affairs to employ them, they will be perpetually musing on themselves ; their thoughts will all fix and center on the desperate condition wherein their disturbed fancy hath placed them. Whereas virtuous and chearful conversation, innocent recreations, and moderate business, will divert the distemper, and chase away these gloomy apprehensions.

When you find these thoughts creeping on you, be not dismayed, as if they were certain tokens of your reprobation. For so far as they depend on bodily indisposition, which they chiefly do ; I take them to be no more marks of the divine displeasure, than  
sick.

sickness, losses, or any other temporal calamity. Neither violently struggle with them, since experience teaches, that they encrease by vehement opposition; but when neglected, they will dissipate and waste away.

And let not such think the worse of God, nor accuse his providence, of not caring for them; for he sends these afflictions for wise and kind reasons: perhaps, as powerful preservatives against heinous sins; or, that they may lessen our inclinations to the enjoyments of life, abate our appetites to sensual pleasures, and wean our hearts from the perishing goods of this world. Nothing will dispose us more to have compassion on our suffering brethren, than our own sorrows; or make us less envy the prosperity of others, or more to feel our own infirmities, and need of divine assistance, than our present disconsolation and trouble. Let not these afflicting thoughts discourage our devotions, nor tempt the most melancholy to omit or negligently discharge any Christian office or duty. We must persevere in the ways and acts of religion, notwithstanding such performances seem flat and heavy. Let our prayers continually ascend to heaven, tho' at present we find no answer or return to them. Prayer is the natural and only safe refuge for the afflicted; a sure stay to the heart, when nothing besides can support it. Prayer refines the thoughts, and exalts the soul above its natural pitch; so that he who enters on his prayers with some coldness, shall often, before he ends them, receive wonderful joy in his mind. Nothing makes the soul so much partake of the divine nature, as devout prayer.

At these disconsolate seasons, let the matter of our prayers be such as implies our reposing an extraordinary trust and confidence in God, tho' he seems to hide his face from us; this will be most acceptable to him, and a strong proof of our integrity,  
not

not to omit our duty, even when we find little pleasure therein. Let our prayers be frequent, rather than long; such as may cause **delight**, and not prove tedious: For it is not **the** multitude of words, but an honest disposition of heart, which will incline God to hear us. Let such be careful not to forsake the Lord's table, tho' they there find no comfort; for that heavenly bread will refresh their souls, encrease their graces, and replenish their hearts with joy, as soon as God finds them qualified for so great mercies.

What evil thoughts then soever are injected into our minds, so long as we persist in a religious course of life, there can be no doubt but God will love and approve our services. For he hath promised, that those who are not weary in well doing, shall in due season reap everlasting life. And should these perplexing thoughts last as long as we live, which is the worst can be supposed; yet this would be no more an argument of God's displeasure, than a fever or fire, the loss of a friend, or any other affliction. Let not therefore our present trials and humiliations make us despair of finding favour with a God of boundless mercy and most tender compassion. We must persevere in our duty, confide in his infinite goodness, and in time the clouds which now darken our mind, will vanish, and be succeeded by cheerful light; our fears shall be turned into full assurances of unconceivable happiness; and all the disorders, tumults, and confusions in our souls, shall be changed into eternal peace, undisturbed and endless joys. "Fear the Lord and praise him, for he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him, but when he cried unto him, he heard him. Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart. I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy, for thou hast considered my trouble; thou

thou hast known my soul in adversity. I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me; yea, I will hope continually, and praise him more and more. O how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee! O love the Lord, all ye saints; for the Lord preserveth the faithful. They that know thy name will put their trust in thee; for thou hast not forsaken them who seek thee."

Discourse

Discourse XCVIII. Dr. *Clarke*.The PARABLE of the RICH MAN and  
LAZARUS.

Luke xvi. 25.

But Abraham said, son, remember thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

OUR Saviour, in the beginning of this chapter, shews by the parable of the unjust steward, what is the true and wise use of riches. “ Make  
“ to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail, they may receive  
“ you, (or rather, that ye may be received) into  
“ everlasting habitations.” By the mammon of unrighteousness, is not here meant riches unjustly gotten, but riches in general; the false, the uncertain, the transitory riches of this world. So that our Lord exhorts us, to employ in the ways of justice, equity, sobriety and charity, these transitory riches here, that we may hereafter obtain a possession, unchangeable and eternal. Our Saviour, by way of reproof to the covetous Pharisees, proceeds to shew, by the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, that those who had highly exalted themselves in this world, were not always esteemed by God, or in the way of being happy in the next life. “ There  
“ was, says he, a certain rich man, which was clothed  
“ in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously  
VOL. III. D d every

“every day. He died and was buried; and in hell,  
 “lifting up his eyes in torments, and seeing Abra-  
 “ham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom; he beg-  
 “ged of him, to send Lazarus, that he might dip  
 “the tip of his finger in water and cool his tongue,  
 “for he was tormented in that flame.” To whom  
 Abraham replied, “Son, remember that thou in  
 “thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and like-  
 “wise Lazarus evil things; but now he is com-  
 “forted, and thou art tormented.”

It is observable, that tho’ the rich man’s petition for mercy was rejected, yet he is not expressly charged with any great and enormous vice; but what his peculiar crimes were, is left to be collected from the circumstances of the whole parable. He is only here barely put in mind, that he had in his life-time received his good things, as Lazarus had evil things. It was natural to have expected, that he should have been accused of revelling and drunkenness, of wasting his substance in riotous living, as the prodigal had been, in the foregoing chapter; or with cruelty and uncharitableness towards the poor. He might have been told, and with many aggravating circumstances, that since when he lived in ease and plenty, enjoying an abundance of all the good things of life, he had shewed no regard to the poor; there was no reason to expect, now the scale was turned, and himself fallen into a state of misery, that the poor man should leave the happiness he had in Abraham’s bosom, to come and quench the flame that tormented him. He might have been told, that since he had shewn no mercy, it was but just none should be shewn to him; that he should receive no relief from the same poor man after death, to whom he would give none when alive. All this might have been expected should have been severely aggravated upon him. But on the contrary, what Abraham’s reply charges him

him with, does not at first appear to be criminal ; “ son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst “ thy good things.” The character before given of him, is, that he was “ clothed in purple and fine “ linen, and fared sumptuously every day.” And this quality or station might have been justified, without the imputation of any scandalous excesses. It being plainly the will of God, that there should be difference of stations in the world ; and to be supported with proper marks of distinction. For,

Luxury does not consist in the innocent enjoyment of any of the good things, which God has appointed to be received with thankfulness ; but in the wasteful abuse of them, to vicious purposes, inconsistent with sobriety, justice, or charity. The exceeding plenty in which Solomon lived, is not laid to his charge as a sin, but remarked as an instance of God’s blessing upon him. “ I have given thee “ that which thou hast not asked, both riches and “ honour, so that there shall not be any among the “ kings like unto thee all thy days.” And in the new testament, where the future state is more clearly revealed, “ godliness hath the promise both “ of this life, and that which is to come.” And they who are rich in this world, are not threatned to be miserable in the next, only because God hath blessed them here ; but they are charged “ not to “ be high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, “ but in the living God, who giveth us richly all “ things to enjoy : That they do good, that they “ be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing “ to communicate ; laying up in store for themselves “ a good foundation, against the time to come, that “ they may lay hold of eternal life.”

Since, therefore, the rich man in this parable, is not expressly charged with the practice of any direct vice ; and yet it being certain, that nothing but vice could occasion his being in that place

of torment ; we ought to enquire from the scope of our Lord's discourse, and the several circumstances of this parable, what the vices were, which Christ intended to condemn, in the person of this rich man. As also why our lord chose not to express in plain words any particular vice, but left it to be collected from the whole series of the parable.

In general then, it seems our Lord intended, that by the person here represented, should be meant, not merely a state of prosperity, but a real vicious character. This appears from the description the rich man gives of his five brethren, who are supposed to lead the same manner of life, with their rich brother. And as they had no regard to the exhortation of Moses and the prophets, the rich man judged it necessary, that one should be sent on purpose, "to testify unto them, lest they also should come into that place of torment." For as their course of life, must needs bring them to destruction, if they did not repent ; he therefore thought, if one went from the dead, they would repent, though they disregarded Moses and the prophets. But in particular, it is very probable, that our Saviour designed here to intimate the danger of the sin of uncharitableness ; when he represents Lazarus lying in a miserable condition at the rich man's door, "desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fell from his table." And for the same reason, we may also suppose, that luxurious rioting and drunkenness was also intended to be reprov'd in this parable. For tho' all we read on this head is, that the rich man was clothed in purple and fine linen, and sared sumptuously every day ; yet since neither in this parable, nor in the rich man's plea for mercy, there is no intimation of any good use made of his riches and grandeur ; it is reasonable to conclude, that this vice was likewise intended

tended by our Lord, to be part of the character here represented.

But our Saviour's principal view in this discourse most evidently was to warn men of the danger of that worldly mindedness, neglect of religion, and intemperance upon pleasure and profit, which is not so much any one vice, as the foundation of all vices. It is that which makes men regardless of futurity, and not to have God in all their thoughts. It is that deceitfulness of riches, ambition, and voluptuousness, and the care of things temporal, that stifles all notions of religion, chokes the word, and it becomes unfruitful. It is that temper which exposes a man to every temptation, and makes him ready to sacrifice the interest of truth and virtue, whenever it comes in competition, with the good things of this life, on which his heart is entirely set. This character is lively described by the Psalmist. "There be some that put their trust in their goods, and boast themselves, in the multitude of their riches.—They think their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places, from one generation to another. --- But he shall carry nothing away with him when he dies, neither shall his pomp follow him." Job speaks of the same sort of persons. "They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave; therefore they say unto God, depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?" The same temper is also set forth by our Saviour in another rich man; who finding his ground to bring forth more fruits, than he had room to bestow them in; said, "I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul; soul, thou hast much

“ goods laid up for many years ; take thine ease, “ eat, drink, and be merry.” This is the true character of a person, whose treasure is upon earth, and his heart and affections entirely placed there ; who no way regards riches, honour, power, and other worldly advantages, as talents committed to his charge, to be employed in promoting and encouraging truth, virtue, justice and charity in the world, which is to be rich towards God ; but he esteems them as only instruments of luxury, pride, and vanity. But in the midst of his folly, “ God “ said unto him, thou fool, this night shall thy soul “ be required of thee ; then whose shall all these “ things be, which thou hast provided ?”

That our Lord’s view and design in describing the state of the rich man and Lazarus after their deaths, is as I have represented, may be easily confirmed, from the connexion and coherence of his whole discourse, in this parable. The pharisees and chief men among the Jews, were extremely proud and vain-glorious, covetous and ambitious ; “ desiring to walk in long robes, loving the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief room at feasts ; making long prayers, for a shew before men, at the same time devouring widows houses.” Concerning these persons, our Saviour frequently declares, that they had their reward, in the praise of men, which their hypocrisy procured them ; but that they shall receive greater damnation, at the hands of God, for their real wickedness. Our Lord’s discourses through the whole gospel, have a perpetual view to these men’s corruptions, particularly in this chapter, of which my text is a part. “ Ye are they, says he, which justify yourselves before men, but God knoweth your hearts ; for that which is highly esteemed amongst men, is abomination in the sight of God.” And then to illustrate and confirm this assertion, he concludes this

this his discourse with the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, wherein is represented in the strongest and most affectionate manner, how riches, power and grandeur, so highly valued in this world, are no marks at all of God's favour; for that in the next life, God will judge men entirely by their virtues. So that many who are first here, shall be last there, and the last shall be first. Having thus fully explained the design of this parable; I will now consider what reason there might be, why our Lord chose, not to express in plain words any particular vice, for which the rich man was condemned; but to leave it rather to be collected from the series of the parable.

And since it is plain from the introduction, that our Lord here intended to reprove the covetous and proud Pharisees, we may reasonably suppose, that he expressed himself after this manner, that they might more readily apply the parable to themselves. Had our Lord aggravated the particular vices of the rich man, they probably would have thanked God, "that they were not as other men are, or even as this rich man." But by our Saviour's description, their own hearts must tell them, they were such as he described; and that all their grandeur, and being highly esteemed by men, was of no advantage before God, the judge of hearts. This must naturally lead such of them as had any sense of religion, to consider and recollect from the discourse, for what vices the rich man was condemned.

But the principal reason why our Lord thus expressed himself, seems to be, that he might apprise his disciples of the great danger, to which an uninterrupted state of worldly prosperity, does expose men. He represents the rich man, as condemned to a place of torment, intimating, that no

one could be ignorant, of the temptations incident to such a state; not that riches, honour, power, and other temporal advantages, are in themselves criminal; on the contrary, they are real blessings of providence; talents, by the right use of which men obtain a great reward; "laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may attain eternal life." But who that observes what has generally happened in all ages and nations, can assure himself, was he invested with arbitrary power and dominion; that he could execute that trust, without such a tyrannical spirit, as the government of this world are generally fond of? Who can rely upon himself, was he advanced to the highest pitch of honour and grandeur, that he would avoid all pride, insolence and ambition? Who can be sure, if he was surrounded with immense riches, with ease, plenty, and flattery; that he could resist all temptations to luxury and voluptuousness, by which innumerable persons have been ruined before him? For this reason our Lord in most of his discourses, uses the strongest expressions on this head. "Woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation. It is easier for a camel to go thro' the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." Not that the enjoyment of the blessings of providence in this life is criminal, as I have before observed; but that the temptations to abuse those blessings are many and great, and require much resolution to overcome them. No doubt, Christ's intention by so frequently repeating his admonitions of this sort, was, to comfort the poor, by shewing that virtuous poverty is no mark of the divine displeasure; and when occasioned by persecution for righteousness sake, that it entitles men to an extraordinary reward: On the other side, that he might give perpetual caution

caution to the rich, so to use the good things of this life, as that the ultimate design of all their actions, may have a constant view to that which is to come, thereby to prevent their falling into the same condemnation, with the rich man in the gospel. I proceed to draw some observations, naturally arising from the main scope, and intent of this parable.

“ And hence it appears, that uncharitableness and unmercifulness to the poor is a very great sin, containing inhumanity and impiety. We find no other fault imputed to the rich man, but that he took no care out of his superfluities and abundance, to relieve this poor man, that lay at his gate. He is not charged with having got a great estate by fraud and oppression, but that in the midst of his abundance, he had no pity for those who were in want. It is a certain sign of a cruel and savage disposition, not to pity and relieve those that are in misery. Tenderness and compassion for the sufferings of others, is a virtue so suitable to our nature, that it is therefore called humanity; being as it were essential to it. For whenever we see a man groaning under want, and do not relent, and relieve him, if we are able, we are hard-hearted to our own nature, and do in some sense hate our own flesh. Besides the inhumanity of this sin, it is also a great impiety to God. For unmercifulness to the poor implies in it contempt of God, a slighting of his providence, and shews we do not love him. “ He that oppresseth “ the poor, reproacheth his maker ;” that is, he despiseth God, who made him after his own image; for the poor man bears the image of God, as well as the rich; and we cannot oppress, or neglect him, without reflecting on God, whose image he is. The uncharitable man slightes God’s providence, in not considering, that riches and poverty are of  
the

the Lord ; that he can soon alter our condition, and that it is easy for him to make a rich man poor. God can soon turn the wheel, and lay the rich man as low as the poor man. He can “ cast down the mighty from his seat, and exalt the “ humble and meek.” But we do not sufficiently reverence God’s providence, if when he hath blest us with plenty and abundance, we shew no pity and regard to those who are in need ; and unmercifulness to the poor plainly demonstrates, that we do not love God ; “ who so hath this world’s goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him ; how dwelleth the love of God in him ?” This deserves to be seriously considered by those who make a great appearance of devotion in prayer, fasting, reading and hearing God’s word, and in other frugal exercises of religion, which cost them nothing ; lest with the young man in the gospel, after they have kept all the other commandments, they be rejected by Christ, for want of this one thing.

There is no particular grace and virtue, to which the promise of eternal life is so frequently made, as to this of mercy and charity to the poor. “ Blessed are the merciful, for they shall find mercy. ---Charge them that are rich in this world, that they do good, be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation, or treasure, against the time which is to come, that they may lay hold of eternal life.” Our future happiness does not so much depend upon the exercise of any one single grace or virtue, as on this of charity and mercy ; for the scripture lays the greatest weight upon this of charity. So that if we truly believe the precepts of the gospel, its promises and threatenings, we cannot but have a principal regard to it.

Another

Another observation I would make from this parable, is, that a man may be poor and miserable in this world, and yet dear to God. Lazarus, tho' despised in his life-time, by this rich man, yet when he came to die, God gave his angels charge over him, and he was carried to Abraham's bosom. Nay, our blessed Saviour was "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." God could have sent him into the world with majesty and great glory, but the wisdom of God chose rather that he should appear in a poor and humble, a suffering and afflicted condition; to confound the pride of the world, who think God hates all whom he permits to be afflicted. But afflictions, so far from being a sign of God's hatred, are an argument of his love and care. "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son, whom he receiveth. God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him." This consideration should persuade us to patience under the greatest sufferings and afflictions. God may be our father, and yet chasten us severely; he may love us, though the world hates us. It is but exercising a little patience, and these storms will blow over, and we shall be removed into calmer regions; "where all tears shall be wiped from our eyes, and death and sorrow shall be no more." Again,

Hence we may observe the different states of good and bad men, after this life. "Lazarus died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom; the rich man died, and went to hell." This the divine justice seems to require, and without a revelation, is very credible to natural reason, whether we consider God, or ourselves. If we consider God to be the holy and righteous governor of the world, that he loves goodness and hates  
 sin,

sin, our reason tells us, that he is concerned to countenance the one, and discountenance the other, in such a solemn public manner, as may vindicate his holiness and justice to the world. And as the dispensations of his providence are now promiscuous, it seems reasonable there should be a general assize, a fair and open trial; "when God will render to every man according to his works." Also if we consider ourselves, this will appear very credible; for if we search our own consciences, this is acknowledged, by that inward peace and satisfaction we perceive in any good action; and in that shame, fear and horror, that attend the commission of even the most secret sin.—Both scripture and reason assure us of a future judgment, and that when we go out of this world, we shall meet with the proper rewards of our actions in the next. And though the happiness or misery of men, shall not be compleat, till after the public judgment, yet it is unspeakably great. Lazarus immediately after death, was carried into Abraham's bosom; and the rich man is represented, as in great anguish and torment. But what the happiness of good men, or the misery of bad men, shall be hereafter, no one can express. But there will be a great difference between men's conditions in this world and the next. The rich man prospered here, and was afterwards tormented; Lazarus was poor and miserable in this world, and happy in the other; and its very agreeable to the wisdom of God, to make such differences; as well for the trying of men's virtues, as for the rewarding of them.

God ordains the sufferings of good men, to try their faith and love to him; to improve their virtue, and to prevent those sins, which a state of prosperity may draw men into: to take off their affections from the love of this world, and to fix them on things above; to prove their sincerity to God,  
and

and to exercise their patience and submission to his will; and to prepare them for the glory of the next life. And God also does this, in order to reward their virtue; that as they, who will enjoy the pleasures of this world, gratify their senses, and neglect their immortal souls, may inherit the just consequences of their wretched choice: So on the other hand, that they who love God above all things, who believe the reality and eternity of the other state, and live accordingly, may not be disappointed in their hopes; namely, to serve God, and suffer for him, for nothing. And from the condition of men, in this world and the next, we may infer, that no man should measure his felicity or unhappiness, from what happens to him here. If we are rich and honourable, are splendidly attired, and fare sumptuously every day; let not this make us think ourselves the happy men: or, if we are poor and miserable, destitute of all the conveniences and accommodations of life; let us not repine at our lot, and murmur at God, for having dealt hardly with us; since no man can be pronounced happy or miserable, for what befalls him in this life. This is but a short inconsiderable duration, and it matters not much what entertainment we meet with, in passing through this world. The state of eternity is what shall determine the happiness, or misery of men. He is the happy man, and he the miserable, who shall be the one or other, in that state which is eternal. We should not therefore set too great a value upon the blessings of this life; lest we receive our good things here, and be tormented hereafter; nay, we should be so far from applauding ourselves in the prosperity of this world, that we should be afraid, lest this should be our portion, and that our misery in the next world, will be the greater for our having been happy here.

The felicities of this world are transient, and ever passing away; and if misery succeed these, they had better never had been. Temporal good things are only for this short life; did men seriously consider this, they would not so estimate the perishing enjoyments of this life, as for the sake of them, to neglect the momentous concerns of another world. We are apt to be dazzled with the present glitterings of worldly glory and prosperity. But would we look on these things, as they will shortly appear; how little would they signify? The rich man thought himself more happy, than poor Lazarus; and yet after a little while, how glad would he have been, to have exchanged conditions with this poor man? We should value this world, as the rich man, not when he enjoyed it, but after he was taken from it. We should do all things here, with regard to our future and eternal state. It signifies not much, what our condition is in this world, because it is but of short continuance. But we ought to have a great and serious regard to that state, which shall never end. We should therefore consider what influence every action we do will have upon the happiness, or misery of the next life. To be rich in this world, will contribute nothing to our future felicity; the things we so much dote on here, will signify nothing, when we come to appear before God. Death will strip us of these things; and in the other world, the soul of the poorest man, will be upon equal terms with the richest. Nothing but holiness and virtue will then avail us; so that the best thing we can do in this world, is to provide for the other.

The last observation I would make on this parable, is, that the state of men, in the next life, is fixed and unchangeable. "Between us and you, there is a great gulf fixed, so that they that would  
pass

pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." Those that are happy, will continue so; and those that are miserable, must remain in that sad state. This consideration of the immutable state of men after this life, should engage us, with all seriousness and diligence, to endeavour to secure our future happiness. God hath set before us good and evil, life and death, and we may chuse which we please; but in the other world we must abide by that choice, be it what it will. Man by sin is brought into a miserable state; and yet not desperate, or past remedy. For God hath "sent his son to be a prince and a saviour to give repentance and remission of sins." So that it is our own fault, if we do not lay the foundation of a perpetual happiness for ourselves; the grace of God is ready to assist us, and no man's case is so bad, but he may, if he will, make use of the grace which God offers; and by the influence and assistance of this grace, those "who are dead in trespasses and sins, may be turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." But if we neglect the opportunities of this life, and reject the grace and mercy of God, we are lost for ever. God will try us no more after this life; our miscarriage in this world, will prove fatal to us in the other; we shall have no further time to correct our errors: as the tree falls so it shall lie. The state we are in when we go hence, will be fixed, and never can be changed. We are yet in the hands of God, and by his grace, may be forever happy; but if we trifle away this advantage, we shall fall into the hands of the living God, out of which there is no redemption. God hath yet left heaven and hell to our choice, and we ought to take care to chuse well, as we can do this but once, for all and

for ever. There is yet space and opportunity left for repentance, but as soon as we enter upon the other world, our condition will be sealed, never to be reversed; so that, "this is the accepted time, this is the day of salvation! Therefore to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts; lest God swear in his wrath, that we shall not enter into his rest."

Discourse

Discourse XCIX. Abp. *Sharpe*.

## The PARABLE of the PRODIGAL SON.

Luke xv. 18, 19.

I will arise and go to my father, and say unto him, father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

r  
8-85-

**I**N our Saviour's famous parable of the prodigal son many excellent things are delivered for the instruction, direction, and encouragement of all penitent sinners. We here read of the miserable condition which the prodigal son brought himself into by his evil courses; and which was very great. "How many hired servants, said he, of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" and also his resolution to return to his father, which followed thereupon. When he came to himself, that is, considered, he said, I will arise, and go to my father, &c. Under the first circumstance of the prodigal, I shall represent the true state of sinners and wicked men, and the wretched condition into which such bring themselves. I shall then treat of the method by which sinners are brought to repentance; the first step of which is, a deep and serious consideration of their own state and condition.

I begin with the prodigal's evil courses and misery; and it will be proper to consider the account given of him in this parable, both as to his sin and misery. "A certain man, (says our Lord,

had two sons, and the younger of them said to his father, father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went to a citizen of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him." By the father here, is meant God, the great father and lord of the world, who, out of his abundance, bestows on mankind their several portions. Not one of his children but has a variety of talents committed to him; which, if carefully managed and improved, he will forever preserve the love, favour and kindness of his heavenly father; and will not fail of living happily here, and arriving at last to a glorious state of immortality. By the two sons is meant, the two different sorts of men in the world. In the character of the eldest son, are represented those men, who being blessed with a good temper, virtuous inclinations, and careful education, have in a great measure preserved their innocency all their lives; have not wandered from their father's house, nor gone astray in the paths of vice and wickedness; but have served their heavenly father, without any wilful or habitual transgression of his commandments. In the character of the younger son, who is the prodigal, are represented all those men who abuse the talents committed to them, the benefits, helps, and powers bestowed upon them, to evil purposes; who forsake the guidance and conduct of their heavenly father, and betake themselves to a course of vice and sensuality; in a word, all who live wickedly, whether Jews or Gentiles.

These

These are the prodigals here mentioned, for whose comfort and encouragement to repent, this parable was framed by our Saviour. And in the account of the prodigal's evil courses and their consequences, we have a lively description of the state of sinners, the methods and steps by which they proceed in sin, and the wretched condition they are thereby brought into; as will appear by comparing one with the other in the following particulars.

The younger son having got his portion, cares no longer to be in his father's house, thinking his liberty there too much abridged: And in order to be free from the awe and restraint of his father, he goes into a foreign country. And thus it is with sinners: the first step of their miscarriage, is the forsaking their heavenly father. They think it too severe a discipline to live always under the apprehensions and awe of an invisible being. And therefore put the thoughts of God out of their minds, saying with the profane people in Job, "depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." That is, they depart from God while they do not consider or regard him; while they cease to maintain a constant sense of his justice, goodness, and providence in their minds; while they lay aside the care of his worship, neglect their prayers and holy exercises, and live as if they did not believe there is an intelligent, omnipotent being, who governs the world, and to whom they are accountable.

The prodigal having got into a distant country, and out of his father's sight, allows himself all the liberties his heart can desire; lives viciously and profusely, and soon spends what his father had given him. Thus also the sinner, when once he throws off the fear of God, and all sense of religion, (which is the best security of men's innocence, and the most effectual curb to keep them from go-

ing astray) he presently runs into all sorts of extravagancy and debauchery; gives the reins to every appetite and passion, and takes his fill of unlawful liberties and gratifications, and by this means misapplies those talents, which God hath committed to him. He besots his understanding, depraves and corrupts his will, weakens all his spiritual powers, hardens his conscience, and thereby loses all sense of good and evil; he squanders away his time, renders himself incapable of the benefit and advantages which God gave him to improve in virtue.

The prodigal having thus spent his portion by his profuse way of living, is at last, by reason of the extremity of want, forced to become a servant. And this is the true condition of a sinner. He who lives in the constant gratification of his lusts and appetites, so weakens his higher powers, that in a little time he is reduced to the abject condition of a servant or bondman. They who give themselves to commit sin, are the servants of sin. He that is entangled in a habit of vice and wickedness, is no longer at his own disposal, but his lusts hurry him whithersoever they will. Reason is dethroned, and the brutish part of man reigns and governs. He is not a servant to one lord only, but to many, and all inconsistent with one another, which makes the servitude still more intolerable. Lust commands one thing, ambition another; covetousness this way, intemperance another; some the man must obey: And yet which soever he does, the rest are displeas'd for not being gratified. Indeed they all conspire to promote the interest of the great enemy of mankind, the devil; whose work a man does when he pursues the gratifications of his appetites. So that he is the slave of the devil, as well as of his own lusts, which certainly is the most miserable bondage in the world. He who "committeth sin is of the devil;"  
and

and such persons are "led captive by him at his will  
"and pleasure." Again,

The prodigal having thus of a freeman made himself a servant, we will next see how wretchedly and basely he is used: and he is put to the meanest and most contemptible employment, even to feed swine, and his diet no better than the husks that were given to the hogs. Just thus are all they treated who give themselves up to a vicious life. God designed men for noble employments, and so long as they preserved their innocence, and remained under their father's wing, in his fear and obedience; they lived like the children of the most high. Their work was suitable to their dignity, and becoming such excellent natures as God had given them. Their business was to contemplate God and his works; to exercise their reason about the best and noblest subjects; to sing praises to him who was the author of their being; and to employ all their faculties in the most manly way. To love and do good to all their fellow creatures, as they had opportunity; to govern their inferior appetites, and keep them constantly in subjection to the higher spirit that was in them. This was the employment that our heavenly father designed us for; and this, all virtuous persons, all who live up to the dignity of their nature, do still follow. But alas! what a mighty change is there when a man departs from God, and gives himself up to the service of his lusts! Without a figure, we may truly say, that the keeping of swine with the prodigal, is a more honourable employment than that which sinners chuse for themselves. What can be more base or vile than that immortal souls, made for the fruition of God himself, should spend days and years, in minding nothing but eating, sleeping and playing; or in scraping together heaps of money, which in a little time will prove useless to them; or in wallowing in uncleanness and lust,

which generally ends in beggary, shame, or rottenness? or in filling their bodies full of drink, till there be nothing but the shape of a man remaining? And yet these are the principal employments in which vicious men busy themselves. These are the things they live for, and beyond which they have no thought or ambition. "Whatever is in the world, " is either the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or " the pride of life." Sensual pleasures, wealth, popular applause and greatness, are the three great idols of the world; and whoever forsakes his God, falls down and worships one or more of them. But are not these pitiful and contemptible deities, for a rational and immortal soul to prostrate itself before? Is it not a shameful prostitution of our natures, to make these the great objects of our fears and hopes, of our love and joy, of all the designs and pursuits of our lives? Oh! the blindness and degeneracy of mankind! what mean, despicable creatures do we make ourselves, when we forsake the paths of virtue and the commandments of our God? Alas! we cease to be men, and level ourselves with the brutes; we debase ourselves even to hell.

Such is the nature of things, that it is impossible for a vicious man to live happily, let his circumstances be ever so prosperous. The mind of man can never be fully contented with any outward goods, and least of all, with those which are enjoyed in a vicious, unreasonable manner. Solomon, who made more experiments of this kind, than any man besides, found at last, that these seeming satisfactions were but vanity and vexation of spirit. All the pleasures which the sinner can receive from the greatest gratification of his sensual appetites, are like those that brute beasts are capable of as well as he; only with this difference, that their enjoyments are not allayed with bitterness, which his are. And can that be the happiness of a man, which animal creatures

creatures partake of as much as himself? But so far are our vicious gratifications from being true pleasures, that, take them altogether, they have much more of uneasiness and trouble, than of delight and satisfaction. The covetous, the proud, the revengeful, the envious, the glutton, the drunkard, the whoremonger, the ambitious, all these can testify from sad experience, that the contentment they receive from the gratification of these several passions or appetites, doth no ways countervail the pains and restlessness, the disturbances, disappointments, and manifold evil consequences to their bodies and souls, good names and estates, which they suffer upon account of them.

But to come to the last circumstance of the prodigal's condition, which the parable mentions: As coarse and disagreeable fare as the husks were, yet he would have been glad to have satisfied his hunger even with these; but thus much was denied him. "He would fain fill his belly with the husks which the swine did eat, but no man gave them unto him." Wretched unhappy man! he, who before pampered himself with all sorts of delicacies, even to surfeiting, would now be glad of any sort of food, even of husks, if he could get them. But so cruel is the master he serves, that he will not suffer him to fill his belly, no not with these. In this instance also, we have a lively representation of the state and condition of the spiritual prodigal.---For thus doth the devil treat all those who abandon God and virtue, to serve him and their own lusts. The best wages they have is only a little sensual pleasure, or empty honour and greatness, which are but husks in comparison of the noble entertainments of religion, and a good conscience. But even these they cannot have their fill of; for, alas! they are obnoxious to a thousand contingencies, which either rob us of them, or put a period to all the delight

and comfort we should receive by them; they are in a short time either taken from us, or we from them.

How then can he be said to have his fill of wealth, who is either always craving and drudging for more, or anxiously fearful to lose what he hath? and who, notwithstanding the fulness of his barns, and the largeness of his possessions; and his “saying to himself, soul, eat and drink and be merry, for thou hast goods laid up for many years,” shall hear these words, “thou fool, this night shall thy goods be taken from thee, and then whose will all these things be?” Nor are there any greater hopes for the ambitious, who as easily may command the wind, the ebbings and flowings of the sea, as secure to themselves the uncertain favour of great men, or the more uncertain breath of the people. And as for bodily pleasures, what do they signify, when the appetites are decayed and perished; when the powers of nature grow feeble and languid? This old age will undoubtedly bring to pass, but most frequently riots and debauches effect it sooner. Besides, what comfort and satisfaction can they afford a sinner under a multitude of other unfortunate, afflicting circumstances, to which he is unavoidably exposed? Can he say, I will refresh myself with play, or wine, or music; when he lies languishing on a sick bed? Or will his heaps of treasure charm the gout, stone, or cholic, that they shall not torment him? or, lastly, can all these things together yield any balm to heal a wounded conscience, which in the midst of the greatest affluence, the most luxurious entertainments, makes the vicious man to tremble and look pale with the bitter reflections of his life past, and the dismal prospect of what is to come? Alas! in such cases, he can purchase no quiet and repose to his mind, from the possession of what the world calls great and happy.

But

But supposing he could uninterruptedly fill and satisfy his appetites herein, without the disturbance of sickness, afflictions, disappointments and even of a guilty conscience; yet this misery will still attend him, that he cannot enjoy these things always. The time is coming on apace when he must part with these his friends and comforters; in a little time he must go into the regions of death; and then bid an everlasting farewell to the light of his eyes, the desire of his soul, and the idols of his life. Then he will sadly say with the prodigal, "how many hired servants are there in my father's house that have bread enough, but lo! I perish with hunger." He calls for his pleasures, but they are all gone as a dream when one awaketh. He calls for his wealth, which with so much anxiety and toil he hath amassed together; but that is upon the wing, to fly to a new heir, who perhaps will spend it more profusely than he got it sordidly; and all his gay feathers in which he prided himself, are now plucked from him, and he is left naked and despicable. In this extremity, he sees nothing but what fills him with horror. If he looks inward, there is all hell, despair, and confusion; there he finds a soul polluted with sin, oppressed with intolerable loads of guilt, and filled with the remembrance of his past folly. If he looks about him, he sees all his friends and companions taking their last leave of him; and as they forsake him, his great master, the devil, with his frightful guard (whose interest he hath faithfully pursued all his life) are ready to seize upon the trembling soul, as it parts from the body. Lastly, if he looks upwards, he sees an angry offended God, whose laws he hath affronted, whose threatenings he hath despised, whose grace he hath turned into wantonness, and whose holy spirit he hath done despite to. He sees the judge of the world summoning him to appear at his dreadful tribunal,

to give an account of the talents he hath misemployed, of the precious time he hath mispent; of the riots and debauches, the frauds and unjust dealings, the oaths and blasphemies, the lewd intrigues, wicked designs, profane words and evil actions of his whole life: and he seems to hear that terrible sentence sounding in his ears, which will be most certainly pronounced upon him, and all such, at the last day, "Go ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels." Oh! miserable state! the dismal conclusion of a sinful life! These are the natural fruits and consequences of forsaking God, and giving ourselves over to a course of vice and impiety. Nor is there any probability of preventing or averting those consequences, unless with the prodigal, we do in time come to ourselves, and enter into a serious consideration of our ways, and then arise and go to our father.

Which leads me to consider the prodigal's return. "I will arise and go to my father." And here we have a lively representation of the beginning and progress of repentance after a vicious life. The prodigal being pinched with extremity of want, at last comes to weigh and debate things seriously in his own mind. Whilst he was in the height of his prosperity, he minded nothing but the pursuit of his riots and debauches; he seemed to live without thinking or any kind of reflection. But at last his miserable circumstances make him to deliberate, and use his reason. He then considers the happiness he has lost, and the wretched condition, to which his folly hath brought him. And this puts him upon serious resolutions, to apply to his father: And thus it fares with every spiritual prodigal, who, after a vicious course of life, at last returns to his duty. The first step of his repentance, is a serious sense of his condition; till he begins to think, reflect,

flect, and consider, there are no hopes of him ; but when providence by a fit of sickness, or some sharp affliction, brings him to a sense of his condition, and that he in good earnest lays things to heart, and debates matters seriously with himself ; then he gives some hopes that he may, in time, rescue himself from the bondage of his lusts, and the snares of the devil, and become a convert to virtue and piety.

Let then all of us who have gone astray, with the prodigal instantly lay the foundation of repentance, which is serious consideration. And I would to God we would all do it presently. Oh ! that we would give ourselves leave to think ; and no longer blindly pursue our appetites ; that we would at last come to ourselves, as this prodigal did, and resume the exercise of our long abandoned reason ; that we would with David, “ stand in awe, and commune with our own hearts in our chamber, and “ be still :” That we would sedately consider what will be the issue and conclusion of our riots and vicious courses ! Were we thus wise, did we thus consider, I doubt not but thro’ the grace of God, we should in a very little time, feel a mighty change in our minds ; and then imitate the prodigal in the second step he made to his repentance, namely, enter into firm purposes and resolutions to quit our lewd courses, and to return to our heavenly father, from whom we have so long withdrawn ourselves. D

To persuade all who are concerned, thus to come to themselves, and to enter into serious considerations, about their everlasting interests, is the next thing I shall offer. Let such then consider, that it is this want of thinking, reflecting, and coming to themselves, that hath been the great occasion of all their past sins and follies. But if such will seriously consider their own spiritual affairs, they cannot avoid being brought to true repentance. Serious thinking, if practised and continued, will have the same effect

effect upon others that it had upon the prodigal. It will make them return to their father.

It is the want of thinking and reflecting that is the great occasion of all the miscarriages of our lives. For though our natures are bad enough, and our propensity to sin is very great, yet it is not so much that which hurries us into so many sorts of follies and vices as our inconsideration. We will not give ourselves liberty to think and reflect upon the consequences of our actions, before we venture upon them, but blindly rush into them; and hence comes the great degeneracy of human kind; we follow our present inclinations, and attend no further than just what the object before us, or the circumstances we are engaged in, prompt us to. And after we have done a sinful action once or twice, by degrees it becomes familiar to us, and at last our sins grow habitual and customary, and then it is not easy to conquer them. The truth is, want of consideration is the fountain of almost all the miscarriages of mankind. What is it that makes any man an atheist, or to question the being of God and providence, but that he will not give himself leave to think; will not take the pains to view the manifest effects and footsteps which every where, and in every thing, are to be discovered of an infinite power, wisdom and goodness? The same may be said of those who are infidels and sceptics as to the Christian religion. None is so because he wants evidence of the truth of the gospel, (for there is enough to convince the most curious enquirer) but because he will not consider. He runs on in a road of worldly business or sensuality, and cannot find time or humour, to make a serious and strict enquiry into things of this nature. If a man would but use his reason fairly, and calmly attend to the arguments that may be offered for the convincing him of the being of God, or the truth of Christ's religion;  
he

he could almost as soon not be man, as an atheist, or an unbeliever. And thus, as to the particular immoralities of our lives, it would not be possible for any man to live in the practice of common oaths and imprecations, if when tempted to swear, or damn, he did seriously consider, that it is the dreadful name of God, he is going to affront, who can damn him in good earnest for the lewd abuse of his tongue.

Again, it is nothing but inconsideration that makes any man follow a course of drunkenness and sensuality; he could hardly be such a brute, if his mind was attentive to the dismal consequences both as to his business, health, estate, and posterity, as well as his soul, in following such a course of life. It is stupidity and want of thought that ruins us all. We may pretend the unhappiness of our education, the badness of our nature, the force of temptations, the irresistible baits of pleasure or profit, or the bewitching charms of company, in excuse for our careless or vicious lives: But in reality it is our own rashness and inconsideration, that ought generally to bear the greatest blame. If we would but seriously and frequently consider the arguments and motives to religion, and meditate upon them, it would be impossible for us to live as we do. Did we ponder deeply and often, upon the shortness and uncertainty of our lives, the madness and folly, the shame and uneasiness of all sorts of sin; the joy, peace, and continual feast of innocency and a good conscience; the serious desire of God that we should all be happy; the severe account we must one day give of all our actions; the unspeakable, glorious and immortal life, that we may attain by holiness and virtue, and the everlasting punishment in hell that does certainly await all lewd, profane, ungodly, impenitent sinners: I say, let a man seriously and constantly consider these things, and it  
would

would not be possible for him to live in whoredom or drunkenness, or in any other wicked course.

For wherever serious thinking and reflection is practised and continued, it never fails to produce reformation of life. It is very observable, that when Christianity was first preached by our Saviour, it had visible effects upon the hearts and lives of men; no sooner did any one profess the gospel, but he became a good man, a mortifier of all his carnal lusts and appetites, dead to the world and all the vanities of it. He despised all earthly pleasures, and was ready to lay down his life for his lord and master, whenever called to it. It was then a strange thing to hear of a lewd, vicious, debauched christian. But in our days, tho' we have the same religion and doctrine preached, the same arguments enforced, the same assistance of God's grace and spirit afforded; yet we see very few of these effects among us. We can now believe the gospel, communicate with the church in all her offices, hear our sins reprov'd, our duty told us, and all the glorious promises of Christ displayed to us, with the dreadful threatning of God denounced against us, and yet still continue the same persons we were before, as vain and loose in our conversation, as uncharitable and worldly minded, as wrathful, peevish, and censorious, as if we were still in the darkness of heathenism, and the gospel had never been preached to us. And what is the reason of this difference between the effects of the gospel then, and now? Why the first Christians did seriously consider their religion, and weigh its arguments and motives, but we do not. They took up their Christianity by choice, and we by chance or education. They upon the profession of the gospel, made a diligent enquiry into the doctrines and duties of it, and the evidence for it; they considered the goodness and reasonableness of the precepts, the greatness of the promises,

promises, and the mighty encouragements to holiness and virtue which it laid upon mankind: And such fruits and effects will always be produced, where the same consideration and application of mind is used. Even in our days, as hardened and insensible as we seem to be, yet there is none of us when brought to a serious consideration of our own ways, and the concerns of our souls, but we presently find ourselves changed into another sort of men; we have new thoughts, new desires, new purposes, and resolutions. This we see frequently in sick persons; they who have most despised religion, and the arguments of it, while they were in health, yet when they come to their sick beds, and begin to be awakened by the apprehensions of death, into a serious consideration of their own state, how strangely are they affected? how much do they repent of their former actions? how absolutely necessary doth virtue and a holy life then appear to them? how full are they of strong resolutions to amend their ways, if ever God restore them to health again? how earnestly do they ask God's pardon for what is past, and pray for his grace for the future? and what is the reason of all this? there was the same difference between virtue and vice, they had the same arguments to avoid the one, and pursue the other before, only they now deeply consider and apply them to their own hearts, which before they did not.

And thus will it always be with all persons, in all circumstances, if they can once be brought seriously to reflect and consider; this is a good step made towards their repentance; and if they continue such considerations, there is no doubt but they will at last become truly virtuous and holy persons. Oh! that we would now begin to apply our minds seriously to our spiritual concerns, and entertain the same thoughts that we shall be  
sure

sure to have when we come to die ! what trouble, care, and consideration would it save us, and which will certainly some time or other come upon us ! we cannot always live without thinking ; a time will come, when we shall consider, and reflect, whether we will or no ; when we shall not be able to divert our thoughts from those things, which we are now so unwilling to think upon, and perhaps, when it may be too late. Happy they, who do with the prodigal, come to themselves in time, before God's mercies be shut up against them ! who will with him so consider their ways, as to take up the same resolution that he did, to arise and go to their father.}

Discourse

## Discourse C. Dr. Rogers.

The DUE IMPROVEMENT of our  
TALENTS.

Mat. xxv. 19.

After a long time, the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

**I**N this parable, we have the measures of our duty to God, and the motives that enforce it, set before us, in an allusion so plain and simple; in its views so extensive and affecting; that while it instructs the meanest capacity, it engages reverence and attention from the greatest, and strikes an impression on the most improved understanding. We are to consider God, as our lord and master, the author and giver of every good gift; and ourselves as his servants or stewards, who, in various instances and measures, have received from his goodness, such blessings and abilities, as may fit us for the several stations and offices of life, to which his providence appoints us. But then we are to observe, that these are committed to us, as a trust or loan, for whose due management we are accountable to the donor. If we faithfully acquit ourselves of this probationary charge, we shall receive far greater instances of God's confidence and favour; but if we are remiss and negligent, we must expect to feel his resentment and displeasure. A time will come, when the Lord will demand a particular account of every talent committed to us. And though this day of enquiry, is at a distance,

and that this life is allotted us for our trial ; and our account will not be required, till this scene of action is closed ; yet no one knows, when that great and final audit may begin. But, however distant the time may be, yet God has fixed and appointed it, “ in whose sight, a thousand years are “ but as one day.” It will assuredly come, and our eternal happiness or misery depends on it ; so that we ought to have the prospect of it ever in view, and to live under a constant expectation of it. *a*

Though these are the principal conclusions, to be collected from this parable ; yet the divine author has adapted every incident of the relation, to convey to us some spiritual instruction. Hence we learn, that infinite wisdom hath appointed the talents of men to be various, and in their kind and proportion, adjusted to the diversity of offices, necessary to human life. But though the gifts of men are unequal, yet none can with justice complain, since what is bestowed, be it more or less, is a favour entirely unmerited. Each then should be thankful, and satisfied with his portion ; and instead of envying the more liberal allotments of another, apply himself to the improvement of his own. It must be observed, that the difficulty of the task, is according to the number of talents committed to each. He, who had received five, was required to gain other five ; and he who had received ten, was to account for other ten : ought we then to complain, if our master has laid on us, a lighter burden, a more easy and less service, than what he has no others ? Especially, as our interest in God’s favour, depends not on the number of our talents, but on our diligence and application in the management of them. He who had received **two** talents and improved them, was “ admitted into the “ joy of his lord.” And he who came last, was re-  
 proved, not for having fewer talents, but for not improv-

improving what he had, as others had done. So that the moral design of the parable, is to engage our utmost attention, to improve such talents as God bestows on us, whether great or small, many or few, because we must account for them, "when our Lord shall come and reckon with us." That we may be enabled to make suitable reflections on this parable, it will be proper to consider, what is meant by these talents; What duty is required of us, for the improving and rendering an account to God of them.

By these talents are principally meant, the communications and graces of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows in different measure, "dividing to every man severally as he will." And subordinate to these, are all the means, opportunities, and abilities to exercise or improve these graces; all the advantages of station, fortune, education, and what ever may enable us to do good. For we having received all we have from God, are strictly obliged to promote the wise ends, for which he bestows his favour. And here let us take a short and imperfect view of what God has done for us. He has given us reason and understanding, to discern good from evil, to enquire into the causes, relations, and consequences of things; and to collect from thence, proper rules of judgment and actions. Indeed since the fall, this faculty has been much obscured; but still it remains an universal gift of God to men: and tho' not equal to all, yet it is given to every man in such measure, as is sufficient for their direction. In the knowledge of our duty, and the pursuit of happiness, God has by the gospel, so graciously supplied the defects of reason, that the meanest understanding may know how to be happy. Such assistances of divine grace attend every Christian, if he will apply to God for it, as may enable him to direct his inclinations, govern his affections,

and subdue his corruptions. These talents of nature, are in some degree common to all men; and by the improvements of that grace, which is conferred on every one, all have sufficient to conduct them thro' the several stages of life; if they will but use proper diligence and application. But then regard must be had, to all the means afforded for cultivating these gifts of nature and grace; such as all opportunities of instruction, the ministry and ordinances of religion, the reproofs and examples of good men, the occasions offered, and the abilities given, for the exercise of virtue. All these are talents, or gifts of God, deposited with us, to be diligently made use of, and for which we are accountable to him. I proceed to shew what duty is required from us, in the improvement of these talents.

It is here supposed, that these talents are improveable; or otherwise they would be of no use, nor value. And, indeed, we are bound by the command of God, to improve them, who has threatened to inflict severe penalties if we neglect it. And if they are not improved, they will not continue long at one stay, but be lost. The finest parts and capacities, without proper culture, will make but a mean and contemptible figure. No knowledge can be preserved without use and exercise. And the same as to moral accomplishments. It requires great care and attention to form a virtuous habit, and much more to preserve it in vigour. Unless we co-operate with the motions of God's grace, and cultivate it by use and application, its impressions will gradually wear out, and be lost. "The spirit of God will not always strive with man." He gives us a stock to manage, equal to the services he expects from us; but if we are slothful and negligent, and will not apply it to the purposes for which it was given, he will recall the  
useless

useless gift. "Take from him, says he, the talent, and give it to him, that hath ten talents." Let us therefore diligently improve every talent committed to us, because this will be enquired of in the day of accounts, and if not improved they will be immediately taken from us. What this improvement implies, and how we may discharge this duty, is an enquiry of the nearest concern to us. 13-

The proper improvement of all God's gifts, is the employing them so, as may best promote his glory. This is the end the Almighty proposed in our creation, in all the powers he has endued us with, and in all the aids of grace, he has vouchsafed us. Whatever other improvements we make of them will not profit us, nor be admitted as any proof of our fidelity, in the day of reckoning. We may cultivate our understanding by learning and study, and extend our knowledge thro' all the subjects of human enquiry; but if our end be only to gratify our curiosity, or our vanity, this is not serving God, but ourselves. We may increase our portion of God's outward gifts; but if we only apply them to enlarge our own conveniencies, this is not the improvement our master expects. We may take pleasure in our knowledge and fortune, rejoice in them as our portion and instruments of present satisfaction; but we must still remember, that in our reckonings with God, all these improvements of our capacities and abilities, will be added to our receipts. And the only use God will permit us to set in ballance of our debt to him, is to employ them as means of increasing and multiplying our graces, or as instruments of exercising them in works of piety and virtue. Every gift of God is capable of these applications.

By the advantages of learning and knowledge, we are enabled to excel in spiritual understanding; to defend the faith, explain and enforce the doc-

trines of the gospel ; to instruct the ignorance, and correct the errors of others. By riches and authority, we are enabled to support, and promote the service of God ; to relieve the poor and indigent ; to be a terror to evil-doers, and to protect and encourage those who do dwell. When we thus apply God's gifts, as means and instruments to exercise the graces of his spirit ; the zeal, justice, and charity, he infuses into our hearts ; these are improvements which God will own. He will immediately bless our fidelity, and render it fruitful in greater gifts, in more abundant measures of grace ; and in the day of account will acknowledge it in proportionable allotments of reward and glory. This brings me to enquire how our Lord will then proceed with us.

And we may learn from this parable, that the divine justice, in this scrutiny, will estimate and reward every one's fidelity, in proportion to the receipts and return they have made. An account will be demanded of every talent ; and it will not be sufficient that we have made some improvement, unless it be such, as is answerable to the number and value of our gifts. If he who has received but two talents, shall gain five, his approbation and reward from his master, will be greater than his who makes only the same improvement of five ; because the improvement made by the former, is in proportion to his receipts, more than double to the others. And from this sentence here passed on the unprofitable servant, we may learn, that God will severely resent our unfaithful discharge of the trust he reposes in us. The servant who said, " lo there thou hast what was thine ;" made use of a weak and false suggestion, because the increase was as much due to the Lord, as the original stock ; but he only rendered one moiety of what he owed, and was therefore condemned to utter darkness.

this will be his portion, who preserves his talent entire and undiminished, but made no improvement of it, what sentence must they expect, who squander away the principal itself, in trifles and vanity; or which is worse, in affronting and dishonouring God, or in the service of his enemies? Alas! how many are there who abuse the gifts of God to sin, and make the abilities his goodness bestowed on them, the instruments of offending him? how frequently do we see great endowments of mind or fortune, wholly devoted to the service of mens lusts? and if the idle and unfruitful servant, who only sat still, when he should have been active, shall be cast into utter darkness; how heavy must we suppose their sentence will be, who have been diligent and active in doing evil? who have deserted to the adversaries of God, and employed what they received from heaven, in rebellion against it? The judge of all the earth will assuredly do right, and proportion his resentment to the aggravations of the crime.

The general view and intention of this parable, is to excite men to live and act under a serious, habitual regard to the event of that day, when our Lord shall come, and reckon with us. And then enquiry will be made of the good or bad management of those talents he has committed to us. We should therefore attentively reflect on the nature and number of God's gifts to us, and what improvement we have made thereof. We should on each article, examine how we have acquitted ourselves of the duties required from us: whether we have duly cultivated the seeds of grace, and with honest open hearts, received and obeyed its suggestions: whether we have diligently attended to the means afforded us of growing wiser and better, have frequented the holy ordinances, and regarded

the teachers of religion : and what fruits these excellent means of improvement have produced. Are we advanced in spiritual knowledge and understanding, in piety and holiness of life, in purity, meekness, and charity ; in any proportion to the calls and assistances, the invitation and instruction, we have had ? With respect to those outward talents God has intrusted us with, have we faithfully employed them, in promoting his honour, in the exercise of Christian graces, in such works of devotion, justice, or mercy, as he requires by the gospel ? If on enquiry, our conscience can acquit us, as diligent and faithful servants, we may then with joy expect our master's coming. But whatever improvements we have made, we must still proceed farther, and " press forward to the high mark of our calling." For every progress in grace, tho' our own endeavours co-operate therein, is yet the gift of God, and an accession to our talents ; as it enlarges our abilities, and adds to our duty. And as to all such as have been idle, and made no use of the talents God has given them, they may in this parable read their sad fate, when their Lord comes, and finds them thus unfruitful. And the terrible prospect should awaken such from their slumber ; quicken them to an immediate and vigorous application to duty ; that by a double improvement of the time yet remaining, they may redeem what is lost.

But worse, and more hardly to be retrieved, is his case, who has squandered away the stock itself ; suffered his gifts to perish for want of use ; or, by abusing them to the service of sin, has provoked God to take them from him. How shall the prodigal recal the fortune he has spent, and appease the anger of his judge ? The terrors of the Lord may justly terrify him, but yet must not extinguish his endeavours in despair. He has lost many excellent talents,

talents, but he who gave, can restore. If his heart be humbled with a true sincere repentance, this is a gift of God; a gift thro' Christ, capable of great improvements, towards obtaining of divine mercy. This, alas! more or less, is the condition of every mortal. "If we say, that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." For which of us hath improved every gift of God, so far as we might have done? or, if we have been faithful in some talents, how have we neglected others? The most circum-spect piety, will in the day of account want to have much to be forgiven; and must expect his reward, rather from the mercy of his judge, than the merit of his service.

Let us then all by a sincere contrition, shew forth fruits meet for repentance, by a diligent application of every remaining hour; remembering, that the judge stands at the door. The day of reckoning may be long before it comes, but the time allotted us to prepare for it, is limited by the short space of human life. The night of death comes when no man can work; and though many ages may pass between that event and the resurrection to judgment, yet when we leave this world, the days of probation expire, the account is then sealed up, nor can we alter one article of it: to-day therefore, while it is called to day, let us be diligent in the work of our Lord; correct our errors, and finish what is imperfect, that we may obtain his approbation, and make our calling and election sure.

The last thing I shall observe with respect to this parable is, that the condition of those who diligently improve these their talents, will be unspeakably happy; but those who do not, will be miserable beyond expression, both in this world and the next. The diligent improvers of their talent,

lent, will be truly happy both here and hereafter. In this world, a quiet and serene conscience, will be to them a continual feast; the sense of having performed their duty to the best of their ability; of having been good stewards of that grace which God bestowed on them; and that they can give a sincere, though not a perfect account, to their great master, when he comes to enquire into their behaviour and stewardship; this will fill their breasts with infinite satisfaction, their souls will be calm, their thoughts at rest, from a consciousness of their fidelity; and their life not embittered with anxious fear and dread of a sad future reckoning. Besides, this serenity and satisfaction of mind, and comfortable prospect of a glorious recompence of reward, the improving Christian shall have more talents given him, more grace bestowed upon him; what the slothful forfeited, shall be conferred on him, and he shall abound in every good word and work. And what condition can approach nearer, to the state of heavenly glory, than that of a holy soul thus plentifully adorned with the divine grace? If grace and glory differ only in degree, and the one is but the completion and perfection of the other; a soul thus filled with grace, must needs here enjoy a heaven upon earth.

And in that other world, when the glory shall be revealed, that is prepared for them that love and serve our Lord Christ in sincerity; then will their happiness be infinite and eternal. They will enter into the joy of their Lord, partake of his glories and felicities, in the presence of the immortal God. Having given an account of their stewardship, they shall be conducted by the blessed angels, into the presence of the great king of heaven, where they shall see him, face to face; and with admiring eyes and unravished hearts, shall behold his glory, gaze upon his splendour, and nearly view his beauty,  
who

who is the fountain of perfection ; and he who is light himself, will communicate the knowledge of his most excellent nature, and make them full of divine gladness, with the joy of his countenance. And since the reward of a pious industry, in improving the talents God has committed to us, will be such an exceeding and eternal weight of glory ; we should take off our affections from these vain and worthless trifles, and not bestow our love upon that which satisfieth not, nor spend our labour for that which is not bread ; but make it our great endeavour to be rich towards God, to improve the talents he hath given us, and to lay up a treasure in heaven ; remembering, “ that eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither can it enter into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” And that diligence is surely well bestowed, which shall be rewarded with “ a crown of glory, eternal in the heavens.”

But this is not the case with the unprofitable and slothful servant, neither here nor hereafter. In this world, the lashes of a guilty conscience, will be to him a continual torment. The sense of his having carelessly neglected his duty, and not performed the just commands of his great Lord ; that he has not improved the grace which God gave him, and is unable to give any good account of the talents committed to his charge ; this will fill his mind with trouble and perplexity, and embitter all his worldly enjoyments with anxious fear and dread, of a future reckoning : so that the dreadful expectation of his sad fate, will be to him, even like hell upon earth ; and in the next world, at the great day when he shall be summoned to give an account of his works, the terrible sentence, of “ depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil, and his angels,” shall strike

strike him with horror and confusion. He shall then be shut up in utter darkness, where he shall eternally bewail his miserable condition, gnash his teeth in bitter remorse, for slothfully neglecting the improvement of divine grace, and bringing himself to that place of torment; crying out to eternal ages in despair and most tormenting agonies of soul, "O that I had considered in that day, the things that did belong unto my peace; but now they are forever hid from my eyes."

To conclude this discourse; in this parable we see on the one hand, all the encouragement given to diligence, industry, and an improving piety; with all the blessed attendants of abounding in grace in this world, and a full enjoyment of God himself in heaven; and on the other side, here is represented, what if duly considered, is sufficient to make any man afraid of spiritual sloth and idleness, and not dare longer to neglect the improvement of his talents, lest he is deprived of God's grace here, and be sentenced to eternal misery at the day of judgment,

Discourse

Discourse CI. Mr. *Balguy*.

DILIGENCE and INDUSTRY, ENFORCED  
and APPLIED.

Rom. xii. 11.

Not slothful in business.

EVERY man has two general concerns of great moment, to employ his thoughts, namely, the present life, and that which is to come. The one is indeed, of much greater importance than the other. The business of eternity is of infinite consequence, and requires our utmost diligence and care; not that the affairs of this life are to be neglected: worldly industry under proper restraints and regulations is a great friend to religion; and therefore well deserves our consideration. The true meaning of the text is, that men must not give themselves up to idleness or sloth, but diligently pursue their respective callings, and be industrious in that state of life, which God has allotted them.

As mens different circumstances and conditions require different degrees of industry and labour, it is not possible to mark out the bounds and limits of industry. Some are obliged to take more pains than others, whose condition of life exempts them from labour, by making it neither necessary nor expedient; and yet idleness is the privilege of none; but is criminal in itself, and prejudicial to all men, in many respects. But it must be observed, that worldly industry may be carried to excess, and  
become

become detrimental, as well to our health, as to the concerns of another life ; which latter, being by far of the greatest moment, requires our utmost care and regard ; so that we must make our spiritual calling and election sure, whatever becomes of our temporal affairs. It will be needless to shew, how far men ought to be diligent and industrious, in their respective employments ; because every man who is convinced that he ought to be industrious, and resolves so to be, may easily discover, how to proportion his industry to his condition and state of life. But it shall be my endeavour to shew from these words, the necessity and advantage of industry ; both as to our temporal and spiritual concerns. I begin with the first.

Let it then be considered, that the world cannot subsist without labour and pains ; even those who are exempted from the drudging part of business cannot be unemployed without great disadvantage to themselves and the public. The necessities of life require a great deal of pains, and the comforts and conveniences of it demand much more. Indeed, had God pleased, he might have maintained the world, without men's labour ; by making such provision for them, as to have supplied all their wants and occasions, without their endeavours. The earth might have been made to yield its fruits and encrease, without any human care or cultivation ; nature might have been made so rich and fruitful, as to have rendered art useless, and labour superfluous. But providence has wisely ordered matters otherwise. For considering the corruptions of our nature, such a state of ease and freedom, might have been fatal. Indeed, had man continued innocent, as when created, labour would have been needless ; our first parents, while they remained in paradise, were provided with every thing

thing, by the bounty of nature. The earth produced without care or culture, whatever could administer to use or delight. But this privilege they lost with their innocence; and by incurring guilt, became subject to labour: and part of Adam's curse was, "to eat bread in the sweat of his face;" which devolved upon his guilty posterity; so that human labour has but an ignoble original. But then, this is no way in favour of idleness; for had man continued innocent, and not been condemned to labour, yet he would not have lived in sloth. Employment would not have been wanting for his active nature. The works of creation, the unsearchable excellencies and perfections of the creator, would have found abundant exercise for the faculties of his mind. There would then have been more leisure and inclination, as well as greater capacity, for so sublime an employment. The punishment therefore of the above curse only consisted, in the exchange of the exercise of the mind, for the labour of the body; and it is necessary it should be so now, both in a natural and moral respect; in a natural sense, because, since man's expulsion from paradise, nature calls for his endeavours, and will not furnish him with such blessings as he wants, without his own labour; and in a moral respect, labour is greatly necessary, to keep him out of worse employment. Had not man in this corrupt state worldly business to engage some of his thoughts, they would naturally be employed about things unlawful. He has such an aversion to good, and such strong propensity to evil, that it is necessary he should be some way employed. But this shall be more fully considered under the next head; which brings me to shew the advantages of industry.

To industry and diligence are owing the birth and improvements of arts and sciences, which contribute so much to the use and embellishment of life,

life, and distinguishes man from the inferior rank of creatures. The nations destitute of industry, are barbarous and uncivilized, the countries wild and desolate, and the men savages. There cannot be a flourishing people without industry. The benefits of nature, and the blessings of providence, must in a great measure be lost without it. There are flourishing nations, that solely owe their power and prosperity under heaven, to a spirit of industry, which has raised and advanced them, in spite of many great obstacles and discouraging difficulties; while other nations, blessed with many and great natural advantages, have never distinguished themselves, for want of taking the necessary pains: Their sloth buried them in obscurity, or they became a prey to other nations, and so lost their riches and liberty, and fell a sacrifice to their indolence and inactivity. As liberty is a great encourager of industry, so is industry the best guard to liberty. Strength and power avail nothing if not exerted, which they cannot be to advantage without pains and industry. Idleness naturally tends to slavery and poverty. An industrious people may expect the protection of heaven, whilst the lazy are abandoned to their own sluggishness. “The hand  
“ of the diligent shall bear rule, but the slothful  
“ shall be under tribute.”

And as industry is beneficial to the public, so is it of great advantage to private persons. It has a natural tendency to raise men in the world, for wealth cannot be acquired without it. Men indeed may inherit riches without taking pains, but cannot improve or keep them without industry. But those who have their fortunes to make, may as well think to be wise without instruction, as rich without diligence. If a man's condition be very low, he must labour for a subsistence; if moderate, he must be industrious, to advance it. “The hand of  
“ the

“the diligent maketh rich; and the substance of  
 “a diligent man is precious.” He whose wealth  
 is of his own acquiring, best knows the value of  
 it, and how to spend it; and the blessings of hea-  
 ven will prosper his honest labours and endeavours.  
 “Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished;  
 “but he that gathereth by labour shall encrease.”  
 Both honour and wealth must be obtained by in-  
 dustry; which indeed, is the high road to prefer-  
 ment. It also tends to the preservation of health;  
 for our bodies are so framed, as to require con-  
 stant exercise; no doubt contrived on purpose by  
 providence, as a natural check upon sloth, and a  
 kind of security to business, that so no motive  
 might be wanting to spur man on to that labour  
 and industry for which he was designed. Sloth is  
 an enemy to health, and moderate labour very be-  
 neficial to it. This truth is confirmed by experi-  
 ence; long life being most common among the  
 laborious part of mankind; and was not health  
 thus supported by business, the thread of life would  
 be very short. In truth, idleness is a dead weight  
 upon a man’s constitution. It loads him with in-  
 firmities, that naturally tend to shorten his days;  
 as if nature designed, that he who did but little  
 good in the world, should be soon cut off, as an  
 unprofitable member, and a nuisance to society.  
 We may then say of industry, as the wise man  
 did of wisdom, “length of days is in her right  
 “hand, and in her left hand, riches and honour.”  
 Besides,

We should consider the pleasure and satisfaction  
 which redounds from an honest employ. Those  
 who inure themselves to business, like it so well,  
 that they cannot live without it; which shews it  
 must be pleasant: and though gain may contribute  
 to make it so; yet surely a man may take plea-  
 sure in being industrious, for other views, than

barely the love of riches. His employment may be pleasing and delightful to him, exclusive of other considerations. He may find great satisfaction in industry, as being part of his duty, pleasing and acceptable to God; and as it enables him to do good, to provide for his own household, which whoever neglects, is worse than an infidel. So that a man may take pleasure in his business, both upon its own account, and for the sake of the many advantages attending it; and though hard labour is troublesome and painful, yet custom will make it easy, and much pleasanter than constant idleness. To do nothing is the hardest labour, a state the most restless and uneasy; because its contrary to the nature of a man's mind, which requires action: a slothful man's time is a great burthen to him, it hangs upon his hands, and he knows not how to get rid of it.

As rest gives refreshment to a laborious man, this makes hard labour to be better than idleness, because it gives a man the true relish of rest. The slothful man is glutted with his ease, but that leisure which the industrious man finds from business, is truly delightful to him. Indeed, labour and rest do mutually recommend each other, both for the pleasure of variety, and the agreeable succession: when a man is weary with business, and his spirits are sunk, when rest arrives it is truly welcome: and when he is refreshed, as his strength and vigour return, so does his appetite to his business; and he goes to work with the same alacrity, as he came from it. This is natural and must be pleasant to all, but the lazy and slothful. Providence seems to intend, that men should have no true enjoyment of any blessing without labour.

I will now consider industry with regard to religion; and certain it is, that the glory of God is highly promoted by it; a due improvement of his

his gifts and talents must necessarily redound to his honour. Industry discovers the wonders of nature, their various ends and uses; and gives men a proper occasion to acknowledge God's wisdom in the creation of the world, to proclaim his power, and extol his goodness. Industry has also a great influence on the moral world. By a spirit of industry societies and governments are framed, and wholesome laws enacted; and by it the members of a community carefully execute their several and respective trusts and functions.—Industry is also a great friend to religion, as it enables men to do much good in a private capacity, to their neighbours, friends, and relations; by putting it in their power to exercise acts of charity, to relieve the needy, and succour the distressed. But the greatest advantage of industry is, that it tends to the preservation of innocence, by securing men from the ill effects of sloth. Idleness is the inlet to licentiousness, vice and immorality. It corrupts the principles of religion, and opens a door to sin and wickedness. The mind of man will not sleep; his thoughts and passions must be employed; as he is prone to evil, nothing but employment will prevent his committing it. Idleness gives full scope to all sorts of temptations; it draws men into ill company, exposes them to all manner of sin and vice, and to the prevailing influence of bad examples; and particularly to the temptations of their spiritual adversaries, who will improve this grand opportunity, to facilitate and hasten men's ruin.

And as idleness dishonours God, and is pernicious to man's self, so has it a great tendency to make him injurious to his neighbour. An idle person to keep himself in countenance, and encourage his beloved sloth, will hinder other men's business, and endeavour to get companions as idle as himself, or make them such; and this perhaps is

the only instance of their taking pains. Thus by idleness is business interrupted to the detriment of the public, and other men often brought to ruin. But further; if a man be low in the world, idleness will keep him so; if he enjoys a fair fortune, it will soon be gone, and then he must either work, or do worse. But as it is not likely he will work, he of course falls to stealing, to supply his wants at the easiest rate; hence idleness brings men into the most enormous crimes, to the great detriment of the public. Had industry nothing to recommend it, but to keep men just and honest, this would be a sufficient character of it; and could nothing be said against idleness, than that it tends to thefts, wrong, and injustice; this is enough to deter men from it.

Lastly, idleness tends to disturb the peace of society, by intermeddling with other men's concerns, kindling contentions, feuds, and animosities, which generally end in difference and disagreement: Did men mind their own business, they would have no leisure to intermeddle with the affairs of others. The apostle observes of some, that they were disorderly, "working not at all, but are busy bodies." Such he exhorts, "that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread." Industry is an excellent expedient for the maintenance of peace, love and unity. A diligent attendance upon men's callings and employments prevents those differences, dissensions and ruptures, which are the natural consequences of sloth and idleness. Thus we see how highly advantageous industry is to religion, by promoting many branches of men's duty; by securing their innocence in general, and keeping them out of temptations, mischiefs and snares, which they would otherwise unavoidably fall into. But then care must be taken, that while men apply themselves so diligently to the affairs of this world, they do not neglect the more weighty concerns of the next; lest  
whilst

whilst they are employed about “ things temporal, “ they finally lose the things eternal.” This brings me to shew from several considerations, the great obligations, we are under also to discharge the duties of religion, to cultivate and improve our minds, in order to the working out our eternal salvation.

Let us then observe the singular moment and vast importance of this work, whereon depends our supreme interest, and well being for ever. The gain or loss of a blessed immortality, is an event the most important: In comparison of which, all temporal concerns are inconsiderable, vain and contemptible. A disappointment in these should not affect us deeply, because they cannot affect us long; to aim at the good things of this world is not unreasonable, but we should not estimate them, beyond their true value. Many of the grievances of this life, are purely imaginary, and those which are real, are commonly much aggravated, by our own fancy. The demands of nature are little and few, soon supplied, and easily satisfied. Those hardships and pressures which are certain and unavoidable, may be greatly alleviated, by the shortness of their duration, by the encouraging hopes and prospects of a happy futurity.

But if, by neglecting our immortal souls, we make little or no provision for eternity; if by depraving our faculties, and defacing the image of God, we neglect to improve his gifts; if we continue unprepared and unqualified for that blessed state, which he has provided for his faithful servants; how deplorable and desperate will be our case? Without remedy, without relief, without hope. To be for ever banished from the presence of God, and the habitations of the just, will be a loss above all estimate; and yet we are as sure as death can make us, that vice and wickedness will

find no place in the regions of bliss. A God of infinite purity and perfection can never suffer it ; whoever aims at happiness, and draws plans of prosperity, either present or future, exclusive of virtue, forms vain and delusive projects. He might as well seek light in the grave, or liberty in a dungeon. It is impossible for a rational creature to be made happy without virtue ; and yet an eternity of the greatest happiness depends on our virtuous improvements. The state of bliss which is offered to our choice, is unspeakably perfect, and of endless duration ; which is an infinite addition to the weight and strength of the motive ; so that this affair most highly concerns us, and is of the utmost importance. It is impossible to frame an idea of any thing equal to it. A perpetual possession of the greatest happiness we are capable of, is a good so immense, so entirely compleat, that it fills and surpasses all our desires, and leaves nothing to be wished. It therefore deserves our principal care, and most earnest endeavours to obtain this mighty good ; and the only qualification for it, is a virtuous course of life. But,

The necessity of great care and diligence in the discharge of our duty, further appears from the extent of it. For it comprehends a variety of particulars, and none to be neglected ; and requires constant perseverance to our lives end. In the cultivating of our minds, many things are to be learned, others unlearned ; many prejudices to be weeded out, and many errors extirpated. The precepts of virtue and religion must be reduced to practice. The several branches of our duty must be deeply impressed on our minds ; the obliquity of our wills must be rectified ; our weak humours, wild appetites, and wandering inclinations must be carefully watched ; our natural affections must be governed, our acquired ones restrained. The heart  
must

must be kept with all diligence ; an habitual guard must be put on our words, actions, and thoughts. There it is our designs are formed, whether good or bad ; and if our thoughts are not cautiously watched, and governed, by the rules of sobriety and virtue, they will soon become licentious ; great circumspection is therefore necessary to regulate these springs of action, and prevent the first tendencies to evil.

With respect to our fellow-creatures, various duties are incumbent on us ; for we ought to consult the interest of the community, and the welfare of individuals. We must inviolably obtain the rules of justice and equity. We must deal with all men truly and uprightly, without fraud, guile, or dissimulation ; conscientiously doing to others, “ what we would they should do to us ; ” performing as far as possible, in word and deed, the obligations of truth and righteousness. We must cultivate a kind and benevolent disposition ; a charitable and merciful frame of mind ; doing good unto all men, as opportunity offers ; endeavouring to promote the peace and prosperity of mankind. In short, we are obliged to be grateful to our friends, placable to our enemies, and well affected to all.

Another principal branch of our duty is to walk humbly with our God ; to have a deep sense of our own meanness and unworthiness, and of his transcendent majesty and boundless perfections. That we frequently and devoutly contemplate the excellence and glory of his nature and attributes ; that we carefully consider the wonderful operations of his hands ; reflect how great he is in himself, and how good to us ; that he bestows upon us a variety of enjoyments, and crowns us with mercies spiritual and temporal. Our hearts thus disposed, we shall naturally approach him with profound reverence, gratitude, and adoration ; cheerfully pay-

ing him that homage and worship, praise and thanksgiving, which are due to his great name. We must also place our entire trust and confidence in him, and with absolute resignation submit to his will; performing sincere obedience to his laws, and devoting ourselves to his honour and glory. And when ever we fail herein, violate our obligations, and transgress our known duty; we must make up the breach by sincere repentance, and effectual reformation. But if we abuse his Christian privilege, it becomes useless, and we are only unprofitable penitents. From this imperfect sketch we may see how copious and comprehensive our duty is; and how it requires our constant attention, and most vigorous endeavours; since the culture of our soul will not admit of indolence; for that many virtuous habits and Christian graces must be formed and planted; nor should this be esteemed a hard duty. For if we chearfully take such pains for the small advantages of this short life; ought we to do little or nothing, for a blessed immortality? Does not such a prize deserve an industrious preparation, when the profits are infinite and the reward endless?

Another reason for our diligence and application in religious concerns, arises from the shortness and uncertainty of this present life. So precarious is our continuance here, that we cannot assure ourselves of one day or hour. How often is the thread of life broken by various accidents, and unavoidable misfortunes, besides the havock made by vicious courses? But supposing the natural period of man's life accomplished; what is it at best but a span; and how is that nothing shortened by continual avocations; by the demands of nature, and the cares of this world, which consume the greatest part of our time; leaving but a small portion for the concerns of the soul, and the improvements  
of

of religion. Indeed, in the midst of our temporal employments, our thoughts might often be turned towards objects of a higher nature. It is an easy transition, from the creatures to the creator; from the works of nature, to the power, wisdom and goodness of their great author: if we did not want will, we could seldom want opportunities for this. But we are apt to think ourselves entirely in our own power, and that virtue may at any time be easily purchased. This shews how little we are acquainted with the excellence of the one, and the impotency of the other. To purify and cleanse our souls from every pollution of sin and sense, so as to obtain the graces and accomplishments which the gospel requires; and to fit them for heaven and eternity, is not so easy as we are apt to imagine. Indeed, without a more than common care and attention, how can we think to be duly qualified for the society of angels, and saints made perfect; or to be made partakers of that glorious inheritance? But,

We are apt to deceive ourselves about the sufficiency of our preparation. We know in general, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord; that without renovation of mind and purity of heart, all our hopes are vain; and what we have done amiss, must be undone, and a real reformation effected; that good habits and virtuous dispositions must be fixed and cherished; and the love of God and goodness rooted in the soul. This we all know whenever we please to consider; and yet so weak or wilful are we, as to content ourselves with faint resolutions, feeble endeavours, and to build our hopes on the most uncertain foundation. But let us consider, that if we fall short of what is absolutely necessary to salvation, the consequence is utter ruin; whereas, should we exceed in any part, the consequence will be not only safe, but vastly beneficial to us. If then we have any regard to our

own welfare, we shall strive so to run the race of this short life, that we may obtain the prize of everlasting life.

It appears from the foregoing considerations, that we have all possible reason to act with our whole might, to exert our utmost endeavours, in the execution of this great concern; if we only consider it on the foot of self-interest. If relying on the assurances of reason and revelation, we firmly expect an immortal state hereafter, we may refer it even to the decision of self-love, what is fit to be done, and how we ought to proceed. Let us consider but for one moment, what eternity is, and how it may be enjoyed. And then let us doubt if we can, whether we ought not to be in earnest with our duty: or where our true interest lies, and our principal treasure, ought to be laid up. If to enjoy for ever the greatest happiness we are capable of, be not our chief and main concern; our faculties entirely delude us, words have no meaning, and things no reality. The enjoyments of this world, are in comparison, neither solid nor durable; for though they smile in prospect, they seldom satisfy in possession. If then we toil and take pains to acquire such precarious perishing things; how can we think any care too great, to secure a blessed immortality? And since so much depends on our success; our diligence, our perseverance, our utmost efforts, cannot but be well and wisely employed. To serve God, and discharge our duty as penuriously as we can, is being dangerously frugal; since a partial estimate may blast all our hopes, and ruin us for ever. In our temporal concerns, we strenuously exert ourselves; to obtain what at the best is small and uncertain. Whereas in the present case, the recompence is sure, and immensely great. We have divine security for it, that what we sow in this life, we shall reap ten thousand fold, in the  
next.

next. Such an object as this will justify the most ardent affection, and demand the highest pitch to which our desires can rise. When such treasures, such glories are in view, moderation is meer folly, and ambition true wisdom. To conclude; if we really mean ourselves good; and wish our own welfare; if we desire to promote our true interest in the best and most effectual manner; let us earnestly strive to obtain and fit ourselves for that state, where every thing will concur to compleat our condition, and crown our desires. That we may finally partake with joy unspeakable, of those streams of bliss, those rivers of pleasures, which flow for ever at God's right hand.

## Discourse CII. Abp. Tillotson.

The NATURE and INFLUENCE of the  
GOSPEL PROMISES.

2 Pet. i. 4.

Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature.

**T**HE chief and principal of those great and excellent promises which Christ hath made us in the gospel, are, the forgiveness of our sins, upon our faith and true repentance; the assistance of God's grace and holy spirit here, and eternal life hereafter. The scripture contains full and clear promises, that if we believe the gospel, forsake our sins, and amend our wicked lives, we shall be forgiven all that is past, thro' the merits of our blessed Saviour. The light of nature, considering the mercy and goodness of God, gave men good hopes, that upon their repentance God would forgive their sins, and turn away his wrath from them. But mankind being yet doubtful of this, they used expiatory sacrifices to appease the offended deity. The Jewish religion allowed of expiation, only from such transgressions as proceeded from ignorance and inadvertency, but not for sins of presumption. If men sinned wilfully, there was no sacrifice appointed by the law for such sins. But the grace of the gospel justifies from the greatest sins, upon our faith and repentance. For all who believe in Jesus, are

“ justified

“justified from all things, from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses.” There was no general promise of pardon, nor way of expiation under the law; perfect remission is clearly revealed to us only by the gospel.

Another great promise of the gospel is God’s grace and holy spirit to assist our obedience. “Our heavenly father will give his holy spirit to them that ask him.” The apostles and Christians of the first ages, had indeed an extraordinary power to publish the gospel, and give confirmation to it, which is not to be expected now the Christian religion is settled, and that these miraculous gifts are ceased. But yet the spirit of God doth still concur with the gospel on the minds of men, to excite and assist them to what is good. And tho’ this operation is very secret, and not in that sudden, sensible manner as in the first times of Christianity, and so as to account for the manner of it, yet the effects of it are very sensible and common, to influence Christians in all ages of the world. The assistance of God’s holy spirit is still necessary, to incline and enable us to that which is good; but not in that degree it was at first necessary: Because the prejudices against Christianity are not now so great, and many of those advantages which were wanting at first, are now supplied in an ordinary way. So that it is not reasonable to expect the same extraordinary operation on the minds of men now, which we read of in the beginning of Christianity. And as to the promise of eternal life, to reward our obedience, this the scripture speaks of, as the great promise of the gospel. “This is the promise which he hath promised, even eternal life.” The new covenant of the gospel is preferred before that of the law, because it is established on better promises. The particular, special promises of the law were of temporal good things; these were the great encourage-

ments

ments given to obedience under that imperfect dispensation. But now "godliness hath not only the promise of the life that now is, but of that which is to come." The gospel hath clearly revealed a happy state of immortality after this life, of which men had before but very obscure and doubtful apprehensions. "Our Saviour hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light thro' the gospel." Holy men had good hopes of it before; but they had no sure distinct apprehensions of it; no such full assurances, clear and express promises of it, as the gospel affords. Hence it appears, that the great promises of the gospel, are the free pardon and forgiveness of our sins, upon our faith and repentance; the help of God's grace and holy spirit to assist our obedience; and the promises of eternal life and happiness as the reward of it. These three are the most eminent promises of the gospel, or what the apostles call "exceeding great and precious promises, whereby we may be partakers of the divine nature."

And if we consider the condition mankind was in, when God was pleased to make such gracious declarations, we shall see great reason highly to estimate every one of these promises. Mankind was then extremely degenerated, all flesh had corrupted its ways; the whole world was guilty before God, and liable to the wrath and incensed justice of the Almighty. Nor could they recover themselves out of it by repentance and future obedience, would God have accepted thereof. But the promises of the gospel removes the difficulties and discouragements which mankind lay under. The gracious promises of pardon frees us from guilt, and secures us from the dreadful wrath of God; without which mankind would have been under the greatest doubts and discouragements. For when men are afraid their sins are greater than will be forgiven, they are

are apt to despair, which state is an effectual bar to repentance; a desperate condition, which makes men not to value what they do. And the promise of God's grace and holy spirit, to assist and enable us to do our duty, fully answers all the discouragements and objections, from our own weakness, and the power of temptation. We may do all things thro' Christ strengthening us; and tho' weak, we are yet strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. If God be for us, who, or what can stand against us? Tho' the devil is a powerful enemy, yet the holy spirit of God, who is always ready to help us, when we do not refuse his assistance, is more powerful than he. "Greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world." The spirit of God dwells in all who are willing to admit him, and is ever ready to assist those who comply with his blessed motions, and vigorously exert their own endeavours. And as to the promise of eternal life, that answers all the difficulties of our obedience, and prevents all worldly threats from having power to change our constancy to God and his truth. A wise man will contentedly suffer any thing, on terms of greater advantage. And what motive so powerful to encourage our constancy and obedience, as the promise of eternal happiness? Well therefore might the apostle call these exceeding great and valuable promises; since without them our redemption and recovery had been extremely difficult, if not absolutely impossible.

But then it ought to be observed, that these promises are only conditionally made. The promise of the grace and assistance of God's holy spirit, is on two conditions. First, that we earnestly beg it of God. This our Saviour expresses, by asking, seeking, and knocking, which signifies the importunity of our requests. Our heavenly father will give his holy spirit to them that thus ask. Secondly, that we improve

prove the grace which God affords. "To him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away, even that which he hath." That is, to him that useth the grace which God affords, more shall be given; but from him who makes no use of it, shall be taken away that which he hath. And as to pardon of sins, the scripture plainly suspends that, on the general condition of repentance and amendment of life. "Repent, that your sins may be forgiven you," and on the condition of our forgiving others: "If we forgive not men their trespasses, neither will our father forgive our trespasses." And as to the promise of eternal life; that is made on the condition of faith, repentance, and perseverance in well-doing. Our Saviour says, he that believes, or whoever effectually assents to the doctrine of Christ, and lives according to the truth of it, shall be saved. For Christ is the "author of eternal salvation, only to them that obey him." So that none shall be saved by Christ, but those that obey the gospel. "Without holiness none shall see the Lord." "To them who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, God will give eternal life; but to them that are contentious, and obey not the truth, (that is the gospel) but obey unrighteousness; indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, shall fall upon every soul of man that doth evil." So that the promises of the gospel are conditional, and we cannot be partakers of them, unless we perform those things which are required on our part; For it would be most absurd to imagine that God should grant us forgiveness of sins, and eternal life, let our behaviour be what it will.

As to the time when we may apply these promises to ourselves, that must be, when we are certain of having performed the conditions of these promises. When we so truly repent of our sins,

as to forsake them, and lead a new life; when we sincerely forgive those who have offended us, and have no animosity against them, or thought of revenge; then we have a right to the promise of pardon and forgiveness, and God will blot out our transgressions, and remember our iniquities no more. When we constantly and earnestly implore the assistance of God's holy spirit, and faithfully make use of that strength and assistance which God affords us: When we make it our constant and sincere endeavours to please God, to "walk in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless, to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world;" then, and not before, we may with comfort and joy apply to ourselves these exceeding great and precious promises of the gospel. This is a plain account of our confidence and good hopes in the promises of God; but to apply any promise to ourselves, before we have performed the condition required of us, is not faith, but fancy or presumption. Having thus considered the nature of the gospel promises, I will now shew what influence they ought to have on us, that by them we may be made partakers of the divine nature.

To be partakers of the divine nature, is in scripture signification, to be of a divine temper and disposition, to have our corrupt natures rectified and purged from all sinful lusts and passions, from all vicious and corrupt affections. So that we are made partakers of the divine nature, by cleansing ourselves from the lusts of the flesh, or in the apostles words, from the corruption that is in the world thro' lust; and by a diligent endeavour after all Christian graces and virtues. And that this is the proper influence and efficacy of the gospel promises, on the hearts and lives of men, the apostle fully declares; "Hav-

“ing therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us  
 “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and  
 “spirit.” From the lusts of the flesh and uncleanness, from all evil and corrupt affections of the mind; such as wrath, envy, malice, hatred, strife, revenge, cruelty, pride, and the like; perfecting holiness in the fear of God: continually aspiring after greater degrees of holiness, virtue, and goodness, which are the great perfections of the divine nature. By thus constantly and sincerely endeavouring to “cleanse ourselves from all impurity of flesh and spirit, and by  
 “practising all the virtues of a good life,” we shall by degrees raise and advance ourselves to a godlike temper and disposition; imitating in all our actions, the goodness, mercy, patience, truth, faithfulness, and all those other perfections of the divine nature, comprehended under the term holiness. To this state the gospel designs to raise us, and those exceeding great and precious promises, which I have mentioned, are greatly instrumental thereto, in the following instances.

By their internal efficacy and assistance, inclining and enabling us to do what is good. For God’s holy spirit is promised us, in consideration and commiseration of that impotent, weak, and depraved condition, into which mankind is sunk; to help us who are without strength, to recover ourselves from that miserable state, into which we are fallen by our own wilful transgression; “to quicken us who are  
 “dead in trespasses and sins; to raise us to a new  
 “spiritual life,” and to carry us thro’ all discouragements: To excite us to our duty, and enable us to perform such difficult parts of obedience, as are most contrary to our natural inclinations; to bear down the strength of sin and temptations; and to make us victorious in all our conflicts with the world, the flesh, and the devil, and all the powers of darkness: in a  
 word,

word, to be a principle within us, more mighty and powerful than the lusts and inclinations of our evil hearts; than the most obstinate and inveterate habits of sin and vice; than all the temptations and terrors of sense. So that if we will make use of the assistance which God affords us in the gospel, and become workers together with God, we need not despair of victory and success; for God will continually give us more grace, whereby the force and violence of our lusts will be abated, and we shall encrease from strength to strength. The holy spirit of God will open our hearts to receive the light of divine truth; will represent such arguments and considerations as are apt to persuade us to embrace and yield to it, by secret and gentle reprehensions; softning our hard hearts, and bending our stubborn wills to a compliance with the will of God and our duty. This the scripture calls our "regeneration and sanctification, turning us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." It will also lead and direct us in the ways of holiness and obedience; it will quicken our devotion, stir up holy desires and dispositions in our souls, support and comfort us in our afflictions and sufferings; and seal and confirm to us the blessed hopes of eternal life. Thus the spirit of God carries on the work of sanctification, and makes us partakers of a divine nature, by way of inward efficacy and assistance.

The promises of the gospel are also a powerful motive and argument to engage us to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God." For a full pardon of what is past is a mighty encouragement, a strong argument to persuade us to amend our lives, If God, whom we have so highly provoked, is not only willing and ready to forgive us, but to provide and purchase for us the means of our pardon by

the grievous sufferings of his dear Son, and freely to offer and earnestly invite us to be reconciled to him; the consideration of this ought in all reason and gratitude to melt us into sorrow and repentance, and a deep sense of the evil of our sins, and to inflame our hearts with a mighty love to God and our blessed redeemer, “who hath loved us and washed us from our sins by his own blood.” This should make us resolve never more to offend a God so merciful and gracious, so slow to punish, and so ready to forgive; it should effectually engage us to a dutiful, constant, and chearful obedience to all his commandments; it should make us infinitely afraid to sin any more, lest a worse thing come to us, and we relapse into an incurable state, more full of guilt and misery. And the promise of God’s grace and holy spirit, is likewise a very powerful argument and encouragement to holiness and goodness; engaging us to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, that so our souls may be a fit temple for him to dwell in; encouraging us hereto by the consideration that we have a guide so unerring to counsel and direct us; an assistant so powerful to strengthen us with might in the inner man, to stand by us in all conflicts with sin and Satan; and to make us more than conquerors over our spiritual enemies. For tho’ we are weak, our lusts strong, our enemies and temptations many, mighty and violent; yet we need not be disheartned, so long as God is with us, whose holy spirit is sufficient for us, against all the strength of sin and hell. Tho’ our duty is hard, and our strength small, yet we cannot fail of success, when the omnipotent grace of God is always ready to assist our sincere but weak endeavours. Lastly the promise of eternal life and happiness, if duly weighed and considered, is of mighty force to disengage us from the love and practice of sin, to  
encourage

encourage our obedience, “and patient continuance in well doing.” The assurance of enjoying unspeakable, endless happiness, and of escaping extreme and eternal misery, cannot fail of checking all temptations to sin, and of removing all difficulties and discouragements in the way of our duty.

And if heaven and hell will not weigh with, and make impression on us, it will be in vain to use other arguments. If the hopes of perfect comfort, joy, and felicity, eternal in duration, and vast beyond imagination; “such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man to conceive: Or if the dread of God’s terrible wrath, the vengeance of eternal fire, together with the unsupportable torments of a guilty conscience, the perpetual stings of bitter remorse and anguish, for the wilful folly of our wicked lives, and the horrible despair of ever getting from so miserable a state; if neither, or both of these considerations, will prevail on us, to cease to do evil, and to resolve to go good, so as to obtain the one and escape the other; there is no hope that any words, arguments and considerations will work upon us. He that is not to be tempted by such hopes, nor terrified by such fears, is proof against all the force of persuasion in the world. I shall conclude all with a few useful reflections. And,

If we expect the blessings and benefits of these exceeding great and precious promises of the gospel, we must be careful to perform the condition required of us. It is a great mistake, and of dangerous consequence to the souls of men, to suppose the gospel is all promises on God’s part; and that we have nothing to do but to believe them, and then rely on God for the performance of them. That the Christian religion is only a declaration of God’s good will to us, without any expectation of duty from

from us ; this is an error of a very pernicious nature. The three great promises of the gospel before mentioned, are expressly contained in our Saviour's first sermon on the mount. The promise of blessedness is there often repeated, tho' not absolutely made, but on certain conditions required on our parts ; as repentance, humility, righteousness, mercy, peaceableness, meekness, patience. Forgiveness of sins is also promised ; but then it is only to those who penitentially acknowledge and ask forgiveness for them, and are ready to grant that forgiveness to others, which they beg for themselves. The gift of God's holy spirit is likewise there promised ; but it is on condition of our earnest and importunate prayer to God. The gospel is full of precepts, enjoyning duty and obedience on our part, as well as promises of blessings on God's part. St. Paul in a few words declares upon what terms we may expect that salvation which the gospel offers. " The grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men ; teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously, and godly in this present world ; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

And from hence we also learn, that if the promises of the gospel do not make us partakers of the divine nature, it is because we are wanting to ourselves. God is always ready to do his part, if we fail not in ours. There is a divine power and efficacy which attends the gospel, to prepare the hearts of men to entertain it, unless they put a bar and obstacle thereto. If men will resist the motions of God's spirit, quench its light, and obstinately oppose the force of truth, God will withdraw his  
grace

grace from them. The intent of the gospel is to raise us to the perfection of all virtue and goodness : and in order to attain that end, its promises are wisely adapted to assist the infirmities and weakness of human nature ; “ to renew us after the image of “ God, in righteousness and true holiness ;” to destroy sin and vice, to allure us to goodness, to assist and encourage us in the practice thereof. But if we will not comply with God’s gracious design manifested in the gospel, and suffer these promises to have a due influence upon us ; we wilfully deprive ourselves of all the blessings and benefits of it ; “ we “ reject the counsel of God against ourselves, and “ receive the grace of God in vain ;” and by rejecting and despising his promises, we provoke him to execute his threatenings upon us.

Lastly, if the promises of the Christian religion, do in their own nature tend to make us like God, and to resemble the divine perfections ; by making us good, just, merciful, patient, and holy, in all manner of conversation ; if this is the proper tendency of the gospel and its promises, how should the consideration upbraid the degenerate state of the Christian world, which so abounds in all kind of wickedness and impiety ? So that we may say, as one did on reading the gospel ; “ either this is not the gospel which we read, and the Christian religion which we profess ; or, we are no Christians.” So far are we from having attained to that pitch of goodness and virtue, which the Christian religion recommends, that too many of us are degenerated into very beasts ; wallowing in abominable filthy lusts, indulging ourselves to that degree, in those diabolical passions of malice and hatred, strife and discord, revenge and cruelty, sedition and disturbance of the public peace ; as if the grace of God had never appeared to teach us the contrary. It therefore concerns all Christians, for the honour of  
their

their religion and the salvation of their souls, to demean themselves otherwise ; to depart from the vicious practices of this present evil world ; “ to have their conversation as becometh the gospel of Christ,” that if possible they may prevent the impending judgments of God, or at least “ save themselves from this untoward generation.”

F I N I S.







