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# **PUTTING AWAY EVIL**

**THE**

***GREAT ESSENTIAL***

**OF**

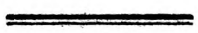
**Religion.**

**IN FOUR SERMONS.**

**BY THE**

**REV. JOHN CLOWES, M. A.**

**Rector of St. John's Church, Manchester, and late Fellow of Trinity  
College, Cambridge.**



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# PUTTING AWAY EVIL

## THE GREAT ESSENTIAL OF RELIGION.

### SERMON I.

“Put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes.”

ISAIAH i. 16.

**E**VERY considerate person, who has been accustomed to any degree of spiritual reflection, must needs have discovered that evil is the great and only enemy of man. He must needs have seen, that it is *evil* alone which separates man from God, and God from man. It is *evil* therefore alone which makes man miserable here, or which can make him miserable hereafter. If evil were removed from man, the life of God and heaven would presently enter into its place, and make man completely blessed; but whilst evil remains with man, the life of God and heaven cannot enter, and therefore he is unblest.

Every considerate person therefore, who has been accustomed to any degree of spiritual reflection, must needs have discovered further, that the great concern of man, as well as the great intention of God respecting man, is to remove evil. All the laws, all the precepts, all the promises, and all the threatenings of God, are of course directed to this great end. To *put away the evil of your doings from before the eyes of God*, is consequently the great essential of all true religion. If this essential be duly fulfilled, all the ends and purposes of religion are accomplished with it; but if this essential be neglected, all is neglected, and religion in this case, whatsoever be its name, or whatsoever its formalities, must needs be a vain and unprofitable service.

The removal of evil then being of such infinite moment to every human being, I am persuaded you will give me a patient and attentive hearing, whilst I endeavour to assist you in a matter of so great importance to your temporal and eternal peace, by shewing,

First, What is to be understood by *the evil of our doings*, which we are commanded of God by the prophet to *put away*.

Secondly, How, or in what manner, we may best fulfil this commandment; and

Thirdly, Why, and in what sense, it is said, *From before mine eyes*.

And, first, as to *the evil of our doings*.

The evil of man's doings is manifestly the evil intention and thought which is in his doings, inasmuch as no doing can be evil, but so far as an evil intention and thought is in it.

The mere *doing* is of the body, being a mere bodily act; but the *evil of the doing* is of the spirit, consisting in its will, its purpose, its meaning, in the execution of any work.

This distinction between the *doing* and the *evil of the doing*, is not in general perhaps sufficiently attended to, and yet it is of the utmost importance that it should be well noted.

Many for instance, suppose they have put away the *evil of their doings*, when they have merely ceased from the external act of evil; whereas it must be plain to every considerate person, that the *evil itself* may remain, although the external act hath been put away; just as it is possible a man may cleanse *the outside of the cup and platter*, and yet *that which is within* may nevertheless be full of all uncleanness.

As for example—it is possible a man may not commit *murder*, or *adultery*, or *theft*, or *bear false witness*, in the external act, and yet in spirit he may still be guilty of all those abominations; the reason is, because the real evil of *murder*, of *adultery*, of *theft*, and of *bearing false witness*, is in the spirit of man, and only so far in the body as it proceeds from the spirit; and therefore, until it be removed from the spirit, as well as from the body, it cannot with any propriety be said to be put away.

It can never therefore be enough considered, that all real deadly evil hath its abode in the spirit of man, and can only be in the body so far as it is derived from the mind or spirit; therefore it is not said in the words of the text, put away your evil doings, but, *put away the EVIL OF YOUR DOINGS*, with intention doubtless to lead us to distinguish well between the *doing* and the *evil* thereof.

For as it is possible that man may cease from external acts of evil, and yet may remain in much evil, in his spirit, so it is possible also he may do many external acts of good, and yet in all those external acts there shall be much evil.

As for example—what can be a better external act than that of prayer to God? And yet who cannot see, that even in prayer to God there *may be* much evil, and always *will be* much evil whilst men pray to the God of purity and truth, with impenitent and impure hearts?

The evil of our doings therefore against which we are warned in the text, is manifestly the evil of the mind or spirit, consisting in the evil of its intentions, purposes and thoughts.

But it will be asked—What is the evil of the mind or spirit? What is the evil of intention, of purpose, and of thought?

I shall answer these questions by other questions.—

What is that in the mind or spirit of man, which in his doings hath respect to himself and his own glory, more than unto God and to His glory? What is that in the mind or spirit of man, which in his daily business and employment, is influenced more by worldly love than by heavenly love? or, in other words, is more anxious about *the meat which perisheth*, than about *that meat which endureth to everlasting life*? What is that in the secret intention, purpose, and thought, of man's heart which seeks rather to be exalted than to be abased, and which, though it professes to believe in the Gospel, yet was never taught to submit itself to

the Gospel-spirit of humility, charity, and devotion to God? What, in short, is that in the mind or spirit of man which is proud, vain, envious, covetous, despising others in comparison with itself, and in all its thoughts, words, and works, consulting secretly its own preeminence more than the good of others? Examine well in yourselves what that principle is, which thus in mind and spirit secretly departeth from, and opposeth God; and you will then know of a certainty what that *evil of your doings* is, which you are required of God by the prophet to put away.

And this leads me to the second point proposed to be considered, viz. *how*, or in what manner we may best fulfil the requirement of God *in putting away the evil of our doings*.

This must be very plain from what has been already said concerning the nature of the evil which is to be put away.

For if the evil of our doings be the evil of our minds or spirits; or, in other words, if it be the evil of our daily intentions, purposes, and thoughts; then who cannot see, that to put away this evil is to remove it out of our minds or spirits, that is out of our secret intentions, purposes, and thoughts?

But you will ask, perhaps, How shall I remove evil out of my mind or spirit? I feel, alas! that my heart is prone to much evil; that I do not seek the glory of God in my intentions, purposes, and thoughts, so purely as I ought to do; that the love of myself, of the world, and the flesh, prevails too often over the love of God and my neighbour. But how shall I put away this evil love, that so a right and heavenly love may ever have rule in my spirit?

The question is of infinite importance; but it has a full answer in these words of the everlasting Gospel—“*Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*”

Consider, I entreat you, and understand this well—Gospel repentance implies, both that you *see* the evil which is in you, and are desirous to have it removed; and if you *see* the evil which is in you, and are *desirous* to have it removed, it then is removed, and is removed so far, or in such a degree, as you *see* it, and *desire* it to be separated from you; and for this eternal reason:—

Nothing properly belongs to you but what you *love*, or what your spirit takes *delight* in, whether it be good or evil. If then you do not love evil, and do not delight in it, you have an infallible sign and proof that evil doth not belong to you, and of consequence that it is removed or separated from you; as, on the contrary, if you find that you still love evil, and take delight in it, you have then a sign and proof alike infallible, that evil is not yet removed, and not yet separated from you.

And here you may see the true cause and ground why the Gospel of JESUS CHRIST, which was intended principally for the removal of evil from man's spirit, that so a righteous and heavenly love might abide therein—you may see, I say, the true

cause and ground why the Gospel presses the great duties of repentance and faith in JESUS CHRIST so powerfully upon men's minds. It is because repentance implies serious examination concerning evil, and a ceasing from the delights of evil, whilst faith in JESUS CHRIST opens a way in the human mind for the admission of that eternal grace, and mercy, and truth, without which, evil can neither be known nor be rendered undelightful and abominable.

And this leads me to the third point suggested to our consideration from the words of the text, viz. Why and in what sense JEHOVAH requires that we should put away the evil of our doings *from before His eyes*.

The *eyes* of JEHOVAH manifestly denote His divine wisdom, His supreme intelligence and omniscience, by virtue whereof He sees and notes whatsoever is intended, thought, and done in the universe of creation.

The penetrating influence of these *divine eyes* are most conspicuous in the human mind, or, in other words, in the interior recesses and hidden chambers of the human spirit, upon which they are ever open; and accordingly it is written, "*His eyes behold the children of men.*"\*

Would we but take the trouble for a moment to enter into ourselves; would we but shut for a while the eyes of our bodies, that we might be more at leisure to open those of our spirits; how should we be surprised to behold these *divine eyes* of the omniscient and all-searching God ever open, and piercing with their divine rays into the very centre of our minds! How should we be at first confounded by their brightness! How should we be astonished, that, though the Scriptures of truth have so plainly pointed out to us these *sacred eyes*, yet we had never noted them before! But above all, how forcibly must we be struck with the awful conviction, that there cannot be an intention of our hearts, howsoever hidden from men; there cannot be a purpose or thought, howsoever secret it may seem to ourselves, but what is under the immediate inspection and notice of these all-exploring *eyes* of the Father of spirits in us!

Here then we may see the true and weighty reason, why we are desired to put away the evil of our doings *from before the eyes* of JEHOVAH. It is because it cannot be put away *effectually*, until it be put away from before these *Divine eyes*. We may remove our evil from the *eyes of men*, that they cannot see it; but unless we remove it at the same time *from the eyes of God*, it is plain to perceive that it still remains in us unremoved.

It is therefore of the utmost concern in the removal of evil, that we examine well the motive, the intention, the principle, leading us to such removal, under the conviction, that the removal will be more or less perfect, according as that motive, intention, and principle, is more or less elevated and pure.

As for example—it is possible for a man *to put away the evil*

of his doings, lest he should suffer in his worldly reputation; lest he should injure his health or character; and lest disgrace should be attended with the loss of gain and honour. But who cannot see, that to put away evil from such motives, is in reality not to put it away, but only to *conceal* it? It is *hidden* indeed, in this case, from the *eyes of men*; but before the *eyes of God* it remains unremoved and conspicuous as before.

Evil, therefore, can never be thoroughly put away, until it be put away from before the eyes of God; and it cannot be put away from before the eyes of God, until God, that is, His mercy, His wisdom and truth, be regarded as the motives and ends for putting it away. Whosoever a man notes evil in himself, and rejects it from this principle because it is contrary to and destructive of the life, the truth, the righteousness, and the peace of God in himself; consequently, because it is contrary to and destructive to his own eternal life and well-being in the kingdom of God, he may then rest assured that it is *fully* and *entirely* put away: and therefore the grand purifying maxim and motive for the removal of all evil from the human heart is, "*How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*"\*

Do you wish then to have all *the evil of your doings put away*, and thereby to be re-instated in the righteousness, the life, and the peace of God? Learn first by serious examination of yourselves, that is, of your secret intentions, purposes and thoughts, in the presence of God, and by the light of His Word, to *discover* your many interior evils. Until you make this discovery, it is impossible that your evils can be removed, for what you do not see and know, how should you put away? Evil unseen and unknown, is the same thing as evil unremoved; but evil that is seen and known, is removable, and therefore the Lord saith by the prophet, "*Cause Jerusalem to know her abominations;*"† and in another place, "*Shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sin.*"‡

But in order to remove evil, it is not sufficient that it should merely be seen and known—to be effectually removed, it must be *hated*, that is, be rendered *unpleasant* and *undelightful*. Therefore it is written again, "*Ye that fear the Lord see that ye hate the thing that is evil.*"§ This is the grand mark or sign of the removal of evil. This is the only sure distinction between the penitent and the impenitent, between the pure and the unclean. The penitent and the pure *hate* and abominate all evil, and so far from finding delight in it, it is their greatest misery:—evil, therefore, with them is removed, because, as was just now observed, what a man takes no delight in, that doth not belong to him. But it is otherwise with the impenitent and unclean—they love evil, and take their ruling delight in it, and therefore evil remains with them, being incorporated with their very life, that is, in their love and affections.

\* Gen. xxxix. 9.

† Ezek. xvi. 2.

‡ Isaiah lviii. 1.

§ Psalm xcvi. 10.

In putting away then *the evil of your doings*, after having made the discovery of it, and noted it, learn next by serious repentance before GOD, to make it *unpleasant* and *undelightful*: For this purpose be sure to view it well by the eternal light, that so you may see how dreadful a thing it is. But inasmuch as you cannot hate evil, only from the love of the contrary good, that is, from the love of GOD and of your neighbour, beg of GOD continually in never-ceasing prayer, to inspire you with the love of Himself, and of all that is connected with Himself. The eternal and supreme GOOD will then enter into your minds, and engage your affections: you will begin to be made sensible of its heavenly joys and delights: you will taste the ineffable blessedness of humility, charity, contentment, submission to GOD, and every other evangelical temper; and with these spirits and powers of heaven within you, you will soon be enabled to triumph over all the contrary infernal powers of pride and vanity, uncharitableness and impatience, with every other anti-christian abomination, till you finally join in that song of the ever-blessed—“*Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.*”\*—AMEN.

## SERMON II.

ON THE CAUSES WHICH HINDER MEN FROM PUTTING AWAY THE EVIL OF THEIR DOINGS.

“*Put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes.*”

ISAIAH i. 16.

**I**N the preceding discourse, it has been shewn what is here meant by *putting away the evil of your doings*; and also what is meant by the *eyes of the LORD*, from before which the evil of your doings is to be put away.

I shall now proceed to consider some of the principal causes, which operate to prevent mankind from fulfilling this most reasonable requirement of a holy God, and thus endeavour to guard you against many received errors and delusions, which at this day so much abound, to the destruction of all true piety and religion.

The first and fundamental cause why men do not *put away the evil of their doings from before the eyes of the LORD* is manifestly this, because they *love and delight in* that evil, so as to make it their ruling satisfaction and gratification, by which means it gets *incorporated* as it were into their life, and becomes *one* with their life; so that to put away evil seems to them like putting away and destroying the very first principle of all their life and being.

This must needs operate as a very powerful cause with men for not putting away the evil of their doings; for who is there

that loves to part with his life, or to put away what is as dear to him as his life? If then any have been so unwise as to take evil into their bosoms, so as to cherish it, and take delight in it, and thus by habitual association with it make it *one* with themselves, it is not to be reasonably expected that they will be easily persuaded to part with their well-beloved child. They will assuredly defend it to the uttermost; they will combat all those truths, whether of reason or of religion, which would endeavour to rob them of what they call their dearest treasures; they will use all kinds of subtlety, and argument, and wit, in opposition to the wisdom of God; in short, they will try every expedient to secure their life, that is, their evil love.

And here it may be well to note the peculiar artifice which evil ever uses to defend itself, and to secure its strong holds in the mind of him who takes delight in it. It knows very well that the Word of God is directly against it, and that it cannot stand before the light of the eternal truth. Its utmost exertion therefore is put forth in opposing this its greatest adversary; but as it cannot do this successfully by strength, it is forced to attempt it by cunning. Its method therefore is this:—it takes the truths of the Word of God, and perverts them so as to make them favour itself; or, as it is described in the sacred records, it *changes the truth of God into a lie*;\* *it puts darkness for light and light for darkness*;† thus it *makes the Word of God of none effect*‡ by its false and perverse interpretations; and in this manner it seeks to shield itself against the stroke of that invincible Word of the eternal truth, which was intended for its destruction, and which in this view is called, and said to be, *sharper than a two-edged sword*. §

I shall endeavour to point out some particular instances of this method of perverting the truths of God's Word, by which evil, and they who delight in evil, have in all ages endeavoured to make void the wisdom of God, and thus to screen themselves from its unerring scrutiny and severe judgment.

The first instance I shall mention of this sort, is in regard to the mercy of God.

All, who are in the least acquainted with the Sacred Scriptures, have heard of the mercy of God; or, in other words, how God is merciful to sinners, and in His infinite loving kindness forgiveth their sin; for this is one of the great fundamental truths of the Gospel.

But mark, now, how they who delight in evil, and on that account refuse to put away the evil of their doings, pervert this blessed evangelical truth concerning the mercy of God.

They reason thus with themselves:—God is merciful, and ever ready to forgive *us* whensoever we call upon Him, notwithstanding all our evils and our evil delights. Why need we then be so much concerned about evil, when we have only to call upon God, and He will at all times hear and pardon? And if our

\* Rom. i. 25. † Isaiah v. 20 ‡ Mark vii. 13. § Rev. i. 16. Heb. iv. 21.



iniquities be pardoned, is not that sufficient for us? And cannot we call upon God at any time, even at the hour of death, and say, "God be merciful to my sins;" and will He not then look upon us in His mercy, and forgive us our sins? And shall we not be quite clean and pure from sin, if God forgives us? Can any evil hurt us if we have pardon with God? What necessity then for being so exact and strict with ourselves in examining the evil of our doings, and putting it away, when God of His mercy can put it away at any time, without any labour of our's?

I have been more particular in describing the mode of reasoning concerning the mercy of God thus used by those who delight in evil, because there is too much room, alas! to believe, that it is at this day most exceedingly prevalent in the minds of many, even of those who call themselves Christians, and who profess to believe the Gospel, and that numbers are deluded and destroyed by it.

But let us examine the ground of this reasoning, and see how far it may be safely depended upon.

You, who delight in evil, and who on that account refuse to put it away, say that *God is merciful and ready to forgive*. It is true, and there cannot be a greater truth, God is most merciful, and He is ever ready and willing to forgive. But you add, *therefore He will forgive us, whensoever we call upon Him, notwithstanding all our evils and evil delights*. But what is it you mean by *calling upon Him*? Do you mean by this expression, whensoever you pronounce His name only with your lips? Do you mean by it, whensoever you address yourselves to Him in the mere *external language* of prayer? If this be your meaning, nothing surely can be more untrue, than to say that God will forgive you *whensoever you call upon Him*; and for this plain eternal reason, because God Himself hath said concerning all such *external* calling upon Him, out of impure, that is, impenitent hearts, "*When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide Mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear.*"\*

But you say further, "*Why need we then to be so much concerned about evil; when we have only to call upon God, and He will at all times hear and pardon us?*" And do you urge this then as a reason for not being *concerned about evil*, because you have only to call upon God, and He will hear and pardon you? Alas! what a lamentable and gross ignorance doth this argument betray in you concerning the nature of evil, as well as concerning the mercy and forgiveness of God! For do you know what evil is? Do you know that evil is internal defilement, that it is spiritual death, that it is separation from and opposition to all the goodness, and mercy, and wisdom of God? Do you know, therefore, that on every evil, as for instance, on the evil of pride, of vanity, of covetousness, of envy, of malice, of hatred, and of revenge, and every other anti-Christian spirit, all those direful characters of mischief and misery are written?

Do you know further, that evil, whilst you delight in it, is incorporated in your very life, that it is the very essence of your being, that it is rooted and lives in you, being an infernal fire which kindles all your affections, and sets at work all your thoughts? And do you say then, that you need not be *so much concerned about evil?* Do you say, that you *have only to call upon God, and He will hear and pardon you*, whilst yet you continue to delight in evil? Alas! what can the mere pardon of God do in such a case for your defiled spirits? Can the mere pardon of God, think you, make you in an instant clean and pure? Can the mere pardon of God in an instant change your life and your love from infernal to celestial, from natural to spiritual, from earthly to heavenly? If this were the case, do but consider with yourselves, how you must needs charge all evil and the condemnation thereof upon God Himself—for if a mere act of God's pardon can remove evil, then who cannot see that God, in *not pardoning*, is the sole cause why evil is not removed?

But further—reflect only a moment seriously with yourselves, and you will see plainly, that all the aforesaid reasoning concerning the mercy of God, tends to undermine the whole foundation of the Gospel, and to make the doctrine of JESUS CHRIST of none effect. For what is more strongly insisted upon in the Gospel than repentance and keeping the commandments of God? Doth not JESUS CHRIST expressly say, “*Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish?*” \* and doth He not say also, “*If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments?*” † and what is *repentance*, and *keeping the commandments*, but parting from the *love* of evil as well as from the *practice* of it, because evil is opposite to God? To say then that man may be saved by the mere mercy of God, without putting away evil, and ceasing from the delights thereof—what is this but making void the great duties of repentance and keeping the commandments? And if repentance and keeping the commandments be made void, what then is religion, what is faith, what is trust in the mercy of God, but empty sounds, vain dependencies, unprofitable professions? In short, to say that man may be saved by the mercy of God, whilst he loves what is contrary to God—what is this faith but that very same which is described by the prophet in that emphatical language, where he saith, “*They hatch cockatrice eggs, and weave the spider's web; he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which is crushed, breaketh out into a viper?*” ‡ For what but a *viper*, venomous and most destructive, can come forth from that faith which trusteth to be saved from evil, without putting away evil?

I should now proceed to point out some other methods, whereby they who delight in evil, and are unwilling on that account to put it away, pervert the great and holy truths of the Word of GOD in defence of the evil of their doings; but the present time will only permit me to suggest a caution or two on what has been already said. And, first,

\* Luke xiii. 3, 5.

† Matt. xix. 17. ‡ Isaiah lix. 5.

Let it not be thought, that in exposing as above the vanity of a false dependence on the mercy and forgiveness of God, it is intended to set any limits to those adorable attributes of the Divine Being.

So far from it, it is designed rather to extend the operation of those blessed attributes, by striking at the root of that which alone contracts and limits them.

For it can never be enough considered, that nothing limits the mercy of God, but evil unrepented of and unforsaken. To say then that the mercy of God can save man without man's repentance, or departing from the love of evil, is in reality to contract the mercy of God because this is to keep man in a state in which the mercy of God cannot be extended to Him: but to say on the contrary, that man cannot be saved without departing from the love of evil, is in reality to extend the Divine Mercy, because this is to call man to a state capable of receiving and being blessed by it.

Secondly, Let not the humble, the converted, and penitent disciple of the merciful Jesus, be discouraged from applying to Him for mercy and forgiveness, because He is told that mercy cannot save the impenitent.

Let it therefore be well remembered, that though there is a groundless and unprofitable dependence on the mercy of God, there is also a dependance which is sure and stable, which is blessed and most beneficial.

Would you know what this latter dependence is; Go then unto JESUS CHRIST in the spirit of a true repentance and conversion, to receive from Him the greatest possible blessing—humble yourselves before Him under a sense of the manifold evils both within you and without you, by which you are encompassed—beg of Him the grace to enable you to search out and to put away all evil love—make use of the grace which He gives you, because He gives it you for use, and unless you use it, it cannot profit you, and you cannot use it but in the way of renouncing and abstaining from evil—search out well by His given grace all your evil loves, all your vain affections, all your foolish and unjust thoughts, which are contrary to Gospel humility, charity, purity, the true love of God and your neighbour; beg further of Him to inspire you with a righteous, pure, just, and holy love, in the place of that defiled love which you thus intreat Him to remove—apply in this manner unto JESUS CHRIST for His adorable mercy—you will then assuredly soon experience, to your unutterable comfort, this great Gospel truth, that though the careless and impenitent shut out the mercy of God from themselves by their unremoved evils, yet in the bosoms of the humble, the pure, the penitent disciples of the holy JESUS, the gate of His mercy is ever open, and to them is permitted to sing, with confidence, the blessed song, “*My trust shall be in the tender mercies of God for ever and ever.*”\*

AMEN.

## SERMON III.

ON THE CAUSES WHICH HINDER MEN FROM PUTTING AWAY THE EVIL OF THEIR DOINGS.

*“Put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes.*

ISAIAH 16. 1.

**I**N the two preceding discourses, I have endeavoured to shew what is here meant by the *evil of your doings*, and also by the *eyes of JEHOVAH*, from before which we are required to *put it away*.

I have further endeavoured to point out the principle cause which operates to prevent men from complying with this reasonable requirement of a holy God. And here occasion was taken to expose the methods by which evil men, in all ages, have laboured to defend themselves in their evils. One of the most distinguished of those methods, it was shewn, is the perversion of the sacred truths of God's Word, whereby evil, or evil men, would endeavour to make those truths no longer oppose, but rather favour their iniquitous and ungodly purposes.

Having already pointed out this perversion in one striking instance, viz. that of the *divine mercy*; I shall now proceed as was proposed, to point it out in another instance equally striking, viz. that of *the merits of the great REDEEMER*.

It is a great evangelical truth, that the Great REDEEMER, whose name is JESUS CHRIST, alone hath *merit*, and that by His *merit* alone man is saved. Hence it is written, *“Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.”\**

But observe now, how they who delight in evil, and on that account are unwilling to do the work of repentance, and thereby put away evil, pervert this great evangelical truth to their own destruction.

They reason thus with themselves—Why need we be so much concerned about evil in ourselves, when Christ, by His sufferings and death, hath taken it away? Are not we cleansed from sin *by the blood of Christ*? Was not He manifested to *take away the sins of the world*? Was not He made a *full, complete, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction*, for iniquity and transgression? Have we not reconciliation with the Father therefore, through His merits? And if we are reconciled with the Father, and cleansed from sin by the blood of Christ, what occasion then for any *other* means of reconciliation and purification? What necessity for *our* repentance, for *our* putting away the evil of our doings, for *our* labouring to purify *ourselves*, when Christ has already by His merits effected all this for us?

\* Isaiah liii. 4, 5.

Thus do they reason, who delight in evil, and who are unwilling on that account to put away their evil. The reasoning, it must be confessed, is *specious*, and carries in the face of it a *semblance of truth*: and so is all reasoning in favour of what is evil; and if it were not *specious*, if it did not carry with it a *semblance of truth*, it would not answer its purposes; it would not satisfy the sinner's mind; it would not be powerful enough to remove scruples of conscience; it would not leave him at full ease in the love and practise of what is contrary to the laws of God.

But is all reasoning *true*, because it is *specious*, and has the *semblance of truth*? Cannot vice reason in its own favour as well as virtue? And cannot vice call to its aid *specious* arguments? Cannot it *put darkness for light, and light for darkness*; and thus impose upon and deceive by false appearances? Surely he is little acquainted with the deceitful nature of sin in the human heart, who doth not know that it is as ingenious as it is wicked in covering itself under the mantle of *fair semblances* and endeavouring to delude by *artful persuasions* and *perversions*.

Let us not then trust to all reasoning, because it *appears* just. Let us rather examine carefully whether it *be* just, especially in a matter of such momentous concern as our eternal salvation. For what wise man would choose to risque his everlasting welfare on vain sophistry, or build his best hopes on the sandy foundation of ingenious argument?

But will the above reasoning concerning the merits of Christ stand the test of serious examination? Let us bring it to that test, and try whether it will stand or not.

You, who delight in evil, and have never done the work of Gospel repentance, by examining yourselves, and putting away such evil delight, say "that you need not be so much concerned about evil in yourselves, since Christ, by His sufferings and death, hath taken it away."—But let me ask, *What* evil hath Christ taken away by His sufferings and death? Do you suppose that He has taken away the evil of the *impenitent* and *disobedient*? Did you ever see it written that Christ died to put away the sins of those who would not put away sin in themselves? If so, why did Christ preach repentance to the world, as a necessary preparation to receive the remission of sins? For if by the merits of His death alone the sins of all men indiscriminately were remitted or taken away, then what occasion for the duty of repentance, or indeed for any other duty?

But you urge, further, "*Are we not cleansed from sin by the blood of Christ?*"

Yes, most assuredly, provided that by repentance, faith and obedience, you are partakers of that blood. But do you imagine that the blood of Christ can cleanse you from sin, whilst you continue to delight in sin? Do you imagine that the blood of Christ was shed to keep you in a state of impenitence, and thus to bind the chains of iniquity faster upon you? Doth not Christ Himself still declare, notwithstanding the shedding of His

blood, "*Depart from Me ye that work iniquity?*"\* And would Christ, think you, have said, *Depart from me*, if His blood alone had been sufficient to cleanse them from sin? How then can you be so exceedingly blinded as not to see, that the blood of Christ cleanseth only the penitent, the humble, the sincere, who by obedience depart from all iniquity, and become converted thereby unto God; whilst it is of no efficacy at all to the impenitent and disobedient?

Besides—do you know what is properly meant by the *blood of Christ*, in which you thus repose a vain and destructive confidence? Perhaps you understand, by the expression, only that *material* blood which was shed upon the cross. But if your idea of the blood of Christ goes no further than this, excuse me when I tell you plainly; that you are in utter ignorance of what is meant in the Sacred Scriptures by the *blood of Christ*. For the *blood of Christ*, as spoken of in that Holy Book, if carefully examined, you will find, is an expression, to denote the whole life, and spirit, and temper, and process of Christ, as manifested in the great and astonishing work of man's redemption. The *blood of Christ*, therefore, is somewhat most spiritual, most holy, most divine; and to conceive of it as being merely *material*, is to confound the blood of Christ with the blood of a creature—it is to make what is divine, merely human: what is spiritual merely corporeal. Besides hath not Christ Himself said in regard to this sacred blood, "*Except ye drink the blood of the Son of Man, ye have no life in you?*"† Consider, therefore, the blood of Christ cannot profit you, unless you *drink it*; and how can you drink it, whilst you continue through impenitence to drink only of that cup of abominations and unclean delights, which it was the intention of the blood of Christ to destroy in you?

But you urge yet further—*Have we not reconciliation with the Father through the merits of Christ?*—I should be extremely sorry to say any thing which had the least tendency to lessen the adorable and inexpressible merits of Christ, or to weaken a well grounded trust in those merits; but when you would suggest, that the merits of Christ *alone* are sufficient to reconcile you unto the Father, separate from any way of preparation in the way of repentance, and putting away evil, on your parts, I must be plain here to tell you, that it is *you*, and not *I*, who would lessen the merits of Christ, and weaken a well-grounded trust therein. For be at the pains only to recollect seriously with yourselves a moment, and see, whether by such a suggestion you do not entirely set aside the merits of Christ, and make them of non-effect. For what was the merit of Christ, and in what did it most particularly consist? Was it not in this, that He wrought the great work of redemption: that by dreadful combats endured in His own person, He removed from man the powers of darkness; that He brought near to Him, by the same

\* Matt vii. 23.

† John vi. 53.

process, the powers of heavenly light and life; that He set man an example of all that holiness, purity, and obedience, which is necessary to effect his return to God: that thus he made salvation possible to the penitent and faithful, which would otherwise have been for ever impossible? And if such were the merits of Christ; if they were thus calculated to rescue man from the dominion of sin, and bring him back to the bosom of his GOD in the spirit of a true repentance and conversion; are you bold enough to continue yet in sin, pleading these merits? Can you look God in the face, and say, God be merciful to my sin, to my pride, to my covetousness, to my worldly love, to my sensuality, to my impure affections, thoughts, and works, for the merits of thy Son, when at the same time you never were at the pains, or even took a single thought, of removing from your hearts and lives such a load of iniquity? Do you not perceive that by such strange folly you entirely frustrate all the designs of Christ, and of consequence all the merits of Christ?—For if it was the design and merit of Christ, to make your deliverance from evil possible, and thus to enable you to regain a righteous, holy, blessed and heavenly nature, by conjunction with Himself; then how can you more effectually frustrate that design, and make void that merit, than by continuing impenitent in the love and the life of that very evil nature, which the design and merit of Christ was principally calculated to destroy?

To conclude.—We read in the book of the Revelations this remarkable circumstance, that when *“the fifth angel sounded, he opened the bottomless pit, and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth; and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.”*

These words have a manifest relation to some dire and destructive persuasions, which were to originate in the kingdom of darkness, and to prevail in the church in the latter days.

I shall not waste your present time with inquiring particularly what *all* those persuasions might be. I wish more immediately to suggest, is not this *one* of them, to believe we may be saved by the merits and blood of Christ, without repentance, without putting away evil, without examining ourselves concerning evil, without applying earnestly to the meritorious Redeemer for grace to lead new lives, that is, lives of charity, purity, peace, and well doing? For can any persuasion answer more exactly to the above description than this? Can any tend so much to *darken the sun and the air*; or, in other words, to destroy spiritual life, and spiritual light? Can any by its power resemble so much the *power of a scorpion*, which is, first to *sting*, and then to *kill*?—Beware then of such a persuasion, as you would of a poisonous scorpion, or of the darkness of the bottomless pit; and if you would know the real merits of the Great

Redeemer, and experience in your own bosoms all the unspeakable comforts thence resulting, begin then with the practise of the prophets's advice in my text, "*Put away the evil of your doings from before His eyes* ; and thus drawing nigh unto Him, you will soon be made sensible of the greatness and the blessings of His merits and of His salvation.—AMEN.

#### SERMON IV.

ON THE CAUSES WHICH HINDER MEN FROM PUTTING AWAY THE EVIL OF THEIR DOINGS.

"*Put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes.*"

ISAIAH i. 16.

**I**N the preceding discourses on these words, the nature of the evil here spoken of, hath been considered and pointed out; as also what is to be understood by the *eyes* of God, from before which it is to be *put away*.

It hath been further shewn, what is the principal hindrance on the part of man against complying with this reasonable requirement of a holy God; and how, in order to evade the force of this purifying law, he is ever labouring to pervert the great truths of the Sacred Scriptures, in favour of his own impenitence and love of evil.

Having already considered this *perversion*, as practised in two instances, viz. in regard to the *mercy of God*, and the *merits of Christ*, I shall now proceed to consider it as practised in another instance, viz. in regard to what is called in the Sacred Scriptures *faith* or *belief*.

Many excellent things are spoken in the Book of God concerning the evangelical virtue of *faith*. Thus the Lord saith to the penitent Mary, "*Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace?*"\* and in like manner to the woman who was diseased with an issue of blood, "*Daughter, be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole.*"† To the same purpose He exhorts His disciples in another place to "*have faith in God;*"‡ and to encourage them the more earnestly to seek after this wonderful grace, He saith again, "*All things are possible to him who believeth;*"§ and further, "*He who believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.*"||

Numberless other passages might be adduced, if needful, to shew the very high estimation in which the principle of *faith* or *belief*, is held in the Sacred Writings, and how necessary a principle it is towards the salvation of man.

But mark now how the impenitent, who delight in evil, and who on that account were never at the pains to do the work of repentance by *putting away the evil of their doings*, pervert this holy and heavenly doctrine concerning *faith*.

\* Luke vii. 50. † Matt. ix. 22. ‡ Mark xi. 22.—In the original it is *the faith of God*. § Mark ix. 23. || John iii. 36.



They reason thus with themselves—If this be the case that we are saved by *faith*, what occasion then for the purifying and troublesome work of *repentance*, and *putting away evil*? If God hath declared that it is sufficient for salvation to *believe* in His Son, why need we add to this declaration by making any thing else necessary? We believe in the Son of God; we repeat the creeds of the church; we assent to all the doctrines of the Gospel; we therefore have faith; and since Christ Himself hath declared that faith is saving, we have confidence in Him that we are saved through this faith; and to make salvation depend on repentance, or on any other duty, is to take away from the excellency and supereminence of this faith.

Thus do the impenitent argue; and perhaps since the first promulgation of the Gospel unto this day, there hath been no argument urged, which in its tendencies is more delusive and more mischievous: perhaps few Christians have escaped altogether unhurt by it; it is so much adapted to favour the natural reluctance of man to oppose his corrupt nature, that the generality, alas! have a strong party in their own bosoms to favour the delusion. Salvation by *faith alone*, or, what is the same thing, by an assent of the understanding to some particular form of doctrine, independent of any *change in the life*, is so easy a way to heaven, that it is not to be wondered at, that in all ages so many have been found willing to walk in that way. Hence this specious reasoning, it is to be feared, hath affected, not only the hardened and the impenitent, but also the well-disposed and sincere Christian; and possibly there are none of us, but who, in a greater or less degree, have drunk its deadly poison; possibly we should all of us have attained to greater measures of holiness, in the fear and the love of God, and a more perfect separation from the powers and principles of evil in our corrupt natures, if we had not been more or less deluded by the above argument concerning the efficacy of *faith alone*.

But the grand question is, Will *faith alone* save us at the last day? When we stand in the judgment before the great and holy God, will it be sufficient for us to say, Lord, we have *believed* in Thy name; we have *assented* to all the truths of Thy Gospel? Will not the Lord then answer us, But have ye *lived* as ye say ye *believed*? Have ye *practised* what ye say ye *assented to*? Have ye done the work of repentance in *putting away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes*, as I enjoined you? And if we have not so *lived* and so *practised*, and so *put away evil*, how shall we then be confounded; and what shall we be able to reply, when He saith further, *Depart from Me all ye workers of iniquity!*

The grand question therefore is, Will *faith alone* save us at the last day? Is the above reasoning of the impenitent, therefore, concerning the efficacy of such a faith, to be safely depended upon?

Let us bring this matter to the test of sound reason, and of the uncorrupted sense of the Sacred Scriptures, that so we may no longer be deceived, or even doubtful, in a point of such infinite moment; but distinguishing clearly between the true and the false, between the genuine and perverted meaning of the Word of God, may avoid all crooked and dangerous paths, and may fix our steps firm in the straight and sure way that leads to the heavenly Jerusalem.

You, who delight in evil, and on that account have never done the work of repentance in putting away evil, say that you are saved by *faith alone* without repentance; and you urge, in defence of this your argument, the case of Mary, to whom the Lord said, "*Thy faith hath saved thee*;" and also the case of another woman, to whom the Lord in like manner declared, "*Thy faith hath made thee whole*."

It is most true; the Lord did ascribe to those two women, the virtue of an *all-saving and all-healing faith*, and there is every reason to believe that their faith was of this character and description. For it appears plainly in them both to have been a *faith working by love*, and joined with a sincere repentance in the fear of God, and on this account the Lord ascribes to it the power of healing and of salvation.

But permit me to ask, Is the faith, on which you depend, of this character and description? Is it a *faith working by love*, and joined with a sincere repentance in the fear of God? If it be so, you may then rest satisfied that it is a true, evangelical, and saving faith, and you cannot possibly place too much dependence upon it; but if it be *not* so, if it doth *not work* by love, and is *not* joined with sincere repentance in the fear of God, then give me leave to tell you, that your faith is as unlike Gospel faith, or the faith to which Jesus Christ imputes so much saving virtue, as darkness is unlike to light, or as the faith of devils is unlike the faith of angels.

Your great mistake therefore lies here—you misapprehend what Jesus Christ meant by that *faith*, or *belief*, which He makes a *saving faith* or *belief*. You conceive that He meant by it only an assent of the understanding to the doctrines which He taught, and that all therefore are in the sure way of salvation, who profess in this sense their belief in the Gospel, and in the name of the great Redeemer.

But is it possible you should thus mistake the words of Jesus Christ, and debase that holy principle of faith which He so much commends and exalts? Is it possible that you should not see, that the faith, which the Redeemer speaks, is something more than mere opinion or speculation? Can you conceive, that when He said to the penitent Mary, *Thy faith hath saved thee*, He meant only to inform her, that her *sentiments were right*, that she had *just and proper ideas*, and that these had wrought her salvation? Or is it not much more reasonable, and more agreeable to the plain and obvious sense of the Word of God, to sup-

pose, that by those consolatory words to the humble Magdalene, He intended to acquaint her with a principle in herself, higher than herself, and higher than her sentiments, from whence her salvation was derived? As if He had said, Mary, *thy sins are forgiven thee*; thou art saved henceforth from all the power thereof; but dost thou inquire whence this thy great salvation cometh? Be it known unto thee, it is from thy *faith in Me*. It is from that divine principle in thyself, by which thou hast believed in My divine power: this belief hath led thee to hate thy sins, and to turn in repentance unto Me as thy God and Saviour: it hath changed thy whole heart, and soul, and life, and transformed thee into a new creature; be it therefore further known unto thee, that this *thy faith*, thus converting thee from thyself and thy own evils, to take refuge in Me, and to place thyself under My perpetual guidance, *hath saved thee; go in peace.*

Which now, let me ask, do you think the most reasonable interpretation of the sense in which the Lord meant to apply the term *faith*, as addressed to the penitent Mary? Shall we say that He designed by *faith* nothing but *notion*, but *opinion*, but the *exercise of thought*, and the *expression of the lips*, which too often, alas! passes amongst men for faith? Shall we say that the Great Redeemer, who came to call man to the recovery of a new and heavenly life, and who for that blessed purpose called Him first and principally to *repent*, or, in other words, to resist all the corrupt workings of his old life—shall we say that this Redeemer would frustrate His own blessed purpose, by declaring it sufficient for salvation to take up a *new opinion*, and repeat a *new creed*? Or, shall we not rather say, that this God of truth and wisdom was ever consistent with Himself, and therefore, that when He spake of being saved by *faith*, He must needs mean a faith, not separate from repentance; not disjointed from man's life, that is, from his love; not leaving him a slave to the evils of his corrupt nature; not hereby a dead, a barren, an unpurifying and unprofitable faith; but he must needs mean a faith working according to the excellency of its divine origin—a faith which being not of man, but of God, must necessarily operate according to the order and counsel of God; consequently a faith, doing that which God ever designed it should do, and which no other power in heaven or in earth can do, viz. delivering man from his corruptions, rescuing from the powers of darkness, unbinding the chains of his abominable lusts, and thus by leading him in the ways of repentance, humility, the fear and the love of God, setting him finally at liberty to regain his long lost purity, rest, and peace, in the bosom of his Redeemer?

To conclude:—It appears from what has been said, that the term *faith*, or *belief*, as used in the Sacred Scriptures, is subject to much mistake and misapprehension; and that it hath been so mistaken and misapprehended in all ages by those who wished to have a religion which would leave them at ease in their natu-

ral evils, rather than a religion which would purify them from their evils.

Beloved, tell me to which of these two characters does *your* religion answer, and I will then tell you of a certainty what your notion of *faith* is. Are you seeking a religion which shall leave you quiet in the bondage of corrupt affections, rather than a religion which shall destroy that bondage? Your notion of *faith* in this case will necessarily be as low and degraded as your religion, and you will fall into the monstrous absurdity of believing yourselves in the *faith*, and consequently in the way of salvation, for no better a reason than because you can repeat a *creed*, or say your *catechism*. But if you are seeking a religion which shall do for you what all true religion was designed to do, and what nothing but true religion can do, viz. purify your corrupt natures, and renew you in a heavenly and godlike nature, by effecting your conjunction with God, your notion of *faith* will then, like your religion, be pure, just, edifying, and heavenly. You will see that all genuine *faith* cometh from God, that is, from the Lord Jesus Christ, as its adorable fountain, and is His perpetual gift to man. You will see further, that as its *origin* is pure and holy, so is its *operation*; and that wheresoever it is rightly received, it conducts the devout soul in the paths of penitence, purification, and separation from evil, back again to the bosom of its God. You will see therefore that the saving principle of Gospel *faith* is not a mere notion, or speculative opinion, such as the wicked may entertain as well as the righteous, but that it is a most holy, sacred, and heavenly principle, incorporated in and influencing the very life, and soul, and mind, and body, of him who is happy enough to receive and submit to its blessed guidance. You will see therefore, lastly, to your unspeakable edification, that *Gospel Faith*, *Gospel Repentance*, and *Gospel Obedience*, always go hand in hand; and that to endeavour to separate the one from the other, is to destroy them all. Thus will your *faith* be like that of the penitent Mary of old, and it will be attended also, with the same effects: it will introduce you, as it introduced her, into the presence of Jesus Christ, and lay you low with her at His feet: it will also incline this God of mercy to be gracious to you, and you will presently hear from Him those words of unutterable consolation, which once sounded so joyfully in the ears of the favoured Magdalene, *Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.*

AMEN.

