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S E R M O N S

O N

Several Subjects.





SERMONS

ON

Several Subjects.

Preach'd at the

Presbyterian Church

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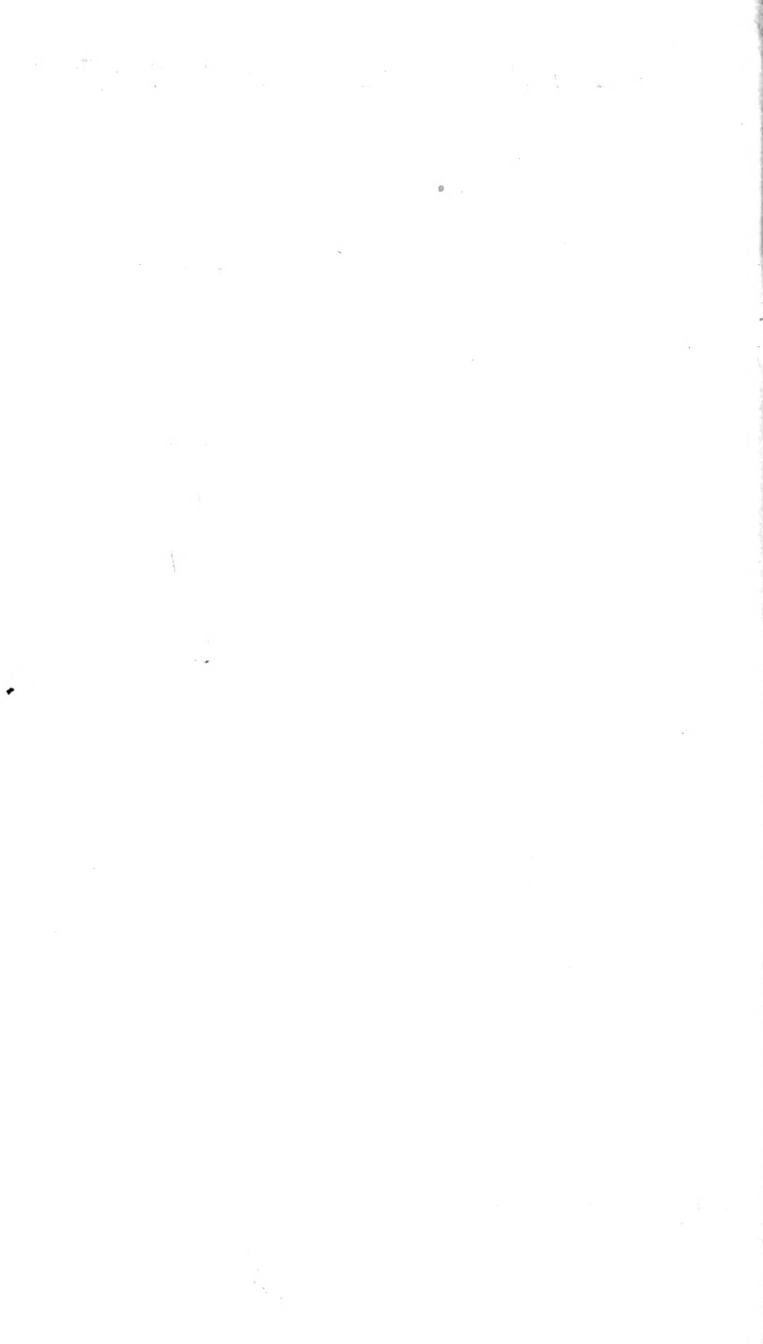
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S E R-



S E R M O N I.

The wonderful Propagation of the Gospel.

1 TIM. III. 16.

— *Believed on in the World.*

WHEN the Gospel of Christ was first publish'd in the World, it had innumerable prejudices to conquer, and the strongest opposition to break through.

A crucified Saviour was to the *Jews* a stumbling, and to the *Greeks* foolishness.

The People of *Israel* were intoxicated with the dream of earthly grandeur, and vainly expected that the promised Messiah would assume the ensigns of royalty and power, subdue all Nations by the force of his victorious Arms, and exalt them to the supreme Government of the World. When therefore our blessed Saviour appeared in the humble circumstances of poverty and disgrace, and they beheld (instead of a Conquering Prince) a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; they despised his person, rejected his Doctrine, accused him as an Impostor, and condemn'd him as a public Malefactor.

The *Gentiles* were profess'd Admirers of Wisdom, and distasted every thing that was not recommended with the beauties of Wit, and adorned with the flowers
of

of Rhetoric: the Gospel they therefore despis'd as a simple and ill-contriv'd fable, destitute of Art and Eloquence, and treated its professors with scorn and contempt. But notwithstanding the unhappy prejudices of the *Jewish* Doctors, and the insolent Pride of the *Gentile* Philosophers, the Gospel was attended with surprising success, and Multitudes of all Orders and Degrees flock'd to the standard of Christ. This is plac'd by St. *Paul*, in our Text, among the Mysteries of Godliness. *Great is the Mystery, &c.*

In speaking unto these Words (by Divine Assistance) I shall

First, *Evidence the truth of the Fact*, and show that Christ was believed on in the World.

Secondly, I shall consider this as a *Mystery of Godliness*, beyond the power of second Causes, and to be ascribed to the supernatural influences of the Spirit of God.

First. I am to *evidence the Fact* mention'd by the Apostle, and shew that Christ was *believed on in the World*.

No sooner was the Gospel publish'd by the first Ministers of his Kingdom, but it was attended with astonishing success, and made a triumphant Progress through the Earth.

When the Great Author of our Religion ascended into Heaven, the number of his Disciples was inconsiderable: But no sooner was the Spirit poured out upon the Apostles, but there was immediately a mighty Accession made to the Church, *and three thousand were added unto it in one Day**. *The Word of God increased, and the Number of the Disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem; and a great Company of the Priests were obedient*

obedient unto the Faith †. From thence with incredible swiftness it pass'd through all *Judea, Samaria, &c.* and by degrees penetrated to the more distant parts of the World; so that within thirty Years after the Death of Christ, and before the great and final destruction of *Jerusalem*, it was not only diffused throughout the whole *Roman* Empire, the Seat of Learning and Politeness, but the dark corners of the Earth were inlightned with the Doctrine of Salvation, and the most barbarous Nations had the Gospel of the Kingdom convey'd unto them: and wherever it came, it flourish'd exceedingly; multitudes of all Ages and Sexes embrac'd the faith of Christ. So quick and surprizing a progress it made in the World, that in a few Years we find the Christian Apologists boasting of their mighty numbers, and representing to the pagan Emperors, "that their Cities and Provinces, " their Camps and their Courts, yea the Senate-house " and Palace, were filled with the despised Sect of " Christians, and that it would be impossible to destroy " them without exhausting the strength of the Empire, " and leaving all places in a state of dismal solitude " and silence *.

And tho' at first the Disciples of Jesus were destitute of worldly wisdom and learning, without power and policy, of an humble and inferior character: yet in a few Years Men of uncommon Sagacity and Learning, of superiour Genius and Figure, laid aside their ancient prejudices and chearfully embrac'd a despised Gospel. Thus the Word of God went on conquering and to conquer, until at last the mighty Generals of the Earth were subdued by its victorious power, and resign'd their lawrels at the foot of the Cross. The Sovereign Princes of the Roman Empire were perswaded to submit to the Obedience of Faith, and zealously to propagate that Faith which before

B

they

they had inhumanly persecuted. Thus was that Prophecy of Isaiah accomplish'd, *In the last days the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it and be saved**. But the swift progress of the Gospel being a Fact so fully known, and so universally acknowledged, I need not enlarge any further in the proof of it.

Secondly. I am to shew, That this is a *Mystery*, beyond the power of second Causes, and to be ascribed to the supernatural influences of the Spirit of God. And this will appear, if we consider,

1. *The astonishing Change it produced in the Lives and Manners of its Professors.* They were at once transformed into new Men and became obedient to the Faith, not in word but in deed; they renounc'd their ancient Idolatries and became chearful Victims to the Cross of Christ. When they chang'd their Profession they reform'd their manners, and from the depths of iniquity were recovered to the unfeign'd practice of Piety. The proud Masters of Philosophy forsook their beloved Sentiments and submitted to the dispensation of Grace, the sensual and voluptuous were perswaded to mortify the Flesh, and renounc'd the forbidden Pleasures of Sin, the ambitious despis'd their earthly honours, and receiv'd the Crown of Martyrdom as their highest Glory, the covetous Miser became beneficent and charitable, and consecrated his Wealth to the service of the Saints; Persecutors were disarm'd of their fury and grew ambitious of appearing among the Martyrs of Jesus; the fiercest Natures were subdued into Meekness, and insulting tyrants became patrons of oppress'd Innocence and Vertue.

This mighty change was happily exemplified in the *Corinthian Converts*, who were practiced in the vilest

* *Isai.* 2, 2.

vilest iniquities, but after their receiving the Gospel were eminent for their temperance and sobriety, *they were washed, sanctified, and justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God* *.

Yea so exemplary were the lives of Christians in these first and purest Ages of the Church that their very enemies represent them as “a devout, innocent and charitable sort of men”, and the ancient defenders of the faith challenge their adversaries to produce one of their Number “that was condemn’d as a thief or a murderer, or was guilty of any gross enormities for which the pagan world was so infamous”. Now certainly nothing but a divine power could produce such a wonderful Change in the lives and manners of men; it is only the almighty Spirit of grace, that can subdue the perverseness of human Nature, restrain the tumultuous passions of mankind, and transform Monsters of Vice and Impiety into patterns of Sobriety and Vertue.

2. Let us consider *the Meanness and Simplicity of the Instruments, that were employed in this Blessed Work*. A Stranger to the sacred History will perhaps imagine that the Gospel was propagated at first by Men of superior Genius, intimately acquainted with the secrets of human Learning, well vers’d in the Art of disputing, and assisted by the Charms of Perswasion and Eloquence; and had this been the case, the success of the Gospel had not been so wonderful, nor the divine power so clearly display’d: therefore *God chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, the weak things of the world to confound the mighty, that no flesh should glory in his presence* †. The Apostles were Men of contemptible figure, inferior extract, and of plain Understanding; they were not polish’d by Education, nor improv’d by study, but brought up to the meanest employments; they had neither Art to insinuate them-

* 1 Cor. 6. 10, 11.

† 1 Cor. 1. 27, 29.

selves into the affections of their hearers, nor power to compel them to embrace their doctrines; they were not supported by authority, nor clothed with pomp and splendor to awe the minds of men into subjection and reverence; but they appear'd with the utmost plainness and simplicity, and address'd their hearers with humility and meekness. These were the first Heralds of the Everlasting Gospel, and by these (in themselves contemptible Instruments) it pleas'd God to humble the Pride of man, and subdue the world to the Cross of Christ. This then declares the divine power that attended the Publication of the Gospel: *we have this treasure in earthen Vessels, that the excellency of the Power may be of God and not of us**. And this divine Power will further appear, if we consider

3. *The manner in which the Gospel was propagated in the world.* The Instruments employed were not only mean and contemptible, but the method they took to accomplish their design was contrary to carnal Policy, and most unlikely to prevail. Impostors have always endeavoured to propagate their doctrines by force, or insinuate them into the minds of men by policy and contrivance.

Thus the Prophet of Arabia introduc'd his religion by the Sword, and by his victorious Arms oblig'd the Nations to receive the Alcoran. The Papal Empire was at first establish'd by force, and has been supported ever since by continual Stratagem.

But the Apostles of Christ abhor'd all methods of deceit, nor did they propagate their doctrines by force and sword; they were not attended with conquering Armies to prepare the way for their reception, nor did they make use of torture and violence to support and enlarge their conquests. *The Weapons of their Warfare were not carnal but spiritual*: They address their hearers

* 2 Cor. 4. 7.

hearers *not with the enticing words of man's wisdom* *, with studied Ornaments of Speech or engaging methods of persuasion, but in the most plain and artless manner declared unto them the doctrine and miracles, the death and resurrection of Christ; they proclaimed him whom the Jews had slew and hanged upon a tree, the Saviour of the World, and the Prince of the Kings of the Earth. They promised an Immortality of Happiness and Glory to those that believ'd in his Name and obey'd his Commandments: but on the contrary they threatned destruction and misery to such as should impenitently despise and reject him. And yet by these contemptible methods, in the midst of innumerable difficulties, they gain'd profelytes to the faith and baffled the Wisdom and Eloquence, the power and policy of the world: this certainly exceeds the power of man and evidences that the almighty influences of the Spirit attended them.

4. *The Doctrines inculcated in the Gospel make it still more mysterious*, that Christ should be believed on in the world. Had the doctrine of Christ been suited to the Pride of human Nature and calculated to flatter Men in their Vices and Pleasures, we might justly have expected that it would be suddenly and universally embrac'd: for men are fond of gratifying their sensual inclinations, they easily receive a doctrine which indulges their Pride and Passions, and affords them an unlimited enjoyment of their darling Pleasures.

By this means the religion of Mahomet became palatable to a vicious World, and quickly over-spread the Nations of the East; for it encouraged an unbounded indulgence of men's appetites and lusts upon Earth, and promised an eternal paradise of brutish and sensual enjoyments in a future world.— But the Gospel of Christ had nothing of this nature to recommend it to the public reception; the doctrines it taught

were

* 2 Cor. 10. 4.

were sublime and mysterious, contrary to the Pride and passions of men; the duties it inculcated were harsh and ungrateful, against the grain of our corrupt and defiled Natures; it obliged its professors *to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world**. It required them to renounce their darling iniquities and part with their most desirable enjoyments when they became inconsistent with a good Conscience. These were hard sayings indeed and difficult to be practised by a degenerate Age: and yet notwithstanding these difficulties and disadvantages it prevailed exceedingly in the World, and triumph'd over the vices and follies of men. And this is still more wonderful, if we consider

5. *The unhappy Prejudices, that prevailed against the Gospel-dispensation.* Prejudice is always an enemy to truth, and fixes the mind in an inveterate opposition against it, and no prejudice is so strong as that which is received from the birth and founded in Education, especially when it is strengthened by Authority and recommended by the venerable claim of Antiquity. It is next to impossible to erase the early impressions that men receive in their tender Age, and persuade them to renounce that Religion, which from their infancy they have been taught to revere and obey. And this was a mighty difficulty which the Gospel had to encounter at its first appearance. Both Jews and Gentiles were filled with the strongest prejudices against it.

The *Jews*, the peculiar People of God, had the highest reverence for the Law of Moses, which was unquestionably of divine Authority, and deliver'd unto them from Heaven, with the utmost pomp and solemnity. They had also a venerable regard for the traditions of the Elders which they believed to be sacred

* *Tit.* 2. 12.

facred and binding upon the Conscience. But above all their minds were filled with a flattering expectation of earthly dignities, and delighted with a groundless hope that their Messiah would be a temporal Prince and appear with a prosperous and conquering Army; this filled them with an invincible aversion to our humble Redeemer, and they despised the afflicted State in which he appear'd.

And the prejudices of the *Gentiles* were as strong as those of the *Jews*; they were addicted to the most execrable Idolatries and sunk into the lowest State of Ignorance and superstition; the Prince of darkness reign'd in their Hearts without controul, and for many Ages maintain'd an undisturb'd dominion over them; the worship of their Idols was establish'd by immemorial prescription, and the method of it was stately and magnificent, their Priests were engaged by Interest to maintain their ancient Customs, and perswaded the multitude that their costly Sacrifices and superstitious modes of worship appeas'd the Anger of the Gods and procur'd continual peace and prosperity.

The Philosophers were puffed up with a vain conceit of their knowledge, and were too proud to submit to the humbling discoveries of the Gospel, they despised the plainness and simplicity of its teachers, and distasted the strictness and purity of its precepts. The Doctrine of the Cross they esteem'd a ridiculous Story, and the Resurrection from the dead the grossest absurdity; thus St. Paul was stiled a babbler by the Wits of Athens, and look'd upon as a setter forth of strange Gods, because he preach'd unio them *Jesus and the Resurrection**: and yet the Doctrine of Christ bore up against all opposition, and triumphantly prevailed in spite of all partiality and prejudice.

6. *These prejudices were increased by the bitter persecutions to which Christianity was exposed.* The Pri-
 mitive

* *Act: 17. 18.*

mitive believers had not only the Corruptions of humane Nature to conquer, the prepossessions of Education to surmount, but the Rage and Malice of Earth and Hell to contend with. The Dominion of Satan was disturb'd by the preaching of the Gospel, and the prince of darkness was unwilling to lose so many subjects of his Empire, he therefore engag'd the Powers of the World strongly to combine against it. *The Kings of the Earth and the Rulers took counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed**. The High Priests and Governors among the Jews used their utmost endeavours to stifle Christianity in the birth, and suppress it in its infancy. And when it began to increase in the World, the whole face of the Roman Empire the Mistress of the Earth was engag'd against it, and mighty persecutions were continually rais'd to extirpate and destroy it.

How many forsook their most valuable enjoyments and were banish'd into the most desolate Corners of the Earth for the testimony of Jesus? how many submitted to the most barbarous Cruelties rather than make shipwreck of faith and a good Conscience, and suffer'd the most affrighting Deaths for the honour of our great Redeemer. They were expos'd to hunger, thirst and nakedness, they were destroy'd by fire and sword, they were condemned to be devoured by Beasts and forc'd to expire in the midst of torments. In fine, the King of terrors was presented to their view in its most formidable appearance, to deter them from the profession of the Gospel, or persuade them to renounce and forsake it.

And yet these ancient Heroes of the Christian Church, this noble Army of Martyrs, persisted in their Faith in the midst of their bitterest sufferings, they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and patiently submitted to the most exquisite miseries, they gloried

* *Psal.* 2, 2.

gloried in the Cross in the presence of their enraged persecutors, and rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for the Name of Christ; they encountred Death not only with patience and resignation, but embrac'd it with extacy and triumph; they hugg'd their Chains as the trophies of their honour, and receiv'd their Executioners as the Messengers of Heaven, to convey them to the happy mansions of Paradise. They enter'd into the fire with Joy, and breath'd out their Souls in chearful Hallelujahs.

Nor was this peculiar to men of undaunted Courage and manly Resolution, but the Number of Confessors was vast, and consisted of Persons of all Ages and Sexes, of all Orders and Conditions. The hoary Heads despis'd the Weakness of their declining Years, and joyfully devoted the remainder of their days to the defence of the truth. Blooming Youths forgot the tenderness of their Constitutions, and with undaunted Courage entered the fiery trial, and even delicate Virgins renounc'd the softness of their Sex, and despised Death, tho' attended with the most ghastly terrors.

Now what but a divine Power could preserve the Church in the midst of the fiery furnace? Had this Work or Counsel been of men, it must certainly have been overthrown, when all the Powers of Earth were united to oppose it: but under all the discouragements that the Policy of men could invent, or the Malice of tyrants inflict, the Gospel flourish'd, mighty additions were made to the Church, all attempts to suppress it prov'd successful methods to advance its Glory. The Contradiction of Sinners redounded to the Credit of its Disciples. The Blood of the Martyrs was the seed of the Church, and like the showers of Heaven upon the thirsty Earth, made it more fruitful and flourishing. This must be acknowledged the work of the Lord, and it should be marvellous in our Eyes. It certainly deserves a place among the Myste-

ries of Godliness, that Christ was believed on in the World.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. *Let us all be persuaded to believe the Truth and Divinity of the Gospel, which was so eminently confirm'd from Heaven, and so miraculously prevailed in the world.* The Great Author of our Religion evidenc'd his Mission by the most unquestionable Authority; the Father testified his approbation from Heaven, and in a Voice of thunder, declar'd him his beloved Son in whom he was well pleased.— The Miracles which he wrought in the presence of Multitudes declar'd him to be the Son of God, and the Saviour of the World.— The wonderful descent of the holy Ghost upon the Apostles, and the astonishing Gift of tongues with which they were at once inspired, was a visible confirmation of his Doctrine, and a standing testimony that the Gospel was not a cunningly devised fable, but of divine and heavenly extract.

But were all these forgotten, the incredible success that attended it at its first promulgation against all humane probabilities, would be a sufficient demonstration that it was of God and not of Man.— Is it possible to conceive, so unacceptable a Scheme could be imposed upon the world by men destitute of Education and Learning, without art and address; and universally prevail in spite of prepossession and prejudice, in opposition to perpetual force and violence, without any advantages to recommend it, but the promise of an unseen and future Reward? What but a standing Miracle could propagate a Doctrine so severe and ungrateful, so repugnant to the Appetites and Passions of humane Nature, so displeasing to flesh and blood, so contrary to the Wisdom of the World; a Doctrine that was ridiculed by the great Philosophers of the Age, and persecuted by the Princes of the Earth? Must not the happy Entertainment it met with, be principally ascrib'd to the demonstration of the Spirit
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and power that accompany'd it?—What but an almighty Arm could destroy the Kingdom of Satan, and banish the Prince of darkness from his ancient dominions?—Who but the Spirit of Grace could subdue the obstinacy of rebellious Sinners, and set up the Throne of Christ in the Hearts of Men?—What but a divine power could support the primitive Christians under their numberless hardships, and influence the most soft and delicate Natures to despise the Cruelty of Tyrants, and bravely encounter the most tormenting Deaths? This must be own'd to have been the Work of God, and a remarkable evidence of the divine Authority of the Gospel.

2. *How vast is the Guilt, how awful the danger of those, who reject the Doctrine of Christ!* The Jews persecuted Christ in his State of suffering and weakness, and the Gentiles oppos'd the Progress of the Gospel through the strength and prejudice of Education; but the Infidels of the present Age insult him upon his Throne, and cast contempt upon him, to whom all power in Heaven and Earth is committed; and that after the clearest discoveries of his divine Authority, and the fullest evidencé of the truth of his Mission. Their Sin therefore is of a deeper Dye than the Iniquities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and their punishment will be more severe than the destruction of ignorant Heathens. Had the Princes of this World been acquainted with the dignity of his Person and the excellence of his Doctrine, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory; this therefore was an abatement of their Guilt, and render'd them capable of Pardon: but now the Sun of Righteousness hath appear'd in such visible Glory, chased away the darkness of Heathenism, and establish'd his Kingdom upon the Ruins of Superstition and Idolatry, it is unaccountable Obstinacy not to acknowledge his Authority, and submit to his just and righteous Government. Such have no Cloak for their Sin, no excuse for their Infidelity;

but may justly expect that the Saviour whom they despise, will clothe himself with Vengeance as with a Garment, and execute an exemplary punishment on his Enemies, in proportion to the degrees of Light they have resisted, and the invaluable Mercies they have abused.

3. *The Sanctity of manners, so remarkable in the first Days of the Gospel, severely reproveth the awful degeneracy of the present Age.* The Primitive Disciples of Christ were shining examples of Virtue, they cast a Glory upon their Profession, and recommended it with advantage to the World. Their Piety was fervent without Superstition and Idolatry, their Charity diffusive without hypocrisy and reserve; they practised an ascetic Virtue in the midst of alluring temptations, and manifested a generous contempt of the World, when surrounded with its most agreeable enjoyments;— but where is that ancient Piety and Virtue, by which the primitive Christians were so justly distinguish'd?— Where that Purity of faith and sanctity of manners, by which they shone as Lights in the World, and inspired their very persecutors with awe and reverence? Alas! in this degenerate Age, Religion is wounded in the House of its Friends, the Professors of the Gospel are oftentimes Enemies to the Cross of Christ, and the venerable Name by which we are called, is insulted and blasphemed by reason of the scandalous miscarriages of those who enroll their Names among the number of his followers: this is indeed a melancholy reflection, and should inspire us with a pious Indignation against the Vices and Impieties of the Age, and inkindle in our Breasts a fervent Zeal to advance the honour of that holy Religion we profess.

4. *Let us sincerely endeavour after a saving acquaintance with this Mystery of Godliness.* Our blessed Saviour is propos'd unto us in the Gospel as the proper Object of our Faith, and recommended to our Esteem
and

and Regard by the most powerful and persuasive Arguments. This is a faithful Saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ is come into the World to save Sinners; our Necessity loudly demands his assistance, and his gracious Invitations should encourage us to fly to him as our Saviour. It is not enough that we yield a naked assent unto the Gospel, but our Faith must purify the Heart, and produce the works of sincere Obedience, if we would be entitled to the favour of Christ, and own'd as his faithful Servants; if we believe his Doctrines, we must regulate our Lives by his excellent Precepts, and imitate his perfect and shining Example: for a Christian in Name and profession only, having a form of Godliness but denying the Power of it, is one of the worst of Infidels, and will be disowned by Christ in the great Day, and herded among the number of his Enemies.

To Conclude, therefore let us now be persuaded to accept of Christ as our Saviour, and adore him as our Lord and Master. Let us be imitators of their Faith, Patience and Holiness, who through Grace inherit the Promises. Let us earnestly long and pray for that happy time, when *all the Enemies of Christ shall be subdued under his Feet*; when that promise to the Son of God shall receive its fullest accomplishment, *I will give thee the Heathen for thine Inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the Earth for thy possession*; when the *Kingdoms of this World* shall in a more illustrious manner become the *Kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ*. To whom be Glory and Dominion for ever. AMEN.



S E R M O N II.

The certainty of a future Judgment.

H E B. VI. 2.

— *And of eternal Judgment.*

IT is the distinguishing privilege of Man, the lord of this lower world, that he was made a reasonable and accountable creature, and design'd for a future State of immortality; the noble powers with which he is endowed, and the vast improvements he is capable of, were not intended to be confined to this dark and imperfect Scene of action: Death that destroys our earthly frame, and puts an End to our worldly business and enjoyments, does not put a final period to our being, but translates us into a future state: when we pass off the stage of time, we enter upon an unalterable eternity; for *after death comes the Judgment* *.

This is an important Article of the christian faith, frequently inculcated in the sacred Oracles, and almost universally received in the world. It is mentioned in our text as one of the *first principles* of the doctrine of Christ, and the *foundation* of practical Religion. It is therefore of the highest consequence, to fix in our minds

* Heb. 9 27.

minds an unshaken persuasion of this awful truth, that we may feel its happy influence, and be excited to prepare for the coming of our Lord. To this end it is my design from the words now read,

First, To consider the *Evidences* of a future Judgment.

Secondly, To make some *Improvement* of this Important Doctrine.

First. I am to consider the *Evidences of a future Judgment*. And here I shall observe,

I. *The voice of conscience bears testimony unto it.* There is implanted in the breast of every man a conscience, on which is engraven with a pen of iron and the point of a diamond, the necessary and immutable distinction between virtue and vice, between good and evil:— hence arises that happy serenity of mind, that secret joy and satisfaction that attends the practice of virtue, and those distressing fears and gloomy suspicions, which are the melancholy companions of vice and impiety: So that the good man has an inward support and comfort, even when he meets with nothing but frowns and discouragements from without, and is often filled with joyful expectations of a reward in the midst of worldly darkness and difficulty; on the other hand the wicked are haunted with perpetual terrors in the most prosperous circumstances of life, and terrified with the apprehensions of future vengeance, tho' their crimes are concealed from the world, and committed in the darkest privacy. At the approach of death, when all hopes and fears are at end with respect to this life, then these apprehensions are the most lively and vigorous: in that melancholy hour the wicked are in a more especial manner stung with remorse for their iniquities,— reflect with horror upon their past lives, and tremble at the apprehension of impending

vengeance; whereas the righteous are oftentimes supported with the most sprightly hopes, and amidst the agonies and convulsions of nature, are revived with the joyful prospect of immortality and glory.

Nor are these impressions of futurity peculiar to men of narrow minds, of gloomy and suspicious tempers, but men of all orders and degrees, of all ages and conditions have felt the force of them. Conscience exercises its power without respect of persons, the greatest monarchs are equally liable to its reproaches with the meanest of their subjects;—insulting tyrants have trembled at the remembrance of their guilt, tho' plac'd above the reach of any human tribunal, and surrounded with a servile train of flatterers and dependants. Conscience is neither aw'd by greatness, nor brib'd by riches, nor charm'd into silence by gaities and pleasure: it breaks through the strongest guards, insinuates into the palaces of the mighty, and is not afraid to say *to a King, Thou art wicked, and to Princes, Ye are ungodly*. It sets before them a black catalogue of their crimes, cites them before the inlightned tribunal of heaven, and fills them with fearful expectations of a judgment to come.

The Sinner may indeed silence the voice of conscience for a time, and suppress these uneasy impressions while he is amused with company and engaged in business or diversion, yet they are hardly ever quite effac'd and obliterated; but when the wicked are retir'd from the vanities of the world, when any accident intervenes, that puts a stop to the gaiety of their thoughts, and disposes them to seriousness and reflection, the mind awakes out of its stupidity, and is harassed with continual Images of horror. Now to what shall we ascribe these awful apprehensions of futurity, that so universally possess the breasts of men, and attend us to the last period of Life? Must we not suppose that they are impressions stamp'd upon our nature by the wise Author of our beings, and design'd

sign'd to warn us of a future judgment? and consequently that these Joys of the righteous are the dawns of immortality and the earnest of eternal happiness, and that the terrors of the wicked are the beginning of Sorrows, and the first fruits of endless and intolerable misery.

2. *The Perfections of God, the supreme Governor of the world, seem to require a future judgment.* The first notion we entertain of God is, that he is infinitely perfect in all his attributes; and whatever implies the least imperfection, strikes at the very existence of the Deity, and banishes him out of the world.

The admirable beauty that appears on the face of Nature, the wise disposition of its various parts, and their mutual subserviency to the good of the whole, are standing evidences that this world was made at first by a wise and powerful Being, and is continually preserved and governed by his gracious providence: Nor can it be supposed that infinite Wisdom should be employ'd in ordering the inferior creation with such surprising harmony and exactness, and cast off the care of man, his favourite creature, and the most noble part of his workmanship.

Now if God is so infinitely perfect in himself, and human affairs are subject to his wise and universal providence, we may justly conclude, that as he loves righteousness and hateth iniquity, so he will encourage the one and discountenance the other, in a way agreeable to the undoubted perfections of his nature, and consequently will make a visible distinction between the generation of his faithful Servants, and the company of his implacable enemies.—The Purity of the divine Nature, and the justice of his Government assures us, that he will not condemn the innocent, nor always suffer the guilty to escape with impunity; this would be an unanswerable reflection upon an earthly Prince, and soon bring his Government into universal confusion and contempt, and therefore must not be

attributed to the supreme Governour of the world, who is wiser than the Kings of the earth.—The only question then is, Whether in the present dispensations of providence, there is this visible difference made between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serves God, and him that serveth him not?—Is virtue always rewarded in this world, and vice remarkably punish'd?—This cannot be pretended, the contrary is evident to the most careless observer.

We daily behold a great deal of darkness and difficulty appearing upon the face of providence, and good and evil seem to be indifferently dispensed to the righteous and to the wicked. *There is one event to the just and to the unjust, to him that sweareth, and to him that feareth an oath**, without any frequent interposition to vindicate the cause of innocence, and punish the violence of the oppressor. The vertuous man is not secured from the common trials and afflictions of life, but oftentimes stands peculiarly exposed to the blasts of adversity; his strength and beauty is consumed by wasting diseases, his estate devoured by oppression and injustice, and his reputation sullied by the breath of envy and malice.—While the wicked are triumphing in prosperity, † *Neither are they plagued like other men; they live, they become old, they are mighty in power, their seed is establish'd in their sight, and their offspring before their eyes; their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them; they spend their days in wealth, and in a moment (without any remarkable judgment) they go down to the grave* ‖.—Thus we see a just man to whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked, and a wicked man to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous** :—It is no uncommon sight, to behold men of distinguish'd vice advanc'd to places of dignity and power, and enjoy the largest share of wealth and esteem,—while men of

* *Eccl.* 9. 2. † *Psal.* 73. 5. ‖ *Job.* 21. 7. ** *Eccl.* 8. 14.

of unblemish'd vertue are treated as the off-scouring of all things, and abandoned to poverty and contempt. Persecuted innocence stands trembling at the barr, while wickedness is exalted to the throne. The most eminent Saints are clothed in rags, and destitute of the conveniencies of Life, while the brutish epicure is clothed in purple and scarlet, and fares sumptuously every day.— Nay, the wicked often attain to their greatness and power, by the most unjust and disgraceful methods; they ascend to the pinnacle of honour upon the ruins of their oppressed neighbours; when at the same time the righteous, for their steady adherence to the Laws of God, and zeal and fidelity in his service, are persecuted in their names, robb'd of their estates, and exposed to the loss of all the valuable enjoyments of life.— Thus the illustrious Saints of old, *of whom the earth was not worthy*, were persecuted and abused, *they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins*, they inhabited the *dens and caverns of the earth*, *they were destitute, afflicted and tormented**, while their guilty persecutors were honoured with the public esteem, and enjoy'd all the felicities that earth could afford them.— Now how shall we reconcile these events, with the wisdom and justice of divine Providence, if we confine our thoughts to the present world, and do not look forward to a future judgment?— Will the sovereign Ruler of the universe make no just distinction between those who insolently defy his power and prophanely despise his authority, and those who stedfastly obey his laws, and sacrifice their dearest enjoyments in obedience to his commands?— Shall persecuted vertue be always hiss'd off the stage with disgrace, and be buried in eternal silence and oblivion?— Shall the triumphing of the wicked endure for ever, and the ungodly always possess the fruits of their prosperous villanies?— Where would

* Heb. 11. 37, 38.

be the goodness of the divine nature, if there were no reward for those that diligently seek him? Where the justice of his government, if impenitent transgressors pass for ever unpunish'd?— And since this is frequently the case in this world, we may with the highest assurance expect and believe another, when God will publickly reward the righteous, and signally punish the workers of iniquity. This world is a state of trial, and this is the day of God's patience and forbearance; the next will be a time of retribution and vengeance: when the Mysteries of divine providence shall be unriddled, the darkness and difficulties that have attended his dispensations shall be removed, and the whole administration of his government shall appear surprisngly beautiful and regular.

Tho' for a time he may seem to wink at the sins of men, and suffer them to pass unpunish'd: Tho' he may permit his servants to be abused and insulted, for the trial of their faith, and the brightning of their virtues: yet *the triumphing of the wicked is but short, and the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment.* The God of justice will shortly appear in the defence of his persecuted children, and evidence to the whole intelligent world, that he loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity. Tho' clouds and darkness at present encompass the throne of his Justice, and our shallow capacities are not able to search into the reasons of his conduct; yet we may be assured, that he will shortly vindicate the honour of his despised laws, and display the wisdom and equity of his Government. *He will bring forth his righteousness as the light, and his judgment as the noon-day.* Every eye shall see, and every tongue shall confess, *that verily there is a reward for the righteous, there is a God that judgeth in the earth.* I proceed to say,

3. *The sacred Scriptures expressly reveal a future Judgment.* The light of nature makes it probable, that God who made the world by his power, and governs

governs it by his providence, will also judge it hereafter; but the light of the Gospel gives us the most convincing evidence of this important truth, and assures us, that the day is appointed, and the time is prefix'd in the unalterable decrees of heaven. In all ages of the Church mankind have been warned of this awful day. Before the destruction of the earth by the flood, *Enoch the seventh from Adam prophecied of a Judgment to come, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his Saints to execute judgment upon all**. Solomon under the law inculcates the same doctrine, and assures us, that *God will bring every work into Judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil †*. Our Lord himself informs us, that *the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels, and then shall he reward every man according to his work ‖*. This doctrine St. Paul preach'd to the Athenians. *The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent, because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance to all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead §*. St. Peter speaks of this day in the most solemn and affecting language. *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up ***. Finally, Our Saviour shuts up the Canon of the New Testament with an express promise of his coming. *Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be ‡*.

Thus we have not only the testimony of conscience, the infinite perfections of God, and the goodness and justice

* Jude 14, 15. † Eccl. 12. 14. ‖ Matth. 16. 27. § Act. 17. 31. ** 2 Pet. 3. 10. ‡ Rev. 22. 12 and 20.

justice of his Government, to assure us of this great truth; but we have the express declarations of his will, which gives us the highest and most satisfactory evidence, and by which all the other arguments that support it are strengthened and confirm'd; so that we are as certain that there will be a future judgment, as if we saw the heavens opening, and the almighty Judge descending, the tribunal erected, and the dead small and great standing before it. I pass therefore,

Secondly, To make some *Improvement* of this awful doctrine. And here,

1. *This manifests the justice of divine Providence, and answers the objections that are so frequently brought against it.* When we see the tabernacles of robbers prosper, and the prophane and ungodly flourish in ease and prosperity; when the vilest men are exalted to the height of honour, and possess the largest affluence of worldly enjoyments, while the children of God are bow'd down with an heavy weight of cares, and loaded with contempt and disgrace:— When impenitent transgressors depart out of the world in peace, and *the wicked have no bands in their death*; while the righteous are persecuted to their graves with reproach, and take farewell of the world in darkness and distress;— Men are apt to draw the most dark and uncomfortable conclusions, and to imagine that either there is no God, or that human affairs are not under his wise and righteous administration.— Yea, this has oftentimes been a stumbling-block to the most eminent Saints, and caused their faith to stagger and fail, *their feet have almost slipp'd*, when they beheld the uninterrupted prosperity of the wicked, and the distressing calamities of the righteous. They have been ready to pour out that melancholy complaint of the Psalmist, * *Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and wash'd*

wash'd my hands in innocence: and to join in that pathetic expostulation of the Prophet, *Wherefore do the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously**?—And indeed these would be inextricable difficulties in the dispensations of providence, that it would be impossible to account for, if this were the only life of man, and there were none else to succeed it.

But the doctrine of an eternal Judgment scatters the clouds that encompass the paths of divine Providence, clears up the mysteries that attend his Government; and shews the justice and equity, the beauty and regularity of his proceedings. For this assures us, that every secret iniquity shall be punish'd with an holy severity, and every vertuous action shall meet with a just and suitable recompence. The persecuted servants of Christ shall meet with a distinguishing reward, while their proud and insolent oppressors shall be doom'd to a state of the most aggravated misery.—Why then should the righteous complain of the sufferings of this life, which are but for a moment, and shall be recompenced with a superior and *an eternal weight of Glory*?—Why should they repine at the prosperity of the foolish, whose enjoyments will vanish as a dream, and prepare them for more severe and intolerable torments?—This surely may well satisfy men of the Justice of divine Providence, even when the greatest difficulties attend it, and his ways appear most intricate and mysterious.

2. *This shews us the reason of God's patience, why he bears so long with the provoking iniquities of men.*

Every wilful transgression is an insolent defiance of the eternal Majesty of heaven, and a daring contempt of his sacred authority; impenitent sinners challenge almighty Justice, and provoke the Lord to jealousy, as if they were stronger than he.—And yet he bears with

with astonishing patience their continual affronts; he spares a guilty world that ungratefully despise his goodness, and abuse his favours to wantonness and excess. Notwithstanding their innumerable provocations, he showers down his favours upon them in daily abundance, and fills their hearts with food and gladness:—from hence they take encouragement in their wickedness, and flatter themselves that they shall escape with impunity. They vainly imagine that God does not observe their actions, or at least that he will not severely punish them for their crimes. *Because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil**.—But how vast is their madness! how unreasonable is their conclusion! It is not because God is unacquainted with their ways, that he forbears to punish their rebellions. For *his Eyes run to and fro in the earth, beholding the evil and the good*. The most forlorn corner of the world cannot conceal them from his view, nor the darkest privacy banish them from his presence; his Eyes are as a flaming fire, and pierce through the thickest darkness; and his diffusive influence extends to every part of the creation.

It is not any defect of his Power, that can secure the sinner from his avenging wrath; for he made the world by the Authority of a Command, and can destroy it in a moment by a frown of his countenance. Sinners are always in his hand, and he can at once ease himself of his adversaries, and be avenged of his enemies. He can strike dead the intemperate in the height of their jollity, and fill them with the venom'd wine of his fury. He can seize the profane swearer in the midst of his hellish rage, and dispatch him out of the world, with his oaths and curses in his mouth.

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* *Eccles. 8. 2.*

It is not because divine Justice is asleep, that he does not make bare his almighty arm, surprize the wicked in the very act of sin, and hang them up in chains as standing monuments of his righteous severity. — But he waits with patience that he may lead them to repentance, and delays the execution of his vengeance to the judgment of the great day. He now seems to wink at the sins of men, to try their reverence for his authority, and obedience to his laws; and has appointed a day for the public triumph of his Justice, in the destruction of his implacable adversaries. He suffers them to remain undisturb'd in their enjoyments, and to wallow in wealth and plenty in this world; but they are fattning for the day of slaughter, and are reserved for a more severe and dreadful execution.

He is now seated upon a throne of Grace, and *endures with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath that are fitted for destruction*, but amazing judgments are denounced against them in his unalterable word, and will be executed upon them in his appointed time. *These things* (says he) *hast thou done, and I kept silence, thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thy self, but I will reprove thee, and set thy sins in order before thine eyes* *. In the height of their security, when they flatter themselves with peace and safety, sudden destruction will come upon them as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape.

3. This shews the madness of unthinking Sinners, who put the evil day far from them, and neglect to prepare for a future judgment. Since the doctrine of eternal judgment is so evident to the principles of Reason, and so clearly revealed in the Gospel of Christ, it is just matter of surprize and astonishment, to behold the children of men give a loose to their vicious inclinations, and live in an allowed course of impiety and lewd-

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* *Isal.* 50. 22.

ness, as if they were made for no higher end than to eat and drink, to laugh and to die,— as if they had no apprehensions of that great and terrible day of the Lord, in which they must be called to an account for their actions, and must appear at the bar of an impartial judge.

It exceeds all belief, did not melancholy experience make it too plain to be denied, that multitudes of christians, who profess to expect a day of judgment, should be so slothful and unactive in their preparations for it; that those who are convinced, that the wicked shall be condemned in that day, and exposed to the vengeance of eternal fire, should yet retain their beloved lusts, and continue in as much ease and security as if these awful truths were the dreams of enthusiasm, and the wrath of God were no more to be dreaded than an insignificant scarecrow.— To what shall we ascribe this general stupidity and impiety of men? Whence arises, O Sinner! your inward peace and security, when wrath from heaven is revealed against you, and hell from beneath opens its mouth wide to receive you? Do you believe there is a just and powerful Being to whom you are accountable, that a memorial is kept of your secret iniquities, and that he will make a strict enquiry into your actions? And can you yet persist in your sinful courses, and live in a careless neglect of God and your duty? — This is madness beyond a parallel; you are more insensible than the brutal world, who will not rush into a destruction they are apprized of.— But alas! the unhappiness of mankind is, that they banish these solemn truths out of their minds; otherwise they could not be so careless and secure, they would not dare to spend their days in mirth, and their years in pleasure, without any serious regard to God, their almighty Judge, or to their immortal souls, which are upon the brink of eternal misery.— Or if these melancholy thoughts sometimes crowd into their minds, they shift them off as unwelcome

come guests, to a more convenient opportunity, and join with the scoffers of old, saying, *The vision is for many days.* They are so captivated with the vanities and amusements of life, so immers'd in its cares and employments, that they are averse to exercise their thoughts upon such harsh and ungrateful subjects, and flatter themselves that they shall have time enough hereafter, when they are fatiated with the pleasures of life.— But what can be more stupid than to leave your most important concerns at a desperate uncertainty, and spend your days in unprofitable trifles?— Indeed, could you prevent the approach of that day, by banishing the thoughts of it out of your minds; would the Judge wait upon your unreasonable delays, and put off the time of his coming until you were prepared to go forth to meet him, you would have some excuse for your negligence. But since the day is swiftly approaching, whether you regard it or no, since the end of all things is at hand, and the Judge is even at the door, it is the height of distraction to drive the thoughts of his coming out of your minds, and put the evil day far from you; and especially if we consider, that the frequent fore-thoughts of this important event is a likely means to persuade us to a diligent preparation for it: and if this be the happy effect, we shall escape the terrors of that day, and be able to hold up our heads with joy, and stand with comfort before the Son of Man at the time of his illustrious appearance; which brings me to say,

4. and finally, *The doctrine of a future Judgment administers comfort to the people of God, under all the trials and persecutions that they meet with in the world.* Tho' at present they seem doom'd to a state of suffering and disgrace, and are made spectacles of misery to Angels and Men, yet this may support their sinking spirits, and relieve their desponding thoughts; to consider that all the hardships they meet with are recorded in the book of God's remembrance, and shall be
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mention'd to their immortal honour in the great day of accounts. Tho' they are made the laughing-stock of fools, and reproached and condemned by an abusive world, yet the inward testimony of their conscience, and the prospect of the future applause of their Judge, may preserve their Souls in peace, and enable them to despise the censures of their malicious adversaries.— In fine, to suppose the worst, tho' they may be called to pass through the fiery trial, and be expos'd to the extreamest sufferings for the sake of Christ, yet they may maintain their ground with invincible courage, when they consider, that *the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in them.* Their fidelity to God shall meet with a distinguishing reward, and their patient sufferings shall be crown'd with immortal Glory.

Wherefore, my *beloved Brethren*, let us all be animated with a noble ambition to become of the number of the righteous, and be excited to unblemish'd fidelity in the service of our Master and Judge; and then we may with joy and comfort *look for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.*

To whom, &c.

AMEN.

Preach'd Nov. 20.

1737.

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S E R M O N III.

The Lord Jesus Christ appointed to
be the Judge of the World.

A C T. X. 42.

*And he commanded us to preach unto the People;
and to testify, that it is He which was ordain-
ed of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.*

THAT God will judge the World in righteoufness, is a truth agreeable to the light of nature, that candle of the Lord, which inlightens every man that comes into the world; and has obtain'd the consent of all ages, not only among the nations who live in the valley of vision and enjoy the supernatural revelation of the Gospel, but also among those who inhabit the regions of darkness, and are strangers to the Covenant of promise.

Indeed the *Gentile* world had but dark and confused notions of a future Judgment; they disguised this awful truth under the most absurd and ridiculous fictions; yet the belief of it was almost universal: We have frequent intimations of it in the fables of their Poets, the harangues of their Orators, and the pre-scrip'ts of their celebrated moralists. But tho' they expected a day of future recompence, in which the
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righteous would be signally rewarded, and the wicked remarkably punish'd, yet they were intirely ignorant of the *Person* by whom this Judgment should be administred, and the surprizing circumstances that should attend his approach. This was one of the secrets of the divine Counsel, which none of the Princes or Philosophers of the world were acquainted with, and which we could never have discovered by our most painful and laborious enquiries, had not God been pleas'd to reveal it unto us in his word; and here we have not only the nature of a future Judgment unfolded, but the awful solemnities that will attend it described, and are assured that the *Lord Jesus Christ is ordained of God to be the Judge of the quick and the dead*: which words afford us this important doctrine for the subject of our present meditation,

That the Lord Jesus Christ is appointed the supreme and universal Judge of the world.

In speaking to which (by divine assistance) I shall,

First, Consider how *clearly* this great truth is *revealed* in the word of God.

Secondly, Shew how *excellently* Christ is *qualified* for this exalted office.

Thirdly, Enquire into the *Reasons* of this Divine appointment.

First. I am to consider *how clearly it is revealed in the word of God*, that the Lord *Jesus* is appointed the great and universal Judge of the world.

The supreme power of Judgment belongs to the Blessed God, whose creatures we are, by whose Laws we are govern'd, and to whom we are accountable for our moral actions: the exercise of this power is committed to Christ, the only mediator between God
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and man. This our Saviour himself expressly declares, *Job. 5. 22. The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son.* He assures his Disciples, that *the hour is coming, in which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation,* *vers. 28, 29.*—The Angels publish'd the same doctrine at our Lord's ascension, and inform'd his astonish'd Disciples, that *this same Jesus whom they had seen taken up into heaven, should so come in like manner as they had seen him go up into heaven.* *Act. 1. 11.*—This truth the Apostles were commanded to preach and testify to all People: therefore we find *St. Paul* declaring to the Philosophers of *Athens*, that *God would judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom he had ordained,* *Act. 17. 31.*—And our Lord himself repeats the promise of his coming, in the Revelation of *St. John*, the last of the inspired writings, *Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me.* *Rev. 22. 12.* From these, and innumerable other Texts that might be mentioned, we have the fullest evidence that our Lord *Jesus Christ* is appointed the supreme Judge of the world.

He is now seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and dwells in inaccessible Glory; the whole creation is subject to his authority, and he governs the inhabitants of heaven and earth according to his sovereign pleasure. He is indeed invisible to mortal eyes, and the curtains of heaven conceal his glory from us. But these heavens shall shortly pass away as a scroll, and flee from before his presence; then shall he appear in the majesty of an incarnate God, and all nations shall be summon'd before his awful tribunal.

I pass,

Secondly, To shew how excellently he is qualified for this exalted office.

All human Judgments are subject to innumerable imperfections, and the cause of Justice is often perverted through ignorance, partiality and prejudice. To judge the world in righteousness, is a work too difficult to be performed by the most excellent creature. The Blessed *Jesus*, who is in the Bosom of his Father, and is intimately acquainted with the divine secrets, he alone is capable of this important commission, and he has all those qualities which are necessary to the just and impartial discharge of it.

1. *His Knowledge is infinite.*—It is highly requisite, that the supreme Judge of the world should have an exact and intimate acquaintance with all persons that are brought before him, and a full knowledge of the nature and circumstances of the actions for which they are to be judged.—For want of this, insuperable difficulties attend the administration of human justice: the innocent are oftentimes exposed to an hard and unrighteous sentence, and the guilty escape the punishment they have deserved.—But the Judgment of the great day will be perfectly free from any uncertainty or mistake; the knowledge of Christ being universal and unerring. *All things are naked and open to the Eyes of him with whom we have to do*, Heb. 4. 13. He knows the persons, and is acquainted with all the actions of the children of men. *His Eyes are as flames of fire*, and penetrate into the secret recesses of the soul; he *discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart*, the inward motives and designs of our actions. Those abominations which are carefully concealed from the world, and committed in the darkest privacy, are as open to his critical inspection, as if they had been perpetrated in the blaze of day, and exposed to the public view of the world: for *the darkness hideth not from him, but the night shineth as the day*, Psal. 139. 12. Tho' the wicked fly to uninhabited deserts, and shelter themselves in the dens and caverns of the earth, these dismal solitudes will not

not screen them from the presence of their Judge, nor conceal their crimes from his accurate observation. *For he compasseth our paths, and is acquainted with all our ways.* He cannot be abused with doubtful evidence, deceived by any artful insinuations, nor imposed upon by any flattering appearances; but has all that knowledge that is necessary to form an impartial Judgment.

2. *His Justice is inflexible.*— Earthly Judges are subject to corruption, and a righteous cause oftentimes miscarries, through the partiality and prejudice of those who are plac'd in the seat of Judgment. They are sometimes influenc'd by favour and affection, to extenuate the crimes of their friends, or perswaded by bribes to pronounce an unrighteous sentence. A slavish cowardise causes them to connive at the faults of men of power and estate, and a servile fear restrains them from an impartial execution of public Justice. Therefore *Solomon* mentions it as one of the great evils he had seen under the Sun, *That he beheld the place of judgment, and behold wickedness was there, and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there,* Eccl. 3. 16. But those mean and carnal considerations will have no influence upon the unerring judgment of *Christ*. The supreme Governour of the world is infinitely above all suspicion of corruption or prejudice, and he will wield the sword of justice with a steady and impartial hand; he loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity, and will make a suitable distinction between his faithful obedient servants, and his perverse and implacable enemies: the perfection of his nature secures him from the least imputation of injustice, and his infinite kindness and compassion assures us, that he will consider our frame, and put the most favourable construction upon our actions: he cannot be brib'd by riches, nor aw'd by greatness and power; for *he is the great and only potentate of heaven and earth, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords,*

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from whom the Princes of this world derive their Power, and to whom they are accountable for their conduct. With him therefore there is *no respect of persons*, but the meanest slave shall have as fair a trial as the proudest monarch; Princes shall be divested of their imperial diadems, and stand upon a level with their inferior subjects. Every one shall receive *according to the things done in the body, whether good or evil*. He will pass an unalterable doom, not only upon his open and avowed enemies, but also upon his pretended friends and followers. Secret hypocrites shall be unmask'd to the view of the world, and be exposed in all their guilt and deformity; tho' they call Christ Lord, and pretend that they are of the number of his disciples, yet they will be rejected and condemned by their righteous Judge: with terror in his looks and thunder in his voice, he will *say unto them, Depart from me, for I know you not, ye that work iniquity*. Matth. 7. 23. Thus he will judge the world in righteousness, and the people with equity; and therefore is admirably fitted for the great work assign'd him: especially if we consider,

3. *His power is almighty*, and none can resist the execution of his will.—— How often do we find earthly criminals plac'd above the reach of any human judicature, and defended by wealth and interest from the punishment of their crimes? But the great Judge of the world is clothed with omnipotence, and able to execute his vengeance upon the greatest offenders: *for he hath all power in heaven and earth committed unto him*, Matth. 28. 18. When he tabernacled in flesh, and was clothed with the infirmities of mankind, universal nature own'd his dominion, and even Devils were subject to his authority; the dead were raised by the word of his power, and the tempestuous elements submitted to his rebuke: and the power of Christ will be still more illustriously display'd, when all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and at his

his command shall start out of their dusty beds ; when the righteous shall appear in the shining robes of immortal glory, but those that despis'd him upon earth, be condemn'd at his awful barr, and doom'd to unalterable misery. In vain will Sinners fly from his almighty arm, and endeavour to escape his avenging wrath: Who can contend with offended omnipotence? or subsist under the terrors of his indignation? The Anger of the most enraged Tyrant can only affect the body, and is confin'd within the narrow limits of this Life; but the wrath of our almighty Judge extends to the whole man, accompanies the sinner beyond the grave, and endures through eternal Ages. And as he has power to punish the wicked according to their deserts, so he is able to reward the righteous according to their works: He has mansions of glory prepar'd for their everlasting reception, and will bestow upon them an happiness, vast as their capacities, and immortal as their souls.— Thus you see how excellently the Lord Jesus Christ is qualified to be the final Judge of the world: His knowledge is infinite, and extends to the secret actions of men; his power is almighty, and none can resist the execution of his will; his Justice is inflexible, and will be seen in impartially dispensing Rewards and Punishments. I proceed,

Thirdly, *To Enquire into the Reasons of this Divine Appointment*; why this important Office is devolved upon the Lord Jesus Christ. And,

1. *It is in compassion to the weakness and frailty of mankind.*— With GOD is terrible Majesty; He dwells in unsufferable Glory, and the spotless Spirits above veil their faces before his dazzling Throne; such is his unspotted purity, that *the heavens are not clean in his sight, and he chargeth his angels with folly: The mountains tremble at his presence, and the pillars of heaven are astonish'd at his reproof.* How then could the children of men support the majesty of his appearance,

should he descend in the naked terrors of the Deity, the unvailed Glories of the Divine Nature! God hath therefore compassionately ordain'd, that the last Judgment shall be administred by one in our nature, *who is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, made in all things like unto us, only without sin.* And what can be more desireable, than to appear before him *whose delight from eternity has been with the sons of men,* and who shed his invaluable blood to redeem us from eternal destruction; who is not only the Judge of the world, but the Saviour of men; who is acquainted with the weakness of human nature, and the temptations to which we are exposed; who will make the most favourable allowances for the frailties of his People! This may convince us with what kindness, condescension and equity, this great transaction will be managed, and assures us that he will condemn only those, who have obstinately despis'd his Goodness, and defeated the endearing methods of his Grace.

2. The Son of Man is appointed to be the Judge of the world, *as a suitable reward for his obedience and sufferings.* This Reason is expressly given by St. Paul, Phil. 2. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. *Who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross: wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father.* It was an amazing stoop, for the Son of God to be made in the Likeness of sinful Flesh, to descend from a throne to a manger, from the government of the world to the state of a servant, and to submit to such humbling circumstances of poverty and disgrace, and at last to suffer the Death of the

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the Cross, that he might advance the Glory of God, and procure the Salvation and Happiness of man.— And what can be more reasonable, than that he should once more appear, to display his *glory as the only begotten of the Father*, and convince the world how great and illustrious a person he is, *God manifested in the Flesh*? What more suitable than that he who was rejected and despised of men, should have power to summon at his awful barr all those that insulted and abused him, and punish them for the indignities they put upon him?

At his first coming, his dignity was veiled by the meanness of his condition, and he appear'd without form or comeliness: But is it just, that the Sun of righteousness should always be cover'd with a cloud? Surely at his second advent, every Reproach of Christ shall be wiped away, and he will shine in all the glories of an incarnate God. He was falsely accused by his malicious adversaries, and unjustly arraign'd and condemn'd by the powers of the world: But the scene will be astonishingly changed, when the Kings and Judges of the Earth shall stand quivering before his tribunal, and receive an irreversibile sentence from his mouth. Then every eye shall see him, not surrounded with a croud of insulting scoffers, but attended with an innumerable host of adoring Angels; not engag'd in a bloody contest with the powers of darkness, but with all his enemies subdued under his feet; not hanging upon a disgraceful Cross, but seated upon a triumphant Throne, and encircled with a shining train of heavenly courtiers. The thorns that pierced his sacred head, will be chang'd into a sparkling crown of glory; the spear that wounded his side, into a sceptre of authority and government. *Judas* that betray'd him, *Pilate* that condemn'd him, and all those who in all ages of the world have despised and rejected him, shall be confounded at his presence, and *call to the mountains to cover them, and the rocks to hide them* from his avenging justice.

3. This appointment is design'd to *increase the visible pomp and splendour of the future judgment*. This great affair is to be transacted in a public and visible manner, in the view of the whole world, for the display of the divine glory, and the manifestation of his perfections, in the condemnation of a guilty world, and the final reward of his People: God hath therefore wisely determined, that the last judgment shall be executed by a visible person, in the sight and hearing of men. God the Father is invisible: and therefore *judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son, because he is the Son of man*; that every eye may see him, when he appears on the Throne of Judgment, and every ear may hear that righteous Sentence he will pronounce.— And how will it increase the glory of that day, to see the Son of Man descending in the clouds of heaven, attended by the innumerable company of Angels, the noble army of martyrs, and the general assembly of the Church of the first born? How vast will be the majesty and splendor of his appearance, when *he shall come in his own glory and the glory of his Father*, and shall sit upon a radiant Throne high above all, encircled with the heavenly hosts, shouting forth perpetual Hallelujahs! When all the apostate Angels, and the universal progeny of *Adam*, shall stand before his presence, and wait to receive their unalterable doom! With what astonishment shall we behold the Heavens pass away as a scroll, the elements melt with fervent heat, and the beautiful fabrick of the world consum'd by devouring flames? Could we but paint the glories of that day in their awful colours, and represent to our minds the pomp and solemnity, in which our Judge will descend, it would disgrace all the splendid vanities of the world, and shew us how unworthy they are of our regard and attention; it would inspire us with the highest reverence for the authority of him who is now our rightful Sovereign, and will hereafter

be our final Judge; and would influence us to endeavour an exact and universal obedience to his Laws. Which brings me to the IMPROVEMENT of my Subject, and

1. *This evidences the Divinity of Christ, the great Judge of the world.* To judge the world, is the prerogative of the supreme God, a Right inseparable from the Crown of Heaven. Who can challenge such a sovereign authority, but he that made the world at first by his power, and preserves it by his gracious providence? To whom shall we give an account of our behaviour, but to him who has given us these reasonable natures, and made us moral and accountable creatures? Justly then does the Prophet say, *The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King*, Isa. 33. 22.— From him is all inferior authority derived; *by him Kings rule, and Princes decree justice.*— And as He is the supreme Judge of the world, so no creature is capable to discharge this important office; for it requires infinite wisdom to know the nature and circumstances of our actions, and almighty power to punish rebellious Sinners.— What but the voice of God can awaken the dead, bring them out of their silent graves, and summon the whole world before his tremendous Judgment-seat?— Who but a divine Person can search the hearts of men, and unfold the secret springs of their actions, from whence their malignity or goodness does principally arise?— Since then the Lord *Jesus Christ* is ordain'd to this glorious work, we may justly conclude, that he must be the great God, as well as the Saviour of the world.

2. *This takes away the scandal of the Cross, and shews that we have no Reason to take offence at the meanness and sufferings of Christ.* Among all the prejudices that have been rais'd against the Gospel, none has had a more fatal influence upon the bulk of mankind, than the mean and despicable appearance of the
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great Author of our holy Religion, and the bitter and ignominious sufferings that he underwent. *A crucified Christ was to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness.* They thought it the highest absurdity, that the Son of God should be delivered into the hands of men, and expire upon a shameful Cross.— But the firm belief of this truth, that Christ is appointed to be the Judge of the quick and the dead, takes away the reproach of the Cross, and removes the darkness and contempt that attended his suffering state.— For this informs us, that his humility and sufferings made way for his advancement and triumph, and that he who was so ungratefully abused, and so unjustly condemn'd by the Princes of the earth, is now exalted to the Government of the world, and will shortly appear in dignity and power, to the Joy of his friends, and the terror and confusion of his adversaries.— Let then the Infidels of the Age despise his person, and deride his sufferings; we are not ashamed to own, that we are the Disciples of a crucified Saviour. *God forbid, that we should not glory in the Cross of Christ!* For our Redeemer is great, and greatly to be praised: God hath rais'd him up from the dead, and given him a name above every name. We now by faith behold him seated at the right hand of power, and encompass'd with the triumphant acclamations of Heaven: but he will shortly rend the Heavens that now conceal his Glory, and appear *in flaming fire to take vengeance on those that know not God and obey not the Gospel of Christ*; then shall his enemies bow before him, and lick the dust of his feet; and the dignity of his character and office shall be manifest to the whole world of Angels and men.

3. Hence *the destruction of Gospel-impenitents will be inevitable and intolerable.* Men are apt to shelter themselves from the terrors of the Law, by the gracious and merciful promises of the Gospel: They imagine, tho' *God is a consuming fire, and wrath from heaven*

heaven is declar'd against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, yet that the merits of Christ will screen them from the flames of hell, and secure them a title to immortal glory. But these are wild mistakes, and contradict the whole design of the Gospel. The blessed *Jesus* indeed is a merciful and compassionate Saviour, but yet he has denounced the severest damnation against incorrigible sinners; his merits will be imputed only to those that accept of his offers, and submit to his reasonable demands; he will be *the author of eternal Salvation only to those that obey him*. Such as bear the name and character of Christians, and yet by their wicked lives confute their profession, and openly declare that they *will not have this man to reign over them*, will be so far from receiving any advantage by the name of Christ, that it will be an aggravation of their guilt, and an increase of their future condemnation. The *blood of the covenant* which they have trampled under foot, will cry aloud for vengeance; and the condescending mercies of heaven which they have prophan'd and despis'd, will be turn'd into resentment and fury. They reject the only remedy which infinite grace hath provided for their recovery; and therefore will fall unpitied sacrifices to his avenging justice. He that now offers to be their compassionate Saviour, will then appear their inexorable Judge. The meek and innocent Lamb of God will then be arm'd with the terrors of a devouring Lion: and those that would not bow to the sceptre of his Grace, shall be broke to pieces with the rod of his Anger. Their doom will be pronounc'd by him who was once the messenger of divine Grace, and made them the most friendly offers of mercy. This will doubtless give the bitterest accent to their misery, and fill them with the utmost consternation and horror. How highly therefore does it become us now to secure an Interest in his Favour, that so he who will be our Judge, may also be our

Friend! How reasonable is that advice of the Psalmist, *Psal. 2. 12. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish in the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little, blessed are they that put their trust in him.* Which brings me to say,

4. Hence we see *the certainty of the believer's complete and eternal Salvation.*— When we consider the unspotted holiness of our Judge, before whom the Angels stand chargeable with folly, and the heavens with impurity; when we reflect upon the corruption of our natures, and the innumerable imperfections that attend us; the best of men may tremble at the apprehension of a future Judgment, and stand amaz'd at the thought of having their eternal state determin'd by so righteous and impartial a Judge: For if he should be strict to mark iniquity, who could stand before him! Verily every mouth must be stop'd, every tongue must confess their guilt, and own themselves worthy of eternal damnation.— But, blessed be God, the Gospel affords the true believer a solid foundation of hope, under all these affrighting considerations; those that have by faith secur'd an interest in Christ, and made it the sincere endeavour of their lives to approve themselves to his all-seeing eye, shall escape that dreadful Sentence that will be pronounc'd upon an impenitent world. For he whom they accepted as their Saviour, is appointed to be their Judge; they have resign'd themselves to his almighty and compassionate hands, and he has engag'd to be their complete and eternal deliverer. He will therefore save them from the dark horrors of the grave, and the amazing terrors of the last day, and put them in possession of that Kingdom he has prepar'd for them. He has bought them out of the hands of Justice by his atoning blood, and purchas'd for them a title to the mansions of Glory by his invaluable merits. Surely then he will not suffer the ends of his death to be defeated, nor the sacred purchase of his blood to miscarry.

We may be assur'd he has not forgot the distressing sorrows of his life, nor the dreadful agonies of his Cross.— That Love that nailed him to the cursed tree, and brought him down to the dust of death, for the redemption of his People; will excite him to take care of their welfare, and finish the work he has begun.

Let *Infidels* tremble at the approach of their Judge, who have out-sin'd his infinite mercy, and denied their God and Saviour: *Let fearfulness seize the hypocrite, and horror surprize the sinners in Zion*, who are enemies to Christ, under the disguise of a visible profession.— But let the *Saints in Christ Jesus* lift up their heads with Joy, and long for the coming of their Lord. When he says by the Spirit to his Churches, *Behold I come quickly*, let our Souls eccho back with the loudest transports of Joy, *Even so come, Lord Jesus!*

To Him, &c.

AMEN.

Preach'd Dec. 4.
1737.

S E R.



S E R M O N IV.

The Manner and Circumstances of
Christ's Appearance at the last Day.

MATTH. XVI. 27.

*For the Son of Man shall come in the Glory of his
Father, with his Angels; and then he shall re-
ward every Man according to his Works.*

THE dispensation of the *Gospel* is admirably calculated to reclaim a sinful world from the paths of error and delusion; and to persuade the children of men to consult their duty and happiness: Its *doctrines* are sublime and excellent, worthy of their heavenly descent, and come recommended to our faith by the brightest evidences of a divine authority: Its *precepts* contain the noblest rules for our moral conduct, and are happily design'd to exalt and purify the nature of man, and advance the universal prosperity of the world.

And since we are at present in a corrupt and degenerate state, disinclin'd to our duty, and indeed filled with prejudices against it; therefore the wise Author of our Beings hath seen fit to enforce his laws by suitable *sanctions*, and engage us to obedience by the most powerful and persuasive *arguments*. Hence in the
Gospel

Gospel there every where appears the greatest severity to dissuade us from sin, and the highest condescension and goodness to allure us to holiness.

The Eternal Majesty of heaven is sometimes revealed in the amazing terrors of his *wrath*, as a consuming fire to the workers of iniquity; at other times he appears in the bright displays of his *mercy*, as a tender and indulgent father to those that serve and obey him: And the great *Saviour* of Souls is represented as one who *dy'd a sacrifice* for the sins of the world, and compassionately invites the children of men to come to him that *they may have life*; but will shortly appear in flaming fire to take vengeance on those that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of Christ.

These different representations are wonderfully suited to influence the *hopes* and *fears* of men, the two great ruling passions of our nature, and the secret springs of our actions; and have an happy tendency to deter us from all ungodliness and unrighteousness, which lead to destruction and misery, and to engage us to a stedfast adherence to our duty, which is the way to immortality and glory. Our blessed Saviour having therefore urged upon his disciples the necessity of *denying themselves, taking up their cross, and following Him*, their Lord and Master, in humility and suffering, enforces all with this awful consideration, *That the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his Angels, and then he shall reward every man according to his works.* In speaking to which words (by divine assistance) I shall

First, Consider the *Manner* of Christ's second Appearance.

Secondly, The *Work* that he will then perform.

First, I am to consider *the Manner of Christ's second Appearance.*—When he first left the mansions of glory,

glory, and descended into this lower world, he came in a state of humility and meanness, and stoop'd to numberless hardships and difficulties, that he might answer the design of his manifestation in the flesh, and accomplish the great work of redemption. But his second advent will be with surprizing majesty and glory, to execute vengeance upon the ungodly, and vindicate the cause of his despised Gospel.

When God came down upon mount *Sinai* to proclaim the law to the children of *Israel*, the glory of the Lord appear'd like devouring fire, and the mountain was covered with darkness and smoke. So terrible was the sight, that *Moses* the friend of God exceedingly fear'd and quak'd; the whole army of *Israel* were struck with amazement, and cry'd out in distress, *Let not God speak with us, lest we die.*— If such surprizing terrors attended the first promulgation of the law, with what awful solemnity will the Lawgiver appear, when he comes to *avenge the quarrel of his covenant*, and punish the profane contempt of his authority?

The Scriptures represent this awful event in the most lofty and magnificent language. Amazing prodigies will usher in this illustrious day, and proclaim the descent of our almighty Judge; continual tragedies will be acted on the great stage of nature, and this lower world will be involved in universal confusion and disorder; * *the Sun shall be turned into darkness, and the Moon into blood; the Stars of heaven shall start from their exalted orbs, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken; perpetual thunders shall roar from the lower regions of the air, the earth shall tremble and quake, and the foundations of the hills shall be removed.*— Then shall appear *the sign of the Son of Man in the heavens* † and give the world a convincing evidence of the near approach of the great and terrible

* *Joel* 2. 31. *Matth.* 24. 29. *Psal.* 18. 7. † *Matth.* 24. 30.

rible day of the Lord. At which amazing sight, the inhabitants of the earth shall mourn, and the sinners in *Zion* shall be horribly afraid.

In the midst of their perplexity and distress, *the Son of Man shall descend in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.* He will appear in the pomp and solemnity of an incarnate God, and assume a glory and magnificence suitable to the dignity of his office.

His *personal* glory will be inexpressibly great, his eyes will sparkle like flames of fire, his countenance will shine with dazzling beams of majesty and beauty, and his whole body be bright and luminous beyond the Sun in its meridian splendor. Thus he is describ'd in the Visions of *St. John*, *In the midst of the seven candlesticks was one like the Son of Man, his head and his hair were white as wool, as white as snow, his eyes were as a flame of fire, and his countenance was as the Sun shining in its strength*.*

He will also come in the glory of his heavenly *Father*, and be clothed with the authority of the universal Judge of the world. God has appointed him *King upon his holy Zion*, and proclaim'd an unalterable decree, that *to him every knee shall bow*; not in scorn and derision, as in the days of his infirmity and suffering, but with the deepest humility and reverence; and *every tongue shall confess* his royal dignity and power, not with an insulting scoff, but in submissive postures of adoration.

But to increase the glory of his appearance, he will be attended with a splendid and numerous *equipage*, becoming the dignity of his person, and the exalted character he sustains. The innumerable host of *Angels* shall leave the mansions of heaven, and attend their descending Lord, to obey his sovereign orders, and adorn the triumphs of his justice. The general assembly

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* *Rev.* 1. 13, 14.

bly of the *Saints*, whom he hath redeem'd by his invaluable blood, and sanctified by his all-conquering grace, shall forsake the celestial paradise, and accompany the great God our Saviour, in his illustrious progress through the skies. Thus the Patriarch *Enoch* prophesied of old; * *Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his Saints, to execute judgment on the ungodly.* And the Prophet *Daniel* assures us, § *that thousand thousands shall minister unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand shall stand before him.* And *St. Paul* tells us, † *that he shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty Angels.* Those spotless Spirits shall be clothed in their brightest robes of glory, and appear in visible splendor to the inhabitants of the earth. And how vast and surprising a figure will they make? How awful and majestic will be the appearance of our Judge, when he shall assume his own proper greatness, and be attended with the shining inhabitants of heaven? Who may abide the day of his coming, or be able to stand before his awful tribunal? How will all nations fall prostrate at his footstool, and tremble at his presence, who can by a word of his mouth sentence them to the depths of misery, or advance them to the height of glory and happiness? Which brings me to the other thing proposed;

Secondly, To consider the *Work* that he will perform. *Then shall he reward every Man according to his works:* And this includes three things.

1. All mankind shall be *summon'd* before him.
2. They shall be called to a strict *account* for their actions.
3. The *righteous* shall be adjudg'd to unalterable glory, but the *wicked* condemn'd to eternal misery.

1. *All mankind shall be summon'd before him.* No sooner shall the Judge descend to this lower world, and

and erect his throne in the Air, but they that are in their graves shall be awakned out of the sleep of death, and all the inhabitants of the world be cited to appear before the Judgment-seat of Christ. The voice of the Archangel, the chief of the heavenly host, shall eccho through the wide creation, and penetrate into the secret caverns of the earth; at which mighty sound the *dead* shall start out of their dusty beds, and all the descendants of *Adam* shall be compelled to obey the call; those that are *alive* shall be immediately chang'd, and prepar'd to make their personal appearance at the bar of their Judge. Thus the Scriptures assure us: *We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. Every one of us shall give an account of himself unto God.* The universal Father of men without respect of persons judgeth every man according to his work. He accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor, for they are all the work of his hands*.

Civil distinctions make a mighty sound among men, and persons of superior wealth and power are admired and applauded like so many Deities, by their fervile flatterers: hence they are apt to swell with pride, upon the account of their elevated circumstances, and vainly hope that they shall be treated with deference and respect at the future judgment; they flatter themselves that God will not be *strict to mark iniquity* in men of their dignity and station, but that he will make some favourable allowances for the excesses and follies which are so common among men of figure and estate in the world.— But alas! these are vain imaginations: the sovereign Ruler of the world pays no regard to earthly greatness, neither has he any value for those distinctions, which are made by birth and estate. The great Potentates of the earth, who are cry'd up as gods by deluded mortals, are in

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* *Rom.* 13, 10. *1 Pet.* 1. 17. *Job* 34. 18, 19.

his sight but contemptible worms of the dust. In that day they will be divested of all their stately ornaments, depriv'd of the ensigns of their greatness and power, and stand upon a level with the meanest slave. Death, the universal Conqueror, pays no complements to their quality, but arrests them without ceremony or respect: and their impartial Judge will irresistibly summon them to his tremendous bar. The mighty *Cæsars* and *Alexanders*, who have depopulated the earth by their destructive swords, and sacrificed nations to their unbounded lusts, shall tremble at his appearance, and curse their ambition and madness. Thus this astonishing scene is represented by St. *John*, **And the Kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, hid themselves in the dens and rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come: and who shall be able to stand?*

And as none are too great and mighty to be called to an account, so none are too mean and contemptible to be taken notice of. They that have made no figure among men, but have spent their days in want and obscurity, will not be overlook'd in this vast assembly, but strictly examined, whether they have submitted to the wise disposals of providence, and improv'd the talents committed to their trust. Those that are in the morning of their Youth and in the strength and vigour of their age, shall be brought into judgment for their unmindfulness of their great Creator, and their criminal indulgence of sensual pleasures. Ignorant uninstructed heathens, who have inhabited the wild and desolate corners of the earth, shall be called to an account, for their transgression of the law of nature, and their abuse of the divine goodness. The
learned

learned and civilized nations, who have been favour'd with the light of the Gospel, and early instructed in the will of heaven, must answer for their superior advantages, and their neglect of the means of grace and salvation. Such as will not now approach the throne of divine mercy, must then appear at the bar of inflexible Justice. Thus all mankind of every nation and language, of every quality and condition, of every age and sex, must be judg'd in the great day. What a grand and solemn sight will this be! To behold all the successive generations of men stand together in their respective orders, and wait for their decisive trial! Which leads to say,

2. *In that day men shall be called to a strict account for all their actions.*—So the royal Preacher informs us; * *God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.* All the actions of men are recorded in the book of God's remembrance, and shall be disclosed to the public view of the world in the great day of the revelation of all things.

Unthinking sinners are apt to imagine themselves secure, if they can conceal their crimes from the Cognizance of men, and commit their sins in darkness and retirement: but alas! *the ways of man are now before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings.* There is no darkness or shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves †. No secret impurity can escape the knowledge of our Judge, nor any artful hypocrisy deceive his piercing eyes: even the secret motions and inclinations of our hearts are exposed to his critical observation: all proud and revengeful thoughts, all uncharitable and malicious intentions, all the covetous and unjust designs, that men have secretly harbour'd in their breasts, shall then be unfolded before the grand consistory of

* Eccl. 12, 14.

† Prov. 5, 21. Job 34, 21.

Angels and Men. *For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed, nor hid that shall not be known**.

Men frequently imagine, that *their tongues are their own*, that their words vanish into air, and shall not be brought to any future account. But our Saviour tells us, † *that Men shall give an account for every idle word that they speak*. You therefore delude your selves to your eternal ruin, if you think that your vain and filthy communication, your profane and irreligious discourse, your horrid oaths and imprecations, your impious jests upon our holy Religion, your malicious slanders of good men, shall pass unobserved in that day; *for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned*. When our Lord shall come to execute judgment upon all, he will convince the wicked not only of their ungodly deeds, which they have impiously committed, but also of *all their hard and grievous speeches which they have spoken against him* ||.

But sinners shall not only be called to an account for their transgressions of the law of God, but also for their *omissions* of duty, and neglecting to improve the various and happy advantages they have enjoy'd: Their Power and estates, their health of body and abilities of mind, their opportunities and capacities of glorifying God and promoting the welfare of mankind; these Things shall then be produc'd against them, and be a heavy article in their indictment.— Thus we find the slothful servant, *who traded not with his Lord's talent, but buried it in the earth*, is sentenced *into outer darkness, where there is perpetual weeping and gnashing of teeth* §.

All the *aggravations* of men's sins shall then be enumerated, and their guilt shall appear in its crimson-colours. If the *Gentile-world* shall be condemned for resisting the glimmering light of *nature*, and rebelling

* Luk. 12. 2. † Matth. 12. 36, 37. || Jude, 15. § Matth. 25. 30.

bellings against the law of God so obscurely written on their hearts; how inexcusable will be their guilt, how vast their condemnation, who have shut their eyes against the marvellous light of the *Gospel*, and stifled the powerful convictions of the *Spirit of Grace*!

Finally, while the wicked shall be exposed in all their guilt and deformity, and be publickly charged with their numberless transgressions; God will not be regardless of the *Saints*, nor forget their labour of love. Their heavenly Father knows their works, and with pleasure observes their zeal and fidelity in his service: Their secret prayers and tears, their diffusive charity and beneficence, are set down in the sacred records of heaven, and will be mentioned to their immortal honour in the day of the Lord; their patient sufferings in the ways of their duty will be carefully remembered, and their smallest services to the Kingdom of Christ will meet with a vast and unspeakable reward.— Thus I am come to the last thing to be considered.

3. *The Righteous shall be adjudg'd to unalterable glory, but the Wicked condemn'd to eternal misery.*

Those who have accepted the compassionate offers of a Saviour, and complied with the gracious demands of the Gospel; who have devoted themselves to God without exception or reserve, and made it the great study of their lives to approve themselves to their all-seeing Judge; who have lamented their innumerable defects and infirmities, and sincerely endeavour'd to mortify their most beloved lusts; who have improv'd the means of Grace with fidelity and diligence, and abounded in acts of charity and benevolence; these shall be openly acknowledg'd by Christ in that day, and rank'd among the number of his servants and followers. Their Master and Judge, whose authority they have reverenc'd, whose laws they have observ'd, and in whose merits they have confided; the Lord
Jesus

Jesus Christ, with indulgent smiles in his countenance, and the tenderest accents in his voice, will pronounce that happy sentence upon them; *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom, prepar'd for you from the foundation of the world**.

But the Wicked, who have despis'd his sacred authority, trampled under foot his invaluable blood, and obstinately persisted in sin, in contempt of all the condescending offers of his grace, shall receive that awful doom from the mouth of their slighted and injur'd Saviour, *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels* †.

And according to these different sentences will the *final state* of the children of men be unchangeably determined. The *Wicked* shall be immediately seiz'd upon by devils, and convey'd to the dark abodes of horror and despair; the heavens from above shall shower down torrents of flaming fire upon their guilty heads, and hell from below shall open its mouth to receive them, where they shall be tormented day and night, without any possibility of escape, or hope of deliverance. While the *Righteous* shall ascend to their enthroned Lord and Saviour, and with crowns upon their heads, and palms of victory in their hands, make their triumphant entrance into the new *Jerusalem*, the city of the living God; a place of unspeakable joy and refreshment, where all sorrow shall be banish'd from their breasts, all tears shall be wiped from their eyes, their hopes shall be satisfy'd, their desires accomplish'd, and their whole man filled with those divine and transporting pleasures, that flow at the right hand of God. Then shall they *shine like the Sun in the kingdom of their Father*, and be immoveably fix'd in the firmament of immortal glory. They shall no longer complain, that *they sojourn in Mesneec, and are vex'd with the filthy conversation of*
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* *Matth.* 25. 34.

† *Vers*e 41.

the wicked: But shall be associated with the glorious company of the Apostles, the goodly fellowship of the Prophets and Martyrs, and the general assembly of the Church throughout the world; together with these they shall encompass the throne of God with prostration and praise, and tune their voices to the sacred anthems of heaven, saying, *To him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us Kings and Priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever. Amen.*

I pass now to the IMPROVEMENT of my Subject.

1. What we have heard should be improv'd as a *powerful restraint from the practice of secret sins.* For what can be an higher absurdity, than for men to encourage themselves in sin when they have the advantage of privacy and retirement, and to imagine that they are safe from punishment, if the curtains of night, or any artful disguises hide their wicked actions from the view and observation of men? Alas! what will it avail you to conceal your wickedness from the eyes of men, when your most secret actions are visible to the God with whom you have to do? What little advantage will you receive by avoiding worldly shame and punishment, when your secret enormities will shortly be brought upon the public stage, and display'd in their most odious colours, to your eternal confusion? Tho' now you cover your transgressions as *Adam*, and hide your iniquities in your bosom; yet there is nothing so secretly committed, but it shall then be brought to light, and expos'd before the vast and numerous assembly of Angels and Men.

The firm belief of this awful truth would break the force of many temptations, and be an happy preservation from defiling sins; it would make us reject with abhorrence the insinuating charms of vice, and say with holy *Joseph*; *How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God!*

2. This

2. This shews us *the vanity of hypocrisy*. For the eyes of our Judge are as flaming fire, and penetrate into the hidden corners of our souls. In the day of Judgment every mask shall be pull'd off, every flattering disguise shall be remov'd, and the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed. Why then will you put on a form of Godliness, and engage in external acts of devotion, only to be seen of men, and gain the empty applause of your fellow creatures; when your eternal state will be decided, not by the charitable opinion of short-sighted mortals, but by the unerring Sentence of an all-seeing God! Be not deceived; Christ is not to be mock'd. He sees the pride and hypocrisy of the painted pharisee, under the most amiable and goodly appearance. He beholds the sordid flattery of false and noisy professors, who bow the knee before him with seeming humility and devotion, while their affections are wedded to the world, and their lives are stain'd with abominable impurities. This therefore should excite us all to the greatest sincerity in our profession, to be faithful to our solemn vows and engagements, that we may be found the disciples of Christ, not only in outward appearance, but in the inward temper and disposition of our minds: so we shall have this for our rejoicing, even the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world.

3. How much does it concern us to *hold fast the profession of our faith, in the midst of the greatest difficulties and discouragements*? We live in a dark day of error and apostacy; in which the distinguishing glories of the Gospel are publicly reviled and insulted, by men of corrupt principles and licentious morals. Weak and unstable minds are in danger of being carried away, by the prevailing torrent of infidelity. It is therefore our indispensable duty to maintain our sacred profession, in this dangerous hour of temptation, and vigorously to defend *the faith once delivered to the Saints,*

*Saints, even in the face of its boldest opposers. For our blessed Saviour has made those declarations ; * Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall be ashamed of me, or of my words, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father, with his holy Angels.*

If then we betray the sacred depositum committed to our trust, through covetousness or cowardise ; if we corrupt the purity of the Gospel, through a sinful compliance with the humours of the age : What can we expect, but that our Master and Judge will treat us with contempt and abhorrence, and herd us among his abandon'd enemies ! This thought should inspire us with undaunted courage in the cause of Christ, and arm us with a noble resolution to submit to the greatest hardships and difficulties, rather than make shipwreck of our faith and a good conscience.

4. *We should constantly bear in mind the strictness of our future account, and live as those that expect to be judged.* If the actions of our lives were transient, and there were no remembrance of them hereafter ; if death put a final period to our being, and we were never to be called to an account for the things done in the body ; we might then give a loose to our sensual inclinations, and *eat and drink* without thought or concern, *for to morrow we die.* But since we are candidates for immortality, and our final state will be determined according to our present behaviour, it infinitely concerns us, if we have any true love to our selves, any regard to our great and everlasting interest, to keep a future judgment perpetually in our view ; to consider, that every action of life will be scann'd with an impartial severity, and an unalterable sentence will pass, according to our works.

It

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It is for want of this, that the unthinking children of men are embolden'd in the practice of sin, and live oftentimes in an allowed course of impiety and profaneness, of rioting and excess, in an habitual neglect of the service of God, and the welfare of their immortal souls.

Did men seriously consider the important consequences of their actions, that they are now sowing the seeds of endless and inconceivable joy, or laying the foundation of unutterable horror and despair; it would powerfully excite them to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and to be perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. This Argument is made use of by the wise man; *Fear God, and keep his commandments; for God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.* Eccl. 12. 14.

Let us therefore keep our thoughts fix'd upon this great and important day, *when the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his Angels, and shall reward every man according to his works.*

This indeed is an harsh and ungrateful subject, to the greatest part of mankind; they are so involv'd in secular business, so solicitous to increase their estates and raise their families, that they have no time to regard the one thing needful, and prepare for an eternal judgment: therefore they banish the thought of it out of their minds, lest it should give a check to their ambitious views, and interrupt their worldly enjoyments. But consider, I beseech you; those things which you now so passionately doat on, and for which you sacrifice your eternal All, will not profit you in the day of wrath; they will not appease a stormy conscience, nor bribe your impartial Judge.—What comfort or satisfaction will it then afford you, to reflect, that you have had a distinguish'd name among flattering mortals, that you have been rank'd among the great men of the earth, and have been honour'd
with

with a splendid passage to the grave?—Will any of these serve to procure you a favourable sentence at the tribunal of heaven, or screen you from the avenging wrath of an offended God, or even abate your punishment and sorrow in the day of *perdition of ungodly men*?—No verily! nothing will then support and solace you, but the testimony of an unrepenting conscience, and the smiles of your almighty Saviour, a title to his invaluable merits, and to the great and precious promises of his everlasting Gospel.

Let us then be so wise as to *foresee the evil*, and *flee from the wrath to come*: Let us now seek and secure the favour of Christ, our supreme Lord and Judge, that when we come to stand at his awful bar, we may receive a gracious sentence from his mouth; and may appear before him with Joy and Confidence in the day, when he shall come to be *glorified in his Saints, and admir'd in all them that believe.*

To Him, &c.

AMEN.

Preach'd Jan. 8.
1737, 8.

SER.



S E R M O N V.

The Nature and Necessity of Preparation for the Coming of Christ.

II COR. V. 9.

Wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent we may be accepted of Him.

OF all the affairs, that employ the time and captivate the affections of the children of men, none so justly deserve our attention and concern, as a preparation for that awful day, when we must stand before the impartial bar of Christ, and give an account of the things done in the body. This should be the work of our early Years, and engage the strength and vigour of our manly age; but alas! it is commonly delay'd to the dark evening of life, 'till the melancholy decays of nature warn us of our approaching end.

The specious vanities and trifles of the world divert unthinking sinners from a serious application to the one thing needful; they flatter themselves, that *the vision is for many days*, and they shall have time enough hereafter to secure the favour of their Judge.

The deluge of waters broke in upon the old world in the height of their security, *whilst they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage*, and dis-

dispatch'd them in a moment into irrecoverable misery: and this present earth, which is reserv'd for the fire of the last day, shall be destroy'd in as sudden and irresistible a manner. *As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the Son of Man.* When the world is drown'd in sin and security, and dream of nothing but *peace and safety, then shall sudden destruction come upon them, as travail upon a woman with child.*

Therefore our blessed Saviour exhorts his disciples to continual watchfulness and diligence. *Take heed, lest at any time your hearts be overcharg'd with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares; for as a snare will it come on all them that dwell on the face of the earth*.* And every wise considerate man will receive the solemn caution, and avoid the danger of a sudden surprize: Now this can only be done by making it the great business of Life to prepare for the coming of our Lord. This was the practice of *St. Paul*, as we find in our text; and his example is worthy of our careful and diligent imitation. The Point then to be insisted upon is this:

It should be the great study and endeavor of every christian, that he may be accepted of the Lord in the day of Judgment.

In speaking to this Point, I shall

First, Consider what is required of us, that we may be accepted of the Lord in the day of Judgment.

Secondly, Why every Christian should make this his great study and endeavor.

First.

64 *The Nature & Necessity of Preparation*

First. *I shall consider what is requir'd of us, that we may be accepted of the Lord in the day of Judgment.* The case is practical, and deserves our close and diligent attention. I shall only insist on a few general and comprehensive articles.

1. *We must by faith secure a title to the Merits and Righteousness of Christ.* We are all by nature involv'd in the guilt of sin, expos'd to the condemning sentence of the law, and in danger of suffering the vengeance of eternal fire; the holiest of men are encompass'd with innumerable imperfections, and their best performances are defiled with so many blemishes, that should God be strict to mark iniquity, who could stand the fiery trial, and appear with safety at the inlightned tribunal of heaven? Hence the humble Psalmist vehemently deprecates the strict inquiry of justice; *Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord! for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.* And the great Doctor of the *Gentiles*, tho' among the chief of Saints, and an eminent Apostle, renounces all confidence in himself, and counts all things but loss, that he may be found in Christ, not having on his own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through faith in him*. — Not one of the sons of men can perfectly obey the divine commands, nor by any thing that he can do or suffer, appease the infinite displeasure of an holy God: But the expiatory sacrifice of Christ completely answer'd the demands of justice, and by his unspotted innocence he vindicated the honour of the law, and purchas'd eternal redemption for his chosen People.

Now if ever we would be acquitted at the bar of God, and obtain the favour of our impartial Judge, we must plead, *not any works of righteousness that we have done*, but the meritorious obedience and sufferings of our blessed Saviour.

And

* *Phil.* 3. 8, 9.

And that we may have a title to his invaluable merits, we must by faith accept of him as our only Saviour, and acknowledge him as our sovereign Lord and Owner, with an entire dependance on his all-sufficient sacrifice, and an unfeigned desire to obey his excellent precepts; *for he is a Priest upon a throne, a Prince as well as a Saviour*: And none will be sav'd by the merits of his blood, but those that submit to the sceptre of his government.— And happy are they who thus by faith receive him upon the terms of the Gospel; for they are deliver'd from the condemning sentence of the law, and may approach the sacred tribunal of Justice with an humble confidence of approbation and acceptance.

2. *Our natures must be sanctified by the almighty influences of the Spirit, and renew'd after the image of the blessed God.* Man by nature is not only involv'd in chains of guilt, but sunk into the most deplorable state of deformity and pollution; his understanding is darkned by clouds of error and ignorance, and filled with mighty prejudices against the divine and supernatural mysteries of the Gospel: His will is stubborn and refractory, impatient of the yoke of God's authority, and inclin'd to continual rebellion against him: His affections are captivated to the dominion and tyranny of sin, and plac'd upon the most degrading and inferiour objects: In short, the whole man is perversly alienated from the life and service of God, and strongly dispos'd to the most abominable evils.— This is the unhappy character of man in a state of unregenerate Nature.— Hence arises the indispensable necessity of an holy change, to qualify us for the acceptable service of God upon earth, and prepare us for the ineffable glories of heaven.— The understanding must be illuminated by the Spirit of God, to believe the certainty and excellency of things unseen and eternal, to perceive the beauty of holiness, and the equity and reasonableness of the divine commandments.

66 *The Nature & Necessity of Preparation*

ments. The native enmity of the sinner's heart must be subdu'd, and every faculty of the soul brought under a consecration to the service of God. — Till this mighty change is produc'd, the sinner *is dead in trespasses and sins*, and his most perfect services are a stench and abhorrence in the nostrils of an holy God; and therefore he has nothing else to expect, but the awful frowns of his incens'd judge, and the distressing thunders of his avenging wrath.

The Lord Jesus Christ is *of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, the heavens are not clean in his sight, and his angels he chargeth with folly*. None will be acknowledged and accepted by him, in the great day of Judgment, but such as bear the impression of the divine image, who cleanse themselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and are perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. Without this inward purification, the most bright and distinguish'd profession among men will be disapprov'd and condemn'd by our all-seeing Judge. Others indeed may have a name in the church upon earth, and pass for eminent Saints in the sight of the world; but they will be excluded the Sanctuary above, and rank'd among the workers of iniquity, in the day of their decisive trial.

3. *A sincere and impartial regard to the law of God is necessary to final acceptance with our Judge*. Many that boast of an high profession, and vainly triumph in their Gospel-privileges, are hypocritical in their pretences, and partial in their obedience to the laws of Christ. — With the ancient *Pharisees*, they are strict in their attendance upon the divine worship, and zealously attach'd to the outward formalities of Religion; but unjust and oppressive in their dealings, carnal and covetous in their conversations. — While others build their hopes upon a moral and inoffensive behaviour towards men, tho' they are sadly negligent of their obligations to God, and live in an avow'd contempt of

of his worship and ordinances.— A third sort calculate their Religion for the public view, and make a plausible appearance in the Temple, but are strangers to the devotions of the Closet; they liberally dispense their alms, when the sound of a trumpet proclaims their charity, but are fordidly sparing when there is no prospect of gratifying a vain-glorious humour; they are zealous for the Kingdom of Christ, when it will advance their honour and interest, but are cold and indifferent when the great doctrines of the Gospel are fallen under reproach, and boldly assaulted by men of figure and estate.

By such hypocritical pretences as these, multitudes lull themselves into security, and vainly imagine to obtain the favour of God. But alas! his all-seeing eye pierces through every disguise, and marks out the painted formalist, how cautiously soever he may be concealed. A partial obedience to the divine commands will not stand the trial of an enlightned conscience upon earth, nor be approv'd by the unerring verdict of heaven. *If our hearts condemn us of any secret and indulg'd iniquity, God is greater than our hearts and knoweth all things: but if our hearts condemn us not, then we have confidence towards God, and may hope for the divine acceptance.* 1 Joh. 3. 20, 21.

If therefore we would enjoy the testimony of an unrepublishing conscience, and receive the euge of our Judge, we must have a sacred respect to every duty, without exception or reserve; and be the same in the secret closet, when no Eye but that of God and conscience is upon us, as when we stand upon the open theatre of the world, and are encompass'd with a thousand witnesses. We must bear an universal hatred to sin, tho' dear unto us as a right hand and a right eye; and particularly watch and strive against those darling iniquities, which the constitution of our bodies, the disposition of our minds, and our company and business most strongly incline us to the commission of. In fine,

we must not only pay a strict regard to the important duties of piety towards God, but inviolably observe the sacred rules of justice and charity to men. This will afford us a divine support in the darkest hours of distress, and enable us to say with the inspir'd Apostle, *Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.* 2 Cor. 1. 12.

4. *A frequent Review of our lives and actions, and a judging our selves for our sins,* is an happy preparative for the great day of trial. It is the wisdom of persons engag'd in worldly business, frequently to survey their accounts, and enquire into the state of their affairs: And it is equally incumbent on the children of light, to examine into the state of their souls, that they may know what duties they have omitted, what sins they have been guilty of, and what progress they have made in the christian course.— While we tabernacle in flesh, and are surrounded with so many insnaring objects, the best of men will be sometimes surpris'd into sin through the remaining corruption of their natures, or overborn by the strength and violence of temptations.— It is therefore highly necessary that we frequently review our conduct, and compare it with the law of God, the unerring rule of our duty; that so we may be acquainted with our errors and miscarriages.— This will awaken our repentance for our daily offences, and engage us to a fervent application to the blood of Christ for pardon, *that fountain which is set open for sin and for uncleanness.*— This will inspire us with unfeign'd resolutions of amendment, and excite our care and vigilance to avoid those sins for which we have so severely judg'd and condemn'd our selves.— And this has a blessed tendency to keep our consciences clear from indulg'd iniquities, and to prevent that awful surpris, that must seize the impenitent sinner, when the midnight-cry

cry shall awaken him out of his security, and summon him to the tremendous judgment-seat of Christ.

What an unspeakable happiness will it then be, to have our conscience purified from defiling sins, and all breaches made up between God and our souls!—Such may hear the sound of the last trumpet with calmness and serenity of mind, and stand secure amidst the shocks of a dissolving world.

5. *Continual Meditation upon the certainty and solemnity of a future Judgment*, is an excellent means to engage us to a serious preparation for it. There's nothing more highly deserves our serious and attentive regards, and yet nothing that unthinking sinners so industriously banish out of their minds. What subject, of equal importance, can employ our thoughts and engage our attention, as this great and illustrious event? Which will unfold the mysteries of divine providence, clear up the difficulties of his government, and display the perfections of the Deity in their brightest glories.—What are all the dazzling triumphs of the mighty Princes and Generals of the Earth, but childish and despicable trifles, in comparison with the pompous descent of our almighty Saviour, attended with the shining equipage of heaven!—If now we are affected with the appearance of an earthly Judge, attended with the ministers of justice, to enforce the execution of the law, is it not infinitely more reasonable to employ our thoughts upon that vast and most affecting scene, in which all the posterity of *Adam* shall stand before the throne of God, and receive an irrevocable sentence of happiness, or misery, according to their works!—Especially if we consider, that we are all deeply concern'd in this great transaction, and must bear a part in the joys and triumphs, or in the fears and terrors of that awful day. The neglect of this great duty is one cause of the general impiety and wickedness of the world, and makes them presumptuous and secure in the midst of amazing dangers.

We should therefore call off our thoughts from the contemptible vanities of time and sense, fix them upon a future Judgment, and consider its important consequences, that so we may be quickned to prepare for that great and terrible day of the Lord.— I now proceed to consider,

Secondly, *Why it should be the great Study and Endeavour of every Christian to prepare for the day of Judgment*, and that he may then be accepted of the Lord.

Now,

I. It is a work of the greatest *difficulty*, and requires the utmost *self-denial*, *resolution*, and *diligence*. This our Master and Judge hath warn'd his followers of; that they might not please themselves with vain dreams of carnal ease and pleasure in the way to the Kingdom, but might be prepar'd to encounter the hardships that attend the christian life. He hath assured us, that *the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force*: He hath commanded us to *strive to enter in at the strait gate*; for *many will seek to enter in and shall not be able**.

The Duties enjoyn'd upon us, are contrary to the corrupt inclinations of flesh and blood, and require the deepest mortification and self-denial. The carnal mind is enmity to God, impatient of restraint, and madly bent upon those ways that lead to destruction and ruin.— And what can be a greater difficulty, than to offer violence to our depraved natures, to subdue our darling lusts, and maintain a continual war against our selves?

And the difficulty is greatly increased, by the external impediments that attend us. Satan, the grand adversary of souls, shoots his invenom'd arrows, on every side, to wound and destroy us, and uses a thousand unobserv'd and politic stratagems to entice us
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* *Matth.* 11. 22. *Luk.* 13. 24.

from God and our Duty. The men of the world will revile and persecute us for our fidelity and diligence in the discharge of our duty, and practise the most destructive Methods to corrupt and defile us. And is it not a laborious task to withstand the rage of earth and hell, to resist the infection of evil examples, and stem the tide of a degenerate age?— Is it not difficult to oppose the soft enchantments of vice, and escape the corruption that is in the world thro' lust? What manly courage and resolution is required, to subdue the inveterate habits of vice, to conquer our native indisposition to holiness, and to bear up against the subtle insinuations and violent assaults of temptation? Now this must be done by every one that would be faithful to the cause of Christ, and obtain the approbation of his Judge. Therefore we are commanded, *not to be slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord** : and are exhorted *to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure* †.

2. *This Life* is the *only season* allotted for this great work. The foundation of our future happiness must be laid in this world, if ever we expect to receive the reward of future glory. We must now sow the seeds of righteousness, if we would rejoice in a plentiful harvest at the resurrection of the just. The divine life must be begun upon earth, that so it may receive its last and finishing stroke of beauty and perfection in heaven. Now we must arise from the death of sin, and follow Christ in the regeneration: and then we shall hereafter rise unto Glory, *and be accounted worthy to stand before the Son of Man, in the day of his appearance and kingdom*. This is the time of trial, in which we must engage in the christian warfare, *fight the good fight, and continue faithful unto death*, that in the day of Judgment we may give up our account with joy, and receive a crown of Life. For
in

* Rom. 12, 11.

† 2 Pet. 1. 10.

in that day the rewards and punishments will be distributed according to our present spirit and behaviour; and the sentence that shall be pass'd, will be final and irreversibile. No appeal can be made from this high tribunal; no review can be obtain'd in the court of heaven; the Judge will then be inexorable, and the state of all mankind unalterable. Which leads me to say,

3. If *death* surprize us in an *unprepar'd* estate, the day of *Judgment* will be a day of inconceivable *terror* and *amazement*. Unutterable anguish and distress will seize upon impenitent sinners, when they shall *see him whom they have pierced*, and remember the innumerable indignities they have thrown upon him. They will no longer be able to drown the voice of conscience in floods of wine, nor drive away their melancholy thoughts with musick and dancing, with gaiety and entertainment. The Principles of Infidelity, which are now so greedily imbib'd, against the repeated admonitions of conscience and to the reproach of human nature, will then afford but a poor and feeble support. Unbelievers will receive a terrible conviction, that the great doctrines of the Gospel are not the dreams of enthusiasm, nor the subtle inventions of the designing Priest and the crafty Politician. They will find by sad experience, that *God is not to be mock'd*, that his wrath is not to be trifled with, nor the methods of his grace to be insulted and blasphem'd.

What excuse will they plead for their insolent defiance of Heaven, their stupid neglect of the invaluable offers of a Saviour, their obstinate continuance in sin, in opposition to the convictions and strivings of the holy Spirit?—What defence will they make for their contempt of their baptismal vows, and their preferring the pomps and vanities of this world, to the favour of God, and the ineffable joys of his presence?

How will their countenances be appal'd, and their souls filled with terror, when they shall see their almighty Judge, whose authority they have despis'd, whose laws they have disobey'd, and whose merits they have blasphem'd, descending in the clouds of heaven, attended with the dreadful artillery of his wrath, to vindicate the authority of his laws, and punish the contempt of his government!—What confusion and horror will surprize them, when they meet with their sinful and defiled bodies, the ancient partners of their wickedness, which have been the detestable instruments of their profaneness and impiety, their oppression and cruelty, their riot and debauchery!—With what weeping eyes, astonish'd countenances, and trembling hearts, will they stand before the tribunal of Christ, when their secret impurities, their hypocritical disguises, their lewd and wicked intentions, shall be publickly detected and expos'd, to the contempt and abhorrence of the congregation of the righteous!—What distressing agonies and convulsions must seize them, when they shall be condemn'd in the day of trial, and their incens'd Lord shall pass that unalterable sentence upon them, *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!*—If the sentence of an earthly judge is so much to be dreaded, and excites in a condemn'd criminal such bitter lamentations, how inconceivably more terrible will be the final determination of our eternal Judge, which condemns the wicked to endless and intolerable misery!—With what vehemence and importunity will they lift up their cries for that mercy, which now they affront and despise! But alas! their righteous Judge will then be deaf to their loudest intreaties. Once he compassionately called upon them to flee from the wrath to come, and sent his ambassadors to invite them to accept of eternal happiness; but they insolently rejected his invaluable offers, and ungratefully abused the methods of his grace, they
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despised his wise counsels, and disregarded his awful reproofs: therefore *he will mock at their calamity, and laugh when their fear cometh.*—Not all the surprising miracles of his love, not all the bitter agonies and sorrows of his death, not the sacred streams of his blood, which was shed for the redemption of a guilty world, could persuade them to forsake their sins, and devote themselves to his service; but they obstinately retain'd their beloved lusts, and prefer'd their sins before their Saviour: His abused goodness will therefore be converted into fury, and the door of mercy be bolted against them forever.—But I turn to a bright scene, and proceed to say,

4. To those that are found in a state of *favour and acceptance* with Christ, the day of Judgment will be a time of unspeakable *joy and refreshment*. With what satisfaction and pleasure may they, who live soberly, righteously, and godlily in the world, *look for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God their Saviour*, who has loved them with an everlasting Love, chosen them from among the degenerate mass of mankind, wash'd them from their sins in the fountain of his blood, and is coming to receive them to his arms and embraces for ever!

With what extasies of joy and triumph will they salute the happy day, when their glorified Redeemer shall descend to this lower world, in the pomp and character of an incarnate God, clothed with majesty and strength, and attended with all the honours of his exalted state!—How will they rejoice, with joy unspeakable, to behold Him, that for their sakes *made himself of no reputation, became poor*, and pass'd through an amazing scene of the most dismal sufferings, even the Man *Jesus Christ*, seated upon a triumphant throne of glory, and surrounded with a shining croud of *Angels, Archangels, and the spirits of just men made perfect!*

How agreeable a meeting will they have with their ancient *Bodies*; the companions of their meekness, humility and self-denial, which have for so many years been confin'd to the dark and silent grave, and covered with deformity and corruption; but are now rais'd from the dust of death, clothed with immortal youth and beauty, and fitted for a state of perfect innocence and happiness!—How transporting a sight will it be, to behold the goodly Company of the *Prophets, Patriarchs, and Apostles*, and all those brave and generous Souls, who in all ages of the church have sacrificed their lives *for the testimony of Jesus*, and have follow'd their Lord and Master in suffering and patience, in purity and heavenly-mindedness, all united in one vast assembly, and shouting forth the praises of their exalted Redeemer!—How will it refresh them to have their injured innocence publicly vindicated, their secret piety and charity applauded, and their holy thoughts and intentions proclaim'd, to their immortal honour!—But what heart can conceive, what tongue can utter the mighty transports that will possess the Saints, when their God and Saviour shall openly acknowledge them as his friends and favourites, and declare them heirs of eternal Glory!—With what raptures of Joy will they hear that happy sentence pronounc'd upon them; *Come, ye Blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!* after which they shall immediately enter into the heavenly paradise, and *be for ever with the Lord.*

And now upon the whole, since *preparation* for a future Judgment is a work of so much *difficulty* and *pains*,—Since *this* life is the *only* time allotted for this great work,—Since the consequences of an *unprepar'd* state are so infinitely *terrible*, and the advantages of the contrary so inconceivably *joyful*; surely it behoves every Christian to make it his great study and endea-

vor, that he may be *accepted of the Lord* in the day of Judgment.

EXHORTATION.

Wherefore (in the Apostle's words, 2 Pet. 3. 14.) *Beloved, be diligent that ye may be found of your Judge in peace, without spot and blameless.* This is the natural and necessary Counsel, upon what has now been deliver'd unto you: and what more important, than a speedy and unfeign'd compliance with it? Especially if we consider, that the *time* of this great event is reserv'd among the *Secrets* of heaven, and wisely concealed from the most sagacious and inquisitive minds: So that, for ought we know, the Judge may be now standing at the door; and before the dawn of another day the last trumpet may sound, and summon us to the bar of Christ. And considering the infidelity and profaneness, the corrupt principles, and dissolute manners of the present age; we have uncommon reason to believe, that day hastens upon us apace: *for when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith upon the earth?* Luk. 18. 8.

These things may now be received with scorn and banter, and the awful warnings of heaven may be treated as the melancholy dreams of a gloomy and superstitious mind; the Scoffers of the present day may break their impious jests upon Religion, and triumph in their present peace and security:— But we are assur'd from the unerring oracles of God, that *the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up.* 2 Pet. 3. 10.— It is therefore our wisdom and duty to attend to the advice of our Lord (with which I conclude) *Matth. 24. 42, — 46. Watch therefore,*

fore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. Be ye ready; for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh: and Blessed is that Servant, whom his Lord when he cometh, shall find so doing.

AMEN.

Preach'd *March 12.*
1737,8.

SER-



S E R M O N VI.

The Dissolution of the World, a
Motive to universal Holiness.

II P E T. III. 11.

Seeing then that all these Things shall be dissolved, what manner of Persons ought ye to be, in all holy Conversation and Godliness?

THE doctrine of a future Judgment, tho' agreeable to the principles of reason, and confirm'd by the testimony of *Jesus*, the faithful and true witness; has nevertheless been oppos'd and blasphem'd, in all ages, by men abandon'd to their lusts, and given over to a reprobate and impenitent mind. Such there arose in the christian Church, even in the first and purest days of the Gospel. In opposition to whom, *St. Peter* asserts the doctrine of Christ's coming to judge the world, and removes the objections that were made against it. The Ground of their infidelity was the uninterrupted prosperity, that the world enjoyed, notwithstanding its approaching ruin had been so frequently foretold. *Where* (say they) *is the promise of his coming?* for since the Fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. In answer to this, the Apostle sharply reproves them for their wilful

Ignorance; and shows them that the world had *already* undergone such remarkable Changes, as might justly serve to strengthen our belief in those that were yet to come. He tells them, that the delay of Christ's coming did not in the least impeach the truth and faithfulness of God, but was an astonishing evidence of his Goodness and forbearance. *God is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* Then he goes on to confirm our faith in this important Article of Religion, and in the words of our text, directs us a suitable Improvement of this solemn and affecting Subject.

Seeing then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy Conversation and Godliness?

The words contain these two Propositions, which (by divine assistance) shall be distinctly discoursed upon.

First, At the second coming of Christ, *this world shall be dissolved.*

Secondly, The *Consideration* of this awful truth is a powerful *motive* to universal *Purity* and *Godliness.*

PROP. I. *At the second coming of Christ this world shall be dissolved.*

Tho' the world at present makes a beautiful and goodly appearance; and the face of nature seems to wear no marks of a declining age, nor to discover any melancholy symptoms of its approaching ruin: yet all things certainly are hastning to their final period; when this earth shall be destroyed by fire, and all its magnificent Glories expire in flame and smoke.

This has been the universal expectation of the wisest among the *beaten* world, of all sects and opinions, in all ages and nations. Their ancient Philosophers taught this doctrine in their publick Schools; their celebrated Poets made it the frequent theme of their harmonious songs; and scarce any notion has more generally prevailed in the world. But we are not left to collect this important truth from the dark hints of Antiquity, and the doubtful conjectures of the ancient sages: We have *a sure word of prophecy* to build our faith upon, even the infallible predictions of the word of God; where the general conflagration of the world is frequently foretold, and described in the most sublime and affecting language.

Under the *Old Testament*-dispensation we have clear intimations of this solemn truth.— *Moses*, the first of the inspir'd writers. pathetically describes it in his sacred song: *Deut. 32. 22. A Fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn to the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase; and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.*— *David*, the sweet Psalmist of Israel, prophesies of this great event. *Psal. 50. 3. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.* So *Psal. 102. 25, 26. Of old thou hast laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a Garment, as a Vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed, but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.*

The prophet *Isaiab* declares the same doctrine. *Chap. 51. 6. Lift up your Eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath, for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a Garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner; but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.*— And *Daniel* had

a distinct view of this amazing scene in his prophetic Visions.— *And I beheld* (says he) *till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose Garment was white as Snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool: His throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: Thousand Thousands ministred unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.* Dan. 7. 9, 10.— *And Malachi*, the last of the old testament prophets, in the Conclusion of his prophecy denounces this awful threatenng (Chap. 4. 1.) *Behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, and all that do wickedly, shall be as stubble; and the day that cometh, shall burn them, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall neither leave them root nor branch.*

But this great truth is more clearly revealed in the *New Testament*. The Apostle Paul expressly assures us, (2 *Thef.* 1. 7, 8.) *that the Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of Christ.* The Apostle Peter tells us, in our Context, *that the Heavens and Earth which are now, are kept in Store, reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men: And that the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise; and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up.* Thus we find, that *Moses* and the Prophets, *Christ* and his Apostles, foretell the future destruction of the world: not by dark and figurative representations, but by plain and positive testimonies.

Nor is there any thing in the *present state* and *constitution* of the earth, that militates against this doctrine, and renders the belief of it absurd and irrational. On the contrary, the corruptible materials of which this admirable frame is compos'd, the jarring elements

elements contain'd in its capacious bosom, expose it to continual changes and convulsions. It has already past through mighty alterations, which have defac'd its Glory, and destroy'd multitudes of its inhabitants.

Soon after this beautiful fabrick was raised out of darkness and confusion, and the almighty Creator had pronounced of every thing which he had made, *That it was very good*; the whole earth was brought under a *Curse* for the iniquity of man, and from a fruitful *Paradise* was turned into a desolate wilderness, from the seat of innocence and joy it became the abode of guilt and sorrow.

When *all flesh had corrupted their ways*, and the *wickedness of man was great upon the Earth*, God shower'd down a miraculous *deluge of waters*, and swept away the whole world of sinners together.

When the Inhabitants of *Sodom and Gomorrah* had filled up the measure of their sins, and attain'd to the most daring height of Impiety and Lewdness, they were suddenly destroy'd *by fire and brimstone*, and their flourishing cities were turn'd into heaps of desolation and ruin.

And in all ages of the world there have been terrible examples of the divine severity. Whole Countries and Kingdoms have been laid waste, by fire and sword,—by famine and pestilence,—by thunder and lightning,—by storms and earthquakes. These things are awful warnings to a guilty world, and standing evidences of God's just displeasure against the workers of Iniquity. The Judgments that he has executed from time to time, loudly declare the Greatness of his power, and the terrors of his wrath; and may abundantly convince us, that the threatenings of his word are not design'd barely to amuse and terrify us, but will be exactly fulfilled in their appointed time.

And *why should it be thought incredible*, that God who made the world at first, as a monument of his
Power

Power and Goodness, should destroy it at last, to adorn the triumphs of his Justice and Holiness? What can be more reasonable than to suppose, that this Earth, which was design'd for the habitation of man, will be dissolv'd when its Inhabitants are remov'd off the stage, and settled in their everlasting abodes?

By what means this astonishing change will be brought about, is utterly uncertain: but this we know, that there are innumerable fires imprisoned in the bowels of the earth, which frequently break forth with astonishing fury, and have produc'd surprizing alterations in the surface of this Globe; the Air also that surrounds us, is a continual magazine of thunder and lightning, and fiery Meteors; all which afford abundant provision for an universal Conflagration.

We may therefore suppose, that at the time appointed in the decrees of heaven, when the end for which this magnificent theatre was erected, shall be accomplish'd, and the sins of men cry aloud for divine justice, the great Lord of the Universe will issue out his sovereign Orders: at which the mighty stores of fire that have hitherto been pent up in the heart of the earth, shall be broke open, flame out, and rage with irresistible force and fury: all the combustible materials that are contain'd in these inferior heavens, shall be set on fire, and descend in hidious cataracts upon the dissolving world. The beautiful order, that has hitherto subsisted in the works of nature, will then cease, and the whole sublunary world be involv'd in tumult and disorder: The foundations of the earth will be put out of course, and all the admired structures of nature and art shall perish together.

But it is not my design to attempt a description of this great and terrible day of the Lord; it is beyond the capacity of man, to conceive, and the power of language to express the horrors of this amazing Scene. I pass therefore to the other thing proposed, *viz.*

PROP. II. *That the consideration of this important truth is a powerful motive to universal Purity and Godliness. Which will appear, if we consider the following particulars:*

It gives us an *awful* representation of the *Greatness* and *Power of God*.

It shews the *malignant* and *destructive* nature of *Sin*.

It *depreciates* the enjoyments of *this present World*.

It evidences the *necessity* of securing a *more valuable* and *abiding* inheritance.

It *heightens* the terror and solemnity of a *future judgment*. And

It affords a bright discovery of the *love of Christ* in *saving his people* from the ruins of a dissolving world.

Of these in their order.

I. *It gives us an awful representation of the Greatness and Power of God.*

These attributes were wonderfully discover'd, when he first laid the foundations of the earth, stretched the heavens over us as a Curtain, and settled the course of nature with such surprizing regularity and exactness; that its various parts mutually support and assist each other, and all conspire to minister to the convenience and happiness of its numerous Inhabitants. But they will still be more astonishingly display'd, *when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and all the Glory of this goodly system shall be made a prey to devouring flames, for to punish the contempt of his authority, and manifest the fierceness of his anger against a sinful world.*

How irresistible is the *Power* of that God, who made all things by the authority of a Command, and can destroy them in a moment by a frown of his countenance?— How terrible is his *Majesty*, at whose rebuke *the Earth shakes and trembles, and the foundations of the hills are removed out of their place?*—

Who

Who can stand before Him, when once he is angry? Who can support the terrors of his almighty displeasure? Is not the thought of these things sufficient to surprize the boldest sinners, to appale their Countenances, and make their knees strike one against another, when they are giving a loose to their mirth and jollity, and wasting their days in intemperance and debauchery? What infinite madness, and worse than brutal stupidity, are they guilty of, who affront and provoke the great Lord and Governor of the world, upon whom they intirely depend, who can destroy them with the breath of his mouth, and make them the flaming monuments of his righteous indignation? What more necessary for us, than to bow before the Lord our maker, and humble our selves for our innumerable provocations against him? How seasonable is that advice (22 Job. 21.) *Acquaint now thy self with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee.*— How much does it concern us, to serve the Lord with reverence and godly fear; seeing our God is a consuming fire? who tho' he now seems to take no notice of the sins of men, and bears with innumerable indignities, yet he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, and fearfully destroy his implacable Enemies.

II. *The dissolution of the world affords a convincing evidence of the malignant and destructive nature of Sin.*

That Sin is an infinite evil, odious to the blessed God, and attended with the most dangerous consequences, is abundantly evident from the declarations of God's word, and is still further verified by the inflictions of his wrath upon obstinate and impenitent transgressors.— How clearly did the purity of his nature, and the severity of his Justice, shine forth in the terrible punishment inflicted upon the fallen *Angels*? who for one sin were dethron'd from their exalted seats in Heaven, were cast down to the gloomy mansions of hell, and are reserv'd in chains of

darkness to the judgment of the great day.— How awful does the divine displeasure appear in the *curse* pronounc'd upon our *first Parents*, for their primitive apostacy; by which the Glory of the creation was stain'd, the harmony of nature disturb'd, and Man (the Lord of all) was brought under a peremptory sentence of death and misery?— And who can recount the various and distressing *Afflictions*, that are since become the sad inheritance of the sinful children of men?— This may assure us, that *God is angry with the Wicked*, and that he will not suffer the wilful contempt of his authority to pass unpunish'd.

But how illustriously will this truth be revealed by the fire of the *last day*; when this lower world shall be consum'd by the heat of the divine displeasure, and all its adored treasures shall be sacrificed to the jealous resentments of an offended God? For it is sin, that enkindles the fire of God's wrath, and provokes him to destroy the works of his hands. How justly then are they branded with the character of *Fools, who make a mock of sin*, who hug this detestable evil in their bosoms; which has already been attended with such destructive effects, and which will at last set on fire this frame of nature, and sink a guilty world into the lowest hell, *where the smoke of their torments will ascend for ever and ever*? What Consideration can more powerfully engage us to *deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts*? How much does it concern us, to *have no fellowship with these unfruitful works of darkness*, but to flee from the *tents of the wicked*, lest we be defiled with their sins, and *partake of their plagues*?

III. The Consideration of the approaching Ruin of this World, *greatly depreciates all earthly Enjoyments*, and *shows the madness of placing our affections upon such uncertain treasures*.

The world is a strong and prevailing temptation, which wonderfully captivates the hearts of men, and is the unhappy instrument of innumerable pollutions.

Many

Many are so enchanted with wealth and riches, so fond of the pomp and glitter of worldly greatness, so charm'd with the gay amusements and pleasures of Life, that they think of nothing but *setting up their tabernacles here*; and entirely neglect their great and immortal interest: but surely, if we consider the transitory nature of these enjoyments, it is enough to damp the force of worldly temptations, and put us out of conceit with such perishing vanities. Why should we put our trust, and place our happiness, in things that are of so short and momentary a duration; which in a few years at furthest, will vanish out of our sight, and take their leave of us for ever? Our daily experience shows us, that all these beloved advantages are continually upon the wing, and frequently fly from our embraces: but besides the common casualties and adversities of life, to which all things here below are exposed, the world *it self*, with all its grandeur and magnificence, with all its riches and pleasures, is hastning to its *final period*. The time is swiftly approaching, *when the earth, and the works that are therein shall be burnt up*. Then all those tempting objects, which now you so passionately dote upon, and for which you sacrifice all Hope of the favour of God, and an heaven of immortal joys, shall be turn'd into darkness and flame. All the great empires, which have been rais'd by ambition or cruelty, and made such a mighty noise in the earth, shall sink at once into ruin and confusion. All those flourishing cities, which have been the pride and glory of their inhabitants, shall be laid waste and desolate. All the proud monuments of human vanity, which have been rear'd with such infinite toil and expence, shall be levelled with the dust, and *the place thereof shall know them no more*. What an undeniable evidence does this afford us of the little value of all earthly possessions? How should it abate our affections to such vanishing trifles, and give check to our immoderate pursuit of

the world? This is the argument made use of by St. Paul, and carries with it the greatest force and efficacy (1 Cor. 7. 29,—31.) *But this I say, Brethren, the time is short; it remaineth, that they that rejoice, be as tho' they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as tho' they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.*

I proceed to say,

IV. This also shows us *the necessity of securing a more valuable and abiding Inheritance.*

Since the world is such a transient scene, and its most agreeable entertainments are like a morning-cloud, and as the early dew, which will quickly pass away; it is a Matter of no considerable consequence, whether our circumstances be prosperous, or afflicting; whether we are carried through the stage of Life with an easy and pleasant gale, or drove to our long home by storm and distress. Our only concern is, to attend the duty of our station, and fulfil the task assign'd us by heaven; that at last we may safely arrive at the peaceful harbour of happiness and everlasting rest. We are here in a pilgrimage-state, and are bound for the regions of immortality; nothing therefore deserves our anxiety and care, but that which will survive our funeral, and pass over with us into a future world. And, blessed be God, an heavenly and eternal inheritance is offered to our choice, and earnestly recommended to our acceptance: This is the noblest object of our ambition, and should engage the strength and vigour of all our powers.

Now by the Tenour of the Divine Promise, as well as the Nature of Things, this can be obtain'd only by those that *cleanse themselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God; who escape the pollutions of the world, and are renewed after the image of the invisible God. What manner of persons then ought we to be, in all holy conversation and Godliness; that so when all things here*

below

below shall fail us, we may be admitted into a city that has everlasting foundations, whose maker and builder is God; and obtain a crown of incorruptible and unfading Glory!

V. The destruction of the world by fire will *heighten the terror and solemnity of a future judgment*: and so the Consideration of it is a powerful motive to universal purity and holiness.

The wise author of our beings hath implanted a principle of *fear* in the hearts of men, to keep them from security and presumption, to quicken them in their flight from impending dangers. Now what can be more suited to raise this passion in the soul, than the consideration of that awful time, when we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, and have an irreversibile sentence pass'd upon us, according to the nature and quality of our actions? But how astonishingly will the terrors of that day be increased by the final destruction of this lower world? What confusion and distress will seize the sinner, when the heavens from above shall rain down fire and brimstone, and the earth upon which he dwells, shall become one mighty Volcano, and discharge whole rivers of flaming sulphur?

Will it not terrify the hardiest mortals, to see nature struggling in the agonies of death, and themselves encompass'd on all sides with the flames of a dissolving world: *The Sun turn'd into darkness, and the Moon into blood*, and whole cities and countries sinking down in a moment into the fiery abyss below! How will they support these visions of horror and amazement, or whither will they fly for safety and defence? If they ascend to the top of the loftiest mountains, there they will be exposed to the hot thunderbolts of divine fury: If they descend into the gloomy caverns of the earth, there they will be swallowed up in an Ocean of liquid fire. In short, wherever they go, the vengeance of an incensed God will pursue them,
and

and make them the monuments of his almighty displeasure.

And now what more powerful argument can be used with sinful mortals to awaken them out of their impenitence and security? If infinite justice cannot affright them from their sins; if the prospect of a dissolving world leave no abiding impressions upon them; they appear to be lost, beyond all possibility of recovery: and it is to be fear'd, they belong to the number of those hardned wretches, who are resolv'd to storm hell, and take the kingdom of darkness by violence.

VI. This also has a prevailing influence upon the people of God, *as it gives them a bright discovery of the love of Christ, who will save them from the terrors of this amazing day.*

Tho' this will be a day of tribulation and anguish to impenitent sinners, yet it will be a time of joy and refreshment to the Saints. *For the Lord knoweth how to deliver the Godly, and reserve the unjust to the day of judgment to be punished**. St. Paul assures us, that the righteous shall be separated from the wicked, and rescued from the calamity, in which all things else shall be involv'd. *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel and the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive, and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord†*. What an endearing expression is this of the love of God our Saviour? What obligations are we under, to bestow upon him our best and dearest affection? In fine, what mighty encouragement does it afford us now to disentangle our affections from this ensnaring world, to be fruitful in every good work, to have our conversation in heaven;
that

* 2 Pet. 2. 9.

† 1 Thes. 4. 16, 17.

that so we may be accounted worthy to escape all those things, which shall then come to pass, and may be able to stand with confidence before the Son of Man at his appearing.

The APPLICATION of my discourse remains: which I shall dispatch in a serious and earnest Exhortation to several sorts of persons.

I. *Let those that are in Youth, be persuaded by these powerful motives that have been set before them, to all holy Conversation and Godliness.*— You are exceeding apt to banish all serious Thoughts out of your minds, and to imagine that it will be time enough hereafter, to attend to religious Concerns, when you have taken a surfeit of the Gaieties and Pleasures of Life. Youth is naturally unthinking; and strongly inclin'd to sensual enjoyments. Their constitutions are ordinarily firm and robust; not broken with fatigue, impair'd by sickness, or worn out with age. Their pulse beats high, their blood circulates briskly through their veins, and all the powers of nature are in their highest sprightliness and vigour: Their appetites are eager, their passions are head-strong, and so apt to hurry them into all manner of riot and excess, contrary to the sacred rules of virtue and sobriety. They esteem Religion too dark and melancholy an entertainment for the flourishing bloom of life, and fit for none but those whose temper is soured with losses and disappointments in the world, and whose strength is wasted with sickness or age. Hence they give an unbounded loose to their vicious inclinations, and wallow in the grossest sensualities.

But make a pause, I beseech you, in the midst of your mad career, and consider what will be the consequence of your actions; *Know it, that for these things God will bring you into judgment,* and call you to a strict account for your youthful follies. You may

now drink wine in bowls, and sing away your cares, spend your days in mirth, and your years in vanity and pleasure; but these are dying comforts, short-liv'd enjoyments, which will soon end in disappointment and sorrow. The sprightliness of Youth, the strength of your constitutions, is no Protection against the sudden arrests of Death, and the inevitable summons of your almighty Judge. How many of your companions have been cut off in the flower of their days, and dispatch'd into an eternal world, without any warning? And have you any security, that this shall not be your case? On the contrary, have you not the greatest reason to fear, that whilst you are revelling in your intemperate pleasures, and madly pursuing your guilty designs, while you are flattering your selves with the prospect of long life and prosperity, and dream of nothing but peace and safety, the fatal Period will come upon you in a moment, and overwhelm you with swift and unavoidable ruin? *Knowing then the terrors of the Lord, we perswade you,* to break off your Sins by unfeigned Repentance, and get reconciled to God, and prepar'd to die. — O fly to the great Saviour of the world, who alone can secure you from the flames of vindictive Justice: Cry to him most importunately for the powerful influences of his Spirit, to cleanse your polluted Souls; that you may be found of your Judge in peace, without spot and blameless. — But I pass,

II. *To apply this Exhortation to those that are in the Evening of Life, and have hitherto neglected to prepare for the approaching dissolution of all things.*

With what confidence will you, under your heavy Loads of Guilt and Defilement, be able to hold up your heads at the bar of Christ? Can you hope to appear with Safety before his Judgment-Seat, who have hitherto spent your time in the neglect of his Authority, in disobedience to his Gospel, and profane

contempt of his inestimable Blood? Alas, your days decline apace, your Sun is almost set, and *the Night* hastens upon you, *wherein no man can work*. O then seize the flying moments, and trifle no longer with your eternal Concerns; humble your selves in the dust for your aggravated Iniquities, and turn from all your Transgressions. *Fly for Refuge to Christ, and give glory to the Lord your God, before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and before the terrors of a future judgment surprize you. O how will you escape, if you neglect so great Salvation!*

III. Let what we have heard put the *Children of God* upon diligent endeavours to *grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of Christ*, to increase in universal holiness, that they may be better prepar'd for the awful Events they are expecting, and which will surely come to pass.

To quicken our Zeal and Activity in the Christian Life, let us frequently be looking forward to that important day, when our descending LORD shall make *the clouds his chariot, and shall ride upon the wings of the wind*; when the Heavens shall bow before him, and *the rocks shall melt at his presence, and a fire shall go before him to burn up his enemies on every side*.— Consider how vast will be the joy of those holy Souls, who shall be saved from the ruins of a burning world, and be admitted *into the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwells righteousness*. And let the prospect of this happy state engage us to unfainting industry in the service of God our Saviour, to a constant separation from the defiling corruptions of the world, and unto a Care to have our Conversation in Heaven: then we may be assured, that the day of Christ's solemn appearance will be the day of our complete and eternal Redemption. While ungodly Sinners shall tremble at the Presence of their righteous Judge, and at the sight of a dissolving world,

world, we that have serv'd God, and waited for his Son from Heaven, shall be able, amidst this Scene of darknes and horror, to hold up our heads with Joy, and not be ashamed before Him at his coming. — We shall shout unto God with the voice of Gladness, and join in that triumphant Song of Moses and the LAMB: *Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints!*

AMEN.

F I N I S.

E R R A T A.

- P** Age 8. line 32. read of *Moses* —
 P. 14. l. 13. r. *Superstition* —
 P. 38. l. 4. r. *Administred* —
 P. 41. l. 11. r. *Should we* —
 P. 57. l. 33,4. r. *Preservative* —
 P. 69. l. 28. r. *Our sollicitous* —
 P. 74. l. 12. r. *Brighter* —
 P. 79. l. 23. r. *Consideration* —

