

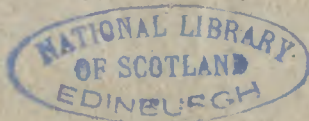
THE
EVERLASTING LOVE OF GOD,
AND
MARY'S GOOD CHOICE:



BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF
TWO
SERMONS,
ON
JOHN iii. 16, 17. & LUKE x. 42.

Preached by the Late
Rev. Mr. JOHN WELCH,
Sometime Minister of the Gospel at Ayr.

FALKIRK:
PRINTED BY T. JOHNSTON.
1816.



A
S E R M O N

ON

JOHN iii. 16, 17.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.

THE Lord's love and care to us has declared itself many ways, and especially in this point, that this privy conference with Nicodemus, spoken at this time for our consolation, it hath pleased the Lord to put it up in register, that it may be the consolation of many; and suppose it was privy, and in the night, yet it hath pleased the Holy Ghost to bear record of it, that all believers, to the end of the world, may have their consolation in it.

Now, in these verses read, is,

I. The fountain of our salvation, The Love of God.

II. There is the means whereby he has uttered it, which is, by the sending of his Son to be humbled and glorified.

III. The means to get Christ, that is, by faith only.

IV. The benefit and conquest of our faith, which is, Salvation.

For this end did the Father love us, that he might save us, and give unto us eternal life. For this cause came the Son down from heaven, and for this cause it was he went to heaven, that he might give us eternal life; and for this cause the Father causes us believe, and this is the fruit and end of all believing, to-wit, eternal life.— So it remains to tell what are the benefits that believers get in the Son.

Now, leaving all that has been spoken concerning this mystery of faith, as for the benefit that faith gets, in a word, it is Salvation. I know it gets more benefit before it will plant thee in Christ, and make thee one with him; it will make thee flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone; it will make thee sit in heaven with him: It will crucify thee with Christ, and it will justify thee in Christ; it will get thee remission in his blood, and it will cleanse thy heart; for it is that bath of hyssop that will sprinkle that blood on thy soul, Exodus xii. 22.— Faith, in a word, will make thee to live in peace, and die in peace at the last, and will put thee in the peaceable possession of endless glory! If ye get not that former benefit, ye will not get the last; and when thou gettest the last, then thy faith shall cease:

So, except the conjunction be made between thy soul and Christ, by the Holy Ghost, and unless thou gettest the Spirit of adoption, faith will never bring thee to the last point; and if it bring thee to the first, it shall bring thee to the last. So faith begins in thee life, but it makes nothing complete till the resurrection, when soul and body shall be caught within the clouds. So look what faith works in thy heart; for if thy living faith have not a work of grace here in the soul, it shall never have a work of glory hereafter.

Now, the last thing which faith brings, which is Salvation, it stands in two points.

1st, In an immunity and freedom from perdition.

2^{dly}, In fruition and possession of eternal life: and both these we have here. Now, I will tell you what both these are. What is the cause that makes the world count so little of Christ, and of the love of God in Christ? It is this, They know not what it is to exist for evermore, and what it is to live for evermore; for if they knew this, they would esteem more of Christ, and of the love of God, than ever they did: *Whosoever believes, shall not perish*: Then it is certain, that there is a perdition, there is a hell, wherein is endless perdition, *Whosoever believes, shall not perish*. There is life

after this; there is a hell and a heaven: and howsoever it be that the god of this world has blinded the most part, and the devil has bewitched men and women, yet it is certain that there is a God, that there is a hell, and a perdition: So it is certain that there is everlasting life. The generation before, if ye could hear them, they would all tell you this; some in endless pleasure, some in endless torment; for they are all gone before you, to be preachers to you. Now, wherein stands this perdition and perishing? For it is the *1st.* point I am minded to tell you. *2dly,* Wherein all life stands.

As for the first, there are three things in it: *1st,* The want of joy. *2dly,* The presence of pain. *3dly,* The eternity of the loss of joy, and the eternity of the presence of pain. Think on them all.

First, It is the loss of the presence of God, that the saints and angels have in heaven, within the gates of the New Jerusalem. Thou mayest not eat of that tree of life; thou mayest not drink of the rivers of the waters of life; thou mayest not drink of the rivers of the waters of life; thou mayest not drink in that company of saints and angels, that hast not believed in the Son of God here: So if there were no other hell, but to be deprived of the blessed society

of the glorified saints and angels with God, it were hell enough.

Secondly, Consider, that no excuse will be admitted that day. Friendship will do thee no good, prophesying and preaching will do thee no good. The other thing that augments it, is the loss of happiness. An unknown benefit, when it is lost, shall not bring meikle pain with it; but a seen benefit, a joy which ye might have gotten, if ye could have believed, shall augment your pain wonderfully: As the pain of the rich glutton had not been so great, if he had not seen Lazarus in Abraham's bosom. So the exclusion, and the barring of the yate on the misbeliever, on the soul and carcase for evermore, this is the first in the perdition: therefore the tribunal must be in the air, for thou shall never win at the yate of that kingdom. And if there were not another torment but the want of these joys in heaven for evermore, it were torment enough. But if there were no more, what rack of all this want of joy, and rugging and separation of the soul and body from the presence of God and his saints, in whom is all-sufficient joy? How grievous shall that be to thee? How ill-will had Peter to come down from the mount, trow ye? Ye would think it hard to be tugged and separated from a friend, and

more from your own children. O! but what is that, in comparison to be separated from so loving a God? But this is not all, the depriving of endless joy; (now, this should cause you know the necessity of believing;) but, besides this, there is an eternity of pain. To lose heaven, is a great matter; but to be cast into hell, is greater! To want the place is great, but to be flung into prison is greater. To lose the pleasure of heaven is great, but to be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the worm never dies, and the fire never goes out, into such a fire, that the violence thereof such, that there is no patience to bear it; for it is so great and painful, that if thou hadst ten thousand worlds, thou would give them all for one drop of cold water to cool thy tongue; a fire that shall never be flockened, for it shall burn as long as God lives. Again, That fire shall not consume the carcase and soul; but it is a furnace that shall burn for evermore! and thou shalt have none to keep the flames of that fire from thy conscience and carcase; and there shall be the wrath of God, and the vials full of his indignation, poured out continually upon thy soul, that it shall get no leave to look for mercy, and put off all hope of help, or ending of that pain!— Besides this, there are these particulars and circumstances that aggravate this per-

dition, there is nothing there but consuming fire; no company but devils; no light but a mirk prison and darkness, bound hand and foot; a death ay beginning, but never shall have an end; a worm that ay shall gnaw thy conscience! Again, It were some ease, if any part of the soul or body were free of torments; but there shall never be a part of thy body that shall not be filled with torments, and never a faculty of thy soul but it shall have its own torments; thy eye, that thou wouldest not open to behold the glory of God, it shall be compelled to look on that ugly sight! thy ear, that thou wouldest not apply to hear the voice of God, it shall be compelled to hear the howling and blaspheming of devils and reprobates; thy mind and understanding, which thou abusedst in this life, shall have their own torments.

Thirdly, There is an eternity of pain, and an eternity of loss. Ye know, were the traveller or mariner never so wearied, yet the hope of an end will bring him consolation; but when thou knowest thy pain is endless, and when thou rememberest the eternity of thy punishment, and that as long as God lives, your pain shall last, this will spoil you of all consolation!

The next point is, What it is to have eternal life; and wherein it stands?

It stands in three things shortly. But, I know, it is a thing that cannot be understood; none can measure the glory of that kingdom, and the joys of that life; for he that saw it, and was ravished with the sight, he said he saw things unutterable. Alwise, there are thred things in it:

First, The glory of the place; not an house made with hands, but that New Jerusalem that has twelve ports that are of precious stones, the streets of gold, and the temple of it, God himself!

Secondly, The fruition of it, God himself, that shall be all in all to thee! And, as you see a drop of water mixed with a hog's-head of wine, it taints the taste; so all our infirmities being flowing in the ocean sea of God's glory, shall be swallowed up!

Thirdly, And last of all, There is an unspeakable peace and joy for evermore! No more sin there; no more trouble there; no more tears there; but contemplation and joy for evermore! and thou occupied in beholding God eternally, and running to the fountain of the love of that blessed God, and wondering thereat eternally!

Now, ye see the first benefit ye shall get by believing: *1st*, A freedom from endless perdition. *2^{dly}*, The fruition of eternal life. The end wherefore I have spoken of these two, are,

First, That ye may see the necessity of believing; and that ye that will not believe, may quit you of eternal life, and make you for that endless pain.

Secondly, To set before you so highly ye should count of the Sⁿ of God; that when there was nothing that could redeem thee from hell, and conquer heaven to thee, but only his blood, and that thou mayest be acquitted what thou shouldest count of the love of God to thee, that sent his only begotten Son to die for thee. Now, I will apply, and so I will end.

Why should you think that word or work, ordinary or extraordinary, were needful for delivering you from perishing, and giving you everlasting life? For, if less things could have done the turn, it would have been done? I know the Lord is merciful, and loth to destroy his own buildings, and to pluck up the plants which he has planted; so, if the word could have done it, the work had not been done. These things that are fallen out, are not only warnings to others, but they are warnings to make you believe. Therefore think not that they are greater

sinners than ye; for except ye repent, ye shall perish also with the like judgment.

I have not now time to commit to you how many things I designed. Since I came here, God has added to his word for our walking. It is not long since there was not an house among you, but there was some of you bed-sick; and some of you had rather laid down your life, than have conveyed them to the grave. Now, the more this be told, yet it is not the less. What need was ye in, when ye would be content to have wanted your whole flock for half-a-year's provision? I leave this to your own consciences. Likewise, how the Lord has guarded you round about, and gave command to the pest, that it should not come near to your port, when he scattered it over other congregations; and made men and women cry, I have no more but one hundred merks, take it all, and give me leave to take but one handfal of water. The skallet-trenchers in Glasgow and Edinburgh, they may bare you witness. I wot well ye had as great sins of incessant whoredoms as they had. What other extraordinary things fell out, I have not will to tell you; but if I would shew you it, ye would say, He will spare one, and shew severity to another; and if there were no more but that mad woman, she

might be a preacher to us all: May not God soon bereave us of our wits, and make us as beasts, as he did Nebuchadnezzar? And these two works that have fallen out this week, one in the night, and another in the noon-tide of the day, he will have all these to cry to you, that ye should cry to the Lord, and say, Lord keep me and my children, that we get not a doleful wakening! Thou mayest rise in the morning, but who can tell with how holeful a heart thou mayest lie down in the evening, that ye may know what need ye have of a protection.

I cannot tell what these thick-spurring warnings mean; I wot well God has a warning for you in this congregation and town, as well as your nearest neighbours. So I see the Lord will have us either renewed to God, by true repentance, in time, or else he will do all wrong with us.— Now, I beseech you, wit well that you reconcile you and your children to God, ere you lie down; and let them not step out of the door in the morning, till ye have commended you and them to God.

Now, to him that is able to protect you, in soul and body, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be praise, honour, and glory, for evermore. *Amen.*

Mary's Good Choice.

A

S E R M O N

ON

LUKE X. 42.

—Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

AS Christ did shew himself loving to Lazarus and his sister, in that he raised Lazarus from the death of the body, and then from the death of the soul: So did his sisters here shew their thankful minds unto Christ again; the one by receiving him into her house, and the other by entertaining of him into her heart. As he was God, he was entertained by Mary; and as he was man, he was received of Martha. They both desired to entertain our Saviour, as Jacob and Esau desired to please their aged father, Gen. xxvii. But Mary made choice of the better part, and was preferred before her sister, as Jacob sped soonest of most dainty venison, and prevented his brother of the blessing:

And although the cares of Martha, in her entertaining of Christ, be not to be misliked of, yet Mary's diligence in hearing Christ's doctrine, is of purpose preferred to Martha's care; to declare unto us, that it is much better with Mary to study in the word, and first to seek the kingdom of God, Matth. vi. 35. than with Martha, to labour in the world, and to neglect that heavenly kingdom. And yet notwithstanding such is the corruption of this rusty age, that our greatest care is to provide for this present life, as did that rich man, Luke xii. that enlarged his barns, wherein to put store for many years; but we never, or very late, do provide for that life to come, like to that other man that never had thought of heaven till he was tormented in hell! Luke xvi.

In John xi. 5. Christ is said to love this family; and here he is said to come unto them: for whom he loveth, he cannot but visit, like the friends of Job, chap. ii. that came to comfort him in his adversity — Yea, and the greater love that Christ bears unto any, the oftener he doth resort unto them; yea, he will come and dwell with them, John xiv. 25. Like Jacob, that came down into Egypt, to his beloved son Joseph, and dwelt in Goshen; Gen. xlvii. But Christ is yet more kind than Jacob was,

or he came not till he came of his own
 accord to his beloved family. Jesus doth
 always prevent us with his manifold bless-
 ings. Before he was desired, he came into
 the world; he called his apostles, before
 they came unto him; and before he was
 invited, he came into this poor house.—
 O happy house, that entertained such a
 guest! and thrice happy inhabitants, to
 whom such a guest would vouchsafe to
 come! When he came unto the swinish
 Gadarenes, they desired him to depart out
 of their coasts; preferring their swine be-
 fore their Saviour, Luke viii. But this
 godly family gladly received him into their
 house; preferred their God before their
 gold, and their souls' health before their
 worldly wealth. They received him into
 their houses, who had not a house of his
 own to put his head into, Matth. viii. 16.
 Wherein their hospitality is commended,
 and shall most certainly be rewarded at
 that most dreadful day! Matth. xxv. For
 with these, and such-like works of mercy,
 the Lord shall answer the sentence of judg-
 ment, which is to be denounced against
 the wicked, that never exercised these
 works of mercy.

Let us therefore learn by their example
 to be harbourers, and given to hospitality,
 which is so often commended to us in the

Scriptures, and shall be so richly rewarded at the last day. These godly fathers, Abraham and Lot, entertained angels in their houses, in the habit of strangers, Gen. xviii. xix. So we may daily entertain Christ Jesus, in the habit of a poor man, of a blind man, of a lame man; and whatsoever is done to any of those that are his members, he doth account thereof as it were done to himself.

Now, as this virtue of hospitality is commendable in all sorts of persons, so it is our special concern, and more especially commended unto ministers, who are expressly commanded by the Apostle Paul, among other things, to be given to hospitality, 1 Tim. iii. 2. Unto the Levites, in the time of the law, the Lord appointed cities of refuge, Numb. xxxv. to signify thereby, that the minister's house should be the poor man's harbour, and his store their treasury. But the true ministers in these our days, have no cities of refuge for others, because they have none for themselves; they have not to relieve the wants of others, for they have not to relieve their own necessities.

Now, when Martha had once entertained Christ, as he was man, into her house, Mary began to entertain him, as

he was God, into her heart: she sat at
 his feet, to hear his preaching. For no
 sooner came Christ into the house, but
 he took occasion to teach and instruct
 the family; and instead of bodily food,
 which they bestowed on him, he bestowed
 upon them the food of the soul. Thus
 hath Christ always shew himself a thank-
 ful guest: For into whatsoever house he
 entereth in, he leaveth better things be-
 hind him than he findeth: He loves not
 to be in Zaccheus' debt for his dinner,
 for instead thereof he bringeth salvation
 to his house: Neither does he here leave
 his supper unpaid; for instead thereof he
 bestowed on them a heavenly sermon.—
 This should be the exercise of all faithful
 ministers, when they are invited to a great
 feast; that, as they are called the salt of
 the earth, (Matth. v. 18.) to make meat
 savoury and well seasoned, and to pre-
 serve them from putrefaction; so the mini-
 sters and pastors should season the table
 with some godly conferences and com-
 munications, to minister grace unto the
 hearers, Eph. iv. 29.

Both these sisters were godly women,
 and both earnest favourers of Jesus Christ;
 and yet in the manner of their devotions,
 there is such a difference, that the worldly
 affections of the one, may, in some sort,

be misliked, in respect of the godly exercise and practice of the other. Martha is sore incumbered with much serving, when a little service had been sufficient; but Mary is attentive to hear the word of God, which never can be heard sufficiently. Mary sitteth, to hear the word, Matth. v. as Christ saith to sit, when he preached the word, Luke iv. to declare unto us, that the word is to be preached and heard with a quiet mind.— In a still night, every voice is heard; and when the body is quiet, the mind most commonly is quiet also. But Martha is troubled with other affairs, and therefore unfit to hear the word, as is the ground that is covered with stones, or overgrown with weeds and thorns, which is indeed unfit to receive the seed, or to yield any fruit to him that tilleth it, Matth. xiii. 20. As often, therefore, as we come to hear the word of God, we must not come with distracted minds, we must not trouble ourselves with the cares of this life, which, as our Saviour saith, are but thorns, to choak the word, and to make it unfruitful, Luke viii. 4. For, as Moses was unfit to talk with God, till he had put off his shoes, Exod. iii. and the blind man unfit to come to Christ, until he had thrown away his cloak, Mark x. so we must think ourselves unfit to hear the word of God,

and unapt for every heavenly exercise, till we have put off our shoes, that is, all our worldly cogitations and affections; and till we have cast away our cloaks, that is, all letts and impediments, which may hinder us in profiting in our professions. When our minds are quiet, we are fit to deal with heavenly matters; therefore the Doctors conferred sitting in the temple; and God he delighteth to deal with us, when we are most private. He appeared to Abraham, sitting in the door of his tent, Gen. xviii. The Holy Ghost, he came down upon the apostles, and filled all the house where they were sitting. The Eunuch, sitting in his chariot, was called and converted, by the preaching of Philip, Acts viii. 37.

Mary sat at Jesus' feet, yet sat she not sleeping, as many sit at the preacher's feet; but she sat at Christ's feet, and heard his words; as Paul was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and was perfectly instructed in the law of his fathers, Acts xxii. Her humility is commendable, in that she sat at Jesus' feet; to declare to us, that the word is to be heard with all humility. Her diligence and earnestness appeareth, in that she would not depart and help her sister; to signify, that the hearing of the word must be preferred before worldly business. Her diligence and humility may

serve to condemn our negligence and contempt of Christ and his word; we do not sit at Christ's feet, nay, we set Christ at our feet, when we are so careless in hearing of the word; we are as slow to come to the church, as the raven was to come to the ark of Noah, Gen. viii. and as loath are we to spend any time in the service of God, as Pharaoh was loath to let the Israelites go to serve the Lord. If a commodity were to be seen, out of which some profit or worldly gain may arise, how careful would we be to procure it? What pains would we take to get it? Absalom was no more desirable of a kingdom, than are the rich men of our time desirous of golden gain; but if it be a matter of cost and trouble unto them, if they cannot hear the word preached, without some hindrance to their worldly business, and some extraordinary charge to their purse, then, like to the Gadarenes, Luke viii. they are content to take their leave of Christ and his word, and would rather leave the heavenly pearl, than part with their worldly pelf, Matth. xiii. 49.

Thus, in Christ, we have a pattern of a good pastor; and in Mary, the pattern of a good hearer. Let ministers learn by his example, to take all occasions to preach the word; to be instant in season and out of season, 2 Tim. iv. 2. And let Christians

learn by her example, first to seek the king-
 dom of God, and his righteousness, Mat. vi.
 and then to provide for things of this life.
 While Mary was careful for the food of
 the soul, Martha was curious to provide
 food to the body; her greatest care was to
 entertain Christ, and to make him good
 cheer, to testify her thankful mind unto
 him, that had done so great things for them:
 he had raised her brother Lazarus from
 death to life, therefore he was worthy to
 be well entertained. If Elias deserved
 to be well dealt withal, at the hand of his
 mistress, whose son he had restored to life,
 2 Kings xvii. or Elisha deserved such en-
 tertainment, for her son's reviving, 1 Kings
 xv. then surely our Saviour Christ was much
 more welcome hither, seeing he had raised
 Lazarus out of his grave, where he had
 lain by the space of four days before, John xi.
 it was well done, therefore, of Martha to
 shew her thankful mind to Christ; but it
 was not well done at that time, to shew
 herself thankful in that manner; for it was
 then time to hear the word, because at that
 time Christ preached the word; it was not
 a convenient time for her to spend on other
 affairs, and to neglect the greatest affair,
 even the means of her own salvation. It
 was not unlawful for Martha to labour,
 no more than it was unlawful for Peter to
 sleep; but, when Christ was preaching,

it was then no time for her to busy herself in serving, no more than it was for Peter to sleep, whenas Christ did so earnestly will him to watch and pray, Matth. xxv.

When Christ preached out of Simon's ship to the people that stood upon the shore Luke v. it was no time then for Peter to play, the fisherman; but when Christ had left speaking, and commanded him to launch out into the deep, then was it time for him to let down his net. There is a time wherein we ought to labour in our vocation, and a time wherein we ought to hear the word of God; and as we may not utterly neglect our lawful calling to follow sermons, so must we not bestow the Sabbath, which is consecrated to the service of God, in following the works of our vocation. "All things have their appointed time," saith the wise man; and "every thing is seemly in his convenient season," Eccl. iii. but when things are done preposterously, and out of order, then followeth confusion.

Now, let us see how Mary is excused, and commended for her godly care: *One thing is necessary*, saith our Saviour. And what is that one thing? Even to hear the word preached, which is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth. Rom. i. 16. A man may better want all

things, than that one needful thing; and yet we desire all things, and we neglect that one thing which is so needful. This one thing hath Mary chosen, and therefore hath chosen the better part: Martha's part is good, because it provideth for this present life; but Mary's part is better, because it leadeth unto eternal life. It is good to be occupied about our calling, to get our living; but it is better to be occupied in hearing the word, which is able to save our souls.

Christ loves Martha for hospitality, as Isaac loved Esau for his venison; and Christ loved Mary for her care and diligence in hearing his word, as Rebecca loved Jacob for the hearkening to her voice, Gen. xxv. As a nurse, that having her breasts full of milk, doth love the child that sucks it from her, even so the Lord Jesus Christ, when he hath his breast full of heavenly milk, is glad when he hath children to suck the same. Let us therefore, as the apostle willeth us, Lay aside all maliciousness, guile and dissimulation; all envy and ill-speaking; and, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby, to perfect men in Christ Jesus," 1 Pet. ii. 1. Let us breathe after the fountain of living water, which springeth up into everlasting life, Jhu iv. 14.

Now, forasmuch as many things are so troublesome, and one thing is so very needful, let us ever be seeking that needful thing, which we must learn by hearing of the word of God, whereby faith, without which it is impossible to please God, Heb. xi. 9. may be begotten and nourished in the hearts of men, Rom. x. 17. As for all other things, whether they be honours, promotions, pleasures, or whatsoever else, they serve only for the maintenance of this present life, they are but short, and also very subject to mutability: But the word of God is the food of the soul, the bread of life, that immortal seed, which bringeth forth fruit unto eternal life, 1 Pet. i. 13.— Let the word of God be precious to us, because it is so permanent; for heaven and earth shall pass away, Luke xxi. 23. but the word of God endureth for ever, 1 Pet. i. 25. If we make choice of any other thing besides, it must be taken from us, or we must be taken from it; but if we make choice of this *one thing*, it shall never be taken from us, neither in this life, nor the life to come. The Lord grant, that we be not only hearers, but doers of the word, James i. 22. *Amen.*

F I N I S.