





SERMONS.

BY

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OF N. Y. E. CONFERENCE.

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N O T E .

THE author does not publish these Sermons as finished discourses. They are merely a portion of his pulpit preparations, as an extemporaneous preacher. He is now an invalid, and it is not likely that he will ever preach much more from the pulpit. Should it please God to permit him to do so, he would rejoice over it more than over great treasures; but there is no great prospect of it, at least for the present. He has concluded therefore to send forth to the world these Sermons, not for the critic's eye to search, but with a hope that they may aid in his attempts still to do good, and contribute to the promotion of the Saviour's kingdom. The volume is affectionately dedicated to his personal friends and former parishioners.

S. W. LAW.

March, 1857.

SERMON I.

INSPIRATION OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

“HOLY men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”
2 PETER 1: 21.

THE allusion here is to the prophets and writers of the Old Testament Scriptures; and the truth asserted is, that what they wrote is truly and divinely inspired. The apostle Paul declares this same truth in other and more direct, but not, we think, in more emphatic language; as when he says: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction in righteousness.” The connection shows that it is to this truth that the apostle Peter refers in the text. The connection runs in these words: “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation: For the prophecy came not of old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

What, however, is thus declared in reference to the writers of the Old Testament, may be also declared in reference to the writers of the New: so that the important truth we have here introduced to our attention

is to be considered as embracing the whole of the sacred volume, extending from Moses to the last of the apostles. "All Scripture," not only as written by holy men of old, but by holy men after Christ, is "given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, and instruction."

It is to be doubted, however, whether we consider this truth, as a general thing, as carefully and as seriously as we should do: whether, that is, we are sufficiently impressed with the fact that the Scriptures we have in our hands, and in which our fathers and mothers have instructed us, are a revelation from God; that here he is speaking to us, and communicates to us his own will and messages of truth and mercy. It is true we profess to believe in the inspiration of this book, and are always prepared to say that it is the word of God: but then is not our faith too vague and indefinite, and does it not influence too little our thoughts and feelings? Apprehending that this is the case, I propose to discuss this subject for a short time this morning. I propose to consider the truth announced, that the Scriptures are divinely inspired; that they were written by men moved by the Holy Ghost; who, that is, were subjects of the immediate and plenary influence of the Holy Ghost; and that, therefore, they are a direct and special revelation from God to mankind. May the same blessed Spirit who indited these sacred writings be present with us, and graciously assist us to comprehend and appreciate this truth.

I. In entering upon the subject, it is a point worthy to be referred to at the outset, that the sacred writers themselves claimed that they were inspired. So far as

the text is concerned, this would appear to be true with respect to the writers of the Old Testament only; for it is to them, as we have said, that these words refer; but then it is also true, as we have intimated, with respect to the writers of the New Testament also. They all claimed to speak in the name and under the inspiration of the Most High, the latter as well as the former, and in the one case as distinctly as in the other. "Thus saith the Lord," is the solemn and imposing manner in which they wrote as well as spoke; and they adopted this manner because it was their perfect conviction that God spake in them and through them in the words they uttered and recorded.

And this is a point, you will admit, in regard to which they could not be mistaken. They could not suppose themselves inspired, in the sense in which they pretended to be, and yet be deceived. It is true a deluded man, a fanatic, might suppose himself to be the subject of inspiration, while, in fact, he was merely the victim of a morbid infatuation; but these men were not fanatics, nor can any philosophical observer of human nature ascribe to them this character. They knew whether their claim to be inspired was true or false. They knew whether they were acting the part of honest men, or practising a deception. Moreover, it does not follow, that because, in one case, a person may suppose he is inspired when he is not, there may be any doubt or uncertainty in the case when a person *is* truly inspired. If, indeed, he is so inspired, he can not be deceived or doubtful in regard to it; and if he is not a deluded or dishonest man, he will not claim to be so inspired when he is not.

There is, then, much importance attached to this claim of the sacred writers. They all pretended to speak with the same authority, and to be moved by the same Spirit. They all said, in effect, in the language of Paul: "Which things we teach, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." We must not forget, furthermore, in regard to this claim, that not only did the sacred writers believe that they personally were inspired, but they believed also in the inspiration of each other. And this I conceive to be an interesting consideration. Those who followed Moses, and wrote the books succeeding his in the sacred canon, believed that he was inspired; and so those who followed them believed that they were inspired; and so on to the end of the volume. The writers of the New Testament believed that the writers of the Old Testament were inspired, and so, too, they believed that they, as they succeeded one another, were inspired. The text, and the passage quoted from Paul, shows that this is the case with regard to the writers of the Old Testament, while there are decisive intimations in some of the Epistles, that it is also the case with regard to the writers of the New. There is, for instance, a passage in one of the Epistles of Peter, in which he refers to the apostle Paul as writing according to the wisdom given unto him, in all his Epistles; and in which he says, that the unlearned and unstable wrest the things that Paul had written, as they do the other Scriptures, to their destruction. Here, you will observe, that he ascribes the writings of Paul to "*the wisdom given unto him*"—the special wisdom of God, the inspiration of the Spirit; and you will observe,

too, that he places them upon a footing with "*the other Scriptures,*" the Scriptures of the Old Testament, written by the prophets. This is conclusive that they believed in the claim of one another.

In this connection, now, I would remark still further, in relation to the Old Testament, that our Lord, who, as the Son of God, could not err nor be deceived, continually referred to its writings, and quoted them as inspired and authoritative records. He never intimated to the Jews that they held these writings in too great reverence, or attached to them a superstitious sanctity; but he directed them to search these Scriptures, to regard their teachings, and to follow them in preference to their own unauthorized traditions. And then, in relation to the New Testament, we know that Christ promised to his disciples who wrote its different books the special and miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit; that he informed them that this Spirit should guide them into all truth; that he should bring to their remembrance whatsoever *he* had said unto them; that he should take of things of God and show them unto them; thus placing them on equality with the writers under the former covenant, and putting his sanction alike upon them all.

II. With this understanding, then, of the claim of the sacred writers, we are prepared to consider, in the next place, the light in which their claim is to be viewed. We are prepared, in other words, for the inquiry, In what sense were they inspired? How far were they moved by the Holy Ghost when they wrote, and to what extent do they speak to us in the name and with the authority of the Most High?

Surely this is an important point in our subject, and one on which we should attentively meditate. If God has spoken to us anywhere by express revelation, it is here. If he has not spoken here, then has he left us to ourselves, and we have no standard and guide of truth, but the indefinite and uncertain light of nature. How interesting, then, is the inquiry before us; not only the inquiry, Do these men claim to speak by inspiration? but the inquiry, How far does their claim extend?

In respect to this point, I observe that there are two leading views or theories entertained by enlightened and evangelical Christians with regard to it, either of which, according as it is adopted, gives to the Scriptures a divine origin and sanction. It matters but little, perhaps, which of these views we take, we arrive, in the end, to the same conclusion; which is, that the Scriptures are the word of God, directly and exclusively. There is, then, the view entertained by some, that the Scriptures are inspired *verbally*; that is, that the writers of these books were so moved by the Holy Ghost, that not only their thoughts, but also their words and forms of expression, were dictated to them. Not only did they record the facts and truths that the Spirit suggested to their minds, as suggested, purely and alone, but they recorded them in the very language that the Spirit suggested also. And it must be acknowledged that there is some reason for this view, and that those who hold it have much to say in its favor. Nor does the diversity of style apparent in the different books, though constituting an argument against it, prove that it is an altogether inconsistent view. The

Holy Spirit might move the human mind so as to hold control over the words as well as thoughts, and yet not necessarily change the characteristic style of a particular writer. He could do this by a supernatural elevation of the mind, giving a breadth of view, and a knowledge of facts and truths, not otherwise to be reached, and also a loftier and more striking diction in which to state the things thus revealed. This view, then, whether we receive it or not, is not in itself unreasonable. There is no philosophical impossibility in the thing supposed: it might have been so had God seen best.

There are, those, however, who do not think, upon a careful survey of the character and style of the Scriptures, that this is altogether a likely view. Hence another theory is advanced on the subject, which is, that the thoughts of the sacred writers were inspired, but not their words; the facts and truths they recorded were suggested and dictated by the Holy Spirit, but they were left to their own style or use of language in recording them. Thus they would say that the *matter* of the Holy Scriptures is divine, but the *manner* is human. The only assistance that the writers received in the latter respect, was that which naturally accrued to them from the high and exalted state to which their minds were elevated while thus under the influence of the Spirit. And this view they think accounts for the diversity of style prevailing, and yet gives to the Scriptures a divine origin. And such is the case. We see plainly, in this view, how the different writers exhibit so prominently their personal characteristics; how, though acting under the immediate influence of the

Holy Spirit, some express themselves in a style of loftiness and grandeur, some of strength and vehemence, and some of elegance and quiet beauty; and how, in all this disparity of manner, God speaks to us in one holy and harmonious revelation.

Nor is this view liable to the objection of lessening the profound respect and reverence due to the Scriptures as the word of God. It fully regards them as his word, eminently and sacredly his, and gives no countenance to loose and indifferent sentiments on this subject. It allows no admixture of human wisdom and speculations, and hears only the voice of God, and acknowledges only divine authority and truth. The men through whom the Almighty has thus spoken employ, it is true, human language, and it may be they employ it without superhuman dictation as to words and phrases, yet they record no fact, no doctrine, no precept, no counsel, no thought whatever, not first impressed upon the mind in a superhuman form by the Holy Spirit. They spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Here, then, we have the two orthodox views in which the Scriptures are held to be inspired. Which of these views best expresses the truth it is not my purpose now to inquire. Their comparative merits are not, I think, an essential point. With either as my belief, I can bow with complete submission to this holy book, as a revelation from God, and can reverently listen to its teachings as to the utterance of his counsel and will. I can see how, in either sense, Paul might say, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God;" and Peter declare, "We have a sure word of prophecy, that came

not by the will of men, but by men moved—directed, influenced, supernaturally illuminated—by the Holy Ghost:" and in either sense I am prepared to say: "Thy Word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path."

III. We are prepared now, having advanced thus far into the subject, to advert, in the next place, though we must do it briefly, to the proof or evidences we have that the sacred writers were thus inspired. And surely this is a most important and absorbing part of the subject. No more momentous question can be proposed than this, Is the Bible indeed a revelation from God? Are we to consider it truly as a divine message, bearing a divine authority, speaking to us divine truth? Or is it, after all, a cunningly devised fable, a mere imposing array of fallacies, a mockery to the hopes of mankind, a false light amidst the darkness and mysteries of earth? Surely, every human being must feel an interest in this question, and whether he is a believer or an unbeliever, he must find his thoughts often turning to it. He must wish to know how the truth with regard to this question stands. And it is a question, I bless God, that may be satisfactorily settled. He has not left it to uncertain speculation; he has surrounded it with a splendid array of evidences, which, if carefully and seriously considered, must produce the conviction that this is indeed the word of God. I do not hesitate to say that it is impossible for any intelligent and candid man honestly and thoroughly to investigate the evidences on which the claim of the Bible rests, and yet withhold the assent of his understanding to its divinity and inspira-

tion. The difficulty is, that unbelievers do not thoroughly examine this subject, or if they do, it is with their verdict already formed, and without an openness to conviction. Take, for instance, David Hume and Thomas Paine. The former, the most subtle and ingenious of all skeptical writers, as well as the most classical, frankly confessed that he had never carefully read the New Testament through in his life; and the latter, the most vulgar and sophistical of such writers, finding the Scriptures a continual and burning rebuke upon the gross vices of his life, determined to resist their authority, and sat down to canvass their claim with the avowed purpose that he would expose and overthrow it. Now I submit that such men, whether gifted like the one, or weak like the other, are unprepared to receive the truth; and that they can not, from their manner of attending to the subject, be expected to decide correctly in regard to it. But let one penetrated with the importance of the subject, serious and candid, with no levity of feeling or opposition of heart, only anxious to know what is true—let such a one examine the evidences of the inspiration of the Bible, and I venture to affirm he will find himself impressed and convinced by them. Of course I can not enter extensively into a consideration of this part of the subject at this time, and yet I would offer a few suggestions.

There is, then, I would just remark, in the first place, some proof bearing on this question from the character of the sacred writers. It is perfectly obvious, from all that appears concerning them, that they were true and honest men, who believed in God and feared him, and who were too upright, and too much re-

strained by the faith they professed, to deceive willfully their fellow-men. It is also perfectly obvious that they could not, in such a case as this, be themselves deceived, as has been before remarked, and thus unwittingly practise imposition upon others. They were sober, candid, solid men. Again, it is obvious that they had not the least motive in the world to practise deception, and that if they did so, they did it without object or reasonable aim, and in perfect disregard to their only present or ultimate welfare. They gained nothing in a worldly point of view; they sacrificed every thing near and dear to them, so far as this life is concerned; they parted with honor, ease, wealth, friends—every thing constituting earthly good—and exposed themselves to suffering, persecution, exile, and death. Take the case of Moses or Paul, and I declare I can not, upon any philosophical principle whatever, account for the course they pursued, upon the supposition that they were impostors. Deceived they could not be, for they were men of strong minds and extraordinary intelligence; and if they were deceivers, not knowing, as in their circumstances they could not know, nor even vaguely surmise, the success that followed them, it is impossible to assign an adequate reason or motive for their action, and therefore impossible to comprehend it. From the character and position of these men, then—upright, strong-minded, with nothing to gain by deception, and holding to a faith in which willful deception could not originate, there is presumptive proof that they spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

But this is not the only proof we have touching this

subject. There is direct proof also, such as the most skeptical must yield to, and such as meets all reasonable demand in the case. The sacred writers brought with them, as it was fitting they should do, sure and infallible evidence that they acted under a divine commission, and were the bearers of a divine message; and that they did not deliver or record only human words. They came, so to speak, with their credentials, certifying that they were the special and accredited messengers of heaven. They came with the superhuman power to work miracles, and *did* work miracles, thus evincing to the world that they were divinely commissioned and inspired.

A miracle is an event superior or contrary to the established course of nature, performed by the almighty power of God, which *none* but God can perform, and which He only performs in attestation of His own truth, and his own messengers of truth. If, therefore, it is true that holy men of old did perform miracles, the conclusion becomes clear and inevitable that they acted under the sanction of God and the influence of his Holy Spirit.

But here, you will probably say, is the great point in the whole question. Did the sacred writers indeed work miracles, and is there any evidence sufficient to make us sure of it? I reply, in answer to this, most confidently and earnestly—*They did work miracles—there is sufficient proof of it—we may know it.*

The only proof we have on the subject—the only proof of which the subject is susceptible—is of course testimony; and the first inquiry that arises is, Is testimony in itself, in any case, a sufficient basis of belief?

Is it competent ever to establish a fact, and to satisfy and assure us in regard to it? And you will all answer without hesitation that it is. Much that we know and believe comes to us through testimony alone; nor have we the least suspicion with reference to the reality of our faith and information in this direction. We feel as sure of what we admit, in all cases where the testimony is good and adequate, as we do in regard to what comes to us through the medium of the senses or through mathematical demonstration. We are all as certain that there once lived such a man as Alexander the Great, or Julius Cæsar, or Cromwell, or Napoleon, as if we had seen them with our own eyes; and yet our only evidence as to the fact of their existence is testimony. So, too, we have no doubt that there exist in the world such cities as London and Paris, and yet but a few here, if any, know it in any other way than by the testimony of others. So that it is perfectly clear that testimony may be such as completely to establish a given fact, and completely to satisfy our minds in relation to it.

The next inquiry then that arises here is, Is the testimony in our possession concerning the miracles of the Scriptures good and adequate, and worthy our acceptance and confidence? And in reply to this, I do not scruple to say that if testimony is ever reliable, and can establish any fact in existence, it is reliable here, and triumphantly establishes the truth of the miracles of the Bible. I can not of course canvass this subject at this time, and can do nothing more than turn your attention to it, and invite you to its careful examination or review; but I would just advert to a few of

the points which you will find in connection with it. You will find then, when you come to investigate this testimony, that it was given by eye-witnesses who saw themselves the miracles in question; that these witnesses were competent men, having too much understanding to be deluded—and candid men, having too much honesty to deceive others; that they recorded their testimony at the time, in the places, and to the very people, when, and where, and among whom these miracles were performed; that they are full and clear and particular in their relation of all the circumstances; that imposition, had it existed, must have been detected at the time; that their testimony was never invalidated, nor proved false or suspicious; that they gained nothing in a worldly view by giving it, but subjected themselves to the severest suffering, and the most cruel and trying persecution; that hundred and thousands, who could have discovered the deception had they been false witnesses, were convinced by them, and like them suffered the loss of all things for their faith; and that even their very enemies, unable to contradict their testimony, virtually acknowledged its whole truth by attributing these wonderful works to the power of the Wicked One. You will find, moreover, that this testimony, recorded at the time, and published to contemporaries, has come down faithfully to us, the authenticity and genuineness of the books of Scripture being points which skeptics have no longer the face to assail. To say nothing of the inspiration of these books, but considering them merely as human productions, it is admitted that they are reliable historical records; that they are, to say the least, as deserving confidence and

respect as any records that have come down to us from the past; that to the critic's eye there is far more decided internal evidence of veracity and fidelity to truth; and that considering them in this light, with no higher than human authorship, they are unimpeachable and without fault. Now I do not hesitate to say that testimony thus originally recorded, and thus transmitted to the succeeding generations of men, may be justly denominated "a faithful saying, and worthy *all* acceptation." I feel perfectly warranted to say that if we may believe any fact or occurrence that has ever taken place in the world, we may believe the miracles that are recorded in Scripture; and that if there is no truth in these, there is no truth in human testimony whatever. And I can not omit to remind you that men whose business it is to examine and investigate the evidence of testimony; who become familiar, therefore, with such investigations, and skillful in them—men, I mean, of the legal profession, are almost invariably believers, theoretically, in the truth of the Scripture and Christianity. Whether they have made a formal profession of the Christian faith, or, like too many others, are putting this off amid the busy calls of life, wherever they have given special attention to this subject, you will find them too deeply impressed with the fullness and completeness of the evidence to declare themselves skeptical. Run over in your minds the names of the great and distinguished men of this profession, known many of them in all parts of the world, and see who among them were infidels. Nearly all of them, with the peerless WEBSTER of our own land, were acknowledged believers in the Bible and the religion of Christ.

The truth is, the historical testimony in favor of the miracles of Christ and his apostles, as well as of Moses and the prophets before Him, is such that their ready and well-trained minds can not find a flaw in it: they are compelled to receive it as perfect and conclusive. And now I surely need not add after this, if testimony *can* warrant us to believe any thing in the past, if it is such that it *does* warrant us to believe the miracles of the Scriptures, if God only can give power to work miracles, and if he gives it only to those whom he has sent to confirm a revelation from him, that therefore the writers of the Bible were sent by him, and that what they wrote is divine and holy truth. On this ground alone we are compelled to believe that they spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

But there are other evidences besides this, to which we might refer, had we time, equally clear and decisive. There is the evidence, for instance, arising from the fulfillment of prophecies, which can not fail to impress every candid and attentive mind. Take, for illustration, the predictions uttered by Isaiah and Jeremiah with respect to the captivity of the Jews. These prophets declared, while yet the Jews were dwelling safely in their own homes in Palestine, that they should be subdued as a nation and carried away for their sins captives to Babylon; that their captivity should last just seventy years; that at that time Babylon should be itself subdued by the Medes and Persians, who, when the prophets spoke, were two different nations, and both of them comparatively obscure; that the Medes and Persians should act under the leadership of a man by the name of Cyrus; and that Cyrus subduing Ba-

bylon should restore the Jews to their own land. Now I ask you how could these men, if they were not inspired, have foretold these things? Their predictions were uttered years before Cyrus was born, and even before the Jews were conquered and forced away, and how knew they that all these things would come to pass? And yet they did come to pass, as every student in history knows, precisely as they declared. Just at the expiration of seventy years Cyrus accomplished the decree of heaven.

This, however, is only one case, and it is referred to merely as an illustration. Let any one examine this subject thoroughly, especially with reference to the prophecies concerning Christ, and if he is a reasonable man he will find the conviction forced upon him that the prophets were truly inspired.

But another kind of evidence meeting us as we advance in this investigation arises internally from the Scriptures themselves. It is denominated by writers on the subject the *internal evidence* of the truth of the Scriptures. To some minds it carries with it greater weight than any other class of evidence bearing on the question; and to every mind conversant with it, it must convey a deep and irresistible impression. It is based upon the consideration that the sublimity of the doctrines revealed in the Scriptures, the purity of their morals, the perfection of their precepts, the high and superhuman excellency of all that they teach, and recommend, and enjoin upon mankind, clearly indicate their divine origin, and prove that the men who wrote these things "spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." I can only mention this evidence at this time

and commend it to your examination. Look at the subject in this light carefully. Answer the question, Where could these doctrines have come from, these lessons and precepts of morality, these far-reaching views of God, and of man, and of immortality, so just, so lofty, so full of light and consolation—and so calculated to promote the purity and happiness of our race, where could they have come from but from God? The sages of the heathen world never proposed any thing that can be considered worthy of even a comparison with them. Why this difference? Why do we find in the Scriptures only teachings like these? It is because the human mind alone, darkened and debased by sin, can not rise to such pure and ennobling views, and can not erect so sublime a standard of truth and duty. These views inspired men only could reach, this standard inspired men only propose.

Many other things might be said indicating the abundance of evidence with which the claim of the sacred writers is supported, and on which the faith of believers rests as an immovable foundation. I have not, however, designed to do more than just to glance at some of the prominent points in this array of proof, and to direct your minds to a careful and more thorough investigation of the subject at your leisure. Sure I am that the believer will be more confirmed in his faith by such an investigation, and that the skeptic will find that in rejecting the Scriptures he is rejecting a true revelation from God, and is shutting out from his mind the real and divine light of truth. But there is another point to which I have been hastening in my remarks, on which I have been desirous to dwell in

the consideration of our theme, and which I have kept in sight from the commencement, but for which I have left myself almost no time; and that is the advantages which this view of the Holy Scriptures give to their possession. To this interesting point I can not pretend now hardly to refer; and yet I can not close without saying that in the fact that the Scriptures are inspired are clustered the highest and most important advantages to man as an intelligent, accountable, immortal being. If they are inspired they are of course reliable and authoritative in all that they record and teach. They may be depended on as infallible and certain in all their parts, their narrations, their doctrines, their ethics, their revelations on all subjects and things concerning alike the past and the future. If they are inspired, then, as I designed particularly to notice, we have positive information in regard to the creation of the world and the origin of the human family; a correct account of the cause and commencement of sin and its attendant evils; a certain standard by which to test and understand all points and questions of morals; an answer to that most momentous and absorbing inquiry, Is there any thing for man beyond death?—and above all, a plain history and statement of the way of salvation. On these topics we should know nothing, or nothing distinctly and certainly, but for the Bible; and if this is rejected as an inspired book we are thrown back upon a level with the nations who live in total ignorance, or in wasted traditions and fabulous conjectures, in relation to them. If the Bible is, after all, a mere fable, all is dark and dreary as it respects the past, the present, and the future. There is no light,

no hope, no sure anchorage on the dismal sea of human existence if not through the inspiration of this book. But if this is indeed inspired—if the great and glorious Creator here speaks to the world—if these good men men spake as they were moved by the Spirit of Truth, then all is clear and bright, then has man some certain knowledge what he is, from whence he came, and whither he is going, then may he know what he must do to be saved. All these advantages, in their wide and immense relations, come arraying themselves before us when we regard the Scriptures in their divine and sacred character.

But I can not dwell upon this consideration, nor upon other interesting points which might be brought on after it, at this time. Our subject is too fruitful of thought for one discourse, and with only an imperfect development I must dismiss it. Let, however, what has been said lead you to prize more highly, to love more ardently, and to study more diligently the Scriptures that Providence has placed in your possession. Oh! how much you owe to this book! How much indeed does the world, especially this and other Christian lands, owe to it! Think what this and other enlightened lands would be but for the Bible; and to do this you have only to think what those lands are that are destitute of the Bible. How dark and degraded, how cheerless and hopeless, are all such portions of the earth to-day! No Sabbath dawns with its holy quiet and sanctifying rest on them. No bright and blessed hope of another and immortal state dispels their anxious surmises of the future, and assures them of an existence on the other side of death. No cheering pro-

clamation of the "glad tidings of great joy," the advent of the Saviour and the redemption of the cross, has ever broken the moral gloom of their minds, and opened to them the "living way" to God and to heaven. There they live in doubt and die in despair. But with us it is not so. Ours is a land where the light of revelation shines. We have the holy oracles of truth, and therefore we differ from others. But are we improving this incalculable blessing as we should? Are the Scriptures our guide and counsellor, and are they making us wise unto salvation? Do we search or neglect them, do we follow or disregard them? There are those who would undermine our confidence in this book, setting us adrift like themselves upon the uncertain sea of human speculation, and leading us on in the idle pursuit of the foolish and dangerous systems of an infidel and falsely styled philosophy. Are we resisting these temptations of the wicked and deceived, and amid the multiform and changing errors of the day are we clinging to the Bible as the only true and authoritative word of God? Be assured this book can never be superseded: it is the Creator's full and last express revelation, and it will remain to the end of time, man's only sure source of moral light, outliving all the vain theories and idle conceits of perverted reason. It is the book from which our fathers learned the way to heaven. It supported them in life, comforted them in death, and has conducted them safely to God. We will follow them in their footsteps; we will go by the same sure light; we will pursue the same old paths; we will not turn to the right nor to the left to find any new or better way. It

is enough for us to know that they trusted in God, as manifested in this book, and were never confounded. The same blessed instructions and promises, if we adhere to them, will carry us also safely through, and bring us after the toils of our pilgrimage to immortality and eternal life. Never, then, will we renounce the Bible; but we will faithfully read and live by it. No man shall take it from us; but we will earnestly contend for it as the faith once delivered to the saints. We will stand by this book: we will bow in reverence to this book: we will cling to it in life, we will rest on it in death.

SERMON II.

O N P R E A C H I N G .

“I CHARGE thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.” 2 TIM. 4: 1, 2.

WHEN the apostle addressed to Timothy these Epistles he was occupying, though comparatively a young man, an interesting and a responsible field of labor. The fact that the apostle appointed him to this field is evidence that he judged him qualified for it; and the fact that he continued him here, is evidence that he was not disappointed in him. It was not, therefore, on account of any incompetency or unfaithfulness in Timothy that the Epistles were written, but it was simply to aid him in his work; to strengthen his hands, and to incite him to continued fidelity to it. The text, which was obviously penned with this design, appears toward the close of the Second Epistle, and takes the form, you perceive, of a solemn and impressive charge. “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.” Here, before the Searcher of hearts, and

the Head of the Church, in view too of the great day of final reckoning, Timothy is counselled and admonished to be faithful in preaching the word. The drift and natural import of the words, especially when considered with the circumstances under which they were uttered, clearly suggest this doctrine: that it is the chief business of ministers faithfully to preach the word. And if this doctrine is a legitimate inference from the text, it is also an important one; one that is deserving the attention not only of ministers, but of all church members; one, therefore, that I may appropriately bring before you on this occasion.

In considering this doctrine I propose to inquire first, What is the word that the ministers of Christ preach? Secondly, How must they preach this word in order to preach it faithfully? And thirdly, How does it appear that thus to preach it is their chief business?

I. First, then, what is the word that the ministers of Christ preach? And in regard to this inquiry it is hardly necessary to remark that the Gospel is the subject referred to. The apostle is charging Timothy, as a minister of Christ, to be faithful in preaching; and we all know that that which Christ has sent men out to preach is his Gospel. His commission to them is: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." He has sent them forth for no other purpose; at least, for no other not connected with this. Their business is to preach; and the subject of their preaching, the grand, the only subject, so far as their commission from him extends, is his holy and ever-blessed Gospel.

Nor is this the only instance in which the Gospel is styled the "Word" in the Scriptures; on the contrary, it is a common, and I know not but its most common designation. Christ himself, you will recollect, not only occasionally, but frequently, referred to it in this language. "The seed," said he, for instance, when comparing the preaching of the Gospel to the sowing of seed by the husbandman, "the seed is the word." Again, in speaking of the peculiar benefits of properly receiving, and practically adhering to the Gospel, he said: "Blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it." And so too his apostles. "The word of the Lord," says Paul, obviously in reference to the Gospel, "is not bound." Again: "Unto us was the Gospel preached as well as unto them; but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith." And Peter, to cite no other instances, makes use in one of his epistles of these words, so beautiful in themselves, as well as so pertinent to our purpose: "For all flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word of the Lord which by the Gospel is preached unto you." The Gospel then, the great and glorious scheme of salvation, called the Gospel of peace, and the Gospel of the grace of God, this is the word referred to in the text; the word that ministers are to preach, and which Timothy is charged to preach faithfully.

If now it is asked why the Gospel is thus called the word; why it is so designated both by Christ and his apostles with such uniformity, it may be replied, that

it is not accidentally, and without meaning, that this is done; but for a particular reason. There is a natural and an obvious propriety in it. The Gospel is emphatically a message; a message from God to man, a message of peace and mercy. It is a scheme not only providing and constituting salvation, but unfolding and proclaiming this salvation to us; proclaiming it freely, openly, distinctly. According to the literal signification of the term itself, it is "good news," or "glad tidings;" a divine announcement of peace on earth and good will toward men. It is a scheme then in which God manifests, and not only so, but *declares*, the fullness and the purposes of his grace. And here is the reason for styling it the word. It is so in reality; the appellation is appropriate and beautiful; it is the word, the word or proclamation of life, the word of grace, the word of salvation.

II. Let us attend, then, in the second place, to the inquiry, How are ministers to preach the word in order to preach it faithfully? The purport of the charge is evidently to this effect; it is not merely to *preach*, but to *preach faithfully*. "Preach the word;" and in doing this, "Be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine." The question now, How may this be done; how may the messengers of salvation so speak and unfold their message, as faithfully to accomplish their mission? will be considered.

And first, it may be reasonably remarked, that in order to preach the word faithfully the ministers of Christ must preach nothing but the word. By this is

meant that they must not make any topics the subject of their discourses, when preaching the Gospel, but such as the Gospel directly sets forth or implies. This it must be acknowledged has not always been regarded; and hence there have been instances in which the pulpit has been used for other purposes than those to which it properly belongs. How often, for example, has the voice of worldly wisdom been heard there! How often have topics, pertaining more to the arts and sciences than to Christ, and calculated to make men wise in the things of earth rather than wise unto salvation, been introduced into this sacred place! and how often have the people gone home, admiring, it may be, the learning and intellect of the preacher, yet feeling in their souls an unsatisfied want for spiritual food, and painfully conscious that he has been withholding from them the bread of life! Such ministers, it is true, do not always intend to preach themselves, for sometimes their course is the result of inattention rather than design; but it is nevertheless apparent that they *do* preach themselves, or at least not Christ Jesus the Lord. They discourse intelligently and eloquently; their audiences are intellectually entertained and delighted; and there is accorded to them the praise of great ability and cultivation; but no souls are awakened and saved, no penitents directed to the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world, no believers strengthened or comforted on their way. No indeed—such men do not preach Christ, and at the last they will not be found among his faithful servants.

But how often has the voice of strife also been in

this place ! I do not mean here the strife which every faithful minister may at times be called to engage in, the strife of a firm and manly defense of the truth and public morals ; but I mean the strife of worldly ambition ; that which results from a love of controversy or a love of reputation ; that therefore which might with perfect fidelity be avoided, and which leads to the preaching of many things that do not belong to the Gospel. How different is the course of those who thus fulfill their ministry from that of the adorable Saviour ! It was said of him by the prophet that he should not strive, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street ; and strikingly was the prediction accomplished in him. Never in all his life did he indulge in a contentious or controversial spirit. He was meek and lowly and retiring. He labored, it is true, to instruct men, and, when assailed in his character and doctrine, to convince them of their error and sin ; but he never spoke in the tone of the controversialist, never discoursed in the way of wrangling debate. There was firmness, and there was a divine majesty with him, for he spake as one having authority, and not as the scribes ; but yet there was mildness, and simplicity of purpose, a kind heart, and a desire to conciliate and save. And thus by avoiding all strife he never preached any thing but his own Gospel ; every thing he said, and every thing he did, was designed and calculated to unfold it. Would that his ambassadors would all imitate him in this particular ; that they would lay aside all malice, and wrath, and evil-speaking ; and that, while contending earnestly for the faith delivered to the saints, they would do it with gentle-

ness and a desire to reclaim sinners. Would, too, that they would imitate his great apostle; that they would preach the word, and nothing but the word; that they would feel as he felt, and do as he did, when he said: "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

But we may remark, secondly, that to preach the word faithfully the ministers of Christ must preach the whole word; not merely nothing else, but this fully. I need not say that it is possible for them to err in this as well as in the respect just referred to. Nor need I say that to err in this respect is as obviously to fail in making full proof of their ministry as to err in the preceding respect. All that they preach may be true, and as far as it goes it may be the truth as it is in Jesus; but then it is not the whole truth; it is the truth restricted, disconnected, deficient; it is only a few particulars of it, a few aspects or phases; not the entire system, so thoroughly and completely presented as to develop in full form and beauty the grand and glorious work of human salvation. And thus they come short in fidelity to their mission. They keep back a part of their message; they even proclaim what they do give in a manner so imperfect and detached, that it loses half its weight and importance, and accomplishes but half its design.

It was not thus, allow me to remind you, that the apostle preached. *He* withheld no part of the truth. According to his own testimony—the best, seeing he spoke under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that could be furnished—he declared the whole Gospel wherever he went and to all to whom he could gain

access. Hear him in that most affecting address which he made to the elders at Ephesus, when he was about to leave them for another field of labor. "I have not shunned," said he to them—and if he had they might have witnessed against him on the spot—"I have not shunned to declare to you *all* the counsel of God." Again: "I kept back nothing that was profitable to you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." No; this great man never restrained the Gospel; he preached it all. It was not with him a point of inquiry, What part of the truth will best suit the taste of the people? What can I say that will be most likely to please and gratify them? but what part do they most need, and how in enforcing this can the whole be brought to bear upon them? And this is the way Christ would have all his ambassadors preach. He would have them declare every doctrine, and precept, and promise, and threatening of the Gospel.

But there are several other things necessary to be observed if those intrusted with the word would preach it faithfully. They must also preach it *plainly*. That is, they must preach it in a clear, simple, intelligible style; a style so transparent, that the truth may be seen at once without obscurity or indistinctness. There is no need, however, in doing this that the preacher should neglect his style; no need that it should be loose, or weak, or slovenly; on the other hand, it is right and proper for him to seek, as did Solomon, to find out acceptable words, and to remem-

ber that such words are as goads, and as nails fastened by the Master of assemblies. But then he should be careful never to darken counsel by the multitude of words. He should never sacrifice perspicuity to ornament; he should remember indeed that perspicuity *is* ornament, and that every thing wanting in this is nearly needless, and in every way objectionable.

The Apostle, to refer again to him, preached the Gospel in this manner. He always spoke with clearness and simplicity. "And, I brethren," says he in writing to the Corinthians, "when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not in enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." He says again, in discussing a certain practice that prevailed for awhile in the early Church: "I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." With plainness, then, as well as with great care and anxiety, did this holy man preach the Gospel committed to him; and from his example ministers may all learn how to preach so that the word may not be in vain, but may accomplish the thing whereunto God hath sent it.

But the ministers of Christ must also preach *earnestly*. A cold, lifeless, indifferent manner, though it may

be clear and logical, will not answer. There must be zeal, energy, and feeling. They are to speak with the heart so much in the effort that it shall be apparent that they believe and realize what they say, and that thus the Gospel may come to the people in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power. It is to be lamented that there is so little true earnestness in the preaching of the word. Many address their fellow-men on this most important of all subjects, their personal salvation, as if it were a theme of earth, and involved consequences relating only to the present. Nay, they sometimes exhibit far less concern and emotion than are often exhibited when men address each other merely upon the affairs of this life. This is a great inconsistency. If the Gospel is true, then, in the language of a certain divine, "it is tremendously true." Our highest interests are included in it; our spiritual and immortal interests, our time, our eternity. Hence it should be preached with a corresponding earnestness; I do not say with loud tones of voice and fierce gesticulations—these are not essential to an earnest manner—but with a feeling heart, with a proper impression of its truth and importance, with the energy of thought, and the power of sincere motives and fervid utterances. Thus did Christ preach, though always calm and self-possessed; and thus the apostle, though so inclined to reason and to argue out his positions.

Again, the ministers of Christ must preach *solemnly*. You have only to consider what the Gospel is, and what it contemplates in reference to mankind, to see the appropriateness of this remark. Truly, if there is any thing solemn in the universe, it is to be found in

the Gospel of Christ ; if there is any thing deserving sober, serious, considerate attention, it is here. Many, I know, do not realize this, nor regard it, but can trifle with the Gospel, and treat it with indifference, and even contempt ; but the time is coming when they will discover their mistake, and when they will find, though they think themselves wise, that they are influenced and swayed by the weakest and wildest folly. But then, if the Gospel is so solemn a subject, it should evidently be preached in a solemn manner. No levity or pertness is becoming here. A calm and thoughtful seriousness should take possession of the preacher's mind, and show itself in all his words and actions. Always should it characterize him in the pulpit ; and that it may have its full effect there, it should characterize him out of it. Let him *feel* serious, and *be* serious, and then, when he addresses the people, it will be in a serious style. The adorable Saviour, I imagine, was a solemn preacher. And so, too, was Paul, who ever spake with fear and trembling. And so, too, must every ambassador be who would faithfully preach the word.

But, finally, I remark, under this head, that the ministers of Christ must preach *affectionately*. A kind and gentle spirit, springing from true love to Christ and to souls, must appear in every discourse, and pervade every word. There is to be no bitterness, no vindictiveness. There is not merely to be the *absence* of these feelings ; there is to be the positive presence of the feelings of tenderness and affection. He who preaches without these feelings can not be faithful to his trust. Besides this, if he has not a kind heart, if

he has no sympathy with Christ in his great love toward our guilty race, he has no call and no right to preach. Look at Christ, and see how he preached. What tenderness marked all his utterances, not only when he was unfolding the way of salvation, but when he was exposing and rebuking sin! Always solemn and in earnest, yet he was always compassionate. Look, too, at the apostle, and see how greatly he resembled the Master in this particular. A tender though strong heart had Paul. Yes, and the more strikingly tender because strong. In his farewell discourse at Ephesus, to which we have referred, he reminded his brethren, that for the space of three years he had faithfully warned them night and day *with tears*. On another occasion he remarked, even with respect to the wicked: "Many walk of whom I have told you, and now tell you even *weeping*, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." Look, also, at John, and, with all his warmth and ardor, at Peter; they, with all the apostles, both held and proclaimed the truth in love. The love of Christ, indeed, constrained them, so that, with affection and overcoming pathos, they warned men, and besought them to be reconciled to God. And in this manner should every one preach whom Christ has called and put into the ministry.

III. This, then, is the word, and this the manner in which it should be preached. One other inquiry now remains, which is, How does it appear that thus to preach the word is the chief business of Christ's ministers? It is not pretended, you will observe, that this is their *only* business, for such all know is not the case.

There are other duties besides this, directly devolving upon them, and duties which they can not neglect and be innocent. They are to administer the sacraments, to appoint and attend meetings for prayer, to visit from house to house, especially the poor and the sick, and to watch in love and diligence over the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made them overseers. But though these duties are legitimate and indispensable, they are all secondary to the great duty of preaching the Gospel; and though they are to be attended to with a ready and lively interest, it is only as accompaniments and aids to preaching.

That this view of the subject is correct, may be argued, in the first place, from the fact that preaching was the chief part of the ministry of Christ. This ministry, I need not remark, was continued for a period exceeding three years; and was intended to prepare the way for the great atoning work for which he came into the world. During this time he visited and healed the sick, and, to establish the divinity of his character, as well as to show kindness to the afflicted, performed many great and wonderful miracles. He also instituted the sacraments, ordained men to the work of the ministry, and made every requisite provision for the full establishment and successful progress of his Church. But then, his principal employment during these years was, after all, to preach the Gospel. He began his ministry by preaching, and thus he continued and finished it. In Jerusalem, the great metropolis of the country, in the smaller cities and all the villages around, his voice was heard, instructing the people, and calling on them to repent. He was never

idle, but was constantly engaged in this work. In public and private, dayly, and almost hourly, he was teaching and warning the people, unfolding to them the Scriptures, and sowing in their hearts the seeds of truth.

And this, you will recollect, is in agreement, too, with prophecy. In Isaiah, where the predictions relating to him are fuller and more circumstantial than in any of the other prophets, he is represented as having already appeared, and as proclaiming his mission in these words: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek: he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of the vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn." This was generations before he was incarnated, and is a significant description of his ministerial work. Nothing could be truer to life. And now, if Christ himself made it the principal business of his ministry to preach; if all his miracles, and journeys, and the provisionary regulations of his Church, were really subordinate to this, and only intended to aid and give success in this, we may justly reason that this is the chief work which he designs his ambassadors to do, and that if they fail in this, they fail in the great function of their calling.

The same thing, however, may be argued from the commission under which Christ has sent out his ministers. This commission, as expressed in his own words, is: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to

every creature: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." Here, though it is clear by implication that to baptize is a duty pertaining to the ministerial office, yet preaching is mentioned and placed before it; and that, too, in such a form, that every one can see that it is designed to be the prominent work of ministers, and that every thing else is secondary and subservient to it.

Furthermore, there are direct references to this subject in the New Testament, particularly from the pen of the apostle Paul, which go to establish this conclusion. The apostle plainly declares, with respect to himself, that this is the great work that Christ had assigned to him. He was raised up, he says, and put into the ministry for this chiefly and expressly. The language, he says, which Christ addressed to him at his conversion, was: "Arise and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared to thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister, and a *witness* of those things which thou hast seen, and in which I shall appear to thee." He says, also, in one of the Epistles to the Corinthians, that Christ sent him not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel; and he adds: "I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius." Here he clearly places preaching above the administration of the sacraments; not that the sacraments are of trivial importance, or that their administration is only an indifferent part of the ministerial office, but that, important and binding as they are, preaching is yet more important, and is chiefly to engage the attention. He also places preaching above the administration of discipline. "Let the elders," says he to Timothy, "that rule well be ac-

counted worthy of double honor, *especially* they who labor in word and doctrine." To rule well, or correctly administer the discipline of the Church, to be diligent and skillful in exercising the oversight of the pastoral office, is here referred to as necessary and valuable in a Christian minister; but then, you see, it is more necessary and valuable to be faithful in preaching the word. "*Especially they who labor in word and doctrine.*"

But there is another argument still, that we must not overlook in forming our judgment upon this subject; it is, that the preaching of the Gospel is God's chosen instrumentality for effecting the salvation of men. And this argument is sufficient in itself, had we nothing else to resort to, to decide the whole question. For if it is the design of the ministry to bring men to salvation, and if preaching is that part of the ministry on which this great end is most dependent, then it follows that preaching is the principal, the grand, the leading business of the sacred office.

But is this so? Let us examine this view of the subject for a few moments, and see.

It will be conceded at once, that the word which ministers preach is the great instrumental means of the salvation of men. This the divine oracles teach us with the utmost clearness. The apostle Paul teaches it, when he says, as a reason why he is not ashamed of the Gospel, that "it is the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth." The apostle James, too, teaches it, when he says: "Of his own will begat he us by *the word of truth*, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures." And it is for this reason pre-

cisely that it is called "the word of life," and "the word of salvation."

But it is equally clear that the efficacy of the word, as it regards mankind generally, depends upon preaching. If it is not preached, it is like a hidden treasure, rich, and ample to redeem from destitution and misery, but unapplied and unavailable. The object of preaching is to bring forth and exhibit this treasure; to present the Gospel to the understandings of men, so that, being seen and known, it may be sought and appropriated. Until this is done, men do not come into contact with it. It does not arrest their attention, does not engage their thoughts, does not impress their consciences. Comparatively few are awakened, except it be directly or indirectly by preaching. To be the power of God to our salvation, the Gospel must be believed; and to be believed, it must be offered and unfolded to us.

The apostle plainly took this view of the subject, and in his Epistle to the Romans, he has referred to it, and settled it, in his own clear manner of reasoning. "For whosoever," he says, "shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How, then, shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall he preach unless he be sent?—So, then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The meaning and force of this are so apparent, that they may be seen at a glance. To be saved, men must pray; to pray, they must believe; to believe, they must hear, that is, understand; and to

understand, the word must be preached to them. Their salvation, then, as to its instrumental means, depends upon the word; and the word, in its efficacy and power to them, depends upon preaching. This is the method with respect to men generally. Preaching is the instrumentality God has appointed by which to make known, and to apply, the mighty and saving power of the Gospel. The conclusion, therefore, is clear, that to preach the word is the great work of the Christian ministry; that to perform this work faithfully is to act in keeping with the great commission; and that those who do thus preach to the best of their ability, discharging at the same time the less but important duties of their office, shall receive at the last the approving acknowledgment: "Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

And now, brethren and friends, having brought out this doctrine, in this plain style of illustration, as far as my time will allow, permit me to say, that it is not without a sense of its importance that I appear before you on this occasion. In the providence of God, I have been transferred from the pastoral charge of another to this Church, and this morning I take upon me the care of your souls. Impressed, as I am, with the responsibility of my whole work, I am particularly impressed with the responsibility of this part of it. It is surely a serious thing to preach the Gospel of Christ. Well might even an apostle exclaim: "Who is sufficient for these things?" There is no employment so solemn, so deserving careful attention and diligent application, as

this. There is none connected with such momentous results, or so intimately regarding the dearest and greatest interests of the souls of men. To all who hear it, it shall be either the savor of life unto life, or of death unto death. Well, then, may every minister of Christ tremble as he enters upon this work! Well may his heart almost fail within him, as he contemplates the immenseness of his responsibility! And when he looks forward to the future, to the period referred to in the text, when the Lord Jesus Christ shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom, and remembers the account he must then give of his stewardship, well may he fear, and say—as feared and said the prophet before him: “Ah! Lord God! behold, I can not speak, for I am a child.” But my heart is too full, and I find myself too deeply affected by the strength of my feelings, to say all that I would wish, or that might be proper. I can only assure you of the fidelity of my intentions, and of my need of your prayers. I shall aim to discharge as in the sight of God, all the duties of my relation, not forgetting that I am chiefly to preach the word. I shall endeavor to make full proof of my ministry. But when I have done the best I can, there will appear in the history of our connection many defects and deficiencies to be regretted. For these I bespeak your forbearance, assuring you that I shall try to be faithful. God helping me, I shall labor with a heart touched, I trust, with at least a spark from the heavenly altar, to preach the word, to be instant in season, out of season, to reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. And I pray that no root of bitterness may

spring up to trouble us; that no unfaithfulness on my part or yours may become so apparent as to interfere with the peace of our union, or the success of the Gospel among us; that we shall mutually understand, and love, and have confidence in one another; and that the blessing of God, without which we can neither enjoy nor expect any good, may rest richly upon us, and never remove from us.

SERMON III.

PAUL IN THE PRESENCE OF FELIX.

“AND as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee.” ACTS 24 : 25.

THE apostle Paul, who is the faithful ambassador of Christ here referred to, was at the time a prisoner in bonds. Having returned to Jerusalem after a long and laborious tour in preaching the Gospel, he was suddenly arrested by the Jews, through malice and persecution, and being charged with some offense against their government and institutions, was patiently awaiting his trial. While in this situation Felix, the Governor, before whom he was to be tried, sent for him, and with his wife Drusilla, requested to hear from him “concerning the faith in Christ.” The request the apostle most cheerfully received and complied with: but instead of acting the part of a time-server; instead of flattering his noble hearers, or attempting to gratify their taste with a soft and insinuating address; instead of uttering one word with a view to interest them in his favor, or to conciliate their good opinion; instead of exhibiting in any form a man-pleasing or a man-fearing spirit, he proves himself true to his mission, and embraces the opportunity, as the only one he might perhaps ever have, faithfully to preach Christ, and to

warn them to flee from the wrath to come. It is to this occasion that the words of the text refer: "And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and said, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee."

In whatever light we view it, the scene here opened to our contemplation is certainly an interesting one. Whether we consider the character and circumstances of the speaker, the position and authority of his auditors, the power and effect of his discourse, or the manner of his dismissal, we are led to the conclusion that it must have been a marked and memorable occasion. But in speaking of this scene, as I propose to do this evening, I shall overlook by design the incidental circumstances, such as the pomp and show which we may imagine to have been displayed, and the dependence and peculiarity of the apostle's condition, and confine myself to the main circumstance, his preaching. In pursuing this purpose I shall notice the character of his preaching, the effect it had on the mind of Felix, and the conduct of Felix with regard to it; and I pray that something that may be said may answer the end, under the blessing of God, of convicting and awakening those who hear me at this time as impenitent sinners. Many there are probably here who are as unconcerned and thoughtless as to their guilt and need of repentance, as was Felix when he sent for the apostle. Sincerely do I hope that the truth may have the effect to-day that it had on that occasion, and that every careless and indifferent soul in this assembly may be aroused from his sleep of sin, and be induced to repent

and turn to the Lord. Now, let all such consider, is the accepted time, and this the day of salvation.

I. In the first place, then, let us consider the character of the apostle's preaching. And under this head I remark, first, that it must have been eminently *instructive*. This we are led to infer from what is said of the manner of his preaching, and of the topics on which he preached. As to his manner it is said that he "reasoned." This can not be understood only as intimating that he discoursed with perspicuity, and with force of argument. He did not merely *talk*, that is, discourse without thought or connection of thought, but he *reasoned*; he intelligently, clearly, and cogently presented and developed the truth and claims of God. As to the topics on which he preached, it is said that he reasoned of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." These were the points incorporated in his discourse, and important, and in this case appropriate points did they prove themselves to be. The first of these topics refers to the duty of justice; the duty of being correct and equitable in all our dealings one with another. It is probable that the apostle referred to this virtue as an attribute of the character of God; and that in illustration of it he descanted on the strictness and integrity with which He conducts his administration as the Ruler of the universe; and it is probable that he argued from this the necessity of justice in our private and official conduct toward each other. The next topic relates more particularly to duties which we owe personally to ourselves—to temperance, or the proper government of the mind, in all its passions, appetites,

and propensities. The original word signifies general or entire moderation; not moderation merely in eating and drinking, but in every thing, in every inclination and movement of the soul. It forbids all unholy and inordinate desires; enjoins chastity, prudence, and self-denial; and puts an unyielding and unconniving restraint upon the whole man. And then the remaining topic, a judgment to come, was brought forward no doubt to illustrate the importance of these virtues, and of a holy life generally, and to incite his hearers to commence such a life at once. It is quite likely that the apostle showed the necessity and certainty of such a day; that he described the grandeur and greatness of its proceedings; and referred to the utter confusion which shall then appear in every one that doeth evil.

And now connecting these several topics, in their extent and bearing, with the manner in which the apostle discoursed upon them, and it is reasonable to infer that his preaching must indeed have been instructing.

But I remark secondly, in connection with this, that his preaching was faithfully plain and pointed. It has been observed already that the apostle said nothing in this discourse intended to conciliate the good opinion and favorable regard of Felix. He bestowed no flattering titles either upon him or his admired consort; he uttered not so much as one word in praise of their dignity, or calculated to gratify their vanity. He preached to them just as he preached to other sinners, directly, plainly, faithfully. This is not merely supposed, but it is legitimately inferred from the peculiar

adaptation of the topics on which he treated to the case and circumstances of Felix and Drusilla. Felix was a governor and a judge; and as such it was his business to execute law and administer justice. It is known, however, that in his official character he was exceedingly corrupt; so much so, that he would not only receive bribes, but invited and sought after them; and to gratify personal wishes would oppress the innocent and clear the guilty. How suitable a theme then for his consideration was the righteousness on which the apostle reasoned—the duty of official and private justice! How must his conscience have been aroused, and with what force and power must he have been reminded of his sins!

Again Felix and Drusilla were both blamable in private conduct. To say nothing of other things, they had been living for some time in unholy marriage; she having left her own husband at his suggestion, and he having received and acknowledged her as his wife. It was in reference to this circumstance doubtless that the apostle reasoned of *temperance*; the duty of chastity, of restraining all unlawful desires, of leading a pure and spotless life. And in this too how exactly did he adapt his discourse to the character of his hearers! It is impossible for them not to have been convicted of their guilt! As he enlarged on this topic they must have felt that they were sinners in the sight of God, and that, though able now to defy consequences, the future would reveal their iniquity, and administer strict and impartial justice.

And how appropriately is all this applied to their consciences by an allusion to the day of judgment!

Then they as well as their subjects, *they* as well as those whom they have wronged and oppressed, shall stand before the Judge of all the earth, and answer for their injustice and impurity. Then they shall deal with One who can not be bribed, and who can not be deceived; then the penalty of the divine law, though contemplated with indifference now, will overtake them for their sin; and then for the brief gratification of pride and appetite they shall find themselves banished from God, and from the society of the pure and the good. See the devoted apostle as he stands there in the presence of dignity and power! See him as he fixes his eye on his noble but guilty hearers! Mark the point and directness of his utterances as he reasons on the very moral duties against which they had transgressed, and the great day of accounts when they must appear before God and answer for it all!—and if there is not fidelity here where can you go to find it? They expected no such preaching as this. They summoned the apostle before them merely for entertainment. They did not imagine that he would treat on such practical things, or aim any remarks at themselves, at least in condemnation: but he saw their condition and danger; he desired if possible to save their souls; and forgetting himself, and his own temporal interest, he spake of things that convicted them of sin, and that filled them with alarm.

This leads me now to remark that his preaching was also solemn and alarming. That it was solemn is not only inferred from the character of the man, who was always serious and in earnest, but from every thing relating to his subject and position. Nor does the

phrase, "he reasoned," stand in the way of this conclusion. It simply means that he discoursed in an intelligent and manly style; not that he was metaphysical, or dry, or dull. His discourse was, doubtless, argumentative, for such was the structure of his mind; but it must also, from its great impressiveness, have been lively in thought, dignified and devout in delivery. Certain it is, that he said nothing that we might call amusing or trifling, nothing calculated to excite mirth or pleasantry. And he was also alarming. No other proof of this is needed than the effect which his discourse produced. No man ever possessed a greater versatility of mental powers, or was ever more able to adapt himself to the circumstances and demands of an occasion, than he. Hence when it was called for, he could speak in gentleness and sympathy, and offer the most consoling considerations to the sad and sorrowing. Never, except by the Redeemer himself, has he been excelled in feelings and expressions of tenderness, and in fitness to comfort and encourage the dejected. But he had likewise the power to alarm. He knew well how to address himself to the fears of the wicked, and what to say, and how to say it, so as to convince them of sin, and awaken their slumbering sensibilities. He could skillfully preach the terrors as well as the promises of the Gospel. He could describe the consequences of rejecting Christ as vividly and forcibly as he could the consequences of accepting him. And this we observe he frequently did. He did it on this occasion to Felix and Drusilla. By the terrors of the Lord he endeavored to persuade them to repent and turn from their sins. With what energy is it likely that he

spoke! With what an expressive countenance did he look upon his astonished hearers, and with what vividness and grandeur portray the scenes of a judgment to come! Surely their hearts must have been moved within them, and with feelings both of wonder and fear they must have realized that it was a serious and momentous hour!

II. But having said thus much as to the character of the apostle's preaching on this occasion, let us now consider, as proposed, the effect of his preaching on the mind of Felix.

And here the first thing that we are led to notice is the marked difference, in regard to this particular, that appears between Felix and Drusilla. As it respects the latter we are not informed how the apostle's discourse affected her; yet the very silence of the evangelist seems to indicate that the effect was not the same with her as with Felix. Probably she was somewhat moved, and perhaps sufficiently so to discover and feel her sinfulness; still it is not likely that she was very greatly alarmed, or that she manifested to the observer any particular emotion whatever. If now we inquire why this was so? why was there this difference in the immediate effect of so powerful a discourse on these two minds? an answer may be found, at least in part, in their previous education. As a Jewess, Drusilla had been instructed in things to which Felix was comparatively a stranger. She had had access to the Old Testament Scriptures, and from these had understood from her childhood the necessity of a holy life, and the certainty of a judgment to come. Thus the topics on

which the apostle preached were already to some extent familiar to her. On the other hand Felix probably had but an imperfect acquaintance with these truths and duties. Something with regard to them he had no doubt been in circumstances to learn, but yet he could not have had that intelligent and appropriate impression of them which every enlightened Jew possessed. Consequently, when the apostle spake as he did, he was taken as it were by surprise; if he did not hear what he had never heard before, he was brought to comprehend it more perfectly, and was impressed with it more deeply. Had Drusilla been equally uninformed; had her acquaintance with these topics been more recent or limited; had she not been familiar with them from her girlhood, it is probable that she too would have felt their solemnity and importance, and would also have trembled. But as it was, though she may have received some new and more adequate views, she was in a measure prepared to resist the truth, and so to suppress emotion and harden her heart. It was with her indeed as it is with sinners now: when they are not reformed and benefited by their superior light they become more and more unconcerned as to their condition, and are in fact harder than the less favored.

And on this last remark let me make, as I pass, a short pause for reflection. Let me observe that this is not a solitary instance in which the preaching of the Gospel has affected one and not another. On the contrary the same thing is frequently, and indeed constantly occurring. Some at a particular time are reached by the truth and awakened, while others at the very same time, and under the same discourse, will sit un-

concerned, or, rallying all their strength to the effort, will successfully resist conviction. Even to-night it is fondly hoped that some poor sinner in this congregation is yielding to the convincing influence of the Gospel, and will leave this place resolved to forsake his sins, and to save his soul ; but it is to be feared at the same time, nay, it is almost certain, that there are others here who will resist impression, who will drive back all serious feeling, and who will go away as careless and unthoughtful as ever, and as undetermined to take the first step to secure their salvation. Thus while Felix trembles, Drusilla is comparatively unmoved ; while a husband is giving way under the power of the Gospel, a wife sits unsubdued ; while a brother is weeping, a sister is trifling ; while one is resolving now to repent, another is saying, there is time enough yet.

But the question remains yet to be considered, what was the effect of this discourse on the mind of Felix ? The declaration of the text, *Felix trembled*, indicates unequivocally what this effect was. It informs us that the Gospel took hold of this wicked, this proud man's heart ; that it moved, alarmed, and awakened him ; and that under the strength of his conviction he was unable to conceal the agitation of his mind. It is possible, though the original is only a strong term expressing great mental excitement, that his body did literally tremble ; but whether this was the case or not, his mind was put in commotion, his understanding and sensibilities powerfully affected. The declaration assures us of two things : that he was convicted of his sins, and that he was afraid to meet them at the bar of God. Nothing, certainly, but a deep conviction of

guilt, could have produced this agitation within him. Had he been able, like Drusilla, to ward off conviction, if not in whole, yet in part, he would, like her, have remained comparatively undisturbed; but because he could not at the moment do this, because a strong and overpowering view of his sinfulness came rushing irresistibly upon him, causing him to perceive how vile and criminal his whole life had been before God, therefore he was unsettled and dismayed. And the excitement produced in his mind by this view of his moral condition and character, was strengthened and increased by the dread he must have felt at the thought of meeting his sins at the last day. This he was evidently afraid to do. His trembling shows that he feared such a reckoning, and that his very soul was filled with terror as he looked forward and contemplated it. Nor is this to be wondered at. To a guilty and unforgiven man there must be something unspeakably dreadful in the thought of a judgment to come. That day will bring to light all his works of darkness; it will proclaim in his hearing, while the whole universe listens and looks on, all the open and hidden sins of his life; and he knows that when this is done he will not be able to answer for one of a thousand. He knows that he will be completely confounded. He knows, also, what the awful consequences of this will be. He knows what it is that the Judge will then say to him in his confusion; what it is that awaits him when the word shall go forth, "Out of thy own mouth will I condemn thee, thou wicked servant;" what shall be the portion of his cup forever and ever. Felix was now led to consider these things. - A ruler and a judge

himself, he saw that he must soon stand with the meanest of his subjects before the Ruler and Judge of the whole earth. A guilty sinner condemned already at the bar of his conscience, he felt assured that his guilt would appear as the noon-day then, and that he would also be condemned at the bar of God. And therefore he trembled—trembled on his own throne—trembled at the preaching of a man whose life was in his hands, and who appeared before him as a prisoner in bonds.

III. The inquiry becomes now a natural one, What was the conduct of Felix on this occasion? As the last point in our subject, I request your attention a few moments longer, while I endeavor to consider this inquiry. "And as he reasoned," says the text, "of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled and said, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee." Here two things are intimated: first, that Felix interrupted the apostle in the midst of his discourse, and abruptly dismissed him from his presence. It is said, *as he reasoned*, that is, while he was yet discoursing, Felix trembled, and thus addressed him. The truth was bearing too heavily upon his conscience to be endured; he bore it as long as he could without crying aloud for mercy—as did the jailer—or sending the preacher away. Unhappily, he chose the latter course; and so, interrupting this faithful minister of Christ, and promising to hear him further at another time, he directs him for the present to leave. Just as sinners now, unwilling to see the desperateness of their condition,

refuse to go to the house of God, or, if found there, to give attention to the word preached, or, if they can not avoid this, to remain the service through. They fear the uneasiness and misery of conviction, and so do not come to the light, lest their deeds should be re-proved.

But it is intimated, also, that Felix resisted, and in doing this, overcame the effect of the apostle's preaching. That he resisted, his interruption and dismissal of the apostle is a significant proof. Instead of yielding, and inquiring, as every convicted sinner should do, "What must I do to be saved?" he exclaimed, from his place of authority: "Go thy way for this time." Thus he stood out against conviction, and postponed and disregarded the duty to repent. Though he felt that he was a sinner, he loved his sins too well to renounce them. Though he felt that he was exposed to the frown and the final condemnation of Almighty God, he resolved to shut his eyes against the peril of his condition, and stifle at once the fears that alarmed him. A penitent spirit would have dictated a different course; it would have impelled him to break loose from his sins, to cherish his serious impressions, and to call mightily upon God for salvation; but no—this spirit he did not possess, and therefore this course he did not pursue.

But he also overcame—not merely resisted, but, in doing this, overcame—his fears and convictions. An awakened state may come *irresistibly*, but it will not *irresistibly* continue. It is comparatively an easy thing for a man to get rid of his serious impressions; he has only to treat them with indifference, and to persist in

sin, and they will soon enough be gone. Indeed, it is much easier to dismiss such feelings, no matter how strong and powerful they may at first be, than it is to cherish and retain them. Hence, determinately to resist is effectually to overcome. Thus Felix resisted, and thus, therefore, did he overcome. But this inference is not the only proof we have: the context informs us, that though he frequently sent for the apostle after this, and communed with him, it was not that he might be further instructed as to the way of salvation, but it was to tempt him to purchase his release with money. How sad a certainty is this that he had successfully resisted the truth and quenched the Spirit! Not the least intimation is given that he ever felt serious again; but, on the contrary, there is the strongest probability that he so hardened his heart and stiffened his neck, that he was forever after perfectly unconcerned, and that he was fully at ease in sin. The struggles of his mind subsided; his alarm fled, and suffered him again to become quiet in crime; his fearful forebodings passed hastily away, and once more he went on undisturbed in his course.

And this was the conduct of Felix on this occasion. It was with him an important and most interesting hour. He might then have entered upon a new and glorious career. He might, in so propitious a time, have commenced advantageously the work of salvation. But he would not. He put off repentance; he resisted conviction; he stifled his serious feelings; he let the day of his visitation pass. He said to the preacher, "Go thy way for this time;" but it was, in fact, saying it to the Spirit of God; it was, in fact,

sealing his own damnation. It is no trifling affair for an awakened sinner to resist the truth; it is no trifling affair for him to say, either to the minister or Spirit of God, "Go thy way;" yet Felix did it, and, without doubt, to his everlasting undoing. Better, inconceivably better, had it been for him to have heard the apostle through, or to have interrupted with the cry: "What must I do? Where can I find safety? How escape the wrath to come?" But such was not his choice: he preferred his sins to the salvation of his soul; he inflicted upon himself the greatest and most fearful of all evils, the insensibility resulting from a resistance of the Gospel.

But we must now conclude this discourse. My friends, you are not hearing to-night an apostle preach, neither are you listening to the words of any other than a fallible and uninspired man. But you are attending to the same Gospel which the apostle preached, and you are as much interested in this Gospel as was Felix, or any to whom the apostle proclaimed it. It comes to you in all its authority, and with all its high and gracious designs. It directs you to repent, to turn from your evil ways, and to believe in Jesus Christ. It discourses to you of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. It discloses to you your guilty and perishing condition, and offers to you a sure and complete deliverance. Say not, I beseech you, that you will consider its claims at some future time. To-day, if you will hear its voice, harden not your hearts. Follow not the example of Felix, and say to the message of mercy: Not now, but hereafter. Remember a convenient season, such as you indefinitely conceive of,

may never come. Should you be spared, you may never feel as you feel now. Like Felix, you may so resist as to banish all your serious impressions, and they may return to you no more. Every day you delay to repent increases the probability that you will delay till it is too late. Every time you resist the truth, and say, as by resistance you do say, "Go thy way for this time," you enlarge the distance between your soul and salvation, and raise up a new barrier between you and heaven. Let me, then, admonish you to forbear. Grieve not the Spirit of God. Yield now to the force of conviction. If you are like Drusilla, and feel but little, or, perhaps, nothing at all, be alarmed for your very insensibility, and getting down before God, entreat him to take away your heart of stone, and to give you a heart of flesh. It is an awful thing to be unconcerned for sin. Pray, therefore, pray earnestly that you may obtain a poor and contrite spirit, and that you may tremble at the word of God. But if you have this spirit already, and are thus like Felix rather than Drusilla, resist it not. Cherish and keep it. Come with it before the offended majesty of heaven, and seek peace and comfort only in his pardon, remembering he has said: "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."

SERMON IV.

THE SELF-FLATTERY OF SINNERS.

“FOR he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful.” PSALM 36 : 2.

IT will be natural for you to inquire on hearing this text, To whom does the psalmist refer? Who is the man that pursues the course and runs the hazard here mentioned? The preceding verse, if you will attend to it, will answer this inquiry. The psalmist there observes: “The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes.” By which he probably meant to say, that when he considered the course of the wicked man, marked his steps, and observed his indifference to religious principles and duties, he was led by unavoidable inference to believe that he did not fear nor regard God. In so many words, the transgressor did not of course say this; but few were ever hard enough to say it; but, in his own mind, the psalmist saw it plainly. The conduct of the man was a sufficient evidence of it; this had a voice, speaking loudly to all observers, and telling them that here was an individual who did not fear to live in disobedience to his Maker. And then the psalmist goes on to account for this: to explain how it is that this man, an intelligent, a thinking, an accountable being, could thus live in comparative contentment

a transgressor against God. And this explanation is given in the text: "For he flattereth himself in his own eyes until his iniquity be found to be hateful." It is, you see then, the transgressor, the wicked man—and all unrenewed persons are adjudged in the Scriptures wicked—that the psalmist refers to. *He* pursues this course and runs this hazard: *he* flattereth himself in his own eyes, and *he*, some day, will find that his iniquity is hateful.

And these words, my hearers, suggest a theme on which I desire at this time to address you. My thoughts have been much occupied of late in regard to the religious condition of this community. We live together here, temporally, in great quietude and prosperity—in the widest worldly sense, "under our own vine and fig-tree, with none to molest or make us afraid." Here too we enjoy many religious privileges. We have places of worship, where we may assemble to wait upon God and to seek him. We have the stated and faithful preaching of his word. We have the example too of Christian people, their counsel, admonition, and the good influence of their lives. And then, more than all this, we have, at least at times, the gracious and evident manifestations of the Holy Spirit. And yet as a general thing the people here are greatly indifferent as to the claims of religion. Especially is this so among the unconverted, in regard to their own salvation. The world, seemingly, occupies all their attention: its gains, its pleasures, its scenes of social amusement and mirth, absorb them wholly, while their souls, their precious, yet their perishing souls, are mostly unthought of, and altogether uncared for. I

have said to myself, Why is this so? Why is it that my fellow-creatures around me, immortal, lost and ruined by sin, and hastening every day to death and the bar of God, *why is it* that they live so completely to the world, and forget that they must die and be judged? And the only answer that I have been able to give is found in the words of the text: it is because they flatter themselves in their own eyes: it is because they have no correct apprehension of their spiritual condition: it is because they "do not know" and "will not consider."

Let me then invite your attention to these words; let me set before you, if I can, the self-flattery of sinners; and let me try, with the blessing of God, to awaken you from all indifference to a proper concern for your souls.

I. And first I remark that it can not be doubted as a fact that sinners do indeed flatter themselves as represented. Their conduct in this respect is too plain to require consideration. And yet it may not come amiss to say that the Scriptures repeatedly affirm this of sinners, and that they do so in the form of a grave and serious charge. The text is one instance; but clear and distinct as it is, it is no more than a specimen of the general representations of this holy book. It is a common description here of the wicked that, as they go on in iniquity they bless their own souls, and say, each one to himself, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my own heart. Thus, distinctly, were the Jews of old warned not to do, and thus, at times, were they as distinctly charged with doing; and

thus in the most direct applications are transgressors charged *personally* with doing. Nor can it come amiss to say more particularly that the deportment of sinners fully corroborates what the Scriptures thus affirm. They show by their lives that this is true of them; they show that not only have they no fear of God before them, but flatter themselves in their own eyes, and go on sinning blindly. It may be safely asserted that there is not a sinner on earth who would live as he does live, at least in the first stages of transgression, but for this; not one who would act and think as he does—who would dare thus recklessly to throw off fear and restrain prayer—who could nerve up his mind to pursue the course he does with so little anxiety or concern, but for the fact that he is sporting himself with his own deceivings. There is not a sinner on earth, it may be asserted too, who in his reflecting moments does not know that this is so. There is not one who will not admit, if he is a candid man, that if he continually lived under such views and impressions of religious things as occasionally visit him, say at times in the house of God, or in the retirement of his bed-chamber, or in the seasons of unusual and providential affliction, he would not, nay, he could not, live as he does. It is only because these visitations are so transient—because, when he goes forth again into the world, they are so soon arrested in their good influence, and so completely expelled from the mind, that he does not change his course and become a religious man. The bustle and deceptions of life again prevail over him, and these juster views of truth and duty give way, and his former misleading views come

back upon him, and he goes on as before a transgressor without fear, against God. Every sinner knows that this is a true picture of his state. He knows, when he considers, that he is flattering himself in his own eyes. He knows there are times when he feels that his ways are not right and safe. He knows that the Scriptures charge him with hardening his heart and stiffening his neck, and deceiving his own soul; and he knows in the more serious moments of his life that the charge is true.

II. The fact then is obvious and unquestioned: all sinners do flatter themselves in their own eyes. Let us therefore in the next place consider the ways, or some of the more prominent ways, in which they do this. I say *some* of the more prominent ways, and I say this because the ways in which sinners flatter themselves are various and multiplied. All transgressors do not deceive themselves in exactly the same manner. Nor do they always do this in one way alone. On the contrary there are different pleas and processes of reasoning which transgressors use in quieting the conscience, and what answers for one will not answer for another; and so too what answers in any individual case at one time is found insufficient at another time. Hence there arises a great diversity of arguments and excuses by which sinners justify themselves in the neglect of religion, and by which they strengthen themselves to unyielding persistence in transgression. Only a few, then, of these arguments, these methods of self-flattery, can we refer to at this time.

And first. I observe that some who flatter them-

selves in their own eyes, do it with the idea that God does not, as is generally represented, minutely mark their conduct. Their conception of God is, that he is not only great, but distant; that he is abstracted to a certain extent from our insignificant world, and that he does not consider what we do here of importance enough to deserve his careful notice. In the language of some of old they say: "How does God know, and is there knowledge in the Most High?" Or: "God hath forgotten: he hideth his face: he will never see it."

Such persons persuade themselves either that God does not notice in detail their doings, or that he does not do it with a judicial purpose; that is, with a purpose to reckon with them. In other words, they do not think that God will ever call them to a strict account for what they do in this life. They may pursue whatever course they most desire; omit whatever duties appear to them unpleasant; walk in whatever ways look to them inviting—in the ways of their own hearts, and in the sight of their own eyes; in short, live as they desire, and yet it will be all well with them in the end, for God will not require it of them.

It may justly appear strange to us, when we come to reflect upon it, that any men or class of persons should be found entertaining views and feelings like these. And yet such persons do exist; the Scriptures often refer to them; and while they all say these things by their deeds, some of them have the hardihood to say them in so many words. But let us inquire, What say the Scriptures? What do they teach in regard to this plea?

And it must be admitted that if there is any thing

clearly taught in the Scriptures, it is that God beholds and carefully marks the conduct of men. We do nothing, however small or unimportant we may consider it, that escapes his notice. He sees all and notes all. He is plainly declared to be omnipresent, and as such, being in all places at all times. He is not only able to see, but necessarily sees all that we do. Mark the language of the Scriptures on this point: "Behold the heaven, and the heaven of heavens, can not contain thee." "Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? Do not I fill heaven and earth?" Again: "Thou compasses my path, and my lying down." So too they declare that God carefully inspects our ways. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. The Lord looketh down from heaven, he beholdeth all the sons of men. From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth. He fashioneth their hearts alike; *he considereth all their works.*" Again: "They say, The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it. Understand, ye brutish among the people: and ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planteth the ear, shall not he hear? He that formed the eye shall not he see? He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know? The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity." It is said too that "the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and that *he pondereth all his goings.*" And to this we may add the words of the apostle, when he says: "Neither is there any creature that is not mani-

fest in his sight : but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." How clear then is it from the Scriptures that we are all known to God, and that he sees, not with passing indifference, but with a close inspection, all that we do.

But it is equally clear that God notes our conduct with a judicial purpose ; a purpose strictly and solemnly to reckon with us. "The Lord," it is said in one place, "is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed." It is said again : "Thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men, to give to every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." Again : "Every one of us shall give an account of himself to God." And then we are told when this shall be : we are told that God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness ; when he will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil ; when we shall all stand before his judgment-seat ; when we shall give an account for every idle word, and the very secrets of the heart ; when "the books shall be opened, and another book shall be opened, which is the Book of life, and the dead shall be judged out of those things that are written in the books, according to their works." These things are clearly declared to us in the Scriptures, and they are declared repeatedly and impressively. And now, after thus trying this plea by the test of inspiration, comparing it with the authoritative declarations of this holy book, is it not evident that those who make the plea, flatter themselves in their own eyes ? Is it not most certain that they are deceiving their souls ?

But secondly, I observe that some who flatter themselves do not go so far as to pretend that God does not regard their conduct, but take up the plea that sin is not, after all, so great an evil. Such persons argue either that sin is an indifferent thing in itself, or that it is connected in their case with circumstances which go to excuse it. Those who take the first of these positions say that whatever apparent differences there may exist among men, in the moral qualities of their minds or the settled practices of their lives, there is no such ground of distinction as is generally claimed and admitted. There is no such great and radical difference as to make one class righteous and the other wicked. This classification of men, they say, has no basis in fact; it is only nominally, not essentially so. According to their argument, every individual takes the course in life his own inclinations dictate, and it is right and proper for him to do so; and in doing it all are equally blameless and innocent. One is no more deserving censure, and is in reality no more criminal, than another. But those who take the other position do not venture to so daring an expression of their views as this, but allow a real distinction between virtue and vice: their argument is, that sin is indeed an evil, but then it is not so great an evil but that circumstances justify it in their case. There are things respecting the question of innocence or guilt in its relation to them to be considered. Their situation in life is very peculiar; their proclivity to sin is wonderfully strong; their temptations and enticements to evil are unusually numerous; and many other things perhaps concur to overcome their will and to carry them

on against their better judgment to deeds of iniquity and crime. And these circumstances, they reason, justify them in their course, and relieve them from the guilt that would otherwise accrue to them.

But what, let us again ask, say the Scriptures? What is the judgment that an understanding of their teachings must lead us to form of this plea?

Every one knows that so far as the language of Scripture is concerned, it is directly opposed to these views of sin. Every one must know too, where attention has been given to the language of Scripture on this subject, that it can not be construed so as to favor these views. A clear distinction is here made to appear, and it runs through the whole volume, and is presented in a great diversity of forms, between virtue and vice, holiness and sin. It is also clearly declared that this distinction divides mankind into two great classes, and that every man belongs positively to one class or the other. In other words, it is clearly declared that every man is either guilty or innocent; and that every one that committeth sin is guilty, and that he that doeth righteousness is righteous. It is declared also that in respect to this matter every man shall bear his own burden: that God is no respecter of persons, and that no circumstances whatever, no temptations however strong, no love or proneness to sin, however great, can justify any man in omitting duties that God enjoins or doing things that He forbids. There is, this infallible revelation assures us, such a thing as sin, and it tells us that there is no excuse for it. You can forsake it if you will; and if you will not, a fearful criminality and guiltiness must rest upon your soul. The com-

mand to you is, Repent and turn from your evil ways—Cease to do evil and learn to do well—and if you will not submit to this command, you insult the divine majesty by making apologies. Hear what the Most High says on this point: “Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. Wo unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight.” Yes, if this is your plea, wo to you, for you are flattering yourself in your own eyes.

But again: others who flatter themselves do it with the idea that the punishment of sin, admitting that it is a great evil and in no case excusable, can not be as dreadful as is generally feared. They do not feel entirely satisfied with either of the foregoing pleas. They are some how unable to believe that God has so far withdrawn jurisdiction over us as to take no particular notice of our proceedings; neither can they persuade themselves that sin is, after all, a fiction. Still they will not give up, and turn from their folly and seek God. They therefore try to believe that, though sin may be an evil, and on the whole unjustifiable, yet its consequences can not be so alarming as we are taught to suppose. There must, they will admit, be some kind of punishment; but it will not prove so severe as many imagine, neither will it be so enduring.

Now there are doubtless many who strive hard to be satisfied with this flattering hope; and there are doubtless many others who, though not openly professing to be satisfied with it, in their hearts think that possibly it may be so. But the important question is,

What ground has any man to believe this, and to rest his eternal interests upon it? What say the Scriptures? Do they authorize such a secret interpretation of their most explicit and solemn utterances? Surely in a matter of this kind it is well to pause, and seriously to consider this inquiry; and sure I am that those who do consider it will see that there is no ground whatever for such a hope, no basis for such a flattering of their souls.

Let us examine your plea just for a moment. You say then, in the first place, that the punishment of sin will not prove so severe as we are taught to imagine. Now if you are correct in this, how, I ask, are we to account for the strong, and I may say the awful descriptions, given us of the punishment of sin in this book? I need not refer to these descriptions, for you are well aware how they run, and are familiar with the language in which they are given. The strongest and most forcible terms are employed, the liveliest and most vivid figures are pressed into service, and altogether the deepest and most thrilling impressions are made upon the mind, in regard to this ultimate issue of a life of sin. Wrath, tribulation, and anguish; cursed, banished, and destroyed; the smoke of torment, the blackness of darkness, the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched; weeping, wailing, and the gnashing of teeth—such are some of the phrases used to describe the future retribution of the sinner. And surely, such language is not used by inspiration of the Spirit without a significant meaning: surely, it can not be said of such expressions that they are merely rhetorical flourishes, intended to parade a

sentence, or to produce a dramatic effect. God does not trifle thus with his intelligent creatures. When he says that he will punish the transgressor he means what he says; and when in describing this punishment he uses forms of speech presenting the most impressive images of woe, he designs that we shall consider how great this punishment shall be. But upon your view it is not so. You make the Bible an unmeaning book. You make it say things that it does not intend that we should believe. In short, you make it out to be no more than a book of romance or poetry.

But you say further that the punishment of sin will not be as durable as is generally supposed. The common impression is, that it is eternal: that, severe as it will prove, it will be also without end. But this you flatter yourself is a mistake; it is an old superstition, unworthy an enlightened age, and irreconcilable with the fact that God is infinitely merciful. You argue that there will be no punishment at all in another world, or that it will after a space accomplish its design and then cease. Have you, however, candidly asked yourself why you argue thus? Do you seriously believe that the Scriptures furnish you the premises from which you may draw this conclusion? Do they not, on the other hand, unequivocally declare that there is punishment for the wicked beyond death? And do they not repeatedly and without the least qualification, apply to this punishment the words, "everlasting," "eternal," and "without end"? Do you in heart really believe that the Scriptures could have announced the doctrine of future and eternal punishment more distinctly than they do by any language or methods of statement what-

ever? Can you imagine how they could do this? And must you not be driven to regard their style, if not their purpose, such as to mislead and perplex us if they do not indeed teach this doctrine? I can not suppose, if you are a reasonable and candid man, that you feel perfectly contented in your position under the pressure of inquiries like these. The Bible means something or nothing; and woe be to the individual who dares to trifle with the solemn teachings of this book.

The question is not, how can the doctrine of endless punishment be reconciled with the benevolence of God, or with any other attribute of his character; for this is a point on which we are not qualified to judge, because we can have in regard to it no adequate information. We might as well ask, how can any punishment, how can any suffering indeed, be made to harmonize with the consideration that God is good and that his tender mercies are over all his works? We are not competent to investigate such questions, and our business is to leave them where they belong, entirely to the sovereignty of God. The only question with us is, What has God declared to us in the Scriptures? Does he here say that he will punish the wicked forever? If he does, we have no right to quibble with his declaration: we are bound to believe that it is just that the wicked should be thus punished, and we may not try to explain away the force and natural import of these teachings. When you do so, you flatter yourself in your own eyes. Your duty is to repent and submit to God: if you will refuse to do this with the vain hope that the consequences will not be, after all, very alarm-

ing, that no great punishment awaits you, at least no eternal punishment, you will impose the most cruel deception upon your soul, and will bewail your course with unending regret in the world to come. This plea is also then futile, it is false and flattering.

Another class of persons who flatter themselves in their own eyes modify this plea to a certain extent, and thus upon new ground succeed in quieting their conscience and in making themselves believe that they are safe. They admit that there is a future state of punishment, both severe and endless, but they singularly imagine that they in some way will escape it. Either they will not be punished for their sins at all, or it will be very lightly. They can not explain how this can be, nor even assign the least show of reason for entertaining so vain an imagination, and yet they give it a place in their minds, and are evidently taking hope from it. Perhaps there are some here, sitting somewhere in this house at this time, who have no better plea to justify them in their continuance in sin than this; some who are vainly supposing that when the wicked shall be driven away at the last day in their wickedness, they shall some how or other be allowed to escape. If there is one such person here, let me ask him if he really thinks that he is acting the part of wisdom in resting his hope for eternity on so baseless a notion? It is altogether, you must know, an idle imagination, a mere freak of the fancy, to which you are thus holding fast, and which like a bubble will break as soon as you launch on the ocean of the future. You can not rationally suppose that when God inflicts punishment upon those who die in sin that he will let

just you escape. You have no reason in the world to expect this partiality. Sin is as great an evil in you as in others; it is just as offensive in the sight of God; it is just as deserving his condemnation; and you will be able to do no more than others to excuse or atone for it. Why, then, should you dream of any special favor? Is it not, to be plain, the height of folly for you to do so? Moreover, do you not by this idea reflect upon the justice and mercy of God? For if he might let you escape might he not also let all escape? You surely have no such conception of the Most High that he punishes the wicked merely to gratify himself. You must know perfectly well that he takes no pleasure in the punishment of the impenitent, but condemns and delivers them over to this doom because justice demands it; because he finds it necessary in the administration of his moral government to proceed in this manner with the rebellious. You know this, and therefore you must see that in supposing it possible for you while guilty to escape, you imply that it is not absolutely needful for God to punish sin, and that it is only from the want of a favorable disposition toward men that he does it. But not to reason with you thus, do you know that the Scriptures positively declare that to the finally impenitent escape is impossible? Their solemn interrogation to you is, How can you escape if you neglect so great salvation? Their plain declaration is, that there is no other name given under heaven whereby you can be saved but the name of Christ; and that if you turn away from him there remaineth nothing but a certain, fearful expectation of wrath and fiery indignation. Is not your plea then a

mere delusion? Are you not imposing upon yourself an idle yet a terrible self-deception? Are you not blindfolding your own eyes, and thus rushing on with heedless steps to perdition?

But there is one way more in which sinners flatter themselves, that I desire to notice before dismissing this part of the subject. It is, perhaps, the most common way of all, and yet as groundless as any; it is the ever ready and continually offered plea—*there is time enough yet*. I am now young, or I am in sound and perfect health, or I have the impression that I shall not be called away before I have time to prepare. Many live to be old, and why may not I? Many pursue the pleasures of the world in youth, attend to its business in riper years, enjoy and accumulate all that their circumstances permit for years, and then, as old age comes on, direct their attention to the world to come: why may I not do the same? Or many, on their dying-beds—like the thief on the cross—have repented, obtained pardon, and died in peace: is there any reason why it can not be so with me? Dear hearer, I speak only the words of truth and soberness, when I say you are flattering and deceiving your immortal soul. Suppose some do live to be old, do not others—nay, do not most die in youth or in the prime of manhood? Suppose, too, some do in old age seek and obtain a preparation for death, is it not generally the case that those who live on unconcerned till then, live so to the last, or put up with a false and flimsy hope? And suppose some do on the bed of their last sickness desire and profess to find pardon, do not many die in despair, many in unconsciousness, and many besides in

strange indifference? while there is ground to fear, that among those who seem to find peace some are fatally deceived. And then, again, admitting that but few comparatively are called away suddenly, without the warning of an hour, are not some so called, and are not all liable to the awful possibility? and may you not be among the actual number? And now, in view of all this, with the chances so obviously against you, let me ask, if it is reasonable for you to say, There is time enough yet? Is there time enough, when you may die to-morrow—nay, to-day—even this very hour? Is there time enough, when “in the midst of life you are in death”? when “dangers stand thick through all the ground to push you to the tomb”? Have you never felt within your mortal frame the indications of weakness and decay? Have you never seen a fellow cut down in his bloom or his prime, nor followed some dear and loved one to “the house appointed for all living”? How, then, can you say there is time enough yet? It is a mistake, I assure you—a fatal mistake; it is a device of the enemy to ruin you. Instead of time in abundance, there is hardly time for so great work at most. Instead of a certainty of sufficient time to you, there is a doubt if you delay that should alarm and terrify you. In a few years you shall go the way whence you shall not return; and with you those years may be well-nigh gone. The hour of your departure is at hand; and it may be much nearer than you suppose. “This night,” as you go from this house to your bed-chamber, God may say: “This night thy soul shall be required of thee.” Say no more, then, that there is time enough to repent and work out your

salvation. Cease thus grievously to flatter yourself. No longer with so vain a hope continue to strengthen and comfort yourself in iniquity, but to-day, if you hear his voice, harden not your heart.

III. Thus, then, does this subject stand before us. It is a marked fact in the career of the sinner, that he flatters himself in his own eyes; and the ways in which this is done are multiplied and various. But there is another aspect to the subject that we must not pass over. It must be obvious from the drift of our remarks thus far, that no man can take this course and be safe. There is absolute danger in living in this way. No one can thus flatter himself, without shutting his eyes to his own good, and placing his dearest interests at the most alarming hazard. The result, then—the *evil* result of self-flattery presents itself also for consideration.

And this, you will observe, is indicated in the text, in the words: “Till his iniquity be found to be hateful.” The force of these words is, that sin is hateful, and that some day the sinner will find for himself that it is so. It is hateful in itself, hateful before God, and hateful before all the good and pure of the universe. So, too, the transgressor shall also come to regard it. Now he closes his eyes, pursues the desires of his heart, and dreams that all will be well. Now sin looks pleasant to him; speaks in a winning voice; presents its fascinations; beguiles and entices him. Now he does not stop to think that there is evil underneath this fair aspect; that there is corruption and vileness in union with these seeming charms; that there is destruction

lurking behind it all; a thorn with every flower, pain with every pleasure, remorse and bitterness in every cup of joy. But he is hastening to a season when he will be quickly undeceived. The time is not distant when the veil will be taken from his eyes, the enchantment that holds him spell-bound broken, and the odiousness of his sin boldly appear. Then he will see that he has indeed flattered himself all his days, and that the way of the transgressor is hard.

Often, to some extent, does the sinner find that this is the case, even in the present life. When health is broken down, and disease and debility come upon him; when he is unable any longer to run with the multitude to do evil, or to relish the pleasures of the world, then he has time, and is compelled to reflect; then he realizes how empty and vile, though outwardly gay, are all the pursuits of sin; and then he is forced to admit that he has thrown away his life for vanity and nothing. But more especially will this be the case when he comes to die. Then, on his languishing couch, how hateful will his iniquity appear to him! As it comes up from the past and stares him in the face, and he is reminded how many duties he has neglected, how many mercies he has abused, how many wicked thoughts and words and deeds have stained his life, how odious a thing will sin look then! With what regret and self-reproach will he then review his by-gone life! How will he wish that he might return to the days of his innocence and childhood, and live over his existence again! But it will be too late to mend the past, and he will go to his eternity realizing the fact, that with all its fair show, sin is dreadfully hateful.

But, in a keener sense still, will he realize this in the day of judgment. Then, indeed, will his iniquity appear odious. Some may not see it so, particularly in this life, nor yet in their dying-hour; but in that awful day all will view it in this light clearly and unmistakably. With what astonishment and confusion will the sinner then discover the turpitude and criminality of transgression! In what dark and frightful colors will all his evil deeds and moral delinquencies then stand out before him! His mirth and heedless gayety; his pride and love of the world; his neglect of prayer and desecration of the Sabbath; his vain and idle words; his misspent time in parties of pleasure, the ball-room, the theatre, the saloon for drink and gaming; in fine, all that he ever did in offending God and neglecting the Gospel; how dismal and dreadful will these things seem to him then. And when the Judge shall rise up and pronounce sentence against him; when he shall declare before the intelligent universe that he is guilty, and in his sovereign character say to him—Depart; when the gates of despair shall open and take him in; when his abode is thus fixed forever in a state of banishment and wo, then in its fullest, broadest, deepest sense, will he find that his iniquity is hateful.

The result, then, of such a course is ruin: self-flattery is self-destruction. It is the destruction of the soul, in the sense of its everlasting exclusion from the favor and the presence of God. It is the destruction of its hope, of its happiness, of its spiritual and future welfare. It is its failure of blessedness, its certain gain of perdition. It is its loss of heaven, its harvest of dis-

appointment and wo. It is all that is sad and gloomy and lamentable in the future.

Let me, then, in conclusion, ask if there are any self-flatterers here to-night; and if there are, let me entreat them to stop and consider. You have surely, dear fellow-sinner, gone far enough in transgression, and approached near enough its direful consequences. Stop, therefore, at once, and take not another forward step. Turn about immediately, and persist not one moment longer in so certain a course to ruin. You must plainly see, by the reflections presented, that he that sinneth wrongeth his own soul; that the wicked worketh a deceitful work; and that soon, having sown the seed to wind, you must reap the whirlwind. You must see, that instead of a bright and gladdening, there is a dark and dreary end before you; and that, instead of terminating, as you have tried hard to believe, in peace and safety, amid the bloom and the ever-verdant scenery of the better land, the path you tread leads to the desolate region of despair, where the streams of pleasure never flow, nor verdure, nor bloom, nor sunshine, nor flowers ever appear. Oh! it is an awful thing to be a sinner! But it is more awful, now that a way of escape is opened, to flatter yourselves that you are safe, and in your dream of security to go on, overlooking and neglecting this way, and with thoughtless steps passing irretrievably into the land of banishment and darkness! Pause in your ruinous career, awake from your soul-destroying sleep, I beseech you. Only a little ahead lies the fatal destiny to which sin must certainly conduct you. It is a deep, dark, measureless abyss of wo: one day, one hour more may bring you there.

As there is only a step between you and death, so there is only a step between you and hell. Stop, then, I repeat it—stop. Stop and hear the gentle voice of the Spirit, saying to you, Come this way. Stop and weep over your sins and your hardness, and cry in the fullness of your soul for pardon and grace to help you. Stop, and begin, in real earnestness, to pray: “Have mercy upon me, O God! according to thy loving-kindness; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out all my iniquities. Deliver me, and have mercy upon me. Make haste, O Lord! to help me.” And then, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. Then you will pass from death unto life. Then you will have a hope in Christ that will not make you ashamed. In the place of self-flattery, you will rest on the sure foundation. Confidence and joy will take the place of unconcern. Your song will be, O Lord! I will praise thee, for though thou wast angry with me, thy anger is turned away, and thou comforteth me.

SERMON V.

DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE RIGHTEOUS AND WICKED.

‘THE wicked is driven away in his wickedness; but the righteous hath hope in his death.’ PROVERBS 14: 32.

WE are continually reminded in the Scriptures that mankind are divided into two great classes, and that these are separated the one from the other by a plain and obvious line of demarkation. There are, they tell us, the good and the evil—the godly and the ungodly; or, to use their most common language—the language of the text—the righteous and the wicked. And this classification, they tell us, includes all who belong to our species. There are none who are not either righteous or wicked; who, however they may differ as to the shades of character, are not either virtuous or sinful—the friends or the enemies of God. And they tell us that the distinction between them is broad and essential. As there is no neutrality, so, too, the line of separation is not fanciful and unimportant. Light no more differs from darkness in the things of nature, than moral goodness differs from moral evil. There is an immeasurable distance between them, and they can never approximate, never be reconciled together. Did the occasion demand it, we might call to our aid a multitude of Scriptural passages confirming the view thus referred to. We might quote the words of the prophet,

“Wo to them that call good evil, and evil good;” and the words of the apostle: “What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?” And in connection with these we might quote some of those numerous passages, which speak directly of the righteous and wicked, and describe in contrast their character and reward. We might refer to the words of the prophet in another place, where he is directed by the Almighty to say to the righteous that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings; and to the wicked that it shall be ill with them, for the reward of their hands shall be given them. Or we might refer to the words of Malachi, where he tells us that the time is coming when God will so manifest the characters of men, that we shall at once discern between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who serve him not. Or we might refer to the words of Christ, where he describes so vividly the day of judgment, and represents this division of the human race as pertaining not only to this life, but to the life to come, and extending onward through eternity. “When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats; and he shall place the sheep on the right hand, and the goats on the left.” And then, after this separation has been made—a separation executed on the basis of moral character—and placing visibly every individual where he belongs, the Son of Man, thus seated as the judge, will arise and say to those on the right hand, “Come, ye blessed of my

Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:" and to those on the left: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." And then it is said, "These"—the wicked, on the left—"shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." And thus we see how clear is the Scriptural representation that men are either good or bad, righteous or wicked; that there is a distinction among them, and that this distinction obtains in time and in eternity.

The object I have in mind in directing your attention to this view of human condition at this time, is to set before you, as the subject for present contemplation, the difference in character and destiny between the righteous and the wicked; and I sincerely hope that it is a subject that will not fail to leave a useful and permanent impression on your minds.

The line of thought that I design to pursue, is to point out, in the first place, the peculiar character of the righteous, as distinguishing them from other men, and then, in the next place, the hope with which they depart this life.

I. And the first remark I make is, that the character of the righteous, by which they are distinguished from other men, is not native, but acquired. It is a truth repeatedly affirmed in the Holy Scriptures, that by nature no man is righteous. Hence those who now sustain this character were once children of wrath, even as others; guilty, depraved, and unholy; not subject to the law of God, nor, indeed, capable of being sub-

ject to it, until renewed. They were as a sheep going astray. They were on the other—the wrong and criminal side of the line of separation: they were transgressors. However amiable they may have been in their general disposition, they were, notwithstanding, estranged from God and disobedient to him. However early they may have paused in their career, and become thoughtful and serious, and turned to the Lord, yet there was a time with all of them when they were living in sin, and were without God and without hope in the world. All of them were born with a nature inclined to evil, and following their natural bias, all of them went astray in transgression, and came short of the glory of God. The character, then, in which they now appear, and by which they are separated from the rest of mankind, is something that they have sought and obtained. It is not hereditary, not possessed by birth or inheritance, but is an acquisition they have individually made since coming into the world. They have *become* righteous. They have been brought over from the other to this side of the dividing line. They were afar off, but have been brought nigh by the blood of Christ. They were the servants of sin, but they have been delivered from the power of darkness, and have been translated from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

But this remark leads me to another, allied somewhat to it, and which is, that if the righteous are not what they are by nature, they are not so by the law, but by grace. Or, in other words, their righteousness is not legal, but evangelical. It is of primary importance to keep this distinction clearly in mind; for if we

do not, we shall find it impossible to comprehend the nature and glory of the Gospel. The Scriptures, in unfolding the way of salvation, are very explicit in their allusions to this distinction; and it may be truly said, that those who have read the sacred volume without noticing these allusions, have no conception of its true and spiritual import. They are in darkness with respect to the economy of redemption, and it must be to them a vague and undefined mystery.

By legal righteousness, then, let us observe—or, as it is expressed in the Scriptures, “the righteousness of the law”—we are to understand such a condition of innocence and of acceptance before God as results from perfect and undeviating obedience to him. It is the righteousness of personal rectitude. In this sense the angels in heaven are righteous, for they stand before God pure and innocent from transgression. They have always kept his law, and have served him with all their powers from the first dawn of their being until now. They have never violated the precepts nor principles of his law, and have never been indifferent nor reluctant in attention to duty. Judged by the law, which is “holy, just, and good,” and whose high standard is perfect and faultless, they are irreproachable and pure. Consequently they are righteous legally; they are accepted on the ground of obedience; they have never sinned, have never been guilty, have never been condemned; there *never* was a moment when they were not righteous.

But this is a sense, it is very clear, in which no human being since the fall of Adam has been or can be righteous. As we have already observed, all men are

sinners. Inheriting from our first parents a proclivity to sin, we go astray from our birth, transgressing and incurring guilt; and it is not till we are renewed by grace that we cease from disobedience and guilt. We are not subject to the law of God; neither in our natural state, as the apostle affirms, can we be. We have no conformity to it, but in the moral outlines of our character, and in the course and general tenor of our lives, are opposed to it and at enmity with it. Before the law, therefore, we stand condemned. It does not approve of us, does not accept of us. On the other hand, it declares us unworthy and unrighteous, and proclaims against us the sentence of rejection and death. This is plainly the teaching of the Scriptures on this momentous point. It is obviously the meaning of the psalmist, when he tells us that the Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any who feared him, and that he found that all had gone out of the way, and become filthy, that there was none righteous—no, not one. It is the meaning, too, of our Lord and his apostles, who unanimously teach that all men are sinners, that all are condemned by the law, and that by the deeds of the law can no flesh be justified.

This leads me to remark now, that by evangelical righteousness, or, to use the Scriptural expression for this also, “the righteousness of faith,” we are to understand that state of acceptance and favor with God provided for us in the Gospel, and, when we believe, bestowed upon us through the merits of the Redeemer. Unlike legal righteousness, it is a righteousness *given* to us. We can not work it out for ourselves, nor can

we claim it on the ground of obedience. It is entirely gratuitous. According to the constant language of Scripture, it is of grace. It comes to us, meeting us in our state of deficiency and guilt, and making up to us that which we have lost, and which of ourselves we could never regain. It supplies our wants; makes good our defects; retrieves our failure; delivers us from condemnation. It takes away our guilt, destroys the enmity of our hearts toward God, and restores us to favor and friendship with him. In a word, it puts us back to the state we should have occupied had we never sinned, thereby covering all our transgressions, removing all our curse, and constituting us the children and the heirs of God.

And in this sense the Scriptures speak of those who are righteous, just as decidedly as in the other sense they declare that there is none righteous. Abraham, they say, for instance, believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. They also affirm that there is a reward for the righteous; that it shall be well with the righteous; that the righteous shall be blessed on the earth; and that hereafter the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. But in speaking in this manner, we are not to consider the Scriptures as contradicting themselves in what they say on the other side of this subject. Only keep in mind the distinction we are noticing, and all is at once plain. It is true that under the law there are none righteous; but yet it is also true, that under the Gospel there are those whom God designates righteous. The law, on account of sin, condemns all men, and places them under sentence of death; but the Gospel delivers

such as believe from this sentence, removes their condemnation, and restores them to a state of acceptance and reconciliation. Hence we read, that "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus; that being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to them that believe; and that what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, (that is, for a sin-offering,) condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." And thus we see how it is, that while there is no such thing as legal righteousness among men, there may be what we denominate evangelical righteousness. We see how the Scriptures may consistently declare, "There is none righteous, no, not one;" and yet, "To him that worketh not"—him that hath failed perfectly to keep the law—"but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

And now, having proceeded so far in our remarks, we are prepared to notice more particularly what the righteousness of those who believe is. If, as we have seen, it is not native, nor legal, but evangelical; if, that is, it is through Christ, and through him for beings guilty and depraved, then it must consist in these two particulars—the pardon of sins, and the regeneration of the heart. As guilty and depraved beings these gifts or attainments are the indispensable condition of our acceptance with God. Our guilt is the consequence of our actual transgressions; until therefore these are

pardoned, our guilt must remain against us, and the law we have violated must hold us under the sentence of condemnation. Our depravity is the natural inclination of our hearts to do evil, developed and strengthened by disobedience and sin; and until our hearts are renewed and rectified, changed by divine grace and turned toward God, our depravity must retain its dominion over us, and carry us persistently away from duty and holiness. To be righteous, consequently, we must experience each of these blessings: this change of judicial relation, and this change of moral nature. And these blessings we do experience the moment we believe on Christ. Abraham, when he believed, experienced them and was accounted righteous; and so too do all who exercise the same saving faith. And they are always experienced in connection, as concomitant parts of our salvation. All whom God pardons he regenerates at the same time, and he accepts them and acknowledges them for the sake of his Son. Hence it is said, "There is *no condemnation* to them that are *in Christ Jesus*;" and, "If any man be *in Christ* he is a *new creature*; old things have passed away, and all things have become new." Hence we read too that all who thus believe in Christ are reconciled unto God through him; are renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created them; and that Christ is made unto them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Thus pardon, or as it is generally styled in the New Testament, justification by faith, and with this the spiritual regeneration of the soul by the Holy Spirit, are the attainments requisite to constitute a righteous man, and all who enjoy these attainments

have been separated from the world, have passed over to the other side of the dividing line, and belong to Christ.

Here we might now leave this part of our subject, but another thought too important to be passed by arises, and deserves to be just referred too. It is that though the righteousness of believers is not legal, but entirely of grace, yet it implies and secures obedience to the law. It does not come from the law, yet it leads to it; it is of faith, yet of faith in such a sense that instead of making void the law it establishes it. Therefore we read, "He is righteous who doeth righteousness:" which means, simply, that every one who is really righteous, who has been forgiven and regenerated, will give proof of his state by the correctness of his life. The apostle James, too, is full and explicit on this point; devoting a large portion of his epistle to it, and showing very clearly that without works there can be no justification, that is, no proof or evidence of justification. Faith without corresponding obedience, he tells us, is vain: it is worthless and futile; it can not save us; can not please God; does not constitute any man righteous. The faith that saves, and by which we are justified, is a principle of action; it is a living faith, that works by love and purifies the heart, and brings back the mind from enmity to subjection to the law of God. "Was not Abraham, our father," he inquires, "justified by works?" And then he goes on to observe that his faith did indeed work, that is, manifest itself, by obedience; and that thus the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. And so he

reasons it must be with all who believe. They must show their faith by their works. They must be always found in the path of obedience. They must keep all the commandments; they must devote themselves to works of benevolence and piety; they must come out from the world and be separate, and not touch any unclean thing. They must deny themselves of all ungodliness and worldly lust, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world. In a word, they must let their light so shine before men, that others may see their good works, and glorify their Father which is in heaven.

¶ But we must pass now to consider in the next place, briefly, the blessed hope with which the righteous depart this life. The psalmist directs us to mark the perfect man, and to behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace. We have marked or contemplated the character he refers to in the preceding observations; let us now contemplate the peaceful end awaiting all those to whom this character belongs; the end that hundreds and thousands have experienced, and which is the promised and certain reward of faith and piety.

“The wicked,” says the text, “is driven away in his wickedness, but the righteous hath hope in his death.”

There is just one particular then in regard to which the two classes of mankind are upon the same footing; and that is, all of both classes must die. They must all in common be laid in the grave. The sentence is irreversible, and has respect to all. “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” In this particular God has ordered no distinction in destiny between the

righteous and the wicked. But when we come to this point a great and momentous distinction immediately appears. They all die, but they do not die alike. Their bodies go down to the silence and darkness of the tomb, but their spirits go forth into the world beyond in a perfect contrast of circumstances and prospects. Here a wide separation again appears, and they leave the world in keeping with their character and manner of life.

First, the wicked is driven away in his wickedness. He has lived as he would—thoughtlessly, mirthfully, neglectfully; forgetting God, and religion, and eternity; living for this world and the things of the world, and now his time has come to die. His days are numbered, and all his plans, and purposes, and pleasures must come to an end. He must leave the things he has loved so well, and which have so charmed, and yet deceived him, and must go the way of all the earth. But alas! he is unprepared for his departure, and is unwilling to go. He looks upon the past; it is stained with guilt: he looks upon the future; it is dark with gloom. His soul within him is filled with fear. The world on which he has bestowed his affections, and to which he still clings, with the wish that he might enjoy it forever, fades steadily from his vision, and sinks away before the realities of the eternal state. He shudders at the prospect before him, and recoils from the very thought of his doom. But it is unavailing; the mandate will not be recalled; death will not pass him by, and let him escape; he must release his hold on earth; he must, he *must* depart. Dark as is the prospect before him, he can not turn away from it, but

must go with all his dread to realize it. Eagerly as he looks back to earth, and strongly as he retains his grasp upon it, there is no alternative; he must pass on to the other world, he must face his eternal destiny. Surely it is an awful thing thus to die—surely it is a forcible saying: “The wicked is driven away in his wickedness.”

But it is not in this manner that the righteous depart: on the contrary, they have hope in their death. Mark then the perfect man in this particular. See him as he approaches the end of his pilgrimage and becomes conscious that his days are few. Observe the blended seriousness and serenity with which he surveys the prospect before him, and contemplates the eternal realities to come. He is greatly impressed with the greatness and importance of the change he must undergo, but there is no effort of the mind to exclude it from his thoughts, or to affect a philosophical indifference with regard to it. He considers it with immense and indescribable interest, but there is no fear, no trepidation, no agitation of spirit. His feelings are all composed; he has a peace within, the world knoweth not of; a deep and substantial comfort on which he reposes with confidence and hope, and which the adversary can not supplant nor disturb. Instead of being *driven* away to meet his destiny, advancing toward it with a cheerless and compulsory step, he surrenders to the call of the messenger with unmoved placidness of mind, and departs with readiness and tranquillity. Hear him as he describes the ground of his hope and expresses the joy that inspires him: “My heart and my flesh faileth; but God is the strength of my heart

and my portion forever. Though I walk through the valley and shadow of death I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod, and thy staff, *they* comfort me. I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he will stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes behold, and not another. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me in that day. To me to live is Christ, but to die is gain. O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?" Thus he comes down to the dark and gloomy vale; but with such thoughts and feelings it is no longer dark and gloomy to him. A supernatural light, the light of the Redeemer's presence, shines around him there, and its bright and quiet radiance illuminates his pathway, and guides and supports him through. Surely then this also is a true saying: "The righteous hath hope in his death."

Were it necessary, we might dwell longer on this point, and consider more particularly what the hope is with which the righteous depart this life—the hope of immortality and eternal life. But this can not be important to the object intended to be answered, which is to exhibit and impress upon you the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, their distinction in character here and in the destiny to which they are hastening. To accomplish this object, I have brought forward the righteous into special contemplation, delineating their character and peaceful end, and leaving

the wicked, with incidental allusions, in the background, to show off more strikingly the wide contrast in the two classes. Look at the picture as it has been drawn and presented, and for the end designed it is enough. The two classes are now before you. You see, on one hand, the whole world lying in wickedness, naturally inclined to evil, and all practically following evil, and sinning against God. You see the majority of them persisting in this state and course of life, and notwithstanding all that God has done for their salvation, refusing to repent and turn to him. But, on the other hand, you see some who have listened to the voice of mercy, have forsaken the ways of sin, and have returned in penitence and obedience to God. They are the few, who, believing upon Christ, have been chosen out of the world, have received a new character, and are the children of God and the heirs of heaven. Here they are, the one class on one side—a large and numerous and almost innumerable class—the other on the other side, a comparatively small and inconsiderable number. They are hastening on, with a loud and hurried tramp, to eternity—the many in the broad road to destruction, the few in the narrow way that leadeth to life. Soon they will come down to the river of death, and will pass over, the one with fear, the other with hope; the one to a dark and dismal state of existence that shall never terminate, the other to a state of high and holy and immortal blessedness. Let me ask you to which of these classes do you belong, and in which of these paths are you hurrying on to the world to come? Are you travelling with the multitude, doing evil, or are you striving to enter in at

the strait gate? Are you yet impenitent, or have you forsaken your evil ways and your unrighteous thoughts, and turned unto the Lord, and found mercy and pardon? This is no trivial, but a most momentous question. Its importance is as immense as eternity to you. It involves the choice between life and death, happiness and perdition, heaven and hell. It asks you solemnly, which you do chose? Will you go on, and love the world and lose your soul, or will you renounce the world, and take the Saviour for your portion? Will you press on with the wicked, and be driven away at last in your wickedness, or will you come over to the ranks of the righteous, and with them have hope in your death? Let me entreat you to weigh seriously this question, and decide rightly in regard to it. And in doing this, let me earnestly warn the wicked to turn. If you are unconverted, you must repent or be lost. Come over, then, I beseech you, and forsake your sins. There is room on this side of the dividing line; the way, though narrow, will hold you all. Then turn ye, turn ye, for why will you die? Come, for all things are now ready! Come, for though many have come, there yet is room!

"Ten thousand thousand more
 Are welcome still to come:
 Ye longing souls, the grace adore:
 Approach!—there yet is room."

SERMON VI.

SINNERS EXHORTED.

“SEEK ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near.” ISAIAH 55 : 6.

THESE words are addressed to a particular class of persons; and who these persons are we learn from the verse that follows. There, in words immediately connected with the text, and designed indeed to explain and expand it, it is said: “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” The wicked then, or the unrighteous, are the persons here addressed: to them it is said in these words of solemn and earnest exhortation: “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near.”

In occupying your time, my hearers, for awhile this evening, I desire, if possible, to impress upon your minds these words. Doubtless there are some here who belong to the class of persons addressed; some who have not forsaken their wicked way, nor their unrighteous thoughts; who, notwithstanding all that has been done for their salvation, are yet impenitent and unrenewed; and who, therefore, have need of this exhortation. My simple desire is to reason with such

for a few moments with regard to their state. I would bring them, if I can, to a point where they may see it as it is; where, with suitable seriousness of thought and feeling, they may stand still and contemplate it; where they may see how guilty they are, how truly miserable they are, how near to perdition they are, and yet what hope for a time remains in their case. In a word, I would persuade them to believe that now is the accepted time, and this the day of salvation.

I. Let me then call your attention first, in urging this exhortation upon you, to the condition in which it regards the ungodly. It is a condition, you will perceive at once, of separation from God. This is the idea implied in the words, and without it they have no force nor propriety. And this separation, let it be observed, is not a physical or local separation, but one of a moral character, and therefore of the most important and fearful character. In one view, it would be impossible to conceive of such a thing as a local separation from God, seeing he is omnipresent, and always and everywhere with us; and although, in another view, that is, in reference to future abode and destiny, the conception becomes real and truly awful, yet even here this is not the most momentous idea involved in this subject. It is the *moral* separation of man from God, the *moral* separation of the creature from the Creator, that after all gives to the condition of the ungodly its most painful and alarming aspect.

And yet this is the very separation implied in the text; this is the very manner in which the state of the ungodly is here described. They are sepa-

rated *morally* from the God who made them, and in whom they live and move and have their being. It is a separation including on the one hand the loss of God's favor and delight toward them, and on the other of their love and delight toward him. It is a separation, too, including the loss on their part of all moral likeness to God, so that they are both guilty and depraved in his sight. In his holy word we read that when He created man He made him in His own image and pronounced him very good. This implies that He delighted in him, and looked upon him with approval and complacency. Doubtless He thus delighted in him because he reflected His own holiness and perfect purity, and so, resembling Him in moral character, was fitted to show forth His glory and the honor of His name. But now this state of things is reversed. A great and ruinous change has come upon our race, and now in our natural and unrenewed state we no longer reflect the image of God, and he no longer looks upon us with approbation. He is yet kind to us, it is true, bearing with us in our iniquity, and willing and anxious to redeem us; but yet he does not, and can not approve of us, he does not regard us with delight, he does not extend to us the comforts and securities of his favor. Though he is near to us and around us continually, yet there is a wide, a dark, a dreadful distance between.

Nor is this the only instance in which our condition as unregenerate sinners is described under this light in the Scriptures; on the contrary, it is one of the most common methods of description here employed. "The Lord," it is said in one place, "looked down from hea-

ven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God." And as the result of this inspection, it is said that he found and declared, "They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy, there is none that doeth good, no, not one." It is said too in Isaiah, in reference evidently to our unrenewed condition: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way." Again: "Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened that it can not save, neither his ear heavy that it can not hear. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you that he will not hear you." And so too in the New Testament is similar language made use of. The apostle Paul speaks in the same strain when, in reminding the Ephesians of their former condition, he tells them that they were "aliens"—"without God and without hope"—"afar off," but now "made nigh by the blood of Christ." The apostle Peter speaks in the same manner also, as when he declares: "Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that *he might bring us to God*;" and again: "Ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." In these and similar passages the idea conveyed is that a wide moral separation exists between men in an impenitent state, and God, so that we are alienated from him, and he as our sovereign is angry with us, and a reconciliation is necessary in order to our peace and safety. And what a condition is this for intelligent and accountable beings to occupy! A creature estranged from his Creator!—a man morally severed from God! What a spectacle for angels

and the whole intelligent universe to behold! What a catastrophe to be lamented! What a ruin to be wept over! Would that you might consider it as it is! Would that you might feel, if you have never repented and returned to God, that this is your condition, and that it is high time for you to awake from your unconcern, and seriously to attend to the question: "What must I do to be saved?"

II. The next thing now to which I would call your attention in this exhortation, is the kind and earnest counsel that it gives you. Regarding you in this state, wandering from God and exposed to certain destruction, it calls aloud upon you and says: "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." No address could better suit your condition; no counsel, no advice, no entreaty, could be more appropriate to your circumstances. You are straying from God; it says to you, *Seek him*. You are perishing; it says to you, *Call upon him while he is near*.

But what does this seeking the Lord imply? What is it that the exhortation thus counsels us to do?

We must all perceive, I think, that the words imply something more than merely to furnish ourselves with a knowledge of God's character. This we may possess, at least to a considerable extent, and yet remain in the same moral state, and consequently exposed to the same dreadful end. Important and indispensable as is this knowledge, it does not of itself renew our nature, or bring us morally any nearer to God. We may have this in a measure, and many do have it, and remain unchanged, unpardoned, and unsaved. Some

higher and more intimate knowledge then is called for; some more spiritual knowledge; something that not only enlightens the understanding, but transforms and sanctifies the heart; something that reaches the moral feelings, and makes us in this respect new creatures; that takes hold of us in our alienation and sin, and restores us in love and obedience to God. And if I mistake not, it is to such an apprehension of God that the apostle refers when in one of his epistles he uses this language: "And hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments; he that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him: but whoso keepeth HIS word, in him verily is the love of God perfected; hereby we know that we *know* him." It is something more than an intellectual apprehension of God; something more than a merely theoretical knowledge of his character and perfections; something higher and beyond this, something more spiritual and experimental, something that renews the heart and controls the life of the man, and "turns him to the wisdom of the just."

And what it is precisely—the idea immediately involved in the words—the prophet has clearly developed in the verse following, and already alluded to. There to seek the Lord is to return to him. Now you are afar off. You have wandered from him like lost sheep; you have withdrawn from his protection and care; you have thrown off his authority and said that you would not have him to reign over you; you are guilty, condemned, and exposed to everlasting banishment from heaven; and now the exhortation to you is, *return*. If you see your misery, and are conscious that

you have done wrong, and desire to be saved, then come back; *come back to the Shepherd and Bishop of your soul*; return to him and he will have mercy upon you, submit to him and he will abundantly pardon.

But what does the prophet mean in those words: "Return unto the Lord?" The verse reads, you will recollect: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, *and* let him return unto the Lord." Now, to return unto the Lord implies obviously the abandonment of sin. No man can return and yet hold on to his wicked ways. All his evil practices and pursuits; all his sinful plans and purposes; all his unholy desires and inclinations, must be given up, or he can never come back to God. These are the things that have led him away from God: these are the things that have separated so far between him and his Maker; and so long as he clings to these things, and holds on in these ways, so long will he remain away from him. There is no other way, *no other hope*, than immediately to renounce all, and if the sinner will not do this he can not be saved. To return, you must come out from the world and be separate from it; you must detach yourself from the love and service of sin; and you must join yourself in a penitent and obedient spirit to the Lord. You must turn right around in your course, bow at once in subjection to God, and seeking pardon and a new heart, restore yourself to his lost favor and image.

But how, you may perhaps inquire, can this be done? How may a sinner so return to God as to be accepted? How may he obtain grace to forsake his wicked way; and how, should he do this, may he find pardon and

favor? Is it possible for a guilty and unholy man to come back over all this intervening distance, and these barriers, and these alienations of heart on his part, and these claims of justice on the part of God, and be reconciled and received? Is there a possible way in which this may be done? I answer, that there is a way in which every sinner may thus return to the Lord, and that this way is fully unfolded by the prophet. He is speaking in this chapter, and not only here, but through all this part of his prophecy, from the last three verses of the fifty-second chapter to the close, of the work and mediation of Christ. He declares the certainty of his coming, the atonement he should make for sin, and the purpose of God to accept of those who come unto him through Christ. He speaks directly on this glorious theme in the chapter before us, and illustrates the greatness of divine mercy in the fullest and most glowing manner. How striking are his words in the very first verse of the chapter: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk, without money and without price." Equally striking, too, are his words in the text and verse following. Here, though men have wandered far from God, and have become wicked in their ways and unrighteous in their thoughts, they are exhorted to seek him and return, and are assured, if they do so, that he will have mercy upon them and pardon them. So abundant are the provisions of his grace, that all are permitted to come, and that all who come shall be saved. And now, if the prophet has his eye on the mediation of Christ, and if in con-

sideration of this he exhorts the wicked to repent with the assurance of acceptance, we see clearly enough how sinful man may return to God. A new and living way has been opened for us, and now every sinner, no matter how far off he may be, may draw nigh with full confidence and hope. None need despair. Christ is the way, the truth, and the life, to every fallen creature of our race. We may approach in his name, for it is sufficient, and we may trust in his merits, for we shall not be rejected.

But there is another point which you should not overlook here, which is the way in which God is to be sought, or by which we are to come to him through Christ. This way is suggested in the text, in the words: "Call ye upon him while he is near." God, then, is to be sought in prayer. This is the proper way, and we may be assured that it is the only way in which guilty and condemned sinners can return to him. They must call upon him. They must cry to him for mercy. Approaching in the name of Christ, and relying alone on his merits, they must humble themselves and earnestly plead for pardon. They must have a broken and a contrite spirit, and, feeling that they are ruined and perishing, they must call aloud for help. The language of their heart must be: "Have mercy upon me, O God! have mercy upon me: for I acknowledge my sin, and my transgression is ever before me. For thy name sake, O Lord! pardon my iniquity, for it is great." And those who thus pray shall be heard. God has directly and specially promised it. "Whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." "Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find,

knock and it shall be opened unto you." "Draw nigh unto God and he will draw nigh unto you." Come, then, I am authorized to say to every straying, perishing soul to whom my voice can extend—come, and in prayer seek your offended God; and so sure as you come, he will receive you. He is ready and waiting now. He has prepared the way of return; he has given his Son, who has made a full and sufficient propitiation for the sins of the world; and now you have only to come humbly and penitently before him, and ask for pardon and acceptance, and salvation is yours. Let me, then, entreat you, in words of admonition and encouragement, to seek the Lord while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near.

III. But this leads to another thought in connection with this exhortation, that I desire you to notice. You see the condition in which it regards you, and the important counsel it gives you; mark, now, the considerations that should induce you to take this counsel and follow it. These considerations are of the most solemn and impressive character; let us observe them well, and open our hearts to their influence and power. You gain nothing by refusing to think seriously on a subject of such magnitude and immense interest as this, and therefore I beseech you to pause and consider for a few moments the motives you have immediately to seek God.

And first you are exhorted to seek him, and to do it now, from the certainty of success. The expressions, "while he may be found," and "while he is near," imply, surely, that there is now hope; that if you seek

you shall find; that if you call he will answer you. Look at this fact for a moment.

The human mind is so constituted, that it is impossible for us earnestly to seek after any object that we know is unattainable. Even a doubt in regard to it is found to weaken and discourage our efforts. When, however, this doubt gathers in vigor, and we are made sure that, do what we will, the object can never be reached, then we find it impossible to put forth any effort toward it. But when, on the other hand, the object is not only possible, but, upon ascertained conditions, certain to all who desire it; when we see that its attainment is not only possible, but that it is certain to fall as a reward to efforts appropriately directed toward it, then we can seek it, and do so with energy, and earnestness, and perseverance. The thought that it can be gained, if it is an object of worth and importance, stimulates and encourages us to aim and labor for it.

Well, now, this is one of the considerations suggested here that should induce you to seek the Lord. The object in view is nothing less than your future and everlasting well-being—the *salvation of your soul*; and this object you are assured is both possible and certain if you address yourself to it. The phrases in the text to which we have referred, are the same as if they declared, Now the Lord is waiting to be gracious: he is near, and will hear you as soon as you call. Your first accents of prayer will enter directly into his ears, and call forth the tender compassion of his heart. He is also perfectly accessible, and so soon as you turn to him he will meet and receive you. Turn you, turn

you, for why will you die? Forsake your wicked way and your unrighteous thoughts, and come now to his arms, for he will abundantly pardon. And what a blessed consideration is this! How cheering and comforting! What an incentive to effort, particularly to the serious and penitent! Let it encourage and strengthen such, and let it also arouse and awaken the careless and unconcerned.

But there is another consideration that more immediately concerns the latter class of unconverted persons, and which they should seriously ponder. It is the certainty of final rejection if they do not seek God soon. These phrases, "while He may be found," and "while He is near," imply also that the time is coming when he will not be found, and when he will be no longer near. They imply that he will not always wait as he is now waiting; that he will not be always as ready as he is to hear your prayers, and receive you to his mercy and favor. By and by he will cease to wait, and will turn as it were away from you. He will call on you to repent no longer; he will offer you pardon and acceptance no longer; he will give you up to the fearfulness of the ruin into which you have rushed so wickedly. And what a solemn, thrilling consideration is this to induce you to return to God. He assures you that he desires you to return and will most certainly receive you; but he assures you that after a time circumstances will gravely change, and that then he will wait no further. Now he is accessible and may be found; but soon he will turn away, and hide himself in judgment, and leave you to the sad and bitter lamentation: "Oh! that I knew where I might find

Him." Now his favor is attainable, and every one of you may come and avail yourselves of it; but soon it will be promised and proffered no longer, and, having despised it for the sake of worldly pleasure, you will not find it, though you seek it carefully with tears. Now his compassion lingers around you, shielding, watching, and weeping over you; but soon, repulsed, contemned, and abused, it will take its unwilling flight, and leave you exposed to the terrible destruction to which you are hastening. Now he bears long with you, overlooking your neglects and ungrateful rejections of his grace, ready, notwithstanding all, to receive you openly to his arms; but soon he will bring your probation to its close, and, rising up in his majesty, declare in his wrath that you shall not enter into his rest. How solemn and thrilling then, I repeat it, is this consideration! And how solemnly and thrillingly do the Scriptures at times urge it upon our attention! Not always by implication, as in the text, but repeatedly in the most direct and glowing language. "The wicked," it is said in one place, "shall be turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God." Again: "The Lord trieth the righteous; but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest, this shall be the portion of their cup." And how affectionately, and with what powerful pathos, did the dying king of Israel employ this motive in recommending to his son, who was about to succeed him, a life of piety and godliness: "And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father; and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind: for the Lord

searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all imaginations of the thoughts: *if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever.*" And then whose attention has not been arrested, and whose feelings have not been stirred, by those remarkable words, uttered as the voice of wisdom, but in fact the voice of God: "Because I have called and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity: I will mock when your fear cometh—when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but shall not find me."

Here then are the considerations with which you are exhorted to seek the Lord. The first is the certainty of success, the other the certainty of rejection. The one is, that if you seek him he will be found of you; the other is, that if you forsake him he will cast you off forever. Can I say any thing more? If these considerations are not sufficient to move you, *what will move you?* Here you see both the goodness and the severity of God: his goodness, vast, rich, completely immeasurable; his severity, arising from his purity, sovereignty, and rectitude, and harmonizing with his infinite benevolence. Is not all this enough to stir your careless heart? Can you need any thing further? If you do, I can say nothing better than to entreat you to get down on your knees and cry to God for help. Cry mightily for his spirit; cry for his convicting grace;

cry for feeling; cry for a mind to perceive and a heart to realize how near you are to everlasting death. Oh! it is a dreadful thing to have a heart that will not feel! Let your prayer therefore go up to God for help, for this is your only hope and means of deliverance. Let your language be:

“With softening pity look,
And melt my hardness down;
And break my heart of stone.”
Strike with thy love’s resistless stroke,

S E R M O N V I I .

ON PENITENCE.

“BUT to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.” ISAIAH 66 : 2.

AS all men are sinners, and all are dependent upon the mercy of God for salvation, it is certainly of infinite moment to ascertain the ground or conditions on which this mercy is imparted. And it is a consideration of great and peculiar interest to many that this ground has nothing to do whatever with our outward or temporal circumstances. These circumstances may be in every respect humble and disadvantageous; yet he will not on this account disregard us. Or they may be all that we can desire, giving us station, and influence, and all the comforts and luxuries of life; yet he will not on this account accept of us, or delight in us. Unless the heart is in a condition suitable and pleasing in his sight, he will not, because of worldly superiority, dispense to us his saving grace. Riches, honor, and high living avail nothing in the least with him. On such considerations he bestows salvation upon none. With all these things at your command you may live without him, that is, without his favor, in this world; and then dying and leaving these things, you may go and live without him through all the interminableness of the world to come. Men attach an importance to

such circumstances, but he does not. He looketh not, he has himself declared, at the outward appearance, but at the heart. He seeth not as man seeth, he judgeth not as man judgeth.

But what is that state of heart so becoming in his estimation, and so requisite to obtain his mercy? To this inquiry, so truly and immensely interesting, we have an answer, plainly furnished, in the text. It is the state here mentioned and described; a state of spiritual lowliness and debasement; a state of sincere and earnest penitence. "But to this man will I look;" as if he had said to him and none other—to none other, yet to him surely; "to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word."

The subject to which these remarks lead us, and which they bring out from the text, is, the necessity and fitness of penitence as the only way to the favor of God: not, let it be observed, his general favor, in which all men, for the time being, have in some way a share, but his special and spiritual favor—that which is connected with our salvation, and which indeed constitutes our salvation.

And this is a subject, surely, worthy our attention. It is so at all times and in all places; but it is particularly so at the present time in this place, when the Holy Spirit is at work upon the hearts of some of you, and when the inquiry is heard in our midst: "What must I do to be saved?" It is particularly worthy attention at this time, also, from the fact that while some are yielding to the strivings of the Spirit, others are resisting; that while some are anxious and thought-

ful, others are heedless and scornful, and are flattering themselves in their own eyes. The state referred to in the text they affect to despise; they see in it nothing desirable or necessary; they even make light of it, and yet expect to be saved. With a view to benefit both of these classes, to encourage and comfort the one, and to undeceive and admonish the other, I may with obvious appropriateness present this subject before you; and I pray that the spirit of love and of truth may be eminently near to assist and bless us in our meditations.

I. What then—in order so to consider the subject as to accomplish our design—what, let us inquire in the first place, *is* penitence? In attending to this inquiry we shall find ourselves supplied in the text with full and relevant instruction. A penitent, so to speak, is here brought before us. He is described, so far as character can be embodied in words, fully and minutely, and we see him as it were in person, in living reality. The phraseology of the text, too, is exceedingly significant and touching; representing the penitent as a man poor, of a contrite spirit, and trembling at the word of God. If now we can raise our minds to a proper conception of all this; if we can reach in its extent and spirituality the import of these phrases; if we can understand what it is to be poor, and contrite, and to tremble at the word of God, then we shall see in its true sense what it is to be penitent; and what God requires of us that we may receive his mercy.

First then the penitent is one who is *poor*. I need not remark, of course, that this is to be understood

spiritually and not temporally; that it is not to outward circumstances, but to the inward state of the feelings that allusion is here made. It is true indeed that the poor are generally more ready than the rich to humble themselves before God, and to receive salvation; but such is not the case invariably; for often the former will continue and persist in sin, with their hearts unsubdued and unhumbled, while the latter turn away from their rebellion, and bow in contrition before God. Thus furnishing a proof of what has already been stated: that salvation is conditioned on no external circumstances, but that all, the rich and the poor, neither having an advantage over the other, must prostrate themselves before the Most High, and become alike poor in a spiritual sense before they can be accepted of him.

But what does this poverty imply? We see that it relates to the state of the heart; that it is the poverty felt by the psalmist when he said, "I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me;" and that referred to by Christ when he declared, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God;" but then what is it, and what is the state of mind indicated by it? Should we attempt directly to define it, perhaps we could not better express ourselves than to say, It is a true and thorough conviction of sin, with a deep and soul-prostrating humiliation on account of it. Of him that is so affected it may be correctly said that he is poor; but of no one else can this be said with the least propriety. Without this conviction and humiliation the heart is yet rebellious; it is still lifted up against the Almighty, and with a firm and stubborn wickedness continues its hostility to him.

But what is this conviction of sin? I need not observe, in defining this, that it is a consciousness pressing heavily upon the penitent's mind, assuring him that he is a sinner, personally guilty and condemned before God, and justly in danger of everlasting punishment. It implies that he both *knows* and *feels* that such is his condition; not *only* knows, but feels *also*. And here is a point, if I mistake not, on which we are liable to misapprehension, and in regard to which misapprehension may prove serious. Let it not be supposed then that because you know, and are willing to admit that you are a sinner, that you are therefore *convicted*, and consequently poor in the sense of the text. Knowledge here is not enough. It is enough to begin with, enough to arouse you, and lead you to reflection; but then if you stop here, if you will not reflect here, and begin to pray and reform, you can not be truly said to be awakened, but are yet in the gall of bitterness and under the bonds of iniquity. Feeling on this subject is equally requisite. Connected with this intellectual acquaintance with your condition there must be emotion and lively concern, for in this matter conviction relates as much to the sensibilities as to the understanding.

Let us notice this point a little further. How many do you suppose among the unconverted who hear me at this time are really convicted? How many will go home to pray, to weep, and to mend their lives? Yet all of them know that they are sinners. Speak to them on the subject and you will find in them no disposition to dispute it: on the contrary, they will allow it without hesitation or repugnance. Yes, they will tell you, we

are all sinners, and have need to repent; and they will go further and tell you that they intend at some future time to arouse themselves and give their attention to this duty; but then you will see in them no anxious concern, no emotion, no just sense of their danger. On the other hand they will refer you to this very circumstance, their present insensibility, as an excuse for refusing to repent just now: yes, and they will go away from this house to-night, and notwithstanding all the appeals that are made to them, they will lay themselves down and sleep as quietly as if it were merely the suggestion of fancy that before morning they may wake up in hell. And why is this? The explanation is, that though they *know*, they will not *consider*; though they are advised of their danger, they will not look after it; though they are acquainted with their state, they have no feeling in regard to it. And thus they are far off from conviction. They are yet indifferent and rebellious, not poor like the penitent, but at ease in the pride of their hearts.

But humiliation we said is also included in the poverty here ascribed to the penitent. It follows and blends with his conviction that he is a sinner; and this it does invariably when conviction is genuine. The man who fully knows and feels how wicked and guilty he is, and who gives up to the influence thereby exerted upon his mind, will be humble and will get down in the dust before God. The language of his heart will be: "Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Wherefore I abhor myself; I repent in dust and ashes." And did you ever see such a man, my hearers? Yes, you

have: you have seen many such of late in this place: you have seen them in this house, and some of you in the circle of your own families. And perhaps you have thought strange of so sudden a transformation. Perhaps you have wondered how men of strength and standing; how young people bent only on pleasure and vanity; and how the old, venerable in appearance and firmly established in habit, have been brought down to such abasement of soul, and to such a sense of unworthiness, and of nothingness, in the presence of God. But though you may wonder do not chide them. It is right, it is becoming, it is just as it should be. If it is your friend, your brother, your sister, nay your own child, say not a word in ridicule or discouragement. God would have them humble. This self-renunciation, this lowliness, this poverty of spirit is pleasing in his sight, and if you speak against it you exalt yourself against him. With such, he says, he will dwell: he will look upon them and receive them.

But I pass to observe that the penitent is one who is also *contrite*; that is, according to the literal signification of the term, broken and bruised. And how expressive, in this connection, is this term! The spirit of the true penitent is indeed broken: it is bruised and crushed within him, borne down with a heavy load of grief. Being poor in the sense described, convicted and humble, this grief naturally ensues. It gushes up from the deep springs of his soul, and overflows it completely with sorrow and distress. It is true, it is not in every case equally intense, yet it is always strong and subduing. In persons of slow temperament, as well as in persons who have studiously schooled their

feelings, and fortified themselves against excitement, there may be no sudden, overwhelming emotion; but even in their case, where there is a deep sense of sin, there will be, if it is yielded to, deep sorrow on account of it. And there can be no penitence without it. In itself the word penitence implies sorrow: it is a pain for sin; a pain of soul, consisting in a consciousness of guilt, and impelling the subject to a sincere hatred and total abandonment of his sinful ways.

And let me remind you, in speaking on this point, that the sorrow of the penitent, referring to sin as its object, does not regard it so much in its consequences as in its character. In other words, it is sin itself, and not the punishment of sin, that excites his grief. But, in this remark, let me not be misunderstood. I do not mean to say, that the punishment to follow sin has no influence whatever on the mind of the penitent, for this would not be true to fact; but then it is an influence awakening fear rather than sorrow, an influence causing him to tremble rather than to weep. He would feel the same grief if he knew nothing of the punishment of sin at all, provided he had the same deep conviction of its criminality and guilt. As it is, the knowledge he has that punishment does indeed await him, tends doubtless to arrest him in his course, and bring him to penitence; but then, the sorrow that fills his heart respects sin in its criminal above its penal character. It regards it as an offense against God; it is a bitter and heart-piercing regret for having violated his law, holy, just, and good; it is an overwhelming sense of ingratitude and wickedness, so tender and softening, that it breaks down all the obduracy of the

soul, and opens upon it a flood of deep and sincere tenderness.

And if I do not misunderstand the Scriptures, this is the kind of sorrow they imply in penitence. It is certainly the kind David felt when he exclaimed: "Against *thee*, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." It is the kind, too, so affectingly described by Christ in the parable of the prodigal son. Here the prodigal, representing in his repentance the return of the sinner to God, says: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before *thee*, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." And it is the kind referred to by the apostle, when he uses the phrases, "a godly sorrow," "a sorrow unto repentance," "a sorrowing after a godly sort."

And it is just here, too, allow me to say further, that we may distinguish a true from a spurious or superficial penitence. In the latter, as well as in the former, there may be sorrow, or a state of mind to which the subject will apply this term; but it is a different sorrow altogether, originating from a fear of consequences. Could the individual get rid of this fear; could he really believe that there are no evil consequences to follow his sins in the world to come; could he persuade himself that, do what he will, all will be well in the future, then his sorrow would immediately abate, and he would go on in his course with as light a heart as ever. On the other hand, as has been observed already, this would make no difference with the true penitent. His is a godly sorrow. It is such that he hates sin and mourns over it, *because it is sin*; and it leads him to turn away from it with sad and unutterable remorse. He would

not, if he could, enjoy it: though assured that he might do it with impunity, he would not yield it his affections, nor surrender himself to its power another day. His greatest concern is, how he may obtain a deliverance from it. The language of his inmost soul is: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?"

But another thought connected with this, and which it will be proper to refer to here, is, that the sorrow of the penitent not only regards sin in its character, but regards its character in the twofold aspect of it: its relation, that is, both to the heart and life. You are perfectly aware that sin exists among men in each of these forms. There are heart-sins, such as covetousness, and pride, and worldliness, and anger, all originating from a natural bias to do evil; and there are outward sins, such as manifest themselves in our words and deeds, and our general deportment. The true penitent is conscious of his guilt and depravity in both of these respects. He sees that his life has been one continued scene of transgression, and that his heart is vile, deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. He sees that there is within him enmity to God; and that this enmity has kept pace with the increasing iniquities of his life. "There dwelleth in me," he finds himself compelled to acknowledge, "no good thing." And it is for sin as thus existing in him, as well as for sin as developing itself in his every-day deportment, that the penitent is contrite. It is the enmity of his heart to God, as well as his outward disobedience, that makes him sad. It is for his want of spirituality, and gratitude, and love, and reverence, as well as for his idle

words, and acts of violation of the divine law, that he mourns. And in his prayer for acceptance, he has regard to these sins without discrimination, confessing and lamenting the whole. His petition is: "Have mercy upon me, O God! according to thy loving-kindness: according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me." And still further: "Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create within me a clean heart, O God! and renew a right spirit within me." And when his prayer is answered, and the deliverance he seeks is obtained, he feels that he is at once forgiven and renewed; that his transgressions are indeed blotted out, and a new heart created within him; that being justified by faith, he has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; and that being thus in Christ, he is a new creature, old things have passed away—his guilt and his wicked heart—and all things have become new.

But there is one other point in the character of the penitent, brought to view in the text, which we must not overlook. Not only is he poor and contrite, but he also *trembles at the word of God*. This is as truly a part of penitence as either of the states of mind just referred to. It results, too, like contrition, from the first state; for who can be poor in the sense explained, who can know and feel his sinful condition, and be properly humbled on account of it, without trembling, or becoming anxious and alarmed before God? And here we see the legitimate effect of the penal

character of sin on the mind of the penitent. It does not, we have said, produce contrition; at least, it is not to sin in this view that the contrition of the penitent refers; but yet it has an effect after all, and that effect is fearfulness and a spirit of dread. While he sorrows for sin as he contemplates its criminality, he trembles for it as he contemplates its tremendous issues.

And we may be assured that it is not a superstitious and unnecessary feeling that he now experiences: on the contrary, there is cause for trembling. And when you remember that it is the word of God at which he trembles, and which creates his alarm, you will at once admit this. You will admit that he has the best reason in the world for being agitated and disturbed.

In the first place, he now sees the character of God, for the first time in his life, in its true and majestic light. Before this he believed that there is a God, and he never doubted his dependence upon him, and his accountableness to him. To some extent, too, he understood his character. He knew that he is holy, just, and good; and he knew that he is everywhere present, beholding the evil and the good. But his views, after all, were exceedingly vague and indefinite. Though correct as far as they extended, they were too limited; and made on the mind too faint an impression to constitute a proper conception of the divine character. But how different is it now! How far more elevated are his notions of the perfections of his Maker! His holiness, justice, and truth; his omnipresence, omniscience, and power; every attribute, indeed, of his character, both natural and moral, how differently does he view them all! And what an impression, too, has he

of the divine sovereignty! How he shrinks into the dust before it! How overpowering is his sense of his own insignificance in competition with it! Well, then, may he tremble! Well may he fear, seeing he is a transgressor, as the august character of his offended Judge thus rises in full view before him! Well may he exclaim, in the language of the patriarch of old: "When I consider I am afraid of thee."

But this is not all. He sees now, for the first time also, the number and greatness of his offenses. Before this, he went on adding crime to crime, and neglecting duty after duty, without reflection or concern. He never stopped seriously to inquire, What am I doing? and what will be the result of my course? but, without any regard to the long, dark account which he was daily running up against himself, he rushed on in his wicked career, thinking and caring but little. But it is differently with him now. He has paused and is thinking, and his thoughts disturb him. His sins now appear to him as mountains. They look black and dismal, too, like a cloud surcharged with wrath, and foreboding nothing but terror and destruction. And there is nothing to relieve his fears as they pass in review before him. He has no excuse to fall back on, no plea whatever to make. He can only say: "I have wilfully sinned, I am desperately vile." He can not say: "I did it ignorantly and unintentionally; I thought I was right, and in pursuit of lawful ends; my purpose was good, and my motives correct;" no, he can say nothing like this. He knows that he acted advisedly and without constraint. He knows he was well aware what he was doing; and if at first he did

not see the wickedness and consequences of his course, he knows it was because he closed his eyes, shut out the light, and would not consider. And so, again, there is reason that he should tremble. Recollecting what sin is, and how offensive and hateful it is in the sight of God; and recollecting that all his life-time he has been committing sins, so that they are more than the hairs of his head, and can not be named nor numbered, he *must* be alarmed, he *must* dread the future, his soul within him *must* tremble.

But there is another reason still, one suggested by the preceding, why he should tremble. He sees now, also, as he never saw it before, the nearness of his exposure to the wrath of God. He had been repeatedly admonished that the wages of sin is death, and that every day he lives in impenitence he is treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; but it always sounded to him as an idle tale. He regarded it as so much fanaticism, or at least as an exaggeration worthy only of his contempt. "All will be well," was ever his motto, and with this opiate to his conscience, he persisted in his course, and cared for nothing. But he has found out at length, that in rejecting what he regarded the delusion of others, he has deluded himself with an appalling, a ruining infatuation. He sees now that there is meaning to the word of God; that its threatenings are serious and in earnest; that the wrath it speaks of *means* wrath, the wrath of a righteous and sin-avenging God. He sees, too, that there is but a step between him and this doom; that he is standing, as it were, upon the very brink of the precipice; and that, in a short time,

he shall know for himself how fearful a thing it is to fall in the hands of the living God. And how, then, with his feet thus consciously taking hold on death, can he resist this trembling? Imagine to yourself some pleasure-seeker, pursuing his way in the dark: he considers himself in some pleasant and inviting path, and on he goes thoughtlessly and joyously. But suddenly some light breaks upon him, and in an instant he finds that he is standing upon the very verge of a deep, dark, dismal abyss, just raising his foot for the next, the final and fatal step. With what horror and consternation would such an one start back, and what trembling would seize and overpower him as he surveyed his danger. So is it, more or less, with the awakened sinner. He has been seeking pleasure all his days, and he thought that his path was safe. But he has been in the dark. Every step has brought him nearer to destruction; nay, being every moment liable to die, he has been every moment on the brink of the precipice. But the light of conviction has at last forced an opening into his mind, and he sees that he is standing exposed to the most fearful peril, and that just one step more, and he may take the dreadful plunge. And therefore he trembles at the word of God. He flies back from the edge of the pit, and with his mind all awake to the hazard of his condition, he cries to the Lord, and penitently prays for deliverance.

II. But we must pause on this part of our subject, not having time, however useful it may be, to add any further reflections. Having obtained, however, from the full and life-like representation of the text, a pretty

clear and precise idea of what penitence is, we are prepared now to consider for a few moments its necessary and certain connection with the favor of God. It is the only way, and yet a sure way, according to the teaching of the text, to his saving mercy: so that, if we return to the Lord, he will return to us; but if we repent not, we shall all likewise perish.

That penitence is indeed thus connected with our salvation, will not of course be questioned; all who read and have acquainted themselves with the Scriptures understand and admit it. But then, it may not be so well understood why this connection is necessary; why it is requisite to repent in order to be saved; why, without this, no man may hope to be accepted and approved. Some, doubtless, are ready to inquire, Why must we pass through this trying scene? Why, especially, must the high and noble; and more especially still, why must the moral, and kind, and amiable, all humble themselves in this manner, and acknowledge their sinfulness? In illustration of this point, I have two plain and very obvious considerations to present; and if you will attend to these considerations for a moment, you will perceive clearly, I think, why penitence is so essential to our salvation.

It is so, I remark, first, because it is the only state of mind in which it is actually possible for salvation to be received, or to become a matter of experience. Before penitence, the mind of every man, according to the verdict of Scripture, is proud, and haughty, and rebellious; and you yourselves will admit that it is indifferent, repugnant to the claims of religion, and decidedly worldly. We all know that it is at best irreligious;

ungodly, uninclined to duty, fixed upon the pleasures of the world, and settled in its aversion to spiritual things. Now, if this is so, how can a man become the recipient of salvation till his mind is humbled and brought down? It is now lifted up against God, and is at enmity with him; how in this state can he be at peace with God? Surely God can not pardon him while he continues rebellious; and surely he can not renew and sanctify him while he persists in his enmity. It is folly, then, for an impenitent man to expect salvation; it is philosophically impossible for him to partake of it. His heart must first come down; his pride must give way; he must humble himself under the mighty hand of God. In the language of the text, he must be "poor and contrite, and tremble at the word of God." Unless he does this, there is no mercy for him, simply because in his state of mind he can not receive it. Has a man incarcerated in a dungeon any possibility to escape the dreariness of his condition, or again to rejoice under the sweet light and balmy breath of heaven, who, though permitted, refuses to go forth, or to allow some friendly hand to conduct him? Has a man who has become obnoxious to his best friend, by willfully offending him, any hope or likelihood of becoming reconciled to him, while he is daily repeating his offense, and obstinately cherishing his enmity towards him? Has a man whose mind is disquieted and unhappy, whose passions are like the troubled sea that can not rest, sending up mire and dirt, any way to become settled and subdued, while he nourishes his evil and restless propensities, and refuses to admit the tranquillizing feelings of kindness and peace? So is it im-

possible for a sinner refusing to repent, to escape the darkness of condemnation, or to become reconciled to God, or to obtain peace for his troubled soul. His state of mind is incompatible with his salvation. His impenitence perpetuates his rebellion; therefore he can not be saved.

But again: penitence is necessary to salvation because it is a state indispensable to your compliance with the condition of faith, on which salvation is directly suspended. You are perfectly aware that God does not save men by a mere act of sovereignty. It is through the mediation of Christ alone that mercy is imparted; and it is only when we believe, that is, confide and trust in Christ, that mercy becomes actually saving. "He that believeth on the Son," said Christ, "hath life." Again: "Whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Faith, then, a true, living, spiritual faith, is the great condition of personal salvation. But it is impossible to exercise this faith without penitence: you must become poor, and contrite, and tremble at the word of God, before you can thus trust in Christ. This your own reflections will assure you if you will indulge them a moment. Again, it is distinctly taught in the Scriptures: for you are here continually forewarned that if you love and persist in sin, and will not humble yourselves before God, you can not draw near to him with any confidence or trustful feelings. Our Saviour says, most plainly too, "Repent and believe the Gospel;" implying that unless you are penitent you can not believe in a saving sense. Paul says also that in his ministry, he testified "repentance toward God, and faith

toward our Lord Jesus Christ:" teaching that without a sorrow and a renunciation of sin men can not so trust in Christ as to become interested in his saving merits. And if this is so, do you not see the necessity of penitence as the only way to God's favor? Not only is salvation incompatible with any other state of mind, but it is dependent on a condition to which this state of mind is indispensable. There remains therefore nothing but death and destruction to those who, despising the riches of God's goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, after their hardness and impenitent heart treasure up wrath against the day of wrath.

But while penitence is thus necessary to salvation, so that none can find favor from God in this respect without it, it is also *certain* of salvation to all such as truly manifest it. This need hardly be remarked, as it is a thought so clearly implied in the other; and yet it may not be amiss to expand it a little. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." Here is God's own promise that he will regard with favor, and show saving mercy to the humble and sorrowing penitent: instructing us that while it is needful for men to repent, they shall surely be saved when they repent. The worldly and unyielding may despise or pity the penitent: they may affect a haughty superiority over him: they may style his sorrow weakness, and his debasement folly; but the Most High complacently regards him, and will honor him. "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy: I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive

the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." To the penitent then will he be propitious: to him will he disclose the fullness of his compassion: to him will he extend pardon, peace, and purity. Let no contrite soul therefore despair. You are in just the right state to find mercy; and bitter as are the tears of repentance they shall be succeeded by a heavenly and unspeakable joy.

Here, however, I must close. And yet before I sit down I would say just a word or so to those in my congregation who know nothing of this spirit of penitence. You have been convinced of your sin, and yet you have resisted and stifled all feeling in regard to it. You sit here to-night unmoved, on the very brink, we may say, of destruction. The words to which you have listened have been to you an unmeaning sound, or as a very lovely song of one that has a pleasant voice, and could play well upon an instrument; for you have heard the words and you will do them not. You will go home and you will be as careless and indifferent as ever; or if you feel, you will strive hard to overcome your sensibility and to destroy it in the bud. It has been so repeatedly before, and I sadly fear it will be so again. And what can I say to you, not already intimated in my remarks? I can only say, with the solemn and thrilling sensations awakened by a view of your condition, that there is but one step between you and death: not between you and the grave, merely, but between you and perdition. I wish you might realize and be affected by it as you should. It is a dreadful thing to stand in your position. My soul shudders within me as I now look forward and

survey its consequences. *To live a rebel, and to die impenitent*—can you imagine the terribleness of such a life and end? Ah! were you ever so thoughtful, ever so much alarmed, you could not conceive one half of the wo and sorrow that you are preparing for yourselves beyond the grave. And yet you have no thought or alarm about it all. Be aroused, I beseech you, and begin this hour to reflect: be aroused, lest God should give you over to blindness and hardness of heart, that you may believe a lie and be damned.

SERMON VIII.

INTERCESSION OF CHRIST.

“BUT this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” HEBREWS 7 : 24, 25.

THE Epistle to the Hebrews is supposed to have been written by Paul to the converted Jews of Palestine; and its design, obviously, was to confirm those converts in the faith and doctrines of the Gospel. To accomplish this design the apostle proves to them the entire superiority of the Christian to the Jewish dispensation; showing them that the latter was merely a type of the Christian dispensation, and that, having answered its use and purpose, it is now superseded and laid aside.

In the course of his argument to make out this proof the apostle shows in the first place that Christ is superior to angels, who were supposed to have something to do with the giving of the old covenant; secondly, that he is superior to Moses, the leader and lawgiver through whom that covenant was given; and thirdly, that he is superior to Aaron, the great and distinguished high-priest of that covenant. As to angels, he shows that He is superior to them, inasmuch as He is the Son of God, and as such “the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of His person.”

As to Moses, he shows that He is superior to him, inasmuch as He is the Son, ruling in his own house, the Church of God, and Moses was only a servant in that house. And as to Aaron, he shows that He is superior to him, inasmuch as he was a type of Christ, and his priesthood a typical priesthood; and inasmuch, seeing that Christ has now come, as he is to be no longer succeeded in the office, but the office is itself, as a human arrangement, to cease, and Christ is alone and forever to assume it.

It is to this last point that the apostle gives his chief attention; showing by various considerations, and with a clearness that could not fail to make its impression, the superiority of Christ's priesthood to Aaron's, and thus, as this was the peculiar distinction of the Jewish dispensation, the superiority of Christ's dispensation to that. The text occurs in connection with his argument on this point. It is one of his illustrations regarding it. "But this man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood." Aaron was not so. He was a frail and mortal man, and so were all his successors; and they have all passed away. But Christ continueth ever: though dead, he is alive again; though truly man, he has been glorified and is immortal. Hence he has an unchangeable priesthood; that is, "a priesthood which passeth not from hand to hand;" a priesthood that shall forever remain in himself, and that he shall exercise without change or assistance perpetually. And this illustrates his superiority to Aaron. It shows that as the antetype is greater than the type, and the substance greater than the shadow, so he is greater than one and all of the high-priests of the Jews.

As to the remainder of the text, it is an inference that the apostle draws from this consideration. "Wherefore—in view of the fact that Christ is thus a perpetual and the real high-priest—wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

The point in the text to which I design particularly to direct your attention is the fact seemingly incidentally stated, that Christ ever liveth to make *intercession* for us. This fact though incidentally is yet positively stated, and in it there is enough of instruction and comfort to call forth our most devout and careful meditation. Nor is this the only instance in which the fact is stated. It is elsewhere declared by the apostle in this and in other epistles, and we are taught to regard it as an important and a blessed truth. Let us then take it into our contemplation as the theme of this morning, and may the Spirit of God assist and bless us in the endeavor.

It will be perceived then that in referring to the intercession of Christ in the text the apostle does so in a form connecting it with his priesthood. He is an unchangeable High-Priest, and *as* an unchangeable High-Priest he intercedes for us. The first remark, therefore, that we are naturally led to make is, that the intercession of Christ is a legitimate part of his priestly office.

I need not observe that the priestly office embraces two branches, contemplating two objects; for this, without being reminded of it, will immediately occur to you. You will remember that the business of the high-

priest is in the first place to atone for sin, and secondly, to make intercession for the sinner. You will remember that this is the two-fold work that devolved on the high-priest of the Jews; that he slew the victim that was brought to the temple as a sacrifice for sins, making thus an atonement, and that then, taking the blood of the victim into the most holy place, he sprinkled it upon the Mercy-Seat, interceding thus for the people. You will remember too that this is precisely the two-fold work of Christ; that he came into the world to give himself as a sacrifice for sin, and that, having done this and been accepted, he has ascended into heaven, the Holy of Holies, and appears there in the presence of God for us. And now the remark before us is, that the intercession of Christ is an essential part of his office as our High-Priest. It is as much so as his atonement. These two branches of his office are equally essential. Neither of them is merely incidental. Nor is either of them alone sufficient. As we could not possibly be saved without the atonement of Christ, so even with the atonement we can not expect to be saved without his intercession. The one is as truly connected with our salvation as the other; so that it is only through the two conjoined that Christ becomes our actual Redeemer. Hence the necessity that Christ should ascend to heaven, after having made the propitiation. *That* part of his work could be performed on earth, and as the proper place was performed here; but to intercede he must return to his Father, and therefore we read that having made one sacrifice for sins, he has passed into heaven, and has forever sat down at the hand of God.

But this remark opens the way to others. It is indeed a leading remark, suggesting nearly all the reflections we need at this time refer to in consideration of the subject. It suggests among other things the ground on which the intercession of Christ proceeds and becomes admissible. This ground is his atonement. Having as our High-Priest first made this atonement, he has removed all objections to our reconciliation and salvation; and consequently he has opened a way to the throne, where he can now appear, and intercede before Divine Majesty in our behalf. It was only when the high-priest among the Jews had made this atonement in type by "the shedding blood" that he was allowed to enter the Holy Place, and there make his intercession. Without this first, his intercession would have been fruitless and unregarded; and indeed he would not have dared to venture there to make it. So too Christ could not appear in the presence of his Father for us until he had made the atonement by the shedding of his own blood. Then the way was open, and intercession became proper and possible. Now he can plead for us and advocate our cause. Now on the ground of his propitiation he can present our case and obtain the help we need. Now all impediments are removed in the way of our salvation, and God, having thus made it possible for him to be just and yet to justify the ungodly, will listen, and can *consistently* listen, to the prayer of his Son for the penitent.

And how pleasing, and mysteriously glorious, is the subject in this view of it! We see the adorable Saviour suffering, dying, shedding his blood, and atoning for the sins of the world; and then rising from the grave,

ascending into heaven, and there on the basis of his atonement, and with it as an all-prevailing plea, interceding for the objects of his compassion at the throne of his Father! Truly there is something to impress the mind, and to awaken a sentiment of wonder and admiration in this view! There is something, too, calculated at once to humble and to assure us! to humble us in view of God's amazing love and gracious purpose toward us, to assure us in view of the completeness and certainty of the way of salvation. We may well exclaim: "Who can harm us!" Or in other language: "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again, that is even at the right hand of God, who ever liveth to make intercession for us."

But there is suggested to us in the same way, not only the ground of Christ's intercession, but his peculiar fitness to make intercession. He is a High-Priest, as we see, able to atone. Not only is this a part of his office, but it is a part that he has actually and fully accomplished. This we know from the history we have of his life and works, so that there has been no failure in regard to this part of his undertaking. He has truly given himself as a sacrifice for sins, and this sacrifice is entirely adequate, God having assured us that he so regards it and accepts it. There is then no deficiency here; so far, certainly, he is a Mediator competent to his work. But a High-Priest able to atone is one certainly able also to intercede. The merit and dignity qualifying him for the first part of the office must qualify him also for the latter. Moreover the very fact that he has atoned gives him the

right, and invests him with the function to intercede also. So was it with the priests of old. The qualifications that gave them a fitness for the first branch of their office, gave them in like manner a fitness for the second; so that when they had slain the sacrifice, it was proper and suitable that they should enter into the Holy of Holies, and there make intercession. And they, as we have said, were the only persons who could do this; none others were allowed to enter that place, and the intercession of none others would have been at all regarded. These are arrangements with respect to the ancient temple with which you are all familiar. And it is in this way that we have suggested to us the fitness of Christ to become our Intercessor. Being a High-Priest qualified thus completely to atone for our sins; so infinitely worthy and meritorious that his sacrifice is accepted and declared to be a full and sufficient propitiation, he is able so to intercede that God will regard our cause, and that we shall obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. And when connected with this we survey the excellent and perfect qualities of his mind and heart, as exhibited in his life and teachings and atoning work, and commanding universal homage and admiration, we must feel ourselves gladdened with the assurance that we have an Intercessor so perfectly suited and competent to appear for us before his Father. When we remember that he is infinitely wise, so that he can not err; that he is immaculately holy, so that he need not, like those high-priests, to offer a sacrifice first for himself and then for the people; that he is compassionate and merciful, so that he is not a high-priest who can not be touched with

the feelings of our infirmities ; and then when we associate his perfect qualities with his offered and accepted sacrifice, we have every thing to encourage, and nothing to qualify, our satisfaction and confidence.

In the next place there is suggested, along with these views, the *manner* in which Christ makes his intercession. Directly, the Scriptures say but very little on this point; and yet in what they say concerning the duty and functions of the priesthood we are put in possession of some idea in regard to it. We naturally ask, How did the Aaronic priests make their intercession? How, after their typical atonement, did they plead in behalf of the people? And in the answer to this we may find some suggestion as to the manner in which Christ intercedes. And from the Jewish Ritual, as given by Moses, and explained by Paul, we learn that it was not so much by word of mouth that those high-priests made their intercession; it was rather by sprinkling the blood of sacrifice upon the mercy-seat. This may have been attended by some form of words, but it was itself the significant form of intercession. They entered the holy place, taking with them this blood, and then approaching, with reverent steps, the *Propitiatory*, sprinkled it there before God. It was a solemn act, and it was an intercessory act, pleading humbly with God for a penitent people. And from this, remembering that the Aaronic priesthood was a type of Christ's, it seems legitimate to infer that He makes his intercession in some similar way. We can not, of course, suppose that he literally presents there the blood he shed for sin; nor that he shows his body as wounded, and bruised, and bleeding; for this we

know can not be the case, seeing he has been exalted and glorified; and yet we may suppose that his very corporeal presence in heaven is a standing and perpetual memorial of the atonement he has made for mankind, and thus a living and efficacious intercession for his people. The poet has expressed this sentiment in words that we often and feelingly sing; and though the words are poetical, the sentiment is true:

“ Five bleeding wounds he bears,
Received on Calvary;
They pour effectual prayers,
They strongly speak for me;
Forgive him, oh! forgive, *they* cry,
Nor let that ransomed sinner die.”

But it is not implied in this conception of the intercession of Christ, that he does not also intercede for us directly and verbally. This may be the case for aught we know, and the probability is that it is so. Several declarations by him in his last conversations with his disciples, and the declaration of the apostle John, that he is our *advocate* with the Father, seem legitimately to suppose this; and it is an idea, too, which it is difficult to exclude from the mind. And yet it is along with the presence of his human nature as referred to, as a testimonial of his sacrifice for sin, that this is done; and it is because of its conjunction with a plea so powerful that this becomes also powerful.

But another thing suggested in regard to the subject that I design to notice, and which I hope may not fail to make an effectual impression on your minds, is the *object* to which the intercession of Christ is directed.

Why does he intercede for us, what is the end he has in view?

If he is our High-Priest; if he has made as such an atonement for our sins, and full provision for our salvation; and if now he is interceding for us in the legitimate prosecution of his priestly work, then it seems a proper inference that the object of his intercession is our actual and personal salvation. The two branches of his office must relate to the same object; and if the one contemplates our salvation, so must the other.

This is in accordance with the views that have been already presented. It has been remarked, that as our High-Priest he is our Saviour; that as such, he first atones for sin, and then intercedes for the sinner; that these two functions of his office are equally necessary; and that it is only through the two united that he can accomplish his purpose actually to save us. It is in accordance, too, with the language of the text. This says, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them;" which you see connects directly the intercession of Christ with our salvation; declaring that he is able to save us, because he intercedes for us; and implying of course that our salvation is the object of his intercession for us.

In speaking, then, of the object of his intercession, we have it here definitely before us; and let me now, as exhibiting this object in the clearest and fullest manner, fix your attention upon this language of the text. "Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost." Here you see that there is a most satisfactory statement of Christ's ability to save. The words obviously imply

that he is able to save *to the uttermost, first as it regards sin*. That is, he is able to save from all the guilt, all the power, all the pollution, all the consequences of sin. No matter how great the guilt of sin may be; nor how inveterate its power; nor how vile its pollution; nor how alarming its penal consequences, he has the undisputed ability to deliver us from it all. Believing upon him we shall be justified and regenerated, and shall become the children and the heirs of God; and thus he will become our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. They also imply that he is able to save *to the uttermost* as it regards the human family, "all them that come unto God by him." It is true he does not save any but those who come to God by him; who by believing upon him become his followers; but then all *may* come, and he has the ability to save them if they *will* come. There is, consequently, no restriction to Christ as a Saviour in this respect. No one need suppose that he can not become a Saviour to him; but all nations and all individuals come within the range of his saving power. The ends of the earth may come, and they may look upon him and be saved. As sin can not be too enormous for his ability to reach, so sinners can not be too numerous for his ability to encompass. And I feel myself authorized to proclaim this truth to you to-day; and could my voice be heard so far, and could I proclaim the truth so widely, I should feel myself authorized to say to each and every sinner that treads this day upon the face of the earth: "He is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by him. Come, for all things are now ready."

But the words imply, also, that he is able to save to the uttermost as it regards the duration of our being. In other words, he is able to save us *eternally*. Not only is he able to deliver us now from sin, but he is able to keep us to the day of redemption, and to exalt us to the glorious and everlasting bliss of heaven. Having commenced a good work in us, he is able to perfect it. He is able to strengthen, settle, and establish us; to uphold and keep us from falling; to sanctify us wholly; and to present us at last before the Father with exceeding joy. He is able even to redeem our bodies from the grave, to change them, and to fashion them after his own glorious body, and then to advance us soul and body to the high and glorious portions of heaven.

Such is Christ's ability to save, and such the object of his intercession for us. To accomplish this great end he stands there continually before the throne, having us ever in his thoughts, and bearing for us in his soul this wonderful load of solicitude and concern. Let us adore and praise his majestic kindness, and cultivate more than we have been accustomed to do a sense of our obligation to him. We think, I fear, too little on this subject, and feel, I fear, too little with regard to it. It should not be so, but we should often refer to Christ in his character as our intercessor, and should be deeply affected as we thus remember him. Why are we here to-day? Why have we been preserved amid the changes and dangers of life, while death has been all around us, and many have been called away, and the day of their probation closed, and why have we still the blessings and privileges of the Gospel?

Because he ever liveth to make intercession for us. Why is it, though we have been so unfaithful to our calling; though we have neglected so many privileges, misused so many mercies, omitted so many duties; though we have been so dilatory in the path of life, advanced so slowly in holiness, and done so little good in the world, why is it that we have not been cut down as cumberers of the ground, but have still a place in God's Church, and opportunity to awake from our stupidity, and do something still, if we will? Because he ever liveth to make intercession for us. Why is it, though we have sometimes been the children of affliction; though difficulties have often gathered around us, and sorrow forced a way to our hearts; though the world has appeared cheerless without, and all has been dreary and sad within; though faith has sometimes been feeble, and hope ready to expire; though, when we have long looked for the light, the sky of our mind has been all dark; why is it, that under such circumstances, we have still been able to hold out, to keep up within the fainting breast some sustaining confidence in God; to say to the tempter, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," and to press on, though sorrowfully, in the way of life, hoping against hope, and believing in the mysterious darkness that all in the end would be well—why is it? Because he ever liveth to make intercession for us. *He* has obtained for us the needed grace, and the needed forbearance, and here, therefore, we are, the living to praise him. Let us, then, think much of this subject, and let us take strength and courage from it to go on with fidelity and comfort in the Christian race.

But what shall I say to the sinner? He has never come to God through Christ, and can never, therefore, prove his ability to save him; never, I mean, while he refuses to come. For him Christ died, as well as for others. Yes, perishing sinner, his atonement was made for you as well as for the truest believer. And will you let him die in vain? Will you disregard his mercy, and neglect the salvation he has provided for you? Will you, notwithstanding all his love for you, and all that he has done for you, persist in your rebellion, and go down to hell? Let me entreat you to pause, and no longer act so recklessly. You have each of you an immortal soul; it must be saved or lost. Now it is in danger of being lost. You are guilty and wicked, and there is but a step between you and death. Oh! consider your condition. Consider the worth of your soul, and the immenseness of its danger. Consider your unspeakable perversity in rejecting Christ. Cry to God to awaken and alarm you; to put feeling into your stupid hearts; to take away your heart of stone, and give you a heart of flesh. Cry to him while yet there is time, for your life is short and uncertain, and may be even now ebbing to its close. Cry this moment, this *very moment*, for now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation. To-morrow may be too late. To-morrow your friends may all around receive the tidings that you are gone the way of all the earth, and may prepare to follow you to the tomb. To-day, then, hear his voice. To-day come to God through Christ, and find that he is a High-Priest, able to save *you* to the uttermost.

SERMON IX.

THE SECURITY OF THE GOOD MAN.

“AND who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?” 1 PETER 3:13.

To be followers of that which is good is the same thing, simply expressed, as to be good. It is to fear God, to walk in his ways, to cultivate his favor. In a word, according to the literal meaning of the original, it is to be *imitators* of God. In regard to such, the declaration of the text, given in the energetic and impressive form of an interrogatory, is, that nothing shall harm them. They occupy, so to speak, a position above evil. They stand where no weapon formed against them can reach them. They are secure, absolutely secure from any real and actual damage. The doctrine, then, suggested by the text, and which it is the design of this discourse to elucidate, is, That the good man is always and everywhere safe. No matter what may occur in the revolution of human affairs; no matter what either the present or the future may develop in relation to himself, or the world in which he lives, or the universe itself, he, notwithstanding all, is surely and completely safe. There is One who loves the good, who watches over, and protects, and shields them; who has declared that he will never leave nor

forsake them; and who, by day and night, amid all changes and hazards, has them in his special and holy keeping.

Let me, then, for a short time, direct your attention to this subject. Let me try to illustrate before you a truth so full of hope and consolation; one, too, of necessity in this life so appropriate to our condition and circumstances. And let me call upon you to unite with me in the prayer that God may grant to us the influence of his Holy Spirit, that we may be able to perceive the fullness and beauty of this truth, and to receive from it the comfort it is calculated to impart.

The good man is at all times and under all circumstances perfectly safe.

I. The first consideration that I offer in order to open to your minds this truth, is, that God, whom the good man serves, is *able*, at all times, and under all circumstances, to protect him. He has all power, we know, both in heaven and on earth. It is one of the first conceptions we receive of his attributes, that he is omnipotent, and can do whatever he will. No one, nothing can at any time stay his hand, or say to him, in any force or combination, *what doest thou?* In him abides, and will forever abide, unlimited might and energy. He ruleth in the armies of the heaven, and doeth according to his will among the inhabitants of the earth. He made all things, sustains all things, and in accordance with his own purpose controls and disposes of all things. And then, too, he exercises a constant and particular providence over the affairs of the world, and of the whole universe. He has not created

us and thrown us off upon our own resources. He has not built for us this world, and the magnificent universe in which it is hung up as one of his luminaries, and now withdrawn from us his care and superintendence, and left us to provide for ourselves. No: he is yet with us, and continually near to us. In him we live, and move, and have our being, and his sustaining and providing hand is ever open to our wants. The very hairs of our head are all numbered, and we are not absent for a single moment from his eye, or particular notice, or benevolent concern. Every one of us, and every one of our affairs, is perfectly known to him. We can not perform a deed, or utter a word, or conceive a thought, of which he is not cognizant, and which he does not observe according to its character and deserts. He literally hears our every sigh, and witnesses our every tear. He is never absent from our side.

And all this shows, if we may believe it—and believe it we must, unless we reject the clear teachings of Revelation—how able God is to protect those who put their trust in him. Being omnipotent, so that all things are subject to his control, and nothing able to thwart his designs; and being omnipresent, so that he exercises a constant and particular providence in the world and the universe at large, surely there is no lack in his ability to cover and defend, and forever to take care of every good man, and every holy being in his vast dominions. Great changes and important revolutions, it is true, may take place; many threatening evils may arise, in the progress of affairs, to excite and strengthen alarm; and often, perhaps, the heart of the

good man may begin to sink within him; but there is no cause for a single fear, not one evil apprehension. He who sits at the head of the realm of creation, who hold all things material and immaterial in his hand, and subject to his disposal—HE can direct and overrule all these changes, HE can modify and manage all these revolutions, HE can hold back and turn aside all evil that might otherwise follow in their career. Nothing can happen except with his permission. He marks out to all events their courses, assigns to all their issues, and keeps all things within the reach of his own supervision. And surely, in the hands of such a being, the good man is safe. Who can harm him, what can ever occur to harm him, under the watch-care and protection of one so full of ability to do him good?

II. But again: the next consideration that I offer to elucidate the truth we are considering, is, that God, who is thus *able* to protect the good man, is also *fully disposed* to do it. It has already been observed that God loves the good. He does so because he loves *goodness*. He is himself good and holy, and being so essentially and eternally, he loves moral goodness and excellence wherever it is found, and in whomever it exists. Thus, by becoming good, we ally ourselves, so to speak, to God; so far as our goodness extends, we are like him. In the language of the apostle, we have become partakers of the divine nature: by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, and the renewing of the mind, we have been brought to understand in our experience the meaning of the command, "Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." And every

one who attains to this state and character, makes himself the friend of God. He is reconciled to God and God with him. He is also, as was never the case in his unrenewed state, pleased with God, and God is pleased with him. There is peace, a sympathy and congeniality between him and his formerly disowned and offended Maker. The grace of God in Christ has effected a great change in him, so that He can look upon him with delight, and regard him with affection. He is attracted, so to express it, toward him; because He sees in him an assimilation to Himself, a participation of his purity, a reflection of his image. He loves him with a true and enduring affection, and will never, no, never forget him. He rejoices over him, and is glorified by him. He has taken him into his special favor, and bestows upon him his special smiles.

And this consideration also shows how high and certain is the good man's security. God, in whom he trusts, is not only able to defend him, having all power, and being ever present with him, but he is his friend and father, and as such is entirely disposed to do it. It is impossible that God should regard him with indifference, or feel no certain interest in him. He has set his heart upon him, and is ever ready to do him good. And the interest he feels in him is as abiding as it is ardent. It is characterized with a deep and indescribable tenderness, follows him in every stage and emergency in life, and is susceptible of no change or abatement while time or eternity endures. Heaven and earth may pass away, but God's love for his people will never fail; consequently the time will never come when he will be indisposed to exert his power to shel-

ter and provide for them. United to them in the Son of his love, and having received them freely and fully to his favor, he will never leave them nor forsake them, but will always be as willing as he is able to care for and to bless them. Who, then, is he that can harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?

III. But another consideration that will illustrate still further this truth, is, that God, who is thus able and disposed to take care of the good, has promised, and actually pledged himself to do it. We may consider it enough that he has the ability and disposition, for with this assurance who can entertain a fear respecting his peace and safety? But this is not all. He has come forward and given us the plain and positive declaration, that those who trust in him shall never be confounded. Consult his holy word, and you will see how clearly and certainly this is so. You will see, in the first place, that the good man is indeed as near and dear to God as has been represented. He declares his love toward him, and calls him his beloved, his chosen one, his child, in whom his soul delighteth. His love, he assures us, is an everlasting love, and that it shall never be removed from him. He gives us, indeed, every proof that can be considered necessary, that the righteous man lives in his remembrance and affection, and that nothing shall be able to dispossess or disparage him, if he lives faithfully to him.

You will see, also, in connection with these assurances of endearment, promises of help and protection the most certain and abundant. Again and again does God say to the good man: "I will never leave thee

nor forsake thee." He declares that He has made a covenant with him, even the sure mercies of David, and that though all others should forsake him, He will never forsake him. "Because he hath set his love upon me," he says, "therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation." And then, in addressing his promises from time to time, to such as trust in him, he says: "As thy days, so shall thy strength be. Because thou hast made the Lord, even the Most High, thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. Fear not; for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee: when thou walketh through the fire thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. Fear thou 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. I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward."

From these declarations, and such as these which are continually occurring in God's word, how obvious is it that those who put their trust in him are safe. What

has he to fear who is the subject of promises like these? The Almighty who is able to protect him, has not only manifested his disposition to do so, but has positively *pledged* himself to do so. And his promises are not equivocal and indefinite, but full, unqualified, and without ambiguity. They are made in love and sincerity, and they mean all that they imply. Neither can these promises fail. He is the God of integrity and truth, and will not suffer his word to fall to the ground. When he declares that he will take care of his people, no matter what may threaten them or happen to them in the developments of his providence, he fully purposes so to do, and with him there is no fickleness or change as with men.—Let the fearful and desponding disciple then resort to these promises for help. They are a sure foundation on which he may rest. Your God who loves you, and is ever near to you, and is competent to preserve you from evil, declares that he will never abandon you. He has given you his word that he will be with you in all trouble and danger, and amid all changes, and his word is firmer than the pillars of heaven. You have therefore every reason to be confident and calm. You may sing with the Psalmist, knowing that your song shall never be turned into mourning: “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea: though the waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.—The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge.” On his promises then you may rely: and encompassed and

sheltered with these promises, who is he that can harm you if ye be followers of that which is good?

IV. But I observe once more, as completing our illustration of this truth, that God who has the ability and disposition to protect the good man, and has promised to do so, has always *acted* in accordance with his promises in the ages that are past. In other words, the good have always been safe in his keeping heretofore, and from this it is legitimate to reason that they shall be safe in his keeping hereafter. So far as time is concerned we know from actual history that it has been well with the righteous, and though we have no intelligence from them how it is with them now beyond the shores of mortality, yet we have undoubted information from God's word that it is well with them still. He who cared for them when they were upon earth has assured us that he cares for them now; and he who cared for them because they were good, will care for all the good in all time and eternity to come.

Look back then upon the past, and survey the dealings of God with the pious, as they appear before you at different times and places. Look at Abel, and Enoch, and Noah. Look at Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. Look at Lot in Sodom, and Joseph in Egypt. Look at Moses, who "when he came to years refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Look too at Samuel, and David, and Elijah, and all the pious kings and prophets of Israel. These good men were all at times in affliction, and dangers and trials were often

lurking in their path to dishearten them: but God eminently honored them with his presence, and nothing was able to harm them. And when we come to a later period in time, and review the lives of the apostles and primitive Christians, we see that this same care and protection were exercised toward them, and they too were perfectly safe amid all their hardships and exposures. And so has God always been with his people in the past. He has sustained and strengthened them, and in the day of their calamity he has been near their side to preserve them from evil. All through he has been to them a faithful Protector.

And this consideration shows too how certain is the godly man's security. It demonstrates that God is indeed able and disposed to keep those who put their trust in him, and that he is faithful to his promise. It shows us God actually engaged in the defense and welfare of the good. It is then a sure and sustaining ground of hope. Let the humble and devoted child of God reflect upon it and rejoice. It assures him by what he has done for the objects of his love what he will do for them in all the future. He sees that in following that which is good he is pursuing the same path which the worthy have pursued in every age of the world: that he is one with them in character, and object, and aim; that he has the same faith, the same spirit, the same hope; and that he is encompassed with the same arm of strength and protection. He has therefore nothing to fear. He has only to ask himself, did the protection of the godly ever fail? Have the servants of the Most High ever fallen under the weight of tribulation, or been left to perish in the dark day of

calamity? If this has never happened in the past, it is reasonable to believe that it will never happen in the future. He who was continually near to his people of old will be with his people now. He who never deserted them in the season of their need and trial will never desert you. He who guarded, and sustained, and comforted them; who covered their head in the day of battle, and kept them from falling; who drove back evil that it should not overwhelm them, and opened their way by subduing their difficulties before them; who held them up when they were ready to sink, and poured a cordial into their heart when ready to faint; who made darkness light before them, rough places smooth, and crooked ways straight; who at no time and in no instance suffered any thing really and in the end to harm them, will also succor and support and bless you. He will look after all your interests, and manage all your affairs; He will accompany you through the pilgrimage of life, and guide, and uphold, and deliver in every time of necessity. He will be with you too as your life approaches its termination. Then his rod and his staff shall comfort you, and the hope he inspires within you will cheer and radiate the gloomy darkness of the tomb: and as your immortal spirit goes forth and abandons its mortal tenement, he will receive you with a smile to himself, and admit you to the perfect and everlasting rest of heaven. And thus in the concern that God has always entertained for his people, and the deliverances and protection he has always extended to them, we see an illustration, an actual exemplification of the truth we are contemplating: and with this view of the subject before him every

Christian should feel that he is at all times and under all possible circumstances safe ; that he has nothing to fear, no matter what may forebode, nor what transpire ; and that there is for him a sure and unfailing source of comfort under the sorrows and dark prospects of life in the words : “ Who then is he that can harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good ? ”

Who then that listens to me to-day has been the victim of anxiety and dread amid the trials and uncertainties of this life ? It would be strange were there none such here. Notwithstanding the abundant assurances we have in Scripture to nerve and fortify our minds, fear and distressing doubts will, after all, at times assault us. And it may be that some peculiarly oppressed and desponding soul has found way this morning to this place of prayer. If this is so, I shall rejoice that I have selected this theme, and would now in conclusion commend it especially to his reflection. Do you not see enough here to comfort you ? If you are trusting in God you need care for nothing more. Dismiss your anxiety, take courage, and rejoice. Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. He has the power to keep you safe ; he has the disposition ; he has promised to do it ; he has always kept the godly, and he always will. You are secure then in his hands. Whatever takes places you shall have peace. Let this assurance establish and settle your agitated mind ; let it comfort you here in the house of God, as you look to him for relief and assistance ; let it insinuate itself more fully into your thoughts and feelings as you retire to your home ; let

it accompany and sustain you in all the conflicts and fears of your future life. Thus will your mind be kept in perfect peace, being staid on him: thus in the multitude of your thoughts within you will his comforts delight your soul. And now what more shall I say? In the language of the poet I would say:

“ Still heavy is thy heart?
Still sink thy spirits down?
Cast off the weight—let fear depart,
And every care be gone.

“ What though thou rulest not;
Yet heaven, and earth, and hell,
Proclaim—God sitteth on the throne,
And ruleth all things well.”

SERMON X.

FAITH OF THE PATRIARCHS.

“THESE all died in the faith; not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them; and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” HEBREWS 11 : 13.

THE whole chapter from which this text is selected refers, you will recollect, to the subject of faith. In the first place the apostle defines what faith is, and remarks that it is “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” He then goes on, with a view to develop its excellence and efficiency, to illustrate it by particular and individual instances. In this way many of the pious and believing of ancient times are brought in succession before us, and we see in them, as if by present, living example, what faith is—what it does for its possessors, and what it qualifies them, both in the form of labor and endurance, to do for themselves. In the verses preceding the text, Abel, Enoch, Noah; and Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Sarah, are individually referred to; and it is consequently to them in particular, after describing the loftiness and achievements of their faith, that the apostle makes allusion in the text. “These all died”—that is, *departed*, for Enoch did not die, but was translated—“in faith; not having received the promises, but having

seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them; and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

The subject to which these words direct our attention, and which I shall attempt in this discourse briefly to unfold before you, is the faith of the patriarchs; and as it is a subject that can not fail to interest the spiritual, so too, it is hoped, it is one that will not fail to profit the worldly.

I. In considering the subject, the first point that presents itself for notice is the nature of this faith. What did the patriarchs believe, and what was the faith that they exercised? This is the inquiry that demands at once our attention.

But this inquiry is fully answered in the text. We here learn that the object of the patriarchs' faith was the promises of God—those promises that were made and renewed to them from time to time, and that sustained and comforted them through their long and sometimes sorrowful pilgrimage. These promises were numerous, taking, at different times, different forms and aspects, but they may be all summed up in the one great promise of eternal life in heaven, through the interposition and mediation of Christ. The patriarchs knew that they must die; that this was a consequence of sin; and that beyond death there are other and more terrible consequences still to all who reject the knowledge and mercy of God. They knew too that Christ had been promised to the world as a Saviour; that he was the only medium through which the goodness and saving love of God could reach them; and

that by trusting upon him, or, which amounts to the same thing, upon the promises of God concerning him, they would be accepted and be made partakers of divine favor, and enjoy the hope and assurance of everlasting life. And it was to this blessed promise, made to them as sinners, and embracing the great and glorious scheme of redemption, that their faith had reference. It laid hold upon this promise as their only solace and security; and it united them to it, and gave them an interest in it, as the source and fountain of future and immortal blessedness.

This will become apparent when we observe, in addition to the text, some things that the apostle has stated in this chapter respecting these worthies. Take, for instance, Abel, the first that is mentioned, and of whom the apostle says that he offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained the witness that he was righteous, God testifying to his gifts: which, it seems to me, can not be understood only as intimating that when God brought in the promise of redemption he instituted sacrifices as a type or representation of the atonement to be made in due time by his Son; and that Abel, trusting in the promise, offered the sacrifices appointed and was accepted. Cain did not do this. He, instead of complying with the divine appointment in this respect, disregarded it, and in the place of a sacrifice brought of the fruit of the earth, and thus of course was rejected, because his offering could not typify the "shedding of blood for the remission of sins." So too take Abraham, who is also named in this connection, and of whom the apostle says, that while sojourning in the land of promise,

the earthly Canaan pledged to his posterity, he yet looked for another country, "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." This certainly shows that something more than an earthly possession was promised to these patriarchs, and that their faith, referring to a coming Saviour, held up before them as a glorious destiny to be secured through him a future and blissful immortality. They apprehended Christ as their complete Redeemer. They believed that in him they should be saved from sin and all its consequences, and finally be brought to a better and more blessed state of existence beyond the grave. They sojourned here as in a strange land, looking through the promises made to them in Christ for a better and more enduring inheritance. Thus they died in faith, not having received the promises, but were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

But we see in the text also what kind of faith it was that the patriarchs thus exercised; not only what they believed, but *how* they believed. And in regard to this point you will observe at once that their faith was composed of these three elements: perception, persuasion, and reliance. They in the first place saw these promises afar off—the meaning of which is that they perceived or understood them. They were aware not only that such promises had been made, but they were also aware of their import and design. They saw them in such a sense that they comprehended their meaning, and understood, if not the fullness, yet something of the reality and grandeur of the things they revealed.

They knew perfectly well who was intended by "the seed of the woman;" who it was in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed; and what great and glorious ends that blessing should encompass. They knew, not perhaps as perfectly, yet as surely and distinctly as the pious now, in whom they believed, and were as confident and joyous in their faith.

But it is said that they were also *persuaded* of these promises. That is, they were truly and perfectly satisfied with regard to them. They were persuaded of their truth, of the certainty of their fulfillment, and of the sufficiency of the Saviour whom they revealed; they were persuaded indeed that in these promises there was life and hope and peace for them, and not for them only, but for all our race. It was no stumbling-stone to them that these promises were afar off, nor did they on this account receive them with less gladness or contemplate them with less interest. They were satisfied that they would all in due time come to pass. They believed God, who made them, and they believed that he would not let his word fall to the ground. They had therefore no misgivings—no doubts, no fears, no inquietudes: they were persuaded, fully, firmly, savingly, persuaded of the promises.

And then it is said also that they embraced them. The meaning of this is that they relied upon them. Seeing them and being satisfied with regard to them; approving of them, and assenting readily and fully to them, they now relied upon them and trusted in them for acceptance and comfort. They trusted too directly and cordially, without hesitancy and without wavering. They were assured that there is divine power and infi-

nite mercy combined in the redeeming scheme contained in these promises, and they were consequently prepared to venture all upon them. They felt no reluctance, no reserve, but confided implicitly in them. They took them to their hearts, and, finding in them a Saviour and a hope of everlasting life, they with the heart believed in them unto righteousness. Thus their faith was not only an intellectual exercise, including a discernment and an assent to the truth, but it was also a spiritual exercise, including a direct and personal trust in the promises for pardon and salvation: thus by faith they saw the promises, were persuaded of them, and embraced them.

And now if you will compare this particular statement of the faith of the patriarchs in the text with the apostle's general statement of faith in the first verse of the chapter, you will see how exactly it accords with it. "Now faith," he says, "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The purport of this is, that faith is something that gives reality in the view of the mind to things that can not be reached by the sense of sight. There are such things as these, spiritual and unearthly, lying, not in actual distance, but beyond the ken of material vision. They are things made known to us by Revelation, and of which we should be in ignorance had not God announced them. Faith now is that exercise of the mind that makes real to us these unseen things—as real as if indeed seen. It takes the word of God, credits it, and thus gains a view, sees, assents to, and embraces, spiritual and eternal things. Thus it makes real to the believer, God, heaven, a future state, Christ and re-

demption, and all that God has promised and declared in his communications with men. Thus it made real to the patriarchs the Mediator who was to come, and the "better country" for which they lived, and which amid all their wanderings they never forgot. Thus by it, according to Christ's own words, after his appearance, they rejoiced to see his day, they saw it and were glad. It was a reality to them, as much so as if he had actually appeared while they yet lived. Faith to them, resting upon the promises, seeing them afar off, assenting to them, and embracing them, was the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

II. This, then, is the nature of the patriarchs' faith. The next point now to which I direct your attention is the influence that their faith had over them. Some influence, I need not observe, it did indeed possess. You all understand that faith is a state or exercise of the mind of great and controlling power, and that it sways, directs, and governs all those who possess it. Read this chapter before us, and if you have never been impressed with the mighty and molding influence of earnest faith in God, the striking illustrations here given can not fail so to impress you. You will see here that where there is faith there is surpassing moral force.

What influence the faith of the patriarchs exerted over them may be clearly seen in the text. It is said that having faith, and living and acting under its guidance, they "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Their faith then so influ-

enced them that they lived a life of separation from the world, placed their affections on things above, and desired not and sought not their portion on earth. In other words, it led them to live for another world.

But let me particularly call your attention here to the word "confessed." It obviously intimates that they entertained different views, and manifested different feelings, in respect to human life than generally prevail among men. It does not, however, intimate that faith made them what they proclaimed themselves to be; for such in fact was not the case. They were strangers and pilgrims without faith, and so too were their cotemporaries, and so are all men. The unbeliever is as truly so as the believer, and there is in this respect no difference between them. What is true of one in this particular is true of all: all must die, all are passing away. In a little while only all who appear and live here are gone. The places that know them soon know them no more. The houses they occupy, the farms they cultivate, the friends they cherish, all soon miss them, and their names and deeds are all forgotten, and none remain to say any thing concerning them. As with the fathers so with the children; they are all sojourners, appearing for a time, then hastening away. But the difference between believers and others is, that the latter do not "confess," do not regard, and are not influenced in their deportment by this fact. So absorbed are they in the world—so busy with its pursuits, so attracted by its gains and pleasures, that they forget or at least keep out of mind, the truth that they are mortal and must die. It is true they *know* that it is so; they can not doubt, and will

not dispute it; but they do not consider, they do not act upon it. A fact, a certainty, coming swiftly upon them, and which they can not avert, yet it has no practical influence upon their plans and purposes, and they go on in indifference as if it were a mere fiction of the imagination, or a frightful story for children. But it is not so with believers. It was not so with the patriarchs. While other men generally forgot and disregarded the fact that they were to stay on earth but for a time, they confessed that they were pilgrims and strangers, that here they had no continuing city, that their proper business was to seek one to come.

And you can easily imagine how it was that faith thus influenced their feelings, and gave this direction to their conduct. It led them to the promises of God, and those promises revealed to them a Saviour and a blessed future. It gave them too an interest in those promises, and made them feel that they were personally heirs of the saving mercy and glorious destiny unfolded by them to our race. It detached them consequently from the world, elevated their affections to things eternal and heavenly, and impressed them with a suitable sense of the vanity and insecurity of things present and sublunary. Thus it spiritualized their feelings, sanctified their desires, and shaped and controlled their entire deportment: thus it led them to feel that this was not their rest, that there is a better inheritance beyond the grave for the good, and that that was the inheritance awaiting them. By faith they dwelt in tabernacles and tents, declaring that they sought another and a better country, that is, a heavenly—looking not at the things that are seen, but at the things that

are not seen, for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal.

III. But there is yet another point to which I desire to call your attention in this discourse: which is the correspondence of the faith of the patriarchs to the faith of Christians now. Nothing is more natural than to inquire, How does the faith exercised by good men under that and the Jewish dispensation agree with the faith exercised by good men under this dispensation? Is it the same faith, or, if it differs, how does it differ? This surely is not merely a curious and speculative question, but one of real interest and importance, and deserving therefore our consideration.

Let me, then, remark, that the faith of God's people is in its nature always the same. It is a faith not only in him, but in Christ; in Christ, too, as a Saviour; and in him in such a sense as to interest its possessor, whoever he is, and under whatever dispensation he lives, in the hope of future and everlasting life. It is a faith, then, in every case composed of the same properties, and referring to the same object. In the case of the patriarchs, as we have seen, it was a faith in the promises of God, revealing a Redeemer, and immortality and eternal blessedness through him. They had no idea of salvation except through Christ, and they looked forward to the day of his coming with joy, and trusted in the atonement he should make for sins as the only ground of acceptance and pardon. They believed God, who had given them the promises, and it was accounted to them for righteousness. In the case of Christians, it is a faith in this same atonement, not,

indeed, in promise, but in actual fulfillment, and a faith that sees this atonement, is persuaded of it, and embraces it. Hence you see that it is the same faith exercised by the patriarchs, the same in its object and properties, referring to the mercy of God in Christ, and apprehending, receiving, and relying upon this mercy for salvation. If there is any difference, it is only in degree. The Christian's faith is doubtless clearer and fuller than the faith of the patriarchs; for he sees in fact and history, what they saw only in promise and prospect. He has more light, just as one who looks at the sun at noon-day sees more of its glory and radiant power than one who looks at it at early morn. Yet it is the same sun and the same light that they see, and it is under the same influence that they rejoice. So is it here, with the patriarchs of old, and Christians now; it is the same Saviour, the same sun of righteousness, to whom they look and come, only to the former he appeared in the dim light of the morning of redemption, and to the latter he appears in the noontide glory of its perfect day. Now, as then, we look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith—we look from the ends of the earth, and are saved.

But it may be remarked further, in regard to this point, that the faith of God's people is always the same also in its influence. Its influence on the minds of the patriarchs has been already referred to. It separated them, we have seen, from the world, fixed their hopes and affections on heaven, and conducted them through life in noble acts of self-denial and piety; in a word, it led them to confess that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. And its influence upon Christians

is precisely the same now. It forms in them the same frame of feeling, detaches them also from the world, and leads them to the same confession that this is not their home. "Here," in the language of the apostle, "they have no continuing city, but they seek one to come." In the language of the same apostle, they have set their affections on things above, not on things on the earth; and they are dead to earth, and their lives are hid with Christ in God. They look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen; they deny themselves of all ungodliness and worldly lust, and live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world; as pilgrims and strangers, they abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul, seeking to have their conversation honest among men, looking unto Christ, and desiring to depart and to be with him, which is far better. This is the natural and necessary influence of faith, wherever and in whomever it exists. It can not exist in any heart and leave that heart yet attached to the world. It can not go hand in hand with earthly desire, it can not blend with sordid sentiments, it can not build any hopes for this world. Its vision reaches far ahead into the future; it lifts up the soul to the high and glorious portion of another state, and makes earth the place merely of a short pilgrimage to a better and more permanent abode.

Thus, then, we see the correspondence of the faith of the patriarchs with the faith of believers now; we see that it is one and the same. But it is time now for me to bring these reflections to a close. Let me simply ask, have you this faith? Do you believe in the Lord

Jesus Christ? Have you, by personal trust in him, a sure and well-grounded hope of everlasting life? What a momentous question is this! How far exceeding all other questions in importance to you and every man having an immortal soul! In a little while you know you will all be gone: the news will go the round of your acquaintance, to your friends and your foes, that at such a time, and under such circumstances, you looked for the last time upon earth. But then, you know, too, that this, after all, is not with you the last; you know that

“’Tis not the whole of life to live,
Nor all of death to die.”

There is most certainly another world:

“Beyond this vale of tears,
There is a life above,
Unmeasured by the flight of years;
And all that life is love.

“There is a death, whose pang
Outlasts the fleeting breath;
Oh! what eternal horrors hang
Around the second death!”

You know this, and know it well. How important, then, is the question, Are you living for that world, or neglecting it for this? Are you trusting in the blessed Redeemer, who is the life, the truth, and the way—the only way to the better inheritance—or are you going on to eternity without an interest and a hope in Him? It becomes you to consider this question thoughtfully, If the Bible is not a fiction, and Christianity a fable, you must be converted or be lost: you must come to

Christ now, or depart from him hereafter: you must believe in him and be saved, or, believing not, you must be damned. You are pilgrims and strangers, and you can not dwell long on these mortal shores; you must pass over to another state: the question is, what shall that state be to you? Will you lay hold on hope through the adorable Saviour, or will you risk the future without him? Have you pondered this question well, and have you thought of the consequences before you? Some of you have done this, and Christ is this day your portion. Be faithful unto death, and you shall receive a crown of life; you will die in faith, and inherit the promises. But some of you have not; you are careless and indifferent; you are cavilling at the truth, and postponing the claims of eternity; you are living as if you had no soul to save, no heaven to gain, no hell to shun. What shall I say to you? Shall I remind you of the words of the prophet, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish!" or of the words of Christ: "Oh! that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes!" Or shall I yet think that there is hope in your case, and, to encourage and to warn you at once, remind you of the words of the apostle: "Now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation!" Oh! heed these words, I pray you, and now, "while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts."

"Now is the accepted time,
Now is the day of grace;
Now, sinners, come without delay,
And seek the Saviour's face."

SERMON XI.

BREVITY OF HUMAN LIFE.

“FOR what is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth a little time, and then vanisheth away.” JAMES 4 : 14.

WE have all arisen in the morning, and in looking out on the world around us, have found its hills and dales, its brooks and meadows, covered with a dense and impenetrable mist; but when the sun has advanced a little higher in his strength we have seen this vapor quickly broken and dispersed. So, says our text, is human life. “It is even a vapor that appeareth a little time, and then vanisheth away.”

Men, however, are not inclined to consider nor act upon this truth. There are but few who would live as they do live were such indeed the case; but few who would feel entirely satisfied with their present course, if this solemn consideration occupied the place it should do in their thoughts. The minds of men, naturally, discover nothing but what is gloomy and uninviting in this truth; and but few are so spiritual as faithfully to draw near to it for spiritual improvement. We know it is true that we must die, for this all the living know; but the theme is so repelling, and our hearts are so worldly, that we but seldom recur to it, or if we do, it is with reluctance and haste. We are better suited with other and gayer thoughts.

For this reason we find the Holy Scriptures continually and forcibly reminding us of this fact. The original sentence is in the first place clearly and solemnly recorded, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," and from that early point, on through the whole inspired volume, mankind are forewarned and admonished that they must die. They are even remonstrated with for their disregard and apparent forgetfulness of so certain a destiny. "Oh! that they were wise! that they understood this! that that they would consider their latter end!" is the language in effect with which they are incessantly expostulating with us.

I. In meditating on this subject a short time—the brevity of human life—we may glance in the first place at the manner in which the Scriptures allude to it, and endeavor to impress us with it. Apart from its general announcements that "it is appointed unto men once to die," and that there is no possibility for any to escape, they represent the longest life as short, and the happiest as attended to some extent with misery. "Few and evil," said the patriarch Jacob, when an old man, just ready to be gathered to his fathers, "few and evil have been the days of the years of my pilgrimage." And agreeing with this are the general run and testimony of the Scriptures. "Man that is born of woman is of few days and is full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not." Our days on earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding. Our days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle. Our days are swifter than a post; *they fly away*. They are passed

away as swift ships, and as the eagle that hasteth to the prey. Man's days are as grass; as the flower of the field so he flourisheth: for the wind passes over it and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more. Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth or world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. Thou turnest man to destruction, and sayest, Return, ye children of men. For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep; in the morning they are like grass that groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up: in the evening it is cut down and withereth. Lord, make me to know my end and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am. Behold thou hast made my days as an hand-breadth, and my age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity.

Such is the language—such are the figures and comparisons, by which the Scriptures attempt to impress us with the shortness of life. Thus they would call off our attention from present and sensible objects and direct it to the world to come. Here, they seem in every line to say, here you have no continuing city; therefore seek one to come.

II. In the next place, then let us notice the effect which this view of human life should have on our minds and conduct.

It should impress us with a sense of our entire de-

pendence upon God. He it is who thus abbreviates our life. He hath appointed it unto men once to die, and more than this, he hath appointed us our bounds that we can not pass. With him are the issues of life and death. He giveth us life and breath, and all things, and he has only to withhold his hand and we die. His sovereignty in this matter is forcibly represented by Job, when he says, "Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? Or who can say unto him, What doest thou?" and by the Psalmist: "Thou turnest man to destruction, and sayest, Return, ye children of men." In the fact then that we must die, there is furnished us the lesson of our perfect dependence on God. And this is evidently a part of the design of the apostle in alluding to the brevity of life in the text. He says also in the context: "Whereas ye should say, if the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that." He holds our life then in his hand: we live only as he wills it; we die *when* he wills it. Solemn thought! yet little regarded!

It should serve also to moderate our desires for worldly good. Is life so brief? At the longest so fleeting, and so certain to close? Then what is this world to us? What is there in it worthy the attention mankind so generally give it? Allowing that its acquisitions are ever so valuable in themselves, what is their relative value, seeing we must die? Look at it for a moment. Here are worldly riches, surrounding you in abundance, and fortifying you against want! Here are worldly honors, flowing in upon you as a stream, and encircling your brow with glory and fame. Here are worldly pleasures, opening luxuriously before you, and satisfying your eyes and heart with all that

splendor, and mirth, and gayety can impart. You have it all: yes, in these respects you have gained the world; but to-morrow you die — your wealth, your honors, your earthly delights, are all left behind you, for naked you came into this world and naked you must depart from it. What value now are all these things to you? What value can they be to any man in the world of spirits? And yet men live for these things as if they were the chief good. Surely, if the question, What is your life? engaged as it should do their attention they would not do so. How insignificant are they all in connection with the thought that life is as a vapor!

And if I mistake not, the apostle designed to teach the lesson in this allusion to the shortness of life in the context: "Go to, now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city and continue a year, and buy and sell and get gain, whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow; for what is your life? it is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

The same lesson Paul teaches also, when he says of Christians, that they "look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal." Again: this view of human life should magnify in our estimate and desire the importance and value of things spiritual and eternal. Loosing our hold on earth, it should connect us more intimately with eternity. Discovering to us the insignificance and insufficiency of worldly good, it should impress us with a lively sense of the greatness and worth of the reali-

ties before us. And this surely it can not fail to do, if we believe there is indeed a future existence awaiting us. If there is another state—and who is there that can doubt it?—the thought that we are so soon to enter upon it, if properly regarded, must give importance and solemnity to its scenes and objects. It is because we do not consider, that we do not value these things more highly. How must they appear to the dying man! How they appear to you at the grave of a friend, or in a season of trying sickness! How would they appear to you this moment if you were certain that to-morrow you should behold them! Then you would feel the poet's words:

"Nothing is worth a thought beneath,
But how I may escape that death
That never, never dies."

Then you would say of the world, it is vanity, and all the great powers and sensibilities of your soul would be in concern for the future. Then you would feel something of their value and immense importance to you.

It should lead us also to regard this life as properly employed only when connected in our plans and pursuits with the life to come. If life is so fleeting, and consequently worldly good so trivial, and eternal things so important, surely he only improves life who uses it in preparing for eternity. You may think but little of this remark, and yet the time is coming when you will find that it is true. You may now think that your time is well employed; that in the accumulation of wealth, and the successful direction of large and noble business enterprises, you are laudably engaged, and are doing the great work of life; but so sure as you are

now living and must die, you will find at no distant period that if this has been your principal work life has been thrown away. Such industry does not save the soul, and will not provide for eternity. It will not weigh a feather in your favor at the bar of God, and will not assure your heart as from your dying-bed you survey the reckoning that awaits you. Houses and lands you may have in abundance; all that this world can afford to make you comfortable and happy, may flow in rich and ready supplies upon you, but if you have lived for these things, and been worldly and *unspiritual*, not all your skill and activity can give you one pleasant thought as you leave this world, or when you stand at the judgment. He only improves life who lives religiously: who connects it with the future; who, in all his plans and business, remembers that he is a dying man and that his chief work is to prepare for eternity. All others squander and misuse it as to the great end of life; all others will discover at last that they have lived in folly, and must die in *poverty*; a poverty too momentous to be described, relating to the soul, and embracing eternity; a poverty fitly referred to in the lamentation, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."

Different views than these might be entertained of the present life, if it were never to end, or if its end were all. Then we might live for this world, and be wise; but as it is not so, we can not do this without folly and ruin. Let us then awake from our apathy and deception—let us break away from the entanglements and attractions of earth—let us remember the immortal destiny before us, and according to the nobility of our nature and hopes live and prepare for it.

SERMON XII.

OUR DEPARTED FRIENDS.

“BUT I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.” 1 THESSALONIANS 4: 13.

WE live, my brethren, in a world of affliction. There are none who do not find it so to some extent, and there are many who *do* find it so from an experience deep and unutterable. But of all the afflictions of earth there is to none of us, perhaps, any so severe and overwhelming as the loss by death of friends. This, more than any other, touches the tender strings of the soul, and fills us with emotions of bitterness and grief. This, so to speak, drinks up our spirit, reduces and saddens all our pleasures, and spreads over every thing around us the dark veil of melancholy and gloom.

This is an affliction, moreover, that the world itself can not relieve. It is true the mellowing hand of time may work some abatement of immediate grief, and fit us for a more cheerful attendance upon the duties of life; but while the affliction is yet recent, and the feelings fresh, and when, even after the lapse of months and years, memory revives it and brings it near, there is not in all the world any pleasure that can remove our sadness, any light that can gild our gloom. We

may apply to all its sources of strength and consolation; we may inquire with a solicitude and eagerness which none but ourselves can appreciate, Is there no help for us—no ray of hope—no balm of comfort? and in the secret, the dreary, the sorrowful chambers of the soul, the response will be heard, *and it will be felt*: none! there is none! Earth has no words of encouragement under circumstances like these. It has no radiance for the grave, it has no gladness for the bereaved.

But what the world can not do for us in this respect, Christianity, let us bless God, *can* do. Here there is consolation for all the afflicted, even for those who have parted with their nearest and dearest friends. Particularly is this the case when those friends have been eminent for piety and their devotedness to Christ. Christianity assures us, with regard to such, that they have been removed to a better state, and that we, having the same precious faith, and following in the same footsteps, shall not always be separated from them. They shall not return to us, but we shall go to them. They are not, It assures us, then, lost: they are gone, gone a little before, but not lost. We have parted with them, but it is not forever; we mourn over them, but it is not without hope.

And this, under the subduing sorrow of an affliction so great, is precisely the consolation that we need. Nothing else can satisfy and sustain us. We want to know that our friends who have departed from us are themselves safe; and we want to know that at some time in the long future we shall see them again. And all this we are brought to know from the revelations of

Christianity. This has brought life and immortality to light, and this furnishes us the delightful assurance that there is something further and better for us beyond the grave.

The apostle intimates, you will also observe, in the text, that it is from Christianity alone that this consolation can be derived. For, in advising us of our privilege, that we need not, like others, mourn without hope, he indirectly suggests the deplorable condition of those on whom the light of Christianity has not yet shone. They *do*, indeed, mourn without hope. When they bury their kindred, it is without any certain knowledge or definite expectation that they shall ever see them again. They know nothing of the resurrection, and even the future existence of the soul is to them a dim and doubtful truth. All, when they come to the grave, and deposit there the treasures of friendship and affection, is deep and impenetrable darkness. They have, it is true, their thoughts about another state; they desire, and they can partly hope, that there is immortality beyond death for man; but whether it is so, and if so, what the circumstances are under which it shall be experienced, these are points in regard to which they have no settled form nor basis of belief. Without the Gospel they are emphatically without hope; dark, benighted, miserable.

But with us it is not so. We have a sure source of light and consolation. We have a Revelation assuring us of things that they know not, emanating from the fountain of truth, at once clear and infallible. Let us, then, attend for a few moments, as on this occasion it will be appropriate for us to do, to the comfort that

Christianity affords us with respect to our departed pious friends. "I would not have you to be ignorant," says the inspired apostle, "concerning them that are asleep;" that is, I would not have you ignorant of their present condition, nor of their coming destiny; their present condition as disembodied and happy spirits, nor of the glorious portions that await them at the appearing of Christ. And then he adds, "that ye sorrow not even as others without hope;" that is, not being in darkness, as are the heathen, respecting the departed, you must not, like them, mourn in despair; but you must be comforted, knowing that it is well with your pious friends, and that it shall also be well with you.

I propose, then, in addressing you at this time, to advert to the reflections which the Christian Revelation suggests, and authorizes us to entertain, in regard to our friends who have died in the Lord; and which from their nature are so well calculated to console and sustain us.

I. First, then, I remark that this revelation warrants us to believe that our departed friends yet live. It is true, according to the dialect of earth, they are dead. The sentence, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," has been executed upon them. God has changed their countenance and sent them away. They have gone to the house appointed to all living, the dark, the low, the narrow house of the grave. But it is equally true that they still live. The soul, the higher and better part of our nature, the part that thinks and feels, and makes the man, and that inhabits the body as its corporeal tenement merely, this has not

returned with the body to dust, but has gone to God who gave it. It is the materialist only who thinks of the soul as extinct at death, or as slumbering in unconsciousness with the body in the grave. The Scriptures hold out to us a better and a brighter view. They assure us of what reason and true philosophy are found cordially to approve, that we have an immaterial as well as a material nature; and that these, though mysteriously united, are perfectly distinct. They assure us, too, that when we are called to depart this life, the spirit does not go down with the body to silence and forgetfulness, but actually *departs*: it leaves the body, leaves earth, and enters in full possession of its consciousness and powers into another state of being. Though away, and perhaps far away, it yet exists; it yet acts, and thinks, and feels. Were it necessary, we could adduce many declarations of Holy Writ bearing on these points, and fully and incontestably establishing them. As it is, let us allude to a few, and by these revive within us this grateful recollection of the dead.

Solomon, then, in language nearly identical with that we have employed, says, in speaking of death: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return to God who gave it." Christ, who declared himself that he is greater than Solomon, says, in speaking of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who had been dead for generations, that they are now alive. "He is not," says he, "the God of the dead, but of the living." Paul, too, in addressing his brethren of the Church of Corinth, teaches the same truth. "For we know," he says, "that if the earthly house of our tab-

ernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed upon we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." Surely this language implies that the soul is distinct from the body, and lives after it is dead; that while the body is sleeping quietly in the grave, the soul is active and awake, removed to another and a higher sphere, clothed with its immortal consciousness and energy.

Again, the apostle declares, in another epistle, and in language nearly corresponding with this, that he was in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better than to continue in the flesh; and also in the same connection that to live was Christ, and to die was gain. The apostle Peter also speaks in the same manner. "I think it meet," he says, "as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me." The apostle John, too, in the closing book of the New Testament,

furnishes the most abundant testimony that the departed are yet living. In one place he declares that he saw in his vision the souls of those who had been martyred for Jesus. In another place he declares that he saw a great company, and that an angel informed him that they were those who had come out of great tribulation, and washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. He declares, again, that he heard a voice from heaven, and that the voice said to him: "Write, Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." In these, and a multitude of similar declarations, there is clear and certain evidence that the spirits of the departed exist in a state of separation from the body. Particularly in the last quotation, where it is said that the pious dead are blessed *from henceforth*, from the very hour and moment of their departure, is the evidence marked and striking. But all these are only a small part of the allusions and testimony of Scripture touching this subject; and it may be truly said, that if any subject has been clearly and satisfactorily settled by the declarations of inspiration, this is that subject.

This, then, is our consolation. Our friends who have been removed in the providence of God from the present state of being, are still living in some other place in his vast dominions. Where this place is, we may not know; and it is true we do not. We only know the name and character ascribed to it. God has not seen fit to define its location, and we can not cast our eye or thought on any part of the universe,

and imagine with any definiteness of apprehension that it is there. But wherever it is, we know that our friends who have died in Christ are there. They are not in the grave, they are there. Though dead, they yet live. And consoling indeed is this reflection. Our loved ones, though they have passed away, have not passed into nonentity. We are not doomed to the sad and dreary suspicion that their existence has now terminated; that this is the last they shall ever know, or be known; that henceforth they shall be as though they had never been. No: we do not mourn thus without hope. The pure and lovely spirits of these dear friends are more active, and vigorous, and joyous in their being than ever; and we can not think of them as thus translated to a higher state, without some comfort in our bereavement and sorrow.

II. But I remark, secondly, that Christianity warrants us to believe, not only that our departed friends are yet living, but that they have gone to live in a more immediate sense with God. In some sense they are with God here; and so, too, are we all; for he is omnipresent, being at all times in all places, surrounding us wherever we go and whatever we do. The pious may be said even here to be with God, also, because they are the subjects of his special favor, and are blessed with a peculiar sense of his presence and protection. But there is a more immediate sense still in which the pious who have departed this life are with God now. They are *directly* with him. They have gone to the world where he has fixed his special abode, and where he manifests in some glorious form his special and visible presence.

The Scriptures are very clear in those representations from which we deduce this inference. They distinctly instruct us that there is such a world as that referred to; that God, though he is omnipresent, is especially there. It is true, they tell us, in reference to his infinity, that the heavens, and the heaven of heavens, can not contain him; but then they also tell us, in reference to some particular and personal manifestation of himself, that he dwells in the high and holy place, and looks down from his habitation upon the children of men. It would be impossible, indeed, to understand much of the Holy Scriptures, to attach any definite signification to many of their allusions, without a recognition of this sublime truth. If it is not so, a good part of what they say becomes weak and unmeaning verbiage. But it is so. God *has* his special abode. There is in his immense dominions some favored place where he dwells in some peculiar and visible glory. There the angels live and rejoice in his presence. To that place Enoch and Elijah were translated, that they should not see death; and there, in the language of the apostle, are "the spirits of just men made perfect."

And not only do the Scriptures instruct us that there is such a world as this, but that thither all the pious go when they leave this world. The language of the apostle just quoted, positively proves this; and much more might be adduced equally decisive. But it is enough: it plainly shows us that the righteous dead have gone to God.

And this is a further consolation we have in thinking of those who have been taken from us. God has

taken them immediately to himself. They now behold him without a veil between. They dwell in his own habitation. They are safe, forever safe, in his divine embrace. Surely there is comfort in this. Surely, it is better for the dear objects of our affection that they should be in heaven than on earth: better that they should be so intimately near to their Father there than to be in comparative exile from him here. And if we could only take into our minds this grand conception; if we could calmly apprehend what it is to be with God, and could look out above the dimness and vagueness that so becloud our vision, we should see indeed, and should rejoice in seeing, that it is thus better with them. We should see that there is an infinite meaning in the words so frequently spoken of the dead, that our loss is their gain. And we would be willing to bear our loss, to submit in resignation to the privation of beholding them no more in this world, or enjoying any longer their counsel and sympathy, when thus made to understand how happy an exchange they have made, and how indescribably blessed is the state into which they have passed. Yes, our departed friends have gone to God, and we will think of them hereafter as enjoying without intervening distance or obscurations the smiles and felicities of his immediate presence.

III. But I remark, further, that Christianity warrants us to believe that our departed friends have gone to live with Christ. In entering upon this contemplation there is a preliminary thought to be borne in mind. It is that though Christ, as our glorious Mediator, possesses a higher and divine nature, yet he possesses also

a human nature, and in this respect is truly and literally man. "He took not on him the nature of angels, but He took on him the seed of Abraham." "He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man." "For this cause He is not ashamed to call us brethren." He is then, you perceive, a man like ourselves. The only difference is, he is pure and perfect, and not like ourselves sinful and corrupt: "For He knew no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." He was the *just*, suffering for the *unjust*. Still he is man, our brother, our kinsman, our fellow.

And now the use I wish to make of this thought is, that Christ, after living, and suffering, and dying in this nature, with it arose from the grave and ascended into heaven. Hence we read that he has ascended up on high, has passed into the heavens, has forever sat down at the right hand of God, and that God has highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name. We read that Stephen, when he was dying under a shower of stones from his persecutors, actually saw him at the right hand of God; and that John, in the superhuman visions afforded him on the isle of Patmos, beheld also his radiant form, and that, overcome by his glory, he fell down before him. We read too that having thus ascended and been glorified he is now alive for evermore.

And *now* I remark that it is to Christ thus exalted in his humanity, thus returned to his glory, the glory he had with the Father before the world was, that our believing friends have gone. And surely in this contemplation we have the basis of true and solid consola-

tion with regard to them. There is satisfaction in the thought that they have gone to Christ; that he, their once crucified but now risen Master, has taken them to himself; and that hereafter they shall dwell in near and blissful companionship with him forever. When Christ was upon earth he solemnly assured his disciples that this should be the reward of their fidelity to him; and his promise refers not only to them, then living, but to all who should subsequently follow in their steps. "Let not," said he, "your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself; that where I am ye may be also." And in connection with this promise, on the same interesting occasion, he offered up to his Father this prayer: "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given us." Here obviously is the indication, nay, the assurance, the pledge, that Christ intends to gather to himself all those who truly believe in him. He does this, individually, as they one by one leave the world, and he will do it officially, and in concourse, at the judgment of the great day. His love to them, his interest in them, and his care and sufferings for them, all conspire to render him desirous that they should be near to him; and it is the reward the Father has promised him for his toil to redeem us, that he shall in this way bring many sons to glory.

We find, too, that the early disciples of Christ were

cheered and supported by this expectation to endure with patience the trials and persecutions to which they were called. They knew that they should soon be with Christ, where these annoyances would affect them no more. Hence Stephen, to whom we have referred, suffered his fate in peace, knowing that he would immediately join the Saviour at the right hand of God. So too Paul endured all his tribulations, believing that as soon as his work was done he should go and be with Christ. He spoke also of his desire to depart, declaring his conviction that it would be better for him than to remain in the flesh. To the Corinthians, in language before quoted, he said, including not only himself, but all believers: "We are confident therefore, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord." He did not entertain the opinion, surely, from this, that the soul at death sinks into unconsciousness till the resurrection; nor even the opinion advanced by some, that there is an intermediate *place* to which the spirits of the departed go; but he believed that upon death the righteous immediately enter heaven, and enjoy the society and personal presence of Christ. And this too was obviously the belief of all the apostles, and saints of the New Testament. Peter rejoiced in the same expectation, and so did John, and they all. They kept this bright prospect continually in view; and when pursued to prison and to death for the name of their Master, they were sustained by the assurance that the cruelty that thus removed them from earth only removed them the sooner to the glorious mansions he had gone to prepare for them.

And when we reflect upon this, we can not fail to find comfort with reference to our pious friends who have left us. Christ prayed that they might be with him, and he promised that they shall be. We see too that his inspired apostles believed and taught that, as soon as Christians leave the world, they go to experience the reality and blessedness of this promise. We may therefore rejoice, knowing that our friends who have lived to Christ and died in him are where he is, beholding his glory. They see him, literally, in all his beauty and loveliness, and they enjoy in unspeakable fullness the pure felicity of his personal and familiar presence. On earth they used to sing :

“I long to behold him arrayed
With glory and light from above,
The King in his beauty displayed,
His beauty of holiest love.”

And now they reap the rich harvest of their desire, and realize the complete fruition of their hope. Let us not, then, mourn nor murmur that they are gone. They are where, when here, they longed to be ; and are enjoying the blessedness for which they labored, and suffered, and prayed. They are with Christ, which is far better. “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall any sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water ; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

IV. But I remark, further still, that Christianity warrants us to believe that our pious friends have gone

to the society of similar pure and happy spirits. When we consider what has just passed under our contemplation—that heaven is the peculiar abode of the Deity, and that Christ in his glorified humanity is there, we shall comprehend at once that it is a place of holy and hallowed society. None are admitted there but such as are approved by the eye of Infinite Purity, and none could find any enjoyment there, or entertain a desire to remain there, but such as have a character in harmony and sympathy with it. Hence we are distinctly informed that nothing that is unclean shall ever enter there, and that all the inhabitants of that blessed world delight, from congeniality of nature, in its services, and find the richest satisfaction in its sacred and spiritual pursuits.

Among the inhabitants of that happy world there are, in the first place, the angels; those pure and lovely beings who existed before the creation of the earth, and who, when the Almighty had formed it, and beautified it, and placed man upon it, sang and shouted for joy. Then there are all the redeemed who have left our world, and who through the merits and mediation of Christ have been fitted for the company and employment of angels. The patriarchs are there, and the prophets and apostles. There too are the saints of later days—hundreds “whose praise is in all the churches,” and thousands whose humble and fragrant piety blessed the neighborhoods in which they lived, and whose names are in the Lamb’s Book of Life. They form a vast company, and they are the best and the most worthy of our race. And what a community must that be, composed of beings like these! Angels!

and human spirits made partakers of angelic purity ! And yet, my brethren, this is the community to which those of our kindred and acquaintance have gone, who have died in the Lord. They are now mingling with this happy and heavenly throng. They have found in perfection the society they most relished and enjoyed on earth, and they are admitted to the high privilege of forming a part, and of increasing the joyfulness, of the holy and rejoicing throng.

And in this connection we should remember that our departed friends have gone to meet those whom they formerly knew and loved on earth. They once mourned over dear ones taken from them, as we now mourn over them. Once they knew the sorrow of bereavement as well as do we. Either in the circle of their kindred, or of their pious and pleasant acquaintances, some near to their hearts, and strongly enthroned in their affections, had been torn away from them, and carried to the world of spirits. Now they have gone to join them. As soon as they entered the heavenly world, undoubtedly, they inquired after them, or were immediately welcomed by them. There they know each other again, and renew the friendship of earth under better and more congenial circumstances. The tears of separation are all wiped away, and though they have left friends behind to shed the same tears over them, they have found friends where they have gone who are made happier by their arrival. Blessed indeed must it be for loved friends thus to meet !

And is there nothing in all this to administer consolation to our wounded hearts ? Our friends have not left us, to go to some strange and lonely land, to dwell

there in solitude, or to mix with unknown and uncongenial beings. No: they have gone to the home of the pure; to their Father's house and family; and there before this they have rejoined those whom they loved and prized on earth, and formed other and equally endearing associations. Their society, we see, is the best and the choicest of the universe; and we know that nothing shall ever occur to sever them from this society, or to interrupt or alloy their enjoyment in it. We will not therefore wish them back. Though they have left us, and numerous friends, below, they have found other and more perfect friends above. There then let them stay, enjoying with all their other felicities the social scenes and holy friendships of that bright and joyful land.

V. But I remark once more, and in conclusion to these reflections, that Christianity warrants us to believe that, though our friends have found better society above, they yet retain their affection and sympathy for us. They do not in the advanced state to which they have been removed, and I may add, they can not, forget us. They carry with them their intelligence, their memory, their benevolent feelings. They would have to cease to be intelligent beings, to lose their identity, and to undergo an entire transformation, not only of character, but of nature, in order to forget us. And their affection and continued interest in us are as certain as their recollection of us. If they are yet living and thinking, they think of us; and if they think of us still, they love us still. I know that one of the votaries of poesy has referred to this subject doubt-

ingly, and has started an anxious, and perhaps a somewhat melancholy inquiry in regard to it :

“ But tell us, thou bird of the solemn strain,
Can those who have loved forget?
We call—but they answer not again—
Do they love—do they love us yet?
We call them far through the silent night,
And they speak not from cave or hill;
We know, thou bird! that their land is bright,
But say, do they love there still ?”

But though the poet in the sweet sadness of her spirit has spoken thus in an inquiring strain, Revelation speaks out assuredly, and answers, and says, Yes: they do think of us there, and do love us there, still. They teach us enough in relation to the future to justify us in believing this; and sound philosophy establishes our belief. We can not, therefore, and will not, doubt it. Those who have passed on before us do as certainly remember us as we do them. The recollection, and consequent tender and kindly feelings, are mutual—as natural as the daily pleasant thoughts of friends separated by the wide ocean, and for a time dwelling in different countries on the earth. No one would suppose that this separation must result in forgetfulness or unconcern; but on the other hand, we all know that such a result is impossible. Loved ones under such circumstances frequently meet each other in mutual and kind reflection. And so it is with friends divided by the river of death. We on this side need not vaguely wonder if those who have preceded in the passage ever send back a thought or a wish in reference to us; but we have reason to believe that they

do. Whether, through the medium of their spiritual vision, it is possible for them to look through the intervening distance and see us; or whether, as is more probable, they hear from us by messengers passing between earth and heaven—these are points which we may not be able to settle; but they do not in any way affect the consideration we have under review. It is still certain that they are the same beings; and that they are still our friends. Even the lost, Christ instructs us in his parable of the rich man and Lazarus, retain a recollection and an anxious concern for their kindred on earth; and may we not assume that those who have gone to the better land, whose affections have been elevated and purified, and separated from the dross of selfishness and sin, retain in their thoughts and sympathy those whom they have loved and left? Certainly there is no superstition in this, certainly it is not to be characterized as visionary or poetical. It is sober and rational truth—the dictate of reason, of philosophy, of religion.

And if this is so, then have we an additional thought to comfort us in the grief and bitterness of bereavement. It is truly a consolation to reflect that while the friends of our heart have been removed far from us, we yet live in their memory and affection; that while we send our thoughts forward to them, they send theirs back to us; that while we yet cherish their names, they cherish ours. It is truly a consolation to believe that while we can not, and would not, forget them, that while we often muse on their memories and excellences; that while we tenderly call them up to our mind, in the pleasant homes once made bright with their presence,

but now lonely because they return to them no more ; in the sanctuary of the Most High whither we often went with them in company, and where we often bowed with them in prayer and praise ; and in the silent cemetery, by the side of the very graves where their mortal part is reposing—it is truly a consolation to believe they can not, and would not, forget us, but as frequently and tenderly recur to their former intimacy and companionship with us. It is a consolation to know that thus we remain dear to them, as they do to us: that it is indeed true “they love us still.”

But I must hasten to a close. There are several other reflections which it was my intention to refer to, and to incorporate in this discourse ; but which, from the pressure of time, I must leave unconsidered. I will only say that I particularly intended to allude to the resurrection ; and to show from the hope Christianity inspires respecting even the buried bodies of our friends that we have great cause to comfort ourselves in our sorrow for them. I intended also to make allusion to the consoling fact, that, though our departed friends shall not return to us, we, at no distant day, shall go to them. I call this a *consoling* fact ; for though there is nothing pleasing in the thought that we must die, there *is* something pleasing in the thought that beyond death there is a bright and blissful land where we shall meet those who have preceded us, and are at rest. But these, and whatever other considerations might have been referred to, we must for the present dismiss. Enough, however, has been said to furnish a ground of sustaining comfort and becoming resignation to every bereaved and bleeding heart. Let me, then, my afflicted

friends, encourage you to look up, and to open your oppressed and grieving minds to the genial influence of these inspiring suggestions. In a little while the strife and sorrow of earth will all be over. Christ will gather to himself all his true people, and they shall rest from their labors, and go no more out forever.

SERMON XIII.

THE COVETOUS RICH MAN.

“BUT God said unto him, Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?” LUKE 12 : 20.

THIS text is a part of one of our Lord's interesting parables. The occasion of the parable, and its design, are suggested in the verses which immediately precede it. “And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.” From this it appears that the design of the parable was to condemn and correct the common spirit of covetousness. To accomplish this design, He says: “The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this

night thy soul shall be required of thee : then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided ? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

In this parable now you will observe two things. In the first place the man here referred to was rich. In the providence of God prosperity had smiled upon him. His toil had been abundantly blessed, his plans had all succeeded, and suddenly, and almost by surprise, he finds himself surrounded not only with sufficiency, but with abundance. In the next place, having this great wealth, instead of acknowledging the hand of God in its bestowment, and regarding himself as merely the steward of it, he sets his heart upon it, and loves it. Hence we hear him inquiring: "Where shall I bestow all my goods?" Not, How shall I *use* my goods? How may I best employ them in glorifying God and making myself useful to my fellow-men? No: but, Where shall I safely deposit them? Where can I best hoard them? How can I enjoy them the most and the longest?

Now as just such men are to be found all around us, in this and every community, the parable is of importance to us as indicating the light in which such men are regarded by God. In the estimation of the world they are accounted wise and honorable; a eulogy is pronounced upon them; and they are held up as worthy examples of imitation. In the eyes of God, however, the Searcher of hearts, and the Judge of the world, they are esteemed unwise and wicked. Our text is the utterance of his judgment respecting them: "But God said, Thou fool! this night thy soul shall

be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"

The design I have in view in the contemplation of this parable at this time is to consider *the folly of this covetous rich man*. In doing this I shall endeavor to show, first, what his folly consisted in; and secondly, what its consequences were.

I. What did the folly of this man consist in? I answer, it did not consist in his being rich. Wealth in itself is a blessing; or it is at least so if not perverted and turned away from the object God had in view in bestowing it. Hence they who have riches should not despise them; neither should they despise them who have them not. When obtained honestly, and not as the wages of unrighteousness, they are the gifts of Divine Providence, and should be so esteemed and so employed. In the possession of wealth, then, there is no sin; if there was, it would never come in the way of honest effort, and God would never confer it.

Nor again did the folly of this man consist in his active and industrious exertions to obtain riches. I know you may say that these exertions indicate a desire on his part for worldly wealth, and that in this way he seems to exhibit a sordid and ungodly character. But to this I reply that the desire to obtain worldly good does not always exhibit a sordid character, nor flow from an ungodly heart. It is generally so, as the world now is, it must be conceded; but then it is not necessarily so. It is possible for an individual to desire riches with pure feelings and for a laudable purpose. Such is certainly the case when the eye is

single to the glory of God ; when the desire and design is to have the means to do good and to communicate, and to advance the cause of human happiness and salvation. Hence, abstractly considered, we do not see in the activity and industry of this man to improve his temporal condition any sin or folly. There is such a thing as being diligent in business while we are fervent in spirit ; and if the former state of mind and habit of life do not exclude the latter, we may be still serving the Lord.

The question then recurs, Wherein was this man's folly ? It may be replied in general, that it consisted in the state of his mind with respect to his riches. Though he might have had riches without sinning ; though he might have been strongly solicitous and actively engaged to accumulate without sinning, yet such was the state of his mind that this was not the case. There was sin in him ; he did manifest the most egregious folly. We shall see this very definitely and implicitly when we notice for a moment what the condition of his mind in regard to his worldly circumstances was.

1. And we can not give our attention to this point a moment without discovering the supreme appreciation with which his riches were regarded. It is at once obvious that he placed upon them a value and an interest which they did not and could not deserve. Like all covetous men, he over-estimated and over-prized them. He entertained an opinion concerning them that no man should entertain concerning any thing of a temporal or worldly nature. He placed his heart upon them as his *chief good*. There was nothing

higher or more sacred in all the desires and aspirations of his soul. He considered himself to have reached, or as being in the way to reach, all that his immortal nature could need or require. And it is for this reason that he loved his wealth, and was covetous of it; it is for this reason that his desires for it and exertions to obtain it rushed on beyond the line of rectitude, and became foolish and sinful in the sight of God.

2. We see further, however, that with this false estimate of the value of his riches, his mind was fixed on the lowest object or end to which he could devote them. This object was *mere personal gratification*. Hence the plans which he lays in his own mind, and which are expressed in these words: "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." The only end indicated here as having any place whatever in his contemplation is worldly pleasure; the gratification of personal desire and ease. This certainly is the lowest end for which any man can live, and yet it was the highest end in all the schemes and purposes of this prospered individual. The idea of doing good with his means, and of endeavoring in the enjoyment and use of them to benefit others, enters not into his thoughts. "Where shall I bestow my goods?" is the anxious question; and when he has decided this, he settles down on the selfish and sensual aim of life, to eat, drink, and be merry. His only care and solicitude are for himself; and in even this direction they are only for the grovelling and perishing delights of earth.

3. We see further still, that with this false estimate

of his riches, and this unworthy end to which he proposed to devote them, there was in his mind an unwise calculation and dependence upon them. This we see in two respects. There was in the first place a complacent assumption that his riches would remain permanently with him. "Thou hast much goods laid up for many years." He evidently forgot, in the excitement and splendor of his plans, that change and uncertainty hang over every condition in life, and that even riches, however secure for the present, may by some contingency in the future, "take to themselves wings and fly away." He forgot that the Providence that had so suddenly enriched, could as suddenly impoverish him. He forgot that while calculating so joyously on the permanency of his wealth, the many years that rose so grandly to his vision might fail in reality to prove so many days, and that from the pinnacle of abundance he might descend quickly or imperceptibly to the very depths of want. Besides this, there was a complacent assumption also that he would be blessed with a long life in which to enjoy his riches. "For many years." He seems from this to have taken it for granted that death to him was yet far off. He speaks as if there was no such thing as mortality, or as if it was to be surely and indefinitely postponed to him. "For many years." Truly there is no suspicion here that life is only a short and fleeting thing; no apprehension that it might in the revolution of *one* year, instead of many, yes, one *day*, close, and all be over; no impression of its frailty, its uncertainty, its rapid flight. "For many years." Ah! how blind, how inconsiderate, how worldly is this! Had he never

seen a friend or neighbor die? Had he never stood by the dying-bed of some familiar acquaintance, or of some poor fellow-creature at least, cut down by the stroke of death, and removed from this to the eternal world? Had he never followed such an one to the house appointed for all living, and there reflected what in a little time was sure to be his own lot and destiny? Or had he never felt in himself the pains and infirmities common to human nature, the indications of disease, the premonitions of death, and by these been admonished that life is not so sure and certain a possession, but a feeble light that may go out in a day, a tender thread that may break in a moment, a shadow that may quickly vanish and be gone? "For many years." No—it was not the voice of wisdom in the rich man that said this! It was not a sober review of life as it is; not a calm and judicious comparison of its prospect with its uncertainty; not a fair balancing of its securities with its dangers, that induced this confidence, and led to this utterance. No; it was inconsideration, it was worldliness, it was the infatuation of covetousness and sin: it was a want of seriousness, of spiritual impressions, of concern for the soul.

And now do you not perceive in these views and feelings which this individual entertained with respect to his riches, the indication and the manifestation of folly? Surely no wise and reflecting man can be thus deceived and deluded by the perishing possessions of earth. To regard these things as our chief good; to place the heart upon them as the dearest and highest object in the range of our pursuits; to use them and pervert them for the low and ignoble purpose of mere

personal gratification; to calculate on them as abiding and permanent; to assume amid the dangers and uncertainties of life that many years are pleasantly awaiting us in the future, in which we may find comfort and luxury in our plenty and opulence, and thus forget that we are mortal and every moment liable to surrender all that is dear and delightful to us on earth—truly, if there is folly in any thing, if there is a want of wisdom, and prudence, and manly forethought in any plan or conduct in life, there is this folly, this presumption and infatuation in such a course as this. And so, as we have remarked before, God himself regards it. He considers every man who schemes and acts and departs in this manner as blind and wicked, wasting the precious season of his probation, perverting the designs of His mercy to him, and striking the ruinous bargain of gaining the world and losing his soul.

II. But it is time to consider now the consequences in which this course of folly resulted. These are intimated in our text, and they were of the most serious and momentous character. It is not possible seriously to refer to them without exciting the deepest and strongest emotions of the soul. There are times when the mind can hardly bear the weight of its own thoughts and feelings; it is so here, when it is summoned to survey the dreadful consequences of a life of worldliness, and to connect the folly of sin with the issues and wages of sin. Yet we may not shrink from this calling, and should not. It is proper that we should consider what the end of our conduct shall be;

to pause amid the gayeties and bewilderments of earthly pleasure and pursuits, and ponder well the course we are selecting, and the ultimate consequences to which it is leading. He who refuses to do this, betrays the guilt and danger lurking in his path, and may be lamented and admonished as one who is bent on destruction, and who yet refuses to understand or to care for his state. He is rushing headlong toward a precipice, and he will not open his eyes to see, nor give heed to the voice of warning uttered and urged behind him.

What then were the consequences of the rich man's folly?

1. You will perceive from the language in which the Almighty addressed him in the text that one consequence, and a serious one too, was divine disapprobation. "Thou fool!"—thou unwise and imprudent man!—certainly implies this. Disapproval and rebuke could not be more decidedly expressed. And think what it is for a rational and immortal being, one accountable for his conduct, to receive from God such a judgment in regard to his ways. The disapprobation of men, particularly when we are conscious of wrong, is to us all a source of more or less disquietude. More especially is this the case, if the good and the esteemed thus express their dissatisfaction and dislike. But what is the disfavor of men, however great and good they may be, compared with the disfavor of God? And yet every covetous, worldly, ungodly man, seeking and loving the things of this world, and banishing God from his thoughts, is in this way resting under His frown, and occupying the fearful position of one in

whom He is not, and can not be, pleased. You may think lightly of it, but it is a serious result of your sin; you may care nothing now about it, but the time is coming when you will see and feel that it is an immense and an awful calamity. So this man found it, and so will all who take this course.

2. But this language implies further, as a consequence allied to this, that when God, in the exercise of his sovereignty, called him to leave the world, he was unprepared to meet the summons. "This night thy soul shall be required of thee: *then whose* shall those things be?" This address or inquiry, "Then whose shall those things be, that thou hast provided?" seems to convey an idea of unfitness for departure. As if He had said, you place your whole affections on these things; you have expended all your time to acquire them, and now you think and care for nothing else; you have no other hope, no other trust; but what can these things do for you now? In life, properly used, they might have availed you something; but they belong to earth, and you can not carry them with you. What can you find in them to give you a safe introduction into the world of spirits? Alas! they are of no use. They can not help you, and yet you have no other passport or preparation. This appears to be the import of the words. He is therefore unfitted for his change! What a sad result! What a poor advantage from the possession of so much wealth!

3. Another consequence following on these, and giving them a higher meaning and significance, was, that being thus destitute of divine favor, and unfitted for the summons to die and meet his account, nothing

awaited him in the world beyond but eternal poverty and wo. No pains had been taken to make provisions for that state; his only care and labor had been in reference to this world. He has no portion there; he has provided none; his only portion is here. Rich in time he must be poor in eternity; eating, drinking, and being merry here, as his highest good, he must be destitute and miserable hereafter. He has gained the world, but lost his soul; here he was comforted by the sinful pleasures of earth, now and forever he must be tormented by a separation and banishment from God. O sad result of worldliness! terrible wages of sin! How the mind shudders and recoils as brought in contemplation of it! And yet it is the legitimate, the natural consequence of impiety. All who thus live must expect just such a doom.

Had I time I would try to apply this subject with the solemnity and earnestness it so eminently demands. To all would I apply it; not only to the rich, but to all who love the world more than they love God. You may be worldly without being wealthy. Pause and consider! Fix in your minds the concluding words of the parable: "So is every one who is not rich toward God." That is, so is every one who forgets God, and loves and places his heart on this world. There are many of you who are doing this, and the subject at this time should be a warning to you. Imitate no longer this man! His path led to ruin, and there it will conduct you if you do not forsake it. Turn from it this day. Now come to Him who is the life, the truth, and the way.

S E R M O N X I V .

O N P A R D O N .

“FOR thy name sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great.”—
PSALM 25 : 11.

HERE is a most humble confession on the part of the Psalmist, that he was a great sinner. He does not try to conceal his iniquity, nor to excuse it, nor to palliate it, but he frankly acknowledges “that it is great. And yet he does not despair—does not allow himself to believe there is no mercy for him, but knowing that God is full of mercy, he bows down in the dust and prays: “For thy name sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great.”

^oThe truth contained in these words, and which I desire now briefly to illustrate, is this: there is pardon, on the ground of divine mercy, to those who will confess their iniquity, no matter how great that iniquity may be. None need despair; none need fear nor hesitate to bow in supplication to the Almighty; for if he is truly penitent, and is willing to confess and forsake his sins, he shall not be turned unregarded away. The apostle John has expressed this truth in another and a most unequivocal form, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness;” and so too has the wise man, who declares: “He that covereth his sins shall

not prosper, but he that confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."

I. In considering this subject for a short time we may notice in the first place the confession which it is necessary to make in order to obtain pardon. And here I remark that it is a confession originating, as did the Psalmist's, from a thorough conviction of sin. He felt, and so do all who properly approach God in penitence, that he was guilty and desperately wicked. The transgressions of his past life came crowding upon his recollection, and he realized how justly God might reject and cast him off forever. He felt, as he expresses himself in another place: "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head; therefore my heart faileth me." And without this thorough conviction of our guilt no one can so confess to the Most High as to please him and insure his favor. All other confession would be unmeaning and unavailing. What God requires is a poor and deeply convicted heart, and such He will not despise.

Again, it is a confession accompanied with a sincere *sorrow* for sin. Evidently the Psalmist felt this sorrow, as is attested by the humbleness and earnest fervor with which he prays. He was truly convicted, and as a consequence he was truly sorrowful. And so are all who acceptably confess their sins to God. Their hearts are broken and contrite. There is not merely a sense of guilt, but grief and overwhelming regret on account of guilt. There is a sorrow that takes hold of the very soul, that drinks up the spirit and opens

within the breast a fountain of tenderness—a godly sorrow that worketh repentance not to be repented of. And every man may be assured that he approaches God but to little purpose who does not feel something of this sorrow. The first thing such persons should do is to bow down before Him, and acknowledging their unconcern and insensibility, pray for a tender and contrite heart. Without this they can never pray aright, never so confess their sins as to find pardon.

Again, it is a confession attended with a full and unreserved *abandonment* of sin. Had the Psalmist in his prayer for pardon still held on to his transgressions, that is, continued to live in carelessness and disobedience, he would have felt himself condemned in the very act of offering the prayer. He knew perfectly well that if we “regard iniquity in our heart the Lord will not hear us;” and that “the sacrifices of the wicked,” the prayers of those who love their sins and still pursue them, “are an abomination to the Lord.” Consequently in his confession he renounced his sinful ways; he turned from them with mingled remorse and abhorrence; he commenced a new and better life. And so must we do, and so must all do, who would confess in a manner pleasing to the Almighty, and saving to the soul. We must abhor ourselves and abhor our past conduct. We must renounce without hesitation or reserve all the paths of iniquity, and with an obedient heart turn to the Lord. The wicked man must forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts: all sin, however pleasant and inviting it may appear; all, whether it relate to the heart or the life, must be totally cast off and resisted, or we can never expect

forgiveness. And in this connection every man may try himself by an infallible rule, by which to ascertain the truth or falsity of his pretended penitence. If he still loves his sins and in any degree willfully adheres to them, he may be assured that he is yet in the gall of bitterness and under the bonds of iniquity; that he has never yet truly repented; that he is as much this day as ever without God and without hope in the world. But if sin appears hateful to him; if he contemplates it with sorrow and repugnance of soul; if he turns away from it with loathing and fear, as he would turn away from a nauseous and destroying poison; if by prayer and watchful striving he is endeavoring to resist and overcome it, then he has reason to believe that his repentance is godly and sincere, such as meets with the approbation of the Most High, and will result in his salvation.

I need not add that it is a confession leading to humble and earnest prayer for forgiveness. You see what was its effect upon the Psalmist's mind in this particular. Seeing the guilt and ruin of his condition, and filled with deep and inexpressible remorse, he cries out from the depths of his soul for deliverance. He is in distress which tongue can not utter, and as his only relief he betakes himself to prayer. "Pardon my iniquity"—"remember not my sins"—"Look upon me and have mercy upon me," are the expressions which his agonized spirit prompts him to utter. And all who are truly penitent are exercised in the same way. "God be merciful to me a sinner," is the sincere and urgent language of their hearts. In the words, or similar words, uttered by the Psalmist at another time,

they exclaim: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me."

II. Such, then, is the confession which we are to make if we desire and would obtain the pardon of our sins. To none but those who do thus confess to God is pardon ever offered or intimated. The self-righteous, the unconvicted, the unconcerned, has no ground to expect it, and in his present state can never receive it. It is for the humble and repentant, they who are poor and contrite and tremble at the word of God, who feel their sins, and who confess and forsake them—it is for them, and them alone. But for them, we bless God, there is pardon, and this with absolute certainty. No matter who they are, nor what have been their transgressions, if they are truly penitent they shall be surely accepted. The amount and aggravation of their sins constitute no ground of doubt in regard to this matter. Though they are the worst and most criminal that man has ever committed, extending through many long years of darkness and indifference, yet in this circumstance there is no cause to fear: if they are truly convicted and sorrowful, and by renouncing their former ways are calling upon God for mercy, they may rest assured that He will not turn a deaf ear upon them, but will hear, and answer, and deliver them.

And this, you perceive, is the inference which we

are led to make from our text. David was not deterred from praying for pardon because his iniquity was great; on the other hand he urges this consideration in his prayer as a reason why he desired pardon. He knew that the greater his iniquity, the greater of course was his need of forgiveness; and he knew that God, who is abundant in goodness and truth, would not disregard and reject him in his distress. And the confidence which he felt all sinners may feel, and the salvation which he experienced may we all experience, if like him we have a broken and a contrite spirit. And this, now, is the other point in our subject which I wish to bring before you and encourage you to lay hold of in these remarks. The point is, that when we have truly confessed our iniquity before God, we may hope for pardon on the ground of his mercy, no matter how great that iniquity has been. Though it be of the vilest character, and deepest dye, without palliation and without parallel, yet if we are sorry and will give it up, He will most certainly receive and abundantly forgive us.

The first remark I offer, to impress you with this truth is, that the mercy of God, which we recognize as the source of pardon, is infinite and unlimited.

It will not, of course, be doubted by any who hear me that pardon is indeed an act of divine mercy alone. On no other ground did the Psalmist pray for it, and on no other can any man ever expect it. There is no other eye that can pity but the eye of Mercy, and there is no other arm that can bring salvation. And this is very obvious when we recollect that man in his unrenewed state has no merit by which he can claim, and

can perform no works by which he can secure, pardon and acceptance. Strictly speaking man has no merit whatever. He is a fallen and depraved being, and as such he has not only forfeited the favor of God, but has experienced the loss of all moral worth and excellence sufficient to recommend him to the saving mercy of God. In the significant language of the Apostle, there dwelleth in him no good thing. Neither is it possible for man in this condition to perform any good works sufficient to make up for this absence of moral goodness and merit. Good works, such as spring from a right principle and are acceptable to God, can not be performed prior to regeneration; and admitting that they could be, still they could not atone for past sins and transgressions. No created being can do at any time more than his duty. Entire obedience and continual good doing are required of him. His line of obligation is not any particular amount of service, but his capacity for service. Consequently if he has been guilty of transgressions or of short-coming at any time or in any respect, he can never by any thing he can do make an atonement for that fault. It must stand forever against him, so far as his good deeds can extend, though no additional sin should ever afterwards appear in his history. And from this it is clear that if man is ever saved it must be upon the ground of divine mercy. He can not save himself, and there is no being in the universe, except the Supreme, against whom he has committed all his sins, that can save him. If HE does not pity him, he must remain in his guilt; if HE does not deliver him, he must perish.

But this mercy we know God does exercise toward

our sinful race. He is full of benevolence and compassion, and though He might have passed us by in our ruin, and left us to reap the consequences of our iniquity, he has not done it, but has stooped to regard and relieve us. And now the thought on which I wish to fix your minds is, that the mercy which God thus exercises toward our race is *infinite*. Springing from the deep fountain of his eternal nature, it is without limit or measure. It knows no bounds, it can not be encompassed. It is as vast and expansive as his own immensity. But if this is so, do you not see how truly it may be said that there is pardon for the greatest iniquity? Surely if pardon proceeds from the mercy of God, and if this mercy is infinite, then no guilt can be so great that it may not be forgiven. That which is infinite can not be outmeasured; and sin, therefore, however great, can not outmeasure the mercy of God. All crimes, great as well as small, come alike within its scope; and no man, however wicked he has been, can go so far as to say: "Now the eye of pity will never again look upon me, and God can not any longer be disposed to forgive me." No; great as are your sins, the mercy of God is greater still; and if you will confess and forsake them, you most certainly will find pardon.

The next remark I make to illustrate this truth is, that the atonement of Christ, through which the mercy of God finds way to our race and becomes available, is also infinite and unlimited. This remark will recall to our view the scheme and method of our salvation. It is not enough that God should be well disposed toward us; that he is benevolent and should consequently

pity us in our fallen and ruined condition ; it is necessary that some way should be devised in which he can consistently manifest his sympathy, and actually commiserate and save. This he could not do in a mere prerogative exercise of sovereignty. For as a sovereign he is not only kind and merciful, but righteous and true : or in the language of the apostle in describing his law, "holy, just, and good"—not only good, but holy and just. In dispensing mercy, therefore, to offenders, it must be in such a form as to comport with the holiness of his character and the righteousness of his government. His law must be magnified and made honorable. In a word, justice must be satisfied, and its claims in no sense disregarded. The only way in which this could be done is that which has been revealed to us in the Scriptures of truth, and which alike displays the divine wisdom and goodness. It is through the atonement of Jesus Christ. And as there is no other way in which mankind can be saved, except through the exercise of divine mercy, so there is no other medium except through the atonement. It is through this that mercy comes to us ; and but for this medium it could never reach nor find us. "There is no other name given under heaven, among men, whereby we must be saved," and this is the only hope that has been or can be offered to us.

But this is enough. The atonement is God's own method, and it is a glorious and sufficient method, to save our ruined world. Through it the unbounded mercy of God has full and unrestricted scope. It is a scheme in perfect harmony with his vast and immeasurable benevolence. Like that benevolence indeed it

is infinite—infinite in its virtue and efficacy, infinite in its sufficiency and adaptation. And now our argument is, that because the atonement is infinite and unlimited in its ability to save, therefore there is pardon for all, even the greatest iniquity. If it is infinite then, like the mercy of God which it conveys to our race, it as completely encompasses the worst as it does the least offenses; all come alike within the range of its efficacy, and may with equal certainty be brought to God for forgiveness. There is no such thing as sinning to such a degree as to outreach its merit or its sufficiency to avail for us. And I feel myself authorized when I contemplate what God has done to reconcile the world to himself in Jesus Christ, to say to all and to the most daring transgressors: “You need not despair; if you are penitent and desire pardon, all you have to do is to go to God and he will give it to you; for so sure as his Son has died and become a propitiation for your sins, so sure will he receive you if you come to him.” Yes, we preach a free and a sufficient salvation—*free* for all, *sufficient* for the sins of all.

But I remark further, to illustrate this truth, that the condition on which salvation through the atonement is suspended has no reference whatever to the greatness of our iniquity. It is to be remembered, after all that has been said respecting the abundance of God’s mercy and the provisions of the Gospel, that mankind are not saved unconditionally and by force of circumstances. It seems to be inconsistent with the righteousness of the divine government to save us in this way. At any rate we know that conditions are annexed to a personal participation of redeeming mercy,

and that none but those who comply with these conditions will be finally accepted. But these conditions are not complicated nor difficult, but easy and universally practicable. They may be summed up in the requirement to believe or trust in Jesus Christ. This every penitent, confessing his sins in the manner we have described, is prepared to do. Convinced of his guilt and danger, and of his insufficiency to help himself, he is in a state of mind fitting him to cast himself upon the atonement of Christ; and when he does this there is pardon granted, and salvation secured. And this condition, you see, does not regard in any way the magnitude of our sins. It can not be in any manner affected by this consideration. It is to exercise faith in Christ, and this you may do as well with the burden of great as of small offenses. There is no proviso nor restriction in the condition as Christ has himself expressed it; on the other hand he has ordained and proclaimed it without the least shape or shade of modification. "Whosoever believeth," is the broad and unreserved announcement with which he lays it before us. Not, you observe, "Whosoever believeth," unless his iniquity is great, unless he is hoary-headed in crime, unless he has sinned against light and knowledge, unless he has provoked ME by his daring deeds and repeated rejections of pardon—no; but emphatically and absolutely, "Whosoever believeth;" as if he had said: "It matters not what his transgressions are; let them be as innumerable as the stars for multitude; let them be of the vilest, the most flagrant, and the most provoking character; let them be the most and the worst that man has ever committed, yet if he

will trust in me, with a broken and contrite heart, he shall be saved."

And from this view of the subject again we see how true it is that all who will confess and forsake their sins may find mercy. If the only condition required of such is to trust in Christ, and if this condition has no reference to the greatness of our sins, and is not affected by it, then certainly every penitent has ground to hope for pardon. There is nothing in the way but his own unbelieving heart; the number and aggravation of his sins are no obstacle whatever; let him believe and free and full forgiveness will be dispensed to him.

But I remark in the last place that the promises of God are so expressed as directly to include the greatest sins and the worst offenders. God has done more for us, great and indescribably gracious as it is, than to make our salvation possible. Along with the rich and glorious provisions that he has made he is striving in every consistent method to induce us to accept of offered mercy, and turn from our sins. Among other things he is continually encouraging us with his promises—promises of peace, of certain reconciliation to him, of joy and happiness, and of everlasting life. These promises are scattered like so many rich and brilliant gems through his word, meeting the eye on almost every page, and cheering the heart with their sunshine and hopeful assurance. And these promises are not made for the milder and less daring offenders, but for one and all, the basest, the most degraded, the most abandoned. All are included, but the worst and most hardened are especially named.

There is certainly no exception made made against any class of offenders in the general promises found in the Scriptures, to our guilty race. Surely when the Almighty says, "Look unto me all ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved, for I am God, and besides me there is no Saviour," there is no intimation that any of the human family may become so wicked that he will not receive them. Neither is such an intimation to be found in connection with any promise in this blessed book. There is always the assurance given that all may come, and that none need despair. But as if this was not enough, and as if to take away all ground or temptation to fear, special promises are made, in which the greatest sins and sinners are particularly mentioned. One instance of this is found in the 1st chapter of Isaiah, where the Almighty remonstrates with such solemnity and tenderness with the rebellious Jews. After setting forth their sins in all their base and ungrateful character, he says in his unwillingness to cast them off and destroy them: "Come now, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Here, in the epithets "scarlet" and "red like crimson," the worst forms of iniquity and guilt are referred to; more significant expressions could not be employed; and yet God says of such sins that they may be pardoned; the *scarlet* shall be white as snow, the crimson shall be as wool; assuring us that no crimes can be too enormous for mercy.

Another instance is found in the 55th chapter of this same prophecy. In this chapter God addresses not only the Jews, but in a permanent exhortation all

wayward and rebellious sinners. He warns them to forsake their sins, and to persuade them to do so, assures them in the most positive manner of his readiness to receive and pardon them. His language is : " Seek ye the Lord while he may be found ; call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts ; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Here he admonishes sinners to turn from their wicked ways and seek him, and encourages them to do so with the promise that he will " abundantly pardon." To illustrate his willingness to pardon all, even the worst transgressors, he adds : " For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways." In these words he is declaring his method of forgiving sins, and affirms that it differs unspeakably from the ways of men in regard to this matter. Men will forgive one another only with restrictions and modifications. They will forgive if the offense was not intended ; or if it is a solitary and single instance ; or if it has no particular aggravation ; or if adequate satisfaction can be presented ; but it is not so with the Almighty. He will forgive, though our offenses were intended ; though they are numerous and innumerable ; though they are aggravated in character and by the most peculiar circumstances ; though they been continued long and without interruption ; and though

we can make no kind of satisfaction. All this avails nothing if we are penitent, for his thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so is his scheme of granting pardon higher than the thoughts and ways of men in this particular. Here, then, is a declaration including surely the worst of offenders.

Had I time I might show how perfectly these promises agree with the promises of the New Testament. I might exhibit the significance of the Saviour's declaration, when he says, "I come not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance;" and Paul's, when he says, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, *of whom I am chief*;" and of numerous similar attestations. But it can not be necessary. You know that these promises are abundant and full, and that they leave no one the least ground to fear. And this establishes the truth we are considering. Surely from this view all can perceive that there is pardon for all, even the worst, sinners, who will confess their iniquity to God.

But I can not pursue these reflections any further, nor is it needful. It must be you all believe this truth. You will go home rejoicing in it. Some down-cast penitent may go to his room and on his knees with fresh courage enter into the liberty of the Gospel. Perhaps, too, some hardened transgressor may feel his cold heart a little warmed within him as he sits quietly down and considers this consoling truth. I pray that it may do you all good; lead you to hate sin more, to love the Saviour more, and to devote yourselves more fully to his service. **683**

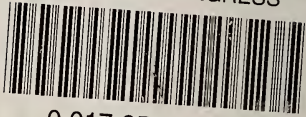


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