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S E R M O N S,

PREACHED IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MICHAEL'S, BATH.

BY THE

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TO THE

CONGREGATION

ST. MICHAEL'S, BATH,

THIS VOLUME OF

PREACHED BEFORE THEM, AND NOW PUBLISHED
AT THEIR REQUEST,

RESPECTFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY

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BY

P R E F A C E .

THE following Sermons do appear before the Public as competitors for theological reputation. They make no pretensions to being elaborate Discourses. They were written, not indeed without care, nor without prayer, yet rapidly, and under the pressure and distraction of various parochial and other avocations; and they are printed almost verbatim as they were preached. Circumstances rendered it impracticable for the Author materially to alter them, if

he had been disposed to do so. But he was not disposed to do so, on this account—his affectionate Congregation were kind enough to desire, as a memorial of him, not simply a Volume of his Sermons, but a Volume of those Sermons which he had delivered to them from the Pulpit: and his object in publishing at all is, to meet the wishes of his people, which he would not have met by a Volume of altered Sermons. But these, he hopes, may now “stir up their minds by way of remembrance;” and thus, though absent, he may have the pleasure and honour of still teaching them the same truths as when he was present with them. May this his pastoral offering be accepted by a flock in whom he will never cease to feel the liveliest interest: and if what he has written “in simplicity and godly sin-

cerity" prove useful, as well as acceptable, to them, and to any portion of the Public, both he and they will know whither to return the praise.

Bath ; April, 1833.

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SERMON I.

GENESIS iii. 6, 7.

“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.”

IN approaching the consideration of the fall of our first parents, it is necessary that we have simple faith in God's account of it given in this chapter. It should be remembered, that there is no other account of the fall of man, but the account given in this chapter. Had this chapter been lost, we should have been in utter ignorance how we first came to be, what we feel we are, a *fallen* world. For, if we have *any* feeling, we must feel that we are a

fallen world. We and all creation groan, being burdened with great and sore troubles. Our world is full of disorder, wickedness, miseries, and death. We see that our very nature is corrupt, and suffering. Children, infants, as soon as they are born, show signs of pain; and as soon as they have any sense, give proofs of sin. It is impossible to believe that a world so groaning with evil came, in its present state, out of the hands of God who is only good. We must be, what indeed we are, a *fallen* world. But when and how we fell, we should not know at all, if it were not for this chapter. This chapter, however, gives us an authoritative, short, clear, and, I must add, *literal* history of our fall. That it is not a mystical, but a literal history, is manifest from the way it is ever after referred to, both in the Old and New Testament, as a matter of fact, which really took place. For instance, in 2 Cor. xi. 3, St. Paul says, "I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." It is not to be believed that the Apostle would so have referred to this third chapter of Genesis, were it not familiar to his mind, as containing the true and *literal* history of the Fall. And it is referred to in the same artless manner, and in no other manner, throughout the whole of Scripture. I conceive* therefore that we are bound to receive the

history of the Fall with the simplicity of little children, as containing an inspired and true record of what actually occurred in the beginning of our world. So let us come now to its more distinct and painful contemplation.

The Scripture says, "God made man upright:" "He made man in his own image; in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them:" "and he beheld them after their creation, and behold they were very good." "And God blessed them." From these words it is manifest that both Adam and Eve were without sin, very good, and perfect in their kind, when they came out of the hands of their Creator. They neither did evil, nor knew evil. So constituted, they were put in a state of *trial*. It would seem that a state of trial is necessary for reasonable creatures: at least the only other race of reasonable creatures we have any knowledge of was put in a state of trial, viz. the angels. Some of them stood, and some of them fell. Satan and some of his followers seem to have been "lifted up with pride," and others to have "left their own habitation," "through the lust of uncleanness." Gen. vi. 2. For this sin "God spared them not, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto the judgment of the last day." For them we know, on our Lord's authority, that "everlasting fire is pre-

pared." Meanwhile, ever since their Fall, they have been in the darkness of sin, wretchedness, and despair; with no light of holiness, no hope of happiness. They see torments before them, and tremble.

But it appears from Scripture, that from the beginning of our world, either all, or some of them, have been permitted by "the only wise God" to "go to and fro in our earth, and walk up and down in it," and even to mingle among their former companions, the holy angels. It appears also from Scripture that these evil spirits are capable of entering into other creatures, both rational and brute. For instance, a "legion" of devils were living in that man whom our Lord healed; and when they were cast out of him, they entered into two thousand swine, and had such power over them, as to drive them to self-destruction. There is therefore nothing *peculiar* in the circumstance of the serpent in Paradise being inhabited by Satan. That it *was* inhabited by Satan is proved by Rev. xii. 9, where St. John says, "The great dragon was cast out, that *old serpent*, called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world." There can be no doubt he is called "that old serpent," because of old, viz. at the beginning of our world, he lived and acted in the serpent in Paradise. The serpent *then* was, apparently, not the same creature altogether that it is *now*. It seems by nature to have walked *erect*, from the circumstance

that the *after curse* upon it was, that “upon its *belly* it should go, and eat dust all the days of its life.” We are the rather led to suppose it was a very superior and sensible creature before its fall, because it is expressly pronounced “more subtle than any beast of the field, which the Lord God had made,” and because there is no indication of surprise on Eve’s part, that it should hold conversation with her. Had it not *then* been a very superior creature to what it is *now*, we cannot but think that the mere circumstance of its speaking in reasonable language would have so startled Eve, as to have delivered her, like a bird, from the snare of the fowler, and frustrated Satan’s design. However, leaving what is only probable, let us come to what is certain. This is certain, “The serpent beguiled Eve by his subtlety.” The narrative of his subtlety is very short. He put into Eve’s mind bad thoughts, and wrong desires. “He said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” Here was, in the first place, a suggestion of *scepticism*, or doubt of God’s word—“*hath* God said?”; and, secondly, a suggestion of *discontent*—“Is it possible God has been so *arbitrary* and *selfish* as to deny you some of the trees of the garden?” “And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the

garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." This answer seemed complete against *both* Satan's suggestions: it argued no *discontent*, and certainly no *doubt* on Eve's part. She appeared satisfied with other fruits, and was quite clear that the fruit of the tree of knowledge was forbidden her by God, under pain of death. So when *insinuation* would not answer, Satan had recourse to *lying*. "The serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall *not* surely die: for God doth know, that, in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened; and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Here was a temptation to the woman's vanity and ambition: and, at the same time, no doubt Satan directed her attention to the beauty and excellence of the fruit before her: and the concurrence of outward enticement of the senses, with inward desire of the heart, prevailed with her to believe and obey Satan rather than God. She was deceived into an idea that it would be to her advantage to disobey her Maker's known command. "When she saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat." Observe how she was wrought upon by the *three great temptations* which, up to this hour, have seduced such multitudes of her children "She saw that the tree was good for

food," and hence her "lust of the flesh"—"and pleasant to the eyes," and hence her "lust of the eye"—"and a tree to be desired to make one wise," and hence her "pride of life." So, not mortifying her "desires of the flesh and of the mind," her appetite after fancied but forbidden pleasure enflamed her till she broke through all restraint, and transgressed openly—"she took of the fruit, and did eat."

Here then was the *first* great instance of *sin*. "Sin is the transgression of the law." The law in Paradise, the only law, was, not to eat of this fruit. Eve knew and acknowledged this law: yet she broke it: which was her plain and grievous *sin*. She was without excuse. Her guilt was, in daring to disobey God under any pretence whatever. It is vain to say, Where was the harm of taking a little fruit? The harm was in *disobeying her Creator*. If she would disobey him in *one* thing, she would disobey him in *another*. Had the test of her obedience been something else, and not the fruit of the tree of knowledge, we have every reason to suppose she would have yielded to temptation in that, just as soon as in this. Her sin was in allowing any suggestions to steal away her confidence in the rectitude and goodness of God, and in allowing her sensual and mental appetites to prevail over her better judgment, and her remonstrating conscience.

And now having been seduced herself, she became Satan's very best agent for seducing her husband. No doubt she went to tell him what she had done, and why, and the pleasure she had found from the fruit: but "Adam was not deceived:" he saw the evil of what she had done; but he was not proof against temptation, when Eve was the temptress—"She gave unto her husband with her, and he did eat." This was the *consummation* of the sin of our first parents; and immediately "their sin found them out"—"the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked." They had, for the first time, "a conscience of sin," and a sense of shame. It is impossible for us adequately to conceive *what* a change they felt—a change the greatness and grievousness of which they continued feeling more and more every moment. But the first confusing emotions were those which arose from a consciousness of nakedness and exposure. They had an indescribable sensation of wanting a covering; and so their immediate instinctive effort was, to cover themselves—"they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons." And thus covered, they seem to have summoned confidence enough just to look one another in the face. But the moment they thought of looking God in the face, their sense of being covered failed them, and their

miserable feeling of nakedness came over them afresh with terrifying power—"They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden." They had gone forth to meet their God, and walked with him without fear, when they were upright: but now that they had wilfully sinned against him, they had a sense of exposure, and a dread of meeting his eye, which they could not surmount, notwithstanding their best efforts to cover their nakedness.

This, then, my brethren, is the simple history of the fall of our first parents, and of its effect upon their feelings. It is written for our *information*, and for our *warning*. With the *information* we are now furnished. It remains that we lay to heart some of the *warning* lessons it conveys to us.

And, first, it warns us of the reality, subtlety, and power of Satanic temptation. Satan is not dead, nor sleepeth: on the contrary, St. Peter assures us "he walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." So that he is a *real* tempter at this day. And he has lost none of his *subtlety*, but rather increased it by experience. If he "beguiled Eve by his subtlety," St. John says he "deceiveth the whole world." So we ought neither to be ignorant, nor forgetful, of his devices.

We are warned also of the *power* of his temptations. They overcame Eve in her state of holiness: what then must be their power on us? They are so powerful, that their removal will immediately usher in millenian blessedness, as we learn from the 20th chapter of Revelations. Meanwhile, till Satan is bound, he has not only great power, but "great wrath, because he knows that his time is short." We are warned therefore to prepare *our* hearts against his certain, subtle, and powerful temptations. This is the first lesson we should learn from the history before us.

The second lesson is, that his temptations will be both *inward* and *outward*, both *spiritual* and *sensual*. His first aim is to *put bad thoughts* into the mind. We read, "The *Devil put it* into the heart of Judas Iscariot 'to betray Christ;" and that "*he filled* Ananias' heart to lie to the Holy Ghost." So that the same poisoning attempt which he made upon the *mind* of Eve, he continued making upon later minds, and makes upon minds now. These bad thoughts which he injects seem to be "the fiery darts of his," mentioned by St. Paul, and which it behoves us immediately to quench with "the shield of faith." If thoughts arise in our hearts, such as tend to set God before us in an unamiable point of view, and to make us question the propriety of his arrangements, we should imme-

diately quench those thoughts by an implicit confidence in the declaration, that "He is a Rock, his work is perfect, and all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he."

But Satan tempts us *outwardly* by means of objects attractive to our senses and minds. He avails himself of "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," as much now, as ever he did. We know the inflaming and seductive power of the sensual, covetous, and ambitious desires which he kindles in us by various *enticements around us*. St. James says, "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn aside, and *enticed*." Eve was enticed by the apparent delicacy and beauty and usefulness of the forbidden fruit. Achan was enticed by the forbidden spoil of Jericho, and Gehazi by Naaman's proffered treasures. Many now make a "god of their belly." Others "have eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin." And others are "high-minded, and have proud looks," or ambitious aims to be above their proper stations. We are all apt to be "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." So Satan sets before us forbidden pleasures of the sort most tempting to us, and with these he *tries* to seduce us into sin.

And which of us here present have not often

yielded to appetite and passionate desire, and taken and eaten our favourite forbidden fruit? I fear we have all been too much the slaves of “inordinate affection, and evil concupiscence:” and have not only yielded to temptation ourselves, but have been Satan’s agents in *tempting one another*. And nothing is a more lamentable truth, than that oftentimes a man’s worst, because his most insinuating, “foes are they of his own house.” Adam would probably have been proof against any temptation which had not come through Eve. Few things are so difficult for the children of God to withstand, as the blandishments of affectionate relatives and friends. It was his wives that turned away the heart of even Solomon: and many a husband, especially a young husband, is now improperly wrought upon by his “weaker vessel,” and yields up his clearer knowledge and better judgment to her solicitations.

But by the history before us we are warned, in the third place, that whatever be our temptations, or whoever our tempters, it will be an evil and a bitter thing for us, *if we give way* to them. However alluring forbidden pleasures may be previous to enjoyment, when they have been enjoyed, they end in disappointment and shame. God does not *grudge* us pleasure. “God is love;” God is good; and “giveth us richly all things to enjoy.”

His wish and object is to put us in the way of enjoying *real* pleasure. If, in his holy word, he forbids us *certain* things which we fancy would be pleasurable, might we enjoy them, we ought to believe God, contrary to our fancy and appetite, that the forbidden things, if we rushed on their enjoyment, would not turn out to be enjoyable. Either we must believe that things forbidden us would *not* be for our real advantage, or we must believe that God *envies* us certain pleasures; which is just what Satan wishes us to believe of God: because if we can be brought to think *hardly* of the God who prohibits, and *well* of the enjoyments prohibited, the next step we are almost sure to take is, to follow our own pleasure instead of God's. But the consequences of so doing are sure to be disastrous to us. How dreadfully disastrous to Adam and Eve were the consequences of self-will and self-indulgence! If we will not *believe* the wisdom and goodness of God, when he tells us in the Scriptures to "*mortify* our members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry," we have only to *gratify* these passions, and we shall soon find out, by the *effects* of so doing, that "the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience." The sense of nakedness and shame and guilt and desert of punishment

which we see so afflicting our first parents, after their sin, more or less afflicts all persons after their sins. People may be *hardened* by a course of sinful indulgences, and so may *come* to commit sins without feeling much after them : but the way to judge truly of the miserable feelings produced by sin, is to observe what they are in *novices* in transgression. The difficulty is to find novices in transgression in our fallen race. Adam and Eve were the only real novices in transgression. We are “transgressors from the womb,” and, through early familiarity with more or less sin, we by no means feel that acute misery after wilful transgression in our riper years, which we should feel, if we then transgressed for the first time. We see the confusion and wretchedness of our first parents after their first transgression ; and that is a specimen of what we should feel after every transgression, were we not, in some degree, “hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.” But notwithstanding our natural hardness and impenitency of heart, it is probable *we* have felt not a little after the commission of *certain* sins which our memory can recal. Very uncomfortably have we looked the partners of our guilt in the face, and much have we mutually inflicted and suffered of shame and reproof : and as to God, the thought of Him, and of being summoned into his presence to give account

of our wickedness, has been terrible. Repetition of sin may have diminished, to a considerable extent, our sensibility to the evil of it, and our uncomfortableness under the thought of appearing before God, after the commission of it. But conscience is not soon lulled to sleep, and it is soon wakened again, especially by alarming occurrences, and embarrassing questions. We see how it waked in Adam and Eve, when "they heard the voice of the Lord God." We see how it waked in Joseph's brethren, when they found themselves in trouble. We see how it waked in Herod, when he thought that John whom he had murdered was risen again from the dead. We see how it waked in the Scribes and Pharisees, who brought to our Lord the woman taken in adultery, when Jesus put to them the startling proposal, "Let him that is without sin among you cast the first stone at her." They were so convicted in their own consciences, and so confused, as to be obliged to retire and hide themselves. In all these cases the persons had for awhile covered their own sin from their own eye, and put on a degree of boldness: but when conscience of sin awaked, under the touch of God, they were presently self-condemned, and hasting to hide themselves, because they were naked.

Now so it is, or will be, with each of us, my

brethren. There is no doubt of our guilt before God. We may somewhat relieve for awhile our uncomfortable sense of it, by fig-leaf imitations of our own to hide it from ourselves and from one another: but wherewithal shall we hide it from God? We may contrive to put on a bold face before those who are as sinful as ourselves: but what face can we put on, when we feel ourselves summoned, by conscience or by death, into the immediate presence of our "holy Lord God?" There is no covering of our own, in which we can stand before God. We can never stand before Him, till our conscience of sin is gone, and instead of it we have a conscience of righteousness; that is, a feeling that we are perfectly righteous. Now, by what means are we to lose the one feeling, and become possessed of the other? Sin is mixed with all we do. So that we can no more cover our impurity from the eyes of God, than our first parents could cover theirs. We can no more cover our past sin with works of righteousness which we can do, than they could cover theirs with fig-leaves. All our prayers, and repentances, and alms, and acts of piety in general, have no efficacy to cover our past sin, have no power to justify us, or make us righteous before God. To lose our conscience of sin, and have a conscience of righteousness, we must "be found in Christ." We can be "justified" only "by his blood"—we can

be "the righteousness of God" only "in him." If we are to have "our conscience purged from dead works," we must earnestly believe that Christ died for our sins. Nothing but the steadfast belief that he suffered *for us* can remove *our* fear of suffering. But "justified by faith," we may "have peace with God," and peace of mind, "through our Lord Jesus Christ." He is "the Lord our righteousness;" and if we put our whole trust in him, "he is of God made unto us righteousness." We are "accepted in the Beloved," and are "complete in Him." "We may have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." Through him we may "draw near to God with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience." Thus we may regain in Christ the confidence before God which we lost in Adam.

And not only so, but Christ is the source of practical as well as personal holiness to us, if we receive and obey Him. If the Tempter vanquished Adam, he was vanquished by Christ, who was perfectly proof against the lust of the flesh, bread; and the lust of the eye, worldly splendours; and the pride of life, display; when these three great temptations were tried upon him, with Satan's craftiest skill. And now, having *Himself* overcome temptation, he is able to make *us* overcome it;

“because greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world.” But as our first parents fell by *self-indulgence*, so Christ overcame by *self-denial*; and there is no way but this, by which He can overcome *in us*. So he says plainly, “If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”

We see, then, brethren, our only safe way to glory, viz., to follow Christ in a course of *habitual self-denial*. We must “keep under our body, and bring it into subjection.” We must “crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts.” “For if we live after the flesh, we shall die: but if we, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live.”

SERMON II.

I KINGS xviii. 21.

“And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.”

AND *why* did they not answer him a word? Because they *were* the *undecided* characters Elijah had reprov'd them for being. Their conscience would not let them declare for Baal; and they had not courage to declare for God. So between their convictions and their fears they remained *silent*. Their tongue was tied by Elijah on the one hand, and by Ahab on the other: and they were in the distressful and ashamed condition of men who had too much good feeling to act wrong, and too little to act right.

Their embarrassed situation leads us to reflect on the *evil* of indecision in religion. Reflection on

this point may, perhaps, neither be unnecessary nor useless for some here. Unhappily, indecision in religion was not confined to the time of Elijah, but exists in a large number of professors in every age of the Church. Indeed I fear there are those present, who, up to this very hour, have been "halting between two opinions," and are conscious at this moment of being ambiguous characters. To such of you I would now address myself; "and I beseech you suffer the word of exhortation," which is not designed to offend, but to do you good.

I would first *describe* your undecided state—then point out to you the *evil* of it—and conclude with urging you to *make your decision* with all speed. May God command his blessing on what shall be said, for Jesus Christ's sake.

First let me endeavour to *describe* the state of some of you, who are *undecided* in religion. In the first place, you are not decided *against* religion, which is a very important consideration, and a very distinguishing feature of your case. Some *are* decided against religion. They are "in the gall of bitterness" against it. Bent on doing evil, they hate the light. They found it reproving their deeds, putting their consciences to pain, and their faces to shame; and they have never forgiven it for this. It has "become their enemy because it told them the truth;" and it has their confirmed dislike, and

deadly opposition. But such is not the case with you who are *undecided*. *Because* you are undecided, you are not decided *against* religion. It has not your hatred—it has not your aversion: on the contrary, it has your attention—nay more, it has your respect—perhaps even it has your secret affection. In the bottom of your soul you approve of religion, and you could not be brought openly to renounce it. You would not, for the world, at this moment solemnly deny God, deny Christ, deny the work of the Spirit, shake off all religion, and take your stand with avowedly infidel and profane persons. You would shrink from such daring impiety. Your heart tells you that there is a God—your guilt reminds you that you want a Saviour—and your corruptions make you feel that you need a Sanctifier. You know enough of Christianity to know that it is the only religion for a sinful fallen worm like you—the only thing that will do you good. And yet you have not *decidedly* embraced Christianity. Like Agrippa, you are only “almost persuaded to be a Christian.” What is it that prevents your decision? What is it that distracts your choice? What is it that you put in the balance against “pure and undefiled religion?” What *was* it that embarrassed the Israelites whom Elijah addressed? It was Baal—it was idolatry. And it is idolatry that embarrasses you—spiritual idolatry—you have

idols in your heart, and your heart goeth after them. In plain words, your affections are divided. You have not *no regard* for God, and Christ, and the things of the Spirit: but then you have not a *supreme* regard for them. You regard them in part, and in part you regard things that are earthly and sensual. You respect religion, but you have your secret sins. You follow God sometimes; but then at other times you follow your idols. You have your seasons of prayer, and your feelings of piety; but you have also your seasons of dissipation, and your feelings of worldliness. On the Sunday you can come hither to worship God; but in the week you can resort to scenes where He is forgotten. You can keep company with saints, and you can keep company with sinners. You can alternately countenance what is good, and what is evil: yea, you can alternately care for your soul, and for “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.” Thus you are *undecided* characters. There is a check upon your conscience, and yet a wavering in your conduct. You are like those Samaritans of old, of whom it is said in Scripture, “They *feared* the Lord, and *served* their graven images.” This is a description of the state of *some*—perhaps of some of *you* who hear me. If you know, in your consciences, that you are thus *wavering* between your convictions of what is right, and your fondness

for what is wrong—between religion and carelessness—between God and the world—lend me your attention farther, while, in the Second place, I endeavour to point out to you the *evil* of this undecided state.

It is evil on these two accounts—First, because it is *offensive to God*, and Secondly, because it is *injurious to yourselves*.

First, Your indecision is *offensive to God*. The same sin must always be viewed by him in the same light. And in what light did he view the indecision of the Israelites in the chapter before us? It so displeased him, that he sent Elijah to rebuke it sharply. You, then, are under the same displeasure of Almighty God, as many of you as are consciously “halting between two opinions.” And *why* God is displeased with your indecision is manifest, viz. because it proves that your affections are divided and distracted between Himself and some other object; whereas He says, “My son, give me thine heart”—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart.” You cannot be loving Him with entire affection, while you *hesitate* to follow him. Your hesitation *must* arise from your heart being entangled in some other direction, and in some other direction opposite to God. Your hesitation *must* arise from your being attached to something wrong, or wrongly attached to something right. Your desires after something worldly *must* be sinful, either

in kind or in degree. In short, you dare to put some idol in *competition* with God: and for *this* reason he is displeased with you; and justly; for *ought* the creature to rival the Creator? *ought* you to hesitate whether your God is the supreme good, or not? Can he be otherwise than offended to see you *doubt* in your heart, whether it is advisable to follow him fully? Have you never read that he is “a jealous God?” And what can more directly touch his jealousy, than to observe you *questioning* whether to give the preference to Him, or to other objects? His anger is kindled that you should *move* a question on such a point—that you should *waver for a moment* in your choice between Himself and any created good. That you may be sure I do not overstate this matter, let me remind you of the explicit declaration of God our Saviour. “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.” Such plain declarations were frequently made by our Saviour, on purpose to convince us that indecision in religion is offensive to God; and *how* offensive, will appear to you from one more declaration of his, which, because it is the strongest, I have reserved to the last—I mean his declaration to the church of the Laodiceans. “I know thy

works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." No words can more strongly express the *offensiveness* of indecision. And the quotation is exactly to the purport of the text, where Elijah rebukes Israel precisely for this sin of *halting*; as if he had said, "I would you would make a *decisive move* one way or other. 'If the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him:' but follow one or the other, because this your *vacillation* is intolerable to the Lord, and he will endure it no longer: you must come to a decision either to give yourselves wholly to him, or cease pretending to follow him at all." Now what God said to Israel he says to all here present. Hence, if any of you, my friends, especially of you, my young friends, ~~are~~ are conscious of halting between religion and dissipation, between God and the world, between the care of your soul and the care of your flesh, be assured that you are in a state of mind *displeasing* to your Maker and Redeemer. You may not be cold—you may not be open followers of Baal—you may not be thorough-paced men and women of the world, much less notorious evil livers: but put you at your best—suppose you are only *ambiguous* characters—suppose you are only *undecided*—*as such* you are *offensive* to God.

This, then, is *one* evil of your undecided state: and the *other* evil is, that your state is *injurious to yourselves*. Indeed if it were not so, God would not be angry with it. He is angry with nothing that tends to our welfare, because he is love. "His commandments are not grievous;" and if he commands us to cease from indecision, it is because it is injurious to ourselves. And I appeal to your own *experience* whether it is not, you who are undecided. Have you been happy? have you been comfortable in your thoughts? have you enjoyed your manner of life, and been at ease in your reflections? You know you have not. You have had no pleasure in *religion*, because your heart was not in it. You have had no delight in God, because you knew you deserved to have none. You have had a bad conscience, and that has prevented your "going boldly to the throne of grace." You have not been able to pray with any confidence, because "you have regarded iniquity in your heart." You have had no fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, because you would have fellowship with works of darkness. You have had no communion with the Holy Ghost, because you would set up in his temple "an image provoking to jealousy;" and therefore he forsook you. Thus you have had no pleasure in *religion*, because you have not been *hearty* in it.

And, on the other hand, you have had no pleasure in *irreligion*, because neither were you *heartily in it*. You have had too much light and knowledge to sin ignorantly; and conscience has restrained you from sinning wilfully. Your clear understanding, your correct feelings, your good education and habits, have made it impossible for *you* to enjoy a number of things which sinners around you enjoyed; and if you *thought* you could enjoy them, you found them apples of Sodom, promising fair, but bitter on trial.

Thus your indecision has made you incapable of finding *real* gratification in *any thing*. You have been too worldly to enjoy religion, and too religious to enjoy the world. So by wavering you have *marred* your own *happiness*. And not only so, but you have brought yourselves into *trouble*, *into suspicion*, and perhaps into *disrepute*. Sometimes you have been so much on the Lord's side, as to give umbrage to the world: and then shortly after you have been so much on the world's side, as to give umbrage to the Church. Both good people and bad have alternately stood in doubt of you; and so you have shaken, if not lost, the confidence of each party in succession.

Thus I have endeavoured to describe your undecided state, and to point out the evil of it. Now, therefore, let me conclude with urging you

to *make your decision* with all speed. You are convinced from your own experience that yours has been an unhappy state to you *so far*. Let me assure you it will be the same, as long as you continue in it. For the causes of your unhappiness will remain the same; and therefore they will produce the same effect. Scripture, as well as reason, forewarns you of this. "He that wavereth," says St. James, "is like a wave of the sea, driven of the wind and tossed." There *can* be no peace, no tranquillity, in the bosom of one who is thus the sport of contradictory influences. I hope, then, it may have some weight in bringing you to a decision, if you are convinced that halting is *unwise* while it lasts. But next I add that it cannot last *for ever*. If you think you can *always* remain ambiguous characters, you deceive yourselves. The thing is impossible, for Christ says so. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." Cease, then, from attempting to serve both. *Throw off* ambiguity of character, before God *strips* you of disguise. Satan is willing enough that you should halt between two opinions. He "loves to have it so," because you are all but sure to become his prey. But God hates to have it so, because he has compassion on your immortal

soul. He wishes to rouse you out of your indifference, to undeceive you in thinking you are safe. He wishes to make you know yourself, and examine yourself, and declare yourself. He lets your indecision put you to pain, that you may put yourself out of it by decision. Be wise, therefore, and put yourself out of it with all speed. Choose you this day whom you will serve, God or Satan. Consider well what each party has to advance in support of his claim upon you. "If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him." And is Satan, is Baal, God? Are you prepared to worship Satan? He is "the god of this world," and he has various favours to confer upon you, if you will openly do him homage. Are you willing, then, to have from him first "the pleasures of sin for a season," and then "the wages of sin, which is death?" Are you willing to gain more or less of the world by iniquitous practices, and then "lose your soul?" In a word, are you willing, like Ahab, to "*sell yourselves to do evil*?" If you are, why do you not at once "give yourselves over to work all uncleanness with greediness?" Why do you not launch out into the depths of wickedness, and take your fill of guilty pleasures? If you have devoted yourselves to the service of Satan, why not serve him with all your might? Because you are *afraid* to do so—because there is

a *check* upon your spirit when you think of doing so. And who *makes* you fear? Who *puts* this check upon your spirit? It is *God*. He restrains you—His Spirit strives with you—he keeps back your soul from the pit—he sends you pain to warn you of your danger. He would not have you perish, but rather that you should come to repentance. He has sent you his word this morning, to call you to repentance—to repentance for having trifled with him so long—to repentance for having dishonoured him so long, by putting other objects in competition with him. Now therefore “if the Lord be God, follow him.” And is he not God? You know there *is* a *supreme* Being, “in whom you live, and move, and have *your* being;” and “he is not far from every one of you.” All creation speaks his existence, and all Scripture is given by his inspiration. The Bible, like the sun, proclaims itself the depository of *light*. Nature shows that *there is* a God—*what sort* of a God He is, may be gathered from his revelation of himself in his word. There he discloses himself as our Creator, and lays claim to us as the work of his hands. There too he discloses himself as our Lawgiver, our King, our Observer, and our Judge. And what Scripture says, our conscience ratifies. The law written in our Bibles corresponds with the law written on our hearts. We cannot read the

Scriptures without finding a response to them in our own bosoms. They speak to us with authority—an authority we find it impossible to shake off. They set God before us, and make us hear his voice: and we feel that his laws are holy, and his commandments holy and just and good. And yet they are death unto us. They make us sensible of our sinfulness, and adjudge us to eternal punishment for our conscious criminality. Under one aspect, then, they set God before us in an awful and alarming point of view, as a consuming fire. But again they set him before us, in another point of view, as a merciful God, “forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin: but who will by no means clear the guilty.” Hence, they also set him before us providing an *atonement* for our guilt, laying on Christ the iniquity of us all, and opening for us in his blood a way of pardon, holiness, and peace. In a word, they set him before us as “God our Saviour,” redeeming us from punishment by his Son, and hallowing us from pollution by his Spirit. And our conscience bears witness with the Scriptures that such a merciful, redeeming, sanctifying God is the God we sinners need. Our heart loudly tells us that “*this* God is our God,” the *only* God in whom we fallen worms can find comfort. There is not a vacillator, a waverer here,

but feels that *this* God must be his only hope, as He is the only Being suited to his wants.

Then, if this Lord be God, upon you, who may hitherto have been double-minded persons, it becomes incumbent to *follow* him. Your heart tells you that He demands and deserves your reverence, your love, and your service. Then be faithful to your convictions, and give the Lord the honour due unto his name. Made by his hands, obey him as your Creator. Bought by his blood, love him as your Saviour. Taught by his Spirit, yield yourselves to his holy influences. *Be* the Christians you were *designed* to be. Let Christ see in you of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied. "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." This you will never prove, so as to know it by your own experience, while you continue conforming to the world. But become "transformed by the renewing of your mind,"—be in earnest and decided in religion—give yourselves to the Lord, to follow Him, like Caleb, "fully," and you will soon prove that "his

ways are ways of pleasantness, and that all his paths are peace." "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and He will show them his covenant." When the heart is sincerely yielded to the divine will, and opened to the divine influence, all heaven soon descends into that heart, and a kingdom is set up in it, which is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. With indecision gloom vanishes; and with decision cheerfulness comes in: and "the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

When therefore I urge you to be decided for or against religion, do not maintain the dead silence and heavy indifference of Israel of old. "Either do good, or do evil." Either be on the Lord's side, or on Satan's. You cannot be on the side of both at the same time. "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord, and of the table of devils." There is no concord between Christ and Belial. Christianity and sin will not amalgamate. Save yourselves therefore the pain and the loss of attempting to make them do so. "God hath divided the light from the darkness;" and what He has put asunder you cannot join together. So "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness," but "walk as children of

light." And "withdraw yourselves from those that walk disorderly." "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Having these promises, no longer "halt between two opinions"—no longer vacillate between two lines of conduct. Dread wavering longer, lest you waver *too long*. Recollect, while you are undecided whom to serve now, death may decide for you whom you shall serve for ever. When you are transported into the next world, you will not halt between two opinions there. Therefore halt not here, lest you endanger your final salvation. "In the midst of life you may be in death." To-day, therefore, "yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." Put not off your decision till to-morrow. Should you live till to-morrow, you will be less disposed to goodness then, than you are now. Come, therefore, and join yourselves to the Lord "to-day, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Now the command of God your Saviour is distinct and urgent, "Follow me." Arise, and follow him, and you will *never repent your decision*. You may leave much, you may

leave all, to follow him ; but he will recompense it to you abundantly. “ Verily, he says unto you, There is no man that shall leave house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for his sake and the Gospel’s, but he shall receive an hundred fold now in this time,” in mental satisfaction and spiritual enjoyment ; “ and in the world to come eternal life.”

SERMON III.

DANIEL iii. 16—18.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

THESE words, my brethren, are too remarkable to be passed without our particular notice ; and, if the Lord be pleased to command his blessing, the consideration of them this morning will tend very much to "the strengthening and refreshing of our souls."

Nebuchadnezzar was a great and mighty king, who had conquered nearly all the then known world, because it pleased the God of heaven, "by whom kings reign," to prosper his arms: Among other

nations the Lord had given his chosen people the Jews into his hand, for the abundance of their sins ; and he had carried them away out of their own land, Judea, captives to his royal city Babylon and its neighbourhood. According to the barbarous and cruel custom of those ages, he had selected some of the most beautiful, able, and promising young Hebrews to be eunuchs in his palace ; and, distinguished above the rest, were Daniel, and his three fellows, the three young men mentioned in the text, commonly called “the three children.” “As for these four children” (it says in the first chapter), “God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom : and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. Therefore they stood before the king : and in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.” In process of time God sent to Nebuchadnezzar that dream concerning the image, which you will find recorded in the 2d chapter ; and when all the king’s wise men had been completely baffled by this dream, but Daniel had been enabled by God both to tell the king his dream and also its interpretation, “then the king made Daniel a great man ; and ruler over the whole province of Babylon.” Afterwards, at his request, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

were “promoted over the affairs of the province of Babylon; but Daniel himself sat in the gate of the king,” that is, was the king’s special judge and privy councillor. Thus these four Hebrew youths were raised to high honours and great emoluments, and the path before them seemed smooth and easy.

But a sharp trial of their faithfulness to the one true God was nigh at hand. Nebuchadnezzar was an *idolater*. And having amassed prodigious wealth out of conquered kingdoms, he seems to have set his heart upon *shewing his riches* by making a gigantic golden image of his god Bel, and upon *shewing his power* by obliging all his nobility and officers and great men to assemble from all places of his dominion, and worship this image at his command. And knowing that he had worshippers of *various* gods in his dominions, and fearing some of those worshippers might resent and resist bowing down to *his* God, and being excessively jealous of carrying his point, with the imperious fierceness of an Eastern Despot, he had a fiery furnace ready heated for the summary execution of all recusants. So his great men were assembled from all quarters to worship this golden image on the plains of Dura, in the province of Babylon; and among others Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were compelled to be present. Why Daniel was not there, does not appear, and it were idle to conjecture. It is impos-

sible to suppose he worshipped the image, and therefore impossible to suppose he was present, or he would have been watched and accused as much, or more, than his three fellows. However, *they* were present. Superiors are to be obeyed by inferiors in all things lawful. There was no law against Hebrews being *in presence* of an idol, because “an idol is nothing in the world.” Therefore, at the king’s command, *they* assembled, with other officers, around the golden image. *So far* they conformed, because so far conformity was lawful and proper: but they would conform *no further*. There *is* a point at which faithful people “must obey God rather than men.” The Hebrew law was plain and explicit, “Thou shalt *not* make to thyself any graven image—thou shalt *not* bow down to them nor worship them; for I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God.” Wherefore, at that trying moment, “when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music; and when all the people, the nations, and the languages, *fell down* and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up”—at that trying moment Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, those faithful servants of the Most High God, *stood erect*, in glorious but dangerous elevation above myriads of prostrate idolaters.

For this they were eagerly accused to the king

by certain envious and servile Chaldeans, who hoped to rise on their ruin. “Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king. And Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?” Are you, whom I raised from nothing, so ungrateful—are you, whom I can reduce to nothing, so daring—as deliberately to resist my will, and set me at defiance before all my assembled people? I can scarcely believe this. Your not bowing down to my image, at my command, must surely have been accidental, through ignorance, or misunderstanding of my wish. You could not have meant to stand out against me—no—you could not—that were incredible rebellion and madness—it must have been through mistake. Therefore you shall have an opportunity of retrieving your character, and convincing me of your loyalty and obedience. The rest of the people will prostrate themselves a second time by-and-by. “Now therefore if ye be ready, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye *fall down and worship* the image which I have made—well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst

of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" "Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter." Our answer is ready, is plain, is full, is final. "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

Behold, my brethren, in these three Hebrew children the *power* and *practical nature* of true faith in God!

Behold, first, its *power*.

How *calm* and *quiet* is their behaviour under the most trying circumstances! There are they—three among myriads—in presence of the most mighty monarch upon earth, in whose countenance they see fury, and in whose furnace they see flames, ready to devour them—and yet they are *all composure*—"their heart standeth fast, believing in the Lord"—"they endure as seeing him who is invisible"—they realize the presence, the power, and the promise of *Jehovah*, "When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee"—and in the

confidence of faith, and the hopefulness of conscious innocence, they tell the imperious, boasting monarch, "Our God is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king." "But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

Behold here, secondly, the *practical nature* of true faith in God!

It made these Hebrews "*yield their bodies*, that they might not serve nor worship any God except their own God"—it made them "*resist unto blood*, striving against sin"—they would not commit an act of disobedience to the Lord, *whatever* were the consequences—"though he should *slay* them, yet would they trust in him." His commandment was plain against idols, "Thou shalt *not* bow down to them nor worship them;" and they would obey Him even unto death, if it should seem good to him, believing that if they were taken out of this present life, "the King immortal, invisible," "the blessed and only Potentate," would "*raise them up*, who had died for his laws, unto everlasting life."

My brethren, we ought to *imitate* their faith and obedience. Have *we* not the very same God as *they* had? Why should *we* not trust him, and follow him fully, as *they* did? Was he not "with them in trouble?" Did he not "deliver them,

and bring them to honour?" Did he not "with long life satisfy them, and show them his salvation?" "They fell down bound in the midst of the burning fiery furnace." Yet soon was "king Nebuchadnezzar astonished and rose up in haste, and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." And when they came forth of the midst of the fire, "the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw those men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them." And "Nebuchadnezzar blessed God, the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego;" and "promoted them in the province of Babylon."

These things "were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of such Scriptures, might have hope." The burning fiery furnace on the plain of Dura was not the only furnace into which the children of God have to go on earth. There are furnaces, burning fiery furnaces, flaming now for Shadrachs, Meshachs, and Abednegos of our day, and there is a Nebuchadnezzar to put them into them. In plain words, the mass of mankind are idolaters now, as truly, though not as grossly, as in the ancient province

of Babylon. The Devil, "the god of this world," sets up some engaging idol before their face; and they, at his command, and charmed by his music, fall down and worship it. "The *covetous* man is an idolater," for St. Paul says so plainly; and money is the golden image by which the Devil entices him to idolatry; for "he cannot serve God *and* mammon."

The *sensual* man is an idolater; for he makes "a god of his belly;" and never had any of the heathen a more beastly idol.

The *man of the world* is an idolater; for he is a "lover of pleasures more than a lover of God."

The *vain* man makes an idol of *himself*, "whose height is three score cubits."

In short, the plain of the wide world is full of idolaters, who, some through fear, others for profit, some through indifference, and others through mistaken fondness and pitiable weakness and ignorance, at the command and instigation of Satan, fall down and worship the idols which he has set up. They either know not or fear not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, being "children that have no faith."

But, blessed be God, there *are* children who *have* faith—there *are* Shadrachs, Meshachs, and Abednegos, among the overwhelming myriads of idolaters in our day—I hope there are some *here*

present, who both *trust* God and *obey* him. To such I now speak. Brethren, it is at your peril if you will dare to be singular—it is at your peril if you will dare to stand up for God in the midst of those who either know him not, or profanely desert him, through temporising and worldly considerations. Your loyalty to God, your renunciation of the authority of Satan, and your condemnation of an idolatrous world by your example of upright faithfulness, cannot escape the malevolent notice of those who will be the friends of the world, and therefore the enemies of God: and hence you may expect to be threatened with a burning fiery furnace. Satan will not quietly bear to see you resist his idolatrous enactments; and your worldly-minded friends and neighbours will not quietly endure seeing themselves reprov'd by your obedient piety. You must compromise your principles, you must conceal your religion, you must dissemble your behaviour in their presence; or you must affront them by your singularity, and run the risk of consequent suffering in your worldly ease or prospects. If you have a single eye to the glory of God as your end, to the word of God as your rule, and to the example of Christ as your pattern, you cannot always “please men,” not even those whom you would wish to please, so far as a good conscience will permit. Cases will occur in which “you *must*

obey God rather than them." You will come into such circumstances that trimming will be impracticable, even if you could think of trimming. You will be obliged to act with decision—you will be obliged to shew what you are, and to run worldly risks, if you are sincere Christians. You will be constrained perhaps to act differently from your natural superiors, perhaps to disoblige former benefactors, and, by not giving way to their unlawful commands, to fly in the face of influential persons, on whose favour or frown your earthly prosperity or adversity seems suspended. Firmness in maintaining your Christian principles, and openly putting them in practice, will *threaten* you with severe losses, and the greatest personal inconvenience. And to be thus situated will sharply try your faith and your obedience. Peradventure you may *then* feel the *comfort* of such a Scripture narrative as the chapter from which my text is taken. It will confirm your faith to mark how faithful were those three children, in circumstances as trying to the full as yours: and it will encourage you to "give your body to be burned," rather than deny your Lord and Master, and "make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience." It will console you to reflect that He was with his martyrs in the midst of the burning fiery furnace, and "quenched the violence of the fire," and made "their latter end

better than their beginning," "because they believed in their God." Hence you will derive a cheerful confidence that certainly he will be with *you*, if you are called to suffer shame or pain or loss for his name; and that "with every trial he will make you a way to escape, that you should be able to bear it." Certainly he *can* enable you to bear it, and he *can* deliver you out of the threatening danger, if he see good. You may trust him to do so, if it would be for your real good; and you may humbly pray to him and expect him to do so. But if he do not, if the worst come upon you, if there seem no alternative but you must suffer extremities for righteousness' sake, still let it appear in your language and in your conduct, as it did in the language and conduct of the three children, that you will make no sinful compliances to evade persecution, to retain the favour of the worldly-minded, no, nor to escape the greatest losses, the worst sufferings, or even death itself. Happy, in fact, and honoured above others will you be, if "to you it is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." You may "reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in you." None will ever regret in the next world the sacrifices which they made in this for Christ's sake, but will perceive that "their

light affliction, which was but for a moment, wrought out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

In fact, the difficulty is not so much to believe that all will be abundantly made up to us which we *do* undergo for Christ's sake, but the difficulty is, to have faith enough in him *to* undergo it. Nothing less than a firm, abiding, habitual persuasion of the reality of "things not seen as yet," will carry us through the temptations and trials of this present evil world. The pains of sense, and the sufferings of experience, will not long be patiently endured by any but those who have "the root of the matter in them," by any but those who have an awful fear of God before their eyes, who choose his favour more than life, and who have such a conviction of his presence with them and his goodwill and approbation towards them in his beloved Son, that their faith, like Stephen's, can, as it were, pierce the clouds, and see heaven opened, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God to succour all those that suffer for him their only Mediator and Redeemer. The faith of the three children was of this vivid kind, or it would never have supported them to act with such cheerful obedience in such trying circumstances. Wherefore, Christian brethren, let their beautiful consistency of deportment be an encouragement to us

also *to have faith* in their Saviour and our Saviour, and in their God and our God; and *to obey him* at all risks, “through evil report, or good report,” not hesitating to “confess him before men, that he also may confess us before the angels of God.”

But if any of us are “children who have no faith,” or not faith enough to make us obey our Lord in trying cases, we are rebuked by the intelligent constancy of these Hebrew youths. They were ready to give up their rich and honourable places under government—they were ready to renounce the favour of the king who had raised them from captivity to nobility—they were ready to go into the furnace, and to apparent certain death—rather than disobey the plain commandment of the Lord their God. And they would not shuffle, or trim, or compromise, or make compliances. Inwardly, in their conscience, they could not bow to the idol; and therefore no threat could induce them so to behave outwardly, as to seem to bow to it. God was to be honoured by them that day, or Bel; therefore without equivocation or disguise they told the truth, they avowed their principles, they followed the Lord fully, and were not careful about the consequences. If Jehovah was confessed with their lips, believed on in their heart, and glorified in their bodies, whether he was glorified by their life or their death, they were not solicitous. “The

eternal God was their refuge, and underneath were the everlasting arms." Into these his providence *called* them to fall—into these they *fell* with the confidence of obedient children—and they *found support*.

My brethren, there is no salvation for any who do not possess the same spirit of faith and obedience. No man can be a faithful Christian without making sacrifices for Christ's and for conscience sake, at some time or other. Things may go smooth with the professing Church for awhile, but sooner or later the Gospel will be a discerning touchstone of the sincerity and constancy of all who embrace it. Jesus Christ's "fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather the wheat into his garner ; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." In due time his providence will be so arranged as to put us all to the most accurate test, and discern what manner of spirit we are of. Then many a professing Christian will turn out far other than his acquaintance think. "The first will be last, and the last first." Many, who are flourishing professors, while the path of obedience to Christ is easy, "when affliction or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by will be offended." The Church will be thinned of its members. A Mark will "not go forth with them to the work"—a Demas will forsake them,

having loved this present world—and Shadrachs, Meshachs, and Abednegos will be *left in honourable loneliness.*

Therefore, brethren, look well to your principles, to your foundations, to your resources. “My son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy heart for temptations.” Unless we are prepared to “deny ourselves and take up our cross daily and follow Christ,” whithersoever he calls us, and through whatsoever painful sacrifices, “we cannot be his disciples.” But if “we count not our lives dear unto ourselves, that we may finish our course with joy,” He is one who “will never leave us, nor forsake us;” but “guide us by his counsel,” support us with his Spirit, “and after that receive us to glory.”

And “now unto him that is *able to keep us from falling,* and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

SERMON IV.

PSALM xviii. 35.

“Thy gentleness hath made me great.”

THESE words are part of “the song, which,” as appears from the title, “David, the servant of the Lord, spake unto the Lord, in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul.” He afterwards delivered it “to the chief musician” for the service of the Church, that by it the mercies of God might “be had in everlasting remembrance.” It now constitutes the 18th Psalm, which we have read this evening. It is, in its character, the joyous song of a man “wholly at ease and quiet,” sitting upon the high rock of salvation, and looking back, with admiring eye, on “all the way” by which his wonder-working God had raised him to his present elevation. The retrospect was touching in

the extreme. "His eye affected his heart;" and "out of the abundance of his heart his mouth spake," what yet language evidently failed him to speak fully, his sense of thankfulness. All he can say, (though, indeed, what could he say more?) is, "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower." In other words, the Lord is my all. I am nothing—He is every thing. And because more I cannot do, this I must do, this I will do, "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength"—I will love thee for many things, and oh! not least for this, "Thy gentleness hath made me great."

The acknowledgment is peculiar and affecting. We find in Scripture much celebration of the power of God, and the wisdom of God; yea, and of the mercy of God, and the love of God; but the celebration of the *gentleness* of God is peculiar to the passage before us. The moment, however, we hear this attribute of the Almighty brought prominently forward by the Psalmist, and particularly acknowledged, we are struck with the justness and propriety and force of the acknowledgment. Nay more, its affectionateness makes it a singularly affecting acknowledgment. When we hear, "Thy

gentleness hath made me great," we are immediately presented with the image of Royal David thanking the Lord of all that to him he had mercifully merged (as it were) the awful character of God in the endearing one of Father—thanking him that he had condescendingly stooped from "the habitation of his holiness and of his glory" to take the conduct of him, a lowly and sinful child of the earth—thanking him that He had "loved him with an everlasting love"—that he had been considerate for his weakness—had helped his infirmities—had checked his errors—had borne with his frowardness—had dispersed his enemies—had guided him safely in the way he should go—and had reared him with unwearied patience and indulgent tenderness into vigorous, disciplined, and accomplished manhood. We are presented, I say, in the text, with this image of grateful David. David could not forget, and could not remember without emotion, how much he was indebted to the gentleness of his God. As he reviewed, (and he did continually review,) the divine dealings with himself during his past life, he could not but recal the sins of his youth, yea, and of his riper years too. Conscience reminded him of the frequent "pride and naughtiness of his heart," and how he had been rebellious and perverse and vexatious and trying. And yet, though he had so much and so

often "grieved the Holy Spirit of God," and provoked Him to depart from him, He had not departed from him. The Psalmist was sensible that God had "overcome his evil with good;" and, instead of rejecting him, when, for his refractory conduct, he deserved such a judgment, had borne with his provocations, loved him through his sins, been merciful to his transgressions, and "restored him in the spirit of meekness." And now, in his better moments, he was *touched* with "the kindness and love of God his Saviour;" he was, in all his heart and in all his soul, aware that, but for them, he must have perished; and hence he could not but "speak good of *His* Name," whose "*gentleness* had made him great." He felt that, had God been either hasty or rough with him, he should have been overdone and undone by the divine severity, and should have withered before "the blast of the breath of His displeasure." He felt that his spirit would have been broken, his affection alienated, his behaviour servile at best. But now, when he looked back upon all he had met with at the hands of God, he saw in it such goodness, rather than severity; such forbearance, rather than sharpness; and such manifest love shining through even his most grievous chastenings; that he felt God had won his esteem, gained his confidence, and secured his heart. He felt he could

love him as his Father, while he revered him as his "holy Lord God." He felt, in a word, that, by his gentleness, God had made him, what he never could have made him by harsh measures—he had made him "great"—had reared his spirit—had made him an established character, "rooted and grounded in the love" of his Benefactor, and disposed to serve him with hearty gratitude and filial alacrity for ever and ever.

And what a holy triumph was this for God! How hard a citadel is the human heart to win! a citadel which *cannot* be taken by storm, no, not by the power of the Almighty God: it must be *yielded*, before God can inhabit there: and, to this end, it must be *won*. "He that winneth souls is wise;" and none has this wisdom like "the only wise God our Saviour." He won the heart of the Royal Psalmist by his gentleness: and thus, my brethren, he is aiming and endeavouring to win your's and mine. He wishes that his gentleness should make us great.

But to be sensible of his gentleness, and duly, or even in some good measure, affected by it, we too, like David, must review our past life, and meditate on what we have *deserved*, and what we have *experienced*, at the hands of God.

And *what* have we deserved? More than Jacob? What had he deserved? or, at least,

what did he feel he had deserved? Let us hear what he says, in Genesis xxxii. 9, when he was returning with large prosperity to his father's house. "Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands." We hear, then, what Jacob felt he deserved from God—not the least of all his mercies. And have we deserved more? Are we, have we been, better than Jacob? Let conscience testify—let memory recal some of those "manifold transgressions and those mighty sins" which weakly, wantonly, and wilfully we have committed against the Lord. But "who can understand his errors?" Our proper feelings and our proper posture are suggested to us by holy Jeremiah, in the end of his third chapter—"We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us: for we have sinned against the Lord our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God." Thus we *ought* to feel, and thus we *ought* to lie low before God, and "blush to lift up our face to him," whom we have grieved

and offended and tried, *we* best know how, and to what a dreadful extent. We have deserved from him nothing but “indignation and wrath,” nothing but “tribulation and anguish;” for “every soul of us has done evil;” and conscience knows the particular aggravations of our own case.

And, while *these* have been our *deserts*, what have we *met with* at the hands of God? Have we met with *destruction*? No—here we are “not destroyed.” That is a mercy. But have we met with *chastisement*? Be it so: yet that too has been a mercy: “He that spareth the rod hateth his son; but whoso loveth him chasteneth him betimes.” “I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right; and that thou in very faithfulness hast caused me to be in trouble.” Well, then, *what else* have we met with? *Kindness*, nothing but kindness. “Mercy has embraced us on *every* side.” We have had health and strength; we have had food and raiment; we have had abundance of comforts, personal, social, and public; we have had much success, and many enjoyments, of a temporal kind. And what shall we say of our acquaintance with God’s “inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ?” What shall we say of our “means of grace,” and of our “hopes of glory?” What shall we say of the rebukes we have had from conscience—the admonitions from friends—the exhor-

tations from ministers—the instructions from Scripture—the warnings from providence—the strivings from the Holy Spirit—the helps from this quarter, and the other quarter, too numerous to be detailed, but too precious to be forgotten? “Whoso is wise, and will *ponder* these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord.” I conceive it impossible for any of us to *ponder* what our God has met with from us, and what we have met with from him, without our acknowledging with some emotion, that, whatever be the degree of our present elevation, “his *gentleness* hath made us great.” “Had He dealt with us after our sins, or rewarded us according to our iniquities,” we should have been in a very different situation from that we now occupy. Therefore “bless the Lord, O our souls; and all that is within us, bless his holy Name: bless the Lord, O our souls; and forget not all his benefits.” These “tender mercies have been *over us all*,” “high and low, rich and poor, one with another:” and they have been over us all with a view to convince us that “God is love,” and worthy of being loved by us with entire affection.

But as God has a *general* love toward us *all*, so he has a *special* love to those of us who are *his children*, by faith in Jesus Christ. That Jesus Christ tells us that “the Highest is kind even to the unthankful and the evil.” How “great, then,

is his mercy toward them that fear him," and are reconciled to him through the death of his Son! "Let them give thanks, whom the Lord hath *redeemed*." Nothing can exceed the gentleness which *they* may hope to meet with. Hear how it showed itself toward the *redcemed of old*. What says the Lord in the opening of Hosea ii. ? "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my Son out of Egypt. I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms ; but they knew not that I healed them. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love." And in Deut. i. 31, Moses reminds them how "in the wilderness they had seen that the Lord their God had borne them, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way they had gone, until they came to that place." "About the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness," says St. Paul ; "he led them about, he instructed them, he kept them as the apple of his eye ;" and eventually "his gentleness made them great" in Canaan.

"Now these things happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for *our consolation*, upon whom the ends of the world are come." If such was the gentleness of God toward "Israel after the flesh," what should we believe of his gentleness toward his spiritual Israel! toward the purchase of his Son's blood, toward the subjects of his holy

influence, toward his sons and daughters who are to live with him for ever! Great is the tenderness we might *believe they* would meet with from “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and God of all grace:” but we are not left to *infer* this by *faith*; we *know* it by *facts*. We know it by the *actual deportment* of Him, who was “God manifest in the flesh.” We have no surer way of learning the character of God, than by observing the character of Christ: because “the Father that dwelt in him, he did the works.” What, then, was, perhaps, the most conspicuous attribute in the character of Christ? Was it not the very one celebrated in our text? So conspicuous was this attribute of his to be, that it was the subject of distinct prophecy, in Isaiah xl. 10, 11. “Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall *gently* lead those that are with young.” And so he did, when, in the fulness of time, he entered on his ministry in the flesh. He was full of grace, full of kindness, patience, and considerateness—so full, that, when St. Paul would use his strongest argument to touch and melt petulant Corinthians, thus he pleads, “Now I Paul myself beseech you

by the meekness and *gentleness of Christ.*" Signal indeed must his meekness and gentleness have been, thus to form the ground-work of such an Apostolic entreaty. In fact, how gentle he was, we may, in a good degree, gather for ourselves, from observing his deportment toward his disciples, as it displays itself in the Gospels. He taught them "line upon line, and precept upon precept," "as they were able to bear them." "He said not many things unto them at the first, because they were not able to bear them then." But at length "he endued them with power from on high." "They had an unction from the Holy One, and knew all things." Such was his gentleness in *teaching*, which ultimately "made them great." And his gentleness of *deportment* was not less edifying. He was the *Lamb of God*. He made himself *beloved* of his disciples. Their *Master* he might have been; but he preferred being their *Friend*. He bore with their infirmities, was patient with their follies, checked their sins, but loved their persons, trained them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and reared them into great Apostles, attached Apostles, "ready, not to be bound only, but to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

Now whatever was the gentleness of Christ toward his followers *then*, it is in equal exercise toward his followers *now*; for "Jesus Christ is the

same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Also, being "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person," and the comprehensible display of his character, from seeing the gentleness of Christ, we gather the gentleness of God in Christ: and it is so great, as to be a ground of most comfortable meditation to all believers. It helps us not a little to believe that "all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, unto such as keep his covenant, and his testimonies." Those of you who keep his covenant and his testimonies may not be able to discern at the time that "all his paths are mercy and truth" to you. But "endure unto the end," and "what you know not now, you shall know hereafter." It was a bitter thing to Jacob to be driven out from his father's house; and to David, to be driven out from the heritage of the Lord. Many were their sighs and tears under their troubles, and much and frequent was their dejection and despondency. But their God helped them out of their sins, over their trials, and against their enemies; and he ever liveth to help you, "whose trust is in his tender mercy through Christ for ever and ever." Indeed I think you must be conscious even now, what great things the gentleness of God has done for you. Surely you can look back on cases and instances in your own particular life, where God was singularly mild and patient toward

you. Many, you must be aware, were the times and ways in which you were trying to the divine forbearance. Since then, through his riches of goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, you have come to repentance—you have come to yourselves—and you have come to admire and love Him who loved you through your sins, and waited for your returning to a better mind. You can see now, how ill it had gone with you, if your God had been as hasty with you, as you tempted him to be. You can see now, that you are a debtor for ever to his paternal gentleness. You are sensible now, that he has *made* you, though you went nigh to the unmaking of yourselves; and that he has *set you up*, when, but for his prompt and supporting hand, you would have sunk into perdition.

It is not always, perhaps, that you may feel in this softened and grateful manner towards your invisible Friend: yet sometimes, methinks, when faith prevails, and experience of the divine goodness is fresh in your mind, you will be constrained to take up the Psalmist's acknowledgment, and say, "Thou art my hope, O Lord God; thou art my trust from my youth. By thee have I been holden up from the womb: thou art He that took me out of my mother's bowels: my praise shall be continually of Thee. I am as a wonder unto many; but thou art my strong refuge. Let my mouth

be filled with thy praise, and with thy honour, all the day. Cast me not off in the time of old age: forsake me not when my strength faileth." And, Christian brethren, he will not forsake you. "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." "Having loved his own that are in the world, he loves them unto the end." "Hearken unto me," he says in Isaiah xli. 3—"hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb: and even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." So thoroughly are "the gifts and calling of God without repentance," that the *very language* he has chosen for the conveyance of his promises is as large and unrestricted as themselves. With regard to our text, for example, the very words translated in the Bible version, "Thy gentleness *hath made* me great," are equally translatable, "Thy gentleness *shall make* me great," and are actually translated to this effect in the Prayer-Book Version. Either translation is *true*, but neither translation is the *whole truth*. The whole truth conveyed by the pregnant Hebrew is, that, if God's gentleness has not made his children great *already*, great it *will* make them in his good time. "The Lord *will*

give *grace* and *glory*, and *no* good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." So, Christian brethren, wherever you are in your pilgrimage, you are within the arms of this comprehensive promise. If God's gentleness has made you great now, you may love him for the past; if otherwise, you may trust him for the future. He who, "of his own will," "has begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:" and having loved you enough to suffer your manners so long, he loves you enough to suffer your manners all the while you are in this body of death, and till you attain that world where, made perfect, you will try the gentleness of God no longer.

You see then, Christians, with what a gracious God you have to deal. You see how he commendeth himself to you, in his word, and in your own experience, as a *gentle* God.

Hence, I have a word of *exhortation* for you in conclusion. "Be ye *followers* of God, as dear children, and walk in love." "Be ye perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," in this character of *gentleness*. Having felt the gentleness of God towards yourselves, exemplify some portion of it towards your fellow-creatures. I observe that such was the effect of the divine gentleness on the saints of old. See how Jacob had drunk into the spirit of his God. Profane Esau was all impatience

and inconsiderateness, as we read in Genesis xxxiii. 12. "He said, Let us take our journey, and let us go, and I will go before thee. But Jacob said unto him, My lord knoweth that the children are tender, and the flocks and herds with young are with me: and if men should overdrive them one day, all the flock will die. Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant: and I will lead on *softly*, according as the cattle that goeth before me and the children be able to endure, until I come unto my lord unto Seir." This good man had been melted by the gentleness of God to himself, till he had become gentle even to his beasts. See again how that David, who wrote our text, had put on the bowels of mercies which had so touched him in God. You know how provoking Absalom had been to him, having usurped his throne, defiled his bed, and sought his life. Yet, when "all the people went out by hundreds and by thousands" to avenge him of his adversaries, "the king stood by the gate side: and the king commanded Joab, and Abishai, and Ittai, saying, *Deal gently* for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom: and all the people heard when the king gave all the captains charge concerning Absalom." The yearning father's gentleness was conspicuous in him, who had met with a father's gentleness at the hands of God. We observe the like effect wrought in the naturally

hasty and overbearing Paul. At the very moment he reminds the Corinthians of “the meekness and gentleness of Christ,” he gives an exemplification how himself was moulded into the same character—“Now I Paul *beseech* you.” It brings to our recollection his similar language to Philemon—“I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, yet for love’s sake I *rather beseech* thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ: I *beseech* thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds.” Nor was such the tenderness of Paul the aged only: he had the same spirit in “the dew of his youth.” In the earliest Epistle we have of his, viz. the first to the Thessalonians, we find, from his own language, what had for some time been his own character—“We might,” says he, “have been burdensome,” (or, as it is better in the margin, we might have used authority,) as the apostles of Christ. But we were *gentle* among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children.” You see, as the gentleness of God had cherished him into greatness, he would fain cherish his children into greatness by the same deportment. Yea, and he would have them *followers* of him, even as he also was of Christ. Hear in particular how he exhorts “his own sons after the common faith.” To Timothy he says, “But foolish and unlearned questions avoid,

knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be *gentle* unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." Thus he puts Timothy in mind of what should be his own conduct: and next he tells Titus how he should put others in mind to the same effect—"put them in mind," he says, "to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but *gentle*, showing all meekness unto all men. For they themselves also," he reminds him, "were sometimes foolish, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another: but the kindness and love of God their Saviour had appeared to them" in a manner so melting, that for them to be harsh with a fellow-creature was altogether unbecoming.

My brethren, these examples and exhortations of holy men of old should not be lost upon us. They clearly show what a *softening* effect the experienced gentleness of God should have upon us. Let us all therefore look to our spirit and conduct. If we are rough and harsh, precipitate and passionate, soon angry with trying persons, and soon tired of doing them good, surely we have not tasted the sweetness of God's mercy to ourselves. The felt love of God to us would make us feel loving to others. The children of God have the heart of

God. Whatever may have been their *natural* disposition, the subjects of grace *become* gracious. "The fruit of the *Spirit* is long-suffering, *gentleness*, goodness." "The wisdom that is *from above* is peaceable, *gentle*, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits." Hence, really to have the gentleness of God, we must be born from above of the Spirit of God. The gentleness of *good nature*, as it is termed, is too limited and precarious to be relied on. The Scripture tells us, we need a *new* nature, a new heart and a new spirit, that we may live a new life.

Let us thoughtfully consider, therefore, whether we have *experienced* "the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." If this is questionable, how instant, should we be in prayer, that "he would create in us a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us," even "the meekness and gentleness of Christ:" for "if any man have not this Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

But if, on the other hand, we have a "good hope through grace" that we are "the elect of God, holy and beloved," let us "put on" more and more, (as becomes those who have received such an inestimable benefit,) "bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any have

a quarrel against any : even as Christ forgave us, so also should we." Nor should we remain satisfied with this negative goodness, but strive to be actively beneficial in improving and strengthening one another's characters. Let us "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." "A bruised reed let us not break, and smoking flax let us not quench." Let us "warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men : not rendering evil for evil, but ever following that which is good, both among ourselves, and toward all men." So shall we best show our gratitude for that divine gentleness which has made us *what we are*, and on which we are wholly dependent to make us *what we ever shall be* of good or great.

SERMON V.

PREACHED FOR THE BATH HOSPITAL.

MATTHEW xiv. 14.

“And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.”

“LET the same mind be in you,” says the Apostle, “which was also in Christ Jesus.” This morning, therefore, by the Divine blessing, I purpose considering, first, How the Saviour’s mind *discovered* itself on the occasion mentioned in the text: and then, secondly, Let me exhort you, my brethren, to the cultivation of *the same* mind.

Let us consider, first, How the Saviour’s mind *discovered* itself on the occasion mentioned in the text.

In Matthew ix. 35, we read, “Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their syna-

gogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few : pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest."

The Apostles seem to have prayed as he directed, and the answer to that prayer was, their own commission to go forth as labourers into the same harvest-field wherein their Lord and Master was toiling to exhaustion. For the next words are, "And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease." Accordingly, in Luke ix. 6, we read, "they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the Gospel, and healing every where."

. Did, then, the Saviour set the twelve at work to spare himself? Was he tired of prosecuting his benevolent purposes, and did he send his Apostles to labour while himself rested?

Far from it. His object in sending the twelve was not to spare himself, but to multiply his benevolence—to extend it far and wide, and do twelve

times as much additional good by their instrumentality as Himself could do alone. Accordingly we read, that while the Apostles were taking their rounds of commissioned mercy, the great Commissioner himself was taking His. For, in Matthew xi. 1, we read, "It came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities." No wonder, therefore, we find, in chapter xiii. 2, that "great multitudes were gathered together unto him." "At that time (proceeds the Evangelist in chapter xiv. 1,) Herod the Tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, and said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist, he is risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him." For, not long before, it appears Herod had cruelly beheaded John, to please the daughter of Herodias for having danced before him. And much about the same time that Jesus received the intelligence of his honoured Messenger's decease, his twelve Apostles rejoined him, having executed their several commissions. For look in Mark vi. 29, 30, and you find the two circumstances connected. "The disciples of John heard of their Master's death, and they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb,"—"and went and told Jesus" (adds St. Matthew). And the Apostles gathered themselves together unto

Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.

And now, natural grief on the Saviour's part for the melancholy end of his faithful John—some prudent consideration for his own personal safety and that of his Apostles—the fatigue and weariness of the whole party after their separate travels—together with the overwhelming pressure of present engagements—all united to make a temporary retirement highly desirable and pleasant. Accordingly, in verse 31, we read, “Jesus said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile: for (explains the Evangelist) there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they departed into a desert place by ship privately. And the people saw them departing; and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him.” And so, as St. Matthew observes in the text, “when Jesus went forth” out of the ship, instead of seeing a desert shore, a calm secluded spot, where he might breathe for a moment, and recreate himself and his wearied followers with that repose which nature painfully demanded—instead, I say, of seeing this longed-for scene of silence and retirement, “when Jesus went forth he saw a great multitude!”

There was an end at once to his desired pri-

vacy. The very multitude, the oppressive multitude, he had left behind him on the shore, and from whom he had conceived himself for awhile so agreeably escaped, lo! that same multitude had outgone him; had been fleeter by land, though round about, than he by sea in a direct course; and there they were on the shore, ready to throng and fatigue him as usual, the moment he should disembark. With *what feelings*, then, did the Saviour eye the collected crowds? Was he *displeased* at their want of consideration for himself and his exhausted apostles? Was he *pettish* at their intrusion on his hoped-for spot of quietness and rest? and, *angry* at their never-ceasing demands, their never-ending importunities, did he *refuse* to land, and order the ship *off again* to some more peaceful shore?

Oh! no. Such feelings might very possibly (I fear) have been found in such circumstances in *our* selfish, hard-hearted bosoms. But very different were the emotions kindled in the Saviour's breast "when *he* went forth, and saw the great multitude"—"he was *moved with compassion* toward them!" He knew how grievously they *needed* his assistance, and he considered what *pains* they had taken to procure it, or they would not on foot have outstripped him in the ship. He knew also how devoid of help they were from any but himself.

Therefore the bowels of the God of love yearned over them. He sacrificed his own ease and quietness: he gave up his own comfort: yea, he forgot his weariness. "His meat and drink was to do the will of Him that sent him and to finish his work:" an opportunity was now given him: there stood the great multitude before him, full of sin, of ignorance, and woe: "he was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick," says St. Matthew in the text—"he began to teach them many things," says St. Mark in the corresponding passage. Both were true. The Saviour ever united attention to the body with attention to the soul; and to each he gave suitable medicine to heal their sickness. Accordingly St. Luke in the corresponding passage in *his* Gospel says, "The people followed him, and he received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed those that had need of healing."

We see, then, how the Saviour's mind *discovered* itself on the occasion mentioned in the text—discovered itself in his feelings, and in his conduct—discovered itself to be a compassionate, benevolent, self-denying mind.

Now, therefore, in the second place, while I would animate myself, let me also exhort you, my brethren, to the cultivation of the *same* mind.

We are called Christians. Are we deserving

of "that worthy name whereby we are called?" "As many as are baptized into Jesus Christ should put on Christ." "Remember always," says our baptismal service, "that baptism doth represent unto us our profession, which is, to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made *like* unto him." And so says St. Paul, "If any man have not the *spirit* of Christ, he is none of his."

Let us cultivate, then, in the first place, the Saviour's *compassionate* spirit. "When he went forth, and saw a great multitude, he was moved with compassion toward them." And what was it in them which so touched his tender heart? It was their sin, their ignorance, their sufferings, their multitude: yea, it was their multitudinous sin, ignorance, and sufferings. It was the mass and urgency of the misery before his 'eyes. Look which way he would, the beach was crowded with sickly souls and sickly bodies all wanting, all perishing for want of, the good Physician.

And, my fellow Christians, look which way *we* will, do we not see *similar* sights? Doubtless we do, if we look at all with our Saviour's eyes—if we *care* to look at the wants and woes of our fallen fellow-creatures. Wherever and whenever we see a multitude, there and then we see a multitude who call for our *compassion*: for where there are many *persons*, there are many *sick*, and many *sinner*s.

The *sinful* meet us every where : theirs are “ the streets and lanes of the city.” The *sick* are less obtrusive on the casual observer. But only let him quit for a moment the street and the lane, and enter the dwelling-house and the cottage, and human misery and human want soon burst upon him in appalling abundance.

These things *are* so : but who *observes* them ? who is *affected* by them ? *Jesus* observes and is affected by them. He *was* moved with compassion towards such when he was on earth : he *is* moved with compassion towards such now he is in heaven ; for he is “ *the same* yesterday, to-day, and for ever.”

Where, then, are our *Christian* eyes, if we observe them not ? and where are our Christian bowels, if we pity them not ? Such observers and such feelings may be painful, indeed, and are so : but persons are not to be envied who are without them. If we might safely, or could properly, be without them, they would not have been so plentifully found in the Lord Jesus Christ our perfect pattern ; nor would his chief Apostle have exhorted us to “ put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies ” — “ to be kind one to another, tender-hearted.”

And *how*, my brethren, are our “ bowels of mercies ” to be moved, *how* are our compassionate feelings to be excited and cherished, but by our

benevolently coming into close contact with cases of wretchedness and sin? Wretchedness is to be contemplated with the eyes of our body: sin, with the eyes of our soul, opened and enlightened by the word of God. Therefore, would we possess and cultivate the compassionate spirit which was in Christ, we must “*see the great multitude,*” as he did. Christian compassion comes, not by imagining distress, no, nor by believing its existence, much less by shrinking and hiding ourselves from it; but it comes by seeing it. Would we then, be like our Saviour, let us make a conscience of benevolently looking into the sin and suffering of our fellow-creatures.

Let us look at our Bibles, and then at the condition of our neighbours; and that is the way to affect our hearts with a proper sense of their *sinfulness*. We are not to measure sin by our own notions and imaginations, but by the written word of God. When we read *that*, and “read therein, how all have sinned, and are by nature the children of wrath—when we read too that to sinners “is born a Saviour, Christ the Lord”—and that “God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their *trespasses* unto them”—when we read that a clean heart is offered, and the gift of the Holy Ghost to renew sinners unto repentance and holiness—when we read this

liberal provision of the Father of mercies and God of all grace, for the pardon and restoration to happiness of his fallen children of men, and reflect how comparatively few, how very few are *partakers* of God's bounty, or are even *aware* of it; the reflection should excite our pity, if we have any Christian feeling at all; it should make us grieve for the perishing condition of immortal souls, and "have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way;" it should make us not only willing, but eager, and active to go forth with the Scriptures in our hand and Christ in our heart, to tell them, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." *This is practical benevolence* of the highest kind; and is the duty not of compassionate ministers alone, but of compassionate private Christians. Every individual who "has tasted that the Lord is gracious" should cultivate the *Missionary spirit*, and be anxious and active that others should taste him too.

And as we should pity the *sinful* and *ignorant* multitude around us, and, like our Lord, "begin to teach them many things" with our own mouth, and by lending them good books, so also should we commiserate their *infirmities*, their *wants*, their *sufferings*. We should see with our own eyes of how many comforts they are deprived, and with how

many afflictive burdens they are oppressed. And surely that sight will touch us; and, overcoming a little of that selfishness and hardness of heart which too generally prevails, surely it will make us put our compassionate *feelings* into benevolent *deeds*, and “open wide our hand to our poor brethren,” and help forward any measures for healing their sick.

But (you say) such acquaintance with the wants, temporal and spiritual, of our fellow-creatures, and such exertions for their relief, are not to be made without great *labour* and *expense* on our part.

I know it, brethren; and therefore I remind myself and you, that our blessed Saviour’s was not only a compassionate and benevolent, but also a *self-denying* spirit. And, depend upon it, none of us shall ever do that good in our generation which we are capable of doing, and which our Lord expects us to do, unless *we also* “deny ourselves,” as he bids us, “and take up our cross daily, and follow him.” He summons us *plainly* to the duty of self-denial: but then, he enjoins nothing, however difficult, of which he did not *first* set us the bright *example*. Think once more how he acted on the occasion mentioned in the text. Behold him, who had been laboriously travelling on foot, from city to city, from village to village, oppressed at last with grief for his murdered messenger, and exhausted

with fatigue! For a little moment he seeks the calm of privacy, the restoration of languid nature. He seeks the ship, and is wafted propitiously toward the desired desert place. And, behold, there is the multitude, the very multitude he had been necessitated to leave. To meet them again, again to toil among them (as he knew he must, if he landed) from morning to night, preaching the word, and healing the sick, required in such circumstances no ordinary effort of self-denial. Human nature will bear few things worse than interruption and loss of hoped-for ease after long-protracted laborious exertions. We all know this. When therefore we recollect that the Saviour was perfect *man* as well as perfect God; and that his sensitive mind felt disappointment, and his sensitive body felt fatigue, as keenly, or more so, than we ourselves; we can tolerably estimate the *extent* of self-denial exercised by him on this occasion, by thinking how reluctantly *we* should have been brought to exercise the same. To give up our ease and comfort, yea, even our necessary repose, for the sake of doing good to the souls and bodies of our fellow-creatures, *this* is Christian self-denial. The Christian whose love and obedience to his Master will lead him to practise *such* self-denial under *such* circumstances, will easily practise it in less trying cases. Multitudes will charitably give their *money*, when they will not

charitably give their *time* : and many will charitably give their time *at certain hours*, who will not charitably sacrifice their *ease* and *leisure*, much less their *refreshment* and their *rest*. But when *Jesus* saw the assembled crowds, *he* sacrificed to them at once his necessary repose, his most cherished hours of privacy and meditation. Much more then would he have given them his money, had he been rich in this world's good. However, "silver and gold had he none; yet such as he had gave he them"—"he healed their sick"—their sick bodies with his touch—their sicker souls with the good word of his grace.

Now, therefore, my brethren, if you call yourselves Christians, and would prove yourselves such, not in empty name only, but in deed and in truth, then I invite you to *imitate* your Redeemer's healing kindness as nearly as you well can, both in general, by benefiting the souls and bodies of your ignorant and sick neighbours, and particularly, in the present case, by supporting the Bath Hospital, of which I this day stand the willing and the needy Advocate. I solicit your *compassionate* and *benevolent* contributions : and if you think you cannot easily afford them, then I solicit your *self-denying* contributions. I solicit them as you love your Saviour, and would make his conduct the pattern for your imitation. In the porches of our Hospital "lie a great number

of impotent folk, leprous, halt, withered, waiting for the movement of our healing waters." Would not the Saviour, think you, were he again on earth, deny himself a little to do them good? Then let us not be slow to imitate him, who "left us an example that we should follow his steps." Good has been done by our waters to many former patients in the Hospital; good is doing to many now; good will be done, I hope, to many more in future, through the instrumentality, in part, of your liberal contributions, which the accounts of the Hospital will satisfy you are wanted.

Be it that you have *many calls* upon you: so had Jesus. Yet which of them did he refuse? What single applicant, or what applying multitude, did he ever send empty away? On the contrary, his compassion "was stirred within him" by thronging supplicants, and always rose to the occasion. The more multitudinous were the calls upon his bounty, the more profuse was his benevolence; and if they "opened their mouth wide, he filled it."

Then let us all, (which we may do,) cultivate his spirit, and let us imitate his conduct, "according to our several ability." Many of you, I am sure, can afford your handsome support without any great personal sacrifice: yet not a few of you, perhaps, cannot. What then? Are such of you *excused* from contributing your Christian aid? By no

means. If you cannot contribute it without self-denial, then deny yourselves to contribute it, as your Saviour did in like circumstances. And do it cheerfully, as unto the Lord. Your offering is to Him: and that it will *cost* you something is the very thing which makes it a *proper* offering. Even David, under the Law, “would not offer to his God that which did cost him nothing:” much less should you under the Gospel, which pre-eminently furnishes you with motives to self-denial. Deny, then, yourselves the next expensive gratification, or the next not quite necessary comfort, or even the next real want; and you are furnished at once with a mite for the Bath Hospital—a mite, like the widow’s mite, the more acceptable to your Redeemer, because it will be cast in out of your living. The mind of the giver is what regulates in His eye the value of the gift. You, therefore, my friends, who can afford little, look to your hearts when your hand giveth, that with little money you may shew much love. Let us all recollect the kindness of Almighty God in giving us what we have, and be glad to acknowledge before Him, with the pious Psalmist, “All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.” Let us recollect the kindness of the Lord Jesus Christ in giving us undone perishing sinners his toil, his example, his Spirit, “yea, and his own life also,” “to make

us the children of God, and to exalt us unto everlasting life." And, "beloved, if He so loved us, we ought also to love one another;" and in that loving spirit to do what we can for the patients in the Hospital, where they receive attention both to their souls and bodies. So should Christ be honoured, our neighbour be benefited, and ourselves be blessed: for it is "blessed to give," said the Lord Jesus; yea, "*more* blessed to *give* than to *receive*."

SERMON VI.

MATTHEW xiv. 22.

And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away."

IT is my wish on the present occasion to give you a short practical *exposition* of this and the eleven following verses. All that I may say will be but simple, and familiar, no doubt, to many of you; but it may be useful, if God permit; and usefulness, not novelty, should be the chief consideration.

I will take the narrative, verse by verse, in order as it stands, explain it occasionally in passing, and suggest some reflections that seem naturally to arise from the different parts of it. If you open your Testaments at the passage, you will be able to follow me with the greater clearness.

From the 13th verse it appears our Lord had

crossed the sea of Galilee for the purpose of temporary retirement into a desert place, that (as St. Mark says in the parallel passage) he and his disciples "might rest awhile." But the people would not let him rest. They followed him round the lake on foot, and outwent him, being fleet^{er} by land than he by sea. So "when he went forth" out of the hold of the ship, with an expectation of landing on a secluded shore, he found the face of things quite different—"he saw a great multitude." There was an end at once of his hoped-for retirement. However he was not angry with the importunate crowds: on the contrary, "he was moved with compassion toward them," and "received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed those that had need of healing:" leaving us an example not to be weary of well-doing, but even to deny ourselves not a little for the sake of relieving the temporal and spiritual wants of our needy fellow-creatures. Thus our Lord spent the day fasting and toiling among the great multitude. Nor was this the whole extent of his goodness. When the evening was at hand, his disciples were proposing to him to send the multitudes away, that they might go and buy food where they could find it. But the considerate Saviour would spare them that expense and fatigue; thereby teaching his *ministers* to remember that their people have bodies

as well as souls, and teaching his *people* to remember that if they “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all other requisite temporal things should be added unto them.” When the hungry cravings of five thousand men, beside women and children, had been thus bountifully *satisfied* by him “who giveth food to all flesh, for his mercy endureth for ever,” “straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side of the sea, while he sent the multitudes away.” He, who is “the wisdom of God,” designed to answer several purposes by this arrangement, and first to teach all his disciples *unreserved obedience* to him, even though his commands be painfully opposed to their natural inclinations. No wonder they of old were *reluctant* to put to sea without Him; but “he *constrained* them”—*compelled* them, as the expression is, in the original. We must not dispute our Saviour’s plain commands under any pretext of attachment to his person. Implicit obedience is the best proof of our affection for him. He says, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken, than the fat of lambs.” When he, by his “never-failing providence, which ordereth all things in heaven and earth,” sends us away from what is comfortable to what is trying, we must

mortify self-will, and let our "soul be even as a weaned child."

But this arrangement taught his disciples, in the second place, to "walk by *faith*, not by sight." They were naturally desirous of their Lord's *bodily* presence: but it was well for them to learn reliance on his *spiritual* presence. And it is well for *us* to learn the same. We are prone to walk by frames and feelings, rather than by faith; and to think ourselves forsaken, if we have not sensible comfort. Yet, when we are in the way of positive duty, we should not doubt our Lord's approving presence, though, "verily, Thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour." But our poet's recommendation is good—

"Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace."

"There was a time," said dying Joseph Milner, "when I should have been much disturbed at experiencing so little sensible comfort as I now do: but I have learnt to believe it one of the most acceptable exercises of faith in God to lean quietly on the written word."

But, beside the good purposes to be answered to the *disciples* by sending them away, Jesus had a purpose to answer to *himself*, viz. the purpose of *retirement for prayer*. "When he had sent the

multitude away, he went up into a mountain *apart to pray.*" Retirement had been the original object of his voyage across the lake, and retirement he would have, even though it were by the sacrifice of that rest which his wearied body naturally craved. There is nothing more remarkable and instructive than the carefulness with which our Lord retired for secret devotion both before and after seasons of unusual exertion. Surely we should be wise to do the same. Busier than our Lord we cannot be; and if even He needed, along with "diligence in business, to be fervent in spirit, serving his Father," how needful must devotion be to us! We should therefore pray before business, that we may do it well; and we should pray after business, that when it has been done well, it may speed well, and that God may be honoured, and ourselves not puffed up, with its success. We can expect no blessing on the greatest exertions, unless they be sanctified by prayer. We may make much stir, but we shall do little good, if we are not devout. Opportunities therefore of secret devotion we should carefully embrace, and make them, if they do not present themselves. What is the end of all our labour, but success? and that is the alone gift of God. "Paul may plant, and Apollos water; but it is God that giveth the increase." Except therefore the Lord be on our side, we may "labour in the very

fire," and yet "weary ourselves for very vanity." So let us never forget to unite prayer with pains, since our great Example toiled the more the more he prayed, and prayed the more the more he toiled. In the greatest press of business it cannot be safe for us to omit or abridge, but rather to increase, our devotions; or, after a weary time and a weary day, Jesus would not have climbed the mountain "apart to pray." "When the evening was come he was *there alone*," and when midnight was past he was still *there alone*. And yet "he was *not* alone, because the Father was with him." A devout Christian is never *less* alone, than when he is alone. To him loneliness is loveliness. He longs to be alone, labours to be alone. To escape for awhile from the great Babel, and be alone with God, whether on the mountain, or in the vale, or in secret chambers at still evening or dawn, is to him a source of peculiar refreshment. A Christian who works as he should do while he is in the world, will enjoy retirement as he should do when he is out of the world. Solitude hangs heavy only on idle and sinful hands.

But let us proceed to contemplate the situation of the disciples. "The ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves; for the wind was contrary." All the circumstances of this voyage were, no doubt, figurative, or emblematic. The

disciples, without Jesus, are *tossed with waves*. The sea, in Scripture, is continually the emblem of *trouble*; and when Christians, from any cause, have lost their comfortable sense of their Saviour's presence with them, they are tossed with uneasy feelings and fears. The Psalmist was in such a storm, when he said, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me. Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." Jeremiah was in such a storm, when he said, "Waters flowed over mine head: then I said, I am cut off." So the disciples, tossed with waves, and in apparent danger of going to the bottom, are an apt type of Christians agitated with doubts of their acceptance, ready to despond of salvation, and fearful of sinking into perdition. And Christians in such a state are not unknown. Spiritual trouble may not be felt alarmingly by all Christians, but it is sometimes felt very alarmingly by some, who are tried with great dejection, and disquieted with innumerable terrors, till their "spirit is overwhelmed within them," and they feel themselves "ready to perish." And why their Lord allows them to be so, is somewhat mysterious. They are not sinners above others of his children, that they suffer such things. He, no doubt, has good reasons for permitting them to be so troubled, though his reasons may be secret to us. He giveth not account

of all his matters : but he probably has purposes to answer both to the sufferers, and to others through them, which could not be answered unless they both went through, and came out of, great spiritual tribulation. There is nothing like experienced distress for making people humble before God, and feeling towards men. It was well for the disciples of old to be sensible of their own helplessness without Jesus : and any of us might become self-sufficient, if we were not sometimes left to see that “without Him we can do nothing” to any purpose. In vain did they “toil in rowing”—“the wind was contrary ;” and their best exertions for three quarters of the night were of no avail to bring the ship to land. *What* an emblem that “we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves !”

“Bound on a voyage of awful length,
And dangers little known,
A stranger to superior strength,
Man vainly trusts his own.

“But oars alone can ne'er prevail,
To reach the distant coast ;
The breath of heaven must swell the sail,
Or all the toil is lost.”

COWPER.

The *darkness also*, amid which the disciples of old made all their fruitless exertions, is aptly emblematic of that confusion and perplexity of mind into which we fall, when our best efforts are made, and with

no success. While we can do any thing to help ourselves, we appear to be somebody, and to have some light. But when we have tried all our own devices, and yet are baffled, and our prospects seem getting worse and worse, then "a horror of great darkness" comes upon us. So it was with the Israelites at Pihahiroth: so it was with the disciples in the case before us: so it was with Jesus on the cross. But man's extremity is God's opportunity. When we cease from our work, He begins His: and when we have found that we are nothing, he begins to show us that He is every thing. "In the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them." He might have gone sooner; but he saw it proper to delay. We must learn to "tarry the Lord's leisure." He has his own time for doing all things, and that the best time, as appears in the end. His delay was a sore trial of the faith and patience of Martha and Mary, when they had informed him Lazarus was sick. "When he heard that, he abode two days still in the same place where he was." Lazarus died and was buried; and perhaps the sisters thought in their hearts that Jesus was scarcely the kind friend they had believed him to be. And yet he meant his delay for good, and tarried on purpose to do greater things when he came at last: and *if* Martha and Mary had doubted his affection, a

blush of shame would afterwards suffuse their cheeks. And many "evil surmises" of *their* being neglected were probably in the minds of the disciples on the present occasion. They would think of their Lord, "Careth he not that we perish?" We are apt to become *suspicious* of Christ's love for us, if we fall into great trouble, and he comes not *speedily* to our aid. And yet Scripture histories are "written for our learning, that we through *patience* and *comfort* of the Scriptures may have hope." What if our Lord delayeth his coming! "Though he tarry, we should wait for him, because he will surely come, he will not always tarry." Did he not come at last to his disciples, in the fourth watch of the night, when it was toward morning? At the same season it was he interfered for his people at the Red Sea. And it is promised generally to all believers, that though "weeping may endure for a night, yet joy cometh in the morning." So let us learn to be "patient in tribulation." Let us "hold us fast by God, and put our trust in the Lord God." "Did ever any trust in Him, and were confounded?" We therefore have no occasion to despond in our greatest adversities. He may appear for our help at an unexpected *moment*, and in an unexpected *manner*. Who would have thought of his coming to the disciples "walking on the sea?" And yet that is his glory. "His way is in the sea, and

his path in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known"—in other words, it is *usual* with Christ to command mysterious deliverances for his waiting and obedient servants. The disciples had put to sea at his orders, and though the path of obedience was certainly the path of trial, yet it was as certainly the path of safety. They could not perish in doing his will: nor can we. Our faithfulness to Him may involve us in strange trouble; but it will issue in our no less strange escape. Christ will appear for us, though perhaps not in the way we thought. But "his thoughts are not as our thoughts, neither are our ways his ways." He comes walking calmly and securely on such a troubled and untrod path, that we can scarcely credit the *reality* of his appearance. "When the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a *spirit*; —a *phantom*; and they cried out for fear." We are "slow of heart to *believe*" that Christ hath his way in the midst of trouble. It is so unnatural for us to look for our deliverer walking on a storm, that we start and shrink from the semblance of a comforter manifesting himself under *such* circumstances: we think it an *illusion*. We are apt to "limit the Holy One of Israel"—to form notions of our own how he will proceed—and discredit his proceeding in an unheard of manner. "Behold," said Naaman of Elisha the Lord's prophet, "behold, I *thought*

he will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper:" but lo! Elisha did quite a different thing. Behold, *we think* a sea of troubles is no scene in which to find salvation. And yet, in trouble, in deep trouble, in trouble threatening to be absolutely and fatally overwhelming, there oftentimes comes the Saviour, so calm, so quiet, that his very peacefulness in the midst of commotion is ready to make us shrink from him with terror, like the disciples, who "cried out for fear." "But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." Christ has compassion on our infirmities, and hastens to assure us with the *well-known voice of his word*. The Scriptures tell us to *expect* that, if we are his servants, he *will* be our "very present help in trouble." There is therefore no just cause for us to be surprised, if he "become the author of salvation to them that obey him," and if he appear for their rescue under circumstances that were naturally unpromising. However *strange* be the Divine interpositions on our behalf, we should not doubt their *reality* because of their strangeness, but assure our hearts with the *well-known voice of his word*, which leads us to *expect* that they will be strange in many cases. For what says Eliphaz in Job v. vi. ? "Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust;

neither doth trouble spring out of the ground; yet man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards." And what is added? This. "I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause; who doeth great things, and *unsearchable, marvellous* things without number. Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty: for he maketh sore, and bindeth up: he woundeth, and his hands make whole: He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee. Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good."

But to proceed with our narrative. When Jesus had said, "It is I, be not afraid," "Peter answered him, and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." The greatest trial of the *reality* of Christ's presence with us is, whether we can be *supported* by him in the midst of trouble. If we can "walk in the midst of trouble," and yet feel "revived," it is as solid a proof of our experiencing divine support as if we should walk on water, like Peter, and not sink; or in the midst of fire, like the three children, and not be burned. We do therefore put the Son of God to an infallible discovery of his real presence, when we invite him to "bid us come to him on the water." And he is not afraid of being put to the test. He is con-

scious of his own unbounded power, and is as ready, as he is able, to uphold all that trust in him. If we have faith, he has virtue. If we have love, he has invitation. If we would have him "bid us come to him on the water," he says, "Come." He is more willing to receive us than we can be to go to him. "He never said unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain."

And now let us behold in Peter the power and yet the infirmity of faith. "When he was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to Jesus." It was an astonishing act of confidence in Christ for Peter to leave hold of the ship, and commit himself to the water. One can scarcely conceive a stronger triumph of faith over sense. Nothing but implicit reliance on the Saviour's supporting power could have induced the Apostle to surmount natural fear, and venture on an untried path, where failure was apparent destruction. But Christ had said, Come; and in the confidence of faith Peter set out to go, not doubting but that the path of obedience would be the path of safety. He is a bright example to us of the unbounded, unreserved cheerfulness and alacrity with which we should set ourselves to the performance of all our Lord's commands, however impracticable they may seem to the natural man. If we are but *clear* that such and such invitations to go to him

are given us by Jesus, let us set out to go to him "in the full assurance of faith." We cannot be wrong in obeying his call; we cannot be presumptuous in complying with his invitation. The invitation of a king is a command. Our Saviour *invites* us to go to him that we may have life, and every blessing. So "let us *go boldly*." He will support us in doing that which Himself enjoins. Himself enjoins us to go to him in trouble. "Come unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And again, "Call upon me in the time of trouble, and I will deliver you." The troubled sea of Galilee is a type (as I showed you) of our troubled mind. So in trouble let us visit our Saviour; and though we have nothing to trust to but his word of invitation, let that suffice us, since "God cannot lie," and will never fail those who trust in him. And let not the buffetings of conscience, nor the raging of Satan, nor any wind of opposition, terrify us, and keep us away from committing ourselves to Christ. The invitation of his Lord had in it for Peter more of encouragement, than all natural obstacles together had of discouragement. He believed, and therefore he left the ship; he trusted himself to the water, and he found it bore him up, because he walked on it in faith to go to Jesus. Could we exercise his confidence in the invitations of our Lord to us, and would we

set out in faith to go to him through the midst of dangers, and rely on him for support, he would support us, and we should find a safe path, where to sense there was nothing but destruction.

But now see in Peter the infirmity even of a good man's faith. "When he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid." However trying the prospect of trouble may be, it is more trying to be in it. Peter in the midst of the raging waves, driven by the wind and tossing him, and having nothing in the world of a natural kind to support him, is a wonderful emblem of a Christian soul in the midst of felt troubles, buffeted by conscience, by the world, and by Satan, and having no earthly source of consolation. It is more to be pitied, than wondered at, if a Christian soul in such circumstances be afraid. A person may say, "I will trust, and not be afraid"—he may *encourage* himself in the Lord his God, and *set out* to face all opposition—but to "*hold fast* the beginning of his confidence firm unto the end," *this* is the difficulty—the difficulty that was too great for Peter, and has been too great for many a Christian since, who, in like manner, is "compassed with infirmities." "Let not him that putteth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off." Let not him who has set out well think he will, of course, hold out well. Let persecution, or affliction, or other wild waves

of trouble, beat over him, driven on by Satan, “the prince of the power of the air,” and it will be seen how liable the courage of faith is “to give way under the timidity of nature.” When Peter saw the “wind boisterous, he was afraid.”

And observe the consequence—“he began to sink.” When we look at natural obstacles, instead of looking unto Jesus, our fears get the better of our faith: and when faith begins to fail, our feet begin to give way; that is, our Christian walk begins to be *embarrassed*. We must walk by faith, not by sight, or we cannot walk at all. We must “not consult with flesh and blood,” or we shall “fail and be discouraged.” The way to walk safely is to keep the eye of our soul fixed on Christ, and go forward, relying on his invitation, “Come unto me.” If we turn away our eyes from Him, who is mighty to save, and become the slaves of sense, “we shall begin to sink.” Should this happen to any of us, and it is but too likely to happen to us all, some time or other, our only preservative from destruction is that resorted to immediately by Peter, viz., *prayer*—“he cried, saying, Lord, save me.” Good men always resort to prayer, even in last extremities. When Jeremiah said, “I am cut off,” his next words are, “I called upon thy name, O Lord.” Jonah says, “When my soul fainted within me, I remembered

the Lord." Jesus in his agony "prayed more earnestly;" and, in his hour of great darkness, still felt after his Father's support, saying, "My God, my God, look upon me: why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?" Here was "strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death." And thus "Himself having suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted," when they call upon him in the time of trouble. Peter called, and not in vain. "Immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him." "The Lord is *nigh* unto all that call upon him, yea, unto all such as call upon him faithfully. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him; he also will hear their cry, and will *help* them." Since then "we have not an High Priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin, let us go boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

But let it be remembered always that our infirmities are *no recommendations* of us, but *sins to be borne with* by our compassionate Redeemer. He would not let Peter *perish* for his infirmity; but yet, in saving him, he gently *chode* him for his unbelief—"O thou of little faith, wherefore didst

thou doubt?" Our "evil surmises" of the protecting goodness of Christ are our disgrace, and we ought to be ashamed and blush for them: and, mercifully as they are pardoned, we should be the more cautious against indulging them again.

And now let us hear the conclusion of this wonderful narrative of Christ and Peter. "When they were come into the ship, the wind ceased." Trouble dies away at the presence of the Lord. "In the world his disciples will have tribulation; but in Him they have peace." "And when He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" Not conscience, nor men, nor evil angels. Christ rebukes them all, saying, "Peace, be still; and there is a great calm." "The Lord will" in due time "give his" obedient and waiting "people the blessing of peace." He may be absent from them, and let them be agitated *awhile*, to try their faith and patience; but he is sure to come into the midst of them at last, with, "Peace be unto you; and then are the disciples glad when they see the Lord." And their peace here is but a foretaste and type of their everlasting peace, which they will have in that new earth, where there will be "no more sea." The agitations of Christians belong to *this* world; in the world *to come* "the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." Then

it shall be more illustriously fulfilled than ever, that “they which were in the ship shall come and worship him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.” The ship is *Christ’s Church* passing through the waves of this troublesome world. Those in the ship are his believing disciples. Did they not know trouble, they would never know his grace and power in saving them out of it. Thankfulness comes from felt deliverance out of the jaws of destruction. What then will be our thankfulness, if we do but find ourselves delivered out of all the miseries of this sinful world, and safe in the presence of our Saviour! And with what heartiness shall we “sing that new song, saying, Thou art worthy; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.” Oh that we may all be “rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, and continuing instant in prayer,” if by any means, through the abounding mercy of our God and Saviour, “we may so pass through things temporal, as not finally to lose the things eternal!”

SERMON VII.

LUKE vii. 13.

“ And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.”

THAT was a short but striking character of our blessed Lord which Peter drew, when he described Him to Cornelius as one “who went about doing good.” He did indeed do good; and “he went about” to do it. He was not only ready to do it, but ready to take pains to do it: yea, he was not only ready to do it when asked, but ready to do it, on suitable occasions, unrequested. In the former part of this chapter we read how the elders of the Jews besought him to go with them and heal the good Centurion’s sick servant: and it adds, “Then Jesus went with them.” And no sooner had he done this solicited kindness, than he was ready, unsolicited, to do another and yet greater kindness.

“It came to pass the day after, that he went to a city called Nain: and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was” a sight before him always attractive, always solemn, to a well-regulated mind—there was a funeral procession—“there was a dead man carried out.” Jesus could not be indifferent to such a sight at any time. He was a man, “a man of sorrows” too, “and acquainted with grief:” therefore he felt for mourners, especially for mourners over “a dead man.” He knew he should *himself* soon be “a dead man carried out;” and he could not, unmoved, behold any one carried out who was “bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh.” He would have been touched with sympathy, *whoever* had been the person before him whom bereaved survivors were following to the tomb. But the circumstances of *this* funeral were peculiarly affecting. He found that “the dead man carried out was the only son of his mother; and she was a widow; and much people of the city was with her.” Here was a complication of touching considerations. The loss of a child is great—of an only child, greater—of an only son, greater still: and when that son has just arrived at manhood and dies, this is the climax of parental loss. It throws a blight, perhaps in most cases an almost

irreparable blight, on family hopes. In the present case, the blight was altogether irreparable. The "dead man" was not the only son of parents, who, under all the cloud of their bereavement, might see a ray of hope of having yet another son: no, he was "the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." Therefore, in losing him, she had lost *her all* of maternal comfort and maternal hope: she had lost "the light of her eyes," "the staff of her hand," "the nourisher of her old age," and "her name in Israel." It would seem also that he was no common son, and that she was no common widow. "Much people of the city was with her." Great worth had drawn forth great sympathy. Such a mother following such a son was felt for by numbers: "and when *the Lord* saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not." She had now one who could not only *feel* for her, but *help* her—one whose kindness was supported by power. "He came and touched the bier; and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother."

Such is St. Luke's exquisite history of this miracle—a miracle peculiarly valuable to us from the disclosure it made of *our Redeemer's disposition*

when he was on earth, and therefore of his present disposition now that he is in heaven, he being “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.”

We learn from it that “we have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our” sorrows ; but one “who can have compassion,” especially on those who are in *domestic* trouble. Our Lord seems to have had a particular respect for the charities of life, and therefore a particular tenderness toward family mourners. How did he sympathize with Mary and her friends over departed Lazarus ! “When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping who came with her, he groaned in the spirit and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him ? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept.” In *that* case you may think there was *personal* attachment toward the family. True, there was. “Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.” But there was *no* personal attachment toward the widow of Nain : yet “when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her.” We read not, indeed, that he *wept* over her. There was nothing strained, affected, or unnatural in our Lord’s deportment. He was a perfect man, and his feeling on every occasion was just such as became the occasion. He was not ashamed to weep over Lazarus. “Behold, how he loved him !” Tears therefore *became* the

occasion of a dead *friend* and his disconsolate sisters. But tears would have been *unnatural* over the *stranger* family at Nain. Yet, so forlorn was the widow's case, it immediately drew forth all the sympathy which was consistent with *unaffectedness*. "When the Lord saw her, he had *compassion* on her," and he soothed her with kind words, and relieved her by a generous action. In each case we trace in our Lord the same *tender-heartedness* for mourners; but the way in which it displayed itself in the two cases was different, while *yet* there was a divine propriety in them both. From which we draw this important conclusion, that mourners in our day should look for such sympathy only *from* the Lord Jesus as is consistent with His *situation* and theirs. The relative situation between the two parties is not the same now as it was formerly. The situation of mourners, indeed, remains the same. Sisters still weep bitterly over only brothers; and widows yet more bitterly over only sons. But the situation of Jesus is greatly altered. "In the days of his flesh," when he was "in the likeness of sinful flesh," and subject to our infirmities and emotions, "*yet* without sin," in those days he loved as a man, felt as a man, sorrowed as a man, pitied as a man. In all *passions* and *affections* that were innocent, and as far as they were innocent, "he was made like unto

his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest." And He is "a merciful and faithful High Priest," yet not after the carnal manner in which he showed his disposition on earth. "Though," says St. Paul, "we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him" so "no more." Our Lord has now exchanged his body of humiliation for his body of glory. When he came "in the likeness of sinful flesh," with the sensibilities, but not the sins, of our fallen nature, then he could hunger and thirst in his body, and then he could pity and groan in his spirit. But now that he is "entered into his glory," as he can "hunger no more, neither thirst any more," in his spiritual body, so his soul can have no more those carnal sympathies and sorrows which it felt toward the bereaved widow of Nain and Mary. There are no sighs or tears in heaven, much less in the bosom or on the face of "the Lord of glory." "The former things are passed away." "That visage" which, in the man of sorrows, was "so marred more than any man's," now "shineth as the sun in its strength." "In his presence is the fulness of joy, and at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

And yet this hinders not but that he can feel, after a spiritual and heavenly sort, for his lowly brethren of earth. He felt for Stephen, when he

stood at the right hand of God to save his martyr's soul from unrighteous judges. He felt for his bleeding Church, which is his body, when he said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" And he felt for that very Saul, when he viewed him dissolved in penitence and supplication, and said, to Ananias, "Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth." And he has felt for many another since. Our Lord has still the sensibilities and emotions of manhood, but of glorified manhood. He is entered into his rest; but it is with a perfect consciousness, founded on past experience, of the agitations of our nature in this vale of tears, and with a real, though incomprehensible, fellow-feeling for human mourners of every sort.

Here therefore is at once consolation and instruction for us all. "We are born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward." Now Jesus says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." It is, then, of the utmost consequence for us to be well assured of the real disposition of Him who gives us this general invitation. We shall not accept it, we shall not go unto him, even in our troubles, unless we have confidence in "the kindness and love of God our Saviour." Mourners will not go for comfort where

they have even a suspicion of meeting with indifference to their case. It is toward a person of well-known tenderness, and who has himself been "acquainted with grief," that sufferers are attracted in their troubles. They are willing to pour out their sorrows into the ear of such "a son of consolation," and to repose their burden on his sympathising bosom. This is human nature. Our Lord knows it; and therefore he has been particular in commending himself to us as full of that very tenderness which alone can win our troubled hearts to "cast their burden upon him, that he may sustain us."

And I say, first, he commends himself *to us all*, whether we be at present saints or sinners, his disciples or not. We are of human kind, born of women: we are of few days, and full of trouble. Whatever else we are, we are Benonis, "sons of sorrow," and have maladies upon us of some description. But whatever plague, or whatever sickness we have, who "know every man the plague of his own heart," we all have ground for confiding application to Christ, as our good Physician. Do we not read, that "when he went forth, and saw a great multitude, he was moved with compassion toward them, and healed their sick?" Do we not read that he even went about "healing every sickness, and every disease among the people?" And

he says, "I am the Lord: I change *not*." Who, then, among us will venture to say or think the contrary? Who will unwisely and offensively suppose that *that* Jesus is unfeeling toward any one, now that he is in heaven, who never was unfeeling to any one, while he was on earth? Why should the worst or weakest of us be suspicious of the good will of that Saviour to ourself, when it says of him, in the days of his flesh, that "there came great multitudes to him, and he healed them every one?" The *general* kindness of Christ to all who were in trouble, and came unto him to help them, is a solid proof of his general disposition to show kindness to every one of us, who shall flee to him for succour. We *must* believe his readiness to show compassion on us; or we must believe that his disposition is *changed*, contrary to the express assurance of his Apostle, that "Jesus Christ is *the same* yesterday, to-day, and for ever." If therefore, brethren, you think that "the Scripture cannot be broken," think that Jesus Christ has a compassionate feeling for every one of you in all your troubles. I do not say that he has the *same degree* of compassion for you all, but he *has* compassion for you all—compassion enough to be doing you many an unsolicited kindness, and to be ready to do you many another, would you "pour out your complaint before him, and show him of your

trouble." Christ has a *general* and a *special* compassion. "He is the Saviour of *all* men, *specially* of them that believe." "He does good unto *all* men, *specially* unto them that are of the household of faith." So that none of you have reason to distrust his kindness: and would you but trust it more, and pray for it more, you would experience it more. He is good, indeed, to the unthankful and the evil: but he is better to those who are of a better disposition. He is gracious indeed to *mourners in general*, and gives them, we cannot doubt, many a cup of consolation which they never seek, nor recognize, nor acknowledge, when given, as coming from Him. But he is "very pitiful" to mourning *believers*. "Like as a father pitieth his own children, even so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." "In all their affliction he is afflicted, and the angel of his presence saves them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them:" and to them he is indeed "good, and a stronghold in the day of trouble: for he knoweth them that trust in him."

Therefore "trust in him at all times, ye people; pour out your hearts before him; for he is our hope." None but Christ has a union of power and goodness adequate to the relief of our necessities.

Some of you, perhaps, are in family trouble now. You have had a wife or a husband, "the desire

of your eyes," taken away "at a stroke;" or you have lost "that whereon you set your minds, your sons and daughters:" and, so bereaved, you are bereaved; and "your heart is wounded within you."

And now to whom or what are you looking for comfort? You look too low, if you look beneath the skies. Look up to heaven. There is balm in that Gilead; there is a good physician there. There Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Look up to *him*. Look up to him, though it be now for the first time. Perhaps he has *therefore* afflicted you, because you have never looked up to him as yet. He has taken your partner, your child, or your companion, that your soul may be awakened to ask, "Who art thou?" Many a death has been the means of life to surviving friends: the Lord has "given them the valley of Achor (trouble) for a door of hope." Perhaps he is dealing so with you, brethren, who were lately careless ones, but now mourn. Strive to mourn "after a godly sort." Mourn for your sins which have caused your sufferings. Let your grief lead you to prayer, and your bereavement make you go to inquire of the Lord, "Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me." Absalom could not bring Joab into his presence by gentle measures: so he set his corn-field on fire; and "then Joab arose, and came to Absalom into his house, and said unto him, Wherefore have thy

servants set my field on fire?" But Absalom wanted him on more important business than the firing of his field, and soon told him so, when he had effected the interview. And so it is with careless sinners. God speaks unto them in their prosperity, and they will not heed. So he sets their field on fire: he sends them losses and crosses, distresses and alarms, that they may be roused to come and reason with him, why he did it. Brethren, is *your* field on fire? Let it awaken you to go unto Christ; and you may find that your family or other trouble was, in truth, a means of grace, and the beginning of greater consequences than you imagine. "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God:" "repent you truly of your sins past: have a lively and steadfast faith in Christ your Saviour;" "and amend your lives according to his holy word;" and then you need not distrust his relenting grace, and pardoning love. "For though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. To crush under his feet his prisoners of earth, the Lord approveth not." He only wants to bend you; and to bend you, that he may not break you. He gives you sorrow, that you may mourn for sin: and in the world lets you have tribulation, that in Him you may seek and find peace. And all your sorrow

will be good sorrow for you, if it end in your godly sorrow; and bring you to Christ here, and, through Him, hereafter to that shining company that St. John saw, who had “come out of great tribulation, and had washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; and therefore were before the throne of God.”

But I cannot omit observing in conclusion, that the miracle under contemplation is peculiarly comforting to such of us as are *pious* mourners over the *pious* dead. Our Lord is not unregardful of comparatively superior worth in his human creatures, but makes distinctions “between those who have served him, and those who have served him not.” It is evident that the widow of Nain and her son had been “of the excellent of the earth,” or “much people of the city would not have been with her:” and it is equally evident that “the bowels of mercies” of our Lord were not the less moved over her on that account. Also Mary’s tears were not the less touching to him, because they were the tears of a pious sister over a pious brother. Such of us therefore as love Jesus may well believe we have his peculiar compassion, when we mourn over those whom He loved, and who loved Him. “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.” So few in number as they are, one of them can ill be spared from this

earth of which they are the salt, and on which they alone glorify him, and their Father which is in heaven. They are, in some sort, a loss to himself, being withdrawn from the too thin ranks of his Church Militant, which has many adversaries. Much more, then, does he know they are a loss to their surviving Christian relatives and friends. And he compassionates their mourners, and still says to us, "Weep not." Yea more, Christian brethren, he practically relieves us: he gives us inward consolations, and secret refreshings which uphold our fainting spirit. And, above all, he gives us a sure and cheering hope of meeting them again before his throne in glory. O the joy that will be *then*, when he shall call dead brothers, and present them to their sisters alive; and when he shall reanimate dead sons, and deliver them to their mothers!—in that world too, where "they cannot die any more, but **will** be equal unto the angels, and the children of **God**, being the children of the resurrection."

What hopes are these, Christian brethren, set before us in "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God!" Let them dry up all immoderate tears under "the changes and chances of this mortal life;" and let us "go our way till the end be: for we shall rest, and stand in our lot at the end of the days."

SERMON VIII.

LUKE ix. 51—56.

“And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face; and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.”

I am not aware that there is much in this passage that needs explanation: my object this morning will rather be, to draw from it some of those many lessons of instruction of which it is full. May it

please God to give us all a disposition and ability to understand and profit by them.

Our Saviour had been in the north part of the country, in Galilee ; but at the time referred to in the text, he had “stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.” Not that he had never been at Jerusalem before—he had been there often—but now he foreknew it was his last time of going thither—that he was going thither to suffer. His prophetic eye saw the fatal city afar off, and “knew all things that would come upon him,” as surely as he went to it. His “agony and bloody sweat, his cross and passion,” all the particulars of shame and pain awaiting him, were perfectly present to his mind ; and he could not contemplate them without considerable agitation. His human nature shrank from the tortures preparing for it ; yea, “all that was within him” revolted at the ignominy and horrors he must encounter, if he went to Jerusalem. Yet, whatever it cost him, go he would. He felt, indeed, “his flesh and his heart” ready to “fail him,” and inclining to turn aside from unutterable woes : but “his spirit was willing, though his flesh was weak :” he subdued nature ; he overcame self ; his “love” for us was “strong as death ;” and, to redeem our souls, “he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.”

My brethren, this was a bitter struggle and a

mighty effort on the part of our Redeemer. None but Himself can tell what it cost him to plant his *first* footstep towards the accursed tree. It was misery, it was crucifixion "before the time." "But none of these things moved him." "For us men, and for our salvation," he had left his Father's bosom and the glories of heaven; for this he had humbled himself to put on the likeness of our sinful flesh, and be found in fashion as a man; and therefore for this he was resolved to humble himself to the deepest depth of humiliation, "even the death of the cross." So, with Gethsemane and Calvary full in his eye, he nevertheless "stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem."

My brethren, we owe him much—we are unspeakably and everlastingly his debtors—for this *effort of love*. Had he drawn back from the cross, had he refused a drop of "the cup of trembling," what would have become of us? We should have been unredeemed, and hopeless of salvation. For every mercy we have, for every blessing we ever shall have, we are indebted to this "kindness and love of God our Saviour." Let us endeavour to be *thankful* to him *a little* for his inestimable benefits, and *show* our gratitude by doing always those things that please him.

We may notice next, *what supported him* in his painful effort to do us good. "It came to pass,

when the time was come that he should be *received up*, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem." It was "for *the joy set before him* that he endured the cross, despising the shame, that he might for ever sit down at the right hand of God," in all the dignity and happiness of a world's Redeemer. Our Saviour, "in the days of his flesh," was a man of faith and hope. He looked through his cross to his crown. He looked over Calvary to Olivet; and, to strengthen himself for being "lifted up" by men in shame, he looked forward to being "received up" by God "into glory." In so doing, he "left us an example that we should follow his steps." And if, in following them, we are exposed to "suffer shame for his name," or any earthly grievance, or any worldly loss, we should "esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures" of the universe, "having respect unto the recompense of the reward," and "reckoning," with the Apostle, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us."

But to return to our text. When Jesus had resolved on going to Jerusalem, "he sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the *Samaritans*, to make ready for him. And *they did not receive him*, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem."

See here an instance of the miserable effect of *prejudice* and *party-spirit*! The Samaritans were prejudiced against the Jews, and envied them the attraction of their holy city. So because the inhabitants of this Samaritan village saw that Jesus was a Jew, and a Jew going up to the Paschal feast at Jerusalem, they indulged their spleen in rudely denying him the common rites of hospitality.

I fear we cannot charitably suppose they were *ignorant* of his character and consequence. It was not a *stranger-Jew* who had appeared among them. He had now lived three years in their immediate neighbourhood, doing such miracles that "his fame was spread abroad." Nay, it was not now for the first time that he had been *among the Samaritans themselves*, as we learn from the 4th of St. John and other places. I am afraid therefore it was not in ignorance that he was thus rudely treated by these Samaritan villagers. I am afraid their insult was *designed*. Had they been evidently *unaware* who and what he was, their conduct would scarcely have excited, so violently as it did, the indignation of James and John. There seems too great a probability that these villagers thought the presence of so illustrious a Jew among them was an opportunity for them to indulge their national malevolence. Hence, to gratify party-spirit, and show, as they thought, their power and consequence, they rashly

repulsed *even Jesus*. The greater *He* was, the greater was their fancied triumph *in Him* over his whole nation.

What a lesson they give us of the littleness and folly and sin of bearing and showing *a grudge* against any class of persons! These villagers were probably exulting in the thought, what a *high* spirit they had shown in thus insulting the great Prophet of the Jews. *We* can see and *pity* the *baseness* and *lowness* of their spirit. It is only *low* minds that can take a pleasure in insulting their superiors, when they happen to have an opportunity of doing so. And the *folly* of these villagers was equal to their insolence. Prejudice and passion had overcome common discretion, or they would surely have forborne rudeness to One who, received with a welcome, might have conferred on them invaluable favours, both of a temporal and spiritual kind. But they seem to have sacrificed every thing to their spleen, and recklessly to have incurred, not only the folly, but the *sin*, of rejecting "the great Prophet who was risen up amongst them."

My brethren, we shall read this history to little purpose, if we do not take *warning* from it to watch against the evil spirit and conduct of these Samaritans. It is but too natural *for us* to "live in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another." We know this from Scripture, observation, and

experience. Through indulging these wrong tempers, we contract antipathies against certain persons, and then prejudices against all connected with them. Thus we become blinded by passion, and in danger of committing ourselves in ways alike disgraceful, absurd, and improper. To prevent this, we should watch against party spirit; and, above all, watch over our own spirit; and seek the grace of God's Holy Spirit to mortify our natural proneness to take up unreasonable prejudices, and act upon them in an uncourteous manner. By so doing we shall avoid much sin, and escape much loss; and shall not have read this history of the Samaritans in vain.

We have seen what was wrong in *them*: let us next see what was wrong in *our Lord's disciples*. Apparently the thought had never occurred to them that any persons would be so hostile, so foolish, so audacious, as to deny the common rites of hospitality to their adorable Master. When therefore they found these villagers actually refusing to receive him, on account of their petty prejudices against his nation, great as was the *surprise* of the Apostles, their *indignation* was greater still. At least James and John could not suppress their anger at these rude Samaritans, that they should *dare* thus to reject the Lord of glory. The two brothers thought the insult not to be endured; and, at a loss for human means of avenging it to their

satisfaction, "they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?"

It is impossible not to admire the zeal for their Lord's honour displayed by the two brothers on this occasion, and how keenly they felt an indignity done to their beloved Master, as if it had been done to themselves. The affront offered to Christ was certainly abominable, and calculated to rouse the natural spirit of his admiring and attached disciples. We should not have thought the better of them, if they had been unmoved at such an outrage on Him whom their soul loved. Their error was not in feeling for Christ; no, nor in feeling too strongly for him. They could not feel too strongly on seeing "such contradiction of sinners against" such a Saviour. It would be well, my brethren, if we all felt as sensitive about our Lord's honour as these two disciples did, and were as much alive as they to the vindication of his glory. But to be "very jealous for the Lord God of hosts" is not a common feeling, nor the feeling of any but those who are warmly attached to him. Thousands who profess and call themselves Christians can hear their Master insulted unmoved, for one that will feel for him like James and John. If the Head suffer, it is only the living and healthy members that suffer with it: the dead or palsied

limb feels little or nothing. To be indifferent therefore about the way in which Christ is treated by our fellow-creatures, is any thing but a favourable symptom of our spiritual state—less favourable than the excessive warmth displayed by the two brethren on the occasion before us.

Indeed their warmth would not have been excessive, had they felt *merely* a burning indignation that their beloved Lord was so rudely treated. Their error was in letting a *bad* feeling mingle itself with their *good* one. To feel for their insulted Master, and in “all his affliction to be themselves afflicted,” was *right*: but to give way to passion, and to desire revenge, was *wrong*. They might, to a certain extent, have “looked round upon” the Samaritans “with anger;” but they should rather have been “grieved for the hardness of their hearts,” and have prayed for their conversion, instead of wishing for their destruction. Anger is one of those natural emotions which requires to be tightly reined, like a proud steed, or it will certainly carry us whither we would not. Indeed we are scarcely safe till we get off it. We had better trust ourselves to the gentler feelings of compassion and sorrow. To “be angry and sin not” is, no doubt, *possible* to a *perfect* man; but with most of *us imperfect* creatures I fear it is so little *practicable*, that the more “all anger is put away from

us," perhaps the better. It is a passion extremely apt to warp the judgment and blind the understanding. We observe it had this effect on James and John, or they would not have quoted the example of Elijah, as if *his* calling down fire from heaven would have justified *them* in doing the same on the present occasion. Elijah did not call it down in revenge, but in self-defence, when his life was twice in danger from a captain of fifty and his company. Whereas, though the Samaritan villagers would not receive Christ and his Apostles, there is no appearance that either he or they were threatened with bodily harm. Hence their case was not like Elijah's. But you see passion is liable to make even good men pull Scripture aside, to countenance them in unscriptural procedures. It behoves us to be cool and cautious and candid when we take up our Bible, or we may make it encourage us in mischief. The Bible has often been grievously misunderstood and misquoted, to subserve the purposes of violent and angry persons. We may be sorry, but we cannot be surprised, at this, when we consider that even Satan himself could quote it as favouring his suggestions. But our Lord soon rescued the sword of the Spirit from the grasp of Satan, and turned it against him with irresistible power. And now, when his own disciples had made an improper use of it,

through an improper spirit, “he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.”

This answer of our Lord’s is remarkable in several respects. It shows, first, how much better *he* knows us than we know *ourselves*. James and John thought that the warmth they felt was no more than a proper and laudable zeal for their Master’s honour. They did not suspect that private passion, and unchristian revenge, had mingled themselves with disinterested affection; so much so, that they were not serving Christ, but Belial. It is to be feared *we* often impose upon ourselves in like manner; and under cover of a good feeling indulge a bad one. Of this at least we may be sure, that a feeling of resentment and revenge is a bad one, however it stole upon us, or whence-soever it arose. Satan is never more imposing than when he comes to us “transformed into an angel of light.” We are never more apt to give way to improper emotions, than when they seem to arise in us from a zeal for God. But Henry Martyn said well, “Never let me think I have a real zeal for God, till my heart overflows with love to every human being.” Good-will towards God does not produce ill-will towards men. “This commandment have we from him, that he who

loveth God, love his brother also." All persecutions, therefore, under pretence of vindicating Christianity, are contrary to that very Christianity they pretend to vindicate. If we feel an inclination to reproach or injure any, because they will not receive our Christ, "he turns, and *rebukes* us, and says, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

From these words we learn, next, that Christianity is essentially a dispensation of *love*. Our Saviour often declared this, because he foresaw how it would be forgotten or overlooked. For example, in John iii. 17, he says, "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." In the 12th chapter of the same Gospel he says, "If any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not; for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world." He said again to the unbelieving Jews, "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses in whom ye trust;" that is, the Law. "The Law worketh wrath"—the Gospel publishes peace. "The Law was given by Moses; but grace came by Jesus Christ." He is not a Judge now, but a Saviour. We believe, indeed, that He will come to be our Judge; but not till the present dispensation of grace

is over. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Now Christ reveals himself to us simply under the character of a Saviour. Hence he would not condemn the woman taken in adultery. Condemnation was no part of his office as a Saviour. All he did was to exhort her to "go and sin no more." And by his behaviour and declaration in the text we ought to be quite confirmed in this view of his character. He now comes, and stands at the door of our hearts, and knocks, as he did, so to speak, at the doors of the Samaritan villagers. "He comes peaceably:" he comes offering to be our guest: "he is meek, and having salvation." "If we open unto him," he is willing to "come in, and sup with us, and we with him," and "satisfy us with his goodness, and that soon." But "if we refuse and rebel," if we "put him from us, and judge ourselves unworthy of everlasting life," *he strikes us not dead* for our rudeness and impiety: he only does, what he did, as we hear, in this case of the Samaritans, "he goes to another village"—he turns to our neighbours, when he is rejected by ourselves.

Hence we should learn, in the third place, to *copy* our Lord's lenity and self-control. *He* was the person affronted by these villagers; yet *he* betrayed no passion, *he* felt no bitterness. When he resented not *his own* rejection, what disciple

of his shall dare to resent it *for him*? When *Christ* does not strike sinners dead for their opposition to him, *his ministers* must not call down fire from heaven, if *they* go to any who will not receive him. Alas! his ministers are not so patient nor long-suffering as their Lord and Master. It is well for you people that you are “in the hands of the Lord, for his mercies are great;” and that you are “not in the hands of us men,” “of like passions with yourselves.” It is well for you that the fire of heaven is not at *our* disposal, but at *His*, in whom “mercy rejoiceth against judgment.” The best of Christian ministers, and the best of Christian persons, are apt to be too hasty and severe with erring sinners. O my brethren, we all need to pray earnestly for an enlarged measure of “the meekness and gentleness of Christ.” We all need a spirit of greater compassion for the wilfulness and waywardness and wrong-headedness of those about us. “Father, forgive them,” said our perfect Pattern; “they know not what they do.” And so now, “the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.” And

if, after our best endeavours to do good, and prepare a lodging for our Master in the hearts of any, they will not receive him, and even meet us his messengers with a rude rebuff, the *utmost* punishment we may inflict upon them is, *to leave them to themselves*. This is punishment sad enough, considering the fatal consequences to persons of being left to live and “die in their sins.”

But perhaps a mild though firm temporary desertion of the refractory may awaken their compunction, and be the means of producing in them that “godly sorrow” which worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of.” This effect is not unknown.

One thing more I cannot help observing from the history before us, and that is, what *room* there is even for *good* men to “*grow* in grace,” and in resemblance to Christ; and how mercifully and beautifully they are *enabled* to do so. Contrast the spirit and conduct of our blessed *Lord* on this occasion with the spirit and conduct of his two disciples *James* and *John*; and we see at once how far the two brethren came short *at this time* of being *perfect* men. The Master was consummate gentleness, forbearance, concession: the disciples were fiery, hasty, resentful. The Master’s temper was perfectly controlled; that of the disciples far otherwise. *James* and *John*, then, *were not yet* what they needed to be. They were yet but young in Christian attain-

ments. They were far from having their passions in due subordination.

Many things concur to show that they were *naturally* of a vehement and hasty temper. This appears in the prompt manner in which “they left the ship and their father with the hired servants” at the call of Jesus, “and followed him.” It appears again in the circumstance that Christ “surnamed them Boanerges, that is, the sons of thunder.” It appears, thirdly, in their eager ambition to “sit one on the right hand, and the other on the left, of their Lord in his kingdom.” It appears, fourthly, at least in John, two verses before our text, when he rashly took upon him to “forbid one from casting out devils in Christ’s name, because he followed not with them.” And it appears, lastly and most plainly, in both the brothers, when they expressed themselves with so great impetuosity on the occasion before us.

It seems apparent, then, that they were, constitutionally, of a warm temper; and we see they had not *immediately* learnt to control it, even though they were Christ’s sincere disciples. But did they not learn to control it *at last*? No doubt they did, *both* of them. *James*, indeed, soon died; on which account we have the less means of ascertaining *his* advancement in Christian lenity and mildness of character. But *John’s* progress in these gentler virtues is as certain as it is beautiful. Read his

Epistles, imbued as they are with the spirit of tenderest *love*, and who would suspect that the author of them was by nature of a *fiery* temper? It is evident, then, how completely *grace* had enabled him to *conquer nature*, and how he had more and more deeply drunk into the spirit of that Master, "on whose breast he leaned," and, from assimilation to whose character, he was emphatically "that disciple whom Jesus loved."

Now such a fact as this is both comfortable and instructive. When we see that even Apostles were not at first by any means the advanced Christians they were at last, we should not "despise the day of small things," nor be immoderately discouraged because neither we nor others *are at present* all that we ought to be. At the same time, when we see how Apostles *became* what they ought to be, the change in them forcibly instructs us both in the practicability and necessity of our own growth in grace. There is no cause for us to be dejected at what we *are*, however *bad*, if we are conscious of becoming, through grace, gradually *better*. *Improvement* is the point about which we should be anxious. *Improvement* we all need: *improving* we all *may* be; *improving* we all *must* be; or we are not like James and John, Christ's genuine disciples. To be becoming, like them, "transformed by the renewing of our mind," and "putting on the

Lord Jesus Christ," is, after all, the decisive test of our vital Christianity.

So, brethren, I ask not simply what you are, but what you are compared with what you were. Examine your character for years back; and if it is no better now than it was formerly—if you still indulge your old tempers, your old lusts, and your old habits—you have great cause to suspect the reality of your discipleship to Christ.

And do not mistake having *outgrown* certain sins for having *overcome* them. The sins of *youth* are one set, the sins of *manhood* another, the sins of *old age* a third. The question is, whether you overcame the sins of youth before you were grown up; and whether you overcame the sins of maturer years before you became aged; and whether, if you are aged, you overcome the sins of old age now. Growth in grace is indicated by *our* overcoming sins at the time when their natural tendency was to overcome *us*. Therefore, brethren, we should examine whether, where and when sin abounded, there and then grace did much more abound. The test of grace is in its overcoming nature when nature is most difficult to be overcome. Applying this test to St. John, for instance, the reality and strength of divine grace in him become strikingly apparent. A bad temper does not improve, but grows worse *by nature* in old age: whereas

in old age his temper grew better : hence it must have been *by grace*. And indeed few things are more comfortable or more beautiful proofs of the operation of divine grace, than the *improvements* which are seen in the naturally bad tempers of certain Christians. How pleasant to observe their acidities changing into sweetness by little and little, till they are gathered, like mellow fruit, “into the garner” of their Lord, that “Sun of righteousness,” to the bright beams of whose grace they were indebted for all their ripeness !

May he mercifully ripen *us*, my brethren, in “those fruits of righteousness which are by Him to the glory and praise of God.” May he give *us* grace to improve, not only in Christian temper, but in all those respects in which we individually most need improvement ; that when we are “stablished, strengthened, settled” in *habits* of “righteousness and true holiness,” he may receive us to *exercise* them in his heavenly kingdom for ever and ever.

SERMON IX.

MATTHEW xxi. 15—17.

And when the Chief Priests and Scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise? And he left them."

THIS is Palm Sunday, so called because, as on this day, "much people that were come to the feast" of the Passover, which corresponds with our Easter, "when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of *palm-trees*, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna! Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord." The palm was the ancient

emblem of victory, borne aloft before the triumphal cars of conquerors returning to the metropolis of their country. The Lord Jesus Christ was now going up to Jerusalem for the last time in great humility, on foot, and surrounded by his few unlettered apostles. He had advanced as far as the Mount of Olives, which overlooks Jerusalem; and then, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, he sent for an ass's colt, and seated himself on it in humble state, amid the gathering multitudes who had joined him on his approach to the city. Immediately the Spirit of God came upon his disciples, and upon those around them. In honour of their triumphant Lord some "spread their garments on the road, and others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way." Thus the Saviour was proceeding in pomp towards Jerusalem. And when intelligence of his approach had reached the yet denser city crowds, they also were seized with the same holy ardour to exalt and magnify the great Prophet of their nation. And "the whole multitude of the disciples that went before and that followed him, began to rejoice and praise God for all the mighty works that they had seen; and cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David! blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Peace in heaven and glory in the highest. Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest."

However, amid all this reasonable acclamation, certain envious and malevolent spirits, unable themselves to enter into the general joy, were chagrined at its ebullition in others. "Some of the *Pharisees* from amongst the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples." All this pomp and noise is intolerable. Surely, Master, it cannot be consistent with thy professed humility to allow the ignorant populace to go on conducting thee in this *ostentatious* manner. Besides, considerest thou not that these *kingly* salutations are of a seditious tendency? Our governors will certainly be offended by them, "and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation." Therefore "rebuke thy disciples:" and if thou *wilt* proceed into the city in weak triumph among thy followers, at least impose *silence* on their officious tongues.

Such were the specious remonstrances of Pharisaic spleen. But they were at once seen through and reprobated by Him "who knew what was in man." "*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem,*" was the language of the prophet: "and the scripture could not be broken." Besides, the condescending and considerate

Messiah did not *choose* to repress the holy and well-founded exultation of his faithful followers. He inhabited their praises; he delighted to receive *for once* their warm-hearted, their unanimous, their public acknowledgments of his exalted character; and he would not damp their affectionate fervour to gratify the envy of malicious Pharisees. So far, therefore, from rebuking his disciples for intemperate zeal, he rebuked the cold-hearted Pharisees for their forward interference. He answered and said unto them, "Trouble me not: I cannot, I will not, check the exultation of my devoted friends. God hath said, 'Let Israel rejoice in Him that made him; let the children of Zion be joyful in their King;' and rejoice they shall—they must. It would profit you nothing were I to stop their mouths—'I tell you that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out,' to shame 'the base silence of ungrateful mortals. Therefore let them bless; for God hath said unto them, Bless the Son of David that cometh in the name of the Lord.'"

The procession therefore now went on: "and when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the Prophet of Nazareth of Galilee. And Jesus went into the *temple*;" and there "the blind and the lame came unto him and

he healed them ;” perhaps studiously multiplying his astonishing cures, to strip his prejudiced countrymen of their last cloak for unbelief.

His accumulated miracles seem to have called forth anew the admiring acclamations of the assembled crowds ; insomuch that all the *courts of the Lord* rang with his praise, and the *very children* caught and prolonged the hymn of gratulation. “And when the chief Pharisees and Scribes saw the wonderful things which he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David, they were *sore displeased*, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say ?” ‘Dost thou notice the language of these little creatures, and dost thou think it proper to encourage them in their unthinking exclamations ? Are not the Hosannas of the grown-up mob sufficient for thee, but thou must covet the senseless clamour of very children ?’ “Hearest thou what they say ?”

And Jesus saith unto them, “Yea,” I hear and I approve, and you ought to have known your Scriptures better than to object. “Have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise ?”

“And he *left* them,” adds the emphatic evangelist. And St. Matthew is not the only one who has so marked the holy indignation of the offended Son of God. If you look in the 8th chapter of

St. Mark, verse 11, you will find, "The Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him. And he *sighed deeply* in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation. And he *left* them."

To come therefore, at once, to the *practical improvement* of our subject; we see, in the first place, in very strong colours, the Saviour's *detestation* of that cold and captious spirit, which, because itself knows nothing of the glow of Christian piety, enviously repines and carps at it in others. It is but too probable that some of you, my hearers, in a mixed congregation, may unhappily be possessed with such a spirit. I beseech you, therefore, suffer a word of expostulation; and may the good Spirit of Almighty God so bless it to you, that you may be ashamed of and renounce a temper of mind which fostered cannot but make you uncomfortable here, and eternally miserable hereafter.

Coldness of heart in religion is the consequence of *unbelief*. You do not admit the affirmed glad tidings of the Gospel of Christ to be so very joyous, so very wonderful and transporting, as to be a sufficient cause for all that fervour of soul and all that exuberance of thanksgiving to God, with which these same tidings are welcomed by

some you please to think enthusiastic neighbours around you. And therefore it is, that not feeling any particular cause for gratitude to the Lord Jesus Christ, "Hosannas languish on your tongue, and your devotion dies." The cause of this is *unbelief*. You do not *value* the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, and you do not *love* its Author, because you do not *believe* him to have done for you the great things which that Gospel *declares* him to have done. "Unto you which believe He *is* precious," says St. Peter; and therefore if he is *not* precious to some of you, my hearers, you are not cordial believers. Oh! were you *thoroughly persuaded* that you "are by nature children of wrath," under the frown and curse of Almighty God, and prevented from dropping into the pit of destruction only by the slender thread of this fleeting life—did you *credit* the word of God when it tells you that, not of necessity, nor by compulsion, nor for your deservings, who might most justly have perished in your sins, but of his own free goodness and overflowing love, the eternal Son of God for you men and for your salvation came down from heaven; had his *body* worn with fatigue, "with weariness and painfulness, with watchings often, with hunger and thirst, with fastings often, with cold and nakedness," with the sweat of Gethsemane, the thorns of Gabbatha, and the nails of

Calvary ; his *mind* galled by the desertion of friends, and the accumulated insults of most bitter enemies ; and his *soul* exceeding sorrowful even unto death under the burden of your sins, and overwhelmed with anguish at the hidings of his Father's face —oh ! did you believe that the patient Lamb of God willingly underwent all this “to redeem you from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for you ;” to purchase for you the gifts of repentance, of forgiveness of sins, and of the Holy Spirit ; and to make you the children of God and to exalt you to everlasting life ; *then* you would join heart and voice with that “great multitude whom no man could number, of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues, whom St. John saw stand before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and *palms* in their hands, and cry with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.” And yet all these glorious things *are true*. It is a truth that the black gulf of hell yawns beneath your feet. It is equally a truth that Christ hath “overcome the sharpness of death, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.” It is a truth that “your adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” It is equally a truth that the stronger “Lion of the tribe of Judah”

calls aloud, 'Come unto me, all ye that tremble for your souls, and with me ye shall be in safeguard.' But your sinful eyes are blinded that you do not see your danger. Your sinful ears are heavy that you do not hear the alarming and the warning voice. Your sinful hearts are hardened that you do not feel a holy shudder at what you are by nature, nor a holier joy at what Christ offers to make you by grace.

Now this alone, O you cold-hearted ones of my flock—this apathy to what is eminently good—this deadness of your spiritual affections, which are the highest endowment, the brightest portion of our triple nature, and make us worms of earth like unto God—in a word, this awful indifference to the God of love, this want of gratitude to your adorable Redeemer, and of obedience to the suggestions of his good Spirit—this alone, I say, this not being what you might be, what you ought to be, and what others of your fellow-creatures and once fellow-sinners are—is a sufficiently humiliating circumstance, and may God grant you to feel it as such. O "glory" not "in your shame," that you "mind earthly things," when others around you, partakers of the same natural corruptions, and who were once as earthly-minded as yourselves, yet now have been born again, have been enlightened, have tasted of the heavenly gift, and been made partakers of the

Holy Ghost, have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, and have their conversation in heaven, while they walk on earth. Can you possibly feel it otherwise than a subject of deep regret, that you are children of the Wicked One, while others are children of God—that you are feeding on ashes, while others are given to eat of the hidden manna—that you have eyes to see, ears to hear, and, in general, faculties to discriminate, and yet have no more *spiritual* perception of the deformity of sin, and the beauty of holiness, of the curse of the Law, and the free and full salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ, than the infant in the womb has *natural* perception of objects in this world into which it is not yet born? Can you think with complacency of your being so imprisoned, as it were, in the womb of darkness, and though with senses, yet without “senses exercised to discern both good and evil?” Can you pride yourselves in being unborn babes, when you might be growing children, yea, youths in practical piety, and rapidly advancing to “perfect men, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ?” Oh, I would fain hope you cannot take satisfaction in the thought of falling so lamentably short of the capabilities of your nature. I would fain hope you are at least not comfortable in being “wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked”—and that in your

hearts you would be thankful for some of Christ's "gold tried in the fire" to enrich you—some of his "white raiment" to cover your nakedness—some of his "eye-salve" to anoint your eyes that you might see. If you would, then go to him in faith and prayer, and you shall have them. This "Lord is loving unto every man, and his tender mercies are over all his works." "He giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not." Only "ask in faith." Whatsoever good things you desire of him, "believe that you receive them, and you shall have them."

But if you are satisfied with your cold and heartless state—if you can see others "press toward the mark for the prize of their high calling of God in Christ Jesus," and yet yourselves contentedly sit still—if you can hear the high praises of God and the Lamb reared to the broad arch of heaven, and yet yourselves add nothing to the strain—then indeed, my brethren, you are greatly to be *pitied* for your groveling and earthly spirit, which, though "my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears," impossible it were adequately to deplore. But if you go further, you are not to be pitied only, but most seriously *warned*. You perceive the Pharisees went further. It is manifest that *their* voices swelled not the chorus of Hosanna to the Son of David: but this was not enough for their envious hearts. They were not content with this *negative*

guilt of *not* welcoming their triumphant Messiah, but they would make it *positive*, by endeavouring to *stop* the acclamations in which they refused to join. "Master, rebuke thy disciples," was the first expression of their inward discontent; and as Jesus Messiah went on multiplying his miracles, and the admiring by-standers went on multiplying their praises, till the very children reechoed Hosanna to the Son of David, the vexation of the Pharisees went on, like a leprosy fretting in their bosoms, till "they were sore displeased," and could not forbear *venting* their ill-humour, to their shame and rebuke.

Therefore, my hearers, beware how you add *cavilling* to cold-heartedness. If your *own* breasts know nothing of the finest glow of which they are susceptible, the glow of grateful love to your Redeemer, beware how you aim at *damping* that glow in others. **Be ashamed** (for you have cause to be so) at the *baseness* of your spirit, and by no means aggravate your guilt by endeavouring to reduce your happier neighbours to your own joyless condition. Why should not piety rejoice? And if a soul be indeed joyful in its God, where are the words animated enough for the expression of its feelings? Why will you captiously censure that *enthusiasm* (if you please to call it so) in *religion*, which you admire and commend in *other* things? Is any thing so calculated to draw forth the affec-

tions, and embody them in glowing language, as “the love of God in Christ shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost,” and the countenance of a reconciled Father beaming upon the soul? Is any ardour too vehement, any language too rapturous, wherewith to thank and praise the Lord of Heaven for such a blessing? The son of Sirach was only reasonable and right when he said, “We may speak much and yet come short; wherefore, in sum, He is all. How shall we be able to magnify him? for he is great above all his works. The Lord is terrible and very great, and marvellous is his power. When ye glorify the Lord, exalt him as much as ye can; for even yet will he far exceed: and when ye exalt him, put forth all your strength and be not weary, for ye can never go far enough.” Surely a little honest enthusiasm is excusable here if any where; and I would that “the high praises of God” in the mouths of his saints were not rather censurable for defect than for extravagance. However, such as they are, they are grateful to God; and he has set a black mark in his word on those who coldly blame his servants for rendering them. Refer to the Psalmist’s case in 2 Sam. vi. 14, when he was bringing up the ark into its new place in the city of Zion. It says, “David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod. And as the ark of the Lord came”

into the city of David, Michal, Saul's daughter, looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart." *She* thought her pious husband an enthusiast, and fancied her own cold-heartedness might venture to satirize his honest fervour. So "she came out to meet him, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel to-day, who uncovered himself to-day in the eyes of the handmaidens of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself! And David said unto Michal, It was before the Lord, who chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel: therefore *will* I play before the Lord. And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maidservants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour. Therefore Michal, the daughter of Saul, had no child unto the day of her death"—and thus she was punished for cavilling at her good husband's pious enthusiasm; for recollect, brethren, that barrenness was one of the most painful marks God could have set upon a Jewish queen, especially a queen of David's, who was in the line of the Messiah.

And as in the Old Testament Michal was reproved for reflecting upon David, so in the New Testament the Pharisees were rebuked for interfering

with the children. "Hearest thou what these say?" was the cold query by which they hoped to draw down reproof upon the innocents; and instead of that, it fell upon their own guilty heads. "Yea," said the Saviour; "have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise? And he *left* them."

Once more therefore I say, Beware, O you that pride yourselves in your apathy, and think nothing so dreadful as enthusiasm in religion—beware how you add cavilling to cold-heartedness. You are indeed greatly to be pitied that you should be indifferent on a subject which above all others deserves the fervency of your spirit: but while you are only indifferent, there is hope in your end, that the Lord may dart a warm ray upon your icy souls, and thaw the chill of death which is upon you. But if you go further—if you proceed to "sit in the seat of the scornful"—if you are not content to neglect, but must needs blame and vilify the saints of the most high God—take heed lest the Sun of righteousness hide his face from you altogether. Remember, he *bore with* the Pharisees while they were *only silent*: but when they presumed to *cavil*, "he *left* them."

And now let me come in the second place to a more pleasing topic, viz. to notice our blessed Lord's

condescending acceptance and vindication of the Hosannas of the children.

One cannot enough admire the affectionate considerateness of his disposition. What if the children did but catch their Hosannas from those around them? He knew that children are the creatures of imitation. What if they could little understand his exalted character? He was aware of their limited capacities. His omniscient eye saw that they intended to do him honour as far as they were able; and therefore graciously overlooking all their imperfections, and delighted with the well-meant homage of their youthful tongues, he accepted, yea, he gloried in their acclamations. For how did their spontaneous and simple-minded songs put to shame the learned silence of Chief Priests and Scribes! and thus out of the mouth of very babes and sucklings Messiah perfected praise.

You therefore, my friends, who are *parents*, blush not to hear your children lisp the name of Jesus; but rather teach them early and teach them reverently the songs of Zion. Endeavour seriously, through prayer and patience, to infuse into their opening minds and susceptible hearts the elements of divine knowledge and divine love. Let your "doctrine drop upon them as the rain, and your speech distil upon them as the dew; as the

small rain upon the tender herb, and as showers upon the grass."

And you, my *youngest* friends, hear not unmoved the Saviour's approbation of your feeble praise—feeble in itself indeed, but far otherwise in his gracious estimation. He calls it, you hear, the *perfection* of praise. So then you have it in your power to render him a homage which all your elders cannot pay; and a chaplet woven by your little hands shews fairest among his "many crowns." And is not this a singular honour? Indeed it is; and we are ready to look with holy envy on your peculiar privilege. O then improve it; and often "lift up your heart with your hands to that gentle Saviour in the heavens" who rejoices to "gather the lambs in his arms, to carry them in his bosom," and to say unto them, "Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." He listens to your humble prayers whenever they are offered with pious mind, and discriminates your lowly songs even amid the uplifted chorus of the great congregation. "Hearst thou what these say?" inquired the haughty Pharisees about your little Jewish brethren crying in the temple. They thought perhaps infant voices were either unheard or unheeded by the Saviour's ear. But they were quite mistaken in both respects. "Yea," was his encouraging reply; "I hear and

I approve: not a note of their cheerful hymn escapes me amid the loud Hosannas of the assembled crowds, and out of the mouths of these babes and sucklings I perfect praise.' And since he is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," be assured he has the same good-will toward *you* as he had toward those in the temple, and pays the same attention to *each* of you that desires to love and honour him. It makes no difference that he sits above your sight on his throne in the heavens. "Where two or three are gathered together in his name, there is he in the midst of them" by his Holy Spirit. And therefore do not neglect your prayers, or cease your praises, because he seems for awhile to take no notice of them. For awhile he *seemed* to take no notice of *your* little brethren of old; but remember he *only* seemed. He did take notice of them, and soon took their part too against the envious Pharisees, the moment they interfered with their sweet Hosannas.

But though doubtless the Saviour's approbation was meant primarily for babes in *age*, yet it may unquestionably be extended to babes in *spirit*. To *such* babes he alluded, as the humble recipients of his Gospel, and the gentle simple-minded heirs of his kingdom, "in that hour" when "he rejoiced in spirit and said, I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things

from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto *babes*. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Therefore, "O ye holy and humble men of heart, bless ye the Lord, praise him and magnify him for ever." "For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people, and will beautify the meek with salvation." Jesus Christ, you perceive, had peculiar satisfaction in the thought that "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." And as he himself was "God manifest in the flesh," so in all his words and works he shewed a marked determination to abase that which was high, and exalt that which was low. He studiously "put down the mighty from their seat, and exalted the humble and meek: he filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he sent empty away." Humility is the guardian of all virtues—the crowning grace of the Christian character: and therefore to the inculcation of humility the Lord Jesus directed his most watchful attention. "When his disciples inquired, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall *humble himself as this little child*, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Hence, on the one hand, I would say to *some* of you, Beware of being wise in your own eyes, and prudent in your own sight. Give not out that you yourselves are some great ones. Be not high-minded: have no proud looks. Above all, beware of proud actions: beware of trampling upon those whom you think beneath you, those especially whose known Christian forbearance and humility and gentleness will not allow them to turn again and rend you. Remember their Redeemer is mighty; and the more modestly they give way to your wrong-headedness and petulance, the more severely he will one day plead their cause to your confusion. "As for you, O my flock, saith the Lord God; behold I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the great he-goats. Seemeth it a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk of the deep waters, but you must foul the residue with your feet? And as for my flock, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet; and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet. Therefore thus saith the Lord God unto them, Behold I, even I, will judge between the fat cattle and the lean cattle. Because ye have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad;

therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle. And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David: he shall feed them, and he shall be their Shepherd." This servant David, this good Shepherd, is that very Jesus who said, "Take heed that ye *despise not one* of these little ones that believe in me; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. How think ye? If a man have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine that went not astray. Even so, it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish." Woe be to the person, therefore, that neglects this solemn caution, and haughtily offends an unresisting child of God. "It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

And, on the other hand, Christian friends, all this is great *encouragement to you* to go on copying

His bright example, who was "meek and lowly in heart," and praising Him that he set it for your imitation, and overcame by it, for your everlasting welfare. For "meek" though he was, when, as on this day, he entered into Jerusalem, yet he was "having salvation;" and "lowly" though he "rode upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass," yet he "spoke peace unto the heathen and to Israel." If therefore his Gospel has come to any of you, "not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance,"—if "God is giving you the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," and "you are more than conquerors through him that loved you,"—then do *you also*, in spirit, take the palm of triumph, and go forth to meet him, and cry, "Hosanna! Blessed be the King of Israel that cometh' in the name of the Lord." 'And blessed be the gentle, happy sway thou hast established in thy believing people. Rapidly may its converting and sanctifying influence extend through every clime. May it please thee, of thy gracious goodness, shortly to accomplish the number of thine elect and to hasten thy kingdom; that we, with all those that are departed in the true faith of thy holy name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in thy eternal and everlasting glory.'

SERMON X.

PREACHED ON GOOD FRIDAY.

JOHN xix. 30.

“When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.”

WE are met, brethren, on the most solemn day of the Christian Church, to meditate on the most solemn, awful, deeply-interesting event which ever transpired on this earth of our's, and perhaps in the whole universe of God—we are met to meditate on the sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus.

Our text at once ushers us into the midst of things. The scene is Calvary: the principal figure, the object on which all eyes should be fastened, is “Jesus Christ, evidently set forth, crucified among us.” There, crowned with thorns, his naked body torn with nails, and streaming with blood, there

hangs the Redeemer of our souls, just at the *end* of "his agony and bloody sweat, his cross and passion." He speaks yet once more, and dies. "When he had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost."

How true to nature, and how faithful to truth, is the simple narrative of the divine Evangelist! Though recording certainly the most wonderful and affecting transaction human eye ever beheld, he utters no word of grief, no exclamation of horror. He makes not a syllable of remark—he is simply historical—his own record is of facts; the only exclamation recorded is the exclamation of Him whose every word was deeply to be remembered—"It is finished."

"It is finished"—O Saviour, thy words were few, but full of meaning. Thy labouring mind, thy godlike reach of thought, betrayed itself by a single intimation. O how much was in thy capacious heart, when thou utterdest that simple sentence, "It is finished!"

My dear brethren, can we *dive* into the Redeemer's secret feelings when that significant, that final word burst forth from his dying lips? Dive into their *depths* can no created being; but dive into them *a little* we can, we may, we ought. By the blessing of the Holy Spirit, it shall be good

for us this morning to search into the Saviour's heartfelt emotions when he said, "It is finished."

What was finished?

Finished was the whole series of Scripture *types* and *prophecies*—Finished was his painful *life of humiliation and woe*—Finished, oh! finished was the *work of our redemption*. Methinks *all this* the Saviour had in his heart, when with his last breath he cried, "It is finished."

First, Finished was the whole series of Scripture *types* and *prophecies*. We are sure the Saviour had *this* thought in his mind, from the words of the Evangelist in the verse but one before the text. In the 24th verse he had recorded how the Scripture was fulfilled which said, "They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots." In that the agency of others was required—"these things the Roman soldiers did." There remained, however, something for the Sufferer himself to do, in order that the Scripture might not be broken. David in spirit had said, "When I was thirsty they gave me vinegar to drink." When therefore others had done their part in the fulfilment of prophecy, "after this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished," except the single craving of vinegar which depended upon himself, "that the Scripture" concerning this also "might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar :

and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished"—the long series of prophecy concerning my humiliation and sufferings is perfectly fulfilled, both as it depended upon others, and as it depended upon myself—now therefore I may breathe out my soul in peace—"And he bowed his head and gave up the ghost."

Yes, my brethren, Jesus was "the Lamb slain" in the counsels of God, and slain by anticipation in types and shadows, "from the foundation of the world." The time would fail me to take even a short survey of the many things that were done emblematically, and said prophetically, pertaining to him. His own blessed lips once opened these things to his two disciples on their way to Emmaus, when "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." And it is very observable throughout the Gospel narratives, that however our Lord was engaged, whether in doing, or in suffering, whether he was riding in triumph into Jerusalem, or languishing in agony on the cross, he never forgot the prophecies. His own Spirit had given them, and his own self would see them accurately fulfilled. He was intent to prove to the whole world, that "one jot or one tittle should in no wise pass

from the Scripture till *all* be fulfilled." *All* the oracles of God are equally inspired, whether they relate to Christ, to Christ's friends, or to Christ's enemies. They are so connected one with another, that they cannot be dissevered. They are either all true, or all false. Now Jesus took peculiar care to shew that not one word of Scripture pertaining to *himself* had been idly, or unmeaningly, or ambiguously spoken—all was literally fulfilled, every type, and every prophecy, every declaration of every sort. From which follows this weighty conclusion—Every word pertaining to *ourselves also* shall as certainly be fulfilled in its season—every good thing shall be performed to the good—every evil thing shall be executed on the wicked. The hour is coming, when *each of us* here present, on being launched into the unalterable everlasting world of spirits, shall reconsider every promise of bliss, or every threatening of misery, contained in that word of God which is now in our hands, and shall shout with ecstasy, or shriek with horror, "It is finished."

But next, The Saviour's exclamation implied that Finished was his own earthly *life of humiliation and of woe*.

Thirty and three years had the patient Son of God now denied himself his Father's bosom, and the glories of his native heaven. Nor was this all. He had borne the degradation of being made in the

likeness of sinful flesh. He had endured the pains of infancy, the infirmities of childhood, the toils of youth, and the labours of manhood. Yea, having taken upon him the form of a servant, he had come "not to be ministered unto, but to minister." He had "gone about doing good," "in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. And beside those things which were without, that which came upon him daily, the care of" our Redemption, the oppressive consciousness of being the *good* Shepherd, who "yet must be *smitten* ; of being the *fellow* of the Lord of Hosts, and yet against whom the *sword* of divine justice would shortly awake. O it was a sinking load for Him, to feel that "the Lord had laid on him the iniquity of us all ;" that he stood singly and alone, the substitute for our fallen race, to bear the burden of the wrath of Almighty God against the sins of a whole world.

And if the consciousness of his situation as a devoted victim was so wearing ; if the anticipation of his sufferings in our stead was so afflicting as to force from his patient heart the bitter acknowledgment, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death ;" yea, if when "the terrors of God but began to set themselves in array against him round about," "he poured out strong crying and tears ;" what must his anguish have been, when the Law "laid"

inexorable “hands on him,” and as it were, said, “Pay me that thou owest,” even the uttermost farthing—pay me for the transgressions of the whole race of mankind! He was “dumb” indeed, “and opened not his mouth,” because he was “made sin for us,” and because “the Law was holy, and its demand was holy and just and good”—therefore he went as a Lamb to the slaughter, unresisting. But he felt the *horrors* of his atoning situation. His very *body* sweat great drops of blood. What was his *mental* suffering, and what the anguish of his *soul*, during his “cross and passion,” God only knows. Of such agony we have no conception. “Behold, see if there be any sorrow like unto his sorrow which was done unto him, wherewith the Lord afflicted him in the day of his fierce anger,” when He, the dearly-beloved of his Father’s soul, felt “a horror and darkness come upon him,” and shrieked in the excruciating torture of spiritual destitution, “My God, my God, why hast *thou* forsaken me?” O it was hard for the Lord Christ to have stooped from heaven to save sinners, and yet find himself “despised and rejected of men.” It was harder still when, in his hour of need, “all his disciples forsook him and fled;” and “his kinsmen stood afar off.”

But it was the extremity of misery, the very torment of hell, when he felt himself forsaken of

his only Comforter, of his heavenly Father. Afflicting, indeed, were his mock crown and the instruments of cruelty, when the thorns and nails entered into his *flesh*: more afflicting were the hardened look and insulting taunt which hurt his *mind*: but *then* it was, that the iron entered into his *soul*, when his angry Father “hid, as it were, his face from him, and it pleased the Lord to bruise him, to put him to grief, to make his soul an offering for sin.”

When therefore, at the moment to which our text refers, the dying Redeemer had struggled through that hour of infernal darkness, had escaped the abyss of spiritual misery, and again felt beneath him the everlasting arms—when he could now look back on his three and thirty years of humiliation and woe, with the sweet consciousness that they were passed; and that all the toils and tears, the shame and anguish, of his earthly life were over for ever and ever, well might he joyously exclaim, “It is finished;” and with inexpressible satisfaction breathe out his contented spirit, now “made perfect through sufferings.”

But thirdly. These dying words imply that Finished was the *work of man's redemption*.

We miserable creatures, blinded by Satan, and hardened by sin, are apt to think but little of our redemption now. But oh! we shall think very

differently of it ere long, either in heaven or hell. Hence, it behoves us to awaken our sluggish mind, and stir up our soul that cleaveth unto the dust, and seek a deeper feeling of the importance, of the atonement wrought out for us by the Saviour on his cross. Nothing so clearly and yet so painfully shews our need of redemption, as the low and unworthy thoughts we entertain concerning it, now it has been accomplished. And yet that very redemption of which we think so lightly, and speak so coldly, is that which wondering “angels desire to look into.” Nay more, it is that which employed the councils of the eternal God ere time began; and that which in time was the grand topic, the burden, of all revelation. What were the ancient prophecies, on which the venerable saints and patriarchs reposed all their hopes? what, but predictions of “the grace that should come unto us, at the revelation of Jesus Christ?” The goodly fellowship of the Prophets, and those that believed them, “rejoiced with Abraham to see the day of Christ; and they saw it and were glad.” And what were those innumerable “sacrifices, which,” says Gibbon, “from Japan to Peru have univ-
sally obtained,” and obtain now in nations which know not Christ? They were all, in their origin, and are, in their dark continuance, typical of Christ crucified. . Especially to the Jews almost the whole

Gospel was preached in types and shadows. So important, we see, in the eyes of God was our redemption, that he caused it to be foreshown, historically, typically, prophetically, from the foundation of the world till it was actually accomplished. What can be a stronger proof of its importance, than that the whole ordering of the world for four thousand years, and the whole revelation of the mind of God during that period, were with a fixed determinate reference to our redemption? The Deity travailed, as it were, in the greatness of his strength for four thousand years, till the plan of our redemption was perfectly matured, and brought forth on the cross of Christ, to be the eternal admiration of angels and of men.

How guilty, then, how earthly-minded are we, who think so little of that of which the eternal God has ever thought so much! How do we need to pray that "the eyes of our understanding may be enlightened" to perceive the glories of that redemption, the message of which St. Paul declares to be "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God."

But it may tend yet further to raise our groveling spirits to a worthier sense of our redemption, if we consider how it occupied the heart and soul of our *Redeemer*.

When he was presented in the temple, why did his Spirit cause aged Anna to be there at the

exact time? why but to “speak of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem?” What was it that he preached at Nazareth, but that he was come as our Redeemer? What did he teach his chosen twelve, to whom it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God? When he took them apart by themselves, what had he so peculiar to communicate to their ears, blessed and favoured above other ears? It was this—“Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man shall be delivered to be crucified.” When he was transfigured on the mount, and there talked with him two men, Moses and Elias, the representatives of the Law and the Prophets, who appeared in glory—what did they talk with him about? “They spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.” And when the time was come that he should be received up, why did He steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem? Because he knew that face had to endure shame and spitting, which it could never have been brought to endure, if he had not set it as a flint. And having so set it, why, on their road to the bloody city, did Jesus march before the rest? Because he panted to reach his cross—he was all eagerness to finish the work of our redemption—“he had a baptism” of blood “to be baptized with; and how was he straitened, till it was accomplished!”

When, therefore, the blessed Saviour hung on his cross, now ready to expire, yet in full possession of all his faculties, his godlike mind seems to have taken a survey of his past work of redemption, even as of old he took a survey of his past work of creation.

We read in Genesis i. that he looked upon every thing which he had *made*, and behold it was very good. In his dying moments on the cross he seems to have looked upon every thing which he had *done* and *suffered* for the perfecting of our redemption, and behold it was divinely complete—it could endure the most rigid scrutiny, the most peering eye-lids of the exquisitely-searching Deity. He felt conscious that he had fulfilled all righteousness, had accomplished every prophecy, had verified every type, had made good every declaration of every sort in Scripture pertaining to our redemption. And he felt further conscious, that the bitter sufferings, exhausted in his godlike person, had magnified his holy Father's law and made it honourable ;—and constituted “a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins, original and actual, of the whole world.”

Thus therefore having reviewed his whole work of our redemption, and having distinctly perceived it to be perfect and complete in every particular ;

satisfactory to his Father, satisfactory to Himself, satisfactory to the Holy Spirit, and therefore satisfactory to the world, to angels, and to men who should examine it aright—in that moment the Redeemer rejoiced in spirit—rejoiced in his work—rejoiced that he had thoroughly redeemed a whole world ready to perish—with triumphant exultation he exclaimed, It is finished—“and he bowed his head,” in token of entire satisfaction, “and gave up the ghost.”

Now then, brethren, we have done with the *interpretation* of our text—we have shown that our Redeemer’s single exclamation had probably this *triple* reference—that now finished was the whole series of *types* and *prophecies* concerning him—finished was his earthly *life of humiliation and woe*—and finished was the great *work of our redemption*.

Were these things so? Then surely the text furnishes materials for some important *practical reflections*.

In the first place, what a door of hope, yea, even of humble confidence, does it open to us miserable sinners!

We know we are guilty: our own hearts condemn us: our own consciences testify against us for having broken the holy law of God in innumerable instances, by thought, word, and deed. And that

law pronounces sentence against us, and justly. We feel we cannot impeach its equity, or deny or justify our transgressions. They were done, multitudes of them done, against light and knowledge, against conscience, against the warnings of friends, of ministers, of God's word, and God's Spirit—and what is worst of all, in many things, we have sinned habitually, deliberately, and without remorse. Therefore we are all cursed with a great curse, the curse of Almighty God, who plainly declares, "Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." And oh! did we feel our natural wretchedness as we ought—did we know but by a few minutes' experience, as the fallen angels know, what it is to lie helpless, hopeless, under the curse of an angry God—surely our hearts would dance for joy, and in our songs we should praise him, that his beloved Son Jesus Christ "hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us." Here is indeed a door of hope to otherwise hopeless sinners. We know that "all we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Jesus the iniquity of us all." And he bare it—bare it away, like the scape-goat, into the wilderness, the land of forgetfulness. And now, "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their tres-

passes unto them : and he hath committed unto us the ministry of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." And the *way* of reconciliation is wide open ; "for God hath made Jesus to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we may be made the righteousness of God in him." God laid our sins upon Christ, and is ready to put Christ's righteousness upon us ; ready to account us righteous, completely righteous, for Christ's sake, if only we heartily embrace our Redeemer, and "believe the love which God," for his sake, "hath toward us." God is not, cannot be, angry now at the most guilty sinner who approaches him through his crucified Son. The drops of *Jesu's* blood have quenched the fire of the flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life. The vilest sinner may now return to his Father's house, to heaven, and inherit everlasting life : because, though himself is sinful, Christ is the propitiation for his sins ; and though himself is worthless, "worthy is the Lamb that was slain," who loved him and washed him from his sins in his own blood,—worthy is he to make the believer a king and priest unto God and his Father.

Wherefore, my fellow-sinners, what is the voice

from Calvary to each of us this morning? This it is—"O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help." "Behold I, even I am He that blotteth out thy transgressions, and will no more remember thy sins. Return unto me, for I have redeemed thee;" and "though thy sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth;" for I am "Jesus Christ whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in my blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses."

This leads me to observe, secondly, The guilt and misery of those who go about to establish their *own righteousness*, and do not submit to the *righteousness of God*. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth:" "for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ died in vain." Where was the necessity of the shameful, painful death of the Son of the Most

High God, if persons can be accounted righteous by their *own good works*? And we should carefully remember, that our righteousness before God is either *wholly* of grace, or *wholly* of works. St. Paul has positively declared it is not *partly* of one, and *partly* of the other. “If it be of grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.” The Lord Jesus is either our *whole* hope, or he is *no* hope at all. Therefore, brethren, we must either rely *entirely* on his atonement and righteousness, or “He will profit us nothing. He becomes of no effect unto us, whensoever we seek to be justified by the law: we fall from grace. For we through the Spirit must wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.”

This, Christian brethren, is the Gospel which Paul preached to the Corinthians and Galatians, and which, by the grace of God, I preach unto you; “which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand: by which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast what I have preached unto you; unless ye have believed in vain. For I have delivered unto you this day first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures:” and “to him give all the prophets

witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth on him shall receive remission of sins."

Lastly, how safe and blessed are those who have laid hold of the covenant ordered in all things and sure in the blood of Jesus! They are heirs of his finished salvation—they have put on Christ as their robe of righteousness—their heavenly Father sees them in their elder brother's raiment, and blesses them. They are "accepted in the Beloved, by whom they have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." They are "the elect of God, holy and beloved:" and "who shall lay any thing to their charge? It is God that justifieth. Who shall condemn them? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for them."

Brethren, can you conscientiously declare that you have forsaken the world in spirit and practice—that you have abandoned all false and carnal confidences—and that you look to Jesus, and have "fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before you" in his Gospel? Then you will not be disappointed of your hope, if you "continue in the faith grounded and settled, and not moved away from the hope of your calling." That exclamation of your Saviour's, "It is finished," is your guaranty

that every thing is done, completely done, to secure your everlasting happiness. Receive, then, the atonement day by day—day by day let Christ be your life—lean on him, love him, learn of him, follow him fully—deny yourselves, take up your Lord's cross—bear it cheerfully yet a little while, and by-and-by he will say, "It is finished"—wear the crown.

SERMON XI.

PREACHED ON EASTER SUNDAY.

JOB xiv. 14.

“If a man die, shall he live again?”

NEVER was a harder question put to reason : never was one more important solved by Revelation. And, what is most material on the present occasion, *we* have such a deep *interest* in its solution. “*If a man die*”—is there, then, any *doubt* of his dying? is there any doubt of *our* dying? None whatever. How shall *we* not “go the way of all the earth?” Brethren, “your fathers, where are they?” dead—your companions, many of them, where are they? dead—numbers even of your children, where are they? dead—for whom are knells going daily? for the dead. They will go for us soon. “The graves are ready for us.” “It is appointed unto

all men once to die." So each of us may look up to God with Job, and say, "I know that Thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living."

But, "if a man die, shall *he* live again?" We shall die: but shall *we* live again? By "we" is meant *our bodies*. Our *souls* will *never die*; so there is no room for the question whether *they* will live again: they will never *cease* living. That part only of a man can live *again* which was once alive before, but *lost* life, and became dead, *viz.* his *body*. The question of the text therefore is, When we have died, as to our *body*, shall we live again, as to our *body*? When this frame of flesh and bones shall have gone into the grave, will it ever come out again? when it shall have slept in the dust of the earth, will it ever awake again? in a word, shall we experience a *resurrection*?

A hard question for human reason. The *Athenians* were masters of reason, and reasoned themselves into a fair persuasion of the immortality of the *soul*. But when from Paul "they heard of the *resurrection of the dead*, some mocked; others said, We will hear thee again of this matter." The doctrine of their bodies living again, after they had gone to dust, seemed monstrous to the curious philosophers among them, and incredible to the serious. And *Roman* reason was no further advanced on this

subject than Athenian. For when Paul, in his defence before Agrippa, had begun to speak plainly about this unheard-of topic of a resurrection, "Festus," though an intelligent man, and a governor, could not contain himself, but impatiently exclaimed, "with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." And if you think Festus, though a sensible governor, might be no philosopher, what do you think of Pliny? He was a philosopher, and a very great one too; and he lived when Christianity was spreading fast among the Romans; and the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead had by some means reached his ears. And what did he, in his acute reason, think of it? In one place he calls it "a childish raving:" and when, in another place, he is mentioning things which were impossible for even God to do, two of those things are, "to recal the dead to life," and "to make mortal men live for ever."

You see, then, what a hard question the text was to Athenians and Romans. And it would probably have been as hard to *us now*, if we had had to deal with it by the force of mere unassisted reason. There is small cause to think we could have reasoned better or further than the Athenians and Romans, on *this* subject. Their reasonings on subjects they were competent to deal with, are our admiration and models at the present day. But the truth is, their

reason was incompetent to deal with the hard question of the text; and ours would have been equally so, but for the light of Revelation.

By the clear light of Revelation, however, a Christian child is now wiser than all those ancient heathen philosophers; and wiser too on a point where *certainty* is of unspeakable consequence. Probably, were the least informed person here present demanded, "If a man die, shall he live again?" the immediate and decisive answer would be, He shall. Will there be a resurrection of the body? There will. What! shall all the millions that are dead, and gone to dust—shall all we, when we have died and gone to dust—shall the whole race of man, from Adam to the last that dies and goes to dust—awake up out of the dust of the earth again, take our respective flesh and bones, and be consciously and substantially the same men, women, and children, we were before? *Doubtless.* "We know that we shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

This is an immensely important point of knowledge—how do we know it so very certainly? We know it *only from Scripture*: but from *Scripture* we do know it—from *Scripture history*, taken in connection with *Scripture declarations*. In *Scripture* we have the record of God's *power*, that he can

raise the dead; and the record of his *word* that he *will* do so.

First, we have there the record of his *power*, that he *can* raise the dead. We have this record both in the Old Testament, and in the New Testament. In the Old Testament we read how he did raise the son of the widow at Sarepta, the son of the Shunamite, and the man cast into the sepulchre of Elisha. The son of the widow had been a corpse but a little while—the son of the Shunamite longer—the man longer still. In the New Testament we read how he raised Jairus' daughter and Dorcas, both lately dead—the widow's son at Nain, when they were carrying him out to bury him—and Lazarus, when he was putrid in his grave. So that "if a man die," God has shown by instances that he has *power* to make him "live again."

Still these instances, though they tend to raise our thoughts of what God can do, are defective proofs of what we commonly understand by "the resurrection." It is true these seven persons died and lived again; but then they did not live again "*no more to return to corruption:*" they lived again only for awhile, and then died again, and are now "in the dust of the earth." Whereas, by the resurrection, we commonly understand, and rightly understand, the rising of bodies in such a state, as that

“they cannot die any more.” At the resurrection we expect “this corruptible to put on incorruption, and this mortal to put on immortality.”

Have we, then, in Scripture, any proof from fact, that the power of God is such, that “if a man die,” he may notwithstanding “live again,” and that for ever? We *have* such proof of the power of God in the great fact which we commemorate this day, viz. the resurrection of our blessed Lord and Saviour, “the man Christ Jesus.” He was certainly crucified, dead, and buried; and remained in the grave so long, that, apparently, in that hot climate he would have seen corruption, but that he was embalmed in abundant spices, and so “saw no corruption.” But nothing could be made more sure than his death and burial. His friends and enemies were equally certain that his life was extinct, and his corpse entombed—and not entombed only, but there sealed and guarded and watched with the most jealous care, because, “while he was yet alive, he had said, After three days I will rise again.”

However, notwithstanding his unquestionable death and silence in the grave, and amid wakeful precautions to prevent his leaving it, on the third day he *did* rise again from the dead. “God raised him up the third day, and showed him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before of God”—witnesses so many, so various, and so vari-

ously ascertained of the reality of his resurrection in the same body which had been crucified, dead, and buried, that human testimony cannot make a thing more certain, than that, though "the man Christ Jesus" died, he lived again, "no more to return to corruption." For, after his resurrection, "he appeared first to Mary Magdalene"—then to the other women, who held him by the feet—then to Simon—then to the two disciples going to Emmaus, and was known of them in breaking of bread. After this he appeared to the eleven, and others with them, as they sat at meat. He showed them his hands and his feet, that it was He Himself in his own material once-crucified body, and not an apparition of him, as they were ready to think. "Handle me," he said, "and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." After this he eat and drank with them. By all which infallible proofs they were satisfied of his resurrection in the same body in which he had suffered and died. But Thomas was absent on this occasion, and he was not satisfied with their testimony, but insisted on having the testimony of his own senses, before he would believe. So, eight days after, came Jesus, and stood in the midst of them, as before. "Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless,

but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God." Thomas was now satisfied. But more satisfaction was still in reserve for his chosen witnesses. He appeared to several of them at the sea of Tiberias. He appeared to the eleven on a mountain in Galilee, where he had previously appointed them to meet him; at which time, probably, "he was seen of the five hundred brethren at once," mentioned by St. Paul, the majority of whom were living twenty years afterwards. Of these St. Matthew speaks, in the close of his Gospel, thus—"When they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted"—doubted for awhile, I conceive, because they saw him at some distance, and were not entirely satisfied of his identity. But when "Jesus came and spake unto them," their doubts vanished.

Thus he was seen of his various witnesses, and especially of his Apostles, with considerable frequency and intimacy, during so long a period as "forty days, speaking with them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." Then, when the forty days were ended, "he led them out of Jerusalem as far as to Bethany, and lifted up his hands, and blessed them; and it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." There "this same

Jesus" was seen soon after by dying Stephen—there he was seen at a later period by persecuting Saul—and there he was seen at a period later still by the beloved John, to whom, in this last revelation of himself, he pointedly declared his *perpetual* immortality—"I am He that liveth, and was dead, and, behold, I am *alive for evermore*:" to which the beloved Apostle says, "*Amen.*"

In the resurrection of *Christ*, then, my brethren, we have a perfect and infallible proof that, "though a man die, he *may* live again," in his *own* body of flesh and bones, "no more to return to corruption." Our blessed Lord suffered and was buried in a body of humiliation, in a corruptible, dishonoured, weak, and natural body: but very early, as on this morning, "according to the working in him of God's mighty power," "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," "his body of humiliation was changed into that body of glory," incorruptible, honoured, powerful, and spiritual, in which he now lives, and shall live for ever. "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God."

We see, then, from Scripture, that our resurrection is *possible* by the *power* of God; because

he has actually raised up Christ, to live for ever in the self-same body of flesh and bones in which he died.

But we have further to show, that our resurrection is not only possible by the power, but *certain* by the *word* of God.

St. Paul says so—"God hath both raised up the Lord Jesus, and will also raise up us by his own power." He gave that exhibition of his mighty power, in raising up Christ, as a pledge to our whole race that he will some time raise us also. So said St. Paul to the Athenians, "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge, and therefore first raise the world, by that man whom he hath ordained; whercof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." And "as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this," that the Son of man shall execute judgment; "for" he shall first be raised himself, and then the whole world shall be raised, that they may be judged by him: "the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life,

and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.”

Nothing, therefore, my brethren, can be more certain from Scripture, than that, though we die, we shall live again, live for ever, in this body that we have now. God is pledged to make us experience what Christ has experienced, death and resurrection. Christ died, and we shall die: Christ was raised again, and we shall be raised again: and because, raised again, he dieth no more, we, raised again, shall die no more. We shall then be as like ourselves as he was like himself; and we shall be as different from ourselves as he was different from himself. He was the same, and yet different: we shall be the same, and yet different. After his resurrection he was known to be the Jesus who was crucified, and none other: after our resurrection we shall be known to be the persons who lived here, and none other. His change from mortality to immortality, from natural to spiritual, made no ambiguity in his identity: our like change will make none in ours. He was still “he himself:” we shall still be we ourselves. He had his own material flesh and bones, but incorruptible: we shall have ours. He had his earthly, but not earthy body to be his companion for ever: for ever shall we be accompanied with this of ours. We may

look at our hands and our feet, and think, ‘I shall as surely have *you* with me through eternity, as my Lord has *his* with him: so, my body, you and I are pledged to one another everlastingly: we may part once; but we shall meet again, to part no more.’

See, then, my brethren, at what an unspeakably important conclusion we are now *certainly* arrived, through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, as on this day. See how it is not only possible we may, but unquestionable we shall, “die, and live again” in these bodies of our’s for ever. “We know that our Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon ~~this~~ earth: and though after our skin worms destroy this body, yet in our flesh we shall see God: whom we shall see for ourselves, and our eyes shall behold, and not another.”

And now, what a solemn thought does this stir within us! Since our eyes *shall* behold him, oh *how* shall we behold him? When “in our graves we hear his voice, and come forth, oh! will it be to ~~the~~ resurrection of life, or to the resurrection of ~~damnation~~?” What an amazing reflection, that we are certain to come forth to *one* of these resurrections; and what an awakening consideration, to *which!* How trivial every worldly anxiety compared with this, “that there shall be a resurrection

both of the just and of the unjust ;” and which shall be mine ? In the world to come I myself am going assuredly to be happy or miserable for ever ; and what are my anticipations ?

My brethren, I cannot tell what your anticipations *are* ; I can only remind you what they *should be*, according to Scripture. Christ leaves you in no uncertainty which resurrection certain characters may anticipate in the world to come, viz. one correspondent to their behaviour in this present world—“they that have done good” may anticipate “a resurrection unto life ;” “and they that have done evil, a resurrection unto damnation.” Therefore, brethren, consider your ways here, and you may judge of your prospects hereafter. What is your ordinary conversation, your daily conduct ? Are you doing *good* ? or are you doing *evil* ? Probably your conscience can whisper you a tolerably correct opinion as to your general character. I refer you therefore to your conscience. Judge ye yourselves, brethren. You may surely tell whether, in the main, you are doing good, or doing evil. The difference between the two courses is broad enough, palpable enough.

If you are doing *good*, you are “living *soberly, righteously, and godly* in this present world”—“*soberly*” as to yourselves, that is, not at random, nor thoughtless, nor heady, nor high-minded, but

sober-minded, sedate, discreet in spirit and deportment; and also in temperance, soberness, and chastity of body, remembering that your body is going to live with you for ever, and that you must rise to be judged for the deeds done in it. Then again, Are you living "*righteously*" as to your neighbours? Do you make a conscience and a habit of doing unto them, as you would they should do unto you? Are you truthful in your words, upright in your dealings, faithful in your post, honest in things committed to your charge? If you are doing good, you are really and regularly living thus *righteously*. And then, Thirdly, if you are doing good, you are living *godly*. A good man is something *more* than a sober and honest man; he is a *devout* man, a *pious* man, a man who "walks with God," through the mediation of the Lord Jesus, and the communion of the Holy Ghost. So, if you are doing good, you are "serving God with your spirit in the Gospel of his Son." You are striving "so to walk as to please Him." You take his word for your guide, his Spirit for your support, and his beloved Son for your pattern. "You set him habitually before you," as a moderator in prosperity: in adversity you "endure as seeing Him who is invisible:" and, on the whole, you have an eye to "his being glorified in you" here, "and you in Him hereafter."

Such, my brethren, is substantially the character

and conduct of those that “*do good*” in body, soul, and spirit; and if you have “the testimony of your conscience” that such is substantially *your* character and conduct, you have a scriptural prospect of “coming forth to the resurrection of *life*.” And that is a blessed prospect. You, like Paul, “have *hope* toward God, that there shall be a resurrection.” The thought of it is your solace and support under the temptations, cares, and sicknesses of life. And well it may be. In this body of your humiliation, this body of death, you groan being burdened—burdened with its corruptions, burdened with its cravings, burdened with its pains. You are waiting for its redemption, from death, and sin, and suffering, and imperfection: and you know that its Redeemer liveth. Yes, Christians, and because he liveth, and liveth in a happy body for ever, you shall live in one also after your resurrection. “He shall change your vile body, that it may be like unto his glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.” He has shown, in his own person, how he *can* lift this flesh and bones of ours from the miseries of Calvary, and the degradation of the grave, to the joys of heaven, and the honours of his Father’s throne. “In him now dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” The brightness of the Father’s glory now shines through that face which once hung sad and

dead on the cross. *What* a change has his human frame experienced! Then your's, Christian brethren, shall experience one similar. You may live in hope, and go to your graves in peace, and there "all the days of your appointed time you may wait, till your change come. Then He will call, and you will answer Him: he will have a desire to the work of his hands:" he will clothe you with glory, and honour, and immortality: "you shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of your Father." And there your eyes shall "see the king in his beauty," yea, and one another too "in the beauty of holiness." There you shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, and all the apostles, and all the martyrs, and all "the excellent of the earth," of whom you have heard, or read. There you shall meet again the Christian friends and relatives over whom you sorrowed here, but not as having no hope, because they slept in Jesus, and, like yourselves, will have awaked with his likeness. And there you shall know one another, even as also you will be known; and be comforted over one another concerning all the sorrows you have experienced in this vale of tears: and there you shall be helpers of one another's joy, and enjoyers of one another's happiness, in the presence of your chief joy, God and the Lamb. Wherefore comfort yourselves and one another with these words. And

having this hope, purify yourselves, even as Christ is pure. Mortify your members which are upon the earth. Abstain from fleshly lusts which war against your soul : and do not sin against your body which shall be the partner and medium of your souls' everlasting bliss. Thus the thought of the Resurrection is justly "full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort" to those of you who are "*doing good.*" To *you* this day may well be "a high day;" for "the Lord is risen indeed;" and with *his* resurrection are inseparably connected *your* dearest hopes and brightest anticipations.

But are you *all* "doing good?" I fear *not*—I fear *some* of you are "*doing evil*"—evil for which "your own heart condemns you; and God is greater than your heart, and knoweth all things." Nor do I now allude to *such* evil as, through the infirmity of our fallen nature, the best are guilty of; but I allude to *deliberate* evil, to *habitual* evil. I allude to your going on, soul and body, in *courses* of sin, careless, wilful, and impenitent, against God, against your neighbour, and against yourselves.

Are not some of you *conscious* of doing evil against *God*?—by neglecting him, shunning the thoughts of him, and indulging thoughts of pleasurable sin—evading his word, grieving his Spirit, not heartily praying, nor taking Christ to rule over you; but kicking against the pricks of his lawful

authority, though you know "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet."

Again, are not some of you *conscious* of doing evil against your *neighbour*? Do you not "devise evil against him, though he dwelleth securely by you?" Do you not meditate mischief upon your bed, and then come abroad, and practise it? Do you not covet the possessions of some around you? do you not envy their prosperity? and do you not often seek to undermine their character by your words, or their welfare by your actions? Have you not an unclean tongue, unclean hands, and unclean feet, by indulging in falsehood and fraud and unjustifiable procedures?

Once more, are not some of you *conscious* of doing evil against *yourselves*?—"Sinning against your own bodies, by habits of effeminacy, impurity, drunkenness, revelling, and such like?"

Now, if your heart condemns some of you of being "accustomed to do evil" in *any* of these ways, have you ventured to *sing for joyfulness* that "Christ the Lord is risen to-day?" His resurrection is the most *melancholy*, the most *afflicting* event that, if you intend to continue doing evil, you could possibly contemplate: for it makes *your own* resurrection *inevitable*; and you hear what He says, "They that have *done evil* shall come

forth to the resurrection of *damnation*." This resurrection, indeed, is not much *thought about* by ungodly, unrighteous, sensual persons; and no wonder. How *should* they like to think about it? Their rising again in their own bodies, to give an account of the deeds here done in those bodies, is the most awful, distressing, revolting event that could befall them. And yet *doubtless* it *shall* befall them—it shall befall *you*, my hearers, if you live and die such *sinful* characters. *Supposing* you to die, such, and be buried, good were it for you, if you might remain in the dust for ever. But not so—"the trumpet shall sound;" and then, though you "sleep in the dust of the earth," you will "awake"—but *to what?* "to shame and everlasting contempt." Before the assembled world you will be made to show yourselves, what you really are. You will have the secrets of your hearts, lips, and lives made manifest, and your characters fully disclosed and exposed before the bar of Christ. There you will have to "see, eye to eye," Him on whom you would not look here, even Him whom you pierced. There too you will have to meet the patient righteous, whom here you insulted or wronged; and you must meet face to face those whom you are ashamed to meet, even in this world. There too you must be confronted

with your partners in iniquity, and be judged together for the sins you committed together. And then you will stand trembling in that body which is but little agitated now. Out of your own mouths must you yourselves be judged. Your own tongues must be witness against your own heads and your own members. Your own ears must hear your own bodies sentenced to dwell undevoured "with devouring fire, with everlasting burnings," gnawed with "the never-dying worm" of the consciousness that you are shut up in a hell you once might have escaped, and shut out of a heaven you once might have entered.

These are terrible things to *mention*; but, my brethren, they will be *more* terrible things to *meet*, as meet them *you must*, if you live and die in *sin*. And *therefore* I mention them, painful as they are, that you may *never have to meet them*. But either they, or better things, *must soon* be met, both by you and me. "Behold, I come quickly," says the Judge of all, "and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be." Therefore "what we do, we must do *quickly*." And, "behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Now Christ is not a Judge, but a Saviour, who "has Life in Himself," to impart to those who will earnestly go to him,

and seek it. "He is the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in him, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth, and believeth in Him, shall never die. Do we believe this?" If we do, let us wait on him in faith and prayer; that, being raised by him here "from the death of sin to the life of righteousness," we may sit with him hereafter in heavenly places, conformed to his image both in glorified soul and glorified body.

SERMON XII.

PREACHED ON WHITSUNDAY.

EPHESIANS iv. 30.

Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God."

SINCE on this day we celebrate "*the coming of the Holy Ghost*" to the Christian Church, to abide with it for ever, I would, in the first place, inquire of you, my hearers, that which St. Paul inquired of the twelve disciples at Ephesus, "*Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?*" He is certainly *promised* in Scripture to all true believers. As on this day, St. Peter said to his first audience, "*Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the*

Lord our God shall call." Those that *are afar off* mean *Gentiles*, as appears by St. Paul's language to the *Gentile Ephesians*, in chapter ii. 11, "Remember that ye, being in time past *Gentiles* in the flesh, at that time were *far off*." The promise, then, of the Holy Ghost belongs to *us Gentiles*, as well as to the Jews, *provided* we are true penitents for our sins, and unfeigned believers in Christ the Lord. Accordingly such Gentile believers among the Ephesians did really receive the Holy Ghost. St. Paul reminds them of their own experience of this in chapter i. 13, "Ye also trusted in Christ, after that ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." And having *received* this Holy Spirit, He *remained* in them, as the Apostle says in the last verse of the 2d chapter, "Ye are a *habitation* of God through the Spirit." And *because* they were so, he gives them the exhortation contained in the text, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

Now "the promise" of the Holy Ghost being not merely to Ephesian Gentiles, but "to *all* that are *afar off*, even as many as the Lord our God shall call," is not the promise to *us*, even to us who are *here present*? Has not the Lord our

God *called us*? Have not *we* “heard the word of truth, the Gospel?” Certainly we have, with our *outward* ears. But have we heard it with the *inward* ears of our understanding and our heart? Have we heard it so as that *faith* has come to us by hearing it? Have we heard it till we have *trusted* in Christ, like the Ephesians, and been persuaded, with them, that “in Him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of God’s grace?” When the Gospel is preached, publishing peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, “some believe the things which are spoken, and some believe them not.” We should earnestly consider to which of these two classes *we* belong.

Brethren, ask your own consciences, and your own conduct, whether *you* have any real belief of the Gospel of pardon and peace through the blood of the Lamb? Is it good tidings to you to hear of pardon and peace through the Son of God? Do you feel you need pardon? abundant pardon? daily pardon? Were you ever, are you now, “pricked in your heart” for your sins? Have you had your carnal security disturbed? your false peace destroyed? Have you seen yourself a polluted, guilty, lost sinner, till, out of the abundance of your heart, you have said with David, “Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O

Lord; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified?" Do you "know in all your heart, and in all your soul," that if He "should be extreme to mark what you have done amiss, you could not abide it;" you must perish, perish everlastingly? And has this conviction made you serious, and humble, and broken in heart? Has it wrought in you "godly sorrow?" that is, sorrow towards God—sorrow for having offended him, for having come under his displeasure. And are you angry with yourselves for your past ungodliness, and ashamed of yourselves for your past ingratitude? But, notwithstanding, "having come to yourselves," have you, like the awakened prodigal son, hoped in God, and said, "I will arise, and go to my Father?" Have you believed the message sent to you in the Gospel, that "God is in Christ, reconciling you unto himself, not imputing your past trespasses unto you; having made Jesus to be sin for you, who knew no sin, that you might be made the righteousness of God in him?" And have you found peace, not to say joy, in believing? and are you now sincerely desirous to "serve God" affectionately "with your spirit in the Gospel of his Son?"

If nothing of this kind is your real experience, you are yet "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity:" and oh! cry mightily to

God, that, for Christ's sake, he would deliver you out of it.

But if your experience is such as I have described, it agrees with what manifestly *was* the experience of the Ephesians to whom St. Paul wrote: and therefore, as *they* received the Holy Ghost, doubtless he must have been imparted to *you also*. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," in his attentive kindness to all believers. You therefore, my Christian brethren, "who have believed through grace," must be considered as still inhabited by that "Eternal Spirit," "whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him; but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." And hereby you may know that He dwelleth in you, because He has made you "partakers of his divine nature" and his own holy dispositions. As you know that your flesh, your old man, is born of sinful Adam, because it lusteth only to evil continually; so you may know that your spirit, your new man, is born of the Holy Ghost, because it continually resists evil, and longs and labours after good. If you were "after the flesh, you would mind the things of the flesh," which you do not mind, chiefly and habitually. The things you really "*mind*" are "the things of the Spirit;" which shows that you are "after the Spirit," and

that "He is in you of a truth." This being the happy case, "suffer, I beseech you, the word of Apostolic exhortation"—"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God."

Notice, first, the *doctrinal truths* implied in these words—and,

Secondly, the *practical duties* which necessarily flow from them.

Notice, first, the *doctrinal truths* implied in these words, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." They are *three*, the *personality*, *Deity*, and *loving-kindness* of the Holy Spirit. They imply, first, his *personality*, by which I mean, that He is not merely an energy, or operation, or power of God, but that He has a distinct personal subsistence of His own. For the Apostle says, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God:" so the Holy Spirit is capable of being grieved or feeling grief; and grief is certainly a *personal* affection: therefore the Holy Spirit is a *person*. He is *alive* to your behaviour—sensible of the way in which you treat him—and grieved if you treat him in an improper manner. All which shows that he has feelings of his own, and is a person of Himself, as truly as you are. Consider whether *your* grief does not prove *your* personality; and if so, the grief of the Holy Spirit proves *his* personality.

But, secondly, our text implies his *Deity*.

is implied by the *solemnity* of the charge, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." That Spirit must be a *divine* person, against grieving whom we are so particularly warned. His Deity is further implied by the *epithet* assigned Him, "the *Holy Spirit*." There is none Holy but the Lord. "Behold, he putteth no trust in his servants, and his angels he chargeth with folly:" whereas his servants and his angels sing before *Him*, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty"—"Holy Father, Holy Son, Holy Spirit." In the Scripture of truth, *Holy Spirit* is his favourite appellation, because it at once marks his divinely sacred and sanctified character. And that He is truly such, is yet further implied, when the Apostle calls Him "the Holy Spirit of God." Being the Spirit of *God*, how can He be otherwise than Holy? and how can he be otherwise than *divine*? Being the *Spirit of God*, "he searcheth all things, yea, the *deep* things of *God*." But what *created* being hath known the mind of the Lord? When therefore we are told by St. Paul that, like as the spirit of a man knoweth the things of a man, so the Spirit of God knoweth the things of God, as our spirit is commensurate with ourself, so the Spirit of God is commensurate with God, and therefore properly *divine*.

But, thirdly, our text implies his *lovingkindness* to ourselves—"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God."

We worms of earth should not have it in our *power* to grieve Him, were it not that He graciously *sets his love upon us*. If He were as indifferent to us, as He is lifted above us, He might take up Elihu's language, and say, "If thou sinnest, what doest thou against me? or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto me? Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art;" but it cannot hurt me. And truly it could not—we could not grieve the Holy Spirit, were it not that He gives us a sort of power over Him, by the very kindness He has for us. Which of *you* are affectionate, anxious parents? Your very love leaves you, so to speak, at the mercy of your children—you arm them with a fearful power against you, if they are wicked enough to exercise it. *They* can grieve you in a way *strange* children could not: *they* can grieve you in exact proportion to the *love* you bear them, and the *anxiety* you feel that they should behave better. Now as *your* regard for *your children* makes you susceptible of grief at their misconduct, so the *Lord's* regard for *us* makes Him susceptible of grief at our misconduct. "God is love." See how the love of the *Father* made him suffer from the world before the Flood—"God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had

made man on the earth, and *it grieved him at his heart.*” See, again, how the love of the *Son* made him suffer from the Pharisees—“He said unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. And he said unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. And he looked round about on them with anger, being *grieved* for the hardness of their hearts.” See, once more, how the love of the *Spirit* made him suffer from Israel in the wilderness—“I will mention,” says Isaiah, “I will mention the loving-kindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses. For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled, and *vexed* his Holy Spirit.” The *vexation* to the Holy Spirit was their rebellion against him after “the multitude of his loving-kindnesses.” “*Forty years long was he grieved* with that generation; to whom He swore in his wrath, that they should not enter

into his rest." It is clear therefore that the Holy Spirit *may* be grieved, and that, because of his *loving-kindness* to ourselves. And if he was grieved by the misconduct of his charge under the Law, how much more by the misconduct of his charge under the Gospel! If, as David calls him, He was a "*loving Spirit*" under the Old Covenant, how much more is He such under the New! He is now on earth in some *peculiar* sense, so as He was not on earth in Jewish days. His condescension to *Christians* is such as was unknown of old. "Know we not that *our* bodies are the *temples* of the Holy Ghost?" "He dwells *in us*, and walks *in us*," and "helpeth our infirmities" with distinguished kindness, gentleness, and love.

Having thus shown, in the first place, the *three doctrinal truths* implied in our text, viz. the *personality, deity, and loving-kindness* of the Holy Spirit, let us notice, in the second place, the *practical duties* which necessarily flow from them.

Since the Holy Spirit is *a person*, we should receive him and think of him as such. There are those who conceive of him only as an energy, or quality, or operation of God the Father, and not as a person, having a spiritual and intellectual subsistence of his own. But this must be a dangerous opinion, because contrary to the account which he himself has given of himself "in the Scripture of

truth." He is, indeed, often mentioned in Scripture in language not descriptive of a *person*; as when the Lord says, "I will *pour out* my Spirit upon all flesh," as if he were a *power flowing* from the Lord. But this figurative description of Him is compatible with his having a spiritual subsistence of his own, distinct, though proceeding from, the spiritual subsistence of the Father. And in many passages of Scripture He is spoken of in language absolutely incompatible with his being *otherwise than a person*. For example, our Saviour, who never spake unadvisedly with his lips, and perfectly knew the nature of the Spirit of whom he spake, speaks of him in these *personal* terms, "The *Comforter, who* is the Holy Ghost, *whom* the Father will send in my name, *He shall teach* you all things—he shall *testify* of me—he shall *reprove* the world of sin—he shall *guide* you into all truth—he shall not *speak* of himself, but whatsoever he shall *hear*, that shall he speak." Who can believe that our Saviour would describe the Holy Ghost as a *comforter*, as being *sent* and *coming*, as *speaking* and *hearing*, and as *teaching, testifying, re proving, guiding*, if he were not a *person*? We ought, then, to receive the testimony of Christ as little children; and, upon his authority, acknowledge the Holy Spirit as a person, and behave ourselves toward Him as such.

But, next, we have shown that the Holy Spirit

is a *divine* Person, and truly *God*. As such therefore we ought to regard, honour, worship, and obey Him. If we are true Christians, we carry God always within us. So says St. John plainly, "Who-soever shall confess that Jesus is the Christ, God dwelleth in him;" and that this God means God the Holy Ghost is evident by those other passages of St. Paul's, "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost:" and "ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." In having, therefore, the Comforter within us, we have in us the presence of God. "But will God in very deed dwell with man on the earth?" He will—he does—not only dwell with us, but in us. Himself says so, and we may not "make Him a liar"—"I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." "Such honour have all his saints!" Such honour has each of us who has penitently turned from sin, and trusted in Christ. What an honour! "Great is our God above all gods. Who is able to build him an house, seeing the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Him? Who are we, then, that we should be his house?" It is true, notwithstanding, if we are sincere believers, that "we *are* builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Which *being* true, and when we "have 'God so nigh unto

us," how great should be our reverence, sanctity, and submission! We live in his constant presence—are dedicated to his exclusive glory—and should be always ready to "do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his words." We are "a spiritual priesthood," who, "building up ourselves on our most holy faith, should be praying in the Holy Ghost," and "offering up" through Him "spiritual sacrifices" of praise and thanksgiving, "acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." This is our practical duty, necessarily flowing from our being inhabited by "the Holy Spirit of God." Our *bodies* are the *temples* of the Holy Ghost; and our *spirits* are the *priests* in those temples. How attentive should we be to have *holy services* in a *holy house*! And to this end, we should "*keep our bodies* in temperance, soberness, and chastity," and be "*pure in heart*, that we may see God." If we be otherwise, we shall "*grieve* the Holy Spirit of God," and tempt him to *withdraw* from us. And then an "Ichabod" would be written on us deserted temples—the glory would have departed from us. It *has* departed before now from *more than one* habitation of the Lord, when it became wilfully defiled. Where is that "holy and beautiful house" wherein our Jewish fathers once worshipped with acceptance a present God, dwelling between the cherubims? "It is burnt with fire, and all its

pleasant things are laid waste." Why? Because it became polluted. "If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy." He forewarned Israel that he would; but they did not believe him. Their self-complacent, self-deluding persuasion was, "The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these." So they were, and so they would have remained, if, as the Lord said, "they had thoroughly amended their ways and their doings;" not otherwise: for, says¹ he, just afterwards, "will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the Lord. But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and *see what I did to it* for the wickedness of my people Israel." And what *did* God do to Shiloh for its wickedness? We are told, in Psalm lxxviii. 60, "He *forsook* the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he had placed among men." "And now," continues God to his polluted worshippers in Jerusalem, "because ye have done all these works, and I spake unto you, rising

up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called, but ye answered not; therefore *will* I do unto *this* house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, as I *have done* to Shiloh." And we know he executed his word. He "sware by Himself" that His once holy and beautiful house should "become a desolation," if it *continued* to grieve Him: it *did* continue to grieve Him, and He *forsook* it, and it *became* desolate, and desolate it *remains* at this day.

Such was the end of his tabernacle in Shiloh, and of his temple in Jerusalem. "Because they were polluted, he destroyed them with a sore destruction." "Now these things happened unto them for eusamples; and they are written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the world are come." We Christians are now the temple of the Lord, "through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." "Our sinful bodies are made clean by His body, and our souls are washed by His most precious blood." His body was the *true* temple of the Holy Ghost, and in it now dwells all the fulness of the Godhead. "Out of his fulness all we receive, and grace for grace." Our body receives grace to be an *adopted* temple of the Holy Ghost. Our body is *by nature* corrupt, defiled; an habitation for every unclean thing, instead of for the Holy Ghost. But, by faith in Jesus Christ,

our person becomes *justified*, and through the grace of his imputed righteousness it becomes *sanctified*, or *set apart* for the Master's use. Also, by faith, our spirit is delivered from *bondage* to sin, from "*servi*ng divers lusts and pleasures;" and by the power of the Holy Spirit our spirit is renewed unto holiness, and made a spiritual priest unto God within our sanctified person. Thus we Christian believers "are bought with a price, to glorify God in our bodies and in our spirits, which are His"—which he claims as His—which He sets apart as His—which He inhabits as His—which he delights in as His. The hour is come when He has none but *living* temples wherein he dwells. And never was his abode in Shiloh or Jerusalem so dear to Him, as His abode now is in us Christian temples, whom his own love has selected, his own Son redeemed, his own Spirit sanctified. "The Lord taketh pleasure in his people," and dwells and walks in them as in his fair purchased possession of inestimable value. O my brethren, have any of us heard his voice, and seen his face, in ourselves as his sanctuary? Have any of us felt the presence of God in our souls, and thereby had a token that he dwells in the temple of our body? If such is our happy experience, how honoured are we, whom God hath made "an habitation for Himself through his Spirit!" Let us never forget that it

is through the *Holy Spirit* that such sinners as we ever became, or ever can continue, inhabited by a *Holy God*. And hence, let us beware of grieving that *Holy Spirit* by unholy *tempers* in our *souls*, or unholy *conduct* in our *bodies*. Let us remember the sins by which Shiloh and Jerusalem were polluted, and for which they were forsaken. "They stole, murdered, and committed adultery, and swore falsely, and burned incense unto Baal, and walked after other gods whom they knew not:" that is, they broke the laws both of the first table and the second—they neither loved the Lord their God with all their heart, nor their neighbours as themselves. We must not imitate their sins, lest we fall into their punishment. And we know that those laws are *spiritual*. If, therefore, under our spiritual dispensation, we would not grieve the *Holy Spirit*, and provoke Him to withdraw from us, let us beware, not merely of theft with our hands, but of covetousness in our hearts—not merely of murder, but of passion—not merely of adultery, but of unchaste desires—not merely of false oaths, but of speaking unadvisedly with our lips—not merely of idolatrous acts, but of idolatrous affections. If we thus "keep ourselves in the love of God," and "love our brother also," "the Lord will bless us, and keep us: the Lord will make his face shine upon us, and will

be gracious unto us: the Lord will lift up his countenance upon us, and will give us peace." And how much *happier* shall we be, thus "walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost," than if we were "sensual, having not the Spirit!" Surely *self-interest alone* should prevail with us not to "grieve the Holy Spirit:" "for if we make Him sorry, who is He then that maketh us glad, but the same that is made sorry by us?"

But, in conclusion, since the *loving-kindness* of the Holy Spirit is so evident toward us, *gratitude* should constrain us not to grieve Him. We Christians, under the law of *love*, are not supposed capable of *vexing* Him, nor is He supposed capable of *resentment*. It was for *Jewish* hardness to "rebel and vex Him;" and it was in accordance with *legal* visitation for Him to "turn to be their enemy and fight against them." But if He have *once* said to us, "It is peace," He will *never* "turn to be our enemy and fight against us." "He makes an *everlasting* covenant with us Christian believers, that He *will not* turn away from us, to do us good:" and that He may have *no need* to do so, he adds, "I *will put* my fear in your hearts, that they *shall not* depart from me." He *grieves* over our *coldness*; he could not *bear* our *revolt*. He is "the *Father* of our spirit," and so dealeth with us as with *sons*;

and has provided for our return into "his favour, which is life," however prodigal and afflicting to Him we may be in our mad moments.

Such is the *loving-kindness* of the Holy Spirit toward us. And will any of you *presume* upon it? will any of you *abuse* it? If you *will*, *who* are you? Stay and let me reason with you a little moment. Are you *a child* with any natural affection? and have you a father, or a mother, yet alive, who, you know, yearns over you, and, though you were to be ever so undutiful, would love you still? Does this thought tempt you to undutifulness? or, supposing you have been undutiful for awhile, does the consciousness you have of your anxious parents' *continued* love for you make you inclined to *go on* grieving him? I think *not*. I think, if *there is* a consideration that *checks* your wandering, and inclines you to say, I will *return* to dutifulness, it is the *consideration* that you are *grieving* an affectionate parent who loves you through your waywardness. Now if you are *indeed* Christian believers, you are "born of the Spirit," and there is a paternal and filial relationship between Him and you: and be ye sure of this, *he is and will be* a "*loving Spirit*" to you, whatever conduct *you* may display to Him. Think of this, and say if you *ought* to grieve him. Think of this, and say whether you *will* grieve Him. You surely *will not*, or will not

long, if you have *any spiritual affection in you*. Surely you will be grieved, if you have *already* grieved Him; and “now that you are turned, you will repent; and now that you are instructed, you will smite upon your thigh: you will be ashamed, yea, you will be confounded” for your ingratitude that is past; you will “go and sin no more;” but “from this time cry unto him, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth.”

SERMON XIII.

2 COR. xii. 9.

My grace is sufficient for thee."

SUCH was the remarkable answer our Saviour gave to St. Paul. That Apostle, dejected with his "thorn in the flesh," had "besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from him;" but the reply he received from heaven was, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Grace here means, inward support, strength, assistance—in a word, such "a supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" to St. Paul's spirit as should be to him adequate "help in time of need."

Now *his* times of need would be at least as numerous, and his need *at* such times at least as urgent, as those of an *ordinary* individual. The conclusion, therefore, which may without hesitation be drawn from the text, is, that if the Saviour's

grace was sufficient for St. Paul, it is also sufficient for any one of *us*. It were unreasonable to suppose that our necessities are either greater, or more frequent, than those of that Apostle, of whom, at his conversion, Christ particularly said to Ananias, "I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." Hence, since "the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear," we doubt not that the same spiritual help, which was effectual to St. Paul in answer to prayer, is ready to be effectual to each and all of *us*, my brethren, when we sincerely seek it.

Now this is at once a *cheering* and a *solemn* consideration—*cheering*, because it appears grace sufficient *may* be obtained from our Redeemer by prayer; and *solemn*, because what if any of us should *fail* of it for want of application?

Let us view, first, the *cheering* side of the consideration, viz., that grace sufficient *may* be obtained by us from our Redeemer, in answer to prayer. The communication of grace from Christ to Christians is the glory of Christianity. Were it not for this, we should indeed be a ruined world. For we are all by nature "compassed with infirmities," and "without strength;" and if we were left to ourselves, it would be impossible for us to overcome our temptations, subdue our iniquities, and

rise superior to our weakness and woe. If we had not hope in Christ, we should be most miserable. But there *is* hope for us in Christ. It hath “pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell ;” and out “of his fulness we may all receive, and grace for grace.” This great fact quite alters our circumstances, and brings us within the possibility of salvation. When God has “laid help” for us “on One that is mighty,” yea, when our ordained Helper is himself “the mighty God,” there is no reason for us worms of the earth to despond. Despond we might, if limited help were the utmost we could hope for. But when our Helper is none other than God Almighty, “*his* grace is sufficient for us.” Accordingly we observe in the New Testament the warmest exhortations to *rely* on that grace. “My brethren,” says St. Paul to the Ephesians, “*be strong* in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” And again he says to Timothy, “Thou therefore, my son, *be strong* in the grace which is in Christ Jesus.” A Christian’s *connection* with Christ Jesus is perpetually adverted to in the New Testament. All sorts of metaphors and figures are there made use of, to convey to us a notion and impression of the reality and closeness of that connection. For example, Christ is the Head, Christians members ; Christ is the vine, Christians branches ; and he tells them distinctly, “Separate

from me, ye can do nothing.” Whereas, on the other hand, his Apostle says, with equal distinctness, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” These two truths therefore are equally established, viz. our insufficiency without Christ, and our sufficiency with him.

It may now be well for us to advert with more distinctness to a few of those circumstances which eminently display the sufficiency of divine grace: and first we may instance circumstances of *resisted temptation*. We all know something of the force and general prevalency of temptation. We all are conscious of the seducing nature of the pleasures of sin, and we all see that the vast majority of mankind yield to their seduction. Some may be tempted one way, and some another, according to their different age, situation, and constitution; but all have sins that easily beset them—all have what the Psalmist calls “*their iniquities* ;” and to their peculiar temptations most persons habitually give way. If any do not give way to the seductions which they feel to be seductive, there is in their case an exception to the ordinary course of events: Nearly all around them are borne down by the torrent of temptation, but here are a few individuals not borne down. The case therefore is clear—they must have in them some *supernatural* principle and power of resistance. We know, on inspired authority, that “in them, that

is, in their flesh," in their natural constitution, "dwelleth no good thing;" and yet here is the existence of a good thing in them, decisively established by the fact that they resist evil, under circumstances in which they would naturally have yielded to it. Whence is it that they stand when others fall? "Christ's grace is sufficient for them." This is the explanation of their superiority to seduction. Of themselves they would fall, even as others. They are men of like passions, and like infirmities, and like corruptions, with all around them; but they have taken hold of Christ's strength, and in it they stand. This is the only secret of their stability. If you could follow them into their privacy, and read all that is in their hearts, and all that passes in their experience, you would discover that they were perfect weakness in their own nature, but that they are "strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus." There is no room for doubting that it is by *grace* they stand. Why should they stand more than others, if they have not some principle and power more than others? And what *is* this principle and power? "They are of age; ask them; they shall speak for themselves." Ask one of the most remarkable among them, St. Paul, and hear what *he* says; "By the *grace* of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet

not I, but the grace of God which was with me." The supernatural grace which upheld St. Paul is that which upholds all who *are* upheld: and, blessed be God, some *are* upheld *now*, as really and effectually as in days of old. "There is at this present time a remnant according to the election of grace," in whom God their Saviour "works, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure." They are "not conformed to this world, but are transformed by the renewing of their minds;" and practically are not carried away by temptation, like the generality of their neighbours. On the contrary, they resist seduction, keep under their bodies, subdue their iniquities, and "overcome evil with good." Would you learn the *means* by which they do so, follow them into their retirement, and you would find them daily *on their knees* before "the throne of *grace*." "Not by" natural "might, nor by" natural "power, but by the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ," do they obtain the victory over those temptations by which otherwise they would unquestionably be vanquished. *They* certainly are the best judges of their own experience; and if asked how they come to be, or to do, more than others, their unanimous and invariable reply is, "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." We pray to him through Christ Jesus for his Spirit, and he answers us. We know that

he answers us, by the fact, that either our temptations lose their fascination, or, if not, we are strengthened with such strength in our soul, that they do not move us. Practically, through mercy, we find ourselves proof against seductions which captivate others, and carried safe through dangers which we see fatal to numbers : and but one explanation of our security *can* we, or *will* we give, and that is, our Saviour's grace is sufficient for us.

But now let us proceed to *another* head. The *usefulness* of Christians *amid and notwithstanding their infirmities*, is a proof of the sufficiency of divine grace. It was with reference to his usefulness that St. Paul received from our Saviour the promise in the text. The Apostle had a thorn in the flesh, which distressed him, chiefly because he feared it would hinder his ministerial acceptability. This thorn was probably a defect in his speech, and a general debility in his person : and “for this thing he besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from him. But he said unto him, My grace is sufficient for thee ; for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore,” continues the Apostle, “will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” And certainly, when the Apostle's “speech and preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom,” and yet was “with power,” it became evident how much

the grace of his master wrought in him and through him. When Paul was so "compassed with infirmities," and yet produced such astonishing effects, it was obvious to all, what a "treasure" he must have in his "earthen vessel," that he, so "poor," should yet be "making many rich." Hence the Churches "glorified God in him," and Christ was more magnified in the weak bodily presence, and contemptible speech of Paul, than in the eloquence of Apollos. When effects are vastly greater than their *apparent* causes, we are naturally led to believe that other causes exist, secret to us. And thus it is that "the foolishness of preaching" often wins people to admire the wisdom of God. Men not great produce such great effects, that observers are compelled to say, "This hath God wrought!" And what is true of the *preaching* of Christian ministers, is true also of the *labours* of Christians *in general*. They have a promise that "their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord;" and this promise is often fulfilled in the happy experience of those who work on in faith. Did they consider only their own infirmities, defects, ignorances, and sinfulness, they would have no courage to undertake anything for God their Saviour. But when they reflect on his declaration in the text, "My grace is sufficient for thee," they are animated to put forth their feeble efforts, hoping that they will be "mighty through God." Thus

youthful David, with but his sling and stones, was not afraid of meeting dreaded Goliath; and when under *such* arms the giant fell, it was evident to all that “the *Lord*” had “wrought a great victory.” And yet the success of David in his undertaking is not more surprising to competent judges, than the success of ordinary Christians in their undertakings. Many of these, who are frail in body, and moderate in talent, and circumscribed in means, and ready to sink under a conscious unworthiness, are favoured to be so useful, and do such good in their generation, that the grace of Christ in them can scarcely fail of attracting attention.

But we will notice *one more* series of circumstances under which its sufficiency is apparent, and that is, *under circumstances of affliction and dissolution*. St. Paul certainly experienced the grace of Christ to be sufficient for *him* under such circumstances. For, with regard to *affliction*, so great were his supports, and so cheering his prospects, that he spoke of it as “light affliction, and but for a moment.” And with regard to *dissolution*, when his life was in danger, when “he was now ready to be offered, and the time of his departure was at hand,” “the consolations of God” were not “small with him.” Divine grace “kept him in perfect peace, with his mind stayed on God;” insomuch that he could say, with inimitable calmness, “I know

in whom I have believed, and am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." And the sufficiency of divine grace to uphold Christians in the day of adversity, and in the hour of death, is still exhibited in numerous instances. We see persons enduring "a great fight of afflictions" with a firmness and composure above nature. They are not stupid, but full of intelligence—they are not stoical, but full of feeling—they are not naturally courageous, but full of timidity: and yet, though they know their danger, and feel their sufferings, and "their flesh and their heart fail them," yet "God is the strength of their heart," and "his grace is sufficient" to preserve them in the main serene and patient. And what supports them in *affliction*, supports them also in *death*. They can contemplate undismayed the approach even of "the king of terrors." "The Lord strengthens them when they lie sick upon their bed; he makes all their bed in their sickness." He whispers peace to their soul. He says, "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Such assistance from Him is not imaginary, but real, and sensible too, as I know by my own certain experience. "The eternal God is their refuge, and underneath are the everlasting

arms," which they *feel* supporting them in the full prospect of their dissolution. So sufficient can the grace of Christ be in such extremities, that agonies of body can be almost unheeded by the mind, and "the spirit rejoice in God its Saviour." You see this in the record of dying Stephen. With "heaven opened" before his view, "and Jesus standing at the right hand of God" to succour and receive him, he was insensible to the contusions of his mortal tenement. Under showers of stones "he fell asleep," as peacefully as a babe on its mother's bosom. And his case is far from singular. Thousands of those who are now asleep in Jesus could have said, with Addison in his last hour, "See in what peace a Christian can die!"

The grace of Christ, then, is sufficient to secure holiness amid temptations, usefulness amid infirmities, and composure amid natural calamities, sorrow, and death. Surely this is a *cheering* consideration, and therefore proper to be the *first* view we took of the text.

But there is *another* view we should take of it, and under that view it is a very *solemn* text. Since Christ's grace is sufficient for us, what if any of us should *fail* of it, for want of application! Then we shall be without excuse; because we shall have neglected to avail ourselves of that which was avail-

able, and to supply ourselves out of that which would have been sufficient.

With regard, first, to the *resistance of temptation*, we are ever ready to excuse our sins, under the pretence that we cannot help committing them. We find that, through the frailty of our mortal nature, we cannot always stand upright. We are overtaken in faults again and again, notwithstanding our endeavours and good resolutions, till by-and-by we are disposed to look upon them as misfortunes more than faults, and to flatter ourselves we shall not be punished for them, because we did not find ourselves able to avoid them. Numbers secretly comfort themselves thus, when they have given way under temptations, and indulged in their easily besetting sins.

But there is no comfort for them in Scripture, on this account. Though they could not resist temptation in their own natural strength, they might have resisted it in the strength of Christ. Scripture tells us plainly that by nature we are “without strength;” but then it tells us as plainly at the same time that “Christ’s grace is sufficient for us,” and may be obtained in answer to prayer. We have an explicit promise that “our heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.” Our Lord Jesus Christ died for us, not

only to atone for our sins, but also to open a way for our sanctification. He took our nature upon him, that he might be to us a fountain of new spiritual life. "The Father gave not the Spirit by measure unto him;" but he has the fulness of it, not for himself, (for he had it of his own before the world began,) but he has the fulness of it for our benefit, that we might draw it out of him in all requisite abundance by faith and prayer. And he invites us to do so. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, yea come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price." "To him that is athirst will I give to drink of the water of life freely:" "and whoso drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life." Such are the Saviour's declarations of the sufficiency of his grace, and such are his invitations to us to avail ourselves of it. And the invitation of a king is a command. Hence his Apostle says, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh." Unless we would make him a liar, and disbelieve his love though he died for us, we must feel assured that, when he urges us to seek his grace, he is willing to impart it. "He never said unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in

vain." And hence, since his grace may be had by all that seek it, and had too in sufficient abundance to fortify them against temptation, those who give way to temptation will, at the judgment day, be found absolutely "without excuse." Their condemnation will not be, that they did not overcome by their *natural* strength—God knows they could not so have overcome—but their condemnation will be, that they did not overcome by the *supernatural* strength, which was offered to them in Christ, and which they might have obtained in answer to prayer. Every mouth will be stopped that would urge the weakness of nature as an excuse for indulgence in sin. God will answer such an one, 'You might have been strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus; but you would not seek that grace, though you knew it was both your privilege and your duty to do so.'

Thus, my brethren, we see the text is a *solemn* text to us, as to the resistance of temptation. Let us never flatter ourselves that the fault and corruption and weakness of our nature will excuse our licentiousness. A sufficient remedy for the evils entailed on us by Adam exists in the grace derivable to us from Christ. What we cannot do, in that we are weak through the flesh, he can do in us by the power of the Holy Spirit. We should pray

therefore, with the Apostle, "that Christ would dwell in our hearts by faith," and "strengthen us with might by his Spirit in our inner man."

Thus we shall be enabled to *resist evil*, in the first place; and in the second place, we shall be enabled to *do good*, notwithstanding and amid the infirmities of our nature. We are fain to excuse ourselves in dejection and inactivity, because we lack some qualification, as we think, or are "sore let and hindered" by some impediment. But here again the text *solemnly* reminds us, that Christ's grace is sufficient for us, and that therefore we must shrink from nothing which he has commanded, because his commands are neither grievous, nor unreasonable, nor impracticable. While we honestly set about fulfilling them, he will "put strength into us," and magnify his power in our feebleness. "It is nothing with him to save by many or by few;" and, little as we may be, and ought to be, in our own sight, if it pleases him we may be largely useful. We have only to "present our' bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto him, which is our reasonable service;" and he can make us chosen vessels to bear his grace to others. Therefore let us never indolently excuse ourselves from Christian work, alleging our thorns in the flesh, our infirmities, and impediments. If we hear our Saviour's voice in providence, saying, "Whom shall

I send, and who will go for us?" let us reply, with the humble but willing prophet, "Here am I, send me." Let us even take pleasure in necessities and difficulties for Christ's sake; for when we are weak in ourselves, then we shall be strong in him.

Lastly, the text is a *solemn* admonition to us, not to *faint* in the day of *adversity*, nor be *uneasy* at the prospect of our approaching *death*. We should endeavour to walk worthy of him who has "called us to glory and virtue"—to glory at the end, as a stimulus to virtue by the way. If we exhibit virtue first, we shall have glory afterwards; and therefore, "for the joy that is set before us," like our blessed Lord, we should "endure the cross," and bear patiently the sufferings whether of afflicted or dying nature. Impatience or distrust cannot be inevitable, and therefore cannot be justifiable in us; because, through prayer to our Redeemer, we might be "strengthened, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness." It is the intention and glory of Christianity to raise us by grace above nature, and animate us to "bear hardness, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ." Christians should be "more than others," because they have more resources than others. Either Christianity is "a cunningly devised fable," or else it is "not in word only, but also in power," the instrument of supernatural vigour

and consolation to those who embrace it. Certainly its Author's promises are of the highest order. "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint." If this be true, if strength more than human, and endurance above nature, be guaranteed by the Author of our religion to all who heartily embrace it, then, if we profess and call ourselves Christians, we should not be content without *experiencing* these secret refreshings in our own souls, when we are in trouble, nor without *exhibiting* their reality in our superior tranquillity and patience. We should be concerned to "glorify the Lord in the fires," and seek that "Christ may be magnified in our bodies, whether in life, or in death." Our patience in tribulation, and calmness under approaching dissolution, may "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour," and show that Christianity is not a vain thing, but that it is our life, and can cause us to triumph in Christ amid the pains of suffering and expiring nature. His grace is sufficient for us to this end; and therefore we should give the more earnest heed to wait on him, that we may have it,

and "have it more abundantly." That it is obtainable, we are certain from *facts* as well as from Scripture. "Blessed" now "are" multitudes of "the dead who died in the Lord," and who, ere they died, were enabled, through protracted sufferings, to display "the patience of the saints." What *they* did through grace, *we* may do also: and therefore let us habitually *seek* "grace so to follow their good examples, that with them we may be partakers of the heavenly kingdom."

SERMON XIV.

PROV. xxviii. 26.

“He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.”

THE truth of this maxim might be shown in various ways. On the present occasion I will endeavour to illustrate it from the experience of St. Peter.

It must naturally be shown, first, that Peter did trust in his own heart: and, secondly, that, in the strong Scripture expression, he was a fool in so doing. Afterwards, the whole subject will give occasion for some suitable remarks, which may the Lord make useful to all present.

It must be shown, first, that Peter did trust in his own heart. “Heart” here means courage, resolution, firmness: and a person’s “own heart” means a person’s *natural* courage, as distinguished from the courage inspired into him *supernaturally*

by the special supporting grace of God. Now Peter trusted in his *own* heart, in his *natural* courage, as is plain from the account given of him in Scripture. Let us survey a little what is there said of him.

He was, evidently, in his natural character, a warm-hearted, bold, prompt, decisive man—sincerely attached to Christ, and quick, even to hastiness, in making declarations of his attachment. He “verily thought with himself” that nothing could shake that attachment, or make him draw back from avowing it, and proving it by his behaviour, under whatever circumstances of personal danger. He had no suspicion of inconstancy in himself—no notion that such a heart as he had could possibly fail him. See how this appeared in his vehement declarations in the garden. “Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But Peter said unto him, Though all should be offended, yet will not I. Jesus saith unto him, I tell thee, Peter, that this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice thou shalt deny me thrice. But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise.” You see here no reference to supporting grace—you see here no consciousness of his need of it. What he trusted in was his own

heart. He would not believe *that* would fail him, though Christ himself had solemnly told him twice over that it would. He "made his Lord a liar" through excessive self-confidence.

And now observe, secondly, what "a fool" his self-confidence made him. Recollect, Christ spoke these warning words to him in the garden of Gethsemane, and recollect that they were soon followed by the admonitory caution, "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." Recollect further, that Christ had but lately given him the alarming intimation, "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." When he had been twice told by the Lord of his danger that very night, and twice admonished, first, that Satan was near, and desirous to have him; and, secondly, that he must watch and pray lest he should fall into his temptations; we should have thought that, under such circumstances, Peter would have trembled, Peter would have watched and prayed, at least for the few short hours previous to the predicted critical period of cock-crowing. But no—Jesus the Lord watched and prayed, and "was heard in that he feared." "Blessed is the man that feareth always." "There appeared to Jesus an angel from heaven strengthening him." But no angel strengthened Peter; for he vainly thought himself strong enough in his own good resolutions.

Hence, while Jesus prayed, Peter slept. While the Master trusted in God, the disciple "trusted in his own heart." Oh, he was "a fool." He securely dreamed away that precious "small moment," when he should have been invoking strength from above; and the difference between spending those few hours in prayer and in sleep soon appeared in the different deportment of Christ and Peter at the crisis of trial. When the traitor and his band arrived "with lanterns and torches and weapons," Jesus, tranquillized by prayer, and strengthened by grace from on high, though "knowing all things that should come upon him," yet calmly "went forth," with a manner and voice so dignified and heavenly, that it threw over the armed band an irresistible awe—"they went backward and fell to the ground." We see in the Saviour no passion, no impetuosity, no violence; and also no alarm, no irresolution, no timidity. We see in him a quiet submissive brave gentleness more than human. He was "kept in perfect peace with his mind stayed on God:" and was "strengthened with such strength in his soul," that he was enabled to "set his face like a flint," and not give Satan the smallest advantage over him under all his trials.

How different the case with self-confident, watchless, prayerless Peter! Just awakened out of his sleep, he is all confusion and indiscretion. He

sees his Lord surrounded with fiery faces and threatening bands, and, with more zeal than judgment, has immediate recourse to carnal violence. "Having a sword, he drew it, and smote a servant of the High Priest, and cut off his right ear." This was the momentary bravery of animal excitement. It soon gave way to animal fear. "He trusted in his own heart," but he was "a fool" in so doing. It deceived his confidence. He saw the armed band lay firm hold on Jesus, notwithstanding his own petty valour: and alarmed lest he himself should be arrested with his master, along with the other ten he "forsook him and fled."

However, his "heart" returned to him in some degree. No doubt, his conscience reproached him for his cowardice, and he resolved to make good his promises of adherence to his Master. So he "followed him," but "afar off." However, he followed him, "even unto the High Priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants," round a fire, "to see the end" of his Lord's trial.

And now Peter was tried himself, not by the High Priest, but by the High Priest's servants. They presently put his courage to the proof. "There cometh unto him one of the maids of the High Priest; and when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked earnestly upon him, and said, 'This man was also with him. And he *denied* him before

them all, saying, Woman, I know him not." Here was the *first* failure of his trusted heart. It seems to have disquieted him, as well it might. So "he went out into the porch," "and the cock crew." That sound would not add to his comfort. He seems to have heard it, and to have gone into the palace again with fresh good resolutions. Let us see how trustworthy his heart was this time. "After a little while another maid saw him, and began to say to the servants and officers that stood by, This fellow also was with Jesus of Nazareth. And Peter again denied it with an oath, and said, I do not know the man." Here his heart failed him a *second* time. However, he remained in the palace, perhaps flattering himself he should now be safe from any further challenge. But "about the space of one hour after, another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him, for he is a Galilean. And they that stood by came unto him, and said again to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto, and bewrayeth thee." *This* was sufficiently embarrassing; but a *new* challenger appeared, who completed his confusion. "One of the servants of the High Priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Then Peter," terrified at the danger to which he should be exposed, if he

were discovered to be the person who made the attack on the High Priest's servant, "denied it again" more violently than ever: and, that he might not be questioned any more, he "began to curse and to swear, saying, I *know not* this man of whom ye speak." "And immediately, while he yet spake, the second time the cock crew." "And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and when he thought thereon, he wept bitterly." He wept bitterly as he thought on his ingratitude, his hard-heartedness, his lies, his dissimulation, his cowardice. He wept bitterly as he contrasted his "great swelling words" with his mean disgraceful conduct. He wept bitterly as he recollected how he had been puffed up with an invincible self-conceit—how he had contradicted his Master's prophecies; despised his warnings; thought scorn of his brethren; concluded any of *them* might be cowards, but *he never*—how he had neglected watchfulness, slept when he should have prayed—fought when he should have suffered—shrunk when he should have been foremost—and thrice abjured with imprecations his blessed Lord, when he had vehemently promised, and was distinctly called upon, to confess him openly. Oh! he wept

bitterly, as he thought on his own audacious words, and his turning Master's gentle look.

Surely he would make the reflection in the text, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool!" At all events this is the first reflection *we* ought to make, after hearing his painful story. We lose the proper benefit of one of the most affecting occurrences recorded in Scripture, if we do not learn from Peter's fall an impressive lesson against *self-confidence*. And we *want* an impressive lesson against a "sin that does so easily beset us." Surely, however, such a lesson we *have* in the history before us. Let us remember *who* it was that fell—no common man—no common *Christian*—but *Peter*, a chief, not to say the very chiefest Apostle. *He* was weak. Howbeit whereinssoever any of us is bold, Peter was bold also. Are we sincerely attached to Christ? So was he. Have we long cleaved to Christ? So had he. Have we openly confessed Christ? So had he. Have we a full persuasion that nothing would induce us to draw back from Christ? Peter had more. He was as sincere as possible in thinking he would die with his Lord sooner than deny him. And yet he *thrice* denied him with words—with oaths—with imprecations. "Lord, what is man?" Yea, brethren, what are the best of us, left to ourselves? What is our

boasted strength, but weakness? How *can* we trust to our good resolutions? How *can* we be more resolved than Peter was? Yet *he* fell—fell rapidly, foully, scandalously. “Wherefore let him among us that thinketh he standeth, take heed, lest he fall.” He is the *more* likely to fall for thinking he standeth. “Pride *goeth* before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” So “be not high-minded, but fear.” “Ponder,” says Solomon, “the path of thy feet.” We may be supplanted before we are aware, through our lofty eyes and incautious walk. We have a subtler than Jacob laying snares for us: and if, through self-confidence, we are high-minded and have proud looks, in any moment of fancied security our feet may be taken. “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.” When we are “exalted above measure,” he leaves us to “the messenger of Satan to buffet us,” that we may *not* “be exalted above measure,” but may be taught humility, even though it be at the expense of a fall. Peter had often before shown himself over-forward and self-confident. Who can say, whether any thing less afflictive than his disgraceful fall would have brought him to thorough humility and self-distrust? It is just in God, when we think we can walk without him, to let us try till we get a fall. We are seldom thankful for his supporting hand, till we have found by painful experience, that we cannot

stand, much less *walk*, without it. Grievous and unseemly falls, if any thing, give us a *practical sense*, very different from a *speculative acknowledgment* that "our strength is perfect weakness." Surely Peter would never trust in his own heart any more, after *such* an experience how it had befooled him. Happy are we, if we will learn his after self-distrust, without his prior fall. But if we will not, circumstances will certainly arise to pull down our self-flattering imaginations, and convince us that *our hearts* are no more to be trusted than Peter's was. "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." *Our heart*, therefore, like Peter's, beyond a doubt, "is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." We may not believe this, till we make the discovery by experience. I doubt whether Peter was as sincere a believer in the depravity of our nature before his fall, as he was afterwards. Perhaps some of us now have as little practical persuasion of our native wickedness, as Peter once had. If so, we may, possibly, find it out, not doubtfully but certainly, by, alas! too palpable proofs of it in our own conduct. "Conduct has the loudest tongue;" and if we will not believe, from the still small voice of God's word, how corrupt we naturally are, he may leave us to ourselves, till our misconduct thunder our depravity into the very ears of our soul. Some persons are not to be taught but

SERMON XIV.

by their own experience. Pity that we should shame to teach us modesty, and humiliation to teach us humility. However, we must be brought to "become as little children, or we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven:" and when other methods fail of bringing us to this dependant spirit, we may, perhaps, be brought to it, by finding we have the *weakness* of children. And how are we to find this, but by having the *falls* of children? If therefore we are "proud in heart," we have every reason to anticipate speedy humiliation in our own eyes, by falling into sins of which we little believe ourselves capable. Our present seeming security is no guaranty of our being in the same self-complacent state a few hours hence. Peter was as self-secure as possible of his Christian integrity but a very short time before "he cursed and swore that he knew not the man." It is one thing to "flatter ourselves in our own eyes;" quite another to approve ourselves by our own conduct. It is one thing to promise, another to perform—one thing to be bold before battle, another to be brave in it, and another still to get well through it. It was a good message of Ahab's to boastful Benhadad—"Tell him, Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off." Let us wait for the issue of the combat, and then we shall see who "quitted themselves like men and fought." Ah, brethren,

we know not what we are till we are tried, and then we know that we have no might, no courage. "Being harnessed and carrying bows, we turn ourselves back in the day of battle." It is surprising, it is shocking, at *how little* we turn. It is quite humiliating to think how soon "the fear of man bringeth a snare" upon us. Valiant as we may have seemed to ourselves in private, how do we shrink from confessing our Saviour openly! How will we dissemble and cloak and even disavow our connection with Christ, that is, with Christian persons and Christian sentiments, when we perceive that they are under the world's frown, and that it will involve us in the world's displeasure, to acknowledge and abide by them! How will we be silent or equivocate in presence of worldly people, for fear of their ridicule and evil eye! How little is there in us of the spirit of Moses, who "esteemed the *reproach* of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt!" How ungrateful we are, how slow to "render" unto our blessed Redeemer "according to the benefit done unto us!" For our sakes "he gave *his* back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; he hid not *his* face from shame and spitting." But we hide *our's* from any indignities for *his* sake. Rare are the persons among us who are willing to be "vile" for the Lord; who are prepared to put their worldly reputation and even

their life in their hand, and constantly confess Christ, and abide the consequences! Some of us may seem to be very brave Christians in presence of only Christians, and when Christ is in reputation. *Thus brave* had Peter been for three years, and upwards. But when he saw Christ arrested, tried, condemned, mocked, buffeted; and saw himself in danger of the same treatment, if he owned himself a disciple of the despised Nazarene; *then, then* he trembled, dissembled, and became all but an apostate. We must be put in a little of *his trial* before our Christian courage can be *proved*: and when it is put to the proof, how often, how disgracefully often, does it appear, that though we “endured for awhile,” when there was little or nothing to hinder us from enduring, yet, “when affliction or persecution” is to be encountered by us “because of the word,” “by-and-by we are offended.” We are ashamed of Jesus. “Though he is not far from every one of us,” we fear a few worldlings more than him; and love our own safety and reputation more than his cause, his honour, his approbation. Thus often do many of us “in time of temptation,” that is, of trial, “fall away.”

And what is the *reason*? What was the reason that *Peter* fell away? Because he *trusted in his own heart*, and had not “watched unto prayer.” A prayerless man *may* have *animal* courage, courage

enough to march up to the mouth of a cannon : but a prayerless man *can not* have *spiritual* courage, no not courage enough to face a laugh at his religion, much less to endanger his worldly all for Christ's sake. A man must have *faith* in the *promised* glories of the world to come, before he will cast the *sensible* glories of the present world behind his back, and have the constancy to *keep* them there. Now faith is wrought and cherished in the soul by the Holy Spirit in answer to prayer. "Lord, increase our faith," is the prayer of all those who obtain grace to "confess with their mouth the Lord Jesus," and to "follow him fully" in trying circumstances. Natural courage may avail us for natural struggles, but we need supernatural courage for supernatural struggles. And the struggles which Christians have to make are supernatural. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore," continues the Apostle, "take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand." Brethren, brethren, Satan desires to have us, that he may sift us as *wheat*, and he *will* have us, if our faith fail. And how shall it *not* fail, if we restrain prayer before God? If it fail not altogether, assuredly it will

so *decline* as to give Satan fearful advantage over us. We have seen that *even Christ* was carried through his temptations only by "pouring out supplications and prayers, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared." And we have seen that *even Peter* was *not* carried through his temptations, because he had previously neglected to "watch and pray." With such examples before us of the *opposite* consequences of prayer and no prayer, we cannot be ignorant wherein our only safety lies. Tempted we shall be, as surely as Christ and Peter were. Our adversary the Tempter "is not dead, nor sleepeth." On the contrary, "as a roaring lion he walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. Whom resist," adds the Apostle, "stedfast in the faith." But whence is our stedfastness in the faith to come, but from on high? Jesus said to Simon, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." If *our* faith fail not, it must be through the alone efficacy of the same Saviour's intercession above—it must be entirely through his "strengthening us with might by his Spirit in our inner man." And when he has taught us by his words and by his example, to "watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation," are we presumptuous enough to think he will secure us from temptation, when we indolently omit watchfulness

and prayer? Let us go, in spirit, to the High Priest's hall, and there we shall see a sight that will check any such presumption. Look at that Peter who had slept when he should have watched, and had "trusted in his own heart" when he should have prayed; and there you see him paying the dreadful penalty of his self-confident negligence—there you see him caught in the snare of the Devil, becoming entangled worse and worse in the toils of sin, and, but for an injured Saviour's mercy, involved in inextricable ruin. Such was the precipice to which a chief Apostle was brought through neglect of prayer. And are we *stronger* than he? "No, in no wise;" probably *weaker*. But weak or strong, "comparing ourselves among ourselves," without "Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith" through prayer, "we can do nothing" but sin. Whereas, through prayer, "his strength can be made perfect in our weakness." So certain is this, that

"Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees:"

but, on the contrary, he is not without good hope of circumventing and surprising a prayerless *Apostle*. 'That Lord,' says Bishop Reynolds, 'who out of very weakness ordains strength, also out of presumed strength permits weakness; and as he can make the mouths of babes and sucklings to confess

him, so he suffers the mouth of an Apostle, a Peter, to deny him: showing in both the dependance of the strong as well as the weak on his goodness: the strongest Apostle being not able without his sustaining grace to confess him; and with it the weakest infant in the street being enabled to cry Hosanna unto him.'

Let these considerations, my brethren, teach us the absolute necessity there is for our holding communion with God in Christ, if we hope to escape "the wiles of the Devil." And when we think how powerful he is to tempt, and how weak we are to be tempted; and when we further think into what keen misery and imminent danger he might craftily lead us step by step; oh, it should be a cheering counter reflection to us, that we have, through prayer, the means of bringing to our aid an *all-sufficient* Guardian and Friend. How mad are those who miss of such a Keeper through their wilful neglect of prayer! How they "forsake their own mercy!" Let us cry to him, with his humble Psalmist, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." "Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not."

But are there some here, whose footsteps *have* slipped? Are there some here, by whom Christ has been "wounded in the house of his friends?"

Are there some here, who, having professed, and known, and done, and intended to continue doing, better things, have been "overtaken in a fault," through their own carelessness and the wiles of the Devil? Are there some here, who, having not watched, nor prayed, nor kept under their body, nor brought it into subjection, have "fallen away like water that runneth apace," till they have been "ashamed of Christ and of his word," till they have denied their principles, and till they have renounced their piety? It is probable some such *are* here. Unhappily, backsliders are not so rare, but they may be met with in almost any numerous congregation. *You*, then, whose conscience is now saying, Thou art the man, Thou art the woman, do *you* hear me a few words, and may the Lord rivet them on your souls.

There is *hope for you* in this melancholy history of Peter's fall. You are backsliders—so was he; perhaps as bad a one as the worst among you. Yet "the Lord turned, and looked upon him." So *your case is not desperate*. The same merciful Lord may turn and look upon *you*. He *does* look upon you this night. *He is here*, and by his providence he brought *you here* to meet his eye. He looks upon you with compassion. O "look upon him whom you have pierced, and mourn." Look

upon him whom you have crucified afresh, and “be in bitterness.” “Peter went out and wept bitterly.” You have imitated his crime: imitate his repentance. Think on what you have been doing—“consider your ways”—meditate on the many aggravating circumstances of your guilt—afflict your souls under the remembrance of it—confess it frankly and fully before God—endeavour deeply to feel and deplore it—pray to be more truly “pricked in your heart”—and, lastly, be persuaded that through this very Saviour, whom you have so denied, is nevertheless “preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him, if you believe, you *are justified from all things.*” Take the *comfort* of this, if you are truly penitent, and “go and sin no more.” Rather, like Peter, “when you are converted strengthen your brethren.” You can never enough evince your gratitude to that gracious Lord, who, “when your foot had slipped,” of his infinite mercy “held you up.”

But let none *abuse* this useful history, of Peter’s fall and Peter’s restoration. For a backslider to be *restored* is good, but for a person *not to backslide* is better. It is best of all not to sin, and next, to amend upon punishment. The uses we should make of this instance of Peter’s fall have been already stated in the words of St. Paul—“Thou

standest by faith: *be not highminded, but fear.*”
“Let him that thinketh he standeth, *take heed lest he fall.*” What Augustine said of *David's* fall we should take to *ourselves* as we meditate on this of Peter's—“Let those who have not fallen hear, that they fall not; and those who have fallen, let them hear, that they may rise again. Peter is not recommended as an example of falling, but as an example of rising again after a fall.”

SERMON XV.

I TIMOTHY vi. 6—12.

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called."

THIS passage is so connected, and so important, I could not prevail on myself to do otherwise than lay the whole of it before you. It requires nothing but the simplest illustration, and the grace of God to enforce it on our hearts. The subject cannot

but be looked upon as very suitable to the present season* of mortification of sin, and to the present circumstances of the community in general, among which there is a great deal of poverty and scarceness of money, and therefore a great deal of temptation to discontent, covetousness, and unlawful means of obtaining property. Under such circumstances we should be very thankful to have the cautious and instructions of the Lord our God, given us by the voice of his inspired Apostle. Let us listen therefore to St. Paul "speaking to us from the mouth of God," and seek to profit by his divine and friendly admonitions.

In the verse before our text he had been cautioning Timothy against certain "men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who supposed that gain was godliness," or (as it should rather be translated) "who supposed that godliness was a scheme for gaining," a plan for making money, and getting forward in the world. There are such men now, who suppose and give out that the religion and piety of their neighbours is only a cloak for dark designs, to obtain confidence and custom and profit by it. But such men, by their base insinuations, only shew their own corrupt mind, or they would not be so ready to impute corrupt motives to their more upright neighbours. They are them-

* Preached in Lent.

selves "destitute of the truth," conscious of a readiness to deceive confidence placed in their integrity, if they saw an opportunity of doing so to their own worldly advantage; and hence, from being unprincipled themselves, they suppose there is no principle in anybody; and that *religion* ensures no more conscientiousness than *expediency* does. They have no notion of a principle so high and upright as will make a man "swear unto his neighbour and disappoint him not, though it be to his own hindrance." This lofty Christian integrity "is far above out of their sight." They know and betray that they have it not. Hence they are improper companions for sincere Christians. "From such," says the Apostle to Timothy, "withdraw thyself."

But if godliness was not gain in *one* sense, that is, in a worldly, money-getting sense, it struck the Apostle that it was gain in *another and far higher* sense, even "great gain," especially when taken along with its *proper* accompaniment, *a contented mind*—"godliness with contentment is great gain." Contentment without godliness is gain, as respects this world; and godliness without exact contentment is gain, as respects the world to come; but "godliness with contentment is great gain;" because the contentment secures happiness here, and the godliness secures happiness hereafter: therefore a godly

man, with a contented mind, has, and will have for evermore, “a continual feast.”

Contentment without godliness “is gain,” as respects *this* world: for there may be, and is, a sort of contentment without godliness. You may meet with persons who would decidedly be called, who account themselves, and who, in a qualified sense, are *contented*: and yet they could not be said to be *godly* persons. They have no real fear of God before their eyes—no real love of him in their hearts. Their contentment does not rest upon religious principle, but upon natural constitution favoured by outward easy circumstances. Just as some persons are *born* with an indolent, and others with a passionate, so these are born with a contented disposition. And not having been fretted and soured in early life, or disquieted and harassed immoderately as they have gone through life, they *remain* contented. And their contentment, though without godliness, “is gain,” as it respects *this* world. They pass through the world with much less pain, and abundantly more enjoyment, than many of their neighbours, who, with as little godliness as themselves, have far more discontent, and therefore far less pleasure.

Also, godliness without exact contentment “is gain,” as respects the *world to come*: for there may

be, and is, godliness without exact contentment. There may not be godliness without a fair and increasing degree of contentment. Habitual and prevailing discontent is absolutely inconsistent with godliness. A person of such discontent would show that "his heart fretted against the Lord," and was not submissive. The great trial of the religious principle, that is, of divine grace in the heart, is in its resistance to, and gradual triumph over, inbred sinful tempers and propensities. Now some persons shew their natural sinfulness more in one way than another. The natural sinfulness of some persons particularly shews itself in a sort of perpetual restlessness and dissatisfaction with all about them. Discontent may be said to be in them an easily-besetting sin. And if it be, and they be converted by the power of God and the grace of Christ, and be renewed in the spirit of their mind by the Holy Ghost, still discontent lingers as "a sin that dwelleth in them." The grand difference is, that whereas they once dwelt in discontent, now discontent only dwells in them—dwells in them too, no longer as an allowed indulged friend, but as "an enemy in their habitation," at whose gradual expulsion they shall never cease to aim. But no native evil disposition is hastily expelled, nor, in general, fully and finally expelled till this body of sin is taken down by death, and every "fretting leprosy" purged out

of it in the dust. Hence there is many a godly man, many a true convert and sincere Christian, who has to struggle with a *naturally* discontented disposition to his life's end. His unhappy temper not a little interferes with his enjoyment in *this* world; but still his *godliness*, without exact contentment, "is gain," as it respects the *world to come*. For, when his natural frame shall moulder into dust, the dregs of discontent will vanish with it; and then his *godly spirit*, set free from "the bondage of corruption," will find itself *indeed a gainer* before the throne, for having, through grace, maintained on earth an uncompromising struggle with "the lust of the flesh."

"But godliness *with* contentment is great gain." A man is happy as he feels himself to be so. His happiness does not depend so much upon his outward circumstances, as upon his inward feelings. What happiness therefore can compare with *his*, who, as a *godly* man, "has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," and, as a *contented* man, is satisfied with "the portion of goods that falleth to him" from his heavenly Father? Such a happy man was St. Paul. When he said, "godliness with contentment is great gain," he said so from his own experience. For hear how he speaks to the Philippians, iv. 10—"I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished

again ; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in respect of want : for *I have learned*, in whatsoever state I am, to be therewith *content*. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound : every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Surely the Gospel was "great gain" to him, when it had imbued him with such godliness, and, through godliness, with such contentment. You observe, contentment is a feeling *to be acquired*. St. Paul says, he had "learned" to be content. But not learned without godliness. He says he learned contentment "through Christ strengthening him." And yet he went through extraordinary hardships, and had more natural causes for *discontent* than any of us can have. We see therefore how powerful will be the secret grace of Christ in overcoming our corruptions, and enabling us to learn the hardest lessons, if we will but "trust in him at all times, and pour out our hearts before him, for he is our help." We, through our littleness of faith, may never learn contentment as perfectly as the Apostle did. But no one can pretend to set bounds to what we can do "through Christ strengthening us."

Let us aim therefore first at godliness, and then, through godliness, at "being content with such

things as we have." For why should we "seek great things for ourselves?" "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." "Naked came we out of our mother's womb, and naked shall we return thither." The Lord gave us our property for life, and the Lord will take it away at our death. Why then should we be anxious to "lay up treasures" which we must soon leave? And still more, why should we wish to amass property, in order to indulge the foolish vanity of thinking we shall leave somebody a handsome fortune? This is the disposition and conduct of mere worldlings: and "this their way is their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings." Men of property continue, on that account, to be the admiration of "men of the world;" and even the godly man is tempted to look upon them with too favourable and envious an eye. But hear, "O man of God," what God says to thee on this subject in the xlixth Psalm, verse 16—"Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, and when the glory of his house is increased; for when he dieth he shall carry nothing away with him, neither shall his pomp follow him. Though while he lived he counted himself an happy man, (and so long as thou doest well unto thyself men *will* speak good of thee;) he shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light. Man that is in honour, and

understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish." Who, then, would envy "the ways of them who are greedy of gain, which taketh away the life of the owners thereof?" "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of those things which he possesseth."

"Having therefore *food* and *raiment*, let us be *therewith* content." The pious servants of God in all ages have been very moderate in their desires after this world's goods. Jacob's language in his vow was, "If thou wilt give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on." Agur's petition was, "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord; or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain." And you perceive our Apostle's exhortation is to the same effect—"Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content." No sincere Christian therefore need be *discontented*; for he has an express *promise* of food and raiment from the Lord himself, who said, "Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? for after all these things do the Gentiles seek: and your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be *added* unto

you." If, therefore, we *believe* the Lord, and *labour quietly* in our lawful calling, we need be under no apprehension of wanting food and raiment. He who fed and clothed Israel in the wilderness for forty years, can be at no loss how to feed and clothe us. He feeds the sparrows, and clothes the lilies: and "we are of more value than many lilies and many sparrows." We should exercise *implicit* faith in the God of *providence*, especially if we have found Him the God of *grace*. If he has been "the Father of our spirit," and made us "his children by faith in Jesus Christ," it cannot be doubted but he will "spread a table before us in the wilderness," and provide for all our earthly real wants. "He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Then let us trust him for the future, and be thankful and contented with our present supplies. Let us not hanker after a degree of wealth which God, by his providence, does not seem to have intended for us. Let us "take heed and beware of *covetousness*:" for what says our text? "They that *will be rich* fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil." When it says, "They that will be rich," the original means, "They that *wish*

to be rich;" they whose hearts are set on getting rich; they, in short, who are *lovers* of money. It is not money itself, but the *love* of it that is so hurtful. Many are born rich, or become rich by inheritance, or by the blessing of God upon their lawful exertions, and honest diligence: and these are not criminal in *possessing* riches. "Abram was *very* rich in cattle and in silver and in gold." Yet Abram was "the friend of God." It is not therefore wealth, but the love of it, and the coveting after it, which is so dangerous: for, says the Apostle, "they that *will* be rich," that *long* to be rich, that are *set* upon becoming rich, "fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown them in destruction and perdition." And who can deny the truth of this declaration, that either knows by experience the seductive, ensnaring, injurious nature of a spirit of avarice when it has unawares stolen upon himself; or that watches the conduct of others who are evidently under the influence of a hankering spirit? Indeed we have awful instances in the word of God how "the love of money is the root of all evil," and how it plunges those who indulge such a spirit "in destruction and perdition." Balaam, for profit, would have *curse*d Israel; God forced him, however, to bless his people, and then left his people to *slay* him for his avarice. Achan coveted some

of the wealth of Jericho, and *stole it*, contrary to God's express command; for which therefore he was *stoned*, with all his family. Ahab coveted Naboth's vineyard, and committed *murder* to obtain it; for which the *dogs licked his own blood*. Gehazi would be rich, and therefore *lied* to obtain Naaman's money: for which "the *leprosy* of Naaman *clave* unto him, and to his seed for ever." Nay, the love of money, of merely thirty pieces of silver, made the heart of Judas Iscariot *absolutely hard*, and "*full of evil*," till he betrayed his Lord and Master with a kiss; for which he afterwards *hanged* himself, and falling *headlong*, he *burst asunder* in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out—as if God would mark even on his dead corpse his anger against his abhorred avarice.

It would be easy to point to Balaams and Achans and Gehazis of *modern* days: but it is unnecessary. You know, and every magistrate and every observant person in the earth knows, that "the love of money is the root of all evil," and leads to every species of crime and consequent suffering.

And avarice has this destructive effect not only upon ignorant, inconsiderate, worldly characters, but even upon the *professors of religion*. You observe the Apostle adds, "while some coveted after money, they have *erred* concerning the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." With

such sorrows were Ananias, and Sapphira, and Simon Magus, and Demas pierced, and numbers in later days, who, after their example, have “coveted an evil covetousness,” and have thereby “made shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience.” It is awful to remark, how undue regard to worldly profit blinds the understanding, warps the judgment, biases the affections, hardens the heart, and corrupts the conduct, of those from whom better things were to be expected. Bitter is their self-reproach, if they are awakened by the Spirit of God to see the iniquity of their past conduct; and, even if they have the grace of repentance, and much more if they have it not, do they, sooner or later, find themselves “pierced through with many sorrows.”

Such, then, being the ensnaring nature and, oftentimes, the fatal effects of “the love of money,” not only to mere *worldly* people, but also to promising *religious* characters, St. Paul immediately adds to Timothy, and in Timothy to every godly person, “But *thou*, O man of God, *flee* these things” —flee this uncontentedness with present property—flee this hankering after more—flee this love of money which is so baneful in its influence upon conduct, mind, and soul—“and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called.”

The love and active pursuit of *spiritual* treasures is the proper way to overcome the love and active pursuit of *worldly* treasures. We are *made* with affections, and we must set them on something: we are *made* with energies, and we must devote them to some active pursuit. Also, we are connected with *this* world by our *flesh*, and with the *next* world by our *spirit*. And we may either set our affections supremely on things above, or set our affections supremely on things on this earth: but we cannot set our affections supremely on the things of *both* at the same time. In a word, "We cannot serve God *and* Mammon." The *love* of money is absolutely irreconcilable with the *love* of God. They are opposite affections. The love of money chains down the heart to earth: the love of God lifts it up to heaven. Hence our Saviour says, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven;" "*for* where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Our heart cannot be in earth and in heaven at the same time. Hence we should *flee* those thoughts which set the world and its treasures before us in an attractive point of view, lest they beguile us into a persuasion that they are real treasures, and so worth setting our hearts upon. We should "keep our hearts with all diligence" against indulgence of discontent with what we have,

and of craving for what we have not, of this world's good. If we spend our chief time and thoughts and desires about such worldly matters, we shall contract worldly habits of thought, and be incapable of rising to spiritual and heavenly meditations.

Our wisdom, therefore, and our Apostle's exhortation, is, that we should "*flee these things*;" "and," turning from the inordinate pursuit of worldly gain, "follow after" those holy dispositions, and pious habits of soul, which alone are "the true riches."

This world is transitory with all its seeming treasures. If a man have no other treasures but those of earth, when he dies he has *lost his all*, and enters into the eternal world a naked and impoverished spirit, with *nothing to take to*, and no hope, no possibility of obtaining any thing, for ever and ever. He bitterly "remembers that he in his life-time received *his good things*," and now "he is tormented," not only with the hell around him, but with the hell within him—the gnawing never-dying worm of remorseful consciousness, that he spent his day of grace on earth in gaining a little of the world, and now has lost his soul and is a castaway. And "what can he give in exchange for his soul?" Nothing. He has nothing to give. "When he died he could carry nothing away with him." He lost his all. He has nothing left with which to indulge even a ray of hope of repurchasing

his soul. On entering the world of spirits he feels himself a *bankrupt for eternity*; and “at once he sinks to everlasting ruin.”

But not so “the man of God” who dies in possession of “the true riches,” the riches of holy dispositions, and pious habits of soul—the riches of “righteousness, godliness, faith (that is, fidelity), love, patience, meekness.” *These* are riches which he *carries away* with him. *These* are riches from which he can *never* be separated. They are part of himself: they are riches with which the grace of God endowed him; and they are riches which he will use and enjoy for ever in the presence of God. They are the sort of riches, the only sort of riches, he sees around the throne: yea, they are the riches of *God himself*. “God is a spirit,” and his holy dispositions and habits (if we may be permitted so to speak of God) are his riches. He is rich in righteousness—rich in faithfulness—rich in love—rich in patience—rich in meekness—rich in every spiritual endowment. Such riches are part of himself, an essential portion of his glorious nature.

These, then, my brethren, are indeed “the true riches.” These holy dispositions, these benevolent tempers, these upright habits, are the soul’s treasures *worth* our laying up. They make us *like* unto God—they prepare us to *live* with God. No wonder, therefore, that these were the riches after which

St. Paul urged Timothy to *follow*. Yea, these were the riches after which *Jesus Christ himself* followed, "leaving us an example that we should tread in his steps." O look at the spirit and behaviour of our adorable Lord. Look at him, the Son of the Most High God, born in a stable, cradled in a manger, a carpenter in his youth, a wanderer in his manhood, not having where to lay his head: yet where do we find in *his* spirit or language or conduct a *trace* of dissatisfaction or discontent? or where do we find the *smallest* hankering after the money or possessions of this fleeting world? So little treasure had *he* laid up on earth, he had to work a miracle to pay his tribute-money. And yet *his* were the riches of the universe. Himself *made*, and *gave* them all. But, as *our Example*, he took none for himself, nor therefore wished for any. The love of money was not in him. "Having food and raiment, he was therewith content;" and *would not* be rich, even though, *as a man*, he was *tempted* by Satan with an offer of "the world and all its glory."

But worldly wealth had no charms *for him*. *His* great soul was set on spiritual and heavenly treasures. He was *rich indeed* in all holy, gracious, wise, and charitable affections. Such dispositions were all he prized, were all he sought, were all he commended. He gave us a perfect pattern of

a man living as a contented stranger and pilgrim on earth for awhile, but having his home, his treasure, his heart, in heaven.

And he would have his followers of the same temper as himself. His sublime encouraging exhortation is, "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the *kingdom*. Sell that ye have, and give alms: provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth." So that he exhorted the poor to contentment, not to repining and covetousness; and the rich to liberality, not to luxury or avarice. His object was to induce both to set their hearts on *spiritual* riches, and to raise them *above* anxiety or eagerness about little or much treasure here below. He reminded them of a promised *kingdom* and *eternal life* in the world to come; and sought, by engaging their affections to those, to draw them off from corroding care about the present world.

And the great Apostle had *himself* imbibed his Lord's spirit, and earnestly animated *Timothy* to follow after the same spirit. "Fight the good fight of faith, *lay hold on eternal life*, whereunto also thou art called." And he charged *him* to charge *others* to the same effect. For as he had said, "Having food and raiment, let *us* be therewith content," even if we seem comparatively *poor*; so

he added, "*Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy: that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.*" You see, the *laying hold on eternal life*—the grasping the promise of *that* with believing hand, and keeping firm hold of it with tenacious faith—was the *grand* point of which the Apostle, like his Lord, never lost sight, and which he was so earnest to inculcate upon others, to inculcate upon *us*.

Then let us seek to "set *our* affection on things above, and not on things on the earth." And here "let our conversation be without covetousness, and let us be content with such things as we have: for He hath said, I will never, no, never leave thee nor forsake thee."

But forasmuch as we are not *able* of ourselves to *have* or to *retain* this heavenly-mindedness, let us pray to God, through the mediation of our Lord and Saviour and Advocate, for the gift of the Holy Ghost, to "put into our minds good desires," to "mortify our members which are upon the earth," and to "draw up our minds to high and heavenly things." Let us read and meditate on the Scrip-

tures, on the future "riches in glory" which they offer to obedient believers, and on the steadiness with which patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and Jesus Christ himself, overlooked terrestrial wealth, and had their eye and heart set on ~~the~~ treasures of the world of spirits. By much dwelling on their blest examples, we shall catch somewhat of their spirit, and be animated to walk in their steps. And let us "watch and pray that we enter not into temptation," by running ourselves into needless difficulties, to the producing of discontent; or by entangling ourselves with unnecessary business, to the producing of carefulness and perhaps of covetousness. But let us endeavour to "walk circumspectly," and to "let our moderation be known unto all men." So shall we take the right steps to have peace above, and peace within, and to be in the perpetual enjoyment of that "godliness with contentment, which is great gain."

SERMON XVI.

EPHES. vi. 5—9.

Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him."

THE religion of the Lord Jesus Christ is not a speculative, but a practical religion. Moreover, it is not a religion intended for one class only, but for all classes, of society. Nor is it so much designed to regulate their behaviour in extraordinary cases, as in the common intercourse of life. It comes

home every day to every person's business and bosom. It is a thoroughly useable and useful blessing, like every other bounty which "the only wise God" has bestowed upon us.

When therefore we consider how large a portion of mankind are immediately connected with one another under the relation of master and servant, we are not surprised that the proper line of behaviour should be marked out to *each* of these parties in that blessed Gospel which is of a character so eminently practical. Accordingly, various admonitions and exhortations both to servants and masters are scattered throughout the book of God, especially throughout the Epistles of the New Testament, which Epistles contain the last and clearest revelation of the mind and will of that Great Being "with whom we have to do." These scattered instructions it is my purpose and wish to collect and set before you. My office is that of "a steward of the mysteries of God:" and my desire is simply to dispense to both masters and servants among you the stores of wholesome truth which superior wisdom and opulence have provided in the Scriptures. May it please the Lord to give us "grace to speak and hear meekly his word, and to receive it with pure affection, and to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit."

We will take the text as it stands, and make the discourse upon it a sort of expository lecture.

And this will lead me to speak, first to you who are *servants*; and afterwards to you who are *masters*.

I turn, first, to you, my friends in this congregation, who are in the situation of *servants*, whether of a higher or a lower order. I apprehend *you* form a large proportion of the persons here present before God on the Lord's day evening, and I feel some shame at never having particularly addressed you from the pulpit before, during my ministration of more than two years. Now therefore may the Lord enable me to "give you also your portion in due season," and speak that which shall be "good for the use of edifying." You servants form a very numerous, and a very conspicuous, and a very important class of the community. You are in every, or almost every house, and you affect the order and comfort of every family with which you are connected. Also, you constitute that class of society in which, perhaps, the largest proportion of truly pious and exemplary characters is to be found. I know that the contrary is often asserted, and the class of servants accused and disparaged; but I think unjustly, all things considered. There is probably a greater proportion of pious characters among *you*, than among any other class of equal numbers. Your situation, when you are in tolerably well ordered families, is very favourable for your religious impression and growth in grace. You are

in that condition for which Agur prayed, when he said, "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord; or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain"—that is, forswear myself, to obtain money by unprincipled perjury. In general, you have full, but not excessive employment; and are not preyed upon by the cares and anxieties of money-getting schemes which eat up the spiritual-mindedness of so many of your employers. In general also, you are restrained—providentially and happily restrained, I would have you to think—from the idleness and dissipation of many of your superiors who have more wealth, and wrongly suppose they have more time, to spare than you have. Your situation naturally leads you to be very much "keepers at home," which is a great preservative and a great blessing. And since most of you have been favoured with a tolerable education; had your understandings somewhat cultivated; good books, especially the Holy Scriptures, put into your hands; and frequent opportunities allowed you of coming up to this house of the Lord, and of being, I hope, taught the truth as it is in Jesus; putting all these things together, you are, as I said, favourably circumstanced *for* religious impression and growth in grace. And some of you, I know, and many of you, I trust, *are* impressed

with vital godliness, and *are* growing in knowledge, and piety, and holiness, after the example of your eminent fellow-servants in the early ages of the Christian Church. Judging from the Apostolic writings, it would appear that *you* were a very considerable body in the best and purest churches; and St. Paul and St. Peter in particular seem to have had an eye of special attention and kindness to you, a fatherly anxiety for your comfort, and a tender solicitude that, having “received Christ Jesus the Lord,” you might “walk worthy of him unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.” You are mentioned in their Epistles more frequently, I think, and more at length, than any other class of persons; as if the interests of Christianity, and the honour of the Lord Jesus Christ, were *peculiarly* committed in your department. And indeed there are few sights more pleasing to Christ, more beautiful to the spiritual eye, or more affecting and winning to worldly observers, than the daily walk and conversation of pious, faithful, modest servants. Their exemplary conduct has arrested the attention and touched the heart of many a thoughtless master and mistress, who have first seen the lovely outlines of the lovely character of the Lord Jesus in the behaviour of His and their servants. Consider, then, my brethren, you who are in service—consider in what a number

of families you serve—consider how many and what observant eyes are upon you in those families, and how influential your demeanour may be upon them—and say, Does not your heart burn within you with holy desire to “let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven?” If so, hear how his holy Apostle St. Paul exhorts you to behave; and while you hear, may the Holy Spirit open your hearts to attend to his godly admonitions, and give you grace and power to profit by them and practise them throughout your future life. Thus, then, saith the Lord—“Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good-will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.”

Let us consider a little more particularly the force of these several exhortations. “God is not the Author of *confusion*, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.” God *created* and *appointed* the different *ranks* of society, and he will have them *supported*. Hence the religion of his dear Son Jesus Christ is not a *levelling* religion. It does

not tend to *overthrow*, but to *establish*, under new and most powerful sanctions, the different relations of life. "Christ's kingdom is not of this world," and does not interfere with the well-ordered regulations and laws of society. The Gospel of Jesus Christ takes the world as it finds it ordered under the moral government of his Holy Father, and only furnishes new principles to uphold that order. The relations of *authority* on the one side, and *subjection* on the other, between magistrates and subjects, between parents and children, between husbands and wives, between masters and servants, are *natural*, that is, *providential* relations. The Gospel *supposes* these to exist by the awful appointment of "God only wise," and sets itself to *confirm* them by its peculiar and touching sanctions. Its *general* language is, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers; for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." Consequently, its *particular* language in the case of servants is, "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling," that is, with holy awe and heartfelt reverence. You may no more be disobedient to the lawful commands of your *masters*, than you may to the commands of *God*. In their lawful commands your masters are in the place of God to you: they derive their authority from God: God

speaks to you by them : and as you would be obedient to *God*, “with fear and trembling,” if he spoke to you by an audible voice from heaven, with the same awful reverence must you “be obedient to your *masters* according to the flesh,” whatever lawful commands they lay upon you. In *their* voice you must accustom yourselves to hear the voice of the great God who *made* them your masters, and you must give them reverence as his earthly representatives. So enjoins the holy Apostle in the text—“*Servants*, be obedient,” not only unto your Master in heaven, but “to your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling.” And so enjoins St. Peter also. For having said, “Honour all men ; love the brotherhood ; fear God ; honour the king ;” he adds, “*Servants*, be subject to your masters with all fear.”

And, on your part, this subjection must be absolute in all things lawful, notwithstanding unreasonableness or harsh treatment on the part of your superiors. “Be subject to your masters,” says the inspired Apostle, “with all fear ; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man, for conscience toward God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently ? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is accept-

able with God. For even hereunto were ye called," namely, patiently to bear ill treatment notwithstanding good conduct—"because that Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." Consider how good He was, in that He "took upon him the form of a servant;" and what good He did, in that He "went about doing good" to our froward race. "He was among them as one that served," always waiting upon his inferiors, and doing them service; and yet how bitterly he suffered "without any offence or fault of his." "He was wounded for *our* transgressions, he was bruised for *our* iniquities:" and yet how patiently "he gave his back to the smiters, and his checks to them that plucked off the hair; he hid not his face from shame and spitting." "When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth rightcously." Herein the Redeemer of servants was also the godlike Pattern for their imitation. And **they** will often need to remember and copy his patient goodness. There are many hardships inflicted on **you** servants by inconsiderate and cruel masters and mistresses; but faultiness in *their government* will not justify faultiness in *your obedience*. You must be subject for *conscience* sake, "in singleness of your heart (adds the text) *as unto Christ*," having a single eye to *his* example,

to *his* command, and to *his* glory. You must endeavour, that the world in general, and your harsh masters in particular, may see that “the *love of Christ* constraineth you” to bear patiently for *his* sake that unjust treatment which you *would not* have borne patiently on *any lower principle*.

Thus, if you be *Christian* servants, you must “be obedient with fear and trembling” to *unchristian* masters. But what if you have *Christian* masters? must you “be obedient to *them also* with fear and trembling?” “*So hath the Lord commanded.*” When *Christian* servants consider their *high spiritual* calling as “the Lord’s freemen,” Satan may tempt them to forget their *low natural* calling as men’s servants—he may tempt them to consider themselves not only on a *spiritual level* (which they *are*), but also on a *natural level* (which they *are not*) with their “masters according to the flesh.” *Some professing* *Christian* servants, because kindly treated by their *Christian* masters with brotherly love, become presuming, disrespectful, and disobedient. This is altogether wrong: this is using “their” *spiritual* “liberty for an occasion to the flesh,” instead of “by love *serv*ing” their masters. Brethren, lest any of you, who are servants to *Christian* masters or mistresses, should so far forget yourselves, as to think that your *spiritual* equality gives you liberty to behave as though you were

their natural equals also, hear what St. Paul says in 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2—"Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of *all honour*, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have *believing* masters, let them not *despise* them, because they are brethren; but *rather* do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things (says he to Timothy) teach and exhort." So then, my Christian brethren in service, the circumstance of your masters or mistresses being your brethren or sisters in Christ, and on a spiritual "equality with yourselves, is so far from *relaxing*, that it *tightens* the bonds of your obedience to them—which obedience, on your part, must *still* be "with fear and trembling," with respect to *reverence*—with diligence and heartiness, with respect to *love*—"in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ," with respect to your *motive*.

And this leads me to remark, next, that you are exhorted to be obedient "not with *eye-service*, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart"—"with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free."

The Lord Jesus wishes you to act from *high*

and *grateful* and *spiritual* considerations. He would have you affectionately bear in mind that “you are not your own,” but *His*; “bought with a price,” the price of his most precious blood, bought off from the service of the Devil, the world, and the flesh, bought to be his servants, and serve him in the different situations in which *his* providence has placed you. He would have you shew your gratitude for his mercies by obeying those whom *he* has set over you, with the *same* fidelity and goodwill, as though you were doing him *personal* service. Indeed he promises to *consider* all service done to masters, for his sake and according to his Father’s revealed will, *as* so much service done to himself. He thus graciously puts you in possession of the true philosopher’s stone, which was supposed to turn every thing which it touched into *gold*. He opens to you a way of turning your most common, and trivial, and, otherwise, mean occupations, into so many acts of honourable service to himself. It is the heart of the doer, rather than the thing done, which he respects; and if you go through your daily work with him in your thoughts, designing his glory, and wishful to express by good conduct your gratitude and love, *then* the least thing you *so* do is pleasing in his sight; and you, in your humble sphere of life serve him with as much present acceptance, and with as sure and plentiful a reward

in reversion, as do those who serve him in higher spheres of life. To the servant who, having two talents, went and traded with the same and made them other two, was said, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," just as much as it was said to him who had five talents, and made them other five. The Lord Jesus, therefore, desiring that "you should plenteously bring forth the fruit of good works, and of him be plenteously rewarded," is earnest with you to cherish in your hearts those feelings of love and gratitude to himself, and of respect to the commandments of his Holy Father, which feelings alone can *consecrate* your actions, and make them *spiritual* services. He would have you rise superior to earthly considerations. He would not have you obeying your masters with "eye service as men-pleasers," true to their interests and fulfilling their commands just so long as their eye is upon you, and no longer; and desiring their approbation, and nothing further; but he would have you "obey them, not in their presence only, but, if possible, much more in their absence," because *He Himself is never absent*, and he would have you obey your lawful masters with the same single-eyed, undeviating, thorough goodwill and faithfulness as if you were obeying *Himself*.

Such is the spirit of his exhortations to you servants in the text. His exhortations to you in

other places are to the same effect. I will recite two of them, and so close this address to *you*. First then, in Col. iii. 22, he thus speaks by St. Paul—“Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh ; not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God. And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men ; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance ; for ye serve the Lord Christ : but he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong that he hath done : and there is no respect of persons.” The only other passage I will quote is that rich and full one in Titus ii. 9—“Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things ; not answering again ; not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity ; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world ; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak and exhort.”

I would now turn, in the second place, to you, brethren, who are *masters*, and set before you the Apostolic exhortation—"And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening; knowing that your Master also is in heaven, neither is there respect of persons with him." The corresponding passage in Col. iv. 1 is, "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven." You perceive, the exhortations to you masters are neither so numerous, nor so long, nor so particular, as to your servants; because you are supposed to be better informed than they, and therefore to stand less in need of copious detail of instruction. Accordingly, you are furnished with general principles of behaviour towards your servants, and it is left upon your intelligent conscience to apply them in particular cases, and to regulate your ordinary deportment with reference to them. Let us consider these general principles a little more at length.

"Ye masters," says the Apostle, "do the same things unto them"—that is, "give unto your servants that which is just and equal." And what is just and equal? Why, brethren, if your servants are enjoined to "obey you in *all* things with fear and trembling," it is "just and equal" that you should rule over them with the "meekness of wisdom." In all things lawful they are enjoined

obedience to you as unto God. If therefore you *are* unto them in the place of God in point of *awfulness* and *authority*, you *should be* unto them in the place of God in point also of *equity* and *goodness*. If he have clothed you in your servants' eyes with some portion of his *terrors*, you should seek to put on also a large adornment of his *loveliness* and *grace*. "The Lord is *good* to all, and his tender *mercies* are over all his works." "The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the *father* of mercies, and the God of all *grace*." "Be *ye* therefore gracious, as your Father which is in heaven is gracious." Be considerate for the weakness and infirmities of your servants, and rule them not with a rod of iron. It was with such a rod that Pharaoh, the type of Satan, ruled over the enslaved Israelites, and awed their broken spirits. "All his service wherein he made them serve was with rigour." Such tyranny is odious in the eyes of the Lord, being altogether contrary to his benevolent and beneficent sway. Hence, in Levit. xxv. 39, he says to Israel, "If thy brother be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee; thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bondservant, but as an hired servant: for they are *my* servants, which I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: they shall not be sold as bondmen. Thou shalt *not* rule over them *with rigour*, but thou shalt fear thy God." If, then, a redeemed *Jew* might not rule

with rigour over his redeemed brother-Jew, much less may a redeemed *Christian* rule with rigour over his redeemed fellow-Christian.

You, therefore, my brethren, who are masters and mistresses, I beseech you by the tenderness of God, and “by the meekness and gentleness of Christ,” rule over your servants with kindness and Christian love. “Be pitiful, be courteous;” be considerate for their comfort; be attentive to their wants—be patient toward their failings; be merciful to their faults. “He shall have judgment without mercy that hath shewed no mercy.” Be not ye therefore hard-hearted, unreasonable, and severe in your exactions, or your censures. Christian servants are the Lord’s freemen: you may not treat them like slaves. Therefore be moderate in your orders and requirements, and scrupulously punctual in giving them a full reward for their labour at the proper time. For thus saith the Lord, in Deut. xxiv. 14, “Thou shalt *not oppress* an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of the strangers that are within thy gates: *at his day* thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it: for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee.” Such conduct *was* sin to inconsiderate or unjust masters in St. James’s time; for he says, “Behold, the hire of the labourers who

have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, *crieth*: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." And he says in Mal. iii. 5, "He will come near to you to judgment, and will be a swift witness against those that oppress the hireling in his wages." "Wherefore, masters," says St. Paul, "give unto your servants that which is just and equal."

You observe also he says, "forbearing threatening," or, as the emphatic original is, "letting go the *menace*," the common, the harsh, the brutal, and brutalizing menace, which mistaken man is so reluctant to let go, fancying he cannot command without it, though it is suitable only from a tyrant to a slave—from a Nebuchadnezzar to a herd of servile idolaters. The violent threat, the sharp, reproachful, abusive address of any kind, is utterly unbecoming the master of a house, unless he would resemble Nabal, of whom it is said, in 1 Sam. xxv. 17, that "he was such a son of Belial, that a man could not speak to him." And severity of language is by no means *necessary* to the maintenance of authority. Look at the behaviour of the blessed Jesus among his disciples. Where do we find him menacing them? and yet, though he "forbore threatening," he had them in easy, indeed, yet perfect and profound subjection.

And *now*, masters, he is *your Master* in heaven, and say whether “his yoke on you is not easy, and his burden light.” If so, let your yoke and burden be the same upon your servants. “Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.” Be not imperious, passionate, or unreasonable; but rule for Christ, and like him. And oh bear solemnly in remembrance, that the relation between master and servant can be, at longest, *but for a little while*. We are all fast hastening to a state wherein the relations of this lower world will be for ever at an end. You who are Christian masters and Christian servants are *brethren in spirit* even now, and ere long you will be brethren *altogether* before the throne of your common “Master, even Christ.” Now therefore “be all of you subject one to another, and be clothed with humility.” What your rank may be in this preparatory world of trial, it matters not, with respect to *eternity*. Your rank here will not in the least affect your rank hereafter. The orders of society in this nether world are occasional and pass, and serve for the trial of our spirit in passing. Our place in the bright world above will not be determined by the place we held in this, but by the laborious faithfulness to Christ with which we fulfilled the duties of it. Hence the meanest servant on earth, who was, in his assigned station, a servant of Christ, may be seated by him in a distinguished

place in heaven : for “ He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and make them inherit the throne of glory.” Be it your care, therefore, ye Christian masters and servants, so to associate in this world, as that you may help one another on to an eternal association in the world to come. Have Christ your common master steadily in your eye : move forward toward him, each in your proper line ; and you will at last meet in him, as your common centre ; “ where there will be neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free : but Christ will be all, and in all.”

SERMON XVII.

MATT. v. 7.

“Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy.”

THERE can be no doubt that selfish, unkind, malignant feelings are natural to the human breast, through the fault and corruption of our nature. “We are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” This is evident from the *Scriptures*, from *observation*, and from *experience*.

It is evident from the *Scriptures*—from scripture *history*, and from scripture *statements*—both of which “were written for our learning,” by the unprejudiced unerring hand of God, who knows us better than we know ourselves. How immediately did human bitterness shew itself after the Fall! How affecting, that of the first man that was ever born it should be written, “Cain rose up against

Abel his brother and slew him!" Here was the root of bitterness: and soon did it spring up, and trouble the whole earth: for *cruelty* it was, which drew down the wrath of God on the world before the Flood. "God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with *violence* through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth." But, in the new world, "the imagination of man's heart was still evil from his youth;" and we find the Scriptures still complaining of his natural unkindness. David prays against the ungodly as "unrighteous and cruel men;" and says, "they breathe out cruelty," and that "the earth is full of darkness and cruel habitations." Solomon declares that even "the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." And so feelingly convinced was his royal father of the natural cruelty of the human breast, that when he was in his "great strait," he said, "Let me now fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercies are great; and let me not fall into the hand of man." He durst not trust his fellow-creatures. Such is the language of the Old Testament about our native malignity: and the language of the New is not less humiliating. "Ye are evil," said our Lord. And again he said, "From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, murders." When St. Paul describes the Gentile world, in the 1st of Romans, his awful

climax is, "They are implacable, unmerciful." When he turns to the Jew, he speaks of "his hardness." When he sets forth the universal state of fallen man, as man, he says, "Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes." And lest we should flatter ourselves that this is a description of certain notorious sinners, not of ourselves, he immediately adds, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law"—for what purpose, brethren? "that *every* mouth may be stopped, and that *all the world* may become *guilty* before God." If therefore we attempt to deny our natural bitterness of disposition, we only betray our want of self-knowledge or ingenuousness, and contradict the Scriptures, and those holy men who, when they were enlightened and converted, made full acknowledgment of their former vicious state—"we ourselves also" (says St. Paul to Titus) were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another."

We have heard, then, the *Scripture* account of our natural selfishness and unkindness of disposition.

And is not the account corroborated by our own *observation* and *experience*? What says *observation*? Look at the development of unmercifulness in a child, a boy, a youth, a man. See how he will first torture an insect, or ill treat an animal; and afterwards oppress his companions and fellow-men, according to his opportunities and ability! Is not the earth filled with violence now? Can you go into any lane of any street of any town of any country, where “the wicked cease from troubling”—where you shall not “hear the voice of the oppressor, nor the deep sighing of the poor?” Would not the Christian eye and ear and heart be everywhere pained with sights and sounds proclaiming man’s unmercifulness to his fellows?

And what is our *experience* of “the devices and desires of our own hearts?” Who is not *conscious* of native selfishness, hardness, unkindness, cruelty? Who have not *felt* their natural propensity to be unmerciful in their thoughts, remarks, and behaviour, to those connected with them? “Do ye think that the *Scripture* saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?” and lusteth to consequent bitterness and wrong?

Our Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, knowing our

proneness to be unkind, and studying to draw us to a better spirit, says in the text, "Blessed are the *merciful*"—blessed are those who break the ice of their native *selfishness*, and melt in holy pity over those who are in trouble—blessed are those who subdue their *passion*, lay aside their wrath, and exercise clemency, forbearance, and generosity—blessed are those who take no unkind *advantage* of the destitute and friendless; who do not "go beyond nor defraud their brother in any matter;" who are not severe in their exactions, stern in their looks, harsh in their language, merciless in their punishments; but who behave with compassion to the afflicted, with gentleness to the provoking, with mildness to the blameable, and with mercy to the fallen—"blessed are these *merciful* persons," says the Lord Jesus, "the Word of God," "God manifest in the flesh."

And oh! how *weighty* is his benediction on the merciful, when you consider how it is supported and exemplified in the character of God, and of his dear Son, "in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." If there be one aspect more than another under which "the blessed and only **Potentate**" commends himself to our contemplation, it is under the aspect of a *merciful* God. This was the very first of his titles when he would proclaim himself before Moses. "The Lord passed by,

and proclaimed the name of the Lord, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful." The song of songs in his temple was, "For his mercy endureth for ever." His inspired peumen seem even to *labour* for words whereby to set forth this particular attribute. "I knew," said Jonah, "that thou art a merciful God." Lot says, "Thou hast magnified thy mercy." David speaks of God's "great mercy"—a "mercy great unto the heavens"—yea, "great above the heavens."

He speaks again of "the multitude of God's mercies"—of his "tender mercies." He speaks of his being "plenteous in mercy." Nehemiah celebrates God's "manifold mercies." And, strong as is this language of the Old Testament, St. Paul's is stronger still. He speaks of God as "rich in mercy;" and to sum up all in one insurpassable word, he calls him "the Father of mercies."

Such is the character of our God—the character under which he is specially proposed for our *imitation* by Christ himself—"Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father which is in heaven is merciful." "Blessed are the merciful," because they are like the merciful God. "He displays his Almighty power most chiefly in shewing mercy and pity." It is for tyrannical *man* to "boast that he can do mischief: whereas the *goodness of God* endureth yet daily." His mercies "are new every morning." "His tender mercies are over all his works."

“He is kind to the unthankful and the evil:” and as to pious characters, “Like as a father pitieth his own children, even so is the Lord merciful unto them that fear him.” What a debtor to his mercy is every one here present! “By him have we been holden up ever since we were born. He it was who took us out of our mother’s womb.” “The God of our mercies” “has prevented us with the blessings of goodness” all our life through. How has he pitied our weakness, and helped our infirmities! How has he consoled us in trouble, and relieved us in distress! How has he guarded us in danger, and saved us from ten thousand snares, many of which we have since seen, and seen that we should have been miserably entangled in them, but for our heavenly Father’s preserving care! Again, how has he borne with our provocations, and multiplied pardons to us! And how has he chastised us less than we deserved, and “in wrath remembered mercy!” But, above all, how can we be thankful enough for “the bowels of mercy of our God, whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death; to guide our feet into the way of peace!” See how “the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward us men appeared!” He, so far from being selfish, “spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for

us all." So far from seeking the hurt of his fallen creatures, "he set his heart on us to deliver us, and laboured" how to be "a just God and yet our Saviour." So far from taking advantage of our sinful, impenitent, helpless state, he "shut us all up in unbelief"—why? that he might take vengeance? nay, but "that he might have *mercy* upon all." So far from taking pleasure in revenge, and exulting to see his rebellious subjects perish, "God *so loved* the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life: for God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." Look at Jesus agonizing in the garden, and dying for our sins on the shameful and accursed tree; and say whether "our song" to the Lord should not "be of mercy" as well as "judgment"—mercy to us, judgment to our Substitute. "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, that by his stripes we might be healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord laid on Christ the iniquity of us all." "He suffered, the just for us the unjust, that he might bring us to God." "Herein," then, "was love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son

to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." If we have met with so rich mercy at the hands of our heavenly Father, who are we, that we should be unmerciful to our brethren? "*Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father which is in heaven is merciful.*" "*Blessed are the merciful.*" These were the words of One who well knew his Father's mercy, and was himself the messenger, medium, preacher, and *pattern* of it.

For, would we contemplate the mercy of God in the clearest manner, we should view it shining forth *in the Lord Jesus*, "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person." If we interpret mercy to mean *compassion*, who was ever like Jesus Christ, "who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the Devil?" Look at him in *public*—"when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion toward them." Look at him in *private*—"when he came near to the gate of Nain, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her." He wept over his *friends*, over "Martha and her sister and Lazarus: behold how he loved them." He wept also over his *enemies*, over "the bloody city," over his thirsting murderers—"when he was come nigh,

he beheld the city and wept over it." If mercy, then, be interpreted to mean *compassion*, who was ever so compassionate as the Lord Jesus? Or, if mercy mean *forbearance* under injuries, *forgiveness* of trespasses, *pardoning* love, *sparing* mercy, oh, how merciful was Christ in these respects! Look at "the Lord of glory" rejected by the Samaritan village, with a rudeness that roused the anger of his apostles James and John, who would have called down fire from heaven on the insolent villagers. "But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And he went to another village." What a pattern of forbearing mercy!

Look at him again reviled, mocked, spit upon, smitten on the cheek, crowned with thorns, and crucified. "When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not." "He loved his enemies, blessed them that cursed him, and prayed for them that despitefully used him and persecuted him." "Father," (he said) "*forgive* them: they know not what they do."

And when he was risen from the dead, and *all power* was given him in heaven and in earth, like Joseph, he bore no malice, nor hatred in his heart: he retaliated no injuries on his faulty brethren. He was particular in first sending to Simon Peter,

and afterwards appearing to him, to assure his penitent Apostle of his pardoning mercy. And “when he ascended up on high, he gave gifts unto men, yea, even to his *enemies*.” “Unto *you first*,” said Peter to the Jews, who “with wicked hands had crucified and slain him,” “unto *you first*, God having raised up his Son Jesus, hath sent him *blessing* you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.” Even Paul, “who was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious,” “obtained *mercy*,” “that in him first”—in him “the chief” of sinners, as he reputed himself—“Jesus Christ might shew forth *all* long-suffering, for a pattern to them who should afterwards believe on him to life everlasting.”

Whether therefore we regard the character of God, or of Jesus “the image of the invisible God,” we see it to be *merciful*. And since the perfection of man cannot but be in *resemblance* to his Maker, “Blessed are the merciful”—whether they be compassionate and kind to those who are in trouble; or mild and considerate to those who are in fault.

But let us mark next, *why* our Lord pronounced them blessed—“Blessed are the merciful; *for* they shall *obtain* mercy”—mercy from *God*, and mercy from their *fellow-creatures*.

They shall obtain mercy from *God*. But shall they obtain mercy from God *in consequence* of their

first being merciful to their fellow-creatures? Oh no—none *can* be merciful in deed and in truth, till God has first been merciful to them. We are all unmerciful by nature, as we have already shown : and should the Lord wait for our becoming merciful, ere he shewed his mercy upon us, we should all perish. Therefore “he prevents,” that is, anticipates, “us with the blessings of goodness.” He teaches us mercy by being merciful to us. He lets us “taste” “how sweet is his mercy” to ourselves, and then says, “Shouldest not thou also have compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I have had pity on thee?” It was thus he dealt with St. Paul and the Ephesians. “God,” says St. Paul to them in the 2d chapter, “God, who is rich in mercy, of his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and raised us up together, and hath made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ—that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves : it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast : for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *unto* good works, which God before ordained that we *should* walk in them.” “I therefore the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you

that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.” “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and evil-speaking be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another; even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” Yes, my brethren, it is a heartfelt experience of the mercy of God to ourselves which must lie at the foundation of our mercifulness to our fellow-creatures. We must be “the elect of God, holy and beloved,” before we can “put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering.” We must experience “the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour,” before we, who are by nature “living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another,” can come to be “full of mercy and good fruits.”

It is not therefore *our* being merciful to one another which is the first procuring cause of *God’s* being merciful to us. No—as he “will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and as he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion,” so a consequent merciful disposition in ourselves “is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy”—who, of his free

grace, pleases to "take away" from his chosen ones "the heart of stone," and to "give them a heart of flesh."

When therefore our Lord says, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall *obtain* mercy," we must consider his words as a *declaration* what sort of characters shall obtain mercy at his hands in the last day, and even here on earth. He does not mean to say that any *natural* men are merciful, and *because* of their mercifulness shall obtain mercy of the Lord as a *reward*; for then their salvation would be "of works," and "they would have whereof to boast" in heaven, viz. that they came thither on account of their natural goodness of heart, and habitual mercifulness of disposition. But all boasting is excluded from heaven. Salvation is of free grace, of mere mercy, and not for mercifulness on our part. Even *were* we altogether merciful, still "when he have done all," our Lord bids us say, "We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do." But the truth is, we are unmerciful by nature, merciful only through grace: and our Lord in the text meant to say, Blessed are they whom *God hath gifted* with a merciful disposition; "for they shall obtain mercy." Their having so excellent a frame of soul *proves* them to be "sons of God," "born again of the Spirit," "created in Christ Jesus unto" the same gracious

affections which showed forth themselves in him. Therefore “blessed are they ;” for God has endowed them with such a disposition, that they may *know* that they belong to Christ, and shall find mercy at his hands in that day, “because as he is, so are they in this world.”

But *further* blessed are they, because, through grace, they are endowed with the very disposition *to which the promises are made*. The promises are made to the *merciful*: these persons, through grace, *are* merciful; and therefore are “heirs of promise.” Mercifulness is one of the Christian paths in which they walk, because it was “before ordained that” the heirs of mercy from God “should walk” in the paths of mercy to man. Blessed therefore are the merciful, because “they have the witness in themselves” that they shall obtain mercy. St. Paul was urgent with the Hebrews to abound in the fruits of mercy, *in order* to assure their hearts of their interest in “the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” “Beloved (says he) we are persuaded things of you that accompany salvation”—or, in other words, we are persuaded that you will obtain mercy. But on what is our persuasion grounded? On our observing the kind and merciful disposition which you have been enabled to display—we are persuaded that God “who hath begun a good work in you,” by giving you a

merciful heart, "will perform his good work unto the day of Jesus Christ," by continuing to you the same temper, and so *fitting* you for recipients of final mercy—"for (he proceeds) God is not unrighteous to forget your *works and labour of love* which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence" in exercising a merciful disposition, "*to the full assurance of hope* unto the end." Blessed, then, are the merciful, in that "they have the witness *in themselves*" that they shall obtain mercy.

Once more, blessed are they, because they are enabled to bring forth those fruits of mercy which, being done through faith in Christ and by the inspiration of his Spirit, are pleasant to God and also *rewardable*. Blessed 'are they who are so melted by the mercies they have received, that they are constrained by holy gratitude to be kind and merciful to all around them. Though their deeds of mercy are the effects of grace, "the fruits of the Spirit," still they are blessed in those deeds: and though they should "give only a cup of cold water" to a needy brother, "because he belonged to Christ, verily," they are assured by Christ, "they shall in no wise lose their reward." "The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus (says St. Paul); for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of

my chain : but, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently and found me. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day." And no doubt, blessed is Onesiphorus, for he shall obtain mercy, and be rewarded at the judgment-day according to his works. Thus, the merciful shall through mercy obtain mercy in the last day of the merciful Lord, whose they are, and whom they served, and whom they resembled.

But they shall also obtain mercy of their *fellow-creatures*. Mercifulness "has promise of" meeting with mercy from *men* in "the life that *now is*, as well as" with mercy from God in "that which is to come." For so our Lord has said, who "knew what was in man," and was perfectly aware what would be the consequences of certain modes of behaviour. He has assured us, that what mercy we would that men should shew to us, the way to procure it is to shew even the same to them. Accordingly, in Luke vi. 36, he thus speaks, "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged : condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned : forgive, and ye shall be forgiven : give, and it shall be given unto you ; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosoms. For with the same measure

that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again."

In conclusion, therefore, brethren, *examine yourselves* whether you are merciful. *Reflect* what has been your disposition and general way of behaviour to persons and creatures about you." Solomon says, "a good man is merciful even to his beast;" because a good man has in him the Spirit of the Lord, "who is good to all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works." Consider, then, whether *your* past life goes to prove, that you have in you the merciful disposition of your merciful God. Because, if you can be cruel even to your beast, much more if you can be severe, unkind, pitiless, merciless, to any of your fellow-creatures, "you have neither part nor lot" in the blessing of Jesus pronounced in the text. Beware, therefore, how you become oppressors of those under your power, or "with force and cruelty rule over" your dependants. Beware, ye rich and ye overseers, how ye "answer roughly" to "the poor when he crieth, to the needy, and them who have none to help." Beware, ye masters and mistresses, how you "deal hardly" with your servants, your workmen, or your apprentices. Beware, ye parents, how you "provoke to wrath" the children of your own bodies. Yea, let us *all* beware how we indulge unmerciful thoughts,

express unmerciful judgments, and do in any wise unmerciful deeds to any of our neighbours. "Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us? how then should we deal unmercifully any man against his brother?" O how terrible is that sentence in St. James—"He shall have judgment without mercy that hath shewed no mercy." What must become of our never-dying soul, should "judgment without mercy" proceed against it? Hear how David prays, "Enter *not* into judgment" at all "with thy servant, O Lord; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." How would he, then, have deprecated "judgment without mercy?" He does deprecate it. "If thou, Lord," he says, "shouldest be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it? But there is mercy with thee." Much more, then, should there be mercy with us. Forgiven ten thousand talents, shall we "take our brother by the throat" for one hundred pence? Not unless we would incur the sentence, "O thou wicked servant." Let all therefore strive and pray against that severity of disposition, remarks, and conduct, which is so offensive to our heavenly Father, because so contrary to his own amiableness and benignity toward ourselves, and so utterly unbecoming our situation as entire dependants upon his rich and free mercy for all that we are, have, or hope for. On the contrary,

let us “walk in love, as Christ also loved us, and gave himself for us, an offering, and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.” “By this,” he says, “shall all men know that we are his disciples, if we have love one toward another.” Our knowledge of his goodness should make us merciful. “Beholding” in the Scriptures, “as in a glass,” his tender-heartedness, “we should be changed into the same image.” We should learn to be merciful sons of “the Father of mercies.” *Nearness* should produce *similarity*. “Behold,” said Benhadad’s servants, “we have heard that the kings of Israel are *merciful* kings.” *Even Ahab* had caught *some* kindness from the God of Israel. When therefore we are privileged to contemplate, in all their glory, “the kindness and love of God our Saviour,” much more should *we* “learn mercy,” “keep mercy,” and “love mercy”—especially when we have these two exceeding great and precious promises, “With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful;” and “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.”

SERMON XVIII.

ROM. vi. 21, 22.

“What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.”

THE service of sin is really painful, and the service of God is really blissful. Both these assertions can be thoroughly and variously proved to be true; but, perhaps, there is no way of proving them, so convincing, as an appeal to the experience of those who have tried each service in turn. Such persons must be more competent to speak than those who have known only one service, whether the service of God, or the service of sin. Those who have happily known the service of God only, can have but an imperfect notion of the sorrows endured by

the slaves of sin: and the homeborn slaves of sin can have still less idea of the pleasures enjoyed by the servants of God. But when persons "*were* the servants of sin, but have obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine delivered unto them," then, having known both the way of sin, and the way of holiness, and formed a judgment of each, not in their dark, but in their enlightened state, such persons are best able to give a testimony deserving of our attention. Now the Roman Christians to whom St. Paul wrote were witnesses of this description. They had for some time lived to sin, and then they had lived to God. They had tried the satisfactoriness of each method of living in succession, and the Apostle confidently appeals to their experience, whether the service of sin would bear a comparison with the service of God. "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

These words naturally lead us to consider two things—First, What fruit persons have, while they are slaves to sin; and Secondly, What fruit they have, if they are made free from sin, and become servants to God.

These considerations will prepare the way for an application of the subject ; which may God bless to our use, for his dear Son's sake.

We have to consider, First, What fruit persons have, while they are slaves to sin.

This is certainly the *first* inquiry suggested by the text. "What fruit had ye *then*?" When? This must be gathered from the preceding verse. "When ye were the servants (or, as the original is, the slaves) of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye *then*?" that is, at the time when ye were the slaves of sin.

So our first proper inquiry certainly is, What fruit persons have, *while* they are slaves to sin. "Fruit" means advantage, profit, pleasure, enjoyment: and the question is, Whether *any* satisfaction, and if any, what *sorts* and *degrees* of it accrue to those who are living in sin.

Now that *some* satisfaction accrues to them, cannot be disputed, either from Scripture, or from fact. The Scripture speaks of those who "*enjoy the pleasures of sin*:" and that persons *do* enjoy them is manifest both from observation and experience. Who is there here that has not enjoyed them? We cannot deny our own feelings, and we have felt sin to be pleasurable. There is no one here who has not felt sin to be pleasurable. For there is no one here who has not sinned, and

sinned repeatedly : and it was the pleasurable-ness of sin that constituted its temptation, both at first, and afterwards, and, in fact, constitutes its temptation now. Why did we indulge in any particular sin for the first time, but because we thought it would prove pleasant ? And it did prove pleasant. If not, why did we indulge in it again, and again, and again ? Even if we have suffered for indulging in a particular sin, why have we continued to indulge in it, perhaps up to the present time, but because the pleasure of it is *still* greater to us than the pain ? We do not indulge in any sin *under the notion* of its being painful, but under the notion of its being pleasant. Nobody ever committed a sin, tempted to do so by the pain of it. No—it is the pleasures of sin, enticing, enjoyed, and continuing to be enjoyed, that did at first, do now, and always will, make it a temptation to our fallen nature. Hence, I say, it cannot be disputed that *some* satisfaction accrues to persons who are living in sin : what *sorts* and *degrees* of it, we have now further to inquire. “*What fruit had ye then ?*” inquires the Apostle.

There are many *sorts* of pleasurable sin. “Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like,” are so many sorts of

sin, all pleasurable to the body of sin, or to the fleshly mind, or else they would not be committed. Most of them are pleasurable to most persons at most times ; and each of them is pleasurable to some person at some time. All the sins that are in the world have their seasons of attractiveness and seductiveness, or they would not be in the world at all. But certain sorts of sin are particularly enjoyed by certain persons at certain times. Those sorts, which any of us are conscious of our having particularly enjoyed, have been “the fruit” which we have had. They have been the tastes which have gratified our natural palate—the delicacies on which our “flesh” has fed with the greatest satisfaction.

And now we have to inquire after the *degree* of that satisfaction. “*What* fruit?” inquires the text ; that is, *how good* fruit, had ye? What was the extent and amount of the gratification you had from sin? Was it much, or was it little? Was it long, or was it short? Did it increase, or diminish, every time of repetition? And were your afterthoughts on it agreeable, or otherwise?

We must reflect on these points each for ourselves ; and on them depends the determination of *what degree* of satisfaction *we* have had from sin. That we have all had a considerable degree of satisfaction from it is probable, but some of us more than others. Scripture speaks both of men and

women who "live in pleasure." Many of you have probably "lived in pleasure" hitherto, and are living in it now: and I should only seem and be absurd, if I went about to prove to you, that living in pleasure means living in pain. You cannot be argued out of your own experience; and, I doubt not, you have experienced very considerable pleasure in the ways of sin. You have had a real and perhaps exquisite satisfaction, of a certain kind, in gratifying "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life;" it would be vain either for you or me to pretend that you have not. You are conscious that, as it is said in Job, "wickedness has been sweet in your mouth, and you have hid it under your tongue: you have spared it, and not forsaken it, but kept it still within your mouth." And so, if the Apostle come to *you* with the inquiry, "What fruit have *you* had in the ways of sin?" you are prepared to answer, You have had *some*—you have had a *considerable deal*—you have had many *sorts* of "pleasures of sin"—and very much you *enjoyed* them in various *degrees*.

And yet his question, "*What* fruit had ye?" *implies* that you have had *none*. When he put this question to the Roman Christians, he put it *triumphantly*, under the certainty they would reply, they had had *none*. And St. Paul was not liable to be mistaken: and yet human experience is much the

same in all ages. How, then, should the Roman Christians have had no fruit in the ways of sin, and you have had much? Is sin different in its nature now from what it was then? or are you different in your nature now from what the Roman Christians were in their nature then? Neither. The nature of sin and the nature of man remain equally unchanged. And the explanation of your having enjoyed sin, while the Roman Christians are supposed by the Apostle to have had "no fruit" of it, is this—he attached a *particular meaning* to the word "fruit." He meant *lasting advantage*, as distinguished from *transient pleasure*—and with regard to pleasure, he meant *spiritual* as distinguished from *fleshly* pleasure—in short, he meant "fruit" as distinguished from *blossom*, as distinguished from *flowers*. "All *flesh* is as grass, and all the goodness of man as the *flower* of grass: and the grass withereth, and the *flower thereof* falleth away." It was in *this* light that the Apostle looked upon "the pleasures of sin;" that, though they might be fair and gay and fascinating for a little while, yet soon "their blossom went up as dust," and there was no fruit, nothing substantial, nothing permanent, nothing remaining for the person to *feed* upon, so as to be *nourished unto life eternal*. It was only "fruit unto life eternal" which St. Paul would allow himself to consider and call "fruit."

S E R M O N XVIII.

The pleasures of sin, which were merely pleasures, and produced nothing lastingly advantageous, he always considered and called "unfruitful." For example; he says to the Ephesians, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." But, on the contrary, effects pleasing, profitable, spiritual, and lastingly beneficial, are, in the Scriptures, continually pronounced fruit. For example, in Isaiah iii. 10, it is said, "Say ye to the *righteous*, that it shall be well with him; for they shall *eat the fruit* of their doings. But woe unto the *wicked*! it shall be ill with him; for the *reward of his hands* shall be given him." Accordingly, in the New Testament we read, in Gal. v., of "the *works* of the flesh," but of "the *fruit* of the Spirit." And again, in Ephesians v., "The *fruit* of the Spirit is in all goodness and *righteousness* and truth." So in the text, when the Apostle inquires, "What *fruit* had ye from *sin*?" he means to deny, in the strongest manner, that they had had any from that quarter. He allows of nothing as fruit, but what comes from the opposite quarter, "Ye have your *fruit* unto *holiness*."

Bearing in mind, then, that by "fruit" the Apostle meant, in the text, effects, not merely pleasing to the natural man, but pleasing to the spiritual man, and not pleasing only, but permanently beneficial, you will have no difficulty in seeing why he

asks so confidently from persons who had been living in sin, "What fruit had ye in those things?" He knew they had had none. He knew that the pleasures of sin were, in the first place, pleasing only to the natural, not to the spiritual man; and that they were, in the second place, "but for a season," and not abiding: on which accounts they were but fading fleshly flowers, not lasting spiritual fruit.

And if St. Paul could appeal to the *Roman* Christians, whether they had had, in this sense, any fruit of sin, I may appeal with the same confidence to any of *you*, my brethren, who are converted Christians now. "What fruit had *you*" of those sins in which you lived in your unconverted state? That you may have had from them much pleasure of a certain kind, I have already allowed to be highly probable. But it was mere worldly or carnal pleasure. It was the gratification of those "desires" in you "of the flesh or of the mind," by which you are allied either to the brute creation, on the one hand, or to Satan, on the other. You may "have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton," as so many animals; or you may have indulged yourselves in sins of the mind, such as ambition, pride, vanity, envy, anger, deceit, covetousness, and other evil thoughts. But supposing you to have gratified your evil tempers, to have

fulfilled your worldly desires, and to have had the consummation of your carnal wishes, have you had any fruit from them, that is, any advantage to your spiritual, your highest, your everlasting interests? You know you have not, but quite the contrary. You know that your indulgence of “fleshly lusts warred against your soul;” and that the more you cherished improper imaginations, and gratified corrupt propensities, the more they indisposed you to piety and goodness, and “hardened your heart from God’s fear.” You know how they made you restrain prayer, shun your Maker, despise your Saviour, grieve the Spirit, and inflict wounds on your conscience which pain you to this hour. You know what mischief they did your body; and, which is worse, you know what mischief they did your mind. You are suffering now some of the enfeebling tainting consequences of early immoralities and mental sins. “You mourn at the last.” “You are all ashamed of pleasures that could not profit you,” and of which there remains nothing now but the mischievous effects, or the humiliating remembrance. You perceive, however agreeable such things were to your natural man, they were empty of all good to your immortal spirit. When you look forwards to eternity, and consider what the things are that belong to your peace there; and then look backwards to the things you pursued with satisfaction

in your unrenewed state ; you see with trembling *they* were not the things which would have “brought you peace at the last.” You perceive they were at best but *flowers* to garnish your putrefying *flesh*, not *fruit*, on which your *soul* could have been sustained for ever and ever.

We have seen, then, in the first place, what fruit, or rather what mockery and absence of fruit, persons have, while they are *slaves to sin*. Let us now consider, in the second place, what real fruit they have, when they are “made free from sin, and become the servants of God.” “They have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.”

But here we must explain a little. What is meant by “being made free from sin?” *Are* there any persons free from sin? Certainly not, in one sense ; and yet they are free, in another. There are no persons free from the commission of some kind or degree of sin ; for St. John says, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” Indeed one would think that humiliating experience of his corruption was quite enough to make the most advanced Christian cry daily, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Yet, in another sense, there are persons “free from sin ;” said to be so, because they are free from the *condemnation* and *dominion*, from the *guilt* and *power*

of it. Such persons are "*made free from sin,*" made so by the Son of God, their Redeemer and Liberator, "their righteousness and sanctification;" and "when the Son makes them free, they are free indeed." Their freedom from sin is not imaginary, but real; not theoretic, but practical; not superficial, but radical; freedom in the spirit, though not in the flesh; partial for awhile, but total at last; and then not temporary, but eternal. They are made free, when they "are washed, sanctified, justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." By nature all persons are born in sin, and yield themselves voluntarily as "servants to sin," and are "free from righteousness." But sovereign mercy interposes in behalf of some, and gives them a new heart and a right spirit. Their eyes are opened to see, and their heart to deplore, their guilt and thralldom. "They groan, being burdened" with a sense of sin and helplessness. This is the first work of the Spirit in them. He then "leads them to Christ, that they may be justified by faith," and out of His fulness "receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness." And it is a fact, that all who mourn for sin, and, "weary and heavy laden" with it, go to the Redeemer, and fall penitently at the foot of his cross, and pray for a removal of the wrath of God which they feel abiding on them, as a burdensome

stone, are relieved in due time. They are blessed with real pardon, conscious peace, and effectual grace. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses them from all" condemning "sin," and his Spirit "cleanses them from all" domineering "unrighteousness." They may sin, *alas! they will sin, after this; "for there is no man that liveth and sinneth not:" but they will not persist and continue in sin. They will repent of the evil into which they are beguiled, and they will seek and obtain grace to forsake and amend it. And then "there is no condemnation to those who are thus in Christ Jesus;" and habitually "they walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." So doing, they are the description of persons meant in the text, as "made free from sin;" and they prove that they are so, by "becoming servants to God." A change has taken place at once in their state, their disposition, and their conduct. They were servants to sin; they are servants to God: they did yield themselves of choice to sin; they now yield themselves of choice to God: they did live in habits of evil; they now live in habits of good. When they were "after the flesh," they were known and read of all men as "minding the things of the flesh;" and now that "they are after the Spirit," they are known and read of all men as "minding the things of the Spirit."

My brethren, are any of *you* persons of this

description? Have you reason to think, from your *altered* disposition and behaviour, that the Son of God has “made you free from sin?” When I say *altered* disposition and behaviour, I refer to those of you who are conscious of having been, at a former period of your life, the servants of sin. And if you once “servèd divers lusts and pleasures,” and now do not, Christ must have “broken their yoke from off your neck,” and you must be conscious of your liberation. You cannot have had your chains snapped, you cannot have come out of the house of bondage, and be breathing the air of Christian freedom, and “walking at liberty, seeking God’s commandments,” without being aware of the happy change in your circumstances. There may be some present, who, through God’s preventing and furthering grace, never were the conscious servants of sin, nor at any period of their lives habitually yielded themselves up to “fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind,” but “feared the Lord from their youth.” Such favoured persons cannot, of course, remember “being made free from sin,” because its power over them was broken by the Spirit of God before they were sensible of its oppression. They, therefore, must examine themselves, not so much as to a change, but as to an improvement, an amelioration, having taken place in their disposition and behaviour. And if, in point of fact, *now*, whatever

they were formerly, *now* the disposition and behaviour of any of you are Christian, that is a sufficient evidence of your being "made free from sin;" and you are the description of characters whom the Apostle addressed in the text.

Consider, then, now that you are made free from sin, and become servants to God, what real and lasting *fruit* you have and will have from this your renewed heart and conduct. The Apostle says, "You have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." Now if *holiness* be produced in you, this is indeed something worthy of the name of fruit. Holiness is a produce worthy of the pains God has taken with you, and of the pains you have taken with yourselves. When holiness is the result, your Creator does not regret having planted you, nor the Sun of righteousness having shone upon you, nor the Spirit having showered upon you the dew of his grace: nor do you regret having yielded yourselves to divine cultivation, and striven that Christ might "see in you of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied." The production of holiness in you is the very end of all God's care, and all your labour. You were chosen that you might be holy, called that you might be saints, redeemed that you might be zealous of good works; and if you are so, well; there is joy in heaven, and there is joy in you. God is gratified, and you are satisfied;

for "a good man shall be satisfied from himself." You were planted that you might be trees of righteousness; and if you are "filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ," this is "to the glory and praise of God," and not less to your own comfort. Holiness and righteousness are fruit which will nourish you to immortality, and be the fruit of the tree of life in the midst of the Paradise of God, on which the redeemed of the Lord will feed for ever. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life." For ever will the King of glory take pleasure in such fruit in his garden above, and say to "the nations of them that are saved," "Eat, O friends," "eat of the fruit of your own ways." You had it to holiness on earth, and you shall have it to happiness in heaven.

In other words, and to drop all figurative language, the consequences of being made free from sin, and becoming servants to God, are pleasing, beneficial, and lasting; and so are compared to excellent fruit, beautiful to the eye, refreshing for present use, and, being fully ripe, capable of being "laid up in store, as a good foundation against the time to come." The effects of divine grace in man are holiness and righteousness; and these beautify, and benefit, and save their possessors. We often read of "the beauty of holiness;" and as for the

comfort and advantage of it, they are such as words cannot express. How holy was St. Paul! and how attractive is his character! how exuberant was his happiness, and how great is his reward! But there was "none holy as the Lord," the Lord incarnate, "the holy child Jesus;" and see the beauties and the benefits of holiness in him. "He was fairer than the children of men: full of grace were his lips; and God has blessed him for ever." "He loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even his God, anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows." If then we would exhibit in our deportment "whatsoever things are lovely and of good report;" and if we would enjoy in our experience whatsoever feelings are happy and satisfactory; let us tread in the steps of our Saviour's holy life. The more free we are from sin, the more free we shall be from sorrow; and the more "holy we are in all manner of conversation," the more happy we shall be in all manner of perceptions. Holiness is our highest interest here, and certainly as regards hereafter. It is "profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

May these considerations prevail with all of us to follow after holiness with greater earnestness and perseverance! Surely they should prevail with *you* to do so, Christian brethren, as many of you as

have *tasted* both the wormwood of sin, and the fruit of holiness. However luscious and tempting the vine of Sodom may appear to the ignorant and inexperienced, *you know*, for *you have tried*, that “its grapes are grapes of gall, and that its clusters are bitter.” You have proved the consequences of indulging “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life;” and you have found them to be disastrous. You are certain that “the pleasures of sin” are but “for a season,” and that “the end of these things is death.” And not only so, but *now* God has shown you a more excellent way. You have travelled “the way of righteousness;” and know that it “is life, and that in the pathway thereof there is no death.” You have also tried the fruit along this “highway of holiness,” and found that it is good. You are ascertained that piety, and purity, and probity are the only things that will bring a man peace now, and especially that will “bring him peace at the last.” Therefore cultivate these graces. Mind not the labour and the self-denial. “Deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope” of one day appearing with Christ in glory. “Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.” He is the unspotted Lamb of God in the bosom of the Father. We must be

like him to be gathered into the same bosom. No holiness, no happiness, here or hereafter. Remember this, Christian brethren, and act accordingly.

And if those who have tried the ways of sin have found them hard and grievous, let this *deter you* from wandering into them, as many of you as feel yourselves tempted to do so, though you have been mercifully restrained hitherto by grace, by a religious education, by good friends, and by good habits. What so tempting has the service of sin to offer you, that you should wish to enter it? Ask those who have tried it already, whether they found it a good service. This is only what you would do in ordinary life: it is no more than a dictate of common prudence. What servant is there here, proposing to enter on a new place, who is not intent to ask what sort of a place his or her predecessor found it? Ask then your predecessors in the service of sin, what sort of a place they found theirs. St. Paul has asked them for you already in the text—"What fruit had ye of those things" on which you were employed in that service? and the answer is, None, or worse than none—such "whereof we are now ashamed;" and "the end of those things" would have been "death" to us, if sovereign mercy had not "saved us from our destructions." And will any here presume on that mercy saving *them* from their destructions, if, with their

eyes open, they go into the service of the destroyer? God forbid. "It is written, Thou shalt not *tempt* the Lord thy God." Hear this, my brethren, you who are yet servants to God: and hear it especially, you, my young friends, who have been "brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Hear it, and fear. "When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died."

Lastly, let me *warn* those of you who may be offending *now*, whether through heedlessness or presumption. So "the word of the Lord comes to me, saying, Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them *warning* from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul." For the deliverance of my own soul, therefore, to say nothing of the deliverance of your's, I am constrained to warn those of you, who know in your conscience that you are living in *habits* of sin. *Break them off*, or the end of them will be

death, eternal death. Are they dear to you as a right arm? *Break them off.* “It is better for you to enter into life with one arm, than having two arms to be cast into hell fire, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” *Can you not break them off?* Have you no heart, no power to do so? Then *go to Jesus Christ* in faith and prayer. Believe that *he* is able to break them off. Entreat him to make you willing they should be broken off; yea, determined that by his grace they shall be. And “He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.” Then go stand in spirit by the cross of Jesus. Look upwards, and say, “O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me. Thou art my helper and redeemer; make no long tarrying, O my God.”

SERMON XIX.

GEN. vi. 9.

“Noah walked with God.”

A short but most descriptive character of a good man. We will consider, first, what the *description* implies; and, secondly, what the *character* suggests to us. We shall thus, by the Divine blessing, derive from our text both instruction and stimulus.

First, Noah is described to have “walked with God”—what does the description imply?

It implies these three things: faith—friendship—fidelity. Noah’s walking with God implies, first, that he was *a man of faith*. He certainly did not walk with God by sight. “God was in heaven, and he on earth.” But then Noah’s faith was to him instead of sight. He believed in the Lord God of whom his fathers had told him: for he

was not the first of his family who had lived by faith. Of his great grandfather Enoch it is left on record, that "Enoch walked with God, and was not, for God took him." "He was translated, that he should not see death. But before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." And would we know wherein he pleased God, the Apostle tells us it was by his faith, "without which it is impossible to please God." Now Noah was born not long after Enoch's translation, and must have heard by tradition of all the way in which his pious forefather had walked with God—"whose faith therefore he followed," "having found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Noah, then, was not one of those who live "without God in the world." Wherever he was, whatever he did, he realized the presence of his Maker. "He set the Lord always before him," and walked "as seeing Him who is invisible."

But, secondly, Noah's walking with God implies somewhat more than faith, it implies *friendship*.

For, asks the prophet Amos, "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" No—they will separate. Communion of persons proceeds from union of hearts. Therefore, in that Noah walked with God, it follows that "they two were of one accord, of one mind"—in a word, that Noah was, what Abraham was, "the friend of God." But

how did he become so? He was not *born* the friend, but the enemy of God. For he was a son of fallen Adam; and therefore “behold, he was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did his mother conceive him.” And, being “born of the flesh, he was flesh;” and “in the flesh could not please God.” Nor could God please him; for “the carnal mind is enmity against God.” By *nature*, then, Noah walked *contrary* to God; that he walked *with* Him, was through *grace*. “He found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” He experienced “the new birth unto righteousness.” That Spirit of the Lord, which, in the same chapter, we find striving with his fellow-men in vain, had striven effectually with Noah, and “given him a new heart and a new spirit.” He had been “inclined” to seek God—had had “the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him”—and had “made a covenant with God by sacrifice.” After the Flood we find him “building an altar unto the Lord, and offering on it burnt-offerings of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl:” “and,” the Scripture adds, “the Lord smelled a sweet savour.” No doubt Noah had offered the like offerings before the Flood, and with like acceptance: and “the sweet savour which the Lord smelled” was not that of burning beasts, but that of a crucified Son, who was the true sacrifice with which God was well-

pleased, the clean Lamb slain, in his councils, from the foundation of the world. So says St. Paul plainly, "Christ loved us, and gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour:" and "for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant," and in the first patriarchs. Now if, by faith in a Saviour that "once, in the end of the world," should be crucified for sins, "Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, and obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts," we must needs suppose Noah to have obtained like witness by like means. No doubt, therefore, by the illuminating power of the Holy Ghost, Noah "lifted up his eyes, and saw afar off" his great descendant crucified on Calvary for the sin of the world. No doubt "he saw and believed;" and offered his own clean offerings in typical expression of his faith. He was, therefore, "justified by faith, and had peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also he had access by faith into this grace wherein he stood," and wherein he "walked with God in Christ" as his reconciled Father and Friend. He and God were now "agreed," and he could approach his Maker with reverent familiarity. The iniquity which once separated between him and his God was done away by the blood of Christ; and the enmity of his car-

nal mind being removed by the Holy Ghost, in him “perfect love cast out fear.” A guilty conscience no longer made him hide himself, like Adam, from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. He walked forth to meet his God on blood-besprinkled ground, and having on that robe of Christ’s righteousness wherein he knew he should find favour with God. He could thus walk with God in white. He could say, “O God, thou art my God.” He could appropriate God—he could speak unto the Lord—he could hold with him a communion of spirit—he could feel toward him the confidence of a friend—he could consult him in difficulties—rely on him in dangers—enjoy him for the present—and trust him for the future.

Thus Noah’s walking with God implied faith, in the first place, and friendship in the second: but thirdly it implied also *fidelity*.

To walk with God is to accompany Him whithersoever he goes. Now God’s ways are difficult and trying to flesh and blood. “Thy way, O God, is holy,” and therefore hard to sinful man. The way of God is opposite to our own way, and opposite to the way of the world. Hence, to walk with God, a person must walk contrary to his natural appetites, and contrary to the current of the world, which requires great fidelity to God. Not unfrequently

also "God moves in a mysterious way"—"his way is in the sea, and his paths in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known." In such cases again it requires great fidelity to God even to follow him, much more to walk with him, side by side, with undaunted confidence. Yet "Noah walked with God," in the highway of holiness. He eschewed his own wickedness, and kept himself from his iniquity. He mortified his own worldly and carnal appetites, and, through grace, kept under his body and brought it into subjection. And he walked with his God, not only against the current of his own natural propensities, but against the current of the world. It required in him a fidelity to God almost inconceivable to persevere, as he did, in the good and the right way, when all the world was against him. He had to walk with God when every individual around, except seven persons, was walking contrary to God, and therefore contrary to himself. How difficult was it for him to stem the torrent of an ungodly world. Yet he "was a just man, and perfect (or upright) in his generations." He was "a just man," when "the earth was filled with violence." He was an "upright man," when "all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." He was, by mouth and by example, "a preacher of righteousness to a world of the ungodly." He was a man of approved fidelity to his God in the

midst of a faithless generation. And he not only walked with God against the world, when his path was plain, but he continued to walk with him through untried and mysterious paths. When God forsook the world, he forsook it with him. When God entered into the ark, Noah entered with him. When God went out of the ark, Noah went out with him. His principle and his practice was, "to hold him fast by God," "to put his trust in the Lord God," and to feel satisfied in his Maker's company.

When Noah, then, is described in the text as having "walked with God," we have seen what the description implies: it implies three things: his faith—his friendship—and his fidelity towards God.

We come now, in the second place, to consider what his *character* suggests to us.

It suggests to us to *labour after* the faith he possessed, the privilege he enjoyed, and the practice he exhibited.

It suggests to us, first, to labour after the faith he possessed. Faith is the gift of God. No man has it by nature. All men have it not by grace. Whoever have it, it is a faculty imparted to your soul, by the Creator Spirit. "The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them," whether in nature or grace.

And as he who has no ear cannot discern sounds, and as he who has no eye cannot estimate

prospects, so he who has no faith can neither discern nor estimate things spiritual and eternal.

It requires, in the Scripture expression, "the eyes of our understanding to be enlightened" before we can have right views of things invisible to our natural faculties. To see "the things of the Spirit," we want the spiritual faculty of faith. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual discerneth all things," by his spiritual faculty of faith, which is to him the eye of his soul. With this eye he looks into the world of spirits, and sees God and Christ and the things of the Spirit so certainly and clearly, that they affect him deeply and habitually. They are no longer imaginary and uninfluential beings and things, but are apprehended in somewhat of their just reality and importance.

Thus faith is to the soul, like a telescope to the eye; opening, in a manner, a new world, and causing the observer to be variously affected with sights which, because not seen, had not affected him before.

Now Noah had this faculty of faith, by which he saw God, brought, as it were, close to him. To believing Noah God was an ever-present God, and the prospects of eternity lay continually outstretched

before him: so that he, "saw the King in his beauty, and beheld the land that was very far off." Thus his faculty of faith was to him "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Now this, brethren, is the faculty we should labour to possess—I do not say to acquire, because it is not to be acquired, but obtained as a gift. A habit is acquired—a faculty is given. A man may acquire a habit of seeing correctly, but he cannot acquire a habit of seeing. If he have not the faculty of sight given him by the Lord, if he be blind—he may roll and strain his eye-balls, but in vain—he is dark, and all his efforts will not make him see. But if the Lord give him the faculty of sight, then, afterwards, through exercise, he may learn to see correctly. And thus it is in things spiritual as well as natural. By nature we fallen sinners have no faculty of seeing God and spiritual things. We are born blind: and thus all of us, whether high or low, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, are upon a par, as to our spiritual inability. Our sharp-sightedness for this world avails nothing to open before us the world to come. A philosopher and a fool are equally unable to see God, and equally unable to acquire the faculty of seeing him. This faculty is a gift, for which we all are alike dependant on the mere mercy and

free grace of God in Christ. This consideration humbles our pride of intellect, and brings us to our knees. It shews us that our help and hope are not in ourselves, but in the Lord. "Our faith stands not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God:" and our proper posture is that of prayer; and our proper petition, "Lord, open our eyes that we may see." If the Apostles prayed, "Lord, increase our faith," it shows who must be the author as well as finisher of our faith.

Let us labour, then, my brethren, after the possession of this precious faculty of faith. The God who gave it Noah still lives to give it us. "Ask," he has said, "and ye shall have—seek and ye shall find." Let us ask, therefore, and seek for this blessed faculty of "seeing Him who is invisible," and of setting him before us in a clear and affecting manner. This must be the preliminary measure to our "walking with God." Our faith must set him beside us, before we can begin to walk with him.

And as our faith must realize the presence of God before we can begin to walk with him, so the continuance of our walk with him will depend on the habitual exercise of our faith. "We must set the Lord always before us," if we would habitually have "him at our right hand." If we feel after him, we shall always find him, not far from every

one of us. In him we live and move and have our being; but he will be felt after by faith and prayer and pains, before he will be found, and apprehended as present.

And this leads me to observe, secondly, that we should labour not only after the *possession* of Noah's *faith*, but also after the *enjoyment* of Noah's *privilege*. He walked with God as with a friend. To him the divine presence was welcome and joyous. It is not so to all. The felt presence of God is unpleasant to wicked men, and dreadful to wicked spirits, who see him and tremble; who have him always before them as a consuming fire, always at their right hand as an avenging God. The presence of God can never be joyous, till he be apprehended as a friend. Hence, brethren, our need of believing the record that "He is 'in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Our consciousness of guilt is that which indisposes us to realize the presence of our God. We can never "draw nigh unto him with a true heart, in full assurance of faith," much less can we "walk with him," unless we rest on his Gospel promises in Christ Jesus.

Let us labour, therefore, to rest on them. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of us all to be received, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "And, having made peace through

the blood of his cross, it pleases the Father by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things on earth, or things in heaven: and us, that have been sometime alienated and enemies to him in our minds by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present us holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight, if we continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel which we have heard." These words assure us, that if we continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel, preaching peace to us through a crucified Saviour, we are reconciled to God through the death of his Son, whose blood expiated our sins, and for whose sake God himself accounts and presents us holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his own sight. Christ, then, is that new and living way by whom we may have access with confidence to our heavenly Father, and on whom, so long as we walk with God, we may certify ourselves we are accepted in his sight; and we should therefore look upon him as truly our Friend, and unbosom ourselves to him as such. Allowed, as believers are, the privilege of fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, we should humbly use it. It would not have been allowed us, had it not been intended we should

use it. Therefore we are not presumptuous, but giving glory to God by our faith, if we aspire to the enjoyment of Noah's privilege of "walking with God." What is it we aspire to in heaven? Is it not the privilege of walking with God for ever? If, then, we can hope for Him as a friend through eternity, is it too much to repose on Him as a friend in time? Our confidence is not in ourselves, but in his dear Son. We shall not displease the Father, while we please the Son: and we shall please the Son, if we venture boldly on his merits into his Father's presence. Where can be our high sense of our Redeemer's worthiness, if we think him not worthy enough to recommend us to his Father's favour and friendship? O let us consider well *what* a Mediator we have, and then surely we shall think no privilege too great to be bestowed on us for his sake. He has assured us, that "as many as receive him, to them gives he privilege to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his Name." If, therefore, any of us have received grace to believe on his Name, let us further believe our privilege of adoption as sons, and let us endeavour to walk with our heavenly Father in a filial spirit. We shall thus emulate the faith and friendship of approved Noah.

And, thirdly, let us emulate his *fidelity*—let us labour after the practice which he exhibited. "He was a just man, and upright in his generations:" it

was thus "he walked with God," the only way in which He can continue to be walked with. For "all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is He." And "just and right" must those be who would walk with him in his ways. "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance will behold the thing that is just," and none other. Hence he early said to Abram, "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect." Our Saviour's exhortation is the same—"Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." The children and friends of God are expected to bear the same moral character as God. Called into the honour and advantage of his society, they are expected to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called." Indeed they are called into his society, that they may see how He walks, and be at the same time instructed and incited to copy his example. Accordingly our Lord Jesus Christ, who was "God manifest in the flesh," had disciples around him, whom he called his friends, whom he admitted to the privilege of walking with him whithersoever he went, and to whom his exhortation was, "Learn of me." He said, "I have given you an example." Since the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, we men have much clearer ideas in what way we are to walk with God. We can

now meditate on the character of Jesus, "the Son of man," and see how he walked with his Holy Father. Also we can meditate on the character of his Apostles, and see how they walked with our incarnate God. Thus we can be both instructed and incited to be followers of them, even as they also were of Christ, and even as Christ also was of God. We perceive Jesus to have been "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners:" and we perceive his true disciples to have been, in their degree, of the same character. Hence St. Paul says to his Philippians, "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. For many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. But our conversation is in heaven." Paul walked with God in heart and spirit, while he walked up and down 'in this lower world in the diligent discharge of his appointed business. There is a way of walking with God in every thing. When he is realized and loved as a present Father in Christ, and when we go forth in his strength and for his sake and in dutiful obedience to his will, to our worldly work, we are with God, and God with us, in every thing which we so do. None was more busy than

the Lord Jesus ; yet he did always those things which pleased his Father. St. Paul was full of occupation ; yet whether he was tent-making, or preaching the Gospel, he was still walking with God. We cannot, Christian brethren, go out of the world to walk with God, while we are in the flesh : but though we walk in the flesh, if we walk not after the flesh, but in the spirit, we walk with God. We may walk with God while we are in the body—Noah was in the body—Enoch was in the body. Our being in the body therefore is no fatal hindrance to our walking with God. Only we must keep under our body and bring it into subjection. We must abstain from sinful lusts, which war against the soul. We must endeavour to use this world, as not abusing it, and walk above it, while we are in it. We must have an upward look. We must live under Hagar's impression, "Thou, God, seest me ;" and we must so act as that he may not abhor our company. We may have a great idea whether we walk with God, by considering whether our behaviour in all respects is such, as that he may be supposed content to walk with us. It is not our littleness and degraded condition that will make our merciful Lord decline our company. Those with whom he will not walk are those who live in allowed sin. We should consider, therefore, whether, in our daily walk through life, we so speak and act, in public and in private, in our

worldly business and in our devotional exercises, as that we should not be ashamed, if, the doors being shut, and we thinking ourselves unobserved, Jesus came suddenly and stood in the midst. We should consider whether our habitual behaviour is such that, if he came upon us at any moment, he could still say, "Peace be unto you," and approve our conduct. Our conduct cannot be right, if we know we are indulging in practices which would make us ashamed before him at his coming.

But if we "have a good conscience"—if, at least, "herein we exercise ourselves to have always a conscience void of offence, towards God and towards men"—then we can think with comfort of the Lord's presence. Then we walk in the light, and therefore in Him, and with Him, who "is light, and in whom is no darkness at all." Our past sins, being repented of and forsaken, and our daily sins being daily mourned for and watched against, they do not separate between us and our God: "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all such sins," and our fellowship with the Father continues notwithstanding them: Such is the grace given us in Christ Jesus, through whom we have access by one Spirit unto the Father, and, like Noah, walk with God. Let us hold fast this faith, rejoice in this privilege, and walk worthy of it in our practice. Let us not grieve the Holy Spirit of

God, nor wilfully do anything to alienate the Lord from our company. Rather let us consider what an unspeakable honour and blessing it is to be admitted into the society of God, and to have fellowship and friendship with “the blessed and only Potentate.” Well may we forsake the world, in order to be joined unto the Lord. Well may we renounce Belial to win Christ. Well may we deny ourselves, that we may not be denied Divine society. We cannot be losers, whatever we give up for the Lord's sake. Whatever we resign, we shall have manifold more in this present life, and in the world to come life everlasting. This flesh that we deny will go to corruption—that world we forsake will be consumed by fire—that Satan we renounce will be cast into hell: but the Lord will live for ever—the God whose society we choose will bless us with that society, when the fashion of this world is passed away. Even here no harm can happen unto us, while we have God at our side. From the instance of Noah we are taught by St. Peter that the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations. Noah was safe in the ark, when the world that would not walk with God was buried in the Flood. A greater than that deluge is coming upon our world—a deluge of fire.

But if we here walk with God in faith, friendship, and fidelity, we shall be secure in Him, when

“other refuge there is none.” When we wake from our long sleep, and hear the heavens passing away with a great noise, and find our world in flames; when sinners, who refused to walk with God, are left to perish in devouring fire, and doomed unpitied to everlasting burnings; then we shall be caught up, together with all saints, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we be ever with the Lord.

Wherefore, Christians, comfort and encourage one another with these words; and endeavour, through grace, so to pass through things temporal, that you finally lose not the things eternal. Endeavour so to walk with God by faith yet a little while, that you may walk with him by sight for ever and ever, where there will be no more danger of your falling from him, or losing for a moment that unutterable bliss with which you will be ushered into his heavenly presence.

SERMON XX.

PREACHED ON ADVENT SUNDAY.

ISAIAH xlii. 1—4.

“Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.”

PRESERVED, as we are, by Divine mercy, to another Advent Sunday, and met to remember the coming of our Lord, his Holy Father seems as if He stood with him in the midst of us this morning, and introduced him to our adoring notice in the language of the text—*“Behold my servant, whom I uphold;*

mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth." This language applies to our Saviour's first, not to his second coming. It applies to the period when he "came to visit us in great humility." This is evident, both from St. Matthew's having in fact so applied the passage, and also from the very *terms* made use of by the Father in the introduction of his Son, "Behold *my servant*." Christ, as to his *native* dignity, was not the *servant*, but "the *Fellow*, of the Lord of hosts." "Being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be *equal* with God," and indeed ever was, is, and will be, equal with him, as to his *Godhead*. If therefore he is introduced to us as "the servant" of God, we must remember that he was such only as touching his *manhood*—and even that, "not by constraint, but willingly;" not because necessity was laid upon him, but because, for us men and for our salvation, he voluntarily emptied himself of his glory, and, by assuming our nature, "took upon him the form of a servant." Our race had abandoned the service of our Creator. Though we "were created for his pleasure," we had not done his pleasure. When He "looked down from heaven upon us children of men, to see if there were any of us that did understand, and seek after God, he perceived that we were all gone out of the way, that we were altogether become abominable, that there was none that did good, no,

not one." And, as an apostate and rebellious race, He would have destroyed us, had not Christ, as a servant, stood before Him in the gap, to turn away his wrath from us. "He said, Father, lo, I come to do thy will," and to do it in a human body which thou shalt prepare for me. Such was the covenant he made with his willing Father from the beginning of our world, and in the fulness of time he made it good. Animated by a love for us "strong as death," he left his Father's bosom, laid aside his Majesty, came down from heaven to this fallen earth, did not abhor the Virgin's womb, but was born of her, a man, "in the likeness of sinful flesh," but "without sin," and yet "for sin." He came with no sin of his own, that he might take our sins upon him, and be an atoning Lamb in our stead, "without blemish and without spot." According to the law, the Paschal Lamb was to be narrowly observed three or four days before it was offered up, that it might be known to be an immaculate victim. And so the Lamb of God walked in Jewry, as he said, "to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following," before he fell a sacrifice at Jerusalem. In other words, he was daily with the Jews for three or four years before he suffered; all which time he voluntarily subjected himself to their severest scrutiny, and yet could triumphantly appeal to them at last, "Which of

you convinceth me of sin?" No; the wonderful, the blessed, the saving truth is, "In him was no sin." "He came down from heaven to do his Father's will," and he did it, actively and passively, till with his latest breath on the cross he could exclaim, "It is finished." "Father, I have glorified thee on earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

Here, then, was an instance of perfect *service* done to God—an instance of one who "did always those things which pleased him." And recollect, my brethren, it was a *solitary* instance. Among all the millions of the human race not one was ever a faithful servant of God, except "the man Christ Jesus." When therefore his Father introduced *him* to our attention, well might he say, "Behold *my servant*, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul *delighteth*." Great indeed must have been the *joy* with which the Father beheld his Son "fulfil all righteousness." Did ever any of *you*, who are parents, send out a son into this world of sin and danger, and look after him with anxious eyes, to see how he would bear temptations, and cope with difficulties, and establish a character for "whatsoever things are lovely, and of good report?" and when you saw him "quit himself like a man," and answer your expectations, and fulfil your warmest hopes, did your bosom swell with exultation, and your coun-

tenance beam with delight? Then *you* can understand a little of the exquisite satisfaction with which the Father of all beheld “his holy child Jesus” “do all things without murmurings or disputings, blameless and harmless, the Son of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom he shone as a light in the world”—shone indeed not merely as *a* light in the world, but as “*the* light of the world”—shone as “the *Sun* of righteousness.” Well might the Father take delight in his very “soul” in thus seeing his Son “fulfil all the good pleasure of his will;” and well might he “*uphold*” him in such a course of splendid and gratifying obedience! What parent among you would not uphold *your* son in like circumstances, and furnish him with every proper help to prosecute his course to a successful termination? Such help did God furnish to his Son Jesus. Accordingly he adds in the text, “I have put *my Spirit* upon him.” And, as Christ had a work of immeasurable difficulty to perform, “the Father gave not the Spirit by measure unto him.” And yet so fairly was the support which Christ received adjusted to the degrees of trial in which he was placed, that “he was in all points really tempted, like as we are,” only that he was “without sin.” Whatever of temptation, and sorrow, and danger, and suffering, sinless but real manhood could undergo, that Christ

underwent, otherwise his Father would not have "known the proof of him" as a servant; nor would the Paradise, lost by the fall of the first Adam, have been regained by the last Adam's upright "obedience unto death, even the death of the cross." There can be no doubt that "the *man* Christ Jesus" was thoroughly tried, by men, by Satan, and by God himself. Whatever was the Divine assistance rendered to him, it was not such as superseded the necessity of his making the most strenuous exertions of which human nature is capable. The spiritual support he received was not such as interfered with the perfect fairness of his trial as a man; and therefore when, after trial, he was found sinless, human nature was restored in his person to its primitive holiness, and consequently to the favour of God.

This fact, and the clear knowledge of it, are infinitely valuable to us; because now we know that Christ is a new root of holiness to our human race, and from him we can derive that sanctification, and acceptance with God, which we lost in Adam. Since our Saviour has "magnified the Law, and made it honourable" by his obedience to it, and since by his death he has "redeemed us from the curse," of it, he has opened a way, not for our freedom in sin, but for our freedom from it. We may now "be washed, sanctified, and justified, in

the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." If we heartily receive Christ as "the Lord our righteousness," God finds us in him, and "makes us to be accepted in the beloved." The services of Christ in the days of his flesh are made available for our benefit, and through him we "receive" from our reconciled Father "abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness."

Thus "*judgment* is brought forth to us *Gentiles*." By "judgment" is here meant vindication of our cause, deliverance of us from oppression, and restoration of us to original privileges and happiness. We should recollect that, when the prophet Isaiah lived, our Gentile forefathers were living in gross idolatry and sin, not even in the nominal church, but, as St. Paul says, "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." They were, in the strictest and most awful sense, "*oppressed* of the Devil;" and the Jews thought they would remain so. Even Christian Jews, and at the fountain of light too, Jerusalem, could scarcely credit St. Peter, after his visit to Cornelius, that "God to the Gentiles also had granted repentance unto life." And yet such a favour to our heathen race *should not* have been incredible to our Jewish brethren. It was distinctly prophesied and promised in the text

before us, "My servant shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." And now, brethren, we have lived to prove the truth of the prophecy, and I hope some of us to experience the fulfilment of the promise. That Christ, who sits at the right hand of God, has wonderfully vindicated our cause as a nation. What an astonishing change for the better between our painted and savage forefathers, and evangelized England! Could the valleys and hills around us speak, how would they burst forth into praises of that Gospel which has made us so to differ from our idolatrous and barbarous and bloody ancestors! There are yet preserved in our city remnants of the very altars on which "they sacrificed to devils, and not to God;" and even our eye teaches our heart to thank and bless that Saviour who "has brought forth judgment," that is, deliverance, for us.

But, brethren, it will avail us little to be *nationally*, if we are not *personally*, benefited by Christ. We should therefore most seriously consider whether we, as individuals, have derived from our Redeemer that pardon and peace and piety and probity, which he became a servant that he might have the pleasure of bestowing on all penitent believers. Have we truly repented, and do we unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel? These are solemn questions, and we should reiterate them to ourselves, till we have "the

answer of a good conscience towards God." "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, *Consider your ways.*" How many are ruined everlastingly for want of consideration—for want of paying attention to the *modest, unobtrusive* solicitations of "pure and undefiled religion!" And yet, my brethren, the solicitations of Christ that we should attend to him will never be *otherwise* than modest and unobtrusive. Mark what was prophesied of him in the text, ("and the Scripture cannot be broken,") "He shall *not* cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street." And if you mark further how this prophecy is applied to him by St. Matthew, in chapter xii. 17, you will see it is in connection with the Saviour's *quiet* and *retiring* character. "Great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all; but charged them that they should not *make him known*: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, Behold my *servant*, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased; I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets." Our Lord was a man of *peace*; "apt to teach," but with "a still small voice." His object was not to frighten, nor to dazzle, but to "persuade men." And as its Founder was, so is his religion, and so should be its ministers. "The wisdom from above

is first pure, then peaceable, gentle." "Its doctrine drops as the rain; its speech distils as the dew; as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as showers upon the grass." So, brethren, you are not to expect impression, conversion, edification, to come to you in some noisy and overbearing manner. The influences of Divine grace are still and quiet; and you must be still and quiet, if you would have them reach you. If you will not attend to gentle remonstrance and admonition, you will not be shocked into religion by some voice from heaven, or some Lazarus from the dead. You must hear Moses and the prophets, Jesus and the Apostles; and you must hear them when they *quietly* solicit your attention, whether in your closet or your church. All the good you can obtain at all, you can obtain in a quiet way. Solomon's temple, though "exceeding magnificent, of fame and of glory in all countries," was built in a noiseless manner. "Neither hammer, nor ax, nor any tool of iron, was heard in the house, while it was in building." So must you, if you are lively stones, be quietly fitted into your respective places in Christ's spiritual house, his Church. Therefore attend to the suggestions of your conscience; attend to the leadings of the Spirit; attend to the Scripture, when you read it, or hear it read; and attend to sound religious instruction from the pulpit, though it be neither loud, nor impassioned,

nor exciting. If you want excitement, you want what you would not have found from the lips of Paul or Jesus. "They did not strive, nor cry, nor lift up:" but "they still taught the people wisdom;" and above all they still "*comforted the mourners.*"

It is to *this* trait, in *our Lord* especially, that the Father next calls our attention. "A *bruised reed* shall he not *break.*" "A bruised reed" seems to mean any *timid* and *wounded* spirit, particularly a *Christian* spirit. I say, a *timid* spirit, because a *reed* is soon "shaken by the wind;" and accordingly St. Paul was afraid that some of his Thessalonians would be "soon shaken in mind and troubled." And a reed is a plant of that delicate nature, it cannot bear much shaking without being bruised, nor much bruising without being broken. Now Jesus Christ is *not the person* to break that which he finds bruised. And he finds many bruised—some by temporal, and others by spiritual trouble. And how tender was he to such "in the days of his flesh!" The widow of Nain was a bruised reed. She was in bitterness, almost broken in heart, for her only son. "And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not." And he raised her son, and "delivered him to his mother." The woman that was a sinner was another reed, bruised by spiritual trouble. Simon

the Pharisee would soon have broken her, had she fallen into his hands. But she “fell into the hands of the Lord, and his mercies are great.” *He* said unto her, “Thy faith hath saved thee : go in peace.” Once more, his Apostles were bruised reeds, when he had told them he was going from them, and “sorrow had filled their hearts.” With what care did he comfort them, saying, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you ; not as the world giveth, give I unto you : let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” We perceive the same tenderness breathing throughout his language on the mount of benedictions. “Blessed are the poor in spirit ; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn ; for they shall be comforted.” And what numbers, not only of old, but of modern days, have been sensible of the gentleness of Christ towards them, and how his gentleness has made them great. Had he been severe or hasty with them, they feel they should have “perished in their trouble,” they should have sunk under their load. But they met with Him, who says, “I will not chide for ever, neither will I be alway wrath ; for the spirit should fail before me ; and the souls which I have made. For his iniquity I smote him. I hid me, and was wroth ; and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart.

But now I have seen his” penitent “ways, and will heal him: I will restore comforts to him, and to his mourners.”

Recollect, then, my brethren, if you are, or become, bruised reeds, that you are not bruised by One who wishes to *break* you. He bruises you, or rather lets you be bruised, that you may come mournfully to him, and throw yourselves heartily on his mercy; and then his hands will soon make you whole. In trouble therefore visit this Lord, and pour out a prayer when his chastening is upon you: and you will surely find he will “forgive and comfort you, lest perhaps you should be swallowed up of overmuch sorrow.”

But to proceed with the text, As Christ will not break the bruised reed, so neither will he *quench* the *smoking flax*.

“Smoking flax” is interpreted two ways, first of *beginners*, and secondly of *backsliders* in religion. First, of *beginners* in religion. As smoke goes before flame, so, though “the beginning” of some Christians “is small, their latter end does greatly increase.” Certainly it is *true*, that Christ was not a discourager of any who had a spark of piety. On the contrary, he approved and commended what was good in any one, and sought to make it better. We remember how he “loved” that young ruler, who had “some good thing” in him, though he

could not then attain to the perfection of selling all that he had, and giving to the poor, and following Christ. And how patiently did he bear with the ignorances and errors of his disciples! How was he “gentle among them, even as a nurse cherisheth her children! So, being affectionately desirous of them,” he gave them “line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little,” “as they were able to bear it;” till he matured their piety and knowledge, established their character, and reared them into perfect men. And to how many of later days has he shown the same kindness, suffering long with their manners, bearing with their much evil, and cherishing the small beginnings of good which his Spirit had planted in them, till he has eventually fostered them into a flame, and they have become “burning and shining lights,” to the praise of the glory of his grace.

If then, my brethren, any of you have *any inclination* to go to Christ, though you are “yet a great way off,” be assured “he sees you” with complacency; and if you will actually “arise and go” to him, he will meet you. He will “prevent you with the blessings of goodness,” and “do for you more than you ask or think.”

But, secondly, “smoking flax” is perhaps more correctly interpreted of *backsliders* in religion. The rendering in the margin is, “*Dimly* burning

flax"—flax that had once been a bright and blazing torch, but had died away till it was well nigh extinct. Such is the case with those who, "having known God, or rather been known of God," have "lost their first love," and declined in their religion; and, from "shining as lights in the world," have "their lamps" almost "put out in obscure darkness."

Are any here conscious of being in this *deteriorated* condition, and are you *afraid* you have sinned against the Holy Ghost, "sinned the sin unto death," and that there is no hope for you? But nay, brethren there is *some* hope for you, though I admit your case is dangerous. But there *is* hope for you, "hope in Christ," or you "were of all men most miserable." What says the text of the *disposition* of Him from whom you have declined? It says, "The dimly burning flax he will *not quench*." That you burn, however dimly, at least that you smoke, though your flame be extinct, is certain, from your feeling *concern* about your state. You are not quite dead, or you would have *no* feeling. The fire in you may be very low, may seem to be gone out, leaving nothing but cold ashes. But "stir up the gift of God which is in you." Did you never observe how wonderfully a low fire will kindle up with a little stirring? God has given you *that fact in nature*, to assure you of what may occur in *grace*. So, if you are gone

back in religion, declined in grace, “be zealous, and repent, and do your first works;” and the all-merciful Saviour will forgive you, and heal your backslidings, and give you more grace than to repeat them.

But there is one more part of our Saviour’s character set before us in the text for our contemplation. “He shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.” When it says, “He shall bring forth judgment unto truth,” judgment means the same as when it said before, “He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles;” that is, *vindication*. He shall vindicate truth. He shall bring it forth from the *errors* with which it was obscured and oppressed, and shall make it triumphant. Accordingly St. Matthew’s translation of the passage is, “He shall send forth judgment unto victory;” that is, his judgment, or *decision*, given in any case, shall be victorious. It shall be so agreeable to right reason, the soundest principles, and the test of experience, that it shall be mighty upon earth, and finally prevail. And how wonderfully *has* this been the case with the judgments or decisions of our Lord! and how still more wonderfully it is *likely* to be the case with them! As Paley says, “A Galilean peasant changed the religion of the world”—and that not

by any other force than the force of truth. His decisions and precepts in the New Testament have, from the moment he uttered them till now, been felt as *the truth*. They have been acknowledged and deferred to as such by a succession of the purest and greatest minds on earth. They have been steadily gaining new influence, and fresh victories; and they are at this moment "going forth conquering and to conquer." They have nothing to fear from the acutest examination, the most contentious argument, and the sternest opposition. Amid the awakening of mind that has taken place, and the scepticism and infidelity that have arisen from detected error and exploded superstition, Christian truth is gradually advancing. The New Testament is not some "cunningly devised fable," which may possibly be some day discovered to have nothing in it, and be abandoned as false and foolish. No—when Jesus "opened *his* mouth, and taught," he knew he was establishing principles and precepts which should some time *universally prevail*. So, amid all the uproar around it, and against it, Christianity is as "quiet from fear of evil," as was Noah in the ark amid the convulsions of the first world. When those dreadful but passing convulsions had subsided, Noah went forth, and peopled a second world. And so, whatever may be the convulsions caused by discordant and conflicting opinions, now or hereafter,

they shall all be silenced by-and-by, and Christianity shall "go forth of them all" to have the *general* sway. Its prevalency may seem *questionable* to some, and *slow* to others. But "with the Lord a thousand years are as one day." And, as he knows "he shall not fail," so neither will he "be discouraged:" but calmly yet determinately and assuredly he "will set judgment in the earth"—not in *one corner* of the earth, like England, nor in one *quarter* of it, like Europe—but he will set it *in the earth*, in its length and breadth, to fill its *whole continent*; and not that only, but "*the isles* shall wait for his law." Jesus is "the desire of all nations," "the hope of all the ends of the earth, and of them that remain in the broad sea." And so "let them show themselves *joyful* before the Lord *the King*. Let the sea make a noise, and all that therein is: the round world, and all that dwell therein. Let the floods clap their hands, and let the hills be joyful together before the Lord: for he cometh to judge the earth. With righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity."

My brethren, if *we* do *not* look forward with *exultation* to this final dominion of the Lord Jesus, it is because "our hearts are," in some way, "not right in his sight." In which case it behoves us to "repent of this our wickedness," and exhibit "the

obedience of faith." We *can* have no repugnance to the prevalence of Christianity, but for reasons which it were *shameful* to avow. If we *were* "what manner of persons we *ought* to be, in all holy conversation and godliness, we should be looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God," and the final triumph of good over evil. Instead, therefore, of shrinking from, or opposing, "the truth as it is in Jesus," let us "receive it in the love of it, that we may be saved." Let us seek to be sanctified by it, and have our evil tempers and inordinate passions reduced under its sway. And then, if Christ's kingdom of grace be within us, we shall some time be within his kingdom of glory; and see *him* who, for our sakes, was once a *servant*, "have on his head *many crowns*;" and, among others, those wherewith *we* shall crown him, when he "has made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign with him on the earth."

SERMON XXI.

PREACHED ON THE LAST SUNDAY
IN THE YEAR.

HEB. ix. 27, 28.

“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”

THE closing year naturally reminds us of the close of all things here below to us, that is, of our closing hour, the hour of *death*. Day closes—the week closes—the year closes—and our life *will* close. As surely as we have begun to live—as surely as we continue to live—so surely we shall cease to live in this present scene of things. This is the *first* momentous point brought before us in the text—“It is appointed unto men once to die.”

Let each lay this to heart—It is appointed unto *me* to die. I have heard of death—I have read of death—I have talked of death—I have thought of death—have I not seen death?—well: it is appointed unto me to know by *experience* what that death is. Thousands of words have I spoken—thousands of looks have I given—thousands of breaths have I drawn: but I must speak my last word—I must give my last look—I must draw my last breath—and then I must die. This is what I have to undergo, whether I be “young man or maiden, old man or child.” I see all around me dead or dying. One vanishes from my view—another drops from my side—a third expires in my arms—and I too must “go the way of all the earth.” It is appointed unto *me* to die.

Is there no escape? no alternative? *must* I die? Yes—it is *appointed* unto me. Appointed? by whom? By One who is “strong in power” to see his appointment enforced—it is appointed unto me by God, “in whom I live and move and have my being”—by “the God in whose hand my breath is, and whose are all my ways.” “I know, O Lord, that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living.”

It is thus, brethren, we should take to ourselves individually the declaration in the text. “We must needs die.” We are sinful creatures, and “the

wages of sin is death." We are the offspring of Adam; and "in Adam all die." We partake of his nature—we partake of his sin—we partake of his sorrow—and we shall partake of his death. The time will come, when we must give up the ghost.

What an event to have before us, with the certainty that it must occur! Yes—we must resign this earth, on which we have so long walked to and fro. We must frequent no more our circles of pleasure, our walks of business, our haunts of sin, or our houses of prayer. We must have done with the only objects we ever saw; for "the things which are seen are temporal." "We must behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world." We must part with every thing that is "of the earth earthy;" yea, even with this body of flesh and blood—part with it perhaps amid "strong crying and tears," agonies and groans—but part with it we must, and *die*.

This is appointed unto us: a solemn appointment, an awful, but inevitable, crisis, to which we must all come.

And what adds unspeakably to its awfulness is, that we can come to it *only once*—"It is appointed unto men *once* to die." To have to die *once*, is a momentous matter; but to have to die *only once*, is far more so; because, once done, it is unalterable—done for ever. Many important things which we

have to do we can practise beforehand, so as to do them well at the critical moment. We can detect and correct the errors of our first attempts, so as in a great measure to secure final success. But there is no practising how to die. If we die amiss, there is no coming back to mend the error —no possibility of returning to earth, and learning to die better. When we once die, we “go the way whence we shall not return.” How careful, then, should we be in our preparations to do that right, which, once done, we can neither undo nor amend! and especially when the result of it is so unutterably important, of such everlasting consequence. A final failure in *some* things, though it may be vexatious and distressing, yet is not of so very great moment. The evil effects of it, though even overwhelming at first, gradually subside, and the bitterness of disappointment becomes less and less galling. But a failure in *death* is of unspeakable moment, because the miserable effects of it upon the soul and condition of the departed remain unabated, unmitigated, for ever and ever.

For, says our text, in the second place, “after death is the judgment,” what our Apostle, in the 6th chapter, calls, from its effects, “eternal judgment;” that is, a judgment passed upon our earthly conduct, which will issue either in our eternal happiness, or our eternal misery. “We must all

appear before the judgment-seat of Christ." This is repeatedly revealed to us in Scripture, especially in Rev. xx. 11. St. John says, "I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it; from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works." This, brethren, is "the judgment *after* death" which invests our death with such unspeakable importance. If there were going to be an end of us, when we depart out of this life; or if our behaviour here were going to have no lasting influence on our future condition; then death, though terrible to nature, would cease to be "the king of terrors." What makes him "the king of terrors" is, that he ushers us into the presence of "God the Judge of all," "to give account of ourselves to him." Death puts a final end to that history of us which is recorded in the judgment-books of God. Books of remembrance are written before God of all that we do, or say, or think, in this

probationary existence. Recording angels put down our procedures from our earliest childhood, glad to record good, obliged to record evil. Now some of us may, for many years, have been “treasuring up to ourselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds.” If we had been suddenly cut off in our sins at the end of those years, we should have perished everlastingly. But, while we are in this life, under the means of grace, we may be brought to consider our ways—We may come to ourselves, and see our guilt and folly, and repent us truly of our past sins, and “cease to do evil, and learn to do well.” And then, that may be accomplished in our case which God has promised by his prophet Ezekiel—“If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and will keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, all his transgressions that he hath committed shall not be mentioned unto him.” Through “repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ,” though a person’s “sins may have been as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they may have been red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” However black therefore and alarming may have been the long record in God’s judgment-book against any of us for years of sin, it may be all blotted out

upon our true repentance towards God and sincere faith in Christ crucified, because to every such penitent believer he says, in Isaiah xliii. 25, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." And "the blood of Jesus Christ cleaueth from all sin," and quite purges the book of God's remembrance of any trace of record against his contrite believing people, the very day they turn unto him with all their hearts. "In that day their iniquity might be sought for" in the accusing book by Satan himself, "but it could not be found." Who can lay any thing to their charge, when "it is God that justifieth?" "Who is he," or what is it, "that shall condemn them, when it is Christ that died; yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for them?" "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Now from all this it is evident how important the *continuance* of life is to *sinner*s. Many are now in heaven, who would have been in hell, if they had been cut off out of this life only a few years earlier. But they were saved, God being "long-suffering to them-ward, not willing that they should perish, but that they should come to repentance." And it was "the goodness of God that

led them to repentance." They *did* repent, and found mercy at his hands before they passed out of this life to eternal judgment; which judgment will now be to them a day of acquittal and joy, instead of a day of condemnation and terror. For nothing will be found written against them; but their names will appear in the Lamb's book of life, and "God will not be unrighteous to forget their works and labour of love, which they showed toward his Name," after their conversion and regeneration. Their least cup of cold water given to a disciple, because he belonged to Christ, even it will appear written in the book, and will in no wise lose its reward.

Which shows how important the continuance of life is to *saints* also. They have opportunity for "diligence in making their calling and election sure," by "exercising themselves unto godliness:" and they have opportunity also for being "willing to give, and glad to distribute," and so "laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life:" for "blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." They thus answer the ends of their new^d creation. They were "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that his saints should walk in them." "Christ's

own self bare their sins in his own body on the tree, that they, being dead unto sins, might live unto righteousness," and "plenteously bringing forth," in his strength and through his Son, "the fruit of good works, might of him be plenteously rewarded" in the judgment-day, "when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and reward every man according to his works."

Now, my brethren, you are *all* either *sinner*s or *saint*s. Consider therefore this night how important to *you* is life, and consequently how solemn a thing it will be for *you* to die, and undergo "eternal judgment" which will determine and fix your condition for ever.

Let me appeal to those of you, first, whose conscience testifies against you that you are going on in known sin, impenitent, unpardoned, unrenewed.

God has spared you to the closing Sunday of another year. He is "angry with you every day;" but he has "suffered your manners" another twelvemonth. And how many twelvemonths before the present? I would say to you, what Pharaoh said to Jacob, "How old art thou?" Doubtless too old to have spent so many years in sin,—ten, twenty, thirty, forty. "Forty years long was God grieved with Israel:" and then "their carcasses fell in the wilderness." To them "he sware, in his wrath, that

they should never enter into his rest." And are you tempting him to swear the same concerning you? What would have become of you, if you had died before now? What would become of you, if you were to die to-night? What will become of you, if you die in your sins at last? And yet you may, perhaps, if you tempt God. "How long have you to live?" You cannot tell. You may think, many years; and yet there may be "but a step between you and death." We have had some awfully sudden deaths *this* year: people may be remarking the same of your's ere long—and then what will have become of your souls? They will have gone to judgment,—to "eternal judgment;" and to *what issue* of that judgment, ask your conscience. It will be "a fearful thing to have fallen into the hands of the living God," who has said that "the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment:" and "he is strong that executeth his word."

"Knowing therefore the terrors of the Lord, we persuade you." We have often reasoned with you of "righteousness and temperance," but without effect—now we reason with you of "judgment to come." The thought of this once made Felix tremble. It may excite in you some salutary apprehensions, and shake you out of your carelessness and security. Consider, brethren, it is not my

voice, but God's, that says, "It is appointed unto you once to die, and after that the judgment." Therefore "prepare to meet your God." And if you shrink from the thought of meeting him, all unprepared as you are, *make* preparation. This is the preparation day, and the judgment draws on: Therefore "think on your ways, and turn your feet unto his testimonies: make haste, and delay not the time to keep his commandments." Be thankful you are yet "in the land of the living." Lo these three years ~~has~~ God come by me seeking fruit on you and found none. Be thankful you are not cut down as cumberers of the ground. You *would* have been cut down, had God hated you. Take it as a token for good that you are alive here this day. Think of the tenderness of that heavenly Intercessor for you. "Let them alone," he has said, "this year also, till I shall dig about them and dung them." This is the cultivation he is bestowing on you *now*: and if you bear fruit, well; if not, then let conscience say what you may expect. But *do*, brethren, bear fruit. You may, if you are willing. It is true, you are barren now. But He who "maketh the barren woman to keep house," can make the barren fig-tree to bear figs. "There is nothing too hard for the Lord." "Break off your sins by repentance." Believe the mercy of God; and use vigorously "the blood of Christ, who

through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, to purge your conscience from dead works." "Give yourselves unto prayer." Pray for the Holy Spirit to "help your infirmities:" and use the other helps which common discretion and the word of God instruct you to use. "Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own hearts in your chamber, and be still." "Search the Scriptures;" and, as they direct, shun bad company, and seek that which is good. "He that walketh with wise men shall become wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit: speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God."

"With many such words" I would fain exhort you to "save yourselves from this untoward generation."

But I must appeal to *others*, in the second place—to *you*, brethren, in whom I have not now to

“lay the foundation of repentance from dead works, and faith toward God, of the doctrine of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.” Yet “I would not be negligent to put you always in *remembrance* of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.” The great difficulty is to get “the present truth” into our hearts, viz. that “shortly we must put off this our tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath *shewed* us.” But who would think he had shewed it to us, considering what little *influence* it has upon our affections and conduct? And yet he *has* shewed it to us. We not only *know* it, as a *truth*, that “it is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment,” but we *embrace* it, as our *hope*, that the “Christ, who was once offered to bear the sins of many, unto them that look for him *shall appear the second time*, without sin, unto *salvation*.” “Wherefore, beloved, seeing that we look for such things,” how diligent ought we to be that we “may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless;” and how ought *we also* to account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation! He has spared us to the close of another year, in which, like the virgins of the parable, we have too much slumbered and slept. Had our Bridegroom come suddenly upon us, would he not have found us sleeping? and might not our entrance to the mar-

riage have been endangered or disorderly? But now once more, in mercy, his cry is heard, "Surely I come quickly." Let us "arise, therefore, and trim our lamps." "Let our loins be girded about, and our lights burning, and ourselves like unto men that wait for our Lord, that when he cometh and knocketh we may open unto him immediately. Blessed will be those servants whom our Lord when he cometh shall find watching." And oh! what a watching is this devolved on us by "the God of hope," viz. that we should "wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who hath delivered us from the wrath to come!" Do we indeed believe this, that there is "wrath to come"—"indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, upon the Jew first, and also upon the Gentile?" and do we indeed believe, that there is now in heaven, at the right hand of God, that Jesus who has delivered us from this wrath to come, by having been "once offered to bear our sins?" and do we indeed believe that he "will appear the second time, without sin, unto our salvation?" O awful expectation! O blessed hope! of "the glorious appearing of the great God and *our Saviour* Jesus Christ." What are *we* more than others, that, when "he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, they also which pierced him, and all the kindreds of

the earth shall wail because of him," *we* should say, "Even so, Amen," *longing* for that which will inspire *general dismay!* Have not *we* pierced him? Do any walk the earth more truly guilty than ourselves? any, who, if they "died the death," would be more constrained than ourselves to say, "We indeed *justly*, for we receive the due reward of our deeds?" How, then, can *we*, more than others, hope to see Christ, and not "wail because of him," under conscience of guilt and anticipation of punishment? Do we trust that "he hath washed us from our sins in his own blood?" and, as a proof of this, have we experienced "the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, shed on us abundantly through Him?" Are we no longer "conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of our minds?" Do we "abhor that which is evil and cleave to that which is good?" Are we "kindly affectioned one toward another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality? Do we bless them which persecute us: do we bless and curse not? Do we rejoice with them that do rejoice; and weep with them that weep? Are we of the same mind one toward

another: not minding high things, but condescending to men of low estate: not wise in our own conceits: recompensing to no man evil for evil: providing things honest in the sight of all men: as much as lieth in us living peaceably with all men—not avenging ourselves, but rather giving place unto wrath—not overcome of evil, but overcoming evil with good?” “If these things be in us and abound, they both *make*” and *prove* us “neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.” Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” “The truth therefore as it is in Jesus is, that we put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and that we be renewed in the spirit of our mind, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” If therefore we are not putting off our old sins, surely we have forgotten that the blood of Christ was once offered to purge us from them. If we are not putting on the new man, surely we have forgotten that “without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” And if, while we walk in this remiss and carnal manner, we “are

at ease," surely we are "blind and cannot see afar off." Were "the eyes of our understanding" truly "enlightened"—did we but see all things clearly, look into futurity, and consider that Christ "shall appear the second time," we should not be so indifferent in what state he may find us. Do we reflect that, as he finds us, so we shall remain to eternity? that then "he that is holy will be holy still, and he that is filthy will be filthy still;" and that he who has been but half diligent, though he may be saved, will "scarcely be saved," and not have "an abundant entrance ministered unto him into his Lord's everlasting kingdom?" For then "every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour." And as "he that hath sowed to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption, and as he that hath sowed to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting;" so "he that hath sowed sparingly, shall reap also sparingly, and he that hath sowed bountifully, shall reap also bountifully." When this, therefore, is our seed-time for eternity, when every thing that we do now will tell upon our everlasting condition, it ill becomes us to mispend in sin, or trifle away in slothful inactivity, that time, that short time here, which, well spent, might add to our eternal weight of glory. That servant who had made his pound five pounds had authority given him over five cities; whereas he

who so improved opportunities as to make his pound gain ten pounds, had authority given him over ten cities. When thus it shall be in the end of the world; and when the end of the world to us, for all working purposes, will be the end of our present life; and when that life is but “a span long;” how ought every hour of it to be laid out to the best advantage!

And yet, if we review the many hours of *this* closing year only, (to say nothing of years that are past,) how many of them have we squandered away in things for which we are, or ought to be, “now ashamed”—things that will be found to have brought us small interest for the talents we laid out upon them—things that are “wood, hay, stubble,” which will be “burned” and we shall “suffer loss!” Whereas, if we had listened to the Apostle, and “taken heed what we built,” we might now have had a similar edifice of “gold, silver, precious stones,” built surely on “the sure foundation,” and not fearing that “fire which shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.” “The time past of our life, therefore, may suffice us” to have done many things to so little profit. Henceforth, be it our anxious endeavour to “lose none of those things which we work, but to obtain a full reward.”

And, to this end, let us look unto Jesus in faith and love; and pray to be cleansed by his blood,

and animated and strengthened by his Spirit. He must "work all our works in us," if we would have them good and acceptable unto God. "Works done without the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ: yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin." Let us look therefore to our principles and motives, and pray and strive that they may be truly Christian. "Let Christ dwell in our hearts by faith." Let us cherish the thought of his presence, open our hearts to his Spirit, and desire, "in simplicity and godly sincerity," to "glorify him in our bodies and in our spirits which are his." Thus shall we be "filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God." Thus shall we be growing in conformity to the image of Christ, and so shall have the only scriptural ground of "boldness", with respect to his solemn day of judgment, "because as he is, so shall we be in this world." A heart full of loving trust toward him, a will stedfastly set to obey his commandments, and a godly, righteous, and sober life, are the only witness in ourselves to ourselves that we are born of him. We can have no other scriptural confidence that we shall "not be ashamed before him at his

coming." "He will appear, the second time, *unto salvation*" only "to them that *look* for him," to them that *love* and *long for* his appearing. None can do that, whose heart condemns them of living in a manner which they know, were he here, would meet with his disapprobation and rebuke. To "exercise ourselves *herein*, viz. to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men," *this* is the way to "have *hope* towards God that there shall be a resurrection" and an "eternal judgment" "in the day when the Son of man is revealed." After *this hope*, therefore, let us labour in *this way*. Let us labour after "the full assurance of it unto the end;" that when we have "died in the Lord," and slept our sleep "all the days of our appointed time" in the grave, we may peacefully awake on the morning of the resurrection, and, caught up together in the clouds to meet him in the air, may see his face with everlasting joy.

SERMON XXII.

2 COR. xii. 7—10.

And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

WE are here presented with St. Paul's *experience*, and *behaviour under it*. Let us first *consider* them a little more distinctly; and then, secondly, *apply* them for our instruction and encouragement. And

may the Lord enable us to be followers of Paul, even as he also was of Christ; that with him we may in due season, "through faith and patience, inherit the promises."

Let us consider first St. Paul's *experience*, as recorded in the text, and his *behaviour under it*.

Great sufferers require great encouragements and great support, that they may not faint under their trials. Therefore, as Christ had destined St. Paul for abundance of tribulations, so he fortified him with corresponding abundance of revelations. In the chapter before us we have an account of two remarkable events which befel the Apostle, and which his modesty appears to have concealed from the Christian world for fourteen years. Perhaps at the time mentioned in Acts xxii. 17, three years after his conversion, "when he was come again" out of Arabia "to Jerusalem, even while he prayed in the temple, he was in a trance:" and then "(whether in the body, or out of the body, he could not tell) he was caught up to the third heaven," to a personal interview (it should seem) with the Saviour, and to a sight of the glories of heaven. Afterwards "(whether in the body, or out of the body, he still could not tell) he was caught into Paradise." Our translation says, "Caught up into Paradise;" but the word "up" is not in the original, which merely says he was "caught," or "hurried

away" into Paradise, the abode of departed spirits who are in joy and felicity, yet not, in some sense (it should seem), in heaven.

Thus St. Paul saw both what was the *immediate* happiness of the *spirits* of the just, and what would be their *final* bliss, when, in *glorified soul and body*, they should be with Christ, around his throne. These revelations, then, of heaven and Paradise, were a peculiar favour conferred on the elect Apostle: and he was quite aware that they were so, and that he had been honoured by his Lord above the rest of his Christian brethren.

And now there was danger "lest, being lifted up with pride, he should fall into the condemnation of the Devil." Human nature was human nature even in St. Paul. "He was a man of like passions with ourselves:" and we all know how difficult it is for us to be raised above our neighbours in any flattering respect, without being puffed up. Hence, the Lord Jesus not only loved his Apostle well *enough* to shew him heaven and Paradise, but he also loved him *too* well to let him "be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations." He *gave* him, as a favour, he *gave* him "a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure," and so fall into Satan's snare. He made Satan keep out Satan. What this thorn in the flesh was, we are not

expressly told. It seems to have been a feebleness in his natural powers : so that while his “spirit was ready” for the accomplishment of great things, “his flesh was weak.” As to his real inward endowments, he was the very chiefest Apostle ; yet when he came to conversation or preaching, he was full of infirmities, which exposed him, in the most humiliating manner, to the neglect and contempt of worldly-minded critical hearers. Perhaps his bodily nerves had been so affected by celestial glory, as to have *injured his sight*, and caused him a difficulty in *expressing himself*, such as seemed perpetually to threaten his acceptance and his usefulness. That something of this kind, together with continual exposure to “suffer great things,” was his thorn in the flesh, is probable, both from the strain of our text, and from a comparison with it of the three following passages. 2 Cor. x. 10. “His letters, say they, are weighty and powerful ; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.” Hence, in 1 Cor. ii. 1, he reminds the Corinthians, “I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom : but I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.” And, lastly, to the Galatians, he says, “Ye know how that through infirmity of the flesh I preached the Gospel unto you at the first. And

my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected, but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus." He commends the Galatians for their spiritual penetration; that they had looked through those outward infirmities which made him undervalued by carnal critics, and had justly appreciated his rich inward spiritual endowments. On the whole, therefore, we may conclude, that *natural infirmity* was "the thorn in the flesh given to our Apostle."

And he *felt* it to be a thorn—it *rankled* in his flesh—and not knowing, at first, that it was *given* him, as a gracious check to spiritual pride, it was "not joyous but grievous." Such was his *experience*. Now mark his *behaviour under it*. Did he become a murmurer and complainer? Did he repine at the Lord's appointment? No. Was he then stupid and insensible, not seeing the rod, nor who had appointed it? No. The Apostle's behaviour was equally removed from brutish insensibility and from effeminate complaint. He *painfully felt* his thorn, and knew that the Lord had *allowed* it, though he did *not* know that the Lord had *given* it to him. He therefore at once betook himself to the right way of getting it extracted, if, indeed, its extraction should be permitted. "For this thing," says he, "I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me." "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for

thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." So merciful was the Lord Jesus, he answered the *spirit* instead of the *letter* of his Apostle's unadvised but honest prayer. The *thorn remained*, that Paul might not *grow proud*—but *adequate grace* was given, that Paul might not be *discouraged*. So the presence of the thorn, with grace to bear it well, was a far kinder answer to prayer, than if thorn and grace had vanished together. The Apostle was sensible of this; and now having learnt the *usefulness* of his thorn, he further learnt to rejoice in its presence; because it brought the help of Christ more directly to his aid, and made his very weakness redound to his Saviour's honour, to promote whose honour was the object dearest to his heart. "Most gladly," therefore, he concludes, "will I rather glory," than feel depressed, "in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure" in my thorn, and in all the obloquy, contempt, derision, or any other painful feeling to which it exposes me—yea, I take pleasure in all sorts of "infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions, distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong:" when Paul is feeble, then Christ is powerful: and when I can do nothing of myself, then "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

You have heard St. Paul's *experience*, and have marked his *behaviour under it*. Now therefore, in

the second place, let us endeavour to *apply* them for our own instruction and encouragement. .

And here let us observe, first, That “men of the world” are not the *only* persons liable to be puffed up with pride. There is such a sin as *spiritual* pride; the more dangerous *because* spiritual, and therefore not so easily perceived, nor so soon suspected, in himself by a child of God. The Apostle *says* indeed, and a Christian *may say* to himself, “What hast thou which thou hast not received? Now if thou hast received it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?” The Apostle clearly saw, and we can clearly see, the *unreasonableness* of boasting of any spiritual favours with which we may be honoured above others. We confess and feel we *ought not* to be vain of what is not our own, but God’s. But though our reason and judgment are against spiritual pride, it is quite possible for our heart to be affected by it. You perceive St. Paul was in so great danger of being affected by it, that the Lord was compelled, in love, to give him that painful thorn in the flesh to preserve him humble. And if the great Apostle was liable to spiritual pride, which of us will presume ourselves secure from the same subtle sin? We are not likely indeed to have St. Paul’s revelations; but then, neither, I fear, are we likely to have his natural and supernatural strength of mind to bear them properly. Little

superiorities may tempt little Christians to pride, as powerfully as great superiority tempted St. Paul.

It is difficult even for a true Christian to find himself distinguished by the Lord, not merely from the profane world, but from his brother, "with gifts and graces eminently adorned," and with the pleasure of the Lord prospering in his hand, and not feel some improper elevation and self-complacency. If even in words he do not "boast himself a little," he is apt to draw secret comparisons in his own favour, and approach the Pharisaic sentiment, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are." Therefore, Christian brethren, we must ever be on our guard against the inroads of spiritual pride—against the temptation to "think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think," if we perceive our spiritual views clearer, our spiritual endowments richer, and our spiritual labours and success more abundant than those of our surrounding brethren. When Satan cannot prevent our growing in grace, his next object is to make us vain of our growth; and when he cannot hinder us from being really eminent Christians, he would gladly lead us to take notice of our eminence, that so we may cease to be "poor in spirit," and lose the "kingdom of Heaven."

But we may observe, secondly; from the text, that "we have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities." The Lord Jesus

himself, in the days of his flesh, was tempted to spiritual pride, when "the Devil set him upon the pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down." But pride had no place in him, who, though the Son of God, was "meek and lowly in heart," and would not abuse his elevation. Experience, however, having taught him the Tempter's power, he knows how to compassionate and guard his exposed people. "Behold, he that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. The Lord himself is our Keeper." Mark how he kept his Apostle. He perceived his spirit to be in danger "through the abundance of the revelations;" and therefore he "gave him a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure." How gracious is the Lord, who will not withhold from us spiritual endowments because liable to be abused; but will give them, and give with them "a thorn in the flesh," that we may not abuse them! There is no good thing which, if left to ourselves, we should not abuse. Hence our souls would be barren indeed, if the Lord vouchsafed to us only such communications of his grace as could not be abused. But he deals not so with his favoured servants. He fills them with knowledge and understanding; but, since "knowledge puffeth up," along with it, he gives them mortification to keep them down. He lets their spirit soar, indeed, but he gives

them pain in the flesh to act as ballast, that they may not be carried away, and hurried into perdition.

My Christian brethren, have any of us made some considerable attainments in spiritual knowledge and holy practice? And have we been zealously engaged in promoting the cause and kingdom of Christ? Then I suppose *we* have had thorns that troubled us. We have met with circumstances that baffled our endeavours, that humbled us in our most promising attempts, and seemed to threaten our acceptance and usefulness altogether. Often when our hopes of success were highest, we have had grievous failures; and have effected little or nothing, when we flattered ourselves we were about to do great things. Thus, when we were sanguine and confident, we have had mortification after mortification; and our high-flown thoughts and schemes have met with some unexpected check which has spoiled all our carnal pleasures. "This was the Lord's doing." Our failure, our check, our mortification, was our "thorn in the flesh," our painful remembrancer that we "are worms and no men," and that "our strength is perfect weakness." No doubt this has been the experience of many of us, and may yet remain to be our experience. We are slow to learn our own nothingness, and practically to bear in mind that "Christ is all." If we find ourselves strong, and exulting in our strength, the Lord Jesus,

who is jealous of his own honour, may deal with our aspiring capabilities as he dealt with Gideon's flourishing army—"The Lord said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me." So from twenty-two thousand the Lord first reduced the people to ten thousand, and then he reduced the ten thousand to three hundred; and with them he delivered Israel from enemies numerous as the sand on the sea-shore, that his people might know that not their own, but "his right hand and his arm had gotten them the victory." We shall even find, both from history and from our own experience, that the greatest spiritual successes are obtained under such humbling accompanying circumstances, and by saints with such sore thorns in their flesh, that "the excellency of the power has manifestly been of God, and not of man."

But observe, Thirdly, How pain, or disappointment, or any other thorn in the flesh, should *operate* upon us, if we be true Christians. It should *lead us to Christ for relief*, as it led St. Paul. "For this thing," says he, "*I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me.*" "Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground." Affliction and trouble of any

and of every sort, whether bodily, or mental, or spiritual, are not sent us by chance, but by God; are not sent us at random, but with a special design, and to answer a purpose; and that purpose is, to bring us to feel our own helplessness, and to 'set our hope on God,' saying, "Now, Lord, what is my hope? Truly my hope is even in thee. Deliver me." Affliction and trouble are naturally undesirable and grievous, and both may and ought to be prayed against. They are "given" as incitements to earnest prayer, leading us to deep and humble and spiritual communion with "the Father of our spirits." "God doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve" us children of men "for his own pleasure, but for our profit," and especially to cure us of our evil habit of "restraining prayer before Him." Prayer is necessary for the continuance of our spiritual life and health. Prayer is the appointed channel through which we are replenished with "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost." Therefore it is, we are taught, encouraged, commanded, to pray, to "pray without ceasing," in order that we may be "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Prayer, then, the spirit and habit of prayer, is what the Lord desires to preserve in us, and must preserve in us, by some means, or we should perish ever-

lastingly. Now if we would be "instant in prayer" during our seasons of ease and comfort and happiness, doubtless the Lord would not afflict us so much as he does. But he knows how little we frequent his mercy-seat when all goes smoothly with us: whereas "in our affliction we seek him early." Yes, brethren, the humbling fact is even so. When we are in peace and plenty, we "restrain prayer before God:" but "when he slays us, then we seek him; we turn ourselves early and enquire after God. We then remember that God is our strength, and that the high God is our Redeemer." Hence he will put himself to the pain of paining us rather than lose us. He will slay our flesh, slay our families, slay our health, slay our peace, slay our hopes, slay every earthly comfort we have, as he did Job's, rather than let our souls be slain by Satan, and by our own hands, through our neglect of prayer. When therefore "we are afflicted, let us pray." Whatever be our "thorn in the flesh," and we each know best our own thorn, it is given us by Christ, to warn us that danger is nigh, and to bring us close to his "throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." And if our affliction *continue*, our prayer must *continue also*. *Delay* is not *refusal*. Paul knew that, and therefore he *pressed* his suit for help: "for this thing I besought the Lord *thrice*."

That Lord himself had set him the example, when he kneeled down and prayed to his Father a first, second, and third time, "saying the same words:" and that Lord has "spoken *us* a parable to this, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." When therefore our thorn *rankles*, let us renew our petition; and let our pain give *importunity* to our prayer. For this thing *we* may lawfully beseech the Lord *thrice* that it may depart from us. He holds back his answer to try our faith and patience: and what he sees not fit to grant to-day, he may see fit to grant to-morrow; or if not to-morrow, on the third day. At all events he will see fit to grant it some day, if we persevere in our suit, and what we ask be really good for us.

But we should observe, lastly, from the text, that *we may* be asking, and with great importunity, what, if granted, would *not* be for our *good*, but for our *hurt*. Paul besought the Lord, even thrice, that his thorn might *depart* from him: and yet, in a certain sense, he "asked amiss"—asked, I mean, that which, if granted, would have been to him "an occasion of falling." So then, my Christian brethren, whatever relief we pray for in our trouble, we should always pray for it with at least the mental proviso, that it would be good for us. Not that the Apostle was blameable in pressing his suit that the thorn might

depart from him. It was very grievous to St. Paul's flesh :

“ And nature may have leave to speak,
 And plead before its God,
 Lest the o'erburden'd heart should break,
 Beneath his heavy rod.”

WATTS.

Besides, his thorn was not apparently for the honour of Christ: on the contrary, it seemed to interfere exceedingly with his ministerial usefulness, and threatened almost to destroy it. Hence he judged its removal both naturally and spiritually desirable; and accordingly, for the glory of Christ, and the good of perishing souls, who were waiting to hear from his mouth the tidings of salvation through a crucified Saviour, he implored for its removal. Since therefore the Apostle pressed his suit *with a view* (a *mistaken* view, we grant, but yet the *best* view his judgment could take at the time)—with a view, I say, to the glory of Christ, and the good of souls, he was not blameable, but commendable, for pressing it so earnestly. Whatever, then, to the best of our judgment, will tend to honour Christ and benefit man, that we shall be justified in asking with all perseverance. Such, at least, seems the conclusion properly deducible in the notice taken of St. Paul's prayer. Had he, *strictly* speaking, “asked amiss,” probably *no* notice would have been taken of his

prayer. But notice *was* taken of it—he received a special answer about it from the Lord Jesus, who thereby showed that he approved of the *spirit* of his Apostle's prayer, though he refused to grant it according to the *letter*. Yea, he *therefore* refused to grant the letter of the petition, because he saw the letter to be contrary to the spirit of the petitioner. He knew his Apostle longed to promote his glory and the good of souls, and longed for the removal of his thorn, as conceiving it a *hindrance* to his good designs. Could St. Paul have been aware that his thorn was given him not as a hindrance, but as a *furtherance*, to his pious endeavours for the promotion of his Saviour's glory, he would *never* have asked for its removal. The Lord Jesus knew this, and therefore gave his faithful and beloved Apostle *not* what his *words*, but what his *spirit* prayed for—not what he literally asked, but what he *would* have asked, could *he* have seen as far as *his God* saw.

My Christian brethren, you who are accustomed fervently to pray to Jesus, or to the Father through him, there is something to my mind *peculiarly encouraging* in the view here presented of our Saviour's *attention* to our prayers. "We," ignorant sinners, oftentimes "cannot order our speech" aright "by reason of darkness," and "know not what we ask." But that compassionate Saviour; "who knows our necessities before we ask, and our

ignorance in asking," "helps our infirmities." If our spirit prays, and our heart inwardly longs for the promotion of his glory, then, whatever we ask, may we cheerfully rely upon his infinite grace and wisdom to give us, not the *evil* we may crave in *words*, but the *good* we crave in *spirit*. Thus he answered the prayers of Augustine's pious mother, as is beautifully recorded by her *converted* son. Augustine had hitherto lived at Carthage, a profligate young man, indeed, but yet under his mother's eye, and within the sound of her admonitions and entreaties. But now he had resolved on going to Rome. The Lord was leading him thither, that he might hear Ambrose and be converted and live. His mother however naturally thought he was going only for the more unrestrained indulgence of his evil passions. "But," says he, "the true cause of my removal was at that time hidden both from me and my mother, who therefore bewailed my going away, and followed me to the sea-side. But I deceived her, though she held me close, with a view either to call me back, or to go with me. I pretended that I only meant to keep company with a friend till he set sail; and with difficulty persuaded her to remain that night in a place dedicated to the memory of Cyprian. But that night I departed privily; and she continued weeping and praying. Thus did I deceive my

mother, and *such* a mother! Yet was I preserved from the dangers of the sea, foul as I was in all the mire of sin; and a time was coming, when thou, O Lord, wouldest wipe away my mother's tears with which she watered the earth, and even forgive this my base undutifulness. And *what* did she beg of thee, my God, at that time, but that I might be *hindered* from sailing? And *Thou*, in profound wisdom, *regarding* the *hinge* of her *desire*, *neglectedst* the *particular object* of her present *prayers*, that thou mightest gratify the *general* object of her devotions. The wind favoured us, and carried us out of sight of the shore, when in the morning she was distracted with grief, and filled thine ears with groans and complaints; whilst Thou, in contempt of her violent agonies, hurriedst me along by my lusts to complete her desires, and punishedst her carnal desire with the just scourge of immoderate grief. *She* loved my *presence* with her, as is natural to mothers, though in her the affection was uncommonly strong; and she knew not what joy thou wast preparing for her by my *absence*. *She knew not; therefore* she wept and wailed."

My brethren, there is not, I think, a more touching encouragement to unrestrained prayer than the fact exemplified in the text and in this narrative of Augustine's, viz. how that the Lord, in

“profound wisdom, regards the *hinge* of our desire; neglecting the particular object of our present prayers, that he may gratify the general object of our devotions.”

What therefore, upon serious consideration, we think would promote our Lord's glory, and the good of our own and our fellow-creatures' souls, for that let us ask with all simplicity and perseverance. And, on the other hand, if we have any “thorn in the flesh” which we honestly deem a hindrance to our usefulness, let us not hesitate equally to pray for the removal of it.

The Saviour will regard the *hinge* of our desire, as he did in the case of St. Paul, and Augustine's mother; and will give us, not perhaps the most *literal*, but certainly the most *favourable* answer to our prayer. He will not “send us *empty* away.” If he remove our thorn, that will be well. If he continue it, that will be well also; yea, it will be “riches of grace” if he honour us to bear his cross, and endue us with strength to bear it in a proper spirit. Blessed was Mary “that believed:” but more blessed were the Philippians “to whom it was given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake, having the same conflict as they saw in Paul.” Those are most honoured who have most trials, and withal grace sufficient to endure them well. They are most

conformed to their Saviour's image as a patient sufferer, and therefore will be most conformed to his image as a glorified king. "If we suffer with him," says St. Paul, "we shall also reign with him."

If therefore, Christian brethren, we have infirmities of the flesh, best known to ourselves, and for the removal of which we have so long prayed without success, that we seem bound to conclude their removal is undesirable, "most gladly let us glory in our infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon us." "He that once overcame for us," says Leighton, "always overcomes in us. That he lets temptation and tribulation assault us, disproves not his love; yea, it doth but give evidence of its firmness. He suffers *others* to lie soft, and sit warm, and pamper their flesh at leisure; but he hath nobler business for his *champions*, his *worthies*, and most of all for the *stoutest* of them. He calls *them* forth to honourable *services*, to the hardest *encounters*. He sets them on, one to fight with sickness, another with poverty, another with reproaches and persecutions, with prisons and irons, and with death itself. And all this while, loves he them *less*, or they him? Oh, no. He looks on, and *rejoices* to see them do valiantly. It is the joy of his heart. No sight on earth so sweet to him. And it is all the while by *his* subduing, and

in *his* strength, that they hold out the conflict, and obtain the conquest." Well therefore might a chief standard-bearer in this army of suffering Christians say, "I *take pleasure* in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." "Let us go and do likewise."

THE END.

