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S E R M O N S,

PAROCHIAL AND DOMESTIC USE.

L O N D O N :
GILBERT & RIVINGTON, PRINTERS,
ST JOHN'S SQUARE.

S E R M O N S,

FOR

PAROCHIAL AND DOMESTIC USE,

DESIGNED TO

ILLUSTRATE AND ENFORCE, IN A CONNECTED VIEW,

THE MOST IMPORTANT ARTICLES

OF

CHRISTIAN FAITH AND PRACTICE.

BY

RICHARD MANT, D.D.

(NOW LORD BISHOP OF DOWN AND CONNOR,)

DOMESTIC CHAPLAIN TO THE LATE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

"I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified"—1 COR II 2

"To preach practical sermons, as they are called, that is, sermons upon virtues and vices, without inculcating those great Scripture truths of redemption, grace, &c which alone can incite and enable us to forsake sin, and follow after righteousness, what is it but to put together the wheels, and set the hands of a watch, forgetting the spring, which is to make them all go?"—Bp HORNK

SIXTH EDITION.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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P R E F A C E.

AMONG the modern theological publications of the national Clergy, the number perhaps is not great of such as are adapted to the purposes of parochial and domestic instruction. It is in consequence of this opinion, which I suppose to be not confined to myself; and from having experienced the utility of works of this description, that I have been induced to make the present attempt for adding to their number, by a collection of plain discourses on some of the most important Articles of Christian Faith and Practice.

The foregoing observation will explain the general character and pretensions of these volumes, and prepare the reader for what he may expect

in them. Originally composed for the instruction of my own parishioners, they are now offered to the public, with the view, not in any degree of assisting the researches of the theological Student, but of promoting the advancement of ordinary Christians in the “wisdom” which is “unto salvation.”

In selecting and preparing these sermons for publication, considerable regard has been had to the choice and arrangement of the subjects. Each sermon, with one or two exceptions, is independent of the others; and is intended to give a distinct view of the subject, of which it treats. At the same time they all succeed each other, so as to afford a general and, I hope, not a very defective survey of the scheme of our salvation; of “the inestimable love of Almighty God the Father of mercies, in the redemption of the world through our Lord Jesus Christ: of the means of grace, and of the hope of glory.”

As to the occasions on which they were written, it may be convenient to the reader if I mention,

that, besides several which are adapted to the Proper Lessons, Epistles, and Gospels of certain Sundays, the fourth sermon (on the Divinity of our blessed Lord) was composed with a particular view to the service of the Church on Christmas-day; as was the fourteenth (on the existence and nature of the Holy Ghost) to the festival of Whitsunday. Bishop Jeremy Taylor's advice on this point has always appeared to me highly worthy of regard: "Let every Preacher," he says, "in his parish take care to explicate to the people the mysteries of the great festivals: because these feasts containing in them the great fundamentals of our faith, will with most advantage convey the mysteries to the people, and fix them in their memories by the solemnity and circumstances of the day." A similar motive led me to the subject of the fifth and four following sermons; which were first delivered on the evenings of Passion-week in a parish, of which I then had the cure, and in pursuance of a practice, that had been piously and laudably introduced by the Rector, for the purpose of keeping up a more religious observance of that solemn season. As

they now appear, they have undergone some slight alterations, to fit them for the general purposes of this publication : at the same time I venture to express a hope, that they may furnish appropriate subjects for meditation to any one, who may be disposed to distinguish by more than usual religious exercises the season, for which they were designed.

As to the principles of these sermons, I would observe, that it appears to be the gracious design of Almighty God, our heavenly Father, by the Gospel to bring men from a sinful and lost condition to happiness, by the way of holiness :—happiness, purchased by the precious blood of the incarnate Son of God for those, who through an active faith in his merits repent of their sins, and sincerely and diligently labour to obey him :—and holiness, conferred by the Holy Spirit of God on those, who will conscientiously practise the appointed means of grace. To be the instrument of promoting this holiness as the means, and this happiness as the end, by an assiduous preaching of “ Jesus Christ, and him

crucified," and by a careful exposition of the distinctive doctrines and precepts of his religion, should be the endeavour of every Minister of the Gospel. To promote these objects should be the aim of every sermon. I trust it will be found, that I have never lost sight of them in the following discourses : but that the truths of the Christian faith are so proposed, as to be made the foundation of Christian practice ; and that the duties inculcated are of such a character, and are enforced by such motives, as become the followers of Christ.

Since writing the foregoing paragraph, my attention has been drawn to a passage in one of the admirable and instructive Charges of Archbishop Secker : which is so much to my purpose, and so accurately enumerates the chief subjects of the following discourses, almost in the very order of my arrangement, that I shall take the liberty of transcribing it. "To improve your parishioners effectually to their future happiness, you must be assiduous in teaching the principles, not only of virtue and natural reli-

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gion, but of the Gospel ; and of the Gospel, not as almost explained away by modern refiners, but *as the truth is in Jesus*¹; as it is taught by the Church, of which you are members ; as you have engaged by your subscriptions and declarations, that you will teach it yourselves. You must preach to them faith in the ever-blessed Trinity : and vindicate, when it is requisite, those parts of our Creeds and Offices, which relate to that article, from the very unjust imputations of absurdity and uncharitableness which have been cast upon them. You must set forth the original corruption of our nature : our redemption, *according to God's eternal purpose in Christ*², by the sacrifice of the cross : our sanctification by the influences of the Divine Spirit, the insufficiency of our own good works, and the “ efficacy of faith to salvation. These doctrines,” he presently adds, “ we must preach fully and frequently : yet so, as to reserve always a due share of our discourses for the common duties of common life, as did our Saviour and

¹ Eph. iv. 21.

² Eph. iii. 11.

his Apostles. But then we must enforce them chiefly by motives peculiarly Christian ; I will not say, only by such ; for the Scripture adds others. And while we urge on our hearers the necessity of universal holiness, we must urge equally that of their *being found in Christ ; not having their own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness, which is of God by faith*¹.”

It is necessary for me to add, (and the acknowledgment may serve as an useful hint to some of my younger brethren in the Ministry, into whose hands this publication may chance to fall,) that in composing these sermons assistance has been occasionally derived from the treasures of sound theology, contained in the works of some of our most valuable Divines. The judicious Prelate, to whom I just referred, observes on this point : “ I would have young Clergymen, especially, make very great use of the works of able Divines : not inconsiderately and servilely transcribe them ;

¹ Phil. iii. 9. First Charge at Canterbury, p. 216, 218.

but study, digest, contract, amplify, vary, adapt to their purpose, improve, if possible, what they find in them. For thus it will fairly become their own; mix naturally with what proceeds altogether from themselves; and preserve their youthful productions from the imputation of being empty and jejune¹." For my own part, I have found the adapting of an ancient sermon to modern use to be at once an interesting and a profitable occupation: and I am persuaded, that those specimens of it, which form parts of the present collection, are the most valuable of its contents.

It may be satisfactory to the reader to be informed, that the substance of the seventh, ninth, fourteenth, and fifteenth sermons is for the most part the property of Bishop Andrewes; that a considerable portion of the materials of the first, twenty-fourth, and twenty-fifth, was supplied by Bishop Beveridge; that the statement of the

¹ Archbishop Secker's Third Charge at Canterbury, p. 269.

argument for universal Redemption in the fifth, is taken from Isaac Barrow, and for the Divinity of our Saviour in the fourth, from the late Rev. W. Jones's Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity; that the eleventh is abridged and altered from Joseph Mede; and that the general plan of the twenty-ninth was suggested by the Homily on the fear of Death. Of any other important obligations I am not sensible: but it is by no means improbable, that I have been sometimes indebted to a favourite author for some course of thought or turn of expression, without being at present able to recollect, and even without having been at the time aware of, the source from which it was derived. If I have thus enriched my own compositions, and made them more "profitable for instruction in Christian righteousness," I doubt not that the authors, could they be sensible of it, would rejoice in becoming, even in this way, "the Ministers of God for good," and would "forgive me this wrong."

May the following discourses be sanctified

both to the writer, and to the reader or hearer,
by the operation of the Holy Spirit on our hearts!
And so may they redound to the glory of our
heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

COGGESHALL VICARAGE,

Oct. 26, 1812.

CONTENTS

OF VOL. I.

SERMON I.

COMPARATIVE VALUE OF THE WORLD AND OF THE
SOUL.

MATT. xvi. 26.

	PAGE
What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in ex- change for his soul?	1

SERMON II.

THE GOSPEL THE ONLY FOUNDATION OF RELIGIOUS AND
MORAL DUTY.

1 COR. iii. 11.

For other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ	21
--	----

SERMON III.

ETERNAL LIFE, THE GIFT OF GOD IN HIS SON.

1 JOHN v. 11, 12.

PAGE

And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.	
He that hath the Son, hath life ; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life	39

SERMON IV.

ON THE DIVINITY OF THE WORD.

JOHN i. 1.

In the beginning was the Word ; and the Word was with God ; and the Word was God	58
---	----

SERMON V.

THE SON OF MAN THE SAVIOUR OF THAT WHICH WAS
LOST.

LUKE xix. 10.

For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost	72
---	----

SERMON VI.

THE LOVE OF GOD, THE MOTIVE TO MAN'S SALVATION.

ROM. v. 7, 8.

PAGE

For scarcely for a righteous man will one die ; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die :
 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us 91

SERMON VII.

THE SUFFERINGS OF OUR SAVIOUR UNEXAMPLED.

LAMENT. i. 12.

Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by ? Behold and see, if there be any sorrow, like unto my sorrow which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger 107

SERMON VIII.

THE HUMILITY AND PATIENCE OF OUR SAVIOUR.

PHIL. ii. 5—8.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus ;
 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God,
 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men ;
 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross 126

SERMON IX.

CHRIST CRUCIFIED A MOTIVE TO HOLINESS, AND A
PATTERN FOR IMITATION.

HEB. xii. 1, 2.

PAGE

Wherefore seeing we are compassed about with so great a
cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the
sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with
patience the race that is set before us ;
Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith ;
who for the joy that was set before him, endured the
cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right
hand of the throne of God. 145

SERMON X.

INSUFFICIENCY OF WORKS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS TO
PURCHASE SALVATION.

ACTS iv. 11, 12.

This is the stone, which was set at nought by you builders,
which is become the head of the corner.
Neither is there salvation in any other ; for there is none
other name under heaven given among men, whereby
we must be saved. 164

SERMON XI.

OBEDIENCE TO CHRIST NECESSARY TO THE SALVATION OF
CHRISTIANS.

MATT. vii. 21.

PAGE

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter
into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will
of my Father which is in heaven. 182

SERMON XII.

EFFECTS OF DISOBEDIENCE EXEMPLIFIED IN THE
PUNISHMENT OF SAUL.

1 SAM. xv. 22, 23.

And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-
offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the
Lord? Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to
hearken than the fat of rams.
For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness
is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected
the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from
being king. 201

SERMON XIII.

DECEITFULNESS, OF SIN AND EFFICACY OF REPENTANCE,
EXEMPLIFIED IN DAVID'S FALL AND RESTORATION.

2 SAM. xii. 7.

	PAGE
And Nathan said unto David, Thou art the man. . . .	219

SERMON XIV.

ON THE EXISTENCE AND DIVINITY OF THE HOLY GHOST.

ACTS xix. 1—3.

And it came to pass, that Paul having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus: and finding there certain disciples, He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost, since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard, whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.	238
---	-----

SERMON XV.

NECESSITY, EVIDENCES, AND MEANS OF RECEIVING THE
HOLY GHOST.

ACTS xix. 2.

And he said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost, since ye believed?	256
---	-----

SERMON XVI.

THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT EXEMPLIFIED IN THE
CHARACTER OF JOSEPH.

GEN. xli. 38, 39.

PAGE

And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such an
one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is ?
And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath
shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise
as thou art. 275

SERMON XVII.

THE SPIRIT OF GOD MANIFESTED BY HIS FRUITS.

GEN. xli. 38.

And Pharaoh said, Can we find such an one as this is, a
man in whom the Spirit of God is ? 291

SERMON XVIII.

PRIDE A WORLDLY QUALITY: IRRELIGIOUS AND
IRRATIONAL.

1 JOHN ii. 16.

The pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world. 309

SERMON XIX.

UNCLEANNESSE INCONSISTENT WITH A PROFESSION OF
THE GOSPEL.

1 THESS. iv. 3.

	PAGE
This is the will of God, even your sanctification.	326

SERMON XX.

THE DANGER AND SINFULNESS OF COVETOUSNESS
EXEMPLIFIED IN AHAB.

1 KINGS xxi. 4.

And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him : for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread. 345

SERMON XXI.

MALICE INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

EPH. iv. 31, 32.

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice : And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. 365

SERMON XXII.

THE DOCTRINE OF GRACE A MOTIVE WITH ST. PAUL TO
HUMILITY AND DILIGENCE.

1 Cor. xv. 9, 10.

	PAGE
For I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God :	
But by the grace of God I am what I am ; and his grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain ; but I laboured more abundantly than they all ; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. . . .	387

SERMON XXIII.

EFFICACY AND REQUISITES OF PRAYER.

LUKE xviii. 1—6.

And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men
ought always to pray and not to faint :
Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not
God neither regarded man :
And there was a widow in that city ; and she came unto
him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.
And he would not for a while ; but afterward he said
within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man ;
Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her,
lest by her continual coming she weary me.
And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. . . . 403

SERMON XXIV.

SELF-DECEIT OF THOSE WHO ARE HEARERS, BUT NOT
DOERS OF THE WORD.

JAMES i. 22.

	PAGE
Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves	428

SERMON XXV.

NECESSITY AND BENEFITS OF BAPTISM.

MATT. xxviii. 18, 19, 20.

And Jesus came, and spake unto them, saying, All power
is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in
the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the
Holy Ghost :

Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have
commanded you : and, lo, I am with you alway, even
unto the end of the world. Amen. 453

SERMON I.

COMPARATIVE VALUE OF THE WORLD AND OF THE SOUL.

MATT. xvi. 26.

What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

THERE are two sorts of objects, decidedly at variance with each other, which divide between them, but not in equal degrees, the affections and the pursuits of mankind. They may be indifferently described, as “the things above,” and “the things on the earth¹,” as the things “of the Father,” and “the things of the world²,” as “the lusts of the flesh,” and the desires “of the Spirit³,” as the gratifications of the sensual, or natural, part of man; and as the delights of his spiritual part, that is, of his soul.

Of these things it is evident, that they are in

¹ Col. iii. 2.

² 1 John ii. 16.

³ Gal. v. 17.

opposition to each other. They cannot consist together; for they are in nature essentially different. They cannot be sought together; for a progress towards the attainment of one description of them, carries a man as many degrees farther from the other. They cannot exercise divided dominion over the heart, and be served with partial affection and allegiance: for he, who “loves the one, will hate the other;” he who “holds to the one, will despise the other¹.” Upon this irreconcilable hostility between these different objects of pursuit proceed the declarations of Scripture, that “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other²:”—its admonitions, that we “set our affection on things above, not on things on the earth³:”—and its cautions, that we “love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.” For “if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him⁴.”

It is also evident, (I fear that the experience of every man will too readily incline him to assent to the proposition,) that the practice of mankind at large is not regulated by those cautions and admonitions, to which I have just alluded; but that the balance of numbers is greatly on the side

¹ Luke xvi. 13.

² Gal. v. 17.

³ Col. iii. 2.

⁴ 1 John ii. 15.

of those, who “love the things that are in the world;” and in consequence against those, who “set their affection on things above:”—that the multitude of men, who are “carnally minded,” greatly surpasses the sum of those, who are “spiritually minded:”—that, in short, they who care about the world, are much more numerous than they who care about their own souls. The zeal, the activity, the prudence, the diligence, the watchfulness, the perseverance, with which men in general prosecute their temporal interests: and, on the other hand, the listlessness, the indolence, the carelessness, the thoughtlessness, with which, occasionally only and with long and frequent interruptions, they look to the welfare of their souls; are a melancholy indeed, but an irrefragable testimony to the character of those desires, which predominate in the human heart in general: and confirm the declaration of our blessed Saviour, a declaration, as alarming as it is true, that “the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light¹.”

Whether this preference of the things of the world over the welfare of the soul, be wise or foolish: whether it be in any degree worthy of a being, endowed with reason, and freedom of choice; a being, capable of discriminating be-

¹ Luke xvi. 8.

tween good and evil, and of regulating his conduct by a regard to that which is the greater good: is a question, the answer to which must be determined by the answer to the inquiry, proposed by our Saviour in the text: "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" If the things of the world be really the more profitable; if they be really worth the sacrifice of our spiritual welfare and prosperity, which we make in order to their attainment: let us then continue to act the part, which nature dictates and reason must approve; let us pursue with indefatigable vigour, and having attained, let us enjoy with unremitted indulgence, the things that are in the world: let us do nothing but "pull down our barns and build greater;" let us "clothe ourselves in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day;" let us take our fill of the gratifications of sense, and "eat, drink, and be merry." But if, on the contrary, the "gain of the whole world," could we procure it, would be really of no solid profit at all, and no more than dust on the balance when weighed against the worth of the "soul:" and if, although it be no difficult matter to lose the soul for the world, yet all the riches and pleasures of the world, "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them," could not suffice

to redeem the soul, nor be taken in exchange for it, when it is once lost: what man or woman, nay what child amongst you, can hesitate in determining to which the preference should be given; and whether we, if we make any pretensions to the character of rational creatures, should labour to possess ourselves of the things of the world, or to secure the salvation of our souls?

By “the world,” of which our Saviour speaks in the text, you cannot doubt what is generally intended. By it, you know, is intended that world, wherein we live, and which men in their corrupt state are apt to admire, and value, and love, and desire, and seek. It is thus that the beloved disciple St. John uses the word, when he says, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.” And lest his meaning should be mistaken, he presently adds a short catalogue of those things which the world contains, and which he exhorts us to avoid; “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world¹.”—“The lust of the flesh;” namely, such things as please and delight the flesh, and which the flesh therefore lusteth after:—“the lust of the eyes,” or earthly riches, which, as separated from carnal

¹ 1 John ii. 16.

pleasures, only please the eye, so that it lusteth after them, although, as the wise man observes, “it is never satisfied with them¹:”—and lastly, “the pride of life,” or that imaginary grandeur and honour of this life, which fill men with pride and self-conceit: these are the particulars, that compose the world, of which our blessed Lord is speaking in the passage at present under our thoughts: and these are the particulars, which engage the affections, and are deemed worthy of the pursuit, of the great majority of men.

Now suppose a man to be occupied in the pursuit of one or all of these objects, and at length to become master of his desires: (and yet this is to suppose much more than experience renders probable; for which of us has not reason to be assured, that the voluptuary and the sensualist often “travail with pain²;” that he that heapeth up, as well as “he that withholdeth more than is meet, tendeth to poverty³;” and that the ambitious are often “filled with shame rather than with glory⁴?”) still supposing the worldly man to succeed in his endeavours; nay, supposing him, as he is supposed by our Saviour in the text, to “gain the whole world;” of how little real value is the acquisition, even when

¹ Eccles. iv. 8.

² Job xv. 20.

³ Prov. xi. 24.

⁴ Hab. ii. 16.

considered absolutely by itself; how incomplete is the enjoyment, how short is the duration of the enjoyment, which the world, and all the things that are in the world, can give!

There are many other considerations, but these, I apprehend, are the two most conclusive, to show the unprofitableness of worldly acquisitions. They are unsatisfactory, and they are of short continuance.

For who is the man, that has given himself up to the pursuit of worldly riches, pleasures, or honours; and has ever considered himself to have attained the summit of worldly happiness? He that "loveth silver," saith the wise man, and what he affirms of covetousness, is equally true in its application to voluptuousness and ambition, to the lust of pleasure and of power, as well as to a thirst for money: "he that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this also is vanity. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them; and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes¹?" The desires of the human heart are equal in extent to its capacity. But it is capable of enjoying more than all that this world can bestow, even God himself,

¹ Eccles. v. 10, 11.

who made it. It is impossible, therefore, that any thing, or all the things in this world, should fill our souls, and limit our desires. That which is recorded of a celebrated conqueror, that when he had marched with his victorious army to the boundaries of the earth, he sighed for more worlds to conquer, contains a moral, applicable to the case of every worldly man. Though you were to attain every object of your fondest wishes: though every thing, which you now comprise within the compass of your desires or hopes, were to be heaped upon your head; though you were to gain the whole world, with all its riches, pleasures, and honours; the whole world and all that is in it would not suffice to appease the longing and craving of your soul. Having conquered one world, you would be uneasy and restless for the acquisition of another. New wishes would arise in your hearts: new hopes and new desires would urge you on towards fresh objects of enjoyment: still regardless of the remonstrance of the prophet, and incredulous to the truth of that sentence, which you are at the same time confirming by every day's experience, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not ¹?"

¹ Isa. lv. 2.

But supposing the enjoyments of the world to be more satisfactory than they really are, still they are of short continuance : for if they do not, as Solomon says of riches, “ make themselves wings, and fly away¹,” whilst life continues; still with life itself all the enjoyments of it cease. “ We brought nothing into this world,” nothing of worldly splendour or distinction, “ neither can we carry any thing out.” “ Naked came we out of our mother’s womb, and naked shall we return,” wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked; “ and shall take nothing of our labour, which we may carry away in our hand².” A few brief years, and what will be the condition of him, “ who now trusteth in his wealth, and boasts himself in the multitude of his riches?” His inward thought “ is, that his houses shall continue for ever, and his dwelling places to all generations : and he calls his lands after his own name. Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not, he is like the beasts that perish. For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him³.” Surely, it is a consideration, which might be expected, if no other could, to open the eyes of the worldly man upon the vanity and unpro-

Prov. xxiii. 5.

² Eccles. v. 15.

³ Ps. xlix. 6. 11, 12. 17.

fitableness of his pursuits; that “in all points as he came, so shall he go; and then,” as the wise man emphatically puts the question, “What profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind¹?”

The answer to the question is, He hath no profit at all. The world and its enjoyments, imperfect as they are and transitory, are, when considered only by themselves, absolutely of little value. But much is even that little value diminished, in the estimation of him who compares it with the value of the soul; with the excellence of the delights which may be attained by the spiritual part of man.

The excellence of such delights, and therein the value of the soul, appears from two considerations, opposed to those, which show the insignificancy of worldly things. These delights are perfect in their kind, and eternal in their duration.

It is the assertion of an Apostle, that “godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come².” And great undoubtedly is the blessing, which the soul, devoted to God and his service, enjoys in this life, infinitely surpassing all the gratifications of the sensual part of man; from being rendered capable by divine grace of

¹ Eccles. v. 16.

² 1 Tim. iv. 8.

triumphing in some degree over its hereditary corruption and inclination to evil; from being blest with peace in the well-founded hope and belief that its sins are forgiven; from being made "partaker of the divine nature¹;" from continually advancing in the imitation of the purity and perfection of God; from continually improving in the knowledge of the Godhead; and enjoying more and more communion with him. These are the blessings, which godliness confers upon the soul of man: blessings of the same nature as those which alone are capable of satisfying a spiritual substance: and no despicable step towards that "perfect consummation and bliss," which is to be enjoyed by it in "the life that is to come."

For it is to that life that we are chiefly to have regard in appreciating the value of the soul, and the excellence of the delights, to which it may be admitted. It is then, when the vanities of this world shall have passed away, and the hope of the future shall have been swallowed up in fruition, that the soul shall find her happiness complete. Then shall she be divested of "the corruptible body, which now presseth her down," and be "clothed upon with incorruption²:" then shall she be purified from the alloy of mortality:

¹ 2 Pet. i. 4.

² 1 Cor. xv. 53. 2 Cor. v. 4.

then shall she see the Creator “face to face¹,” and be admitted to a full and perfect knowledge of the divine nature: then shall she “be abundantly satisfied with the plenteousness of thy house, O God; and thou shalt make her drink of the river of thy pleasures².”

And as the delights of the soul shall be perfect in their kind, so also shall they be unbounded in their duration. It is indeed one of the most striking characteristics of that felicity, which “God hath prepared for” the souls of “them that love him,” that like the years of himself, who is the author and giver of it, it shall never fail. “For which cause we faint not,” saith the triumphant Apostle, exulting in the contemplation of an eternity of heavenly bliss: “but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal³.”

These considerations of themselves might be sufficient to guide us in our choice, between the

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

² Ps. xxxvi. 8.

³ 2 Cor. iv. 16—18.

things of the world, and the things that belong to our spiritual welfare. For what rational and reflecting mind could hesitate, between the empty gratifications of a few short years, and the solid substantial delights of an everlasting existence? And who must not instantly condemn the judgment, which could prefer the "gain of the whole world," if it were attainable, to the happiness prepared by God for the souls of the righteous?

But there is another point of view, wherein the inquiry of our Lord is to be considered. For "what is a man profited," he asks, "if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" It is not barely a question, between the pleasures of the world and the pleasures of heaven: between sensual gratifications, and the happiness of the soul. But it is a question also between the gain of the world and the "loss" of the soul; a loss, which comprehends not only the privation of everlasting happiness, but the positive suffering of misery eternal. For our Saviour having virtually told us by his question, that a man is *not* profited, though "he gain the whole world, if he lose his own soul," immediately adds, as the reason for his assertion, "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, and then he shall reward every man according to his work." Hence it is manifest that he speaks of that "loss of the soul," with

which men shall be punished at the day of judgment; when they, who have been more anxious to gain the world than to save their souls, shall be condemned, both soul and body, to that “everlasting fire, which is prepared for the devil and his angels;” where, as Christ himself tells us, “the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched;” where their own consciences shall be always tormenting them, and shall never be pacified; where the fire of God’s wrath shall be always burning in their breasts, and shall never be abated; where they shall be continually harassed by the fiends of hell; where they shall be tormented with the remembrance of their former sensual sins infinitely more than they were before delighted with them; where they shall have nothing that is good, nothing that is pleasant, nothing that is convenient, nothing so much as tolerable or easy to them, but every thing that can disturb and vex them to the heart; where, as the Apostle speaks, they shall be “punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power¹;” where they shall have a clear and lively apprehension that Almighty God, their Creator, is angry and displeased with them, and resolved never to be reconciled to them; and by conse-

¹ 2 Thess. i. 9.

quence where they shall be fully assured, that "this shall be their portion," their bitter portion, "for ever."

This is the mournful condition of a "lost soul:" and the soul that is condemned to such a condition as this, is lost indeed; for it is lost and undone to all eternity. And this is what our Saviour means by a man's losing his own soul; when he is not anxious to preserve it from eternal misery and torment. Here therefore recurs with increased emphasis the inquiry of our Lord, "What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" an inquiry, my brethren, to which you will be then best prepared to reply, when you shall have "communed with your own hearts" upon the nature and the particulars and the duration of that loss, which has been just suggested to your thoughts; and to which the souls of the worldly-minded and the ungodly will be irrevocably condemned at the last day.

But if a man hath gained the whole world, although he hath lost his soul, cannot he purchase his freedom, and redeem his soul again from bondage? It cannot be, my brethren; it is impossible. For, as our Saviour argues, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Shall he give the whole world? Supposing that it once was, it now no longer is, his to give.

But if it were, to whom would he give it? Would he give it to God? It is his already. Would he give it to the Devil, by whom he is tormented? It was he, who gave him the world for his soul; and who therefore (he may be assured) will never give him his soul back again for the world. But indeed the world, "the whole world," is not a sufficient ransom for the soul of a man. Could it have been redeemed by any inferior price, the eternal Son of God would not have come down from heaven, and suffered death for its redemption. Such was the purport of David's observation: "There be some that put their trust in their goods, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches. But no man may deliver his brother," nor his own soul, "nor make agreement unto God for him: for it cost more to redeem their souls, so that he must let that alone for ever¹." And, as St. Peter says, "We are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb, without blemish and without spot²." If, then, the soul be once lost, it is lost for ever. As long as it continues in the body, Christ is able and willing to redeem and save it. But when it has once undergone the sentence of condemnation, misery and torment become its un-

¹ Ps. xlix. 7, 8.

² 1 Pet. i. 18.

failing portion, and the hope of redemption is no more. Christ will not redeem it: the world cannot. A man may have sacrificed his soul to gain the world, but it is not in his power to give the world in exchange for his soul.

Such then being the comparative value of worldly and spiritual enjoyments: and such being the loss, which will be sustained by those who give up their souls for the world; a loss which all the things upon earth can neither compensate, nor repair: what are the objects, to which a rational being, who has, and who knows that he has, a soul to be saved, ought to direct his affections and his endeavours? Ought he to desire, and labour to procure, the unsatisfactory, the transitory things of the world; and so renounce the perfect, the never-fading joys of heaven? Ought he to set his affection upon, and exert himself to gain, the things on the earth, and so rest contented with the thought of being tormented for ever, without the possibility of redemption, in the flames of hell? Is there any principle even of selfish policy and prudence in such conduct as this? Is it not to counteract the dictates of self-love, the most active stimulant in the heart of man? Is it not to violate the law of self-preservation, the first and most constant law of nature? Is it not to raise the hand of destruction against ourselves; to become our own

murderers; to devote ourselves, both body and soul, to death, everlasting death? "I speak as to wise men," my brethren; "judge ye what I say."

But if ye judge what I say to be the truth, (and no one, who believes the word of God, will venture, I think, to dispute it,) be not satisfied with acquiescing in the truth of it, as a barren unprofitable speculation; but let me pray and beseech you all to apply it to your practice; and as you acknowledge the incalculable value of your souls, so to make the welfare and salvation of them the prime object of your concern. Let the wisdom and diligence of "the children of this world" be your example in the pursuit of heaven. Are not they careful to prevent any loss in their temporal affairs? Be ye equally careful for your souls: take heed that they be not lost for ever.—Do not they make it the object of their daily study, how they may promote their worldly interests? Let your souls be as constantly the object of your solicitude: suffer not a day to pass without considering, how you may most effectually "work out your salvation," and "make your calling and election sure."—Do not they studiously avoid whatever may impair their fortunes, diminish their profit, or prevent its augmentation? Be ye equally solicitous for the security of your souls: forsake or avoid whatever

will injure, whatever will destroy them: flee from wickedness, for “the soul that sinneth, it shall die.”—Do not they often examine and make up their accounts, to see what progress they are making in the world? Be ye equally watchful for the improvement of your souls in holiness: “examine yourselves” often, “whether ye be in the faith;” and see whether you “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”—Do not they eagerly grasp at every opportunity for increasing their possessions, and bettering their condition in the world? Let the prosperity of your souls be promoted with equal diligence: let not an opportunity escape of improving your spiritual state, and fitting yourselves for heaven, by diligent attendance on the word of God; by constant and devout prayer for his mercy and grace; by faithful communion in that blessed sacrament, whereby you may be made partakers of Christ’s body and blood, and therein of the merits of his death, by whom alone your souls can be saved. Do these things, my brethren, with a stedfast and active faith in his meritorious sacrifice, and “your souls shall live.”—But will ye rather slight or reject the gracious admonition of your Redeemer? Will ye still set your affections upon the things on earth, not on things in heaven? Will ye still endeavour to gain the world, and neglect the

welfare, the everlasting welfare of your souls? Now indeed ye may be “wise in your own eyes, and prudent in your own sight:” now ye may “call evil good, and good evil:” ye may “put darkness for light, and light for darkness;” ye may “put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter:” now ye may “say to your souls, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry:” but hereafter ye will be wofully convinced of the grievousness of your error, when it shall be too late to correct it: and when ye shall learn by melancholy experience, that “it profiteth a man nothing, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; and that there is nothing, which a man can give, in exchange for his soul.”

S E R M O N II.

THE GOSPEL THE ONLY FOUNDATION OF RELIGIOUS AND MORAL DUTY.

1 Cor. iii. 11.

For other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which
is Jesus Christ.

IN every building it is above all things necessary, that attention be paid to the foundation on which it rests. If a house be “built upon the sand,” it will fall before the violence of the contending elements; if it be built and “founded upon a rock,” though “the rain descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow and beat upon that house, it will fall not;” but will survive their fury, an honour to the builder, and a defence and protection to him who takes shelter under its cover. The holy Scriptures compare man as a moral agent to a master-builder: and our blessed Lord, who employs the similitude, especially directs our thoughts to the analogy in this particular, by teaching us that in the moral,

as well as in the material edifice, as is the foundation so will be the building. "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand." By which we learn, that it is on the truths, which we are taught by Jesus Christ, and on them alone, as on a safe and sure foundation, that a secure edifice can be erected. To build on him, is to "build upon a rock;" not to build on him, is to "build upon the sand:" to build on him is to attain that object, without which all building were ineffectual—safety and permanency; to build otherwise than on him, is to expose the edifice to be involved in hasty and inevitable ruin. It is the uniform language of the Holy Spirit in his revealed word, that whatever benefits are derived to men through their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are derived to them exclusively through him. He is the foundation, and there is none else: for "other foundation can no man lay." Would we know what is our duty? Would we know the principle, on which we are to practise it? Would we have grace to perform it? Would we wish that our performances should be accepted by Almighty God, and that atonement should be made for the

manifold “ sins, negligences, and ignorances,” for which after all we shall have to account? For each and for all of these things, we must have recourse to Christ, and to Christ alone : Christ, and Christ alone, can teach us our duty ; can place the performance of it on a right principle ; can enable us to do it ; can recommend our services to Almighty God ; and atone for our manifold imperfections. By a detailed examination of these particulars, I propose with the divine blessing to illustrate and confirm the Apostle’s position in the text, that “ other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

And first, Jesus Christ is the foundation on which we are to build, inasmuch as it is from him alone, that we procure a knowledge of our duty. Of men in their natural state, unenlightened by the Day-spring from on high, it is emphatically said by the Apostle, that they “ knèw not God¹ :” and proud as man may be of the discoveries of reason, and of the extent to which philosophy has been advanced, yet as to the knowledge of religion and of sound morality, the times of natural reason have been the times of ignorance. Look to the opinions and practices of man, not blessed with the light of revelation :

¹ 1 Cor. i. 21.

look to him, not only in a savage state, but in a state of superior civilization and refinement: look, not only to the conduct and tenets of individuals, acting under the influence of their own partial views of things and their own favourite inclinations, but to the deliberate decisions of the most grave moralists and lawgivers, to the public and authorized actions of large societies and nations: and you will perceive how imperfect is the knowledge of his duty possessed by the natural man. The history of every nation of antiquity; the narratives of every discovery, which has been made in the modern ages of the world; conspire to prove the same truth: but why need we refer to distant times or places? since in the present refined age of boasted science and illumination, we have witnessed a neighbouring people renouncing the worship of the only true God, and raising altars to the pretended goddess of reason: and have in our own country heard the highest commendations bestowed on a philosopher, who was engaged in the nefarious attempt to confound all right and wrong, by justifying suicide and extenuating adultery.

Not such are the instructions as to the duty of man, which are vouchsafed us by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Beyond the power of unaided human reason to discover, of reason vitiated by sin, and deprived of the faculty originally be-

stowed upon it of discerning clearly the will of God, they are agreeable to reason when revealed to it. There may be indeed, and we know there are, pretenders to superior wisdom, who think they can perceive in the Christian code of duty precepts, not consistent with the attributes of the divine Lawgiver, and not calculated to promote the welfare of man. Would to God that the experiment could be duly made! Would that men could be persuaded to “love God, because he first loved them¹,” to believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and to “love one another, as he gave them commandment²!” What a glorious superstructure might we not expect to see arise from such and so solid a foundation! Like “that great city, the holy Jerusalem,” which the beloved disciple saw “descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God³,” the visions of heavenly felicity would then be realized upon earth. There should “in no wise enter into ~~it~~ any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie⁴,” but “mercy and truth should be met together, righteousness and peace should kiss each other⁵.” He, who formed the foundation, should himself also be “the light thereof⁶,” and the whole

¹ 1 John iv. 19. ² 1 John iii. 23. ³ Rev. xxi. 10, 11.

⁴ Rev. xxi. 27. ⁵ Ps. lxxxv. 10. ⁶ Rev. xxi. 23.

earth should be filled with the glory of God, as the waters cover the sea. When the Gospel was first preached to mankind, the conscientious observance of its precepts, practised by those who then professed it, drew from the admiring heathen that glorious testimony to "the beauty of holiness," Behold, how these Christians live! There can be no other cause assigned, why the same glorious testimony is not repeated as widely as the religion is professed, but that the lives of its professors do not correspond with its commandments! that the building is not worthy of the foundation!

Secondly: "other foundation can no man lay than Jesus Christ," because by him alone are we instructed in the right principle, on which our duty is to be performed. What are the principles, which the world holds forth, whereby to actuate our conduct? Honour, custom, expediency: erroneous, and inconstant as human opinions, from which they derive their sanction. He, who is influenced by such principles as these, will one moment love and desire, what the next he will hate and abhor: will to-day pursue with the keenest avidity, what to-morrow he will as eagerly avoid. Besides, these principles being of a worldly character, they must partake of that depravity, which belongs to every

thing that is of the world. "The whole world lieth in wickedness ¹:" a principle, which originates in what is essentially corrupt, cannot be holy.

The principle, which Christ inculcates upon his disciples, as the ground-work of their conduct, is the love of God. "God manifested his love towards us ²," as by other manifold instances of his good will, so more especially by "sending his Son" to die for our salvation. And because God so loved us, therefore we are exhorted to "love Him," and therefore also to "love one another ³." A sense of affectionate gratitude to God is the principle, on which the whole duty of a Christian is established. This is the foundation of his religion : this is no less the foundation of his morality. Can any principle be so firm? can any be so pure? Unlike the fluctuating principles of the worldly man, it is always stedfast, and incapable of misleading by a recommendation of contradictory or inconsistent practices. As with God there is "no variableness neither shadow of turning," the same things must always be pleasing or displeasing in his sight. That which was agreeable to him, that which was offensive to him, yesterday, must be, will be the same to-day, to-morrow,

¹ 1 John v. 19. ² 1 John iv. 9. ³ 1 John iv. 19, 11.

and for ever. It is only necessary then to ascertain, what is pleasing or what is displeasing to God; and whilst we seek the former and avoid the latter, we cannot err. Honour may dazzle; custom may mislead; expediency may perplex us; and neither honour, nor custom, nor expediency will at all times support us in the discharge of our duty: but his "feet are set upon a rock," whose "goings are ordered" by desire of doing the will of a perfect and unchangeable, of an infinitely wise and holy Being. Again: unlike the principles of the world in another important respect, what motive of human conduct can be so pure, as a grateful affection towards God? "God is love¹," saith the beloved disciple; distinguishing in an especial manner that attribute of the divine nature, which was most signally manifested in the redemption of a lost world. And human nature is never more exalted and improved, than when it partakes most largely of the quality, which is (as it were) identified with God; when with the most devout affection "we love him, because he first loved us²."

Thirdly: Jesus Christ is the only foundation, on which we can build, because, as we are indebted to him for the knowledge both of our

¹ 1 John iv. 8.

² *Ib.* 19.

duty, and of the principle on which it is to be done, so also we derive from him the power of doing it. Together with a loss of our original righteousness, a want of the power to recover the righteousness we had lost, entered into our nature by the disobedience of Adam. Weak as well as sinful, in consequence of our descent from a fallen progenitor, and receiving infirmity, as well as corruption, in part of our inheritance, “we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves¹.” We are not able to turn unto God of our own natural ability: we are not able of ourselves to do good works pleasant and acceptable unto God²: but we must have the grace of God to prevent, or go before, us, that we may have a good will to do such works; and to work with us when we have that good will. For the enjoyment of this preventing and assisting grace, we are indebted to Jesus Christ. It is He who sendeth us the Holy Spirit, by whom we are regenerated, and renewed, and sanctified, and strengthened, and enlightened, and comforted: by whom we are enabled to “repent and believe the Gospel;” and to “add unto our faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly

¹ Collect for 2d Sunday in Lent.

² 10th Article.

kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity." In short, whatever powers are conferred upon us by the communion of the Holy Spirit, either to the avoiding of evil or the performance of good, they are conferred of the "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ;" who, when he had completed what was necessary to be completed by him in his own person here on earth, went up into heaven, there to be our advocate with the Father, and sent down his Holy Spirit to be another advocate and comforter, and to abide with us for ever. "Without me," said he, "ye can do nothing."

And this leads me to remark, in the fourth place, that Jesus Christ is the only foundation on which we can build, inasmuch as it is He who renders our services acceptable to Almighty God. Notwithstanding the weakness of our nature be strengthened and supported by the divine grace, no service, that we can offer, is of itself worthy of being received by infinite perfection. The sacrifice which ought to be offered to him, if it would claim acceptance with him, is a sacrifice without blemish. But what is the human offering, that can aspire to this distinction? What is the offering, that we can make, which is not debased by much unworthy mixture, whether of thought, word, or deed? Whose heart, if diligently communed with, will venture to reply, that no mixture of unworthiness is

blended with the motives, which prompt him to the service of God; or with the manner, in which that service is performed? Whose heart will not tell him, that there is much in it, which renders it unfit to appear before an infinitely holy God? To render the offering of such a heart an acceptable sacrifice, there is needed the mediation of one, who knows not and never knew sin. In Christ Jesus is that mediation found. He made a propitiation for us, by dying for us upon earth: he maketh intercession for us in heaven, where he ever sitteth for that purpose on the right hand of God. He formerly submitted to be our victim, the sacrifice for our sins, when he shed his most precious blood upon the altar, the altar of his cross, to redeem us from the penalty, which our disobedience deserved: he now ever liveth above as our high-priest; receives our worship and other offerings to Almighty God; clothes them, imperfect as they are, with his own perfect righteousness; pleads for them, undeserving as they are, his own all-sufficient merits: and so makes them acceptable unto his Father. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins¹." He is the foundation on which we must build our hopes, that our sins will be forgiven, our

¹ 1 John ii. 1, 2.

services accepted, and ourselves admitted into favour by God.

Christ Jesus then being the foundation, the only foundation, on which we are to build; let us inquire in conclusion whether we build upon him in the several particulars, that have been now passing under our view.

And first; is our practice regulated by that perfect law of religious and moral duty, which Christ hath set before us in the Gospel? Do we submit ourselves—our souls, and bodies—our thoughts, words, and deeds—to the Christian commandments? Do we yield to their authority an unreserved, an unqualified, an universal obedience? Are they the maxims of the world, the mere discoveries and imaginations of man in his natural condition, to which we look for our guidance in the passage through this mortal state? or are they the precepts of Him, who came down from heaven, to teach us to perform, and to set us himself in his human character the example of performing, the will of our heavenly Father? Let us not deceive ourselves by supposing, that a regard to those rules, which the world lays down for the regulation of human conduct, will be sufficient to guide us in the right path of duty. Often those rules are inconsistent with the precepts of the Gospel:—often they are in decided and avowed opposition to the Gospel:—at the

best they are incomplete and defective ; insisting upon some points of little or no real importance ; omitting others, which are essential and indispensable to our well-being. The rules being faulty, the conduct which is regulated by these rules must also be erroneous and imperfect. What is the foundation, which in this particular we endeavour to lay? The precepts of the world, or of the Gospel? of Satan, or of Christ? This is a leading consideration, if we would build our house upon a rock.

2dly. What is the principle, which we choose, as our actuating motive? Is it of heaven or of earth? Is it love for our heavenly Father, exerting itself in an earnest desire to please him, and springing from a grateful sense of his manifold mercies vouchsafed unto us, especially in the redemption of the world by his Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ? or is it a desire to please men rather than God; an anxiety to stand fair in the estimation of others, an obsequious acquiescence in prevailing opinions and practices, leading us to "follow the multitude" whithersoever they go before; a disposition to bring every thing down to the level of certain rules of fancied expediency? Is it our principle of conduct, to go resolutely and steadily forward in the prescribed line of our duty, because that Being, whom infinitely above all others we are bound to love and to serve, hath

commanded it? or is it our principle to qualify our obedience, to temporise in our conduct, out of love and respect to that world, "the friendship of which is enmity with God?" My brethren, "love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him¹." The two principles, you see, are opposed to, and incompatible with, each other. "You cannot serve," you cannot love, "God and mammon." Whether of the two do you prefer? Here again, will you build upon the rock, or upon the sand?

3dly. In the execution of our duty, on what foundation do we build our hopes, that we shall be able to perform it? Sinking under hereditary weakness, and encompassed with infirmity on every side, do we rely upon our own imaginary strength to support us in the hour of trial, or do we humbly depend upon the divine grace, upon strength and succour from above? Weak as well as wicked, the natural man must sink before the assaults of his spiritual enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil: whilst he, who is "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might," is able "to withstand the wiles of the devil" and all the powers of darkness, and "having done all to stand²." "God resisteth the proud; but giveth

¹ 1 John ii. 11.

² Eph. vi. 10, 11.

grace to the humble." To him, who in a lowly consciousness of his own feebleness and danger beseeches supernatural assistance, Christ replies in his holy word, as he did heretofore more openly to the Apostle, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness¹." Is it our own weakness, or the all-sufficient grace, the perfect strength of Christ, to which we look for our defence? Do we sincerely feel, that the Holy Spirit of God must "prevent us in all our doings and further us with his continual help," if we would run the way of his commandments? Do we gratefully acknowledge, that the foundation of our hopes is in the divine grace, and that "except the Lord build the house, their labour is but lost that build it?"

Lastly; after all that by the grace of God we have been enabled to do, on what foundation do we rest our hopes, that our services will be accepted by God? Is it upon any value, which those services possess of themselves? Is it upon any goodness of their own, whereby they can be recommended to the Almighty? Is it upon any merit, which belongs to them, whereby they can claim to themselves the divine approbation? or, renouncing all claim to righteousness, all pretension to merit on our own parts, do we trust our

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 9.

cause to the perfect righteousness, to the unbounded merits, of Christ? Who will presume to say that he is without sin? "If he saith that he hath no sin, he deceiveth himself, and the truth is not in him¹." Who will presume to say, that he hath kept all the commandments of God? It is what no man ever did, nor ever will do. Yet could we be free from sin, could we "do all those things that are commanded" us, even then should we have reason to say, "we are unprofitable servants: we have done that which it was our duty to do²." Meanwhile imperfect as are the services of the best of men, notwithstanding the constant co-operation of the divine grace, they continually need the merits of the Redeemer to atone for their imperfections, and to recommend them to his heavenly Father. It is our duty indeed to labour unceasingly after a personal righteousness in obedience to the commandments of Christ: but to satisfy the law of God we require a greater, a more perfect, a complete and unexceptionable righteousness, even the righteousness of Christ himself. Is this, or is it not, the foundation on which we build?

My brethren, "in Christ Jesus all the promises of God are yea and amen³." He "of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and

¹ 1 John i. 8.

² Luke xvii. 10.

³ 2 Cor. i. 20.

sanctification, and redemption¹." By him we may attain salvation; "neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved²." Neither is there any other method of salvation, than that which he hath set forth unto us: he saveth his people from their sins; and he saveth them by the means, which he hath himself appointed. Without obeying his Gospel; without loving his heavenly Father; without holding communion with his Spirit; without trusting in his righteousness; we may call him our Saviour, but we are not warranted in expecting him to be so. If we labour after this obedience, and love, and fellowship, and confidence, we may safely be persuaded that to us the words of this salvation are effectually sent; and we may have comfort in applying to ourselves those words of St. Paul to his Ephesian converts; "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord³."

¹ 1 Cor. i. 30.

² Acts iv. 12.

³ Eph. ii. 19—21.

May it please our heavenly Father to grant, that we may all be so “builded together in Christ, for an habitation of God through the Spirit,” that we fail not finally of being removed to the heavenly Jerusalem; for the sake of the same Jesus Christ our Saviour!

SERMON III.

ETERNAL LIFE, THE GIFT OF GOD IN HIS SON.

1 JOHN v. 11, 12.

And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

He that hath the Son, hath life ; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life.

“GLORY to God in the highest, and on earth peace,” was the song of the heavenly host, when they announced the nativity of the Saviour, “God manifest in the flesh.” The glory of God, as declared in an especial manner by the manifestation of his mercy to the fallen race of man ; the peace and well-being of man, as effected by the manifestation of the divine mercy ; were the great and important objects, which the Saviour came to attest. He came to “bear witness to the truth¹,” as he himself declared in his examination before the Roman governor : and a summary of

¹ John xviii. 37.

the witness that he bore, is contained in the text, which compendiously describes the record that God gave of his Son. “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”

There are four points, to which our attention may properly be directed, in the consideration of the words before us : 1st, the blessing, of which the Apostle speaks, namely, “eternal life;” 2dly, the source from which it proceeds, in that it is said to be “given to us by God;” 3dly, the manner in which it is conveyed, “this life is in his Son;” 4thly, the persons to whom it is given, “he that hath the Son hath life;” and by consequence, the persons to whom it is not given, namely they, “that have not the Son of God.” May it please Almighty God to prosper our meditations; and to convert them and all our doings to his glory, and to our improvement in the knowledge and love of his only-begotten Son!

I. First then; as to the blessing, of which the Apostle speaks, namely “eternal life,” it is to be understood as comprising all other blessings within it. “The wages of sin,” denounced in the first place upon Adam, and since perpetuated to his posterity, “is death;” a punishment, expressed in one simple term, but of a complex

nature, and compounded of a variety of particulars. To die, in this signification of the word, is not to be in that state, wherein the soul is separated from the body: it is to be separated from the favour of God, and to be exposed to his severest anger and displeasure: it is to be estranged from the family of God, and to be reckoned among the children of the devil: it is to be banished “from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power,” and from “the fulness of joy at his right hand;” and to be “punished with everlasting destruction” in that place of torment, “where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth; where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” Corresponding with this signification of the death denounced upon the sinner, is that of the life, concerning which the beloved disciple is speaking in the text. It is to be exempted from the wrath of God, and to be restored to his favour: it is from being children of wrath to be made children of grace; to be rescued from slavery under the evil spirit; and to be admitted into “the glorious liberty of the children of God:” it is to be redeemed from the torments of hell, and to be made partakers of the happiness of heaven; happiness, which shall never fail nor fade, but shall continue unimpaired throughout the ages of eternity. It were unnecessary to enter at

present upon a minute detail of particulars on this division of the subject. Let it suffice to observe upon it in general terms, that it is a blessing promised by a Being of infinite perfection; and that it is, in every respect, worthy of the Giver.

II. I proceed therefore to the second point to be attended to, namely the source from which it proceeds; "God hath given to us eternal life," saith the Apostle, meaning unquestionably to affirm that eternal life is a free gift of the unconstrained grace and mercy of God. Herein consists an essential difference between the recompense denounced upon the wicked, and that which God had prepared for them that love him. Punishment is due to the wicked: it is the necessary effect of a certain cause: it is the fruit, which he ought to reap from the seed which he sows: it is, if I may so express myself, the very pay for which he works. The servant of the devil, the sinner, receives from his master a just remuneration for the service, which he does him. "The wages of sin is death¹," as St. Paul says, meaning evidently to point out the just relation between the thing done, and the recompense received for doing it: not such is that "eternal life," which he contrasts with the death of the

¹ Rom. vi. 23.

sinner : “ but the gift of God,” he adds, “ is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Here is no debt, no obligation, no wages ; nothing which man can claim ; nothing more than what it pleases God of his infinite mercy freely to bestow : “ eternal life is the gift of God :” it is the result of the uncontrolled love of God towards corrupt and sinful man, man corrupt by nature, and guilty of manifold actual sins. And the freedom of this gift, the greatness and unrestrainedness of this loving-kindness, are accordingly made the ground in Scripture, on which we are to be active and indefatigable in our service of God. We are “ to love him, because he first loved us¹.” He is indeed graciously pleased (so infinite is his mercy) to promise us “ eternal life,” as a recompense and a reward for our diligence in serving him · and even to declare, that that recompense shall be conferred upon us in different degrees, and shall be greater or less in proportion to the diligence, with which we serve him. But whilst this most gracious promise should have the effect, as it was doubtless intended to have, of stimulating our exertions, and making us more ardent in our love, and more active in our service, of God ; we should beware of so considering it, as if it was intended to make us regard

¹ 1 John iv. 19.

any thing in ourselves, as the meritorious cause of that recompense. Do all we can, we are “unprofitable servants.” We cannot do our duty: how can we claim a recompense? We cannot do for ourselves what might exempt us from punishment: how can we deserve a reward? We cannot save ourselves from death: how can we of our own merits be entitled to eternal life?—Truly if we have regard to our own deserts, we shall find nothing but “trouble and desolation.” “Destruction cometh,” as the Prophet saith; “and we shall seek peace, and there shall be none¹.” As to any reasonable consolation, which they can afford, we may “wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness².” Glory to God therefore in the highest! It is through his “tender mercy” alone, that “the Day-spring from on high hath visited us; to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death; and to guide our feet into the way of peace¹”

III. Thirdly, we have to look to the manner, in which this precious “gift of God” is conveyed to sinful and lost man: “this life is in his Son.” God giveth to us eternal life freely, as it relates to ourselves: but still he requires the penalty of sin to be paid—the life, which he giveth, to be

¹ Ezek. vii. 25.

² Isaiah lix. 9.

purchased. In one sense it is a free gift; in another it is a purchase. The purchaser is the Son of God, who made an everlasting covenant with his Father for the salvation of his redeemed; the price, which he paid, was his own blood, shed for the atonement of sin in the nature of the sinner. "The wages of sin is death;" and justice required that it should be paid. It hath been paid (blessed be God through Christ Jesus! it hath been paid) by the only-begotten of the Father, who "was made flesh, and dwelt among us," and died for the salvation of mankind—a death, voluntarily undertaken, by a pure and perfect Being, who had "power to lay down his life, and power to take it again;" who neither did, nor could do, sin; who in his human nature was as obedient, as in his divine nature he was powerful; as man, an example of perfect righteousness; as God, the Lord of life! Here was merit, to purchase for the sons of Adam that, which of themselves they could not have hoped to attain; here was merit, to redeem the transgressions, that were under the first covenant, the covenant of works; here was merit, to purchase the promise of eternal inheritance under the second covenant, the covenant of grace. O the unsearchable wisdom and goodness of God, in contriving to propitiate his offended justice; to punish sin, and yet to forgive and spare the

sinner; to bestow everlasting happiness as the gift of his free grace, and yet to receive for it a price, equal in value with the blessing which it was intended to purchase! equal, did I say? nay, great as that blessing is, and incapable of being duly appreciated, the price, that is paid for the purchase, infinitely surpasses it. We can hardly contemplate with a steady mind the brightness of that “glory, which shall be revealed” in the faithful servants of Christ; of that “gift of eternal life,” which is given to his redeemed. But human reason sinks under the contemplation of the price, that has been paid for it—the precious blood of the incarnate Son of God—of “God, manifest in the flesh,” and suffering death in the likeness of man.

IV. And who, let it in the fourth place be considered, who are the persons, to whom this blessing of eternal life is given; for whom is reserved the inheritance purchased by the Son of God? They are those, who heartily and unreservedly embrace the glad tidings of salvation, which he hath announced; who receive him, as their Saviour; and obey him, as their Lord. “He that hath the Son, hath life,” saith St. John in the text; “and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life;” plainly intending to assert, not only that there is salvation in Christ Jesus for them who throw themselves upon his

abundant merits to be saved; but also that there is “not salvation in any other; for that there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby they must be saved:” and that blessed Saviour himself claims, and claims exclusively, the prerogative of conferring both redemption from punishment, and the happiness of heaven; where he asserts, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him¹.”

Would we then enjoy everlasting life, we must seek it where it is to be found: we must seek it through the blood of Christ, in a lively and active faith in his name. We must believe in Christ, as “the author and finisher of our faith”—as perfect God, and perfect man—as suffering for our salvation, and making atonement and satisfaction for our sins. We must renounce all pretensions to the divine favour upon account of any righteousness of our own, and must plead in our justification the righteousness of Christ: we must disclaim all fancied merits of our own, and throw ourselves upon the merits of Christ.—Further: as we look to him for salvation, we must also be obedient to his laws; as we trust in him for our Saviour, we must also submit

¹ John iii. 36.

to him as our Lord; as we believe in him, we must keep his commandments.—Moreover; we must habitually live in communion with him—in external and internal communion. We must observe those outward means of grace, which he hath provided for our growth in holiness; we must be careful in the reading and hearing of his word; we must be diligent in frequenting his house of prayer; we must be attentive to his ministers; we must sanctify his day of rest; we must be partakers of his sacraments. And these things we must observe, not only because they are ordained by Christ; but specially for the sake of that spiritual grace, which they are ordained for the purpose of conveying. Regenerated in the waters of baptism by that Holy Spirit, who supplies the place of Christ in the hearts of his followers, we are continually to seek his sanctifying graces in the communion of Christ's body and blood, and in all other appointed means. By Him we must hold spiritual intercourse with Christ. By Him we must be "renewed day by day." By Him we must be "strengthened with might in the inner man." By Him our "hearts must be opened," and "the eyes of our understanding must be enlightened." By Him we must be comforted with divine consolation. By Him we must be "renewed in the spirit of our minds:" we must "put off the old man," our

natural corruption; and must "put on the new man, which is created in righteousness and true holiness after the image of Him that made us."

These are among the principal ways, (I speak summarily as the present time will allow,) wherein we may be said to "*have* the Son of God:" namely, by believing in him; by obeying him; by practising the outward means of grace, which he hath ordained; by holding internal communion with him by his Spirit. He who thus "hath the Son," hath a foretaste and a promise of eternal life; but he that in these ways "hath not the Son of God, hath not life."

Shall we be told that life, eternal life, may be procured by other ways than these; that these are not necessary to its attainment? "To the law then, and to the testimony;" to "the record, which God hath given us by his Son." By them let us be instructed, which of the ways, that have been specified, is not necessary to salvation.

1. Is it not necessary, that we believe in Christ? I speak not of those to whom Christ hath never been preached; nor of those, (if any such there be,) who are unavoidably prevented from believing. But of us, of all men to whom he is preached, and who lie under no insuperable obstacle, is it not necessary that he be believed? If not, wherefore is he preached at all? Where-

fore did God send his Son into the world, as an object of faith to all mankind, and with such a stupendous apparatus of prophecies and miracles to bear witness to his mission; if men might receive or reject him, might believe or disown him as they pleased? Surely when Almighty God condescends to speak to man, it is man's duty and interest to hear and attend; not to "hide himself from the voice of the Lord God," as did his sinful progenitor among the trees of the garden of Eden; but to listen with a willing ear, and an humble and obedient heart. It is a prevailing error of the present time to raise morality to a high degree of eminence; God forbid I should pretend to speak lightly of morality; of Christian morality, the fruit of Christian faith! But of morality, as distinguished from, and independent of, faith in Christ, the Gospel knows nothing, as a condition or qualification for eternal life. The error, prevalent as it at present is, is not however of modern birth: it hath at all times had its advocates; especially at the period of the Reformation, when our evangelical Reformers condemned it with marked severity. "They are to be had accursed" (affirms our 18th Article) "that presume to say, that every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that law, and the light of nature.

For holy Scripture doth set out unto us only the name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved." If we reject that name, whither shall we turn? on what foundation shall we rest our hopes? what powerful plea have we prepared to present at the judgment seat of God? what offering to conciliate his affection? what atonement, to propitiate his anger? Shall we present ourselves boldly at his throne with a pretence, that we have perfectly conformed to his will, whether revealed by his holy word, or more dimly disclosed by the light of natural reason? Alas for that miserable weakness and corruption of our nature, which renders us incapable of duly serving a holy God! Shall we plead in our justification, that although by nature incapable of perfection, we have served him to the full extent of our power? Who then will dare to say, that he hath not been a wilful sinner; that he hath not submitted to temptation, when he might have resisted it; that he hath not done evil, when he might have avoided it?— Shall we rest our claim to pardon for former sin, on subsequent repentance and amendment? a repentance and an amendment, themselves abounding in manifold imperfections; themselves requiring a like indulgence as the sins, for which they are offered as an atonement! Look whithersoever you will for justification; try the subject in all its parts, survey it in all its bearings; no hope

remains for him, who obstinately refuses the hope of the Gospel: wherever the Gospel is preached, "he that believeth not, shall be damned."

2. Again: shall we be told, that it is enough for us to believe in Christ, and that it is not necessary to obey him?—Where then is that licence for sin, which some men would fain discover in the true evangelical doctrine of salvation by the grace of God through faith in the blood of the Redeemer? Where is that "cloke of maliciousness," which they would fain discover in the Gospel doctrine of "liberty to the servants of God?" Where is that dispensation, which they would fain perceive in the gracious promises of Christ, from the strictest morality, the most diligent perseverance in "good works?" "We are saved not by works, but by grace:" what then? shall we neglect good works? "shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid!" Morality, distinguished from, and independent of, Christian faith, is nothing: but Christian morality is of the very essence, it is the true fruit, the sure testimony, the faithful companion, the glory and perfection, yea the very life and soul, of true Christian faith. Let us beware, that we do not confound things so different as worldly and Christian morality; as the works of the natural man, and those of the disciple of Christ! Let us beware how we suppose, that because a man can-

not be saved by morality of one sort, therefore he can be saved without morality of the other sort; that because one who rejects the Gospel, will not be saved for being a moral man, therefore there is a hope of salvation for an immoral professor of the Gospel! Christian morality assumes to itself no merit: it sets up no arrogant claim to God's favour: it pretends not to "open the gates of heaven;" it is only the handmaid in conducting the Christian believer in his road towards them. Without it no man shall enter in; but they who disesteem and reject it, are well apprised by God's word of the evil which they shall incur; when Christ shall command "the workers of iniquity," "the slothful and the unprofitable servant, to depart from him¹;" and when "vengeance shall be taken in flaming fire on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ²."

3. Further; are there those who would persuade us, that we may be partakers of the grace of God without practising the appointed means of grace? Why, then, were they appointed, and that with a promise of especial blessings annexed to some of them, if we are at our own will to neglect or despise the means; and still may be persuaded that we are in possession of the grace,

¹ Matt. vii. 23; xxv. 26. 30. 41.

² 2 Thess. i. 8.

which they were appointed to convey? Thus in particular, with regard to the sacraments; why did Christ appoint baptism to be the “laver of regeneration¹,” the road to “salvation²,” and “the entrance into the kingdom of heaven³,” if we can be regenerated, and saved, and admitted into heaven without it? and why did he appoint the holy communion of his body and blood, as the way whereby we are to “dwell in him, and he in us”—whereby we are to “have life in us, and to be raised up at the last day⁴,” if we can hold communion with him, and derive life from him, and be raised up by him, without it? It is a rule in the economy of Providence, that he always worketh by means. In the works of creation we see it every where about us: in the work of redemption we read the same truth unequivocally revealed to us by his written word. He covenanteth to bestow the blessings, which Christ hath purchased, on those who practise the appointed means: “He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved;”—“he that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life;”—“faith cometh by hearing;”—“whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Thus do the sacraments, the ministry

¹ Tit. iii. 5.

² Mark xvi. 16.

³ John iii. 5.

⁴ John vi. 53—56.

of the word, and prayer, appear to be covenanted means, whereby God dispenses his benefits to man. We presume not to limit his mercies : God forbid ! Yet thus much may be said with safety, (nor is there any thing uncharitable in saying it,) not only that they, who despise or neglect the means, do thereby seem to betray a want of earnestness for the gift that is to be conferred, and a want of reverence for the almighty and all-wise Giver ; but also, that the Giver himself appears to have limited the blessings to those, who will conscientiously practise the means.

4. But then, lastly, there is danger, lest we be contented with the means ; instead of practising them with diligence for the sake of those spiritual blessings, that spiritual communion, which they were appointed, and are continually designed, to convey, through the operation of the Spirit of grace. Will it be said, that this spiritual intercourse with Christ, that this internal operation of the Spirit, is not necessary to salvation ? Wherefore then did Christ promise to “ send his Holy Spirit ¹,” to hold fellowship with his faithful followers, to “ abide with ²” and “ dwell in them as his temples ³,” and to “ bear witness with their spirits, that they are the children of

¹ John xv. 26.

² John xiv. 16.

³ 1 Cor. iii. 16.

God¹?" Surely it was not to no purpose that he told his disciples, and in them all future Christians, that he would "be with them always unto the end of the world²:" and that he promised "the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, to abide in them for ever!" As long as the world shall last, and "the prince of the power of the air," the spirit of falsehood, "shall work in the children of disobedience," so long shall the Spirit of truth and holiness dwell in "the children of light." I speak not of those visionary raptures, which are sometimes described by enthusiasts as the in-dwelling of the Spirit. But I speak of that "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost," which he himself describes by the mouth of his inspired messengers, as "the kingdom of God that is within us³;"—of that "goodness, and holiness, and truth⁴;"—of that "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, which are the fruit of the Spirit⁵," and the end of which is everlasting life. I speak of that "peace of God, which passeth all understanding, and which keepeth the heart and mind through Christ Jesus⁶." I speak of that "joy and peace

¹ Rom. viii. 16.

² Matt. xxviii. 20.

³ Rom. xiv. 17.

⁴ Eph. v. 9.

⁵ Gal. v. 23.

⁶ Phil. iv. 7.

in believing, wherewith the God of hope filleth the humble Christian, that he may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost¹." It was "through the Eternal Spirit that Christ offered himself without spot to God²;" and it is through the same Spirit, "dwelling in us as his temples," that "the blood of Christ must purge our conscience from dead works to serve the living God;" must endue us with holiness here, and so lead us to glory hereafter.

May it be our constant endeavour with the aid of this Holy Spirit so to cleave unto Christ, by faith, and by obedience; in outward ordinances, and by inward holiness; that having the Son of God for our Saviour and our Lord, our Prophet and our High Priest, we may finally attain to that eternal life, which God hath given to the disciples of his Son! Grant this we beseech thee, O merciful Father, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord! to whom with thee, O Father, and thee, O Eternal Spirit, three Persons in one Godhead, be honour and glory for ever! Amen.

¹ Rom. xv. 13.

² Heb. ix. 14.

SERMON IV.

ON THE DIVINITY OF THE WORD.

JOHN i. 1.

In the beginning was the Word ; and the Word was with God ;
and the Word was God.

IN the portions of Scripture selected for the morning's service of that day, on which we commemorate the Nativity of our Lord, it appears to be the intention of the Church to fill us with the most magnificent notions of the dignity of that divine Person, whose appearance in the flesh we then more immediately celebrate. The royal Psalmist leads the way, addressing him in a prophetic hymn of incomparable sublimity, as God ; seated on a throne of everlasting duration, and bearing a sceptre of unerring righteousness¹. The evangelical Prophet follows, describing him as invested with an everlasting dominion, established " in justice and in judg-

¹ Psalm xlv. 7.

ment ;” and as entitled to the lofty appellations of “ Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace¹.” To him succeeds “ the beloved Physician whose praise is in the Gospel,” announcing the incarnation of the same divine Person, and representing him in the language of an angel, as “ a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord².” By the great Apostle of the Gentiles, who next comes in the order of selection, he is represented as “ the Son of God ;”—“ the brightness of his Father’s glory, and the express image of his person ;”—as the object of adoration to “ all the angels of God ;”—as “ God,” the everlasting King ;—as the “ Lord,” the unchangeable Creator of the universe³. Lastly, the beloved Disciple stands forward to bear testimony to the majesty of his Lord ; and speaking of him under the appellation of “ the Word,” because by Him the divine will has been revealed to man, pronounces him the only begotten of the Father, with whose glory he was invested : the maker of all things ; the life and the light of men : begotten of the Father from everlasting, before all worlds ; of one substance with the Father ; very and eternal God ;—for such appears to be the intention of

¹ Isaiah ix. 6, 7.

² Luke ii. 11.

³ Heb. i. 2, 3, 6, 8, 10.

the Apostle in the passage, with which he opens his Gospel, and which I have chosen for my text ; “ In the beginning was the Word ; and the Word was with God ; and the Word was God.”

Stronger and more elevated language cannot be conceived, than that which is employed in these several extracts, to fill us with becoming notions of the dignity of our blessed Redeemer. And perhaps it might be sufficient to rest our belief in his divine nature on such general statements as these. But as there are some among the professors of Christianity, who are for reducing our notions of the Saviour's dignity to a less exalted standard, and for having him regarded as an inferior and a created being, a being of the same nature as ourselves, but elevated to a higher degree of honour ; it becomes necessary that we should examine the grounds of our faith more minutely and in detail ; and show, in opposition to the error of the Socinian, that the universal Church of Christ in general, and we of the pure branch of it established in this kingdom in particular, are amply warranted in believing Jesus of Nazareth, who took upon him the nature of man, to be essentially partaker of the divine nature also ; and to have been, and to be, very and eternal God.

For the establishment of this truth, (a truth, let it be observed in passing, not of a mere spe-

culative nature, but one most intimately interwoven with our practice, inasmuch as upon it depends the worship which we offer to our blessed Lord;) I propose to lay before you various passages from the inspired writings: wherein, first, he is denominated by the name and titles of God; secondly, he is described as performing divine acts; thirdly, he is invested with the divine attributes; and fourthly, is represented as the object of divine worship. The conclusion from the whole will be, that a being, to whom these marks characteristic of divinity are assigned by the word of truth, must be himself really and essentially divine.

First, then; I observe that Jesus Christ is perpetually denominated in the holy Scriptures by the name and titles of God.

And here the difficulty is, not to adduce passages by which this proposition is confirmed, but to select a few from the variety of passages which offer themselves.

By David, as we have already seen, and the application of the passage is made by St. Paul, he is called "God, whose throne is for ever and ever¹:" by Isaiah, "the mighty God, the everlasting Father²;" by Jeremiah, "the Lord our Righteousness³;" by the Psalmist, "the most high

¹ Psalm xlv. 7. Heb. i. 8.

² Isaiah ix. 6.

³ Jer. xxiii. 6.

God¹;" by Isaiah again, "the Lord, the Lord of Hosts, the First and the Last, beside whom there is no God²;" by Malachi, "the Lord, the Sun of righteousness³;" by Peter, "our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ⁴;" by John, "God" and "the true God⁵;" by Paul, "the great God and our Saviour⁶," or rather "our great God and Saviour," "God blessed for ever⁷;" by Thomas, "My Lord and my God⁸;" by Paul again, "the Lord of Glory⁹;" by Jude, "the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ¹⁰;" and by John, "King of Kings, and Lord of Lords¹¹." It were unnecessary to multiply examples: for if the divinity of Christ be capable of being proved, by showing that he is described in the sacred writings by names peculiar to the divine nature, the foregoing passages must be sufficient for the purpose: at least it may be affirmed, that he, who can resist the evidence of these, may resist whatever evidence of this kind the whole Bible can supply.

I proceed then, to show, 2dly, that as he is

¹ Psalm lxxviii. 56. Compare with this, 1 Cor. x. 9.

² Isaiah xlv. 6. Compare with Rev. xxii. 13.

³ Mal. iii. 1.

⁴ 2 Pet. iii. 18.

⁵ John i. 1. 1 John v. 20.

⁶ Tit. ii. 13.

⁷ Rom. ix. 5.

⁸ John xx. 28.

⁹ 1 Cor. ii. 8.

¹⁰ Jude 4.

¹¹ Rev. xvii. 14; xix. 16.

denominated by the name and titles of God, so is he described as performing divine acts.

The creating of the world is a divine act : but “ all things were made by Christ : and without him was not any thing made that was made ¹.” The preserving of the world is a divine act : but not only were all things created by Christ, but “ by him all things consist ².” To reveal to men the divine will, is a divine act : but, saith St. Paul of the Gospel, “ neither received I it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ ³.” To speak to men by the mouth of an inspired messenger, is a divine act : but it was Christ that spake in St. Paul ⁴. To give authority to the ministers of the Gospel is a divine act : but it was Jesus Christ, who “ put” the Apostles “ into the ministry ⁵.” To fill men with spiritual gifts is a divine act : but it is Christ, who sent the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and continues to send him to all believers ⁶. To pardon sins is a divine act : but Christ claimed the prerogative of forgiving sins ⁷. To quicken the dead is a divine act : but “ as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom

¹ John i. 3.

² Gal. i. 12.

³ 1 Tim. i. 12.

⁷ Matt. xi. 2, 5.

² Col. i. 17.

⁴ 2 Cor. xiii. 3.

⁶ John xv. 26 ; xvi. 7.

he will¹." To raise the body of the man Jesus from the grave was a divine act: but the act was the act of Christ; "destroy this temple," said he to the Jews, "and in three days I will raise it up²." To raise the bodies of the dead at the day of judgment will be a divine act: but "I," said Christ, "will raise them up at the last day³."

As we have thus seen our blessed Saviour denominated by the divine name and titles, and described as performing divine acts, let us now proceed to survey him, 3rdly, as invested with the divine attributes.

Eternity is an attribute of God: but "I," said Jesus, "am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last; which is, and which was, and which is to come⁴." Omnipotence is an attribute of God: but "I," said the same Jesus, "am the Almighty⁴." Omnipresence is an attribute of God: but it is Christ that "fillet all in all⁵." Omniscience is an attribute of God: but Christ "knoweth all things⁶" and "searcheth the reins and hearts⁷" of men. Truth and holiness are attributes of God: but Christ is described by one Apostle

¹ John v. 21.

² John ii. 19.

³ John vi. 54.

⁴ Rev. i. 8.

⁵ Eph. i. 23.

⁶ John xvi. 30; xxi. 17.

⁷ Rev. ii. 23.

under the appellation of “ the Holy One ¹,” and by another under that of “ the faithful witness ²,” and by himself as “ he that is holy, he that is true ³.” To be the fountain of life is an attribute of God : but “ Christ,” saith St. Paul, “ is our life ⁴.”

It remains, that having seen the names, the operations, and the attributes of God thus given to our blessed Saviour, we consider him, 4thly, as the object of divine worship. And upon this point I shall just remark, as I pass on, that if Christ be acknowledged in the Bible, as the proper object of adoration, that acknowledgment amounts to an assertion of his divinity. It was the declaration of Christ himself, “ Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve ⁵ :” so that to admit religious worship to be offered to himself, must be in effect to avow himself the Lord God of the worshipper.

It is true, that it was the practice in the East, for persons to prostrate themselves before their superiors as a mark of respect ; and that this prostration is sometimes denominated worshipping. And it is also true, that no more than this may sometimes have been intended, when it is said that certain persons fell down at Christ’s

¹ Acts iii. 14.² Rev. i. 5.

Ibid. iii. 7.

³ Col. iii. 4.⁴ Matt. iv. 10.

feet, and worshipped him. It is however no less true, that in some cases this testimony of veneration appears to have been intended for divine worship; and that in others the worship, of which the Scriptures speak as addressed to Christ, could have no other intention.

When for example under the former case, the wise men presented unto Jesus "frankincense," which in their native country was the usual offering of religious homage, their prostration, which accompanied it, may be most naturally interpreted into a mark of divine adoration. When the leper "fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean;" his acknowledgment of the power of Jesus may reasonably lead us to suppose, that he prostrated himself before him in token of divine worship. When the Canaanitish woman on a similar occasion showed him a similar mark of respect, it is reasonable to entertain the same conclusion.

But however this may be, the design of the worship offered to him on some other occasions cannot admit of a question. For, (why let it be demanded) did the disciples worship Christ, when he had finally left the earth, and was ascended into heaven¹? Why did the apostles

¹ Luke xxiv. 52.

salute their converts, wishing them “ grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ,” whom they thus invoked, conjointly with the Father, to send a blessing on their ministry? Why did St. Paul “ beseech the Lord” Christ, to remove from him a severe affliction, thus making Christ the object of his prayers¹? Why are the Christians of the apostolical age described as “ calling upon the name of the Lord” Jesus, and in what way did they call on him, if not with religious adoration? Why do “ all the angels of God worship him²?” Why are all the hosts of heaven represented in St. John’s visions as falling prostrate before him, and worshipping him, as they worship the Father³? Why is it said, that “ at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth⁴?” Why is Christ proposed as the object of our faith, hope, and love; as the Person, whom we are to obey, to pray to, and to praise? Why do all these things occur in a religion, the purpose of which is to call men from improper objects of adoration to “ serve the living God⁵,” if he be not the very and eternal God, whom implicitly

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 8.

² Acts ix. 14; xxii. 16.

³ Heb. i. 6.

⁴ Rev. v. 13.

⁵ Phil. ii. 10.

⁶ Acts xiv. 15.

and expressly, by example and by precept, we are thus instructed to serve ?

There is however one remarkable case, which comes under this head of our subject, and which appears to require more particular attention. I allude to the concluding scene of the life of St. Stephen, and will notice the application of it to the present enquiry in the words of a learned Bishop of our Church. "Our blessed Saviour," he observes, "when expiring upon the cross, cried out, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit; and he had just before prayed for his murderers in these words, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. In like manner the first martyr, St. Stephen, at the moment of his being stoned to death, prayed to Christ, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit; and for his murderers he added, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. These prayers of Christ addressed to his Father, and of St. Stephen addressed to Christ, are in substance the same, and are recorded by the same Evangelist, St. Luke. Now it seems very evident, that if Christ was not the true God, and equal to the Father, then this proto-martyr died in two acts that seem not *only* idolatrous, but also blasphemous, since he worshipped Christ in the same acts, in which Christ had worshipped his Father. But to remove all doubts concerning the lawfulness of St. Stephen's

worship of Christ, and to give decisive authority to his example, St. Luke tells us, that Stephen was full of the Holy Ghost¹.”

The result of the foregoing remarks on the names, the operations, the attributes, and the worship, given in the holy Scriptures to our Saviour, is an irrefragable argument in behalf of his divinity. For, that I may adopt the inference of the learned Bishop Burnet, “where all these things are laid together in that variety of expressions, in which they lie scattered in the New Testament, it is not possible to retain any reverence for those books, if we imagine, that they are written in a style so full of approaches to the deifying of a mere man, that without a very critical studying of languages and phrases, it is not possible to understand them otherwise. Idolatry and a plurality of gods seem to be the main things, that the Scriptures warn us against; and yet here is a pursued thread of passages and discourses, that do naturally lead a man to think that Christ is the true God, who yet according to the opponents of the doctrine only acted in his name, and has now a high honour put on him by God².”

The fact appears to be, and I wish to recom-

¹ Bishop of Lincoln's Elements, on the 2d Article.

² Bishop Burnet on the 2d Article.

mend it to your attention as supplying a salutary caution with respect to the opponents of Christ's divinity, that the Socinian is contented to take the Scripture by halves ; and thus while he fixes his mind on those parts, which speak of the human nature of our Saviour, overlooks those, which speak with equal clearness of his divine nature. The consequence is that he denies Christ to be God, and considers him as a mere man, a being of the same kind with ourselves. We, on the other hand, taking the whole of Scripture for the rule of our faith, and comparing its several parts with each other, " believe and confess, that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man ;" that as he is " man, of the substance of his mother, born in the world," so also he is " God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds ;" that in a word he is " perfect God," as well as " perfect man." Such we humbly conceive to be the " faith, once delivered unto the saints : " nor should it ever be forgotten to be the purport of the general language, as well as of particular texts, of Scripture, that as " the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us," so also " in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and THE WORD WAS GOD."

Now unto Him, " God manifest in the flesh ;" unto Him who is " over all, God blessed for

evermore;" unto Him, in the unity of the Father and the Eternal Spirit, be "blessing and honour and glory and power," henceforth and for ever! Amen.

SERMON V.

THE SON OF MAN THE SAVIOUR OF THAT WHICH
WAS LOST.

LUKE xix. 10.

For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which
was lost.

IN this declaration, the declaration of our blessed Saviour himself, our attention is drawn to the most important event recorded in the history of the world ; for surely in such a light must be considered the incarnation of “God manifest in the flesh ;” and the consequent redemption of the lost race of mankind from sin and misery, and their restoration to the favour of the Almighty. Desirable as it is, that we should be employed at various times in examining all the various parts of the system of the Christian faith, we should especially have regard to our leading principles, the great fundamental doctrines of Christianity, comprised in this declaration of Christ. It is for

this reason, that we insist continually upon the utter incompetency of mankind to purchase salvation by their own merits or deservings; and preach unto you salvation through the alone merits of Jesus Christ. It is for the same reason that I have chosen the text just recited for the subject of the present discourse: for I trust, that with the good blessing of God upon our prayers for his preventing and assisting grace, our sense of devotion may be strengthened and increased, and our stedfastness to the principles of the Gospel may be confirmed, if we employ this and some following discourses in examining the purpose for which Christ suffered; the motive, which induced him to it; the sufferings, which he underwent; the manner, in which he supported them; and the conduct which is required of us in return. Such an investigation, I persuade myself, may be made “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:” and whilst it may strengthen us on the one hand in a firm and operative faith in the characteristic articles of our religion; it may contribute on the other hand to make “the man of God perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.”

The first branch of the subject thus proposed, is the purpose for which Christ suffered; a purpose, which is briefly, but expressively and fully, conveyed in his own declaration in the text, that

he came "to seek and to save that which was lost."

In discoursing to you upon these words, there are four points, on each of which I propose successively to enlarge : 1st, I shall state the nature and the particulars of that "loss," which Christ in his state of humiliation as "the Son of man," came to repair : 2dly, I shall show what is that "salvation," which was to be effected by his coming : 3dly, I shall make it appear that the remedy, which he applied, was intended to be commensurate with the disease ; or, in other words, that he came to save, not a favoured part alone, but the whole of "that which was lost :"
and 4thly, I shall infer that, with respect to those who shall be ultimately lost, notwithstanding the coming of the Son of man, their perdition will have been occasioned, not by the inefficacy of the remedy which he has furnished, but by their wilful attachment to their disease.

1. First then, as to the nature and particulars of that loss, to repair which Christ suffered.

Placed by his merciful Creator in the garden of Eden, in a state of happiness, purity, and immortality, the progenitor of the human race was apprized, that his continuance in that state depended on his observance of one test of his obedience. "If thou eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt surely die."

He did eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil ; and the sentence of death was ratified not upon him alone, but upon every individual of his natural descendants : “ by one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men ;” and “ by his disobedience all were made sinners ;” and “ judgment came upon all men to condemnation¹.” Such is the view which St. Paul gives us of the consequences of the fall of Adam, operating to the essential corruption of human nature.

And this in a general view was the nature of that “ loss,” wherein all the sons of Adam were involved, and from which Christ, the only Son of the most high God, taking upon him the nature, and appearing under the appellation, of “ the Son of man,” came to save them. If however we survey the particulars of that loss more in detail, we shall be better able to appreciate the salvation, wrought for mankind by Jesus Christ.

Involved in the consequences of the fall of their progenitor, the sons of Adam were “ lost” to holiness, and were all under sin. Hear the application to this effect, which St. Paul makes of the humble confession of the Psalmist : “ There is none righteous, no, not one : There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after

¹ Rom. v. 12. 18, 19.

God. They are all gone out of the way ; they are together become unprofitable ; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre ; with their tongues they have used deceit ; the poison of asps is under their lips ; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness ; their feet are swift to shed blood : destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known : there is no fear of God before their eyes¹."

They were "lost" to the knowledge and worship of the only true God, and devoted to all the enormities of idolatry: "they are without excuse," said the same indignant Apostle, speaking of the universal condition of the heathen world ; "because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful ; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools ; and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things ; and changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen²."

They were "lost" to the knowledge and the

¹ Rom. iii. 10—18.

² Ibid. i. 20—25.

practice of the charities of life, and of the domestic, the social, and the moral virtues; and plunged into the abyss of immorality and profligacy. "Wherefore," says the same Apostle again, connecting this view of the heathen world with the foregoing; and intimating the indissoluble connexion, which subsists between pure religion and sound morality, "Wherefore, even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient, and to work all uncleanness with greediness: being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful¹."

Thus were they "lost" to the favour of God, who is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," and who "hateth all them that work wickedness;" and being "the children of disobedience," they were by natural and necessary consequence "the children of wrath²."

They were "lost" to the sanctifying graces of

¹ Rom. i. 28—31.

² Eph. ii. 2, 3.

the Holy Spirit, who, "because they did not like to retain him in their knowledge, gave them over to vile affections and to a reprobate mind," and suffered them to "walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now" (and ever) "worketh in the children of disobedience¹."

Forlorn as they appeared to be in their actual state, they were "lost" to all reasonable and well-founded expectation of a better. "Strangers from the covenants of promise, without Christ, and without God in the world," they were at the same time without "hope²:"—without hope, that atonement could be made for their iniquities;—without hope, that their sins could be pardoned;—without hope, that they could be justified in the sight of a holy and righteous God, be admitted into his favour, and made heirs of his salvation.

II. And thus from considering the nature and the particulars of that "loss," which was entailed by the fall of Adam on his posterity; we are the better enabled to estimate the character of that "salvation," which was wrought for them by Christ, the second Adam;—that quickening Spirit, which giveth life to all of them, who are naturally "dead in trespasses and sins."

¹ Rom. i. 26. 28. Eph. ii. 2.

² Eph. ii. 12.

In a general view of the subject, the Apostle briefly states the nature of that salvation, when he contrasts the defeat of Adam with the victory of Christ. "As by the offence of one," he pronounces, "judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous ¹."

Let us however again take the subject in detail ; and compare the particulars of the "salvation" wrought by Christ, with the particulars of the "loss," already specified, as resulting from the fall of Adam. The Son of man then is come to save us that were lost, by being "made sin for us," and suffering in his own person and in our nature the wages of sin, "that we may be made the righteousness of God in him ²." He saveth us that were lost, by withdrawing us from the idolatrous service of false gods; and by revealing to us the spiritual nature, and the infinite perfections, of that high and holy Being, to whom alone our worship is due; and by instructing us in the "spiritual" and "true" devotion with which alone he is to be worshipped ³.

¹ Rom. v. 18, 19.

² 2 Cor. v. 21.

³ John iv. 24.

He saveth us that were lost, by giving us a clear insight into those moral "defilements," which pollute "the heart of man¹;" and by teaching us, that in our intercourse with mankind we must endeavour to be "perfect, even as our Father, which is in heaven, is perfect²;" and that in our personal conduct and affections we must strive to "purify ourselves, even as he is pure³." He saveth us that were lost, by reconciling us unto God, by imputing to us not our own trespasses but his righteousness; and by converting us from "children of wrath" into "children of grace⁴." He saveth us that were lost, by sending his Holy Spirit, to regenerate, enlighten, renew, comfort, confirm, and strengthen us; to purify in us that which is impure; to sanctify that which is unholy; to purge us from the pollution of our own corrupt hearts; and to enable us to wrestle against the power of our spiritual adversary. He saveth us that were lost, by filling us with a holy hope, and "joy, and peace in believing⁵," that he hath triumphed over death and the grave, and hath opened unto his faithful followers the gates of heaven; that he hath made atonement

Matt. xv. 18.

² Matt. v. 48.

¹ John iii. 3.

⁴ Eph. ii. 4, 5, 16.

³ Rom. xv. 13.

for our sins ; that we are justified by faith in his blood ; that we are reconciled to our heavenly Father ; that we are become the children of God ; and if children, “ then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” Such is the nature of that salvation, wrought by the Son of man, who (as the Apostle compendiously describes the purpose of his incarnation) “ was of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption¹ :”—wisdom, to enlighten us with the truth ;—righteousness, to justify us before God ;—sanctification, to cleanse us from all sin ;—and redemption, to pay the price of our ransom.

III. Perfect as the salvation wrought by Christ was in this respect, I am in the third place to make it appear, that it was no less perfect in another ; that the remedy which he applied was commensurate with the disease ; in other words that he came to save, not a part alone, but the whole of that which was lost ; or as our Church asserts in her 31st Article, that “ the offering of Christ once made is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world.”

And here, in the first place, it may be ob-

¹ 1 Cor. 1. 30.

served, that in Scripture the performances of Christ are compared in extent with those of Adam, who was (as the Apostle says) the figure or type of Him that was to come. As Adam, being the representative of mankind, did by his transgression involve all men in guilt, and subject them to punishment; provoked God's wrath, and drew the effects of it upon all men; brought all men under the slavery of sin, and the necessity of punishment; so was our Lord the proxy of mankind, and by his performances in our behalf undid for our advantage what the former had done to our prejudice: by his perfect obedience, expiating the common guilt, suspending the fatal sentence, pacifying God's wrath, imputing righteousness, and restoring life to all that would embrace it. Thus St. Paul prosecutes the comparison at large in his fifth chapter to the Romans, finishing with this inference; "Therefore as by the offence of one man judgment came upon all men to condemnation; so by the righteousness of one, the free-gift came upon all men to justification of life." And he elsewhere expressly affirms, that death is abolished, and immortality conferred on all men, to the full extent of Adam's delinquency; for he affirms, that "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

Again, the object of our Saviour's sufferings is

often described by qualities and circumstances which belong to all men. *All* the sons of Adam are in a *lost* condition ; but the Son of man came to save *that* which was *lost*. “ *All* men have *sinned* ¹,” saith St. Paul ; but it is a faithful saying, saith the same Apostle, and worthy of all acceptation, “ that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners* ². *All* men are naturally weak and wicked ; in a state of alienation and enmity toward God : but, even “ when we were *without strength*, in due time Christ died for the *ungodly* ;”—“ when we were *enemies*, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son ³.” *All* men have souls and lives exposed to misery and ruin : and “ the Son of man came, not to destroy, but to save the souls, or lives of men ⁴.” Propositions such as these, respecting an indefinite object, are in the common use of language equivalent to those, wherein the object is expressed universally.

The object however is expressed universally ; and that in more than one form. Jesus is called the Saviour of *the world* : who was sent and came in to the world to save *the world* ; whose chief performances were designed and directed to the salvation of *the world*. “ We know,” said the

¹ Rom iii. 23.

² 1 Tim. 1. 15.

³ Rom v. 8. 10.

⁴ Luke ix. 56.

Samaritans, “that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of *the world*¹.”—“Behold,” said the Baptist, “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of *the world*².”—“We have seen and do testify,” saith St. John, “that the Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of *the world*³.”—“God was in Christ,” saith St. Paul, “reconciling *the world* unto himself⁴.”—“Jesus Christ,” saith St. John again, “is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of *the whole world*⁵ :”—the *whole* world as contradistinguished from all Christians to whom this catholic Epistle of St. John is addressed;—that whole world, of which he says in the same Epistle, “the whole world lieth in wickedness⁶.” And it is the gracious declaration of Christ himself, that “God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved⁷.” Surely every unprejudiced person must perceive that the world, in all these passages, is to be taken in its obvious and ordinary sense, not as restricted to a certain company of some persons particularly qualified, and separated from others; but as extended to the whole community of mankind, and compre-

¹ John iv. 42.² John i. 29.³ 1 John iv. 14.⁴ 2 Cor. v. 19.⁵ 1 John ii. 2.⁶ 1 John v. 19.⁷ John iii. 17.

hending all persons, however distinguished from each other.

Again; the universality of the extent of Christ's salvation is further expressed under another kind of form, equally large and comprehensive. "The living God, who is the Saviour of *all men*, specially of those that believe¹:"—of all men universally; not only of the faithful, though chiefly of them. "God our Saviour would have *all men* to be saved²;"—"The man Jesus Christ gave himself a ransom for *all*³;"—"God hath concluded *all* in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon *all*⁴;"—"Christ died for *all*⁵;"—"He tasted death for *every man*⁶;"—"The grace of God which bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto *all men*⁷;"—"He was the true Light, which lighteth *every man* that cometh into the world⁸."

But still farther, in order (as it should seem) to exclude any limitation or diminution of these general terms, at least as far as concerns the members of the visible church of Christ, it is expressly affirmed that our Saviour's purpose had respect even to those, who might nevertheless lose the benefit of them; and might ulti-

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¹ 1 Tim. iv. 10.

² 1 Tim. ii. 3.

³ 1 Tim. ii. 6.

⁴ Rom. xi. 32.

⁵ 2 Cor. v. 11.

⁶ Heb. ii. 9.

⁷ Tit. ii. 11.

⁸ John i. 9.

mately not be saved. For he is described as having “died for some, who might nevertheless perish and be destroyed¹ ;” as having “bought them, who nevertheless denied him, and brought on themselves destruction by bringing in damnable heresies² ;” and as having “sanctified them, who tread him under foot, and count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing³ .” And surely every restriction upon the intended effects of his sacrifice must be removed, if it be once admitted that he came to save even those who willingly corrupted and apostatized from his truth, who denied, trampled upon, and profaned him.

IV. And this leads me, by an easy transition, to the inference which I proposed to draw in the fourth place, with respect to those, who shall ultimately perish ; namely, that their perdition will have been occasioned, not by the inefficacy of the remedy provided by the Redeemer’s sacrifice, but by their own perverse attachment to their sins. That God hath no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but is desirous that the sinner should turn from his evil ways and live, is repeatedly asserted in Scripture, and confirmed by the most solemn adjuration even of the Almighty himself. “As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in

¹ 1 Cor. viii. 11.

² 2 Pet. ii. 1.

³ Heb. x. 29.

the death of him that dieth : but that the wicked turn from his way, and live¹." And the most incontrovertible evidence in support of the affirmation is contained in the plain fact, which we have been considering, that the Son of God took our nature upon him, and descended from the bosom of his Father's love, and from the right hand of his glory ; and thus came, as the Son of man, to seek and to save *that*, ALL THAT, which was lost. "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways : for why WILL ye die, O house of Israel² ?" was his expostulation to his peculiar people in old times.—Why WILL ye die, O sons of Adam ? is his expostulation to every creature under the new covenant : seeing that God hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked ; but hath set forth his Son to be a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, and "wouldeth not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance³."

It remains that I make a brief application of what has now been laid before you ; and so close the present discourse.

And first, considering the desolate condition of mankind, in consequence of the fall of Adam ; the corrupton of their nature, and their actual

¹ Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

² Ibid.

³ 2 Pet. iii. 9.

sins ; their religious and moral blindness and pollutions ; their abandonment by the Holy Spirit of God, and their subjection to the evil spirit ; their exposure to the wrath and indignation of God in this world, and to the sentence of condemnation in that which is to come ; we cannot but see and feel the necessity of a Redeemer, “ mighty to save ¹ :” and considering how perfect and how universal is the salvation wrought by the Son of man, who came and suffered for that merciful purpose, in imputing to us his righteousness, in guiding us into his truth, in sanctifying us by his Spirit, and in justifying us before God, as preparatory steps to his finally receiving us into glory ; we cannot do less than acknowledge with devout and thankful hearts the greatness of that salvation ; and prostrate ourselves in the most lowly adoration before that divine Being, who came to seek and to save that which was lost ; and who extends the blessings of his sacrifice to the whole race of mankind, to every individual descendant of Adam.

But considering farther, that the gracious purpose of his coming may be not fulfilled, as far at least as each of us is the object of it, by reason of our own hardness and impenitent hearts, of

¹ Isaiah lxiii. 1.

our transgressions and disobedience; and that our Saviour has most affectionately admonished us, that, in consequence of this, “few there are who find the way of life¹ ;” we ought to feel the most earnest desire, that we may be found diligent in “running the race that is set before us, continually looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith² ; and fearing, “lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of it³ .” Such is the effect, which should be produced in our minds by a consideration of the purpose, for which our blessed Lord suffered : for that purpose, we may be assured, will be; and will then only be, effectually accomplished in us, if we thus strive to profit by his coming ; remembering on the one hand, that “if we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries⁴ :” and constantly trusting on the other hand, not in any fancied righteousness of our own, but in the merits of our blessed Redeemer ; being well assured that “there is none other name under

¹ Matt. vii. 14.

² Heb. xii. 1, 2.

³ Heb. iv. 1.

⁴ Heb. x. 6, 7.

heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved¹” but only the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

To whom, in the Unity of the Father and the Holy Ghost, three Persons and one God, be all honour, power, and glory for ever !

¹ Acts iv. 12.

S E R M O N VI.

THE LOVE OF GOD THE MOTIVE TO MAN'S SALVATION.

ROM. v. 7, 8.

For scarcely for a righteous man will one die ; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die :
But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

IN my last discourse, I endeavoured to lay before you in detail the purpose for which Christ suffered ; namely, as generally expressed in his own declaration, that he might “ save that which was lost.” I propose on this occasion to consider the motive, which impelled him to undertake those sufferings in order to the salvation of mankind. Various Scriptures concur in expressly assigning the salvation of mankind to the divine love as its motive. “ God commendeth his love towards us, in that Christ died for us ;” as we read it in St. Paul’s declaration in my text. “ In this was manifested the love of God towards us,”

saith St. John, “ because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him ¹.” And again, “ Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us ².” And our blessed Lord himself tells us, that “ God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life ³.”

Such are the declarations of Scripture, expressly asserting “ the love of God” to have been the moving cause of our salvation : and the representations, which it gives us of our own lost condition, cooperate with these declarations in assuring us, that there was nothing in us which could deserve so gracious an interposition ;— nothing in us, which could move him, to undertake our salvation, and to bestow upon us everlasting life ; unless it were our very forlorn and desperate condition itself, which by depriving us of all other hopes of restoration, rendered us fit objects for the exercise of Almighty love.

For what expectation could we have of the divine favour ; what could we claim, but a sentence of condemnation ; what could we merit but death, everlasting death ;—we, who were already “ dead in trespasses and sins ⁴ ;” —we, who are

¹ 1 John iv. 9.

¹ John iii. 16.

² John iii. 16.

⁴ Eph. ii. 1.

altogether “ corrupt and abominable¹,” corrupt by inheritance of our nature and abominable by our actual iniquities :—we, who were “ the children of disobedience² ;” —we, who were the willing slaves of Satan ; and “ alienated from the life of God³ ?” Surely whatever blessing was conferred on creatures, whose situation is thus described by the word of truth, it could not have been conferred upon them for any quality, which they themselves possessed ; it could not have been in consideration of any righteousness of theirs ; but it must be regarded as an act, and a testimony, of the exceeding abundance of God's goodness ; of the riches of his mercy, and of the greatness of his love. And thus we find the holy Apostle repeatedly dwelling upon the free grace of God, as the agent of our salvation ; excluding the works of our corrupt and unregenerate nature from any pretensions to the having influenced him to undertake our redemption ; and referring the glory of it entirely to the mercy and loving-kindness of God.

And in the divine mercy we find an adequate motive to undertake the most stupendous enterprises, and to accomplish the most arduous designs. Infinite as God must be in all his perfections, wherever any one of his attributes is engaged, it cannot fail of executing the purpose,

¹ Ps. liii. 1. ² Eph. ii. 2. ³ Eph. iv. 18.

to which it is addressed. Whatever his will intends, whatever his wisdom meditates, whatever his power essays, whatever his justice denounces, cannot but come to pass ; nor can that fail, whatever his mercy ordains. Nay, when the Apostle teaches us that “ God is love¹ ;” he appears desirous of magnifying beyond measure that most adorable of the divine perfections : and surely any the most surprising effect may be expected from the exercise of a quality, which is thus represented in the language of inspiration not merely as an attribute of the Deity, but as concentrating (if I may so express myself) the other divine attributes, and identifying the Godhead with itself.

But the immensity of the divine love will be more satisfactorily evinced ; and it will at the same time more conspicuously appear, how ineffectual any thing in ourselves could have been towards meriting our redemption, and influencing him to redeem us ; if we reflect upon the supreme dignity of Him, who undertook the work of our salvation ;—the extreme state of humiliation and misery, to which he descended in order to accomplish it ;—and the relation borne to him by us, for whom that amazing testimony of the most disinterested goodness was enterprised and perfected.

¹ 1 John iv. 8.

I. And, first, let us most seriously meditate on the supreme dignity of Him, who undertook the work of our salvation. The Son, the only Son, the only-begotten Son, the beloved Son of the everlasting Father; "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person;" co-essential, and co-existent with him before all worlds; equal to the Father, and dwelling in his Father's bosom; himself at the same time very and eternal God; the Lord, the Lord Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts; the true, the great, the mighty God, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, God over all; distinguished by all the appellations, invested with all the attributes, performing all the acts, and entitled to all the honour and adoration, which belong appropriately and exclusively to the only one God:—such are the elevated forms of expression, and such are the characteristic marks, whereby the goodly fellowship of the prophets and the glorious company of the apostles labour to represent the dignity of that divine Person, who took upon him the work of our salvation.

II. But what, secondly, was the state of humiliation, to which he consented to be degraded, in order to accomplish our redemption? If we can conceive the most entire contrast, and the most irreconcilable opposition, between the highest and the lowest, between the grandest and the

most ignoble, between the most honoured and the most despised, conditions ; we shall be able to form an adequate conception of that state of degradation, of that “ emptying of himself”, as the Apostle expresses it, which Christ chose, that he might redeem us. He, who was the Son of God, submitted to become the Son of man : He, who dwelt in the bosom of his heavenly Father, submitted to be imprisoned in the womb of an earthly mother : He, who was “ in the form of God, took upon him the form of a servant² :” He, who was possessed by inheritance of all the names and titles of the Deity, permitted himself to be saluted not as mere man alone, but as a seditious person, a malefactor, a blasphemer : He who was invested with all the attributes of the Deity, was contented to be scorned and derided, as the vilest of the sons of men ; while his wisdom was accounted folly ; his glory was turned into shame ; his truth was impeached of falsehood ; his omnipotence was upbraided as ineffectual impotence ; his holiness was arraigned, and appeared lost in the sins of men, which he bore in his own body on the tree ; his eternity seemed annihilated in an ignominious death ; and his omnipresence was judged capable of being confined within the limits of hell and the grave. He, to whom are ascribed

¹ Phil. ii. 7. *ἑαυτὸν ἐκενώσε.*

² Phil. ii. 6, 7.

all the works and operations of the Deity, was contented to be the lowest, and the most despised, among all the works of his own hands. The Creator of the universe, he had not in his own world "where to lay his head;" the Author of life, and the future Raiser of the dead, he "tasted death" in his own person; the future Judge of the world, he stood at the tribunal of one of his guilty creatures, and underwent the sentence of condemnation with the wicked; the Saviour of all men, he was himself cast out with those that are lost. He, to whom is ascribed the adoration which belongs to the only true God, was contented to be esteemed a blasphemer of his heavenly Father with whom he is one: He, whom "the angels of God worship," submitted to be insulted with the mockery of royalty, and the shadow of an earthly dominion: He, in whose name "the devils believe and tremble," submitted to be insulted by the degrading invitation to "fall down and worship" their prince, in token of subjection and allegiance.

III. Such being the incomparably exalted dignity of Christ, and such being the incomparable degradation to which he condescended;—and that (as hath been before observed) to purchase the salvation of mankind; it is an obvious inquiry, which I proposed next to take in hand, concerning the relation borne to him by

those, for whom this amazing testimony of loving-kindness was enterprised and perfected.

Was it then, let us demand, for his affectionate children, who constantly persevered in serving him, nor at any time transgressed his commandments? Was it for his faithful servants, who honoured and obeyed him, as their master; for his loyal subjects, who revered and paid allegiance to him as their prince? Was it for men, created only "a little lower than the angels," and "in the image and likeness of God;" and still retaining their primitive similitude to their divine original? Even if this had been our condition; and if mankind had been exposed to ruin "without any offence or fault of theirs;" still for the eternal Son of the eternal Father to descend from the bosom of his love and from the right hand of his majesty, and to "make himself of no reputation, and to become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" for their preservation; presents us with such a marvellous exercise of love, as could never have been conceived by a human imagination, and which angels might have scrutinized with astonishment. How much more then, when he came to save not the affectionate child, but the wilful prodigal; not the faithful servant, but the hardened apostate; not the obedient subject, but the audacious rebel; when he came to save mankind, not pure and

spotless as they proceeded from the hands of their Creator, but debased by hereditary corruption, and contaminated with personal guilt !

It is in this view that the Apostle represents the subject in the text. "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die ; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners," and, as he farther observes in a following verse, "while we were enemies, Christ died for us." And inasmuch as we are by nature sinners, we are also by nature enemies of God. If it be the act of an enemy, to slight, resist, and renounce the authority of our lawful sovereign ; if it be the act of an enemy, to range ourselves under the banners of a potentate, in open hostility to our own ; if it be the act of an enemy, to proceed to avowed defiance, and to bear rebellious arms against the majesty of our Prince ; we who are "by nature the children of disobedience," in subjection to "the powers of darkness," "alienated from the life of God," and the ministers and slaves of sin, are by an obvious inference, the natural enemies of God.

And standing in this relation to God, as rebels and enemies, it evidently appears how inefficacious any thing in us could have been towards meriting our redemption ; and influencing him to

redeem us. “Ye have not chosen me,” said our blessed Saviour, vindicating to himself the glory of our redemption; “but I have chosen you¹ :” and “herein is love,” said his beloved disciple St. John, ascribing to him the honour, and specifying at the same time the motive, of the act; “herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins².” There was in us indeed that which well deserved the wrath of God, and might well have left us exposed to the severity of his displeasure. But to reverse the sentence of condemnation, and to admit us again into his favour; to cleanse us from iniquity, and to justify us by the blood of Christ; to exempt us from punishment, and to promise us a reward; to blot out the hand-writing of death that was against us, and to write our names in the book of life:—surely this could have been no other than the work of his mercy and loving-kindness alone, exercising itself in free and disinterested grace towards us miserable sinners. “O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his

¹ John xv. 16.

² 1 John iv. 10.

counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be glory for ever! Amen¹.”

The foregoing remarks may be sufficient to shew the exceeding great love of “God our Saviour” in undertaking and accomplishing the work of our redemption; and to exclude any fancied righteousness of our own from participating in the atonement for our sins. And I might here properly conclude; if it were not that I still wish to detain you for the sake of those valuable practical inferences, which the apostles of our Lord instruct us to deduce from the doctrine.

And first, the contemplation of this surprising love of God towards us ought to warm and expand our hearts, and fill them with the most earnest love towards him in return, and with the most zealous determination to obey him. “We love him,” said St. John, who could speak experimentally of the effect, which ought to be produced by the doctrine; “We love him, because he first loved us²;” “and this,” he presently subjoins, “is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous³.”

Secondly, the contemplation of the love of

¹ Rom. xi. 33—36.

² 1 John iv. 19.

³ 1 John v. 3.

God, as having already interposed to save us by the sending of his Son, should fill us with a devout confidence in him; persuaded that he, who has conferred upon us of his free grace the greatest of all blessings, will not withhold from us others, which he may know to be for our good. This is the inference of St. Paul. "If God be for us," he triumphantly demands, "who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things¹?"

A third inference, to be drawn from a contemplation of the love of God exemplified in the work of our salvation, is a further "confidence," that he will not leave it imperfect; but that if we love him and keep his commandments, "he which hath begun a good work in us, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ²." This again is the inference of St. Paul, who argues upon the ground of our comparative situations in nature and in grace. "God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled we

¹ Rom. viii. 32.

² Phil. i. 6.

shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement¹."

Fourthly, the contemplation of the love of God employed for our redemption, and the persuasion that our salvation is "the gift of God," connected with the belief, that "we all had sinned and come short of his glory, being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God²:"—a consideration of these things, I say, should fill us with all humility and self-abasement; and totally "exclude all boasting³" in our own righteousness, and all regard to our own works, as the meritorious cause of our acceptance with God.

But then, fifthly, whilst we renounce all hopes of salvation as merited by our works, we must be cautious not to disregard them, as if they were not necessary to our salvation. The inference of St. Paul upon this point also should not escape our observation. "By grace are ye saved through faith," he says to the Ephesians, who

¹ Rom. v. 8—11. ² Rom. iii. 23—25. ³ Rom. iii. 27.

had been converted from heathenism to a profession of the Gospel: "and that," that is your salvation, is "not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. For," he continues, guarding his former language from misconception, and pointing out the duties of a Christian life, "we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them¹."

There is another and a kindred inference, for which we are indebted to the same Apostle, and which he appears to have insisted on, for the purpose of securing the doctrine before us from being perverted and abused, as it possibly might be, into an excuse for ungodliness of life. For having compared the transgression of Adam with the righteousness of Christ, and remarked, that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound²;" "what shall we say then?" he proceeds: "shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid³." And then enlarging upon the obligation imposed upon Christians, of "walking in newness of life," he concludes with this admonition; "Let no sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members

¹ Eph. ii. 8—10.

² Rom. v. 20.

³ Rom. vi. 1, 2.

as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin ; but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God ¹." Christ Jesus did undoubtedly come into the world to save sinners ; and the penitent sinner may derive consolation and peace from reflecting on the unbounded love of God exerting itself for the salvation of those who were lost. But it is a most dangerous delusion, and it has no countenance from Scripture, and it is utterly inconsistent with the scheme of redemption through the blood of Christ, to suppose, that that blood will be ultimately effectual, and that the grace of God will be finally extended, to any, but the repentant and reformed sinner.

There is one other inference, which I would mention from a contemplation of the love of God in sending his Son to be a propitiation for our sins ; and it is one, which is drawn for us by St. John, who says, " Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another ²." There are indeed many reasons, why a devout sense of God's affection for us, should fill us with affection towards our brethren, heirs of the same misery with ourselves, and heirs of the same salvation. But it is very worthy of observation,

¹ Rom. vi. 12, 13.

² 1 John iv. 11.

that this disciple beloved of Christ again and again enforces his admonition, that “we love one another,” as the proper fruit, evidence, and perfection, of our gratitude and love towards God. For consistently with the angelic hymn, which announced the incarnation of Christ by the celebration of “glory to God, and good-will to men;” he seems to have been anxious to hold forth the inseparable union between piety and charity; and to impress upon the minds of his beloved children in Christ this most important lesson, that no sense of duty to our neighbour is worthy of a Christian, which is not supported and consecrated by a sense of duty to God.

Upon the whole, a grateful sense of God’s love towards us should ever be present to our minds:—of his love commended towards us, not merely in our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but especially and above all in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ. As it was the motive which influenced him to have mercy upon us, and to save us, so should it also influence us to serve him as his faithful servants and most affectionate children. Nor shall we ever find so powerful a motive, nor so unfailing a principle, of every Christian virtue, as to “love God, because he first loved us¹.”

¹ 1 John iv. 19.

SERMON VII.

THE SUFFERINGS OF OUR SAVIOUR UNEXAMPLED.

LAMENT. i. 12.

Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold and see, if there be any sorrow, like unto my sorrow which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.

At the very hearing or reading of these words, we cannot fail of perceiving that they are the voice of one in great and extreme distress; of distress on two several accounts: being first in such a state of affliction, as was never paralleled, “see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow;” and then, notwithstanding the severity of his affliction, having no one to regard and comfort him. “Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?”

To be afflicted, and so afflicted, as to exceed all comparison, is grievous: in that affliction to find none that will respect or care for us—what can be more grievous? In all our sufferings it

is a comfort to us, that we have a parallel ; that nothing hath befallen us, but such as that others have felt the like ; that no temptation, no calamity hath taken us, but such as is common to man :—but here, in the instance of the sufferer before us, “ there never was sorrow like unto his sorrow.” Again ; in our greatest afflictions, it is a mitigation of our sufferings, even to meet with some regard. We naturally desire, if we cannot be delivered, if we cannot be relieved, yet at least to be comforted : it convinces us, that there are yet some, who are touched with a sense of our misery ; who at least are desirous of our welfare, and would relieve and deliver us if they could.—But the sufferer here has not so much as this belief to comfort him. His affliction is neglected by all those, “ who pass by the way,” as if it were “ nothing to them :” no one relieves, no one pities him : he is even, as it were, an outcast both of heaven and earth.

I demand then, in the words of the Ethiopian eunuch, “ of whom speaketh the Prophet this ? of himself, or of some other man ?” And I remark in answer, that it is the practice of the ancient writers of the Church, to apply, and in an especial manner to appropriate, this speech to our Saviour Christ ; and to consider the day, which is here mentioned, “ the day of the Lord’s fierce anger,” as the season of Christ’s passion.

And in truth, to take the words strictly as they lie, they cannot agree to or be verified of any, but of him, and him only. Others indeed without impropriety might be allowed to say the same words ; but then it must be in a limited and qualified sense : for in full and perfect propriety of speech, he, and none but he, can use them. None can say (neither Jeremiah himself, nor any other man) as Christ can, “ see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow :” no day of wrath was like to his day ; no sorrow can be compared to his.

It is not meant to be denied, that in the primary and literal meaning of the words, they are employed by Jeremiah, in the person of his own people, being then come to great misery ; and of the holy city, then laid waste and desolate by the Chaldeans. But this is only agreeable to the general correspondence between the Old and the New Testaments. “ Out of Egypt have I called my son¹,” was literally spoken of the people of Israel ; yet by the Evangelist it is applied to our Saviour Christ. “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?” was first uttered by David² ; yet the same words our Saviour applies to himself³, and that with more truth and propriety than ever David could : and of those words of David, and

¹ Hos. xi. 1. Matt. ii. 15. ² Ps. xxii. 1. ³ Matt. xxvii. 46.

of these of Jeremiah, there is one and the same reason.

The ground of which is the correspondence that prevails between Christ, and the patriarchs, prophets, and people before Christ. For they were themselves types ; and their sufferings were figures, indicating the great future suffering of the Son of God : hence the offering of Isaac, the selling of Joseph, the calling of Israel out of Egypt, and that other complaint of David, and this of Jeremiah, are all applicable to him : so that he may take them to himself, and the Church may ascribe them to him, and that in terms more appropriate, and with truth more complete and exact, than they bore when spoken of David, or Jeremiah, or any of those to whom they were originally applied.

And this rule, and the practice of ancient writers in conformity with this rule, will be our warrant for applying the text to the present occasion ; in which, agreeably to the plan before proposed, we are to consider the sufferings, that Christ underwent in testimony of his exceeding love, and for the saving of us who were lost. Let these words then be to us, as they were to them, and as they properly are to all men, the words of our blessed Saviour ; and let us represent him to ourselves from the midst of his sufferings, addressing himself to the careless and

inconsiderate, the dissipated and the gay, who pass to and fro without regarding him, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger."

It is held forth to us in this complaint, as a characteristic of our Saviour's sorrows, that they were unexampled; without a parallel; such as are not allotted to other persons in affliction; that "there never was sorrow, like unto his sorrow." And the justice of the complaint will be made to appear by an examination of particulars, in the course of which we may contemplate him, as wounded in body; afflicted in soul; and bereft withal of every consolation, of every thing which might relieve or comfort him.

I. And first, with respect to the sufferings of his body. Look upon him, as he hangs upon the cross, where, having passed through the introduction to his sufferings, he is now finishing and consummating the whole; and your eye will perceive and tell you, that there is no whole part in his body, no place, where he might be smitten, and was not. "His back has been given to the smiters, and his cheeks to them, that have plucked off the hair¹:" his skin and flesh are

¹ Isaiah l. 6.

rent with whips and scourges ; “ his hands and feet are pierced ” with the nails ; his head is gored with the thorns ; his very heart thrust through with the spear :—“ Behold the man ! ” It was the language of Pilate, when he brought him forth to the multitude after the commencement of his sufferings, thinking that the very spectacle of them, imperfect as they then were, would melt the hearts of his hardened persecutors.—“ Behold the man ! ” His sufferings are now complete : not a species of torment is wanting, which the most ingenious malice can invent, and the most relentless cruelty perpetrate ! And shall not the spectacle work upon the feelings of us, who profess ourselves his friends ?

II. Still it may be said that these his bodily sufferings, severe as they must be allowed to be, are not without example : and to them it is possible that a parallel may be found. Not so however to the afflictions of his soul. And indeed the pain of the body is of a less afflicting nature than the pain of the soul. “ Give me any plague but the plague of the heart ¹, ” said the wise son of Sirach ; for (saith Solomon) “ the spirit of a man will sustain all his other infirmities ; but a wounded spirit who can bear ² ? ” And in this respect it may be safely said, that never was sorrow like unto Christ’s sorrow.

¹ Ecclus. xxv. 13.

² Prov. xviii. 14.

And here let us consider, both how well qualified the sufferings, which he underwent, were to produce anguish of soul; and then, how evidently he showed the anguish, by which he was oppressed.

Now the punishment of the cross was not only attended by the most excruciating bodily torment, but it was a punishment of the most ignominious character; and was in the example before us aggravated by circumstances of peculiar bitterness; so as to be incomparably fitted for enhancing the pangs of the body by the greater anguish of the soul. There is no one, however mean and vile, who, if he is insulted in his misery, is not more grieved by the insult, than by the misery itself: but by the generous nature insult is accounted the keenest suffering; and there is no grief, which the noble spirit would not bear rather than contumelious and contemptuous usage.

Let us look then to the nature and circumstances of our Saviour's punishment. And was it not a foul disgrace and scandal to inflict on him the shame of that servile base punishment of the whip, which was not allowed to be offered to any but to slaves and bondmen?—But that, which is *servile*, may still consist with honesty. Was it not then a more foul disgrace and scandal indeed, to appoint him for his death, that

dishonest, that infamous death, the death of malefactors, nay of the worst of malefactors? the most ignominious opprobrious death of all others, so that the very persons were scandalous, who suffered it? To take him as a thief; to hang him between two thieves, nay to count him worse than the very worst of thieves; to say and to cry, "Not this man, but Barabbas?"—If base, if dishonest, let these two suffice: use him not disgracefully; make him not an object of ridicule; pour not contempt upon him. Yet that they did too:—their shouting and their outcries:—their hurrying him about from Annas to Caiaphas, from him to Pilate, from Pilate to Herod again;—their robing him in purple;—then blindfolding him and buffeting him;—their bowing to him in derision;—and then spitting in his face:—what was this, but to treat him so far indeed from "the Lord of Glory," that it was to treat him "as a worm and no man¹?" "Died Abner, as a fool dieth²?" said David of Abner in great regret. O no! Yet surely so our blessed Saviour died; and that he so died, equals, nay it surpasses, even the worst of his torments. Is there any thing yet worse? There is. For though contempt be bad, yet despite is beyond it, as far as earnest is beyond

¹ Ps. xxii. 6.

² 2 Sam. iii. 3.

sport. That was sport ; this was malice. I call it despite, when in the midst of his misery, in the very depth of all his distress, they vouchsafed him not the least compassion ; but as if he had been the most despised and abject of men, the very outcast of heaven and earth, stood staring and looking upon him, wagging their heads, and shooting out their lips ; railing at, and reviling him ; scoffing at, and scorning him ; nay, in the very moment of his prayers deriding him ; even making scorn of his most mournful complaint and cry, which he uttered for the very anguish of his spirit.—But is this all ? No ; all this is but what the Apostle calls “the offence, the scandal of the cross¹ ;” the worst still remains, and that is “the curse of the cross² :” that the death, which he died, was not only servile, ignominious, opprobrious, hateful, but even execrable and accursed.—Such it was in the opinion of men. Nor is that the whole : for man is but man ; his glory is oftentimes shame, and his shame glory. But what God curseth, that is accursed indeed ; and this death was cursed by God himself, as the Apostle moreover tells us : so that when all the aggravating circumstances, which embittered his death, are collected together, this is the extreme point of

¹ Gal. v. 11.

² Gal. iii. 13.

his shame, and the consummation of his sufferings, that "he was made a curse¹."

And now were not these things calculated to vex and afflict his soul? Unquestionably they were: and that his soul was afflicted by the very prospect of them, there is not one of the Evangelists but beareth witness. "He was troubled in spirit²," saith St. John: "He was in an agony³," saith St. Luke: He was "sore amazed and very heavy⁴," saith St. Mark: "His soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death⁵," as it is represented by the same Evangelist and by St. Matthew. Here are trouble, amazement, agony, sorrow, and deadly sorrow; and such sorrow unquestionably, as that "there was never any other like to this."

For we may form some estimate of his sorrow from his sweat in the garden, which is without example, without parallel. No manner of violence offered to his body; no man touching him or being near him; in a cold night; being exposed to the air and upon the bare earth; to "sweat as it were great drops of blood," so abundantly that they penetrated through his garments and fell down to the ground; (whether it be only intended by the sacred writer, that his

¹ Gal. iii. 3.

² John xiii. 21.

³ Luke xxii. 44.

⁴ Mark xiv. 33.

⁵ Matt. xxvi. 38. Mark xiv. 34.

drops of sweat were large and clammy, like clots of gore ; or whether we understand, and I know not why we should not understand, that in this his unspeakable agony, so extraordinary was the commotion of animal nature, that blood was in an amazing manner forced through the pores together with the sweat ; still whichever be the interpretation adopted,) read, inquire, and consider, if ever there were sweat, like this sweat of his ? Never the like sweat certainly, and therefore never the like sorrow. In that hour, wherein he appears to have been struggling with the powers of darkness, with the hosts of hell leagued together to afflict, and (had it been possible) to defeat him, what his feelings were it would be dangerous to define : we know them not ; we should be too bold, were we to endeavour at describing them. It was discreetly and reverently that the ancient Fathers of the Greek Church acted in their liturgy ; wherein, after having recounted all the particular pains as they are set down in his passion, and by all and by each of them called for mercy, they summed up their supplications with this petition , “ By thine *unknown* sorrows and sufferings, felt by thee, but not distinctly *known* to us, Have mercy upon us, and save us !” And, although much more might be said, let this at present suffice for his pains of body and of soul. As to those of the

body, some perhaps may have endured the like : but the sorrows of his soul are unknown sorrows ; and as to them, no one has, nor ever shall suffer “any sorrow, like unto *his* sorrow which was done unto *him*.”

III. And so let us proceed to that other view, which was proposed ; wherein we behold him bereft of every consolation, of all which might relieve or comfort him.

It was before observed, that to be afflicted and so afflicted, as to exceed all comparison, is a grievous case : but in that affliction to find none that will respect or care for us—nothing indeed can be more grievous : and that consideration will serve to show further, that “there never was sorrow like unto Christ’s sorrow.” Comfort is that by which, through the mediation of some friendly consolation and support, we are strengthened in the midst of our distresses, and the better enabled to bear them out. And who is there, even the most destitute creature amongst us, but receives some comfort, some support at some one’s hands ?

Yet such was not our Saviour’s case in this season of his bereaving ; for even that, which is left to the meanest of the sons of men, was not left unto him. As to human comfort, *his own* supported him not : they among whom he had gone about during his life, healing them, teach-

ing them, feeding them, doing them all good—it is they that cry, “ Not this man, but Barabbas ; away with him ; crucify him ; his blood be upon us and upon our children : ”—It is they that in the midst of his agony, “ shake their heads at him and cry, Ah thou that destroyest the temple, save thyself : ”—it is they, that deriding his exclamation of despondence in that his most disconsolate state, barbarously mock him, and say, “ Let us see whether Elias will come to save him. ”

But these were his enemies ; the ignorant and deluded multitude. Be it so : turn we therefore to his friends ; to those who were nearest and dearest to him ; whom he had “ chosen and ordained that they should bring forth fruit, and that their fruit should remain ¹. ” Even of these, one bought and sold him : one denied and forswore him : all fell away, and forsook him.

But still all human comfort is frail and transient at the best : and in all heaviness the true comfort is divine consolation, is comfort from above. But here also he was afflicted in this his sorrow : of such consolation this his day of suffering bereaved him too. And that was his most bitter complaint of all : not that his friends upon earth, but that his Father in heaven had forsaken

¹ John xv. 16.

him ; that neither earth nor heaven yielded him any regard ; but that between the sorrows of his soul, and whatever might in any way refresh him, there was as it were a great gulph fixed, whilst he was left in a state of desolation, destitute abandoned and forlorn.—Evident, too evident, from that his most dreadful cry, at which the powers of nature were shaken, at which the sun was darkened, and the earth quaked, “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me¹ !” Weigh well that cry ; consider it, and answer, if there were ever a cry, like that of his ?—Never surely the like cry, and therefore never the like sorrow.

It is strange, very strange, that nothing like this is recorded of the Christian martyrs, who nevertheless endured most exquisite pains in their martyrdoms ; yet we see with what courage, with what cheerfulness, how even singing and rejoicing, they are reported to have passed through their torments. Would we know the reason ? it is assigned by a father of the Church, who says, “ God delivered them not, but he did not forsake them.” He delivered not their bodies, but he forsook not their souls : but distilled into them the dew of his heavenly comfort, an abundant supply for all that they could endure. But

¹ Matt. xxvii. 46.

here, “ *He* hath afflicted me,” saith the Prophet, prefiguring Christ: “ *Thou* hast forsaken me,” saith Christ in his own person: here is no comfort, no supply at all.

It may serve to heighten our sense of the Redeemer’s sufferings, if having seen them to be thus unexampled in magnitude and bitterness, we consider briefly the quality of the sufferer. Afflictions indeed are generally thought to be in proportion to the person afflicted: as the person is, so is the passion: and any, even the least degree of injury or disgrace offered to a person of distinction, is infinitely greater than the same offered to one of mean condition. And here again we shall leave all parallel behind us.

“ Behold the man!” said Pilate. He was a man, as we are: and even had he been no more than man, nay had he been literally, what figuratively he was, “ a worm and no man,” a brute beast that hath no understanding, it were piteous to behold him trampled on and tortured as he was.

Pilate called him a man, and the wife of Pilate added “ a just man.” “ Have thou nothing to do with that just man ¹.” And this carries us one degree farther: for though we pity and feel for the punishment even of malefactors themselves,

¹ Matt. xxvii. 19.

our compassion is much more sensible for those, who suffer, and yet are innocent. And he was innocent, both Pilate and Herod being his judges.

Now among the innocent, the more noble the person, the more grievous the spectacle: and never do we feel such compassion, as for those of an elevated condition. And such was the sufferer before us: by birth one of the most noble among the sons of men; the royal descendant from a stock of illustrious kings. Pilate styled him a "king;" and he had reason in refusing to alter his superscription.

And this might seem high; if we could not go infinitely higher. For he is yet more; more than the highest of the sons of men; he is the Son of the most high God. Pilate could see no farther than "Behold the man:" the Centurion caught a view of his more exalted nature, when he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God¹." And here all words forsake us, and every tongue becometh speechless.

We can no otherwise express it, than by reasoning from the less to the greater; as in the following manner: of this book of the Lamentations of Jeremiah, one especial occasion was the death of Josiah, king of Judah: "but behold, a greater than Josiah is here!"

¹ Mark xv. 39.

Of king Josiah, as an especial cause for mourning, the Prophet says, "The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, is taken away¹." But, behold, here is not merely the anointed of the Lord, but the Lord, the anointed; not the Lord's Christ alone, but the Lord Christ himself; and that, not coming to an honourable death in battle as Josiah did; but to a most disgraceful death, the death of the vilest malefactors; and not slain at once as Josiah was, but tormented and mangled in the most dreadful manner; wounded in body, wounded in soul, utterly desolate and forsaken. O consider this, and confess that it is truly said, "never was sorrow like my sorrow." Never, never the like person; and if as the person, so the passion be, then never the like passion to his.

It is truly affirmed, that any one, even the least drop of blood, even the least pain of the body only, of this so exalted a person, had been enough to raise it beyond all comparison. And that is enough; but that is not all: for now add the three other considerations; to this so exalted a person, add the torment of body, the agony of soul, and the cry betokening utter desolation, and contemplate the sum of all: and it is beyond all question, that the like was not, shall not, can-

¹ Lam. iv. 20.

not be: it is far beyond what ever was or can be. It is in truth beyond all conceivable parallel; beyond all possible example: men indeed may drowsily hear it, and be coldly affected by it: they may "pass by the way," and pretend that "it is nothing to them:" but "angels desire" to behold and "to look into" it, and the principalities and powers of heaven hear thereof and worship.

But, my brethren, is it indeed nothing to us? is it, can it be, nothing to any child of Adam, that these sufferings were endured by Christ? Is it nothing to us, that our sins laid upon him this weight of affliction, tormented his body, agonized his soul, bereaved him of comfort, and provoked the fierceness of God's wrath against him? Is it nothing to us, that by his stripes we are healed, by his sweat we are refreshed, by his being forsaken we have received grace; that the day which to him was the day of God's fierce anger, is become the day of our salvation? Is it nothing to us, that as this was the day of God's fierce anger against him, only for his love to us, so there is another day coming, and it will soon be here, a day of the like fierce anger against us, if we do not return his love? To return his love indeed to the full extent, for his love like his sor-

row exceeds all example, is what we cannot do. The more we love him, the better : but we can all show, that we do not slight him ; by striving to withdraw ourselves from sinful pursuits ; to free our minds from guilty thoughts ; to set him before us ; to think on him ; to thank him ; to worship and serve him in his ordinances ; to purify our hearts and lives after his example ; and to profit by the grace which he supplies us with. This is what we all can, and ought to do, at this and at every season : and never should we forget what the Son of God suffered, in order that what *he* then felt for us, *we* might never feel ; and that what *he* now enjoys in the bosom of his Father, *we* also might enjoy for ever !

SERMON VIII.

THE HUMILITY AND PATIENCE OF OUR SAVIOUR.

PHIL. ii. 5, 6, 7, 8.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus ;
Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be
equal with God ;
But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form
of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men ;
And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and
became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

WHEN St. Paul desired to inculcate most forcibly upon his disciples that lowliness of mind, which is among the most amiable and the most appropriate qualities of the Christian character, he judged that his purpose could be answered in no other way so effectually, as by setting clearly and strongly before them the example of their blessed Lord. This he accordingly did in the very impressive passage just recited ; wherein we may contemplate a Being of the most exalted nature, under a variety of particulars, exhibiting

proofs of the greatest condescension. For “the form of God” he takes upon him “the form of a servant;”—he divests himself of his “equality with God” to be “made in the likeness and to be found in the fashion of a man;” the Lord of Glory, he “makes himself of no reputation;” the Head of all principality and power, he “clothes himself with humility;” the Author and Prince of life, he “becomes obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

Look carefully at the picture; survey it in all its parts; analyze it, and examine the particulars, of which it is composed; and you will perceive, how well it is adapted to the end proposed by the Apostle:—God in the likeness of men; God in the form of a servant; submitting voluntarily to disgrace, dishonour, and death, a tormenting and opprobrious death; surely no more effectual means can be devised of encouraging lowliness of mind in the disciple, than such a representation of this quality in the character and conduct of the master.

It is not however primarily with this intent that I now bring it forward, although before I quit the subject I may have occasion to employ it in that manner; but it is in order to set before you a general idea of that characteristic temper, which throughout his season of humiliation, distinguished the conduct of our Saviour; and

which, according to the plan before proposed, it is my design in the present discourse to examine somewhat in detail. That temper will probably be better elucidated, and appear in a stronger light, if the consideration of it be introduced with some preliminary remarks upon our Saviour's sufferings. For the difficulty of maintaining composure of mind, and in consequence the admiration of the beholder, must increase in proportion to the severity of the afflictions endured. Although therefore I dwelt upon that subject specifically and more at large in my last discourse, I persuade myself, that a recurrence to it in a more summary way will not now appear unseasonable : unseasonable indeed at no time can it be, to discourse upon the sufferings of our Saviour before an assembly of Christians ; who should be distinguished by a readiness to "glory" in nothing so much as "in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

It was long before their consummation upon the cross, that the sufferings of our blessed Saviour commenced. There indeed they were raised to an unexampled height ; but his life also had been an almost uninterrupted series of distress, disgrace, and persecution. The moment of his first appearing upon earth foreshowed what was to be his condition during his abode upon it. He was born in a stable and laid to rest in a

manger. The first months of his mortal existence prefigured "the contradiction of sinners¹" which he was to endure, while it continued. He was compelled to flee for his life, for "Herod sought the young child to destroy him²."

The rest of his existence here was spent agreeably to this beginning. As to the common comforts and conveniences of life, so far was he from having them in abundance, that he "had not where to lay his head³." As to the common tokens of respect, he was ranked amongst publicans and sinners; whilst if the Pharisee invited him to meat, he withheld from him the customary pledges of hospitality; for he neither washed his feet with water, nor anointed his head with oil, nor greeted him with the kiss of welcome⁴. As to the friendship of those about him, he was (as it had been strongly foretold of him) "a worm and no man; a very scorn of men and the outcast of the people⁵." Did he look for countenance to his country at large? by the rulers he was persecuted; by the multitude he was sometimes followed indeed, but at others they abandoned, insulted, and would have stoned him⁶. Did he retire to the residence of his family? He was treated by his fellow-citizens

¹ Heb. xii. 3.

² Matt. ii. 13.

³ Matt. viii. 20.

⁴ Luke vii. 46.

⁵ Psalm xxii. 6.

⁶ John viii. 59; x. 31.

with dishonour and reproofs ; and was impeded in the execution of his ministry by their unbelief and hardness of heart ¹. Did he seek consolation in his afflictions from his immediate companions, from those whom he had chosen to be the associates of his life, the witnesses of his miracles, the hearers of his doctrines, and the propagators of his religion ? He was betrayed by one of them ; denied by another ; forsaken by all. To sum up the catalogue of his miseries during life in words, which had long before predicted them, in words as true as they are forcible and impressive, “ He was despised and rejected of men ; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ; and we hid as it were our faces from him, he was despised and we esteemed him not ². ”

But wretched in an earthly view as was the life of Jesus, his death was still more afflicting.

Had he during his life been subject to actual bodily sufferings ? Stretched upon the cross in an agonizing posture ; the weather searching his previous wounds and sores ; his hands and his feet pierced, so that (as it was said of Joseph) “ the iron entered into his soul ³ ; ” his forehead bleeding with the thorns ; and all these not stupifying and transient, but acute and lingering pains ; so acute as to preclude repose, and so lingering as

¹ Matt. xiii. 58.

² Isaiah liii. 3.

³ Ps. cv. 18.

to endure through six long hours; he experienced a death tormenting in the extreme.

Had he during his life been vexed in his righteous spirit¹? In the passion which immediately preceded his death, his "soul was exceeding sorrowful;" and being in an agony, an agony which caused him to sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground, he prayed most earnestly and repeatedly to his Father, that the cup of the fierceness of God's wrath might pass from him.

Had he during his life been the object of scorn and derision, of contempt and contumely and malice? His death was attended by every aggravation of insult and reproach. By the Romans, under whose authority he suffered, the death of the cross was considered as a servile punishment: a punishment not fit to be inflicted upon a freeman, however criminal; but suited to slaves only, to those whom they esteemed the dregs and outcasts of mankind. By the Jews so inhuman a punishment was not practised, nor was it allowed by their law: but that which approached most nearly to it, the hanging up of the dead bodies of some that had been executed, was held most infamous and execrable. For, "Cursed," said the law, "is every one that hangeth on a

¹ Isaiah lxiii. 10.

tree¹:" cursed, that is, devoted to reproach and malediction : "accursed of God²," as it is in the law of Moses ; that is, seeming to be rejected by God, and by his special providence exposed to affliction.

Had he during his life been subject to any imputations of guilt ? His death was like that of the worst of criminals. He was accused of the most heinous crimes : as a violator of the divine laws ; as having a design to subvert the religion and to "destroy the temple of God³;" as an impostor, seducing and "perverting the nation⁴;" as a blasphemer⁵, usurping the properties and prerogatives of God ; as seditious, and rebellious, stirring up the people⁶, forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar⁷, assuming to himself royal authority, and styling himself Christ a King ; in a word as being guilty of the most enormous and complicated offences. "If," said his persecutors to Pilate, "he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee⁸." As a criminal then he was described and arraigned ; as a criminal, though by a sentence wrested by malice and importunity against the will and conscience of a timid judge, he was condemned ; and as a criminal, he suf-

¹ Gal. iii. 13. ² Deut. xxi. 23. ³ Matt. xxvi. 61.

⁴ Luke xxiii. 2. ⁵ Matt. ix. 3. ⁶ Luke xxiii. 5.

⁷ Luke xxiii. 2.

⁸ John xviii. 30.

ferred death. “He was numbered with the transgressors¹.”

Thus throughout his life did Christ appear “in the form of a servant;” and thus did he finally “become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

But exceeding great and unexampled as his sufferings were, they were not greater than the patience and humility, with which he endured them. “He endured the cross, despising the shame²,” saith St. Paul:—“When he was reviled, he reviled not again,” saith St. Peter, “when he suffered he threatened not³.”—“He humbled himself,” saith St. Paul again, in my text: “he made himself of no reputation,” or according to the literal and forcible signification of the original word, “he emptied himself⁴,” not only divesting himself of his divine pre-eminence, of his equality with the Father; but taking on him the form of a servant, and submitting with calm composure to all the pain, the misery and disgrace which attended his state of humiliation, and regardless of every evil, provided he could accomplish the great purpose of his manifestation, and make atonement for the sins of mankind.

¹ Isaiah liii. 12.

² Heb. xii. 2.

³ 1 Pet. ii. 23.

⁴ ΕΚΕΙΩΣΕ ΕΑΥΤΟΝ.

His submission and humility towards God were displayed not in sudden and transitory bursts of occasional devotion, excited by the impulse of a momentary feeling, and interrupted by the avocations of business and pleasure ; but it was an uniform habit of the mind, a settled principle ; always alive, always vigorous and active. It was evinced in all his actions ; and gave a colour to his whole character and behaviour. “ Why callest thou me good ? ” was his question to one who addressed him under that title : “ there is none good but one, that is God ¹ . ” According to this decision, not an opportunity did he suffer to escape him, of elevating the minds of his disciples and of the people to the adoration of his heavenly Father ; of instructing them in divine truths ; and of persuading them to the practice of a holy life. Consistent and uniform throughout, not an opportunity did he suffer to escape him of exemplifying in his own conduct the duties which he enjoined on others, and of confirming his precepts by his practice. Witness his observance of all the exercises of piety, whether public or private ; his habitual attendance on the service of the synagogue ; his meditations, thanksgivings, and prayers. Witness the purity, the righteousness, the temperance, the chastity of his manners. Witness his eager-

¹ Matt. xix. 17.

ness to perform, his delight in performing, the will of Him that sent him. Witness the scrupulous care, with which he referred the glory of all his actions to his Father. Especially and above all, witness that surprising humility, wherewith he denied his own comfort and even his life; gave himself wholly up to the direction of the divine pleasure; and willingly and cheerfully awaited the hour of trouble, which was to glorify his Father's name. In that his extreme agony, when his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; when nature shrunk from the prospect of his approaching sufferings, and would have turned aside from the cup of the fierceness of God's wrath, how amazing was the piety, how unexampled was the resignation, of our Lord! He fell on his face, and prayed, saying, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." And again, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done¹." And when he had drained the bitter draught even to the dregs, and appeared sinking under the sense of his outcast and abandoned condition, with what divine resignation did he breathe forth that dying exclamation, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit²!"

Whilst thus lowly and obedient to the divine

¹ Matt. xxvi. 39. 42.

² Luke xxiii. 46.

will, he was not deficient in a suitable regard to ordinances of human institution. When some of his enemies endeavoured to ensnare him, by demanding, “whether it was lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar?” He told them, that they should “render unto Cæsar the things that were Cæsar’s¹,” that as they acknowledged Cæsar’s authority, they were bound to comply with his lawful demands. When he was required to pay his own tribute-money, he paid it agreeably to this decision². When the people, in astonishment at his miracles, would have made him a king, he withdrew himself, and hid himself from them³: and he repeatedly gave it to be understood that his kingdom was spiritual and not of this world. Nay, during his trial and at his condemnation, a trial conducted with partial iniquity, and a condemnation pronounced by unprincipled cowardice; although he conducted himself indeed with the firmness and dignity of conscious innocence, he replied in deference to the High Priest’s adjuration, that he was the Son of God⁴; and he submitted himself to those who were invested with legal authority, notwithstanding they abused it to the purposes of malignant tyranny.

¹ Matt. xxii. 17.

² Matt. xvii. 27.

³ John vi. 15.

⁴ Matt. xxvi. 63.

In his intercourse with his disciples he displayed the same lowliness of character, not only in that he being their "Lord and Master" condescended to wash their feet and to be to them as a servant¹; but by his continual readiness to instruct their ignorance, to relieve their wants, to strengthen their virtue, and to bear with their weaknesses. When he was surrounded by sorrow and affliction; by the suffering of actual misery, and by the anticipation of that more terrible catastrophe, which impended over him; and his three favoured disciples, whom he had selected to "watch and pray" with him, had fallen asleep during his agony; at the same time, that he reproved their unkindness, he pronounced its excuse: "What! could ye not watch with me one hour? watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak²." When he foresaw that the constancy of Peter would not withstand the trial, to which it was shortly to be exposed; at the same time, that he warned him of its failure, he comforted him with the prospect of its restoration: "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have thee that he may sift thee as wheat; ,but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy

¹ John xiii. 5.

² Matt. xxvi. 40.

brethren ¹.” When he foretold the treachery of Judas, the agitation of his manner signified the anguish of his heart, and his language bore witness that every feeling of anger and resentment was swallowed up in the most tender commiseration for the wretched criminal: “When Jesus had said thus, he was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me: the Son of man goeth as it is written of him; but woe to that man, by whom the Son of man is betrayed: it had been good for that man, if he had not been born ²!” And when his hour was come, and what he had foreseen was brought to pass; and he was betrayed by Judas, and denied by Peter; he witnessed in silence the cowardice of the one; and with a question, the most gentle imaginable, reproved the treachery of the other. “Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss ³?” was the expostulation, which he addressed to the traitor. He “turned and looked upon Peter ⁴,” who persisted in denying that he knew him.

To his countrymen at large he conducted himself with the same attentive kindness and meekness; striving to instruct and convert them with a patience, which could not be conquered by

¹ Luke xxii. 31.

² John xiii. 21. Mark xiv. 21.

³ Luke xxii. 48.

⁴ Luke xxii. 61.

prejudices the most inveterate, and obstinacy the most perverse. Notwithstanding the insensibility and ingratitude of the Jews, he would not be diverted from the course, in which he had begun;—from healing their infirmities, comforting their afflictions, “going about doing good,” and preaching to them the Gospel of peace. So that great as must be our admiration of the goodness, which prompted, and of the power, which performed, his astonishing miracles, we must look with equal admiration upon the patience of him, who under circumstances so discouraging could still persevere in performing them. Well indeed had it of old been prophesied of him, “A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench¹.” Nay, when at length he was compelled by the obduracy of the people to pronounce against his country a sentence of condemnation, that sentence was tempered by signs and expressions of the most invincible and the tenderest regard. For “he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace!—but now they are hid from thine eyes².” And again; “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto

¹ Isaiah xlii. 3.

² Luke xix. 42.

thee: how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings; and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate¹."

His conduct to his most bitter enemies also was marked by the same gentle forbearance; by a meekness of temper, which opposition could not irritate, and which persecution could not subdue. When his enemies charged him with profaning the sabbath, he defended himself with a mild appeal to their reason, asking, "whether it was lawful to do good or to do evil on the sabbath day²;" telling them that "the sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath³;" and bidding them "learn the meaning" of that declaration of God, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice⁴." When they accused him of employing infernal agency, and of "casting out devils by the prince of the devils," he calmly exposed their malicious and groundless aspersion, by reminding them that "a kingdom, divided against itself, cannot stand; and that if he by Satan cast out Satan, his kingdom was divided against itself, and must therefore fall⁵." When they upbraided him for "eating with publicans and sinners," he justified himself by mildly

¹ Matt. xxiii. 37, 38.

² Mark iii. 4.

³ Mark ii. 27.

⁴ Matt. xii. 7.

⁵ Matt. xii. 25, 26.

telling them, that “they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick ;” and that he came “not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance¹.” When they charged him with blasphemy, for saying to the sick of the palsy, “Thy sins be forgiven thee ;” he only demanded of them, “whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise and walk²?” When they charged him with “deceiving the people,” he appealed to his miracles, and to the works which he had done among them, as an unanswerable testimony that he came from God. When “they took up stones to cast at him,” he met their fury with this placid remonstrance, “Many good works have I showed you from my Father ; for which of those works do you stone me³?” In this conduct he steadily persevered to the last : and as the malice of his enemies was unconquerable, so was also his gentleness and forbearance. For when in the court of the High Priest, amidst the other insults and dishonours which were heaped upon his head, “an officer of the high priest” rudely and unjustly “struck him ;” his only return was an appeal to the commonest principles of equity : “If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil ; but if well, why smitest thou me⁴?”

¹ Matt. ix. 12, 13.

² Matt. ix. 5.

³ John x. 32.

⁴ John xviii. 23.

And lastly, when he had sustained a trial, excited by malice, supported by falsehood, prosecuted by arbitrary power, and decided by weakness and iniquity; when he had heard his condemnation ratified by a judge who had previously pronounced his innocence; and when he was now enduring a painful and a lingering death, the miseries of which were aggravated by every circumstance of ignominy, derision, and despite; the only return which he made to the malice of his murderers, was an excuse for their guilt and a prayer for their forgiveness: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do¹!"

So true was the prediction of the Prophet, that "he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth²:" and so true was the declaration of the Apostle, that "when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatend not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously³:" as were also those declarations of the other Apostle, that "he endured the cross, despising the shame;" and that he not only "was made in the likeness of men, and was found in fashion as a man, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;" but that "he humbled himself, and made him-

¹ Luke xxiii. 34.

² Isaiah liii. 7.

³ 1 Pet. ii. 23.

self of no reputation, and took upon him the form," and displayed the lowliness of mind, of the meanest among the sons of men.

I know not how I can conclude better, than by earnestly calling your attention to two remarks, suggested by the foregoing considerations. In the first place then, we are bound by the most solemn ties of gratitude and affection, to love, honour, and obey our blessed Saviour, in every possible way, especially in every way of his own appointment,—who could thus for our sakes exchange "the form of God" for "the form of a servant;" and who for our sakes could thus suffer and thus endure. And in the second place we are bound to manifest our gratitude by "following his steps," and by striving to imitate his resigned piety to God; his dutiful obedience to his lawful governors; his general regard for his country; his tender affection for his friends; and his forbearance towards his enemies. "If therefore," in the language of the Apostle, "If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies; let this mind be in us," both towards God and towards our neighbour, "which was also in Christ Jesus¹:" remembering always, that as he "suffered for us," so also "he has left us an example that we

¹ Phil. ii. 1. 5.

should follow his steps¹;" and that it is only "by following the example of his patience and great humility," that we can become meet to be "made partakers of his resurrection."

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 21.

SERMON IX.

CHRIST CRUCIFIED A MOTIVE TO HOLINESS, AND A
PATTERN FOR IMITATION.

HEB. xii. 1, 2.

Wherefore seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.

Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith ; who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame ; and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

ST. LUKE, who recounts the whole of our Saviour's history at length, calls the passion in plain and express terms a sight or a spectacle : " all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned ¹." It is this sight, which the Apostle in the text calls us to " look unto."

Of our Saviour's life there is no part, which

¹ Luke xxiii. 48.

does not deserve our very attentive contemplation; for there is no part, which is not calculated to improve us in holiness and virtue. But of the whole his passion is that part, which ought more especially to fix our attention. He is to be “looked unto” at all times and in all acts; but then more especially, and in that act, when “for the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame.” Then saith the Apostle, “look unto him.” And in another place, being desirous to show the Corinthians, what it most concerned them to know, namely Jesus Christ; and in Christ, what they were more especially interested in considering; he declares, “I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified¹ ;”—meaning hereby, that the perfection of all knowledge is Christ; and the perfection of our knowledge relating to Christ is the knowledge of his Cross and Passion.

The best guide to the understanding of what is said is the occasion on which it is spoken. Now the occasion of the text was this. St. Paul wished to encourage the Hebrew converts, and in them all future Christians, to “hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering² .” This profession he expresses in the former verse of the text under the terms of a “race,” or a game; bor-

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 11.

² Heb. x. 23.

rowing his similitude from the Olympic Games, which were at that time periodically celebrated in Greece, and renowned throughout the world ; and by expressions derived from which, it was the practice with all the writers of the age, both sacred and profane, to represent as in the running, the laborious course ; so in the prize of it, the glorious recompense of a virtuous life.

That we may “ run the race ” with the greater vigour, and be more secure of attaining the prize, he sets before us two sights to strengthen and comfort us, and keep us from being “ weary and fainting in our minds.” The former is “ a cloud of witnesses,” mentioned in the first verse, by which he means the departed Saints :—witnesses, who are able to depose, that the race may be run, and the prize may be attained ; for they have run the one, and have attained the other :—witnesses, who look on to see with what alacrity we exert ourselves, and to whom we may look for encouragement to exert ourselves well, in the course which we have undertaken.

On which assembly when we have fixed our eyes awhile, and fitted them to behold a still brighter object, he sets before us another, even our blessed Saviour ; calling on us to withdraw our eyes from those less illustrious persons, by whom “ we are compassed about ; ” and to fix them upon “ Jesus, the author and the finisher

of our faith." As if he should say, If you would at once behold a sight, which may at all times command, and fix, and occupy, your attention, look unto Him. The Saints, though they be guides to us, are still no more than followers of Him. He is their leader, their guide, as well as ours. They are well-wishers to our faith ; but are neither the authors nor the finishers of it. He is both ; both " author," to call and to introduce us to it ; and " finisher," to lead it to its consummation, and to crown it with its recompense. Look unto him therefore is the Apostle's warning ; and it is the warning of this " cloud of witnesses" also, of those blessed spirits, who having already attained to his rest, are anxious that we should not fall short of it. Sometimes indeed it may be said, as indeed it hath been said by the Apostle St. James, " Take, my brethren, the prophets for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience¹." Sometimes the conduct of an inferior being will serve to guide us in our course. But after all, the surest and most perfect model is that divine Person, " who suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps." And when he himself declares, " I have given you an example²," and commands us to follow it by his authority as our " Lord and Mas-

¹ James v. 10.² John xiii. 15.

ter," then "let all flesh keep silence." Let all the Saints fall prostrate before him ; yea, let the Seraphim themselves cover their faces with their wings, that our eyes may not be drawn aside by other sights, but that we may look steadily unto Him.

This is the object to which our eyes have been directed during our late meditations. But now once again, let us apply the advice of the Apostle ; that we may proceed, from a contemplation of this awful sight, to consider with more awakened minds the effect, which our Saviour's passion should have upon our conduct.

Look unto Him then, and you will see the everlasting Son of the everlasting Father ; " the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person," divesting himself of his equality with God, and appearing upon earth in the likeness of men.

Look unto Him, and you will behold him exposed to all the infirmities which befall the meanest and most despised among the sons of men : submitting to poverty, want, and weakness ; to contempt and derision ; to oppression and persecution ; from the moment of his birth in a stable to that when he expired upon the cross.

Look unto Him, at that season in particular which preceded and terminated in his death, and

you will see almost all the miseries which human nature can feel, heaped together upon his head : for “ never was sorrow like to that sorrow where-with the Lord afflicted him in the day of his fierce anger ;” whether in the exquisite pains and tortures which were inflicted upon his body, or in the unknown fears and anguish, which agitated and depressed his soul.

Look unto Him ; and amidst these unexampled sufferings, you will nevertheless behold him “ enduring the cross, despising the shame :”—amidst the exceeding great sorrow which weighed down his soul, yielding himself with devout resignation to his Father’s will :—amidst the agony of his torments, and under the most painful sense of his forsaken condition, still “ holding fast by God,” and “ commending his Spirit” to his almighty protection :—and amidst the storm of malice which was showered upon him, still pleading the cause and imploring the forgiveness of his murderers.

Look unto Him ; and at the same time call to mind, that the motive of this amazing humiliation was love, free love for us ; that the cause for which he suffered, was not in himself, but in us ; that to save us from the terrible wages of sin ; to reinstate us in the favour of God ; to deliver us from the wrath to come, and to purchase eternal redemption for us, and as the consequence of

redemption from sin, eternal happiness in heaven:—such were the reasons, for which our blessed Lord submitted to his great and unexampled sufferings. “ He, who knew no sin, was made sin for us ;” he humbled himself, to suffer that punishment which nothing but sin could deserve, that “ we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” When we were exposed to eternal misery, he shed his precious blood as the price of our redemption, and became the atonement and “ propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world.” When we lay under the sentence of everlasting death, he placed himself as it were in our stead, and “ tasted death for every man,” that we might have life through his blood. When we were aliens and enemies to God, he made reconciliation for us, and established a new covenant between God and us ; by which God hath graciously promised for the sake of the meritorious sacrifice of his Son, to forgive the sins of all those who repent and believe the Gospel, and to make them partakers of everlasting life and inheritors of his glory.

Thus looking unto Jesus, who “ endured the cross, despising the shame ;” and thus regarding him as “ the author and finisher of our faith,” as justifying those who believe in Him now, and as promising to glorify them hereafter ; what more

animating motive can we require to “lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and to run with patience the race which is set before us?”

And first with respect to our sins, however closely they may beset us; however dear they may be to us;—though they may be incorporated, as it were, into our substance, and made a part of ourselves, beloved and cherished as “a right hand or a right eye;”—the prospect of our blessed Saviour, bleeding upon the cross, and the reflection upon the cause for which he bled, should make us loath and detest them. If we have any sympathy with him in his sufferings, if we feel any share, however small, of the affliction which he endured, and of the contempt and malice which assailed him; that feeling must undoubtedly be mingled with indignation towards his persecutors. Do we then feel displeasure and abhorrence towards those instruments, by which our blessed Lord was exposed to such misery and torment? Do we abhor Judas, who betrayed him; the Jewish priests, who accused; Pilate, who condemned; the multitude, who mocked and reviled him? Do we detest their deeds, and execrate their memories? And shall we not at the same time detest and execrate our own sins, which were the real primary cause of that torture and disgrace? He

was delivered for our offences :—He that knew no sin was made sin for us :—our iniquities betrayed, accused, and condemned him :—our iniquities raised those hands, that smote him ; hardened those hearts, that scorned him ; and sharpened those tongues, that reviled him, and that spear, by which he was pierced. “ He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities.” And can we do otherwise than detest our transgressions ? Can we do otherwise than abhor our iniquities ? Shall we not turn again, and repent, and be converted ?

Or if indignation against the causes of our Saviour’s sufferings will not work upon us to the hatred and forsaking of sin ; can we behold the spectacle of Christ hanging upon the cross, and reflect that it was out of pure love to us, that he so suffered, and not feel our hearts warmed with sentiments of gratitude and love ? But to persevere in sin and disobedience is to slight and despise and reject our blessed Lord, who suffered and died that he might destroy sin. And can we be content to disregard the love, and to slight the kindness, of Christ ? Can we be content to despise and reject Him, who laid down his life, and suffered the greatest misery for our sakes ? Can we, after having been thus kindly and affectionately treated by him, make him a return by “ crucifying to ourselves the Son of

God afresh, and putting him to an open shame ¹?" which we always do, when we who call ourselves Christians bring by our wickedness discredit upon the religion which we profess. Can we without horror "tread under foot the Son of God, and count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing ²?" which we do, when we habitually refuse to renew our covenant with God, and to partake in the blood of Christ, administered at the holy communion? Nay, rather, shall we not take that, and every other method, of "letting our light shine before men;"—of showing our obedience, and therein our affection and gratitude for Him, who for our sakes "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;"—who for our sakes "endured the cross, despising the shame?"

Or if such considerations as these will not melt us into sorrow for our sins, and induce us to repent and forsake them; surely when we look unto Jesus Christ, that Lamb of God, offering himself to the Father without spot for our redemption, we must tremble to think upon the heinousness of our guilt; and upon the anger and impartial justice of God manifested in the crucifixion;—anger so severe, and justice so inflexible and impartial, that the death of the Son

¹ Heb. vi. 6.

² Heb. x. 29.

of God alone was sufficient to appease and propitiate them. If the dread of earthly laws prevent us from doing evil to men ; if the execution of those laws in the death of an ordinary criminal strike us with fear and reverence ; if the very pomp and ceremony, which precede or accompany such an execution cannot be beheld even by the innocent without certain awful and gloomy sensations ; what should be our horror and dismay at this unparalleled monument of divine vengeance ? with what alarming feelings and forebodings should not the sinner contemplate this singular instance of God's justice and abomination of sin ?—At the sacrifice of this victim, this spotless offering for our sins, nature itself was agitated and disturbed. There was darkness over the whole land. The sun was darkened ; and the veil of the temple was rent in twain ; and the earth did quake ; and the rocks rent ; and the graves were opened ; and many bodies which slept arose. And can we think upon these stupendous miracles, without thinking upon the power, which produced them ; and upon the justice, which rendered necessary the sacrifice and death of Him, in evidence of whom they were produced ? Whilst all nature is in confusion, and “the very foundations of the earth are out of course,” shall man alone be an unconcerned spectator of the scene, thoughtless

and careless whether he arouse that justice and power against himself? Whilst the very bodies of the saints are called from their houses of corruption to testify to the Lord of life, shall the soul of the sinner alone pass by the way, or carelessly look on, as if it were nothing to him? These inanimate objects indeed have neither speech nor language for the fleshly ear; but to the ear of faith, the darkened sun and the quaking earth, the rending rocks and the opening graves, announce the wages of sin; yea, the very blood of Christ, like "the blood of Abel, crieth" aloud "from the ground¹," and bids the listening sinner, as Christ himself bade the daughters of Jerusalem, "weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children²;" for "behold, the days are coming, in which they shall hide themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and shall say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him, that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand³?"

Such motives for forsaking our sins arise from the spectacle of Christ crucified: and to those who do forsake them, his blood through faith in his blood will be effectual for their propitiation.

¹ Gen. iv. 10.

² Luke xxiii. 28.

³ Rev. vi. 15.

“He gave himself a ransom for all¹ ;” as St. Paul saith. Then again as St. Peter tells us, “he suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps².” And to this also the Apostle directs our thoughts in the text, where he admonishes us, to “run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith ;” and to the same effect in the following verse, “consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”

Let us then, secondly, look unto Him as the perfect model for our lives. For indeed, as the Church under the law needed not, so neither doth the Church under the Gospel need, any other precept than that which was given to Moses for the offering of the tabernacle ; “look that thou do after the pattern, which was showed thee in the mount³ ;” such a pattern was showed to the Jews in Mount Sinai, where Moses was instructed in the rites of the old covenant ; and such an one is showed to us Christians, in Mount Calvary, where Christ set his seal to the new.

Were all human wisdom and philosophy lost, whatever is really valuable in them might be found there : were every teacher of virtue silent,

¹ 1 Tim. ii. 6.

² 1 Pet. ii. 21.

³ Heb. viii. 5.

even Moses himself as well as others, Christ alone would suffice to teach every virtue requisite for man. He teaches them to us not only by his precepts ; but knowing that instruction is conveyed in a more lively and impressive manner by the eye than by the ear, he teaches us also by his example : and more especially in this spectacle, which we are now contemplating upon the cross, we may behold every virtue embodied as it were in his person, and visibly exhibited before us.

Look unto Him ; and there you will behold Faith, still clinging to God, notwithstanding his apparent desertion, and addressing him by an appellation nevertheless denoting confidence, “ My God, my God.” You will behold Patience, “ enduring the cross ;” Humility, “ despising the shame ;” and Perseverance, not only beginning, but “ finishing our faith,” the work of our salvation. Above all you will behold unexampled Love, the main spring and principle, the crown and consummation of all. “ Behold what manner of love he hath here bestowed on us ¹!”—“ Greater love than this hath no man ²,” that a man lay down his life in any way : equal love hath no man to this, that a man lay down his life in the midst of such torment and dis-

¹ 1 John iii. 1.

² John xv. 13.

grace :—“ Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends :” equal love hath no man, that a man lay down his life for his enemies : look unto it and consider it ; examine it in all its parts ; survey it in all its bearings ; measure it in its “ breadth and length and depth and height¹ ;” that so ye may be able to “ comprehend” it as far as is possible, and “ to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge² .”

But wherefore, and to what purpose are our eyes directed to this pattern of excellence, if it be not that we may adopt it for our imitation ? that we may be taught by it, not to be “ wearied and faint in our minds ;” but that we may “ run the race that is set before us,” supported by those virtues, which distinguished our Saviour’s passion :—by Faith, who “ knoweth whom she hath believed, and is persuaded that He is able to keep that which she hath committed unto him against that day³ ;”—by Patience, who “ counts it all joy to fall into divers temptations⁴ ,” and “ reckons that the sufferings of this world are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us⁵ :”—by Humility, that “ doeth nothing

¹ Eph. iii. 18. ² Eph. iii. 19. ³ 2 Tim. i. 12.

⁴ James i. 2.

⁵ Rom. viii. 18.

through strife or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind esteemeth others better than herself¹;" —by Perseverance, that is "not weary in well-doing²;" and above all by Love, unbounded, unfailling, universal Love;—Love for "God who was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself³;" and Love for our brethren, yea for the whole race of mankind; partakers with us of one sinful nature, and inheritors of the same redemption.

Thus "laying aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us," and thus "running the race which is set before us," with faith, with patience, with humility, with perseverance, and with love; let us "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus⁴." For the cross of Christ is not that which terminates the prospect; the pains that he endured, the shame that he despised, are not the whole of the sight, which is presented to our eyes. Let us look unto Him once more; and our eyes will be captivated with a very different object, while beyond the cross they catch a glimpse of that state of exaltation where "he now sitteth at the right hand of the throne of God." His heaviness is now turned into joy;

¹ Phil. ii. 3.² Gal. vi. 9.³ 2 Cor. v. 19.⁴ Phil. iii. 14.

his pain into rest ; his shame into glory. He, to whom the multitude preferred a thief and murderer, is now “ raised far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come ¹.” He, for whom Pilate could discover no fitter appellation than “ Behold the man !” is now worshipped by the spirits of just men made perfect as their Lord and their God. He, whose superscription the Jewish priests condemned, and denied his right to the title of “ King of the Jews,” hath now “ upon his vesture and upon his thigh a name written, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords ².” He, who was “ despised and rejected of men,” and became “ obedient to the death of the cross,” is now exalted to “ the right hand of power ³,” and sitteth upon the throne of God.

There he sitteth ; and as from the cross of his shame, so also from “ the throne of his glory,” he calleth us to look unto Him. On the former he appears as “ the author,” on the latter as “ the finisher” of our faith : on the former he sets us an example that we should “ follow his steps ;” and from the latter he represents himself as “ the exceeding great reward” of those who shall follow him ; whilst to him that overcometh

¹ Eph. i. 21.

² Rev. xix. 16.

³ Mark xiv. 62.

he promises that he will give a crown of life, that he will receive him into the fulness of his joy, and that he will grant him to sit with him in his throne, even as he also overcame, and is made partaker of the throne of his Father¹.

And what more can we need to make us persevere in the course of Christian holiness? Are we sensible to the feelings of gratitude? Behold the love of Christ, in laying down his life for our sakes!—Are we indignant at the sight of suffering innocence? He died for our sins.—Are we capable of fear? “Knowing the terrors of the Lord,” and the punishment he denounces against the wicked, “we persuade men.”—Are we alive to a noble emulation? The example of Christ is before us, which we cannot reach indeed, but to which we may continually draw nearer.—Are we to be animated by hope? “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”

May it please our almighty and most merciful Father, who supplies us with such powerful motives for exertion, to give us grace to act as they impel us! May it please him to give such efficacy to these our contemplations on the death of Christ, that we may be inspired with godly

¹ Rev. ii. 7; iii. 21.

fortitude to renounce our sins and to follow his holy steps ! that when it shall be his good will to remove us hence we may depart in peace ; and that “ when Christ who is our life shall appear, then we may also appear with him in glory ¹ ! ”

¹ Col. iii. 4.

S E R M O N X.

INSUFFICIENCY OF WORKS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS TO PURCHASE SALVATION.

Acts iv. 11, 12.

This is the stone, which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.

Neither is there salvation in any other ; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

It is not an uncommon practice with the sacred writers, to speak of the scheme of God's bountiful revelation to mankind under the image of a building ; of which Christ is represented as the foundation and chief corner stone. It is in this manner, that the evangelical prophet Isaiah foretels the will of the Almighty ; " Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation ¹." It is in this manner

¹ Is. xxviii. 16.

that the holy Psalmist, foretelling at the same time both the salvation to be wrought by Christ, and also his rejection by the Jews, pronounces, "The stone, which the builders refused, is become the head stone of the corner¹." It is in this manner that the blessed apostles and evangelists apply the predictions of the Jewish scripture in the same figurative language to the person of Christ; and especially St. Paul dwells in a sublime passage upon the idea; and enlarges upon the foundation, the superstructure, and the completion of the fabric, when he congratulates his Ephesian converts, that "now they are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit²."

Of this well-compacted edifice, whose beginning is in the mercy of God, and whose end is God's glory and the salvation of men, you perceive that Christ is uniformly represented as the main and essential support; as indispensable for its security; as necessary to its existence. And

¹ Ps. cxviii. 22.

² Eph. ii. 19—22.

you may perceive from other Scriptures, that this honour is the peculiar property of Christ; it is one, which belongs to him, and to him alone; it is one, which cannot be taken from him, and given to another. The foundation cannot be shifted; the corner stone cannot be exchanged. "Other foundation," saith St. Paul to his converts from heathenism at Corinth, "can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ¹."—"This is the stone," saith St. Peter in my text to the Jews at Jerusalem, "which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner: neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." The claim, you see, is absolute and incommunicable. Christ is as jealous of his title and honour, as the Lord God of the Hebrews was of his. "There is one God, and there is also one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus²." He is the Saviour, and none but he: "He saveth his people from their sins;" and none, but he, will or can do it.

But who are they, that will be saved by Christ? Will all men be saved by him? Will his blood be effectual for the salvation of all

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 11.

² 1 Tim. ii. 5.

men?—Would God, that we could believe or hope it! His name indeed is given among men that they might be saved; his name (we doubt not) is sufficient for all men; but to those alone it will be ultimately effectual, who place their sure trust and confidence in his name, and who seek and cling unto him by faith;—by “faith, which,” as St. Paul says, “worketh by love¹;”—faith, which, in the language of St. James, “is made perfect by works²;”—faith, which, as St. Peter implies, is ratified by obedience. “Unto you which believe,” saith the last Apostle in his Catholic Epistle, still keeping sight of the figure before alluded to, “Unto you which believe, is Jesus Christ precious; but unto them, which are disobedient, the stone, which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient³.”

Now these words of St. Peter, compared with those of the same Apostle in my text, point out to us the principal cause of the ruin of such as are lost, notwithstanding Christ be preached to them. They would gladly perhaps accept salvation, if they could be admitted to it in their own way :

¹ Gal. v. 6.

² James ii. 22.

³ 1 Pct. ii. 7, 8.

but Almighty God, at the same time that he tenders salvation to men, chooses that it should be received by one specific method. He offers salvation through faith in Christ Jesus: "neither is there salvation in any other;" for he declares that "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Many, who would accept the offer, will not close with the terms. Instead of trusting for their salvation to the righteousness of Christ, they "go about to establish their own righteousness¹." Instead of "growing unto an holy temple in the Lord," through faith in the merits of Him, who is the chief corner stone, they endeavour to establish their salvation on the imaginary groundwork of their own merits. So it was in the first times of the Gospel: it was in vain that the apostles of our Lord impressed on their hearers the great, the essential principle of the Christian faith, salvation by Christ alone. Did they tell the Gentiles, that "other foundation could no man lay, than that they laid, which is Jesus Christ²?"—"Spoiled through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world," the doctrine of salvation through faith in a crucified Redeemer was unto the heathens "foolishness." Did they

¹ Rom. x. 3.

² Rom. iii. 11.

warn the Jews, that “there was none other name under heaven given unto men whereby they must be saved,” but only the name of the Lord Jesus Christ? Vain of their peculiar privileges, and fancying that they should be justified by their adherence, however imperfect, to the law of Moses, the doctrine of salvation through that man, whom they had crucified, was “a stumbling block unto the Jews.” Nay, when they had so far overcome their prejudices, as to profess their belief in Christ, and to become disciples of the Gospel, still there were many among them, who could hardly be persuaded to throw themselves on the meritorious sacrifice of the only Saviour, and to renounce the observance of their own legal rites and ceremonies, as contributing in part to their salvation. And it was a doctrine which their hardness of heart rendered necessary to be perpetually inculcated upon them, that if they resorted for justification to an observance of the law, “Christ profited them nothing; Christ was become of no effect unto them;—that in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availed any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith, which worketh by love¹.”

These were the errors, with which the apostles had to contend, when they first preached Christ-

¹ Gal. v. 2. 4. 6.

ianity : and the origin of the errors was this, that the men, to whom it was preached, did not submit their wills absolutely to the will of God ; did not cheerfully embrace “ the riches of his grace ” in the way, in which he would bestow it ; that they endeavoured to “ lay another foundation,” than that which he by his apostles laid ; that they sought salvation in some other name, than in his, “ who is alone the head of the corner.” The consequence was, that notwithstanding salvation was offered unto all men, some were saved, and others perished ; that whilst to some it was “ the savour of life unto life,” to others it was “ the savour of death unto death ¹.”

Are these remarks introduced as matter for mere idle speculation ? Are they applicable only to the early ages of the Gospel ? Are the errors, to which they direct our thoughts, no longer in existence ? Have these errors vanished before the superior degree of illumination, to which pretension is made in this, which we vauntingly esteem an enlightened age ? Do we, for instance, who are here assembled ;—do we amid all the brightness of superior knowledge which encompasses us, cherish the glorious light of the Gospel, the Day-spring from on high, the revelation of God’s

¹ 2 Cor. ii. 16.

love and free grace in Christ, as the best and most inestimable of all the "good and perfect gifts," which "come down from the Father of lights?" Do we know and feel, that there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved, but only the name of our Lord Jesus Christ? Or do we go about to establish our own righteousness, resting our hopes on the one hand, like the Jews, upon our own obedience to the law of God, instead of relying on the all-sufficient merits and the perfect obedience of Christ; or like the Gentiles on the other hand, substituting a vague and heartless morality for the glowing faith, the unfailing charity, and the undefiled holiness of the Gospel?

Each of these errors is of very dangerous consequence, inconsistent as it is with the fundamental truth of Christianity, that there is no other name whereby we must be saved, but only the name of Jesus Christ. Each of them therefore requires to be separately considered: and the more so, as they relate to the condition of a large portion of mankind; the former being entertained by those, who, with a general belief in the Christian religion, have yet a very inadequate conception of the value of Christ's sacrifice; and the latter being held by those, who esteem what they denominate natural religion sufficient for their salvation, without the sacrifice of Christ.

And first, with respect to those, who think they can purchase salvation by a *meritorious* obedience to the revealed will of God.

Now the obedience of such persons must be either perfect or imperfect. Is it, can it be, perfect? Ask your own consciences, and let them sincerely answer the question, whether your thoughts, words, and deeds are in all things regulated by the rule of God's commandments;—whether you have not “followed too much the devices and desires of your own hearts;”—whether you have not “offended against God's holy laws;”—whether you have not “left undone those things which you ought to have done, and done those things which you ought not to have done?” Let them confirm the confession of St. James, “In many things we offend all¹.” Let them bear witness to the truth of St. John's declaration, “If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us².”

Our obedience then is imperfect: in other words, although in some respects we may obey the commandments of God, in others we unquestionably disobey them. Now where we obey them, it is so far well, that we are in those particulars doing our duty; but still even in those,

¹ James iii. 2.

² 1 John i. 8.

it is no more than our duty that we do. Nor can the performance of our duty in one case make amends for our neglect, or violation, of it in another. Our Saviour illustrates this point by a familiar instance drawn from domestic life, and expressly asserts the doctrine, for which I am contending. "Which of you," he demands, "having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me till I have eaten and drunken, and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye," adds our blessed Lord, making the application of the case to us who are the servants of God, "when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do¹."

But whilst a partial obedience cannot make us meritorious in the eyes of God, a partial disobedience must expose us to his displeasure. Imposed upon us by the same authority, all

¹ Luke xvii. 7—10.

his commandments are equally binding. The authority then is slighted, the tie of duty is broken, the principle of allegiance is violated, whenever and in whatever degree those commandments, even the least of them, are disobeyed. And it is in inspired language that we affirm, that "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all¹."

We perceive therefore how frail is the foundation on which we build, if we expect to merit God's favour and our future salvation by obedience to his commandments. We shall hardly dare to aver that our obedience to them is perfect: and if it be once allowed to fall short of perfection, it cannot be in ourselves to offer any atonement and compensation for its failures. If indeed it were in our power to make such an atonement, we should not stand in need of the propitiation made by the sacrifice of Christ: the Apostle's language is of force when applied to the Christian, who trusts to his own obedience as the price of his salvation, as it was to the Jew, who relied on his performance of the Mosaic law: "if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain²." That atonement then

¹ James ii. 10.

² Gal. ii. 21.

not being in ourselves, we must have recourse to some other propitiation ; even to Him, who “ died for our sins and rose again for our justification¹.”

Do I mean to speak contemptuously or slightly of obedience to the commandments of God? God forbid! Such obedience I understand to be, generally speaking, indispensably necessary to salvation :—the surest evidence, the constant accompaniment, the fairest ornament, the only infallible criterion, the very crown and perfection, of a true Christian faith. It is that without which faith is “ nothing,” and “ is dead².” But my meaning is to set obedience upon its true scriptural ground ; to exclude it from every pretension to be considered as meriting our salvation : to protest most decidedly against the notion, that any thing or every thing, which we can do, is to be considered in the light of an atonement for what we do not do : and to assert most unequivocally the doctrine, that after all the exertions of a Christian, he must throw himself unreservedly for salvation upon the meritorious sacrifice of Christ ; for that there is “ no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.”

It is usual with persons of a certain description, who appear to entertain very inadequate

¹ Rom. iv. 25.

² 1 Cor. xiii. 2. James ii. 17. 20. 26.

conceptions of the Christian revelation, to represent it as especially valuable in the light of a code of morals. A code of morals indeed it is ; purer, than was ever conceived by the corrupt heart of man ; and more perfect, than was ever framed by the masters of human wisdom. But this is not its distinguishing, this is not its characteristic praise ; this is not the praise, which it claims exclusively to itself, and which it allows not to be shared with other teachers of mankind. Its glory, its peculiar and incommunicable glory is, that it reveals the plan of salvation to the fallen posterity of Adam, by the free and undeserved grace of God, and through a lively operative faith in the blood of a crucified Saviour. And he who recommends, or he who adopts the Gospel, merely as a code of morals, distinct from and independent of faith in Christ, is, as to all the main purposes of that revelation, attempting to raise the superstructure, whilst he “ rejects the head-stone of the corner.”

II. But if even obedience to the revealed will and known word of God is not sufficient to purchase for us the divine favour ; and the blood of Christ is necessary to make atonement even for those, who believe in, and study to serve him ; what shall we say of that vague, that questionable, and frigid morality, which the modern philosopher teaches, and the man of the world

practises, as a substitute for the glowing faith, the unfailing charity, and the spotless holiness required of the Christian ; a morality, unsound and defective in its principles, uncertain in its production of good ; and often permitting and sanctioning evil ?

As to the principles of this worldly, this philosophical morality, what are they ? Is it founded on a devout love and fear and reverence of God ; on a lowly admiration of his perfections, and a very earnest desire and longing to be approved before him ? The mere moral man would esteem it an insult to be thought capable of such a principle of action. Is it founded on a steadfast principle of benevolence to mankind ? The philosopher will boast that it is so ; he has boasted it ; we have seen, we have heard him boast it ; we have heard him ostentatiously vaunting his enlarged philanthropy, his boundless affection for human kind ; whilst he has been striving to blast all their enjoyments in this world, by crushing their hopes of comfort in another.

But what is the principle of the mere moral man ? Is it the fear of worldly shame or punishment ; or the desire of worldly honour, or reward ? Is it custom ? Is it expedience ? Is it an innate sense of what is right ; and an innate love of virtue, and hatred of vice in the abstract, animating him to the practice of rectitude ? What-

ever it be, it is unsound and defective ; and can never be put in competition with the love of God, founded on a reverential sense of the divine perfections, and exerting itself in beneficence to man.

For look to its effects ; and you will see that it is limited in its operation of good ; it is liable to innumerable fluctuations according to the circumstances under which it acts ; and it allows and encourages, nay it enjoins, various actions of a character decidedly evil. I do not dispute, but that a general decency and outward propriety of conduct may be maintained, or that specious and splendid, nay that in a certain sense great and noble, actions may be performed, upon worldly principles : but I do indeed call in question the value of such principles, in cases of extraordinary trial ; where general opinion militates against our sense of rectitude ; where what is profitable or agreeable clashes with what we esteem our duty ; or where our passions are up in arms against us, or lie in wait to seduce and deceive. A fear of the censure, and a thirst for the applause of the world—motives like these for instance—may cooperate with a man's natural endowments, and enable him to support his part, generally without any glaring impropriety, and even with much of what the world calls dignity, on the great theatre of life. But is he possessed of that, which will invigorate him in scenes of a

less ostentatious kind, and amid more arduous and seducing trials? Will his principles animate him to the practice of the retired and private virtues, as well as of those, which thrive in the sunshine of popularity? Will his principles prompt him to submit with pious resignation to the chastening hand of Providence, and to kiss the rod which smites him? Will they prompt him to bear unmerited persecution with a spirit, which triumphs in forgiveness? Will they prompt him to "visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world?" Captivated as he pretends to be with the loveliness of abstract virtue, and alive to the moral fitness of things, and to the dictates of the moral sense, will his principles restrain him from tyrannizing over them that have none to help them; from staking the welfare of his family on the hazard of a die; from defiling the bed of his neighbour; from exposing the chastity of his wife to ruin by criminal neglect, or no less criminal indulgence; or from arming his hand against his friend? Look abroad into the world, and observe the morality of many of those, who would not only themselves resent any imputation upon their characters; but whom the world is content to esteem, as persons of general respectability. Turn to the treatises of some of our modern philosophers; and see the morality which

they patronize and commend. It was the detestable attempt of a late countryman of our own, who was accounted by many the first philosopher of his age, and whose writings are still perpetually cited with admiration;—in a work designed to settle the principles of morals on their proper foundation—it was his nefarious attempt, to establish principles which would destroy the morality of all human actions; to justify suicide by arguments, which are as conclusive in favour of murder; and to palliate adultery by representing it, as a sacrifice of useful to agreeable qualities, of the domestic to the sociable pleasures.

And shall we, like the poor prodigal, flee from our father's house, “where there is bread enough, and to spare,” and feed on such “husks” as these? Shall we forsake “the living fountains” of salvation, and drink from such cisterns, such “broken cisterns,” as these? Surely if a sincere but imperfect obedience to the moral precepts of the Gospel cannot put away our sins, and endure “the severity of God's judgments;” much less is it the morality of the world, which can reconcile us to a holy and a righteous God. If the blood of Christ be necessary to wash away the sins even of his faithful followers, much more must it be wanted to purify the pollution contracted by such philosophy as this.

Renouncing then on the one hand the Jewish notion of meriting salvation by our obedience to the law ; and watching over ourselves on the other, lest, like the Heathens, we be spoiled by false philosophy and vain deceit, by the traditions of men, by the rudiments of this world ; let us stedfastly adhere to the true evangelical doctrine of salvation through the alone merits of the Redeemer. To place our reliance on any thing else is to build upon the sand : but Christ is the “ chief corner stone, elect, precious ;” and although the self-righteous may slight, or the infidel may reject him, yet whosoever “ believeth on him, shall not be confounded ¹.”

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 6.

SERMON XI.

OBEDIENCE TO CHRIST NECESSARY TO THE SALVATION OF CHRISTIANS.

MATT. vii. 21.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

OF the persons, who call themselves Christians, and profess to be the disciples of Christ, there are two sorts : those who call Christ their “ Lord,” and do no more : and those, who both call him Lord, and “ do the will of his Father,” the administration of which is committed to him. With respect to the former of these, namely such as to a profession of allegiance to Christ, unite no works of obedience ; however favourably they may think of their own state, our Saviour in this passage expressly excludes them from “ the kingdom of heaven.” With respect to the other description, namely that of those, who not only

call Christ their Lord, but do the will of his Father, they are the only true Christians ; and of them it is as expressly said by our Saviour, that they “ shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

The text consists of two parts : the former is negative ; “ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven :” the other affirmative ; “ but they who do the will of my heavenly Father,” shall enter therein. But the two parts are so intimately connected, that they cannot well be considered separately : they shall therefore serve together for the ground of the observations, which I propose with God’s blessing to draw from them. * And first, I shall endeavour to show, that obedience to Christ is necessary to the salvation of those, who profess themselves to be his disciples : secondly, I shall proceed to remark, that in obedience to Christ is comprised, not only abstinence from evil, but activity in doing good : and I shall then conclude with setting before you, in what manner those good works, which are necessary to our salvation, are to be performed. May it please Almighty God to give us the preventing and assisting grace of his Holy Spirit ; and prosper our meditations to the honour of the Gospel of his Son !

I. In discussing the first of these observations, namely, that obedience to Christ is necessary to

the salvation of those who call themselves Christians, let us begin with considering that this is the very end of our faith and justification by Christ; yea, the very end, on account of which he shed his blood for us—that we, being reconciled to God by him, might bring forth fruits of righteousness, which otherwise we could not have produced. This is no speculation; but plain Scripture: no human conceit; but the revealed truth of the Holy Ghost. St. Peter tells us, that “Christ his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness¹.” St. Paul assures us, “The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men:”—wherefore?—“teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works².” These words are an unanswerable testimony to the truth of the assertion, that Christ is given to be a propitiation for our sins and the price of our justification, for this very end, that we might

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 24.

² Tit. ii. 12—14.

walk before God in newness of life, in a holy and righteous obedience to his commandments.

To the same effect is that passage to the Ephesians, where the Apostle having affirmed, "We are saved by grace, through faith, and not of works, lest any man should boast;" he immediately adds, (lest his meaning should be mistaken, as unhappily it too often is,) "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them¹:" as if he should say, Those works of obedience, formerly ordained by God in his law for us to walk in, but which of ourselves we could not perform—now hath God new created us, as it were, in Jesus Christ, that we might perform them in him, and so be finally accepted for his sake, though our obedience come short of that perfect obedience, which the law requires. And thus to be saved is to be saved by grace and favour, and not by the merit of works; because the foundation, on which is built the acceptance of ourselves and of our services in the sight of God, is the mere favour of God in Jesus Christ, and not any thing in us. And this method of salvation excludes all boasting; for what have we to boast of, when all the righteousness of our works is not derived from

¹ Eph. ii. 10.

ourselves, but is the righteousness of Christ imputed to us ; whereby alone, and not for any merit in themselves, they become acceptable, and receive the promise of a reward ? But that men should be saved by Christ, though they are idle and careless about the work of their salvation—I know of no such grace of God revealed in Scripture.

Now that in Christ we may perform works of righteousness, which God will accept and crown, is plain from the tenor of Scripture. St. Paul desires, that the Philippians “might be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God¹.” And the same Apostle tells the Romans, “That being made free from sin, and become servants to God, they have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life².”

And if we would seriously consider it, we should find, that the more we believe this righteousness of faith in Christ, the more reason we have to perform works of obedience unto God ; infinitely more indeed, than if we believed it not. For if our works would not be acceptable with God, unless they were complete in every point, as the law required ; if there were no reward to be expected at the hands of God, unless we could

¹ Phil. i. 11.

² Rom. vi. 22.

merit it by the worthiness of our deeds ; who, that considers his own weakness and insufficiency, would not despair, rather than endeavour to please God by his works ? But we, who believe that they who serve God in Christ, will have their failings and defects covered by his righteousness, and so have their works accepted—what more powerful motive can we have, to induce us to be “ always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that” for the sake of his merits, not of our own, “ our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord ?”

2. And this leads me to remark secondly, that obedience to God’s commandments is necessary to Christians, not only because it is the end, for which Christ shed his blood ; but because such obedience is the way and means ordained by God, by which we are to obtain the reward of eternal life, and without which we cannot attain it. On the one hand we have the Apostle instructing Timothy for the matter of his preaching, to “ charge them that are rich in this world—that they do good ; that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may attain, or lay hold on, eternal life :”—on the other hand, we hear him admonishing the Hebrews, to “ follow holiness,” upon the ground

that "without it no man shall see the Lord." And what is the sentence, which will be pronounced upon the righteous, as our blessed Saviour himself tells us in the representation that he has given of the day of judgment? "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. For verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." What now shall we think of those, who consider good works as not necessary to their salvation, and therefore do them not? Will our Saviour pass this blessed sentence upon them? Or is it to be supposed, that Christ will change the form of the sentence, which he himself has told us will be passed, in the day of judgment? Is it to be supposed then, that the warning, which he has given us, is nugatory and false? Surely not: but they, on whom the sentence of happiness cannot be pronounced;—they, who have not been rich in the works of Christian righteousness;—they in short who have not been obedient to Christ's commandments; they have no other sentence to

expect, than that which will be pronounced upon those on the left hand; “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.”

And let it be here further noticed, that the works specified in these sentences of God’s righteous judgment, are works of the second table;—works of mercy and charity; feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick;—works, which are too often decried, as not in any degree conducing to our everlasting happiness. But will it be so in the day of judgment?—True indeed it is, they *merit* not the reward which will be given them:—but what then?—Are we so proud that we will do no works, unless we may claim merit from them? Is it not sufficient that God will reward them for Christ’s sake, though they have no *worth* in themselves? Let this suffice for the second argument to prove the necessity of obedience to Christ, because, although our best works can merit nothing, yet are they the means and way ordained by God, whereby we may attain the reward of eternal life.

3. A third and last argument to prove the necessity of works of righteousness to those who call upon Christ and profess themselves to be his

disciples, is, that such works are the only sign and testimony, whereby we know that we have a true and saving, and not a counterfeit faith. Let us hear the testimony of the beloved disciple. "If we say we have fellowship with Christ, and walk in darkness; we lie, and do not the truth." —"Hereby we know that we know him," (that is, to be "our Advocate with the Father, and the propitiation for our sins,")—"if we keep his commandments." —"Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as Christ is righteous¹." Faith in Jesus Christ is faith in the Saviour, who came into the world to save penitent sinners. And that only is a true saving faith, which leads sinners to repentance. Faith in Jesus Christ is faith in Him, who died to "purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Nor can that be a true and saving faith, which does not show itself by its fruits of righteousness, and "work" (as the Apostle says) "by love." Our Saviour himself therefore represents obedience to his commandments, as the sure and infallible criterion by which we may judge of our spiritual condition. For taking occasion from the mention of the words of the text, he demands, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which

¹ 1 John i. 6; ii. 3; iii. 7.

I say ? Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings and *doeth them*, I will show you to whom he is like. He is like a man, which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock ; and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth and *doeth not*, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth : against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great." Upon these three arguments we may support the doctrine expressly delivered in the text ; and so prove the necessity of Christians rendering obedience to the commandments of God. And whomsoever the motives, involved in these three arguments, will not persuade to the practice of such obedience, let not my soul, O Lord, be joined with theirs, nor my doom be as theirs must be !

II. I proceed then to the second observation, nearly related indeed to the former, that in obedience to Christ is comprised not only abstinence from evil, but activity in doing good : that it is not enough for a Christian to live harmlessly, but he must exercise himself in positive virtue. For our Saviour in the text excludes, not only those who act in opposition to the will of his Father, but those also, who "*do not his*

Father's will." It is the doing of good which he requires, and not only the not doing of evil. This is an error, which deceives a very numerous portion of mankind, even of those, who would seem to be religious. He is commonly esteemed a good man and a Christian ; and is judged by himself at least, if not by others, to be in the way of salvation ; who abstains from fornication, adultery, drunkenness, revellings ; who is not a robber or a defrauder of other men ; who is not guilty of profaneness, falsehood, or other ordinary sins ; although as to active works of piety and charity, as to a conscientious devotion of himself and all his talents to the service of God and man—as to these things, he practises them not, nor considers that they are required of him.

Such men are greatly deceived. God requires some duties at our hands, that he may reward them, not out of any merit which they possess, but of his own free grace, to his own glory, and according to his merciful promise in Christ Jesus. But the not doing of evil is not a service, on which a reward will be bestowed. A servant, who expects wages, a steward who desires to be honoured by his master, (and what are we, any of us, but servants and stewards to our heavenly Master?) must not only do his employer no harm, but must do him some work, that is good and useful. If not, instead of a reward, he must

be prepared for correction and punishment. In respect to our spiritual services, the Scripture is express to the point. He that increased not his master's talent, though he had not mis-spent it, is sentenced as an "unprofitable servant," and cast into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth. The tree, that "beareth no good fruit," is hewn down, though it bear none that is evil. The fig-tree was cursed for having "no fruit," not for having evil fruit. The foolish virgins were excluded from the feast, not for having wasted but for having neglected to provide themselves with oil. And the sentence of condemnation, as we heard before, is to be passed in the great day for having failed in the active duties of Christian benevolence, the omission of which will be punished as a sin. "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not. Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."

III. Having thus seen the necessity of obedience, of active obedience to the will of God, in those who call upon the name of Christ, and hope for salvation through him, it remains that

we consider briefly, as was proposed, in conclusion, how the good works, required of a Christian, are to be performed.

1. And first, we must do them out of faith in Christ: we must rely upon him alone for their acceptance and reward: for in him alone God is well-pleased with us and with what we do; and therefore “without faith” and reliance upon him, “it is impossible to please God¹.” We must not think there is any worth in our works, for which the reward promised us by God is due: for alas! our very best works are full of imperfections, and fall far short of that measure which the law requires. Our reward therefore is not of merit, but of the merciful promise of God in Christ; which the Apostle means, when he says, “We are saved by grace, and not by works:” that is, it is the grace and favour of God in Christ which makes ourselves acceptable, and our works meet for a reward; and not any desert in them or in us.

2. Having laid this foundation of faith in Christ, the next thing required of us is sincerity of heart: we must perform the duties prescribed to us, not out of regard to profit, or praise, or the fear of men, but from the fear of God, and a conscientious reverence for his com-

¹ Heb. xi. 6.

mandments. "Not every one," our Saviour declares, "that saith unto me, Lord, Lord; but he that doeth the will of my Father." Now it is the will of our heavenly Father, that we serve him in truth and uprightness of heart. "I know," saith David, "that thou, my God, triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness¹." And so the Lord said to Abraham, "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect," i. e. "upright, or sincere²."

Would we know, whether we have this sincerity and truth of heart? If in our secret retirement, when there is no witness but God, we are as careful to abstain from sin, as we are in the sight of men; if, when God alone sees and knows it, we are as willing to do a righteous deed, as if it were published to the world;—if we find ourselves thus affected, we may trust, that our heart is true. In the presence and sight of men, we may easily be deceived; and fancy we do that out of conscience and fear of God, which we really do out of regard to the applause or censure of men. But when none are present but God and ourselves, then to abstain from evil and to do good, is a sign that we serve God, not in hypocrisy, but with sincerity and truth.

Would we desire (as indeed who would not?)

¹ 1 Chron. xxix. 17.

² Gen. xxiii. 1.

to attain this sincerity and truth of heart? Let us strive to possess ourselves always with the sense of God's presence, and to walk before him as in his sight. Wheresoever thou art, there is an eye, that sees thee; an ear, that hears thee; and a hand, that registereth thy most secret thoughts: "For the ways of man," saith Solomon, "are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings¹." Should we not be ashamed for men to know how much our hearts, and our words and actions disagree? Should we not blush for men to see us, committing a known and wilful sin, or neglecting a plain and prescribed duty? What an evil heart of unbelief then does it argue, that we should suffer the presence of a man, it may be even of a child, to prevent us from that wickedness, which the presence of God cannot hinder us from committing! Surely to have God continually before our eyes, and to be continually meditating on his all-seeing presence, aided by devout prayer for the assistance of his grace, would banish at length all hypocrisy and falsehood of heart, and beget in stead that truth and sincerity, which God loveth. Surely it might be expected, that we should labour to renounce all deceit and guile, if we could be thoroughly possessed of an awful sense of our

¹ Prov. v. 21

lying open to that perfect Being, who is “about our path, and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways; who knoweth altogether every word that is in our tongue, and understandeth our thoughts long before” they are uttered.

3. One other property of the obedience which God requires, is, that it be universal. We must not serve God by halves. We must not perform some duties, and neglect others. We must, as David says, “have respect to all God’s commandments¹ ;” to those of the second table as well as those of the first; to the offices of morality, as well as those of religion; to our duty to man, jointly with our duty to God.

The duties of the first table are specially called the duties of religion: those of the second come under the appellation of morality;—honesty, probity, and charity. Now as a man can never be truly honest, unless he be religious; (for the love of God and a conscientious observance of his commandments is the only sure foundation of moral duty :) so on the other hand, whatever show of religion a man may make, he cannot be truly religious in God’s judgment, unless he is honest in his conversation towards his neighbour. We know that all our duty, both to God and to our neighbour, is comprehended under the name

¹ Ps. cxix. 6.

of love : as in that summary of the law, “ Love God above all things, and love thy neighbour as thyself.” This is the summary of the whole law, contained in the two tables. But St. John tells us, “ If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar¹ :” as if he had said, He that seems religious towards God, and is without honesty towards his neighbour, he is a liar ; he is destitute of true religion.

Would we know then, whether a man, who makes profession of religion by diligent attendance on the public services of devotion, be a sound, or only a seeming, Christian ; let us take the universality of his obedience for the criterion by which we are to judge. For if, notwithstanding his attention to the duties of the first table, he disregards the second, which is enforced by the same authority, and does not endeavour to have a conscience void of offence towards his neighbour as well as towards God : if he be disobedient to parents and to lawful authority ; if he be cruel and uncharitable ; if he be unjust in his dealings, fraudulent, an oppressor, a breaker of covenants and promises, a backbiter, a slanderer, or in any other instance a violator of the duties which he owes to man : however in the outward forms of devotion, he may “ seem

¹ 1 John iv. 20.

to be religious, this man's religion is vain¹." His religion indeed is no better than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, on whom our Saviour pronounced the sentence of condemnation; "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites²." They were scrupulous in the duties of the first table; they paid tithe even of mint and anise; they fasted twice in the week; they were exact observers of the Sabbath, and of other ceremonies of religion: but judgment, mercy, and faith in their conversation with men, our Saviour tells them, these they regarded not.

Upon the whole, and to conclude with a short summary of what has now been proposed for your consideration; let us bear in mind, that obedience to the commandments of God cannot but be indispensable to the salvation of us, who call upon the name of Christ; inasmuch as Christ gave himself for us, to enable us to perform it; inasmuch as he has ordained it to be the ways and means, whereby we may attain eternal life through his meritorious sacrifice; and inasmuch as it is by obedience alone that a true and saving faith in him is manifested. Further, let us bear in mind, that such obedience comprises, not only abstinence from sin, but activity in the performance of our Christian duties; not only the

¹ James i. 26.

² Matt. xxiii. 13.

“eschewing of evil,” but the “doing of good.” Finally, let us endeavour to practise it in that way, which the word of God requires. Let our obedience be founded on faith in Christ, and look to his merits alone to procure its reward:—let it be sincere; exerting itself in a conscientious fear of God, and reverence for his commandments:—and let it be universal, not contented with the observance of a part only, but extending (as far as human infirmity will allow) to the keeping of all the commandments of God. May the Spirit of grace enable us thus to act! And so may the blood of Christ render our imperfect services acceptable; and conduct us finally to the inheritance which he hath purchased for them, who “do the will of his Father which is in heaven!”

SERMON XII.

EFFECTS OF DISOBEDIENCE EXEMPLIFIED IN THE PUNISHMENT OF SAUL.

1 SAM. xv. 22, 23.

And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king.

OBEDIENCE to his commandments is the test, by which at all times it has pleased Almighty God to try the fidelity of his rational creatures. "To fear God and to keep his commandments," has been at all times "the duty of man." In the law, which was given by Moses, the Israelites were commanded, to "love the Lord their God; to walk in his ways; and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments¹."

¹ Deut. xxx. 16.

The dispensation of “ grace and truth, which came by Jesus Christ,” declares it in terms equally unequivocal, to be no less the duty of the Christian to “ love God,” and to show that love by “ keeping his commandments¹ ;” and expressly sets before us the sum and essence of religion in that comprehensive sentence, that “ circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing ; but the keeping of the commandments of God² .” In one respect indeed the Christian revelation differs materially from the Jewish ;— in that it represents in a clearer and stronger light the inability of weak and sinful man to keep God’s commandments as they should be kept ; in that it more fully sets forth the imperfectness of our obedience, and so strips it of all meritorious claim to God’s favour ; and as it more pointedly admonishes us to consider the favour, which God may be pleased to show us, as shown “ not of debt, but of grace ;” not as due to our merits, but as freely given for the sake of Jesus Christ. Still, as I said before, obedience to the commandments of God is no less strictly enforced by the Gospel than by the Law ; it is no less the duty of the disciple of Christ, than it was of the follower of Moses. “ If we would enter into life,” through the merits of Him who died to save us, we must

¹ John xiv. 15.² 1 Cor. vii. 19.

“keep the commandments¹ :” whilst on the other hand, “the Lord Jesus shall take vengeance on the day of judgment in flaming fire on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ² .”

It is from this consideration that the historical parts of the Old Testament derive their principal interest. Take away from the Christian his obligation to keep God’s commandments, and it follows, that the examples of virtue and vice which the Jewish Scriptures afford, however they may interest us on account of the persons in whose characters and conduct they were exhibited, become altogether of no value, as to any effect which they might produce practically in ourselves. On the contrary let it be allowed, that the Christian is bound equally with the Jew to keep the commandments of God ; and then every example of obedience on the one hand, and on the other hand every example of disobedience, which the Old Testament contains, become respectively an encouragement or a warning to us, in our conduct towards that supreme Being, in whose sight, now as ever, “to obey is better than sacrifice,” and who never faileth to “reject them, who reject his word.”

Of the fatal effects of disobedience we have an

¹ Matt. xix. 17.

² 2 Thess. i. 8.

awful example in the narrative, the moral of which is briefly comprised in the solemn declaration of the text. On this account, and because it affords an instance of several modes of self-delusion, which men are accustomed to practise for their own quiet, whilst they are living, as their consciences, if suffered to speak, would tell them, in a state of enmity with God, and consequently in a state of extreme spiritual danger ; I propose with the divine blessing to go through the narrative in detail, and to found upon it such observations, as may appear likely with the grace of God to render the example of disobedience before us of the greatest practical benefit to ourselves.

Saul having been exalted by the special appointment of the Almighty, and anointed king over Israel, was commissioned by the prophet Samuel in the name of the Lord of Hosts, to perform a specific service. The terms of the commission were plain and definite ; and the service such as could not be mistaken. “ Thus saith the Lord of Hosts ; I remember that which Amalek did to Israel ; how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go, and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not : but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.” The commission

was a sentence of complete extermination, pronounced by the Lord of Hosts as an act of retributive justice upon a sinful people ; and intrusted to his chosen servant for execution ; for the accomplishment of a menace, which the Lord had before more than once delivered, that he would “utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven¹.”

Such was the commandment given to Saul ; and such was the authority that gave it :—the authority was that of the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel :—the commandment was to “smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they had, and to spare them not.” Let us see now in what way the commandment was performed.

“And Saul gathered the people together.—And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and laid wait in the valley. And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah until thou comest to Shur, which is over against Egypt. And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive ; and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good ; and would not utterly destroy them ; but every thing that was vile and refuse,

¹ Exodus xvii. 14. Deut. xxv. 19.

that they destroyed utterly." Such was the obedience which Saul manifested to the Lord of Hosts ; such was the way, in which he executed his commandment.

Now did we not know the "desperate deceitfulness of the heart of man," we should suppose, that after this instance of disobedience, Saul, conscious of his guilt, would have hid himself, if possible, from the Lord God ; nor have ventured to appear even in the presence of his Prophet. But that "stubborn and rebellious" spirit, which had prompted him to disobey the Lord, first made him blind to his guilt, and then instigated him to justify it. On the approach of Samuel, who had been deputed by the Lord to denounce punishment on the disobedient king, Saul betrayed no symptoms of a guilty and alarmed conscience ; but received the Prophet with a salutation, which showed, not only that he was insensible to the fault which he had committed, but also that he gloried in the performance of it. "And Samuel came unto Saul : And Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the Lord, I have performed the commandment of the Lord." Strange, that he could thus deceive himself into a belief, that he had performed a commandment, when his actions had been in direct opposition to it ! Strange, that he could think to deceive the Lord of Hosts, when nothing was wanted to con-

vict him of disobedience more than the senses of the Prophet! For “Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?” If thou hast performed the commandment of the Lord, what means the preservation of these cattle, the destruction of which was part of that commandment?—Observe now the conduct of Saul; and see how, when he is convicted of the fact of disobedience, he attempts to shelter himself from its criminality. And first, he endeavours to throw the blame upon the people, who were under his command: who appear to have acted by his orders; and whom, even had he been unable to control them, he ought not to have “followed to do evil.” “They have brought them from the Amalekites,” said he; “for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God: and the rest we have utterly destroyed.” Again condemned by the voice of the Prophet, accused of adding ingratitude to disobedience, and of sacrificing the word of the Lord to the gratification of his own covetousness, he sets up another principle of defence; and justifies his partial breach of the Lord’s commandment upon the ground of having partly observed it. “And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel,

and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel? And the Lord sent thee on a journey, and said, Go, and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the Lord? And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord; and have gone the way which the Lord sent me; and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites." Nay, not only does he thus justify himself by his partial obedience for the disobedience of which he was guilty; but he seems also to make a virtue of his sin, and to advance a claim to merit upon the very ground of the evil which he had committed. "But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things, which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal:"—as if any thing which man can devise, could be equally pleasing to the Lord, or equally the duty of man, as the keeping of God's commandments: or as if any voluntary acts and offices of religion could compensate for disobedience to a prescribed and known law! The fallacy of this noxious principle the Prophet accordingly declares in the words of the text; and having condemned the principle itself, proceeds to pass

that sentence, which the Lord had sent him to pronounce, upon the disobedient and sinful king : “ And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord ? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king.”

Upon these particulars in the conduct of Saul, let us proceed to found such observations, as may appear likely with the grace of God to be practically beneficial to ourselves.

1. Saul, acting under a special commandment of the Lord, was guilty of a direct violation of that commandment : yet blind to his fault, and even exulting in the commission of it, he exclaimed, “ I have performed the commandment of the Lord.” Is this delusion unnatural ? is it uncommon ? rather are there not multitudes of men, who give themselves up to the same blindness and presumption ? The same almighty Lord, who spake unto the Israelitish king by a prophet, “ has in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.”—He proposes to us his commandments in language as plain and decided, as that which Samuel employed to Saul. He bids us

make war against our spiritual enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil ; he commands us to resist and subdue our sins ; as expressly as he commanded Saul to make war against the sinners the Amalekites, and to destroy them. A commandment on the part of God implies a power to observe the commandment on the part of man, so far as to satisfy him who gave it. But more than this, he unequivocally tells us, that he will befriend us in this our spiritual warfare ; that “ his grace is sufficient for us ;” that weak and inefficient as we are of ourselves, his “ strength is made perfect in weakness¹.” Plain as his commandments are, there are many persons, who slight, there are many who disobey them. I speak not of casual delinquencies, the unavoidable effects of human infirmity : but I speak of the wilful breach, of the wilful neglect, of God’s laws ; I speak of duties, deliberately and repeatedly disregarded ; of sins, deliberately and repeatedly committed ; of vices, so often and so systematically followed, that they become at length habitual to the sinner ; till they may be accounted “ even as the garment, which covereth him, and as the girdle which he is alway girded withal².” Of men like these what shall we say ? Is it to be supposed, that they knowingly and

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 9.

² Psalm cix. 19.

resolutely defy the vengeance of the Almighty, by a determined disobedience to his commandments; or is it not rather to be supposed, that they are in a state of spiritual delusion, blind to their sin and to their danger;—to the wrath of God, under which they are lying in this world, and to the punishment, which will be revealed against them in the next? If such indeed be the case; if it be the case, that the sinner can flatter himself that he is performing God's commandments, whilst he is living in a state of habitual neglect or violation of them; we call upon him in the name of God to rouse himself from his delusion. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead; and Christ shall give thee light¹." Reflect deeply and earnestly, "what will be the end of them that obey not the Gospel of God?" For the very best of men;—for those who most diligently labour to "love God and keep his commandments," and to tread in the steps of their Saviour Christ;—for the righteous, who shall inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world, and shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father; even for them it will be necessary, that "their robes be washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb³." But if the

¹ Eph. v. 14.

² 1 Pet. iv. 17.

³ Rev. vii. 14.

obedience of the sincere and faithful Christian need the merits of the Redeemer to recommend it ; what shall become of the habitual despiser of God's laws? "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear¹?"

2. Saul attempted to shelter himself from the criminality of his disobedience, by casting the blame upon his army. "I have obeyed the voice of the Lord : but the people took of the spoil sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed." How notorious, how frequent is the attempt of the sinner, to extenuate his own guilt under the plea of the example or influence of others ! Perhaps the plea may be altogether false ; we may have been the means of seducing from their duty those, by whom we pretend to have been seduced : as appears to have been the case with Saul ; for the history informs us, that "Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep and of the oxen and of the fatlings and the lambs, and all that was good ; and would not utterly destroy them : " and when we consider the authority, which he as a king possessed over his army, it is reasonable to conclude, that the act was principally and primarily his. But

¹ 1 Pet. iv. 18.

allowing the truth of the pretence ; allowing that he “ transgressed the commandment of the Lord, because he feared the people, and obeyed their voice :” who can plead for the validity of the excuse, and stand up in justification of the transgressor ? On one side was the fear of God ; on the other the fear of man. In one direction he was drawn by the commandment of the Lord : in the other, by the voice of the people. Whether of the two was he to obey ? My brethren ; let us beware, how we endeavour to shelter ourselves under the plea of another’s guilt ; and imagine that the delinquency of our neighbour will afford in the sight of God any justification of us. Let us look closely into our hearts. Let us take heed, that the temptation does not lie within. Let us be on our guard, that we be not our own seducers, and at the same time the seducers of others. Let us be sure, that we do not unwarrantably urge in our vindication the influence of vicious example, or the persuasions of the wicked, only as a cloak for our own wilful sin. But even where the example of others is really at hand to mislead us ; where the allurements of the world would seduce us from our obedience, or its persecutions would terrify us from it : still let us beware how we build our defence upon so false and hollow a foundation. Is the voice of the world to be more regarded, or

the commandment of God? the example of the world, or the example of Christ? Shall we seek the favour of the Almighty, or of that "world whose friendship is enmity with God¹?" Shall we "fear them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; or shall we rather fear him, who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell?" Where the commandment of the Lord and the voice of the people are at variance with each other; let us be well assured that we make the right choice. By adopting the sinful practices of the world, we may conciliate perhaps its good-will: but if we would conciliate the good-will of our heavenly Father through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, it is only to be done by "loving him and keeping his commandments." According to those commandments, and not according to the example of other men, we shall be judged: if we are wise then, we shall make those commandments our rule of life. "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers. But the face of the Lord is against them that do evil²." What is evil, the Apostle teaches us when he says, that "sin is the transgression of the law³:" and of this we may be assured, that sin will never change its nature,

¹ James iv. 4.² 1 Pet. ii. 12.³ 1 John iii. 4.

and become righteousness; evil will never be transformed into good; however great may be "the multitude" of those, whom we "follow"¹ to commit it.

3. Saul endeavoured to justify his partial breach of God's commandment, upon the ground of his having partly observed it. "Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way which the Lord sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites." It may be doubted, whether there be any plea more frequently advanced in justification of disobedience; or, at the same time, any, which can with less show of reason be maintained. For, what shall we say? Is *universal* obedience, or is it not, the duty of man to his Creator? Do the commandments of God, or do they not, *all* of them require to be observed? Is his authority, or is it not, in *all* things binding upon his creatures? Surely if these questions be answered in the affirmative, (and who will dare, by answering them otherwise, to proclaim open rebellion against God?) it follows, as a necessary consequence, that, as by doing all that is commanded us, we should do no more than we ought to do; so, by doing less than is commanded us, we do less than we

¹ Exod. xxiii. 2.

ought to do; and therefore, that what we do, cannot justify us for what we do not. Such is the reasoning of the Apostle: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point," (knowingly and wilfully offend,) "he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law¹:"—and therein a despiser of that authority, by which the law was enacted. To justify us in despising God's authority in one case, we should at least be able to plead that we show him, in another, more honour than is due; to justify us in breaking his commandments in one particular, we should be able to plead, that we practise, in another, more obedience than he can claim:—a supposition this, which it were impiety to entertain, and blasphemy to support.

The same principle applies to that other plea, which Saul appears to have alleged in his justification, in making a virtue of his sin, and advancing a claim to merit upon the very ground of the evil which he had committed. "The people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things, which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy

¹ James 11. 10, 11.

God." Had not a positive commandment enjoined the destruction of all the possessions of the Amalekites; and then had the Israelitish king offered a sacrifice of the spoil to the Lord, in testimony of his gratitude, and with a wish of doing honour to his almighty Sovereign; such an offering, we presume, would have been accepted. As it was, the offering was rejected with displeasure; because he preferred his own imagination to the revealed will of God, which nothing could authorize him to disregard; and robbed God of the honour which was due unto his name, and was expressly enjoined in one particular, under the pretence of performing to him a voluntary act of honour in another.

Here again then with respect to both of these delusive pleas, be it our business to take warning from the example of Saul. Let us strive that our obedience to the commandments of God be universal; let us strive that it be strict and precise. Let us not be deluded by the conceit, that we may be justified by our observance of some precepts for the breach or the neglect of others, even of the least. Moreover, let us not foolishly, impiously, and arrogantly fancy, that we can perform any "voluntary works, besides, over and above¹" what he has enjoined, so as to make compensa-

¹ Art. XIV.

tion for any failures in our plain and prescribed duty. Conscious of our numerous sins, negligences, and ignorances in the general discharge of our duty; conscious moreover of manifold imperfections even in those parts of our duty, where we are least faulty; let us in all cases say, "we are unprofitable servants;" and throw ourselves for acceptance upon the mercy of our heavenly Father, through the meritorious sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Upon the whole, the conduct of Saul in the narrative that has been passing before us, betrays evident symptoms of a heart actuated by worldly and false principles; and one in which the love of God and a desire to keep his commandments appear to have had little or no influence. May his fall be our admonition! May it join with other scriptural lessons in impressing these important truths upon our hearts: that "to obey God is better than" any other "sacrifice," which we can offer; that "the Lord hath not delight" in any service of his people so much as in their "obeying the voice of the Lord;" and that as to those, who stubbornly and rebelliously "reject the word of the Lord, the Lord also shall reject" them from the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven!

SERMON XIII.

DECEITFULNESS OF SIN, AND EFFICACY OF REPENTANCE, EXEMPLIFIED IN DAVID'S FALL AND RESTORATION.

2 SAM. xii. 7.

And Nathan said unto David, Thou art the man.

THE interest taken by mankind at large in the actions and sufferings of others, and the readiness, with which they apply reflections drawn from past events to their own particular circumstances, were remarked at an early period by the sages of antiquity. They perceived then, that an easier and more effectual method of recommending virtue and discouraging vice in their hearers might be practised, than that of abstract reasoning or unadorned precept: and they found from their own private sensations and from the general disposition of the human mind, that although with the attentive hearer, reasoning might carry conviction, and the soundness of a moral precept

might be allowed, yet their influence on the conduct of mankind in general was partial and transitory; whilst examples set before them in narratives of actual events, or of events, which might probably have occurred, not only operated with greater force in the first place, but were also calculated to make a deeper impression, and to retain a more lasting hold, upon the mind: for the hearer, having thus represented to him such events, as he either is, has been, or may be concerned in, puts himself into the situation of the person actually represented; and feels that with regard to the application of the example, "He is himself the man."

In conveying instruction by this method, as no people were earlier, so none were more successful, than the nations of the East. These nations indeed appear to have been singularly qualified for that purpose, by the quickness of their feelings, and the liveliness of their imagination; by the ease, with which the teacher could invent or adapt a story to the circumstances before him; and by the readiness, with which the hearers could apply it to their own particular cases. An example is accordingly related in the Book of Judges to have occurred as early as 1300 years before Christ; and the well-known fable of the trees, to which I am alluding, and which was delivered by Jotham more than 300 years

before the time of the most ancient heathen writer, has perhaps been rarely excelled¹.

On account however of the importance of the occasion, which produced it ; of the effect, by which it was attended ; and of the advantages, to which it may be applied ; independently of its eminent beauty and propriety ; no one can be more worthy of our attention, than that contained in the chapter, from which my text is taken. David, the king of Israel, the holy Psalmist, the chosen and the anointed of the Lord, the man after God's own heart, the representative of Abraham and of the Patriarchs, and the forefather of the promised Messiah, was polluted with crimes of the deepest and most deadly complexion. He had been guilty of the complicated sins of adultery and murder, aggravated by circumstances of baseness, cruelty, treachery, and oppression. He had dishonoured the wife of Uriah, whilst her husband was occupied abroad in fighting with the enemies of his country : he had in vain contrived and practised several disgraceful artifices, apparently in order to gratify the injured husband, but in reality to conceal from him the injury he had sustained : and at length knowing, that if Uriah survived, his own iniquity must be published, under the pretence of honouring a valiant

¹ Judges ix. 8—15.

and deserving officer, he caused him to be “set in the fore-front of the hottest battle,” there to be deserted by the strength of the army, and with some of his immediate attendants to be slain by the hand of the enemy. Thus with a mind eminently enlightened, and with a heart generally conspicuous for its purity and tenderness, for its kindness to man, and for its devotion to God, did David most grossly violate the laws both of God and man: he “despised the commandment of the Lord, and did evil in his sight.” He “sat and spake against his brother¹.” He “gave his mouth to evil, and with his tongue he framed deceit².” He was polluted with “blood-guiltiness³.” He was “partaker with the adulterers⁴.”

That the Almighty should testify his displeasure at such grievous and complicated offences, might reasonably be apprehended: more especially was it to be expected among a people, in the moral government of whom he had continually and conspicuously interfered. Accordingly “the Lord sent Nathan unto David.” He sent to him a prophet and minister of his own, that such an one might have authority to rebuke the king: and at the same time he inspired him with wisdom and discretion, that he might draw

¹ Ps. l. 20. ² Ps. l. 19. ³ Ps. li. 14. ⁴ Ps. l. 18.

from the unconscious criminal the sentence of his own condemnation. Nathan therefore addressed himself to David in the following apposite parable. "There were two men in one city; the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: but the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had brought and nourished up; and it grew up together with him and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man; and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the way-faring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him." At an act of oppression so flagrant and iniquitous, the indignation of David, disposed in general to distinguish clearly between right and wrong, and blind to the application of the narrative, was strongly excited. He instantly determined that the act should be most severely requited, not only by the ordinary legal punishment¹; but in consideration of its peculiar enormity, by a punishment exceeding that of the law. "And David's anger was greatly kindled

¹ Exodus xxii. 1.

against the man ; and he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die. And he shall restore the lamb four-fold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.”

“ And Nathan said unto David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul, and I gave thee thy master’s house, and thy master’s wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah ; and if that had been too little, I would have given thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight ? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house ; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus saith the Lord, Behold I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly ; but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.” What must have been the feelings of David during this severe rebuke, this dreadful

denunciation! What must have been his mingled and overwhelming sensations of amazement, and shame, and terror, and dismay! How must the king have been forgotten in the sinner! how must the judge have been swallowed up in the criminal! He had pronounced sentence on an act of iniquity, presented to his imagination, and now stood self-condemned in a penalty so much the heavier, in proportion as his own guilt was more enormous and more aggravated. Was the person accused before him in a state of prosperity? David was especially distinguished by the Almighty, and had been anointed by him with circumstances of peculiar favour king over Israel.—Had the rich man oppressively taken a lamb from his poor neighbour? David had taken from Uriah the wife of his bosom.—Had the rich man been guilty of cruelty and injustice? David had added to these sins artifice, and treachery, and the murder of an innocent and meritorious man, his subject, his friend, his defender.—Had the rich man shown no pity towards the victim of his tyranny? David unfeelingly exulted in the success of his nefarious stratagem.—The oppression of the rich man was confined to one unfortunate sufferer. David had involved others of his unoffending and deserving subjects in the destruction, which fell upon Uriah.—The sin of the rich man was suddenly resolved on, and hastily

executed. Not such was the sin of David : it was the work of cool deliberation ; he had proceeded in it step by step ; and he was now resolutely revelling in the fruits of it.—But though the sin of David had been thus great, his heart was not closed against conviction. Awakened to a sense of his sinfulness, the only thing, which remained for him to do, in order to show his compunction for his wickedness, he instantly resolved to perform. To Uriah, whom he had first bereaved of his domestic happiness, and who had then perished by his contrivance, no compensation could be made : to him his lamb could not be restored. He endeavoured then, the only retribution he could make, to humble himself, and to confess his iniquity before God. “ And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord.”

“ And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin : thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.” Thus was accomplished the purpose intended by Nathan’s introduction of the parable in the chapter before us. It was the mean of convincing David of the enormity of his sin ; of leading him in consequence to repent of and confess it ; and thus of restoring him to the favour of Almighty God, whose commandments he had despised,

and whose displeasure he had kindled against him.

These things are recorded for our example. To every individual amongst us, who is placed in the same or in a similar situation to that of David, the sacred historian addresses himself; and says to us, as Nathan said to the king of Israel, "Thou art the man." Let us then revert more particularly to those parts in the narrative of David's sin and of his restoration, which appear "most profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

The first notice that we receive of the incident, which led to the lamentable consequences that ensued, informs us, that it "came to pass in an evening-tide that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house; and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon." Thus far there appears nothing criminal in the conduct of David. The practice of walking and refreshing themselves in the cool of the day upon the tops of the houses, which were adapted to that purpose, was common with the Jews; and it appears to have been accident, which first directed the eyes of David towards the wife of Uriah. But when his eyes had been once attracted, and captivated by her beauty, his guilt then appears to have begun. Having first inad-

vertently discovered her, and being impressed with a sense of her charms, did he immediately withdraw his eyes from observing her, and retire within his own house, and banish her from his thoughts? Had he so done, he might, by the blessing of God upon his exertions, have been enabled to control his passions; and thereby have been preserved from all the guilt, shame, and misery, which ensued. Is any of you placed upon the confines of sin, at the entrance of temptation? "Thou art the man," to whom the Holy Ghost speaketh in this narrative. Escape from the threshold of temptation, ere thou hast yet plunged into the labyrinth, from which thou mayest with difficulty be extricated. Resist the tempter, ere thou art yet entangled in his snares. Struggle manfully against the first attack of a lawless passion. Evil thoughts and desires may present themselves to thy mind; and it may be not in thy power to avoid every occasion, on which they are likely to assault thee. He is the guilty man, who encourages them when they come, and follows them through the crooked and loathsome paths, whither, if encouraged, they will lead. Instead of banishing the object, which had attracted him, at once from his sight and from his mind, David "sent and inquired after the woman." The absence of her husband, who was fighting the battles of his country, afforded

a convenient opportunity to his passion. I need not proceed with the sequel.

2dly. We are warned of the danger of indulging our sinful passions, and giving ourselves up to the power of the tempter, from the consideration, that guilt leads to guilt ; that one sin is commonly the parent of others. The adultery of David with Bathsheba was not only criminal in itself, (though than adultery, however it may be endured and palliated by the sophistry of modern morality, no crime is more injurious to society, or more hateful in the eyes of God ;) but it was also criminal, as it occasioned baseness in the subsequent conduct of David ; artifice upon artifice to conceal his guilt ; the murder of Uriah ; the involving of some of his subjects in sin by making them agents in that murder ; and the exposing of others to destruction.—Art thou addicted to some favourite sin, the slave of some domineering appetite ? “Thou art the man,” to whom God speaks by the mouth of his inspired historian. It were too much had you to answer for one sin alone. But search your conscience and it will tell you, that if you are a slave to one, you are not exempt from others.—Are you a profaner of the Lord’s day ? The evil stops not there : you are probably guilty of intemperance also, or of gaming, or of thieving ; and there is little doubt that you are that most pestilential of all characters, the cor-

rupter of others.—Are you a drunkard? That is not all: can you be so, without adding to your abominable vice the sin of enticing your fellows to be the same; without abandoning your duty to your family; without reducing perhaps your wife and children to hunger, rags, and beggary?—Are you a thief? you must be a liar to conceal it.—Are you malicious? malice feeds upon slander.—I notice some of the most prevailing sins, which beset us. But it will be found, that evil qualities, and it is the case also with the good qualities of the mind, are seldom, if ever, found alone. It was in natural progression, and according to a sort of order which prevails in the moral world, that the Apostle St. Peter exhorted his brethren in Christ Jesus, to “add to their faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity¹.” And it was according to the same sort of order, and in pursuance of the same principle, that the Prophet Isaiah denounced “woe to the rebellious children for adding sin to sin².” David commenced with adultery; and there probably he meant to stop. But who shall say to the delusions of sin and Satan, “Hitherto

¹ 2 Peter i. 5—7.

² Isaiah xxx. 1.

shall ye come, but no further?" He commenced with adultery; he ran the career of deceit and treachery; and he ended with murder.

3dly. This narrative of the fall of David contains an awful warning upon the deceitfulness and danger of worldly prosperity. "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God¹." Such was the sentence of our Saviour; and the example of David is a proof, how greatly those, who are in the enjoyment of this world's goods, stand in need of a more abundant supply of the divine grace. "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel unto David, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul. And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have given thee such and such things."—Art thou blessed in the enjoyment of temporal goods? "Thou art the man:" the Lord God speaketh unto thee: he bids thee "take heed and beware of covetousness²;" he warns thee to "lay up treasures not on earth but in heaven³;" he cautions thee not to be "a lover of pleasure rather than a lover of God⁴;" he charges thee not to presume upon

¹ Matt. xix. 24.

⁴ Luke xii. 15.

³ Matt. vi. 19, 20.

⁴ 2 Tim. iii. 4.

thy prosperity, and neglect Him, who is the Giver of all good, by “despising his commandments, and doing evil in his sight.”

It is a fourth and important doctrine, which this narrative inculcates, that morality ought to be considered as a branch of religion; that a breach of the second table of the commandments should be estimated as a breach of the first; that an offence against man is, in propriety and according to the tenor of God’s revealed will, an offence against God. It does not appear that David had been guilty of any direct and immediate sin of a religious nature; but the offences, which he was guilty of, and they were of a moral nature, are expressly put upon that footing. “Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.” Is there one who thinks that an observance of the duties of religion will extenuate a disregard of the moral law? “Thou art the man,” whom the Lord admonishes in the sinfulness of David. He tells thee that to violate the moral law is to despise Him: that “pure

religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world¹:" that "he who loveth God must love his brother also²:" that "he that hateth his brother cannot love God³." The offence of David (for I repeat it) was against man: the punishment was denounced on it, as an offence against the Lord.

A fifth observation, which occurs to me from the incidents before us, relates to the duty of looking into our own bosoms, and the danger which we incur of pronouncing sentence upon ourselves, when we are condemning the conduct of others. It appeared to be a virtuous indignation, which broke forth from the lips of David, when he decreed restitution and death upon the rich man, who had oppressed his poor neighbour, and had shown him no pity. The sentence was severe; perhaps also it was merited. But happy it was for David that he was in the hands of a more merciful Judge, who did not "measure unto him with that measure that he meted withal." Art thou disposed to judge and to condemn thy brother? "Thou art the man." Look into thine own heart; examine thine own life. Is there nothing there which requires correction? Beware

¹ James i. 27.

² 1 John iv. 21.

³ 1 John iv. 20.

lest thou impose on another a law, which thou thyself disregardest. Beware lest thou sentence another to a penalty, which thou thyself oughtest to pay. "Judge not, that thou be not judged. Condemn not, that thou be not condemned¹." It was in his official capacity, as king of Israel, that David sentenced the rich man to punishment. Would it not have been just, had he been required to abide by that sentence? How much more, if you be required to abide by the sentence, which you, as a private man, unnecessarily and officiously pronounce?

As the example of David may serve us in these particulars for a warning against the dangers we are to avoid, it may also serve to guide us, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, into the way of righteousness and peace. Although his heart was deaf to the whispers of the still 'small voice within it, it did not refuse to listen to the piercing expostulation, addressed by the Prophet of God to his outward ears. His reason was clouded by sin; his feelings were benumbed; his conscience slept. But he could not resist the powerful appeal of God's authorized messenger, "Thou art the man." Thus conviction of his sin took possession of his soul;—conviction accompanied by contrition and repentance for

¹ Luke vi. 37.

having offended the Majesty of heaven ; whilst the feelings of his heart were testified by the language of his lips, “ I have sinned against the Lord.” Happy the man, who has grace to see, to repent, to acknowledge and bewail his offences ! Happy the man, to whom likewise the language of Nathan to David may then be applied, “ The Lord also hath put away thy sin ; thou shalt not die.” My brother, art thou a sinner, as David was ? and dost thou desire that thy sin, like David’s, should be put away ? “ Thou art the man :”—“ to thee is the word of this salvation sent¹.” If thou wilt call upon God to “ have mercy upon thee according to his loving-kindness, according to the multitude of his mercies to blot out thy transgressions ; to wash thee thoroughly from thy wickedness, and to cleanse thee from thy sin ; if thou wilt acknowledge thy faults and keep thy sin ever before thee² ;” if thou wilt “ hate the congregation of the wicked, and wilt not sit among the ungodly ; if thou wilt love the habitation of the Lord’s house, and the place where his honour dwelleth ; if thou wilt wash thine hands in innocency, and so go to the altar of the Lord, that thou mayest show the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all his wondrous works³ :”—then for the sake of his well-beloved Son, who

¹ Acts xiii. 26.² Ps. li. 1—3.³ Ps. xxvi. 5—8.

died to save sinners, he shall “purge thee with hyssop, and thou shalt be clean; he shall wash thee and thou shalt be whiter than snow; he shall turn his face from thy sins, and blot out all thine iniquities; he shall make thee a new heart, and renew a right spirit within thee: cast thee not away from his presence, and take not his Holy Spirit from thee; restore to thee the joy of his salvation, and uphold thee with his free Spirit¹.” David confessed his sins unto the Lord; and God “despised not his sacrifice of a broken and contrite spirit,” but forgave him the wickedness of his sin. Wouldest thou partake in his forgiveness? Like him be penitent for thy sins. Wouldest thou “hear with him of joy and gladness²?” Strive like him to walk innocently, and put your trust in the Lord.

Upon the whole, and as the essence of this narrative of David’s sin and restoration, we are taught, that however greatly a man may be favoured by the Almighty, yet if he will give way to the temptations of Satan and of his own vicious inclinations, he must expose himself to ruin; and that there is no other way to reconciliation with God, but by a hearty and deep repentance. Though he was “a man after God’s own heart,” the “chosen” of the Lord,

¹ Ps. li. 7—12.

² Ps. li. 17.

David “ departed from grace given, and fell into deadly sin ¹,” and became an object of abhorrence in the sight of that holy Being, who is “ of purer eyes than to behold iniquity ².” He repented and was forgiven. Had he not “ by the grace of God arisen again and amended his life ³,” he would have been excluded from the place of forgiveness ; and have been left under that unerring sentence of condemnation, which pronounces, that “ no murderer hath eternal life ⁴,” and that “ whoremongers and adulterers God will judge ⁵.” May it please our heavenly Father to grant us the help of his Holy Spirit, that we may truly repent of all our sins through faith in the merits of his Son ; to whom be glory and dominion for ever and ever !

¹ Art. XVI.

² Hab. i. 13.

³ Art. XVI.

⁴ 1 John iii. 15.

⁵ Heb. xiii. 4.

S E R M O N X I V .

ON THE EXISTENCE AND DIVINITY OF THE HOLY GHOST.

Acts xix. 1—3.

And it came to pass that—Paul having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus : and finding certain disciples,

He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost, since ye believed ? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard, whether there be any Holy Ghost.

And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized ? And they said, Unto John's baptism.

THE language and conduct both of St. Paul and of the persons, with whom he here converses, are worthy of attention ; and may supply very suitable materials for our meditations on this festival, when we commemorate the sensible communication of the same Holy Spirit, who was the subject of the Apostle's inquiry.

The narrative is briefly this. St. Paul being at Ephesus, and there finding certain disciples,

his first question to them was, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost?"—a question, the importance of which appears from its being the very first, that he asked. So far however were they from having received the Spirit, that they had not even been informed of his existence. "We have not so much as heard, whether there be any Holy Ghost." So strange and unexpected an answer excited the astonishment of the Apostle, who supposed them to be disciples of Christ; and as such, of course acquainted with the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith. "Unto what then were ye baptized?" he demands: and understanding by their reply, that it was "unto John's baptism," he first teaches them, that as John was to Christ, so was John's baptism to the baptism of Christ, only an introduction to that which was to come; and thence he leads them to that holier baptism, where they both "heard of," and "received, the Holy Ghost."

This narrative may suggest two leading questions for our consideration; 1st, whether we have heard of the Holy Ghost; and 2dly, whether we have received Him: for the question, which from a sense of its great importance St. Paul first put to these disciples, he would not have put, but on the presumption, that they were better instructed than they really were. We will begin,

then, with having recourse to that quarter, to which he referred them for information; and thence endeavour to “hear” concerning the Holy Ghost, both *that* he is, and *what* he is: both his existence, and his nature.

I. Now, had the Apostle chosen, he might have sent the disciples at Ephesus to other evidences of the existence of the Holy Ghost. He might have sent them to the very beginning of Genesis, where they would have heard of “the Spirit of God moving upon the face of the waters¹;”—or to the Law, where the same “Spirit came down upon the seventy elders²;”—or to the Psalms, where they might have heard David say of Him, “Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, and they are created;” and, “Take not thy Holy Spirit from me³:”—or to the Prophets; as to Isaiah, for the words of Christ’s first text, “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me⁴;” or to Joel, for the words of St. Peter’s text on this day, “I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh⁵.”

Or if they had ever heard of our Saviour Christ, St. Paul might have sent them to his conception, where they would have heard the Angel say to the blessed Virgin, “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee⁶:”—to Christ’s

¹ Gen. i. 2. ² Numb. ii. 26. ³ Psalms civ. 30; li. 11.

⁴ Isaiah lxi. 1.

⁵ Joel ii. 28.

⁶ Luke i. 35.

baptism, where “the Holy Ghost descended upon Christ” in a visible shape¹:—to his promise, so often repeated, of sending to them the Holy Ghost²:—to his caution “not to sin against the Holy Ghost³;” it was a high and heinous offence; it could not be remitted.

Or if they had heard of the Apostles, St. Paul might have reminded them, of Christ’s “breathing on them,” and willing them to “receive the Holy Ghost⁴;”—or of the great event of this day, how he was visibly sent down, like “fiery tongues, upon each of them⁵;”—or of their solemn meeting and council at Jerusalem, where it was the tenor of their decrees, “It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us⁶:”—or of the alarming end which befel Ananias, with the admonition of St. Peter, that he had lied unto “the Holy Ghost;” and immediately after, that he had “lied not unto man, but unto God⁷.”

But instead of taking either of these courses, St. Paul refers the disciples to their baptism, supposing that it was Christ’s baptism, with which they had been baptized. Nor can we follow a better direction: let us take it, and we shall not fail to hear, “that there is a Holy

¹ Luke ii. 22.² John xiv. 36; xv. 26; xvi. 7.³ Matt. xii. 31, 32.⁴ John xx. 22.⁵ Acts ii. 3.⁶ Acts xv. 28.⁷ Acts v. 3, 4.

Ghost." Express mention of Him is directly appointed in the form of baptism prescribed by our Saviour, that all should be, as all are, "baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost¹."

But there is another reason why the Apostle could not refer the disciples better than to baptism. For the Holy Ghost has a special prerogative in our baptism above the other two Persons. That laver is his laver properly, where we are not only to be baptized into him, as into the other two; but also, even to be baptized with Him; which is proper to Him alone. For besides the water, we are there to be "born anew of the Holy Ghost" also, else there is "no entering for us into the kingdom of God²."

A celebrated Father of the Church³, beginning with baptism, thus proceeds through three other degrees as naturally arising from it. "As we are baptized, so we believe; and as we believe, so we give glory, and as we give glory, so we bless."—Are we baptized into the Holy Ghost? in Him also we believe: for, "I believe in the Holy Ghost" is an article of that faith, in which "we desire to be baptized;" of which another article also is, that "of Him Jesus Christ was conceived."—Do we believe in Him? To Him also

¹ Matt. xxviii. 19.

² John iii. 5.

³ St. Basil.

we ascribe glory, in that form of doxology, wherein the universal Church of Christ, from the beginning even to the present time, has given “glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.”—Do we ascribe glory to Him? In his name also we pronounce and receive blessing, in the apostolical form of words, with which we pray that “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the communion or fellowship of the Holy Ghost, may be with us all¹.”

Upon the whole; there is no baptism, no belief, no glory to God, no blessing upon men, but that we hear of the Holy Ghost. Let us not say then, “We have not heard of him:” but rather, let us say with St. Basil, “We are baptized in him; and as we are baptized, so we believe; and as we believe, so we glorify God; and as we glorify God, so we bless men.” That we may hear of the Holy Ghost, we need no more than reply to the Apostle’s question, “Unto what then were ye baptized?”

II. But by referring to our baptism, we may perceive not only *that* He is, but also *what* He is: we may be instructed not in his existence only, but in his nature. And 1st, proceeding

¹ 2 Cor. xiii. 13.

by the same steps as before, we shall perceive that He is God.

1. He is God : because we cannot be baptized into any name, but that of God alone. St. Paul disputes the point at large¹, that it is not lawful to be baptized into St. Peter's name, or into his own, or into any name but God's only. But we are baptized into the name of the Holy Ghost : and therefore the Holy Ghost is God.

2. He is God : for we believe in Him. And never can it be supposed, that we believe in any creature, in any inferior being, but in God alone. Believing then in the Holy Ghost, we acknowledge him to be God.

3. He is God : for we ascribe to Him glory. And glory belongeth to God alone ; and that so exclusively, that he himself expressly declares, "My glory I will not give to another²." But we render glory to the Holy Ghost ; and "with the Father and the Son together, he is worshipped and glorified." Therefore together with them also, He is God.

4. He is God, because we bless in his name. For this also is one of the properties of God, to bless in his name, by "putting his name on children," and on the congregation at large, "to

¹ 1 Cor. i.

² Isaiah xlii. 8.

bless them¹." But in the name of the Holy Ghost we bless, as well as in that of the Father and of the Son; together with them therefore he is "God over all," both to bless, and to be "blessed for evermore."

And upon these four particulars we rest for declaring the nature of the Holy Ghost. For, To be baptized into him, To believe in him, To ascribe glory to him, To bless by him or in his name, are such acts as cannot be given to any, but to God only: and therefore by referring to our baptism we are instructed in his nature as well as in his existence; both that he is, and that he is God. Such again are the two acts ascribed to him in one of our professions of Faith, where it is said of him, that "He is the Lord and Giver of life," and that "He spake by the Prophets." Such also are many other attributes and operations, which cannot agree to any being, but God, and which are expressly ascribed to the Holy Ghost. These proofs of the divinity of the Holy Ghost might here be alleged, as elsewhere they have often been. But the text directing our thoughts to our baptism, it may suffice to look to it, and to things more immediately connected with it, for the direction of our present inquiries.

¹ Numb. vi. 27.

If again then we cast our eyes back upon our baptism, we shall perceive something more relating to the Holy Ghost: and as we hear that he is God, so also shall we hear that he is God in the unity of the Father and of the Son. For there, though we are dedicated to three Persons, yet it is only “in one name.” “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Now in the same manner as the Apostle reasoneth, “To Abraham, and his seed, were the promises made: he saith not, *to seeds*, as of many; but to thy seed, as of one¹:”—so we are baptized, not in the names, as of many; but in the name, as of one: one name, and one nature or essence. “I and my Father are one²,” saith Christ concerning two of them: “these three are one,” saith St. John of them all jointly, “the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost³.” And whether it had been so said or not, the same truth do we hear distinctly revealed in our baptism, where we are baptized “in the name” of the three.

Again: they are one; not one Person, but one Being, as in the original is the import of the declarations both of Christ and of St. John. And the same appears from the form of baptism, wherein, as from the name we deduce the unity

¹ Gal. iii. 16.² John x. 30.³ 1 John v. 6.

of the Godhead, so do we from the number of Persons deduce the Trinity. One as they are in name and nature, they are distinguished at the same time from each other. In our baptism, they are distinguished in number: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost:—at the baptism of Christ, they were distinguished to the sense, the Father being “heard in the voice from heaven,” the Son “appearing in the water,” and the Holy Ghost “descending from heaven in a bodily shape like a dove.” This appears also to be a distinction of Persons, from the promise of Christ: “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter¹:” another Comforter, namely the Holy Ghost; distinct from the Father, according to that saying in Isaiah, “The Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me²:” and distinct from the Son, as is evident from the words of Christ himself, in the promise already cited, where he speaks of “another Comforter,” plainly, as such, different from himself. Moreover, he is distinct, as a Person: for, to omit other personal acts, ascribed to the Holy Ghost, such as to “be the Lord³,” to “speak⁴,” to “teach⁵,” to “reprove⁶,” to “comfort⁶,” to “bear witness⁷,” to “make overseers, or bishops

¹ John xiv. 16. ² Isaiah xlviii. 16. ³ 2 Cor. iii. 17, 18.

⁴ Acts xi. 12; xiii. 2. ⁵ 1 John ii. 27. ⁶ John xvi. 7, 8.

⁷ Rom. viii. 16.

over the church¹:" that which we hear alleged from Scripture, as an article of our faith at baptism, that "of Him Christ in his human nature was conceived," is an act so personal, as can, with propriety of speech, be affirmed of none but of a Person.

The Holy Ghost then is a Person, distinct by himself; yet, as a Person, not *of* or *from* himself. And this indeed is implied in the term "Spirit." For like the term "Son," Spirit also has a relation to some other: respectively they proceed from him, whose Son, or whose Spirit, they are. So the Son of God, and the Spirit of God, proceed from God: each of them is God *of* God. The Holy Ghost then, inasmuch as he is the Spirit of the Lord, does by consequence proceed.

He proceeds; and that, both from the Father and from the Son. He "proceedeth from the Father," as expressly asserted by Christ in St. John's Gospel²: he proceedeth also from the Son, as we infer from the outward visible sign of his communication to the Apostles, when the Son "breathed on them," and so bade them "receive the Holy Ghost³." The same inference follows from that declaration of Christ in another place, "He shall not speak of himself, but he shall receive of mine⁴." In short, he is

¹ Acts xx. 28.

² John xv. 26.

³ John xx. 22.

⁴ John xvi. 13, 14.

“sent by the Father,” and he is “sent by the Son” also: and so, he is “the Spirit of the Father,” and also “the Spirit of the Son¹.”

He proceeds from them; but not by the way of generation: that term is peculiarly applied to Christ, who is often called “the only-begotten;” and therefore, as it is not in Scripture, so neither can it be properly applied to any but to Him. In the Old Testament it is said, that “God sendeth forth his Spirit³ :” in the New, the term by which this is expressed, is that “he proceedeth.” In professing our belief of such mysteries, we retain the language of Scripture; and so long as we do so, we cannot err. The term “spirit” may lead us to consider the proceeding of the Holy Ghost, as something analogous to the emission of the breath, which bears the same name, and has a resemblance to it, breathed forth from the natural body. But it is neither wise nor useful, perhaps it is not altogether pious, to be very minute as to such particulars as these.

Now all these points of doctrine relating to the Holy Ghost, are expressed or implied in our baptism. Still there is one thing more to be observed, and it is that which more especially

¹ John xiv. 26; xv. 26.

² Matt. x. 30. Gal. iv. 6.

³ Psalm civ. 30.

arises from the text, that the Holy Ghost *proceeds* from the Father and the Son, that he may *come* to us : he is *breathed forth* from them, that he may *inspire* us : he is *sent* by them, that he may be *given* to us : the love of God is “ shed abroad in our hearts,” saith the Apostle, “ by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us¹ :” given unto us, that we may *receive* him. And so we are naturally led to the second question, proposed for our consideration, “ Have ye received the Holy Ghost ?” For having been so far instructed concerning him, and having heard the particulars which have arisen in the foregoing inquiry, there is one thing more for us to know ; namely, that we must not only “ hear of him,” but must “ receive him” also : must not only be instructed in, and hold fast, the true faith concerning him, but must also be partakers of his fellowship, and enjoy the sanctifying graces which he bestows.

The prosecution of the inquiry into this part of the subject, suggested by the text, involving the obligation, under which we lie of receiving him ; the proofs, whereby we may know whether we have received him ; and the means, whereby he may be received ; would occupy more of our time than could be bestowed on it upon the present occasion. We will therefore reserve it

¹ Rom. v. 5.

for another opportunity. In the mean time, some remarks arising from the examination, in which we have at present been engaged, shall close the present discourse.

And 1st, Are we persuaded from the testimony of Scripture, that “*there is a Holy Ghost?*” Let us “*hold fast the profession of our faith*” in this, one of the fundamental and most characteristic articles of our Christian faith, “*without wavering.*” It was out of the power of human reason to discover this mysterious truth, without express revelation; being revealed, it is the duty of reason to receive and maintain it. Among the prevailing signs of the times, among the errors which most conspicuously mark this, which we vauntingly esteem, an enlightened age, is a deplorable indifference, as on the one hand to a conscientious practice of Christian duty, so on the other to a well-established faith in the Christian doctrines. With some it is judged a matter of trifling import, whether a man has any religious faith at all: with others, who profess to take the Gospel for their rule of faith, it is thought indifferent whether those tenets, which are in truth the distinguishing doctrines of the Gospel, be believed or not; contented with such a profession of Christianity, as a Heathen could hardly except against, and a Mahometan might with little difficulty adopt. Of the heresies,

which thus disgrace the professors of Christianity, those false opinions, which relate to our blessed Saviour and to the Holy Ghost, the second and third Persons in the “Holy, Blessed, and Glorious Trinity,” are among the most prevalent and the most mischievous : mischievous indeed they are ; for if the doctrines, which they oppose, be the true doctrines of that Gospel, on the belief of which it has pleased Almighty God to suspend the promise of salvation, what have they to hope who wilfully slight or reject them ? Let it not be supposed then, that such inquiries, as that in which we have now been engaged, can be useless or unimportant. In the judgment of the Apostle, as very evidently appears from the tenor of the text, *to have heard* concerning the Holy Ghost was esteemed essential to a knowledge of the elementary principles of Christianity. How then can we be ignorant of it, and be blameless ? It is one of the articles of that faith, of which, in conformity to the universal practice of the Church of Christ, we made profession at our baptism. How shall we be hardy enough to renounce it ?

2. Do we believe in the Divine nature, as well as in the existence, of the Holy Ghost ? Do we believe, not only that he is, but that he is God ? Let us give him then that glory, honour, and worship, to which, as God, he is entitled. To him, jointly with the Father and with the

Son, we were dedicated at our baptism. Let him, together with them, receive all the service, which we, weak and sinful creatures, can bestow ;—the profession of our belief, the tribute of our adoration, the invocation of blessings in his name. It is this consideration, which converts such inquiries as the present, from matters of speculation into matters of practice. It is our duty to worship God : to withhold worship from him is impious. If then the Holy Ghost be God, (and the same applies to our blessed Saviour,) it is our duty to worship him : it is impious to withhold from him our worship. To some persons such inquiries, as the present, appear little interesting and important, inasmuch as they are deemed to have little connexion with Christian practice. But what branch of Christian practice, what part of a Christian's duty, is more intimately blended with his well-being, both now and ever, than the performance of his devotions ? How then can that inquiry be unimportant, which instructs us as to the proper object of our devotions ; or which is calculated with the divine blessing to strengthen our faith in Him, to whom our prayers are to be addressed ?

3. Do we believe the Holy Ghost to be united with the Father and the Son, one God ? Whilst a persuasion of this truth directs us “ to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the

power of the divine Majesty to worship the Unity¹," let the reflection upon that perfect harmony, which distinguishes the Lord God of heaven, prompt us to cultivate union among our brethren upon earth. As the holy Three are essentially one in name and in nature, so let us study to be united, not in profession only, but in brotherly love and affections; and to glorify God by "being perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment,"—"with one heart and with one mouth." This is an inference, to which Christ hath directed us: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one: as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me²."

4. Do we believe that the Holy Ghost is a Person? Let the various evidences of that truth be our security against the mistake of those, who represent him, as only an operation or quality of the Father; and so endeavour to sap the foundations of the true "faith, which was once delivered to the Saints."

5. Do we believe, that he proceedeth from the Father and the Son? Let this conviction induce

¹ Collect for Trinity Sunday.

² John xvii. 20, 21.

us to look with gratitude unspeakable upon the holy Three, for their continual participation in the work of our redemption : in that when the Father had contrived the plan of man's salvation by sending his Son into the world, and the Son had executed it by dying for our sins and rising for our justification ; they concurred in " sending the Holy Ghost, the Spirit both of the Father and of the Son," to enlighten our understandings, to sanctify our hearts, and to " guide our feet into the way of peace."

Finally, do we believe, that the Holy Ghost proceedeth from the Father and the Son, that he may come unto us ?—that he is sent by them, to be given unto us ? Let us make every provision in our power, that we may be prepared to receive him. Let us labour to remove from ourselves every offence, whereby we may be defiled. Let us be diligent in practising the means which may best fit us for his reception : that so we may indeed be " the temple of God," and that " the Spirit of God may dwell in us ;" and that from endeavouring to " glorify him in our body and in our spirit, which are his," we may enjoy the delightful assurance that " he is our God, and that we are his people !"

SERMON XV.

NECESSITY, EVIDENCES, AND MEANS OF RECEIVING THE HOLY GHOST.

ACTS XIX. 2.

And he said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost,
since ye believed ?

IN a former discourse on these words and on the passage with which they are connected, we inquired into the existence and nature of the Holy Ghost. It follows that we are now to consider the question, “whether we have received Him?”—a question, which involves in it these three points: 1. The obligation, under which we lie, to receive him. 2. The proofs, by which we are to judge, whether we have received Him, or not. 3. The means, whereby He may be received.

I. Now, as to the first of these points, namely, our obligation to receive the Holy Ghost: the importance of it appears from this, that St. Paul makes it the leading subject, the very first par-

ticular, of his inquiry. The same will also appear from the reason of the thing.

For should the question be asked, Where is the necessity of this? What need have we to receive any Spirit at all? May we not, of ourselves, of our own power, do every thing that is required of us? We answer, no: for holy we must be, if we would ever “rest on God’s holy hill:” inasmuch as “without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” But holy we cannot be, by any moral or acquired habit. No philosophy can bestow it on us. As we have our faith by illumination, so by inspiration we have our holiness: they are given to us, we receive them, both from without. The philosopher attained to what he called a habit of virtue; and so may the Christian. But that will not suffice; it will raise us no higher than it did the Heathens: it will carry us no further than the origin, from which it springs: it will not lift us above earth and nature. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” The question of the Apostle therefore is not, Have ye acquired a habit, but “Have ye received the Spirit?”

Again: should it be demanded, But why receive the Holy Spirit? Will it not suffice to receive any Spirit but Him? Again we answer, no: and the reason is, because it is nothing here below, which we seek, but we aspire to heaven.

If then we would reach to heaven, something from heaven must exalt us thither. If we hope to be "partakers of the divine nature," as we have "great and precious promises¹" that we shall be, it can be effected by no other means, than by receiving one, in whom the divine nature is. He, being received, imparts it to us, and so makes us partakers of his nature. And He, who does this, is the Holy Ghost.

For is it not absolutely necessary that we "receive the Spirit," in order to our living the life of nature? No less necessary is it, that we receive the Holy Spirit, else we cannot live the life of grace; nor, in consequence, shall we ever come to the life of glory. To receive the Spirit conveys the natural life; to receive the Holy Spirit conveys the spiritual life.

Between the natural and the spiritual life a correspondence prevails in several respects. Was the world made in the beginning by "the Spirit of God moving upon the face of the waters?" So was the world new made, the Church or the Christian world, by the same Spirit moving on the waters of baptism. Did we, in the first Adam, come into this present life, by "the breath of life sent into our bodies?" So in the second Adam, we are led to the other life by the

¹ 2 Pet. i. 4.

Holy Ghost sent into our souls. Was Christ “conceived by the Holy Spirit?” By the same Spirit the Christian also must be conceived. These things are necessary to our spiritual existence, nor can we do without them.

2. But there is another consideration, which shows the necessity of his being received. The house will not remain empty long¹. Some spirit or other, holy or unholy, will enter and take possession of it. The greatest part of mankind are occupied, some by “the spirit of deep sleep²,” so that they pass their time in a state of insensibility, without any sense of God or religion at all:—others, by “the spirit of perverseness³,” so that they reel to and fro, agreeably to their own distorted and unruly imaginations, and are every year of a new religion:—others, again, by “the spirit of error⁴,” so that, as a punishment for their wilful disregard of the truth, they are given over to “strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.” Moreover, even of those, who seem to know the truth, some are contaminated by “the unclean spirit⁵,” some are inflamed by “the spirit of envy⁶,” some are possessed by divers other malignant spirits, who “walk about, seeking whom they may devour.” It is neces-

¹ Luke xi. 24.² Isaiah xxix. 10.³ Isaiah xix. 14.⁴ 1 Tim. iv. 1.⁵ Luke xi. 24.⁶ James iv. 5.

sary therefore for us to receive and entertain the good Spirit, that some evil and noxious spirit may not enter into our hearts, and dwell therein.

3. There is a third reason, whence the necessity of our receiving the Holy Spirit appears; inasmuch as with Him we receive all the things that we want for our souls' good. It is indeed for these several offices that he is sent. By Him we are first regenerated at our baptism¹. By Him we are afterwards confirmed, in the imposition of hands². By Him we are "renewed in the spirit of our minds³," when we fall into sin. By Him we are "taught," throughout our lives, the things necessary to our spiritual welfare⁴: put in mind of the things which we have forgotten⁴: "stirred up" where we are dull⁵: "helped" in our prayers⁶; relieved in our "infirmities;"—"comforted" in our heaviness⁷; in a word, "sealed to the day of our redemption⁸," and "raised up again in the last day⁹." Go all along, even from our baptism, to our very resurrection, and we cannot do without Him, but receive Him we must.

And on the other hand, if we do not receive Him, nothing else that we receive, will do us any good. Receive the word, it is but "a killing

¹ Tit. iii. 5.² Heb. vi. 2.³ Eph. iv. 23.⁴ John xiv. 26.⁵ 2 Tim. i. 6.⁶ Rom. viii. 26.⁷ John xiv. 16.⁸ Eph. iv. 30.⁹ Rom. viii. 11.

letter¹:"—receive baptism, it is but John's baptism, but a "weak and beggarly element²:"—receive the flesh of Christ, it "profiteth nothing³:"—receive Christ; it is in vain; for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his⁴." Christ renounces him; he hath no part in him. To receive Christ, and not the Holy Ghost, were to no purpose. Upon the whole, if we receive not the Holy Ghost, we are in our natural state; we have "a living soul," but we are not actuated by "a quickening spirit⁵." And "the natural man," as the Apostle teaches us, "neither discerneth nor receiveth the things of God⁶:" he does not rightly apprehend them in his understanding; he is not made partaker of them in his heart; so that not to have the Spirit is of itself sufficient for our condemnation.

II. The fellowship of the Spirit appearing thus necessary, we proceed to the second point proposed for our consideration, namely, what are the proofs, by which we may judge whether or not we have received Him.

Now the signs of the Spirit are not difficult to be discovered. For what are the signs, by which we know that the natural spirit actuates the

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 6.² Gal. iv. 9.³ John vi. 63.⁴ Rom. viii. 9.⁵ 1 Cor. xv. 45.⁶ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

body? It beats at the heart; it breathes at the mouth; it is felt in the pulse. Such as these are the signs of the Spirit; and although some or other of them may, all of them will not, deceive us.

1. The Spirit beats at the heart. For, what saith the Prophet? "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you¹." And so the Apostle exhorts the Ephesians, to "be renewed in the spirit of their mind²." That a new spirit is received, there is no better criterion than new thoughts and new desires. So that he who watches well the current of his desires and thoughts, may know what is the spirit by which he is led, whether it be old or new. We may know that we have received the Spirit, by the fear of God, impressed upon our hearts, to restrain us from evil; and by the love of God, shed abroad in them, to impel us to good.

2. But then, as every man may affirm, that all is well within him; and it is impossible to know, whether what he affirms be true or not: therefore we go a step further, and say; the same spirit, which is the principle of our life, is also the principle of our voice: by the breath, that we live by, by the same also we speak. Here therefore is a second criterion. "I believed,"

¹ Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

² Eph. iv. 23.

saith the Psalmist, “and therefore have I spoken¹ :” and, as the Apostle reasons, “We having the same spirit of faith, we also believe, and therefore speak² .” When the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles and first Christians, they spake with new tongues, different from those, with which they had spoken before. The miracle is ceased; but the moral of it still holds good: where the Holy Ghost is received, there a change is produced in the language:—a change from “malicious, unclean, corrupt communication³ ,” unto “such as becometh saints⁴ .”

3. But then again, because the language of sanctity may be assumed, even where no holiness is found within, we look further to the pulse, to the hand, to the actions, for a third criterion, whereby to judge of the spirit. As for that which is in the heart, “who,” as the Prophet demands, “who can know it⁵ ?” We are not ourselves equal to the task: our own hearts often “deceive” us. Then again, as to the language; there are some, as St. Paul warns us, who “profess that they know God, but in works deny him⁶ .” This therefore may mislead. For this reason we have recourse to “the work of faith⁷ ,” as affording a third criterion, necessary

¹ Psalm cxvi. 10.² 2 Cor. iv. 18.³ Eph. iv. 31.⁴ Eph. v. 3.⁵ Jer. xvii. 9.⁶ Tit. i. 16.⁷ 1 Thess. i. 3.

to our satisfaction. For as on the one side faith, which is one of the fruits of the Spirit, “worketh by love¹,” as St. Paul says; or, in the language of St. James, “shows itself by the works²” of a religious and charitable life; so, on the other hand, it is plainly asserted by the latter Apostle, that “faith without works is dead³;” it is no better than a carcass; it is altogether destitute of the Spirit.

It is true indeed, that works are not an infallible criterion, whereby to judge in this matter: for as there are “vain men⁴,” who boast of the Spirit, without works; so there are hypocrites also, who counterfeit the works of religion, without the Spirit. The best mode of discerning between the counterfeit and the real, is, to observe, whether they appear to spring freely and naturally from the heart, or to be wrought with constraint and affectation;—whether they are uniform, constant, and permanent; or variable, faint, and evanescent, vanishing “like the morning cloud, and going away, like the early dew⁵.” It is one character of the Spirit, which was the object of David’s supplications, that it is “upright” or “constant⁶.” it is another, that it is “free” and unconstrained. The application of

¹ Gal. v. 6.² James ii. 18.³ James ii. 26.⁴ James ii. 20.⁵ Hosca vi. 4.⁶ Psalm li. 10. 12.

these marks of distinction to the works which we perform, may lead us to perceive, where they are wrought by artifice and hypocrisy, instead of proceeding from the spirit of true piety and religion.

And these signs may guide us in judging whether we have received the Spirit. More particularly however with a view to the quality of Him, whom we are under the necessity of receiving, it is further important to inquire whether it be the Holy Spirit, or not, that we have received. We may be actuated by a spirit, in heart, in speech, in action; and yet not by Him, by whom alone we ought to be actuated. St. Paul several times makes this distinction. "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage, but ye have received the spirit of adoption¹." And again, "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind²." And again, in words more especially applicable to our purpose, "We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God³;" in other words, the Holy Spirit. Would we know whether the spirit, which actuates us, be the "spirit of the world" or "of God," be unholy or holy, be from earth or from heaven? Let us, in addition to the

¹ Rom. viii. 15.

² 2 Tim. i. 7.

³ 1 Cor. ii. 12.

points already suggested, consider the motive, which influences our conduct; and the end, which we desire to attain. If we act from a worldly motive, or with a view to a worldly end, it may be in a certain sense virtue, but it is not that virtue, which cometh from above.

For example, I refrain from sinning. What is my motive? Because (as Micah saith) it is against "Omri's statutes¹," some penal law. I shall incur such a penalty; I shall be liable to such an action, if I do not. It is well to do so; but still all this is but "the spirit of the world:" it has its origin in the fear of men: it does not proceed from the sanctuary of God.

I go further, to a better spirit. Though there were no penal law, I refrain from sinning, because it is brutish, and therefore at variance with reason; or ignominious, and therefore subversive of my credit and reputation. Nay, further still: because I shall thereby endanger my soul, inasmuch as it will exclude me from heaven, or be the means of casting me into hell. These again are of earthly origin: the spirit of philosophy, the spirit of bondage; they may indeed, and they often perhaps do, the latter more especially, lead to better things; but of themselves they are not the spirit of piety and religion. But if, out of

¹ Micah vi. 16.

regard to God, I refrain from sinning, because by sinning I should offend Him, and do evil, against the rule of his justice, the majesty of his authority, the awful reverence, which I ought to entertain for his power, and the gratitude, which I owe for his bounty and goodness: this in truth is the spirit of the sanctuary; this has its origin in heaven; this is the Holy Spirit indeed.

Together with the motive, which actuates us, let us look also to the end, which we wish to attain. If it be the end of Demetrius, as recorded in the chapter before us, “by this we have our advantage¹ :” if it be the same with theirs, who prefaced their exertions with “let us make us a name upon the earth² :” in a word, if worldly profit, or worldly honour, or any kindred object, be the mark at which we aim, the spirit, which actuates us, is not “of God,” but “of the world.” But if of our well-doing the will of God is the centre, and his glory the circumference; if we do it, not that our will, but that his, may be done: not that our name, but that his, may be hallowed; the act is holy, and the spirit, that actuates us, is the same.

III. The foregoing reflections may enable us to answer the question of the Apostle, whether “we have received the Holy Ghost?” It remains

¹ Acts xix. 25.

² Gen. xi. 4.

that we proceed to the third point, proposed for our consideration, namely, how we may, by the grace of God, so dispose ourselves, that we may receive him. *

The method is two-fold: one, that we lay no obstacles in the way to prevent him from coming to us; the other, that we practise all the means which may allure him to come.

For 1st, St. Stephen teaches us that there is such a thing as to “resist the Holy Ghost¹.” And we then resist him, when we lay any impediments in his way, or indeed do not endeavour to remove them out of it. Of these impediments there are some, which the Scriptures especially point out to us.

One, and a chief one, is pride. For the Holy Ghost will not dwell, but “with the humble²,” as Isaiah saith: nor doth God, saith Solomon, “give grace, but unto the lowly³.” At his first coming he “lighted upon *him*⁴,” who was “meek and lowly in heart⁵;” and he willeth us to learn of him, that we also may “put on the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which” (however the world may slight or despise it) “is in the sight of God of great price⁶.”

Another impediment is carnality or impurity.

¹ Acts vii. 51.

² Isaiah lvii. 15.

³ Prov. iii. 34.

⁴ Matt. iii. 16.

⁵ Matt. xi. 29.

⁶ 1 Pet. iii. 4.

For spiritual and carnal are as directly opposed to each other, as heaven is to earth. Without cleanness, there can be no holiness. The unclean spirit must be cast out, before we can be prepared to receive the Holy Ghost. He will come into our bodies, as into a "temple¹," dedicated to his service, and undefiled by worldly lusts.

A third principal impediment to the receiving the Holy Ghost, is "the spirit dwelling in us," which, as St. James saith, "lusteth after envy²;"—after envy, or malice, or whatever else savours of "the gall of bitterness:" in which whosoever are, St. Peter unequivocally warns us, "that they have no part, or fellowship³" in the gifts of the Holy Ghost. He is indeed by nature the Spirit of love, as well as of holiness: and it is one of his offices, to "shed abroad love in our hearts⁴." But how can He dwell in a heart, already occupied by a different guest? how can love be received, if "malice" be not first "put away?"

These impediments then, pride, lust, and malice, being removed, we are to invite the Spirit to dwell in us by all the means, which he approves of and hath appointed. For this purpose, we must betake ourselves to the place, and visit it

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 19.

² James iv. 5.

³ Acts viii. 21. 23.

⁴ Rom. v. 5.

often, in which he delights to “ come down and talk with” his worshippers, even “ the tabernacle of the congregation¹.” For there is no place on earth, which he more frequents, or wherewith he holds more constant intercourse, than with the holy places, “ where he hath recorded his name ;” for thither doth “ he come unto us, and bless us” with his blessing.

Being there, there is an obvious method, whereby we are to receive him, namely, the performance of the duty, which ought principally to bring us to his sanctuary. It is not the ordinary rule of God’s proceedings to bestow upon us his blessings, especially his greatest, his spiritual blessings, unless we seek for them by prayer. But to devout and constant prayer, there is no blessing which God hath not promised to grant : and as of others, so of this more especially, we are assured by Christ, that “ His heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him².”

A second mean, whereby we are to receive Him, is “ the word of the Lord :”—that word “ which,” as St. Peter saith, “ by the Gospel is preached unto us³.” Indeed it is our own fault, if it doth not profit us : for the Lord hath promised us by a Prophet, that “ his words and

¹ Exod. xx. 24. Numb. xi. 16.

² Luke xi. 13.

³ 1 Pet. i. 25.

his Spirit shall not part¹ ;” but shall continue with us for ever. Of this we have an example in the hearers of St. Peter on the day of Pentecost ; and again in Cornelius and his family at Cæsarea, where upon the preaching of Peter, even “ while he yet spake, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word². ”

That we see not this effect produced by the word, the reason is, that it is no sooner heard than it is forgotten. With Felix perhaps we “ tremble ” at the preacher’s reasoning “ of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, ” but we interrupt the train of seriousness excited in us, and defer the hour of meditation and improvement until a more “ convenient time. ” With Agrippa we are somewhat moved perhaps by a powerful appeal to our conscience ; but contented with being “ almost persuaded to become Christians, ” we hastily dismiss the subject from our thoughts. To profit effectually by the word preached to us, we should withdraw from the noise and tumult that surround us, and retire to some place, where we might be by ourselves ; that when we have heard him by his minister speak *to* us, we might hear also what he will speak *in* us :—that when we have heard the voice before us, we might hear also that “ behind

¹ Isaiah lix. 21.

² Acts x. 44.

us, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it¹ :”—that when we have heard the voice sounding in our outward ears, we might hear that also, “which speaketh,” as it did to Job, “in silence² ;” that “still small voice,” which whispers inwardly to the heart :—that there we might hear him “reprove” us, “teach” us, “comfort” us within. It is for this cause that we are so often admonished to “commune with our own hearts³ :” for it is by “musing” and meditation, that “the fire is kindled⁴” and kept alive, which otherwise would languish and die. And certain it is, that many sparks of religion, for want of this, are soon extinguished. As fast as the word is written in our hearts, it is taken away again : as fast as “the good seed is sown, the fowls come and devour it :” and so our receiving is in vain, and the word and the Spirit are separated, which would otherwise continue together.

Lastly, as the word and the Spirit, so “the flesh” and the Spirit go together ;—that “flesh,” which was “conceived by the Holy Ghost ;” and which is bequeathed by Christ to his faithful followers, mystically given to them in the sacramental elements, that it may be the means of communicating to them the same Holy Ghost, by

¹ Isaiah xxx. 21.² Job iv. 16.³ Psalm iv. 4.⁴ Psalm xxxix. 3.

whom it was conceived. By worthily partaking of that bread, “we eat a spiritual meat¹ :” by worthily communicating in that cup, “we drink a spiritual drink¹ ;” or (as the same Apostle elsewhere expresses it) “we are made to drink of the Spirit² .” “Take, eat, this is my body ; drink ye all of this, for this is my blood ;” are the words, with which our Saviour puts the elements into our hands ; and as we receive of him the outward emblems, so also we receive the inward spiritual grace, and therewith the Spirit who communicates it, if the fault be not in ourselves.

If then, we would invite the Spirit indeed ; and if each of these, severally by itself, be appointed as effectual means for procuring him ; let us, my brethren, unite them all, and employ them together. “Take to you words,” the words of which Hosea speaks, words of earnest invocation ; “and turn to the Lord, and say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously³ .” “Receive, or take to you, the word⁴ ,” spoken of by St. James, which is “ingrafted” into you by the office of preaching. “Receive the body, receive the blood of Christ,” the instituted channel by which he communicates with us by his Spirit. Take all these together ;

¹ 1 Cor. x. 3, 4.

³ Hos. xiv. 7.

² 1 Cor. xii. 13.

⁴ James i. 21.

—prayer, uttered in “the spirit of supplication¹ ;” —the words, that Christ speaketh unto you, “for they are spirit, and they are life² ;” —“the bread of life³ ,” and “the cup of salvation⁴ :” and ye may with humble confidence answer St. Paul’s question in the affirmative ; and say, “We have received the Holy Ghost :” for on earth there is no securer way, than to unite these means together : and by these he is to be received, if he is to be received at all.

May God Almighty grant us grace, so to practise the appointed means, and so to receive Him here ; that He may finally receive us in that “holy place,” whither He came to bring us ; even in that “house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,” with God the Father, who prepared it, and God the Son, who purchased it for us. To whom, three Persons in one Godhead, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, power, and dominion, now, henceforth, and for ever ! Amen.

¹ Zech. xii. 10.

² John vi. 63.

³ John vi. 35.

⁴ Psalm cxvi. 13.

SERMON XVI.

THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT EXEMPLIFIED IN THE CHARACTER OF JOSEPH.

GEN. xli. 38, 39.

And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such an one as this is, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art.

AMONG the various excellencies which recommend the books of the Old Testament to our attention, it is not one of the least that they abound in admirable examples of the most exalted virtue. It is true indeed, that several of those examples are occasionally represented as polluted with moral defilement, the consequence of their inheriting a nature originally corrupt. But whilst we are herein furnished with a proof of the impartiality and veracity of the writers, the humble and contrite heart is encouraged not to despond under the consciousness of its weakness, provided it be not

guilty of “presumptuous sins;” and the more confident spirit is admonished not to be too secure in its own stedfastness, but to “take heed lest it fall.”

In the mean time, notwithstanding these temporary lapses into sin, to which the records of the Jewish church represent the best of men as subject, it may be safely affirmed, that in those records we must search for instances of the purest virtue. And in no other authentic narratives, with the exception of the books of the New Testament alone, shall we discover parallels to the faith of Abraham; the piety of David, and of Daniel; the righteousness of Enoch, and of Noah; the zeal of Elijah; the disinterestedness of Elisha; the integrity of Samuel; the uprightness of Josiah; the religious courage of Caleb and Joshua; the patriotism of Ezra and Nehemiah; the meekness of Moses; and the resignation of Job.

But among the numerous examples of virtue with which these holy writings abound, there is no one, perhaps, more worthy of general imitation, no one, which is illustrative of a greater variety of moral excellence, or which is exhibited in more diversified or in more interesting relations, than that of Joseph the son of Jacob. Placed by the Providence of God in situations of peculiar difficulty and hazard;—exposed to the powerful temptations of the most abject and the

most elevated condition;—at one time persecuted by his brethren, and sold by them as a slave into a foreign country; at another become the object of their reverence, while “they bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth;”—at one time deservedly honoured and exalted by his master; at another slanderously accused of a crime which his soul abhorred, and injuriously thrust into the public prison, as a malefactor;—now with his “feet hurt in the stocks,” and “the iron entering into his soul;” and now “arrayed in vestures of fine linen, as ruler over all the land of Egypt, wearing the gold chain and riding in the second chariot of Pharaoh, whilst they cried before him, Bow the knee:”—this illustrious Patriarch appears to have uniformly maintained the same virtuous character, and to verify the observation of the Egyptian Monarch, that it were difficult to “find such an one as this is, a man in whom is the Spirit of God.”

The observation of Pharaoh indeed was limited to a single feature in the character of Joseph. His interpretation of Pharaoh’s dreams, and his salutary advice with respect to the necessary provision for meeting the approaching exigence, filled the king with a high opinion of his wisdom and discretion; qualities, which he attributed with a discernment, remarkable in a Heathen

sovereign, to the inspiration of God. The inspired writers refer us to the same divine Being as the source of every human excellence; and attribute all our approaches towards moral or intellectual perfection to his benign influence. "The fruit of the Spirit," saith St. Paul, "is in all goodness and righteousness and truth¹;" and the same Apostle elsewhere tells us, that whatever be our "wisdom" and our "knowledge," they are "all the work of that one and the self-same Spirit²."

I shall consider the words of Pharaoh then as describing the character of Joseph in a more enlarged sense than that, which they were originally intended to bear: and shall endeavour to give you a distinct view of the several features of his character, in the several relations, wherein it is presented by Moses, in order to draw from the examination the general inference, that he was "a man, in whom was the Spirit of God."

I. The love of God is "the first and great commandment³:" nor can it be said, that the Spirit of God is in that man, who is not actuated by the love of God. Here then we have a leading criterion, by which to estimate the character of Joseph.

1. He, who loves God, will "do all to the

¹ Eph. v. 9.

² 1 Cor. xii. 11.

³ Matt. xxii. 38.

glory of God¹;" whatever good works he may have grace to do, he will do them with a view to promote the glory of his heavenly Father. Such was the piety of Joseph. When called upon to interpret the dreams of Pharaoh, he replied, "It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." And he had previously ascribed his skill in divination to its all-wise Giver, when he prefaced his explanation of the dreams of the chief butler and the chief baker, by telling them that "interpretations belonged to God."

2. He, who loves God, will believe in his superintending and directing Providence, and will be assured that "all things will work together for good to them who love him²." Such was the faith of Joseph. "As for you, ye thought evil against me," was his language to his brethren, in allusion to their selling him for a slave: "but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God."

3. He, who loves God, will "humble himself under his mighty hand³," and receive afflictions as the wholesome corrections of a father, who "loveth the son that he chasteneth⁴." Such was the resignation of Joseph. When sold by his

¹ 1 Cor. x. 31.

² Rom. viii. 28.

³ 1 Pet. v. 6.

⁴ Heb. xii. 6, 7.

brethren as a bond-servant, he conducted himself with such submission to the will of God, that “the Lord was with him, and he was a prosperous man; and found grace in the sight of his master, who saw that the Lord was with him.” When imprisoned in return for his fidelity to his master, and in consequence of an injurious accusation, “the Lord was with Joseph,” doubtless because he bore his chastening rod with devout submission; “and showed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison; who looked not to any thing that was under his hand, because the Lord was with him; and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper.

4. He, who loves God, will praise him for all his mercies, and will esteem every blessing, which he enjoys, as the gift of God. Such was the gratitude of Joseph. The station of dignity to which he was raised by being made governor of the land of Egypt, did not withdraw his mind from the Author and Giver of all good things: “God,” saith he, “hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.” In the enjoyment of domestic comfort and delight, his thoughts were not estranged from the heavenly Father of all. As he presented his two sons to Jacob, his earthly parent, “they are my sons,” said he, “whom God hath given me in this place.”

5. He, who "loves God," will "keep his commandments¹." Such was the obedience of Joseph. "I fear God," was his declaration on one occasion; and his fear operated as it should do; it prevented him from disobeying and displeasing God. Accordingly when he was tempted to defile his master's bed, what was his answer? "Behold," said he to the unprincipled woman, who would have seduced him from his duty, "my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; there is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" From a sense of duty to his master he was incapable of recompensing the confidence reposed in him with so irreparable and cruel an injury. But his sense of duty to his master was founded on the only perfect security of moral obligation, a sense of his duty to God.

II. "He, who loves God, will love his brother also²." Such was the humane disposition of Joseph; as it will appear from the line of conduct which he observed in his different social relations. We will proceed now therefore to such

¹ 1 John v. 2, 3.

² 1 John iv. 21.

particulars as bear upon this part of the subject: and having thus far seen him performing his duty to God, by piety, by faith, by resignation, by gratitude, and by obedience, we will take for a further criterion of his character, the manner in which he did his duty to man.

1. And here our attention must first be directed to the filial affection of Joseph; for little reason should we have for expecting to find his character exemplary in other respects, if he appeared negligent of the first moral law both of nature and of revelation, and guilty of irreverence towards the authors of his being.

The inspired writer of Genesis informs us that “Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age;” not because he was his youngest son, for that he was not, Benjamin being younger than he: but probably because, after a long season of barrenness, he was born of Rachel, the most beloved consort of Jacob; and because, at the period referred to, he was arrived at an age when he was capable of affording more comfort to the declining years of his father, than could be given by his younger brother Benjamin. And this interpretation appears to be countenanced by the narrative of the Jewish historian Josephus, who assigns as a cause for the partiality shown by Jacob for the first-born of Rachel, that “his father loved him above

the rest of his sons, both because of the beauty of his body, and the virtues of his mind, for he excelled the rest in prudence."

But whatever was the cause of Jacob's preference of Joseph, and however that preference may have been distinguished, it was amply repaid by the filial affection and reverence shown him by this favoured son. Notwithstanding he had been separated from his father more than twenty years, and was raised to a station second only in dignity and power to that of Pharaoh king of Egypt, on the arrival of his brethren to buy corn, his first object appears to have been to procure information concerning this beloved and only surviving parent. For this cause "he made himself strange unto them and spake roughly unto them;" nor suffered them to depart home, until he had taken measures to secure their return. On their return, the first question with which he saluted them, a question which indicated the tenderest and most amiable anxiety, was, "Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? is he still alive?" When he discovered himself to his brethren, he was impelled to the discovery by the lively sense he had conceived of his father's affliction and distress; and accordingly his apprehension for his father's safety betrays itself in language, which after the previous conversation with his brethren could

not have been dictated but by the warmest attachment; "I am Joseph. Doth my father yet live?" Agreeably to this, his first measure is to secure his father's removal from a land of scarcity to one of plenty, where he himself also might be able to minister to his wants and to contribute to his comforts. "Haste ye; and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph; God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not: and thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast: and there will I nourish thee." He dwells on the dignity which he is enjoying in a strange land, because he thinks it will be a subject of exultation and delight to his aged parent. "Ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen: and ye shall haste, and bring down my father hither." He sends him provisions and carriages for his journey: and not content with intrusting the charge of welcoming him to another, he goes himself to receive him: "Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father to Goshen, and presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while." And there he placed him, and nourished him in the best of the land

during the remaining “days of the years of his pilgrimage,” until he “brought down his grey hairs,” not “with sorrow,” but with comfort, “to the grave.” Nor can I forbear noticing those interesting particulars, which illustrate the filial piety of Joseph, in presenting himself with his children before the death-bed of his father to receive his parting blessing; in promising to convey him to “the burying-place of his ancestors;” in “falling upon his father’s face, and weeping upon him, and kissing him,” when he had yielded up the ghost; in “embalming” the body with princely munificence; and finally in removing it to “the land of Canaan,” and depositing it “in the cave of Machpelah,” the sepulchre of Abraham and of Isaac.

2. But Joseph, it may be said, had been treated with partial fondness by his father; and the affection, which he thus testified, was only a return for the kindness he had experienced. Let us see then what was his conduct towards his brethren, all of whom “had hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him;” whilst some of them had conspired to slay him, and others had actually sold him for a slave.

When he had occasion to notice the cause of his being a bondman in Egypt, how does he describe it? “Indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews.” He intimates that he

had been treated with injustice ; but he mentions not those who had injured him. When his brethren appeared before him, how does he conduct himself towards them ? “ He made himself strange unto them indeed, and spake roughly unto them :” he adopted a line of conduct, which was necessary perhaps in order to complete the benevolent design, he had in view ; and which for a time wore the appearance of severity and harshness ; but in adopting even this apparent severity, he laid a temporary restraint on his own humanity and affection ; at the same time he committed no act of injustice towards any one of them, and ultimately he conferred the greatest benefits on them all. In this part of his behaviour indeed we perceive his prudence and discretion ; which would not suffer him to discover himself unto his brethren, before he should have ascertained the probable consequences of the discovery : and which perhaps judged it expedient to awaken their sleeping consciences to salutary contrition for their former unnatural cruelty. From such considerations as these he seems to have done violence to his real feelings ; what those feelings were, we learn from unequivocal evidence, when in the midst of this assumed strangeness and roughness of demeanour, “ he turned himself about from them and wept ;” when “ he commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and

to restore every man's money into his sack, and to give them provision for the way:" when he "could not refrain himself, but wept aloud, so that the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard, while he made himself known unto his brethren;" when he "kissed all his brethren and wept upon them;" when he "gave them a possession in the best of the land;" when he, "nourished them and their little ones;" when he "comforted them, and spake kindly unto them."

3. I have only to add, that the moral character of Joseph, thus beautifully illustrated by his conduct towards his father, who had treated him with paternal affection, and towards his brothers, who had persecuted him with unnatural cruelty, maintains its consistency, when surveyed in its relation to the Egyptians, among whom it was exhibited under a great variety of circumstances. To Potiphar he acted the part as a conscientious and faithful servant; and both in the management of his household in general, and in particular on one memorable occasion, wherein his virtue was assailed, proved himself a man of uncorruptible integrity. By "the keeper of the prison" he was invested with an office of trust, which he discharged with care and success. Elevated by Pharaoh to the highest dignity in the state, he gave the most satisfactory evidence of that "wisdom" and "discretion," on the

presumption of which he had been advanced ; and acquitted himself with distinguished honour in an employment, and during a season, of peculiar difficulty. By his astonishing prudence, he not only preserved a whole nation from the horrors of impending famine, but he availed himself of their temporary distress to confer upon them a permanent benefit, and provided for their future security and improvement in civilization, by removing them from the country over which they were dispersed “into cities, from one end of the borders of Egypt unto the other.” In the mean time he justified the good opinion of his employer by the diligence, wherewith he executed his commission ; and by converting the profits of his success, not to his own personal aggrandizement, but to the promotion of the interests of Pharaoh. Indeed the influence which he possessed with the sovereign, and the authority which he maintained over the people of Egypt, furnish an undeniable argument for the uncommon merit of Joseph : for it is not reasonable to suppose that any thing under Providence, but merit of a very extraordinary kind, could have conciliated the good-will of a whole people to a man, who inherited no domestic or national claim upon their regard ; who had been brought into their country a stranger, an outcast, and a slave ; and whose character had been blackened by the im-

putation of a crime of the basest and the foulest nature.

Upon the whole of this examination, we trace in the patriarch Joseph the character of one, who diligently “exercised himself to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man¹.” Endowed with a solid understanding, and with a heart alive to virtuous thoughts and to kind affections, he made “the fear of God” the ruling principle of his conduct. He accordingly affords us an example of devout and rational piety; of blameless and manly virtue. To the Almighty he was humble, grateful, and resigned; zealous in promoting his glory, and resolute in keeping his commandments. To his fellow creatures he was, as a son, dutiful and affectionate; as a brother, kind and forgiving; faithful, as a servant and a subject; discreet and benevolent, as a ruler; of integrity unshaken, and of manners uncorrupt. The concluding chapters of the book of Genesis, which are unexampled for the interesting and affecting simplicity of the narrative, present us in this character of Joseph with one of the most faultless patterns for our imitation. We may therefore reasonably demand in the language of the Egyptian Monarch, and with that evangelical

¹ Acts xxiv. 16.

signification which the Christian will affix to the words, "Can we find such an one as this is; a man, in whom is the Spirit of God?" And we may then safely conclude, that we are guided by the same Spirit, when we testify our "love of God" by that piety, faith, resignation, gratitude, and obedience; and our "love of man" by that affectionate behaviour in our domestic relations, by that faithful discharge of our social duties, and that general tenor of kindness and benevolence, which so eminently distinguished this well-beloved son of Israel, this highly-favoured servant of God.

SERMON XVII.

THE SPIRIT OF GOD MANIFESTED BY HIS FRUITS.

GEN. xli. 38.

And Pharaoh said, Can we find such an one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is ?

IN a late discourse I took occasion from these words to examine the character of Joseph, the son of Jacob, as set forth in the concluding chapters of the book of Genesis : and I endeavoured to illustrate the position that Joseph was under the influence of the Spirit of God, by bringing forward to your view the several qualities, which he exhibited in his conduct; qualities, which the Gospel represents as the “work of that one and the self-same Spirit.” In conducting the inquiry, I took two leading criterions, whereby to judge of the character of Joseph, namely “the love of God,” and “the love of man;” and I considered them as exemplified in the conduct of that holy Patriarch, respectively branching on the one hand into piety, faith, resignation, gratitude, and

obedience; and on the other into filial duty, brotherly affection, fidelity as a servant and a subject, and benevolence as one intrusted with power. The possession of these qualities may be a rule for ourselves, as was incidentally remarked in the conclusion of that discourse; and as we infer the Spirit of God to have been in Joseph from a consideration of those fruits of the Spirit, which he manifested, so we may infer that the same Spirit is in us, when he produces in us the same fruits. Taking then the remarks, which I made on the character of Joseph, as the guide for those which are to follow, I propose with the blessing of God to devote the present discourse to an application of the principles already laid down to our own spiritual state.

I. And first, as to “the love of God,” which, as it is the subject of “the first and great commandment,” so also should be the first and great spring of all our actions. This was the leading criterion whereby we estimated the character of Joseph; let us take it for the leading criterion of our own characters.

1. In him the love of God produced a pious disposition to promote “the glory of God.” Does the same pious disposition afford us reason to hope that we are actuated by the same love? Whatever good qualities we may possess, whether of the understanding or of the heart; what-

ever evil dispositions we may be able to subdue, whatever sins we may refrain from, whatever virtues we may practise; are we willing and ready to profess, that our light and our strength and our holiness, our ability and disposition to “eschew evil and to do good,” are of the grace of God; that whatever we can do, it is only “through Christ, which strengtheneth us¹;” that as it is not in us, of our own natural weakness, to be wise, or good, or happy, so it is unto God through Christ Jesus that we are indebted, for “our wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption²;” so that “whereinsoever we glory, we may glory in the Lord³?” The Apostle teaches us to carry this principle into the most ordinary occurrences, into the most necessary and indispensable business of life. “Whether ye eat or drink,” saith he, “or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God⁴.” Do we adopt the principle in its full extent, and in its universal application? and labour so to conduct ourselves in the more trivial and familiar, as well as in the more important and public transactions that we are engaged in, not in order to promote our own honour or interest, but “that men may see our good works, and”

¹ Phil. iv. 13.² 1 Cor. i. 30.³ 1 Cor. i. 31.⁴ 1 Cor. x. 31.

being led to regard them as proceeding from the love of God, may “glorify our heavenly Father¹,” who hath graciously enabled and disposed us to perform them ?

2. Again : the love of God was manifested in Joseph by a belief in his superintending and directing Providence. Do we like him believe, that “God meaneth all the evil,” that is thought or wrought against us, “for good,” and that he will ultimately cause “all things to work together for good to them who love him ?” It is not probable that our faith will be put to those severe trials, by which Almighty God saw fit to exercise the faith of Joseph. Torn from his native country, from the arms of an affectionate and only surviving parent, of whose declining years he was the support and the comfort ; betrayed by his brethren, the children of his father ; sold as a slave into a foreign country ; and there persecuted, slandered, and imprisoned : he “held fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end² :” he knew that it was “the word of the Lord which tried him³.” Under trials much less severe than these, trials which do not exceed the ordinary portion of man, many of them probably the consequences of our own sinful lusts, and many probably brought upon us

¹ Matt. v. 16.

² Heb. iii. 6.

³ Psalm cv. 19.

and continued by our own perverse tempers, is our faith unshaken in the goodness and providence of God? Knowing that "we have access by faith in Jesus Christ into this grace wherein we stand," do we not only "rejoice in hope of the glory of God," but "glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience¹?" It is an essential part of religion, not only to "believe in God that he is;" but also to believe, that he judgeth and ruleth the world in righteousness, that he can bring good out of evil, that he can and does make all things, yea even the evil designs and actions of wicked men, work together for the good of his faithful people. Is this our belief? are we assured, under all the trials that exercise us, under all the evil that befalleth us, that "God meaneth it for good?"

3. Again; the "faith" of Joseph was "made perfect" by his resignation: he believed in God, as the all-wise Disposer of human events, and "the trying of his faith wrought in him patience²." If we believe as Joseph did, we shall be resigned also like him. Is such our resignation? Believing that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and that he scourgeth every son, whom he receiveth;" do we "endure chastening," as

¹ Rom. v. 2.

² James i. 3.

intended “for our profit, and that we may be made partakers of the holiness of God¹?” Do we submit to the rod of affliction, knowing “who hath appointed it²,” and that he hath appointed it for wise and salutary ends? Do we in the season of distress, “cast all our care upon God,” believing that “he careth for us³?” Do we “humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, assured that he will exalt us in due time⁴ ;”—that having “called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that we have suffered awhile, he will make us perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle us⁵?” As the desires of human nature will “lust against the Spirit,” and prevent us from becoming perfect in “the beauty of holiness ;” so will the infirmities of our nature sometimes rebel, and hinder us from being “stedfast in the faith⁶ ;” from submitting with that complete and uniform subjection of our will, which we owe and should strive to practise, to “the Father of spirits⁷.” Is it however our hearty endeavour to attain the faith and resignation, which it becometh us to practise ; to manifest that subjection of our will to the will of God, which is our duty in all the dispensations of his

¹ Heb. xii. 6—10.² Micah vi. 9.³ 1 Pet. v. 7.⁴ 1 Pet. v. 6.⁵ 1 Pet. v. 10.⁶ 1 Pet. v. 9.⁷ Heb. xii. 9.

Providence? “The flesh” may be, to a certain extent it always will be, “weak;” is “the spirit” nevertheless “willing¹?”

4. Again; united with resignation under the hastening hand of God, Joseph possessed a heart grateful to him for the blessings which he bestowed. “Give me neither poverty nor riches²,” was the prayer of a wise man, well aware of the dangers which accompany each extreme. Proof against the evils of each, as adversity had not caused the Hebrew Patriarch to repine, and call in question the goodness of God, so prosperity did not seduce him into a forgetfulness of his almighty Benefactor. His public dignity and his domestic enjoyments were alike attributed to their proper origin; as benefits, “which God had given him.” As our sufferings cannot, generally speaking, be as intense as were those of Joseph, so neither can our blessings be great as his. Yet blessings we all of us enjoy; some in a greater, others in a less degree. The gifts of an exalted rank and of abundant riches are bestowed on few men; and such is the spirit with which they are too often received, so little thankfulness do they commonly excite towards him who hath bestowed them, and such and so little worthy are the purposes to which they are

¹ Matt. xxvi. 41.

² Prov. xxx. 8.

applied, that it was only a just observation of human nature that drew from Agur the prayer, to which I have just alluded, wherein he desired not riches, “lest he should be full, and deny God, and say, Who is the Lord?” If however we do possess the good things of this world in a great degree, do we endeavour to be grateful in proportion? If not, do we learn to be content with whatever blessings we do possess, and to be grateful to God for them? Whatever we have, we have no claim to it; but it is the free gift of a good and gracious Providence; whether it be the necessaries, the comforts, the conveniences of this world, or the promise of eternal life, and the aid of divine grace for attaining it, in another; it is more, much more, than we deserve; and it is conferred upon us out of regard, not to any righteousness of our own, but to the abundant merits of our Saviour, and of the great and uncontrolled mercy of God. According to the freeness of the gift, so ought to be our sense of gratitude towards the Giver. From a debtor we may receive what he pays without thanking him: it is our due, and he cannot withhold it. But where the gift is free, great should be the thankfulness of the receiver; and it should rise, if possible, in proportion to the absolute freedom of him who bestows it. I will not ask whether our gratitude to God is in proportion to what, under the

circumstances of the case, we receive; it is not, it cannot be. But do we endeavour, as much as we can, to make it so? Do we cherish lively feelings of gratitude in our hearts? Do we express them with our lips and in our lives? Do we “give thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ¹?”

5. Another proof of the love of God reigning in the heart of Joseph is that he feared him:—that is, he feared to do what might be displeasing in his sight; and was careful not to sin against him, but to “keep his commandments.” Is this our fear of God? Is such our obedience? Do we avoid those things, which we know to be sinful, because God hath forbidden them? do we do those things, which we know to be “lawful and right,” because God hath so commanded? When temptation assails us in the discharge of our duty, whether religious or moral, whether towards God or towards man, do we meet it on the ground of obedience to the divine law; do we reply to the suggestions of the tempter, “How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” I rest upon this point the rather, both because a sense of duty to God is the principle laid down in Scripture, from which all our actions

¹ Eph. v. 20.

should originate; and also because there is no other principle whatever, which can withstand the assaults of temptation at all times, and in all places, and under all circumstances; in the privacy of the most secret retirement, as well as in the presence and before the eyes of the world. Perfect obedience indeed to God's commandments is what we cannot pay; the sense of duty to him will sometimes give way to strong temptations enforced by convenient opportunities of sinning: but a firm conviction, that we are constantly under the eye of an almighty, an all-wise, a just, a merciful, and a holy Being, to whom we are responsible for all we do, speak, or think, and who will hereafter "bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil¹," must operate with greater force than any earthly motive, to fill us with a salutary fear of God, and to prompt us to keep his commandments. Not, again, that by the partial and imperfect obedience, which we can show, it is in our power to make propitiation for our numerous imperfections, and to conciliate the favour of God; but it is our comfort and our blessing, that he himself has provided a propitiation for us in the blood of his only-begotten and well-beloved Son, who will reconcile us to his

¹ Eccl. xii. 14.

Father, if by the succour of his grace we strive to “love him and to keep his commandments.” They, who “keep the commandments of God,” are described under the dispensation of the *Law*, as the persons who “love God¹ :”—“He who keepeth my commandments,” saith the ever blessed Angel of the new covenant, the Author of the dispensation of the *Gospel*, “he it is that loveth me².” Have we then this proof of the love of God abiding in us? Do we fear him, not with the fear of slaves and bond-men, but with the honour and reverence which a son oweth to his father? Do we strive to obey him with a faithful and unreserved and universal obedience, and so “present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service³?”

II. It is an easy and obvious transition from the first criterion, by which we examined the claim of Joseph to be considered as “a man in whom was the Spirit of God,” namely “his love of God,” to the second criterion, namely his “love of man.” For our blessed Lord, who declares “the love of God to be the first and great commandment,” enforces the love of our neighbour by similar obligations⁴; and his be-

¹ Exod. xx. 6.

² John xiv. 21.

³ Rom. xii. 1.

⁴ Matt. xxii. 39.

loved disciple pronounces in the true spirit of the Gospel and of his "meek and lowly" Master, that where the love of man is not, the love of God cannot be ¹.

Let us proceed then to inquire, whether we are actuated by the Spirit of God, by applying to our own condition the particular remarks, that have been made on the moral and social character of Joseph.

1. The first law of nature, which respects our conduct to others, is that which prescribes affection and reverence from children towards their parents : and it is in compliance with those feelings, which Almighty God naturally implanted in the heart of man, that He was pleased to make the same the first moral law in his revealed will to his favoured people, and especially (as St. Paul describes it) "the first commandment with promise ²;"—the first commandment, to the performance of which he hath graciously annexed the promise of a blessing. For his exemplary observance of this commandment, the Patriarch, whose character we are examining, was memorably and illustriously distinguished. Is our conduct to the authors of our being, affectionate and dutiful as his? Do we take that earnest interest in their welfare? Do we minister to their

¹ 1 John iv. 20.

² Eph. vi. 2.

wants, and contribute to their comforts? Do we succour them with our fortunes, and attend on them with our persons? Do we love and honour them in their lives, do we solace them in their declining years, and do we “embalm” their memories when they are dead? In the present age, pretending as it does to superior degrees of illumination, it is much to be doubted whether filial piety, whether the honour due from children to parents, maintains its just rank in the scale of moral obligation. We have seen the rank assigned to it in the divine law: let us see how, agreeably to that station, it is spoken of by the wisest of men. “The fear of the Lord,” saith Solomon, “is the beginning of knowledge; but fools despise wisdom and instruction¹.” This is his first maxim for the regulation of human life, originating, where all sound instruction must originate, with the religious principle. What is his second maxim? “My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. It shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck².” Is

¹ Prov. i. 7.

² Prov. i. 8; vi. 20, 21, 22.

such our reverence for the earthly authors of our being ; is such our obedience to that, “ which is the first commandment with promise ?” or dare we defy the “ curse” denounced by the Lord God upon him, “ who setteth light by his father or his mother ¹?”

2. Together with the most exemplary filial piety, we have seen Joseph distinguished by the warmest affection towards his brothers. A sense of the most unmerited and severest injuries experienced from them, had not been able to stifle his benevolence, and did not prevent him from manifesting the dictates of that benevolence in the most substantial and valuable services. Is such our affection, our good-will to our brethren, to our “ kinsmen according to the flesh ?” But not only so : we are all brethren : “ hath not one God created us ?” hath not one Saviour redeemed us ? Do we then all “ love as brethren ²?” Do we as “ brethren, dwell together in unity ³?” Do we “ put away from us all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, with all malice ? And are we kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven us ⁴?” Can we “ bless them

¹ Deut. xxvii. 16.

² Mal. ii. 10.

³ 1 Pet. iii. 8.

⁴ Psalm cxxxiii. 1.

⁵ Eph. iv. 31.

that curse us? can we do good to them that hate us, and pray for them which despitefully use us and persecute us¹?”—“If our enemy hunger, can we feed him? if he thirst, can we give him drink? Instead of being overcome of evil, do we endeavour to overcome evil with good²?”—“Sirs, ye are brethren,” said Moses to two of the Israelites, as they strove together; “why do ye wrong one to another³?” The principle, in its literal application, regarding the Jews as a distinct people, “children of the blood of Abraham,” ran through the whole of their laws: in its enlarged signification, under the notion which the Gospel holds forth, that all men are children of God, that all men are redeemed by Christ, it runs through the Christian law. He is not a good Christian, who “does wrong” to one of his brethren, to one of his fellow creatures, whether he be the aggressor or retaliate the injury. The world indeed will tell us otherwise: it will often justify aggression; it will enjoin revenge as a duty. But “the spirit which reigneth in the children of the world,” is not the Spirit of “the children of light.” That blessed Spirit commands us to “do good unto all men⁴;”—“as much as lieth in us, to live peaceably with all men;” to “avenge not

¹ Matt. v. 44.

² Rom. xii. 20, 21.

³ Acts vii. 26.

⁴ Gal. vi. 10.

ourselves¹." Do we give this proof of the Spirit abiding in us?

3. Lastly ; the conduct of Joseph in the capacities of a servant, a subject, and a ruler ; as one, acting under the command of others, and as one, invested with authority himself ; leads us to consider the manner, in which we conduct ourselves under similar circumstances. As a servant, he was faithful to his master ; as a subject, he was obedient to his sovereign ; as a ruler, he studied to promote the interests of those committed to his charge. According as we are placed in any or all of these situations, does our conduct give proof of the same honesty and integrity? If our lot be that of a servant, do we "obey in all things our masters according to the flesh, not with eye-service as men-pleasers ; but in singleness of heart, fearing God, and as the servants of Christ ; heartily and with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free?"² It was this sense of his responsibility to God, as I have before remarked, which preserved Joseph true to his duty towards his master in a season of great temptation ; and it is the same sense, which St. Paul is anxious to impress on those in the like

¹ Rom. xii. 18, 19.

² Col. iii. 22. Eph. vi. 5.

situation ; doubtless for this reason, that religion is the only sure defence of morality. As subjects, are we obedient “to the higher powers¹,” submissive to the laws, and respectful to those who are intrusted with the execution of them ;—and that not only “for wrath, but also for conscience sake ;” not only for fear of “the sword which the ruler beareth, to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil ;” but because we know obedience to be our duty, which we cannot fail in to man, without displeasing God? If we be intrusted with power, do we exercise it justly and mercifully? justly, in compliance with the law, whence the authority is derived ; mercifully, out of regard to those towards whom it is to be exercised? The ruler, the officer of the law, in whatever department he may be stationed, is “the minister of God for good” to those who are the subjects of the law. Is it our study then to promote the good of those to whom our authority extends? to correct and reform the vicious ; to protect the innocent and the distressed ; and to reward the virtuous and deserving? In a word, whether we be servants, subjects, or rulers, our respective stations are stewardships, for which we are accountable, and in which we shall be “required to be found faithful² :” they are talents, with which we are

¹ Rom. xiii. 1.

² 1 Cor. iv. 2.

intrusted, and which we are expected to improve, to the glory of God, the salvation of our souls, and the benefit of others. Is it our conscientious endeavour so to improve them ?

I have thus endeavoured to direct your thoughts to those heads of self-examination, which are most naturally suggested by the story of Joseph the son of Jacob. From those “fruits of the Spirit,” which we have seen manifested in his conduct, we reasonably infer that he was “a man in whom was the Spirit of God :” and when we perceive the same fruits manifested in our own conduct, we may reasonably trust that the same Spirit is in us. It is hardly necessary to remark, that it has not been my intention to bring forward all those fruits, which the Scriptures ascribe to the Holy Spirit ; but those, to which the subject before us has more immediately directed my thoughts, as being most signally evidenced in the character of this virtuous Patriarch. Thus much however may perhaps safely be affirmed ; that where these fruits of the Spirit are produced, the others will be found also : and that where these fruits are not produced, whatever spiritual gifts and graces a man may pretend to enjoy, still the Spirit of God is not in him.

S E R M O N XVIII.

PRIDE A WORLDLY QUALITY : IRRELIGIOUS AND
IRRATIONAL.

1 JOHN ii. 16.

The pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world.

THAT the maxims of the world are often at variance with those of Christianity, is a truth, which needs not excite our astonishment. A renunciation of the pomps and vanity of the world is one of the terms, on which we are admitted into the Christian Church : “ not to be conformed to the world ” is one of the rules, by which we are to be regulated in our Christian course : and we are frequently admonished by the word of truth, that the world is one of the most dangerous enemies, against which we have to struggle in our progress towards Christian perfection. It is of course to be expected, that whilst its practices contribute to vitiate our hearts, our understandings also

should be liable to be dazzled and deluded by its maxims.

I am led to these remarks by reflecting on the difference, which prevails between the ordinary language of the world and the representations of Christianity, on the subject suggested by the words of the Apostle.

The mind of the child is soon impressed with the necessity of entertaining, what is called by a strange inconsistency and perversion of language, “a proper pride.” As young persons make their entrance into life, they are instructed to “take pride” in distinguishing themselves, and surpassing their fellows. The force of early instruction and of general example cooperates with the propensities of a vicious nature, prone to weakness and vanity; till as we grow up, we make no scruple of professing that we “pride ourselves” on a variety of things which we speak, think, or do. Nations are only aggregates of individuals: and it is natural that the feelings of the several members should be transferred to the body at large. If a bountiful Providence exempts us from miseries, to which our less favoured neighbours are exposed, and showers on us peculiar blessings, we represent ourselves as placed on a “proud eminence:”—if Almighty God crowns our arms with victory, it is celebrated as a “proud day” for England:—if we are reminded

of our national demerits and offences, we do not perhaps deny the charge ; but adverting to some more pleasing trait in the national character, or to some splendid act of national benevolence, we thank God with a false and pharisaical humility, that we have something to be “ proud of.”

Now whatever may be intended by this quality of “ pride,” which we inculcate and adopt as a principle of action, and a ground of self-congratulation, our language at least is certainly not in harmony with the language of Christianity ; but it has, I apprehend, an obvious tendency to confound in our minds the distinction between right and wrong ; and to diminish our abhorrence of a quality, which is totally inconsistent with the temper recommended by the Gospel, and which the Gospel explicitly condemns. Look to the constituent parts of that character, which our Saviour proposes as the model for a Christian’s imitation, and on which he promises especial blessings, in the beginning of his sermon on the mount ; and you will find that it consists of dispositions, in which pride has no portion. The first three blessings are pronounced on “ the poor in spirit ;” on “ them that mourn ;” and on “ the meek :” and the qualities which follow, are all of a kindred temper. Look to the example of our blessed Lord, whose life is especially proposed as

a pattern of humility, patience, and meekness. Look to the conduct of his Apostles, who in imitation of their Master, were made (in the forcible language of St. Paul) “as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things¹.” Look to the character which our Saviour gives of pride, where he enumerates the moral defilements of the heart of man, and classes it with adulteries, thefts, and murders². Look to the portraits which St. Paul exhibits of the reprobate condition of the heathen world, and of those “perilous times, which should come in the last days;” and you will find pride introduced among their characteristic features³. Look to the contrast, which the Scriptures repeatedly mark between the respective rewards, as well as the natures, of the Christian and the opposite temper, where it is said, that “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble⁴.” Look finally to the reason of all this in the assertion of the text, where St. John coupling “the pride of life” with “the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes,” in other words with sensuality and covetousness, affirms, that “it is not of the Father, but is of the world:” that it is not of heavenly origin, the valuable and fruitful gift

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 13.

² Mark vii. 21, 22.

³ Rom. 1. 30; 2 Tim. iii. 1, 2.

⁴ James iv. 6; 1 Pet. v. 5.

of the Holy Spirit of God ; but is on the contrary derived from “ the god of this world,” sinful as a principle, and mischievous in its tendency.

Pride is defined by a celebrated moralist, to be “ inordinate and unreasonable self-esteem.” Now where a man thinks too highly of himself, it is in the course of nature that he should think too lowly of others : and it may be laid down as a general axiom, that the concomitants of pride are scorn and insolence towards one’s fellow-creatures, and impiety and irreverence towards God. “ The proud have had me greatly in derision¹,” was the remark of the Psalmist ; and he laid his finger precisely on that spring, where irreligion has its origin, when he said, “ The wicked through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God : God is not in all his thoughts².”

These are the distinguishing marks of pride, where it is permitted to get dominion over the heart, and (which is a necessary consequence) to influence the actions. However it be nourished, and whatever be the shape it is invested with, its effects are uniformly hateful and pestilential ; uniformly subversive of piety towards God and charity towards man, as well as injurious to the happiness of him who is actuated by it. In the

¹ Psalm cxix. 51.

² Psalm x. 4.

pride of exalted birth, Absalom the son of David broke the ties of religion, allegiance, and filial duty; and rebelled against his father, whom the Lord had anointed king over Israel; and was violently cut off in the flower of his age. In the pride of arbitrary power, Jezebel usurped the vineyard of Naboth by perjury and murder; and "her carcass was eaten by dogs." In the pride of majesty, "the heart of Nebuchadnezzar was lifted up, and his mind hardened" to forget his almighty Benefactor; and he was "driven from men, and his dwelling was with the beasts of the field." In the pride of despotic authority, Pharaoh "refused to let the people of Israel go to serve the Lord;" and the Lord "hardened his heart" for a punishment, because he had himself already hardened it by his sin. In the pride of victory, Saul "rejected the word of the Lord; and the Lord rejected him from being king over Israel." In the pride of royal favour, the insatiable ambition of Haman would not rest, "so long as he saw Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate;" until he himself "was hanged on the gallows," that he had prepared for the object of his malice. In the pride of popular applause, Herod permitted himself to be saluted with divine honours; and "immediately an Angel of the Lord smote him, and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost." In the pride

of wealth, the covetous man in one parable thought of nothing, but to "eat, drink, and be merry;" and the rich man in another thought not of the beggar that "lay at his gate full of sores;" until the soul of the former was "required of him that night;" and the latter "lift up his eyes in hell, being in torments." In the pride of youth, Rehoboam threatened to "chastise his subjects with scorpions; and was punished by the loss of his hereditary authority. In the pride of bodily strength, Goliath "defied the armies of the living God;" and was slain by the hand of a stripling, whom he had disdained and cursed by his gods. In the pride of female beauty and accomplishments, the heart of Herodias's daughter was hardened into the commission of an act of wanton barbarity in demanding the head of John the Baptist; and the crime was recompensed by the degradation and banishment of her partners in guilt, if not by her own untimely destruction. In the pride of learning, the Greeks esteemed "the preaching of Christ crucified to be foolishness," and were judicially "given over by God to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient." In the pride of a fancied equality and consequent disobedience to their rulers, Korah and his company rebelled against Moses and Aaron, and "went down alive into the pit," because they

“had provoked the Lord.” Proud of their spiritual privileges and of their descent from Abraham, the Jews despised, rejected, and crucified the Lord of glory; and “his blood was on them and on their children;” and “their house was left unto them desolate.” Would we see even a more decisive and alarming proof of the origin of pride and of its offensiveness to God, we may discover it in the disobedience of Adam, which entailed sin, misery, and death on all his descendants; or in the rebellion of the evil spirit, who first set the example of resisting the Almighty, and was the primary cause of the wretchedness of man. Of such a quality as this; so selfish and malignant; so contentious and over-bearing; so impatient of control; so resolute in the attainment of its end; and so unprincipled in the adoption of means; of a quality so pernicious to all “the fruits of the Spirit,” and so signally branded by the displeasure of God; surely of such a quality it may well and safely be affirmed, that “it is not of the Father, but is of the world.”

Such being the nature, the tendency, and the consequences of pride, these considerations might be supposed capable of suppressing it, even if the matter, on which it feeds, were much more worthy of encouraging extravagant self-esteem, than it really is. But, as it hath been well observed,

“—Pride hath no other glass
To show itself, but pride :”

otherwise the mirror of reason and common sense, no less than the mirror of revelation, could hardly fail of exposing its folly and deformity.

We will survey it by these lights under its most ordinary forms ; and 1st, What superior excellence is there for example in superior birth, so as to make it an occasion of pride to a sensible man or to a Christian ? Let me not be misunderstood. Let it not be supposed that I am holding up dignities to contempt. The due subordination of society, the maintenance of which is imposed upon us by the commandments of God, requires, that the possessor of hereditary honours should be regarded with respect and deference by those, who are placed in the inferior stations of life. But considering these honours, as they should affect the mind of him, who is invested with them ; what reasonable foundation do they lay for inordinate self-esteem ? Or how can it enhance the personal merit of a man in one age, that his progenitor was ennobled for military skill, or political sagacity, or (it may be) for some conduct of a questionable at least, if not of a vicious character, a hundred or a thousand years before ? In truth, he who reflects with sober impartiality on the vices and follies of his ancestors, will often find reason to be

ashamed, rather than to be proud, of those who have gone before him : and he who compares their virtues and excellencies with his own inferior qualities, will often find reason to be ashamed, rather than to be proud, of himself. The considerate Israelite must have blushed for the disingenuous artifice, by which the Patriarch, whose name he bore, imposed on the credulity of his aged parent, and fraudulently supplanted his brother in the blessing of primogeniture : and the stubborn infidelity of the Jews in the time of Christ was aggravated by a comparison with the faith of their more illustrious forefather Abraham, from whom they prided themselves in being sprung.

2. Pride founded upon such distinction, as that which is conferred for personal merit, may appear to rest on a more solid ground. Yet when we consider the nature of many of those qualities, which are frequently the objects of royal favour or popular applause ; and when we remember the alloy of vice and infirmity, which is mixed up with most of those qualities, that are the theme of public admiration ; we may perceive enough in the reflection to “ bring down the high looks of the proud.” Indeed the very transitory duration of worldly distinction might serve to shake the foundation of inordinate self-esteem : for it is after all a humiliating

thought, to the most exalted of the sons of men, that however noble may be his hereditary rank, he sprang from the same common stock with the lowest of the people ; and however great may be his personal dignity, he is hastening rapidly towards that condition, when he must adopt the language of Job, and “ say unto corruption, Thou art my father ; and to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister ¹.”

3. Equally, if not more unreasonable is that pride, which glories in large possessions. Often transmitted to their proprietor without any exercise of his own industry ; and often, where they are the fruits of his own exertion, purchased by the compromise of the moral principle ; often hoarded with selfish avarice, and often squandered with no less selfish and senseless profusion ; extinguishing the more virtuous affections, contracting the heart, and clouding the understanding ; riches under such circumstances as these, afford much fitter materials for self-abasement, than for self-esteem. But however creditably and uprightly they may have been procured ; and however fitly, according to worldly notions at least, they may be employed ; there is one most important consideration, sufficient of itself essentially to depreciate the value, and to annihilate the pride, of

¹ Job xvii. 14.

wealth. Our Saviour, whose sense of the insignificance of wealth was shown, by his "not having where to lay his head," has declared in strongly figurative language, calculated to point out the extreme difficulty of the task, that "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God¹." Surely no serious and prudent man would pride himself on a possession, which by multiplying and strengthening his temptations to evil, proportionally increases the difficulty of being admitted to the favour of God.

4. From the endowments of fortune if we turn our eyes towards those of bodily excellence, we shall find them little meritorious in the estimation of a reflecting mind. The fairest face and the most melodious voice have their counterparts in the birds of the air and in the lilies of the field : the most muscular frame is but endued with properties which belong also to the beasts of the forest. Strength and beauty, numerous as are their votaries amongst "the children of pride," are thus equally conferred upon the inanimate plant, and upon the "brute that perisheth:" destined soon to wither and to decay in each, with this advantage indeed in favour of the inanimate and irrational parts of the creation,

¹ Matt. xix. 24.

that they do not by vain-glorious ostentation give occasion for their own destruction, like many of the strong and the valiant, of the lovely and the beautiful, amongst the sons and daughters of Adam.

5. If there were any solid foundation in human excellence for inordinate self-esteem, we should find it indeed less in bodily endowments, than in the treasures of a cultivated and well-stored mind. Reason is the most noble gift of God ; the most characteristic property of man. It is by this, that we are distinguished from the brute creation : and it is by the due improvement of this, that we approach towards a superior order of beings. Yet he who compares the wide range of science with the minute portion of it compassed by his own understanding ; he who weighs what he knows with what he has to learn, and sets the strength and acuteness of his intellect against its weakness, its errors, and its failures ; he above all who estimates a mind, which can comprehend only a little of the things on earth with the knowledge of Him, “ who made the heavens ;” will perceive abundant reason with Job to acknowledge his own “ vileness¹,” or to exclaim with the Psalmist, “ I am foolish ; I am ignorant ; I am even as a beast before thee².” In truth they

¹ Job xl. 4.

² Psalm lxxiii. 22.

are not men of the finest and most improved understandings, who pride themselves on their intellectual attainments. On the contrary it is a remarkable fact, and it is a fact which might serve to repress the affectation of inferior minds, that they who have been most distinguished for a powerful intellect and for profound and extensive erudition, have been also distinguished for the meekness with which they have borne their faculties. Solomon was emphatically described as the wisest of the sons of men : but instead of glorying in his superior capacity, he has left it upon record, that “in much wisdom is much grief; and that he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow¹.”

6. There is one other specific form, wherein pride exhibits itself; which is (if possible) still more absurd and foolish, and more unbecoming a rational being, than any that we have hitherto considered. I mean what may be denominated, unless there be an irreconcilable disagreement between the terms, the pride of religion. How indeed such a quality can harmonize with the idea of any religion, especially with the idea of the Christian religion, it is impossible to conceive. Our holy faith cooperates with the testimony of every man's conscience, in representing us as

¹ Eccles. i. 18.

fallen, weak, miserable, and sinful creatures ; exposed to the just anger of God ; lost, but for the atonement and intercession of Christ ; constantly requiring the aid of the Holy Spirit ; and still, notwithstanding that powerful assistance, sinking under the pressure of a corrupt nature, continually falling into sin and error, and continually needing to be forgiven. It represents self-abasement, and humility both towards God and towards our neighbour, as essential duties of a Christian, and peculiar objects of the divine favour. It represents arrogance and self-conceit, as incompatible with the Christian character, and peculiar objects of the wrath of God. It commands us, even could we do all that is required of us, to look on ourselves as “ unprofitable servants :” and it warns us, when we think we are standing, then more especially to “ take heed lest we fall.” That the professor of such a religion as this should swell with spiritual self-importance ; that he should “ trust in himself that he is righteous, and despise others” for a fancied inferiority in religious attainments ; is an incongruity, which a casual observation of human nature would hardly lead us to expect. That such an incongruity does exist is a most deplorable evidence of the frailty of that nature ; and shows the dangerous preponderance of a principle, which first rendered a Redeemer ne-

cessary, and which is the most formidable obstacle to the influence of his Spirit on the heart.

These remarks may suffice to show the folly, as well as the wickedness, of pride ; its inconsistency with reason and good sense, as well as with the Gospel. I am the more disposed to press the subject on your attention, because, if there be any justice in the remarks, with which I introduced it, we may appear not enough on our guard against so odious and so mischievous a quality. Too much upon our guard against it we cannot be. Like other passions, which are “ not of the Father, but are of the world,” the seeds of it are naturally planted in our hearts ; and very little encouragement is wanted, to make them

“ Grow with our growth, and strengthen with our strength,”

with a rapidity, proportionate to the malignity of the plant, that springs from them. To correct so dangerous a principle within us, we have need of all the assistance we can procure from the divine grace : nor shall we be careless about procuring and exerting it, if we have a due sense of the evil that besets us ; if we have regard for our characters, as reasonable beings and as Christians ; if we would cherish “ brotherly

love" towards our neighbour ; if we would follow the example, and keep the commandments, of our Saviour ; if we would enjoy the fellowship of his Holy Spirit ; and finally be admitted into the presence of our Father, which is in heaven.

SERMON XIX.

UNCLEANNES INCONSISTENT WITH A PROFESSION OF THE GOSPEL.

1 THESS. iv. 3.

This is the will of God, even your sanctification.

THERE is no subject, upon which the holy Scriptures give us more satisfactory information, or information, the glory of which is more peculiarly their own, than on the nature and attributes of the divine Being, the Creator and Governor of the Universe, “the Author and Giver of all good things.” It is their great distinction, not only that they direct our attention to the one true God, as the only proper object of religious worship; but that they also represent him, as possessed of every possible perfection, and infinite in all his glorious attributes. In this respect the efforts of reason have fallen vastly below the discoveries of revelation. The Heathens, as the Apostle tells us in a passage connected with my

text, “knew not God :” they knew him not, as that infinitely perfect Being, as that one “Lord God Almighty, that is, and that was, and that is to come¹ ;” as that “High and Lofty One, which inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy² ;” whom the sacred Scriptures reveal to those, who are enlightened by “the Day-spring from on high.”

But the Scriptures are given us, not for our information only, but for our improvement ; they are “profitable” not only “for doctrine,” but “for our instruction in righteousness³,” in personal, practical righteousness. Whilst therefore they give us improved notions of the great and good God, it is for the purpose of leading us to imitate his glorious perfections ; to strive to become like him ; to “be merciful as he is merciful⁴ ;” to be “perfect as he is perfect⁵ ;” to be “pure even as he is pure⁶.” Knowledge, even the best of all knowledge, the knowledge of God, is of no value, it only “puffeth up⁷,” as St. Paul speaks, unless it lead to godliness : and therefore, when he reminds the Thessalonians of that superior information concerning the divine nature, which they as Christians possessed above

¹ Rev. iv. 8.² Isaiah lvii. 15.³ 2 Tim. iii. 16.⁴ Luke vi. 36.⁵ Matt. v. 48.⁶ 1 John iii. 3.⁷ 1 Cor. viii. 1.

the Heathens, from the number of whom they had been converted, it is for the purpose of pressing upon them the greater obligation to holiness, which was thereby imposed upon them. "This is the will of God," says he, "even your sanctification;" that is what God has intended, in admitting you to that clearer knowledge of himself, which you as Christians enjoy; even your continual improvement in holiness; "that ye should abstain from fornication; that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God." And to the same effect, and following the same line of argument, he thus exhorts the Ephesians, contrasting their present advantages and obligations with the state of spiritual misery and blindness, from which they had been released by the Gospel: "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him as the truth is in

Jesus ; that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind ; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness ¹.” Such is the general purport of the declaration of the Apostle in the text, connected with its context ; “ this is the will of God” in bringing us to know him, “ even our sanctification :” his “ word” is designed to be “ a lamp unto our feet and a light to our paths ²,” and thus to conduct and guide us in the way of godliness : according to our knowledge so will our improvement be expected to be ; so that if, under the Day-spring of the Gospel, we live like Heathens, our sin will be more aggravated, in proportion as our light is greater, than theirs.

Having thus opened the meaning of the text, I would observe, that there are three considerations, brought forward by the Apostle in connexion with it, which serve at the same time both as arguments, to prove that “ the will of God is our sanctification ;” and as motives, to stir up and animate our wills to a faithful obedience to the will of God. The first of these considerations is, that “ the Lord is the avenger of all such as do things” contrary to purity ; the second, that by

¹ Eph. iv. 17—24.

² Psalm cxix. 105.

the Gospel “ he hath called us not to uncleanness, but unto holiness ;” the third, that for the promotion of this end, “ he hath given unto us his Holy Spirit.” Let us pray our heavenly Father for the sake of his well-beloved Son to bestow upon us the gracious help of his Holy Spirit, whilst we endeavour to give to these considerations that attention, which their importance deserves and demands.

I. First then, it appears that “ this is the will of God, even our sanctification,” because “ the Lord is the avenger of all such as do things” contrary to that purity, which he enjoins.

Now the Scriptures, which constantly denounce the most severe punishment upon those, who are guilty of works of uncleanness, do also concur in representing that punishment, as drawn down upon the sinner by his own impenitence and hardness of heart. “ Thinkest thou this, O man,” thinkest thou this, O sinner, “ that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? and despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God ¹?”

¹ Rom. ii. 3, 4, 5.

Thus the Scriptures in various passages, of which this is one of the most striking, represent the vengeance of God as drawn down upon the sinner by his own perverseness ; whilst they concur also in representing Almighty God as being willing that “every man should come to repentance” and be saved ; as “unwilling that any should perish ¹,” as “waiting to be gracious ² ;” as “rising up early and sending his messengers because he has compassion ³” on the sinner ; as “all day long stretching out his hands unto the rebellious and the gainsayers ⁴ ;” as “causing grief” indeed, yet “having compassion according to the multitude of his mercies ;” as “not afflicting willingly, nor grieving the children of men ⁵.” If such be the reluctance, with which Almighty God inflicts punishment upon the sinner ; if his mercy and loving-kindness constantly plead for forgiveness ; and it is only to satisfy his justice, that he becomes the avenger of the wicked ; that must follow, which the Apostle asserts, that “this is the will of God, even our sanctification.” If he “have no pleasure,” as the Prophet teaches, “in the death of the wicked,” it follows that (as the same Prophet also teaches) he must “have pleasure in seeing the wicked turn from his evil ways

¹ 2 Pet. iii. 9. ² Isaiah xxx. 18. ³ 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15.

⁴ Rom. x. 21.

⁵ Lam. iii. 32, 33.

and live¹." If, as he swears by Himself, "he hath no pleasure in the death of him that dieth," he must then have pleasure (as Himself also most solemnly assures us) in seeing the wicked "repent, and turn away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and do that which is lawful and right, that so he may save his soul alive." Thus from God being "the avenger" of the unclean and the sinner, unwilling, as he declares himself to be, to afflict the children of men, we may infer, what he expressly and repeatedly assures us, that he willeth us to repent and be saved ; to be holy here, in order to our being happy hereafter.

2dly. That "this is the will of God, even our sanctification," is to be argued from this consideration, that "God hath called us, not to uncleanness, but unto holiness:"—called us by the word of that Gospel, which his only-begotten Son came from the bosom of his Father to preach to the sinful and lost race of men. Now "for this purpose," saith St. John, "was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil²." Do we ask, what are the works of the devil? The Apostle answers us in the same verse, "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." Look to the melancholy narrative,

¹ Ezek. xxxiii. 11. xviii. 32.

² 1 John iii. 8.

which the Spirit of God by the mouth of Moses gives us of the fall of man ; and you will perceive, how by the artifices of the evil spirit “ sin entered into the world, and death by sin¹.” These are the works of the devil, which the Son of God was manifested to destroy: sin in this world ; in another world the wages of sin, death, everlasting death. And as he came to destroy these works of the devil, so he came to plant others in their stead : for death, to be the author and giver of eternal life ; for sin, to be the establisher and promoter of holiness. These are the things, from which and to which he calls us ; he calls us from hell to heaven, as the ultimate object and final consummation of his coming unto us and of our coming unto him ; he calls us from uncleanness unto holiness, as the means whereby that great end and object of his coming is to be attained. “ In this was manifested the love of God towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us² :” but though he died for us while we were sinners, he will not suffer us eventually to enjoy the benefits of his death, if we wilfully continue in sin. “ Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound³ ?” demands the Apostle St. Paul. “ God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any

¹ Rom. v. 12.² Rom. v. 8.³ Rom. vi. 1, 2.

longer therein?" How shall we, that were "baptized into Jesus Christ," and then made profession, not only of our stedfast belief in him, but of our determination also obediently to keep his holy will and commandments, and thereupon received his gracious promise of the forgiveness of our sins; how shall we, consistently with that profession, wilfully persevere in sin; or, if we do so persevere, expect any benefit from his promise? If we would be benefited by that death of Christ, into which we were baptized, we must be "renewed in the spirit of our minds¹;" we must be "new creatures²;" we must "walk in newness of life³;" we must "put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and we must put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness⁴." Brethren, "if any man be in Christ he is a new creature⁵:"—new, in comparison with what he is in a natural state; in comparison with the children of the world, with the children of the wicked one:—new in understanding and apprehension:—new in his studies and pursuits:—new in heart and affections:—new in thought, word, and deed. Thus does Almighty God call us by the Gospel of his Son, "not unto unclean-

¹ Eph. iv. 23.² 2 Cor. v. 17.³ Rom. vi. 4.⁴ Eph. iv. 22. 24.⁵ 2 Cor. v. 17.

ness, but unto holiness ;” thus does he prove, that “ this is his will, even our sanctification ;” for inasmuch as he willeth us to accept that gracious Gospel, those good tidings of salvation and great joy, whereby he calleth us unto himself and happiness, so doth he also will us to be partakers of that holiness, without which we cannot be happy ; without which Christ will not have been in the end a Saviour to us ; “ without which we shall not see the Lord¹. ”

Thirdly : That “ this is the will of God, even our sanctification,” the Apostle teaches us to argue from the further consideration, that “ he hath given unto us his Holy Spirit.”

Now the Spirit of God is called in his sacred word by the names of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Holiness, not only because he is essentially and perfectly holy in himself, for that the Father and the Son are also ; but because he is the Author of holiness in believers. And this distinctive work of his is clearly pointed out in our Catechism, where we are taught to characterize each Person in the blessed Trinity by some peculiar operation ; as that “ God the Father made me and all the world ;” that “ God the Son redeemed me and all mankind ;” that “ God the

¹ Heb. xii. 14.

Holy Ghost sanctifieth me, and all the elect people of God.”

Man is by nature weak as well as sinful ; he is a helpless as well as a fallen creature. To redeem us from the fatal consequences of the disobedience of Adam, to pay “ the wages of sin,” and so to rescue us from the sentence of death, our blessed Lord and kind Redeemer Christ, the second Adam, took our nature upon him, and was made man ; and “ tasted death for every man,” that we might be saved from death ; and laid down his life for all men, that we might become heirs of eternal life. But, forasmuch as he requires holiness in all men, as a necessary qualification for their admission into life everlasting, it would not have been sufficient, had he only paid the ransom, without enabling us moreover to attain that qualification, which we are not able to attain of ourselves. For how could we, who are naturally sinners, become righteous ? how could our weakness convert itself into strength ? how could our filthiness clothe itself with purity ? how could we, who are naturally “ dead in trespasses and sins¹,” be “ quickened” of ourselves with fresh life, and breathe into ourselves a new spirit, and from the seed of corrup-

¹ Eph. ii. 1.

tion bring forth the fruits of holiness? Truly, if we had been left to our own ability, it is manifest, that as “we had no power in ourselves to help ourselves,” we must have continued in a lost condition; and it was therefore not more necessary, that Christ should die for our salvation, than that he should afterwards supply us with his grace to lead us into the path of righteousness, and to enable us to persevere therein unto the end. For this purpose therefore, when having completed the great work for which he was sent into the world, he quitted it, and returned to the bosom of his Father’s love, and to the right hand of his glory, he left not his disciples “comfortless¹,” but he sent his Holy Spirit to comfort them and all that should thereafter believe in his name; by strengthening their infirmities; by enlightening their ignorance; by correcting their wills; by purifying and animating their affections; and therein by cleansing them from sin, and so “conforming them to the image of Christ” by a communication of that holiness, of which he is the Author and Giver. Such on the one hand are we by nature; such on the other we have the power of becoming by the divine grace. What more convincing proof then can be given of what is the will of God concerning

¹ John xiv. 18.

us, than that having sent his Son to “redeem us from all iniquity and to purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works¹,” he continues to give us the comfort of his blessed Spirit, even the Spirit of Holiness, to be with us, and to “dwell in us as his temples²,” and so to bring us nearer unto God?

Thus do the considerations which the Apostle suggests, serve to confirm his express declaration, that “our sanctification is the will of God.” Let us not however here drop the subject, as if it were a matter of mere barren speculation; but considering that the circumstances, which he brings forward, are designed, not only for arguments to convince us of the will of God, but for motives also to stir up and animate our wills to obey and cooperate with his, let us farther examine, each his own conscience, as to the influence which they possess in our hearts.

And first, when we contemplate the Lord as “the avenger of all such” as follow the lusts of uncleanness, and indulge in the sinful works of the world, the flesh, and the devil; when we contemplate him, as “in his mercy not willing to afflict the children of men,” but desirous “that the sinner should turn from his evil ways and live;” and yet resolving in his justice to execute

¹ Tit. ii. 14.

² 1 Cor. iii. 16.

the sentence of righteous judgment on the impenitent sinner, and to “ render indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish to every soul of man that doeth evil ;” does the reflection fill us with hatred and detestation, with fear and abhorrence of those sinful appetites, which would refuse the gracious invitations of God’s mercy and loving-kindness, and obstinately challenge the severity of his justice and vengeance? Knowing the compassion, “ knowing the terrors of the Lord,” are we duly persuaded so to live, that we may hereafter enjoy the blessed visitations of the one, and avoid the dreadful accomplishment of the other? Do we suffer “ the goodness of God to lead us to repentance,” solicitous above all things to love him, because he hath loved us ; to flee from sin, because he hateth and abhorreth it ; to throw ourselves into the arms of his mercy, and to seek the blessing promised to those who are “ pure in heart?” Or, if this more noble motive has less influence over us, do we at least shrink from the apprehension of his resentment ; and fear to make bare against us that almighty arm, which shall be “ revealed from heaven, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his

power¹?" It were better indeed, that we should be drawn to our merciful Father by the cords of love than of fear. It were better, that we be wrought on by a grateful sense of benefits conferred, than by an alarming apprehension of punishments denounced. It were better, that we be drawn to God by his gracious declarations that "he willeth us to be converted and live," than by his severe threatenings of punishment, if we obstinately refuse his invitations. Still if the Apostles of Christ "persuaded men by the terrors of the Lord²," as well as by mercies; and warned them to flee from wickedness, "because that the Lord is the avenger of all such" as persist in sin; if Christ himself not only allured men to their duty by the promise of the joys of heaven, but diverted them from sin by a representation of the torments of hell, "where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched;" it is not for his ministers to withhold from the sight of men those motives, which are addressed to their fears, any more than those which stimulate their hopes. In this sense the saying of the wise king may be true, that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom³:" for he, who has been diverted from the commission of sin by the fear of those terrors, which God denounces against the

¹ 2 Thess. i. 7—9.

² 2 Cor. v. 11.

³ Prov. i. 7.

sinner, may not improbably by the grace of God make further advances towards piety. If he once firmly believe, that God is the punisher of those who seek him not, he may soon be led to believe, that he is “the rewarder of them who diligently seek him¹ :” the door of his heart having been once opened to one guest, others may find admission ; and where fear has gone before, love may perhaps follow.

2dly. Do we bear in mind the purpose of God in our high vocation, that “he hath called us not to uncleanness but unto holiness ?” Do we seriously meditate upon the cause, which made a Redeemer necessary ; even the fatal disobedience produced by the unruly appetites of Adam, and the consequent corruption and impurity of our nature ; and upon the object, for which our blessed Redeemer came, namely to remedy the sad effects of our forefather’s weakness, to overcome sin, and to cleanse us from all iniquity ? Do we earnestly reflect, that he has called us out of the world—an impure and sinful world—“a world, that lieth in wickedness”—“that we should be holy and without blame before him in love² ;” and that he has translated us into his own body, the church, “which he loved, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and

¹ Heb. xi. 6.

² Eph. i. 4.

cleanse it with the washing of water by the word ; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish¹ ?” Do we then strive to live in a manner worthy of our high vocation ? We “ name the name of Christ :” we profess ourselves to be Christians : we have been incorporated into the body of Christ : do we “ depart from iniquity² ?” do we “ abstain from fornication ?” do we “ put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts ?” do we “ cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit ?” do we “ put away from us all filthy and foolish talking and jesting which are not convenient,” not agreeable to the purity of the Christian character ; not suffering “ such things to be once named amongst us, as becometh saints³ ?” More than this ; do we bear in mind that we are called, not only “ from uncleanness,” but “ unto holiness ?” Do we then endeavour so to live, that men may see the purity of our lives, and glorify our heavenly Father, and give honour to that holy name of Christ, whereby we are called ? Do we follow his commandments, which require us to be “ holy in all man-

¹ Eph. v. 25—27.

² 2 Tim. ii. 19.

³ Eph. v. 3, 4.

ner of conversation ¹?" Do we imitate the example of Him, who is gone to prepare a place for us; and "having this hope," do we endeavour to "purify ourselves even as he is pure ²?"

Lastly, do we cherish that gift of the Holy Ghost, which he has given us and shed abroad in our hearts, as "a pearl of great price;" as "more precious than rubies or fine gold;" as "sweeter to us than honey or the honey-comb?" Do we fear to "vex" him by our hardness of heart, to "resist" him through the perverseness of our wills, to "grieve" him by any uncleanness? Do we humbly and submissively follow where he leads? Do we dutifully obey his will revealed to us in his holy word? Do we comply with his secret motions in our hearts, being then assured that we are wrought upon by his gracious influence, when we "feel him mortifying the works of the flesh and our earthly members, and lifting up our souls to high and heavenly things?"—"Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them members of an harlot? God forbid ³."—"Know ye not, that your body is the temple of God, even of the Holy Ghost, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? Will you then defile" by any uncleanness "the temple

¹ 1 Pet. i. 15.

² 1 John iii. 3.

³ 1 Cor. vi. 15.

of God, which temple ye are ¹?" My brethren, "flee fornication. If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy. Let no man deceive himself: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God on the children of disobedience; be not ye therefore like unto them." But be ye holy; as it becometh the servants of a holy God, inhabited by the Spirit of Holiness. Be ye righteous; as it becometh them, who "are not their own; for ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's ²." Be ye pure; not in deed only and in word, but in thoughts and desires; in the inward, as well as in the outward man; in the affections of the heart, and in the spirit of the mind; that so continually striving to "perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord ³," ye may go on from strength to strength; until ye finally arrive at that "salvation, to which God hath from the beginning chosen" the faithful followers of his Son, "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth; whereunto he hath called us by his Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ ⁴."

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.² 1 Cor. vi. 20.³ 2 Cor. vii. 1.⁴ 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14.

SERMON XX.

THE DANGER AND SINFULNESS OF COVETOUSNESS EXEMPLIFIED IN AHAB.

1 KINGS xxi. 4.

And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him: for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.

It is wisely and mercifully provided by Almighty God in the rules, which he hath been pleased to enact for the regulation of our moral conduct, that attention should be paid to the first motions and beginnings of sin. Thus for the security of every man's person, we are commanded to refrain, not only from the act of murder, but from every act, nay from every word, wish, or thought of a malicious character. For the security of his domestic peace and comfort, we are not only required to abstain from the act of adultery, but

are also warned, that even to "look on a woman" with criminal desires is sinful in the sight of God. And to the same effect, for the security of another's property, of whatever kind it be, the commandment is absolute; not only in forbidding the action, but in forbidding also the inclination, of dishonesty: not only in enjoining upon us, "Thou shalt not steal," but in enjoining also, "Thou shalt not covet nor desire another man's goods." How wise and how benevolent this precaution is, on the part of our gracious Lawgiver, is best perceived by those, who are best acquainted with the deceitfulness and the evil propensities of the human heart; and who are well aware how rapidly the seeds of wickedness, which are congenial to that corrupt soil, will thrive and grow to maturity, if they are not carefully rooted out: in plain language, how rapidly criminal desires, unless they are repressed with the utmost circumspection, produce criminal purposes and resolutions, and so in the end ripen into criminal actions; until they totally cloud the understanding, and destroy all the better feelings of the soul; until (as the Prophet emphatically expresses it) "the whole head becomes sick and the whole heart faint¹."

Of the necessity of laying a check upon

¹ Isaiah i. 5.

irregular desires at their first commencement, and of the danger which ensues from their being permitted to thrive upon indulgence, a memorable instance lately passed before us in the conduct of David; an instance the more memorable indeed, on account of the exalted character for virtue and piety of him, who was so lamentably seduced by criminal self-indulgence into the grossest and blackest sins. Another remarkable instance of the like danger is offered to our meditations in the case of Ahab, king of Samaria. Different from David in his general character, of Ahab it is recorded, "that there was none like unto him, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord;" and that "he did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger, than all the kings of Israel that were before him." Of his wickedness in general, the case, that is at present to call our attention, may serve as a sufficient specimen:—a case, wherein we shall perceive an alarming example of the extent of depravity to which the human heart can go, when it follows its own evil suggestions for the gratification of its own sinful desires; however trifling at first may have been the object of them, and however capable they may appear, by the divine grace, of having been controlled, had they been at first resisted with becoming resolution.

Let us however look to the particulars of the narrative. "It came to pass after these things, that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house: and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money." Now thus far, upon a general view of the subject, and examining it by the general rules of equity, there appears at first nothing sinful in the desire or the proposal of Ahab. Peculiar circumstances made a particular piece of ground, contiguous to his own possessions, convenient to him for the purposes either of use or of recreation; and he accordingly proposed to purchase it of the owner at a reasonable price. Hitherto there appears nothing but what might innocently pass between man and man.

But although, as far as we have yet seen, it does not appear, why Ahab might not desire to purchase the vineyard of Naboth, it is to be considered whether Naboth might not have had sufficient cause for declining the purchase. And first, the property was his own: his own right in it was unquestionable, and in the disposal of it, his own inclination and convenience were first of

all to be consulted. But suppose that out of a due respect to his sovereign, and a laudable wish to gratify his desire, Naboth had been disposed to wave the regard to his own convenience ; a difficulty still stood in the way of his compliance. The vineyard was not a purchase of his own ; a property, of which as he had made himself the master, so he might consider that he had full right to dispose of it to another : it was an hereditary possession ; it had been long enjoyed by his family ; it had been transmitted to him by his ancestors ; and it was consequently his wish, a wish natural to the feelings of man, to retain it in his own possession, a memorial of respect and affection for those who had gone before him ; and so to transmit it to his posterity in due and regular succession. All this is implied in the answer, which he made to the proposal of the king, and all this is agreeable to the attachment which men commonly feel for hereditary possessions ; “ And Naboth said unto Ahab, The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee !”

But this is by no means the whole of what is implied in the answer of Naboth. The Jewish law, approving and confirming this natural attachment felt by men to the inheritance of their fathers, forbade the alienation of lands from one tribe or family to another, unless a man was

reduced to poverty; and even then it evinced such respect for the principle, that it enjoined the return of the property at the jubilee into the family, out of which it had been sold¹. The answer of Naboth therefore, for he was not in a state of poverty, was agreeable, not only to the general feelings of mankind, but also to the express and specific requisitions of the Jewish law: and that law having been imposed by divine authority, it was not only from a feeling of natural affection, but from a sense of religious obligation also, that he replied, "The Lord forbid it me, that I should give thee the inheritance of my fathers."

And this consideration throws a fresh light upon the conduct of Ahab in the first instance; and gives it a complexion, not altogether so innocent and unexceptionable, as before perhaps it appeared to exhibit. As king of Israel, especially obliged and solemnly pledged to observe and maintain the laws, it was his duty to secure the succession of property in its legitimate course, instead of endeavouring to divert it into improper channels by alienating it from one family into another. In obedience to the law Naboth refused to sell "the inheritance of his fathers." If he was praiseworthy for his refusal, Ahab was

¹ Lev. xxv. 23—28.

culpable for his request: for that which the subject could not conscientiously concede, the sovereign could not conscientiously require.

Upon these grounds, the refusal of Naboth to dispossess himself of his vineyard might have been admitted by the king. In a general view, the property was his own, and he had a right to determine whether or not he would accede to the proposal of Ahab: more particularly considered, as an hereditary possession, both nature and duty, the feelings of his own heart and the dictates of the law of the land, which was, at the same time, the law of God, forbade him to part with it. And surely these reasons might have satisfied the king; and convinced him, that even if at first he was not criminal in conceiving the desire of purchasing the vineyard, it was now at least time for him to relinquish it. If you think that this effect was likely to be produced, you are little acquainted with the perverseness of human nature: you are little aware, how tenacious the heart is of a purpose, which it has once formed for its gratification; and how fatally it will suffer the disappointment of its wishes even in a case, comparatively insignificant, to poison all the enjoyment it might derive from other sources, however ample and numerous they may be. What was the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite to Ahab, king of Samaria? What was it in comparison of the ten

tribes of Israel, over whom he bore sway? What was it in comparison of the hosts of Syria, over whom he had recently triumphed; when "the Lord delivered their king Ben-hadad into his hand, and the children of Israel slew of the Syrians an hundred thousand footmen in one day?" Established in his dominion at home, triumphing over his enemies abroad, encircled with every enjoyment, which empire and victory can bestow, Ahab languished for a garden of herbs! "And Ahab came into his house, heavy and displeased, because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread."

Whether the first disappointment of the Israelitish monarch, had he been left to himself, would have vented itself in ineffectual passion; or whether it would rather have stimulated him to be avenged on the author of it, and to satisfy by whatever means the wish which he had once cherished; unhappily there was one at hand, who could not permit such an opportunity of sin to escape. "Iron sharpeneth iron," saith Solomon; "so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend¹." Vicious himself, he found an abettor

¹ Prov. xxvii. 17.

and a promoter of his vices in the partner of his bed and throne. "Ahab, the son of Omri," (as the sacred history informs us,) "did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went, and served Baal, and worshipped him." Impiety and immorality go hand in hand. He, who has thrown off his allegiance to God, will be the last to be steadfast in the performance of his duty to man. Withdrawn from the service of the living God, the Lord God of Israel, and engaged in the worship of false gods by her, whom he had taken to his bosom, Ahab was impelled by the same pernicious counsellor to acts of the most flagrant tyranny and oppression. Perceiving the dependency of Ahab, and informed of the cause of it; instead of assisting him to overcome his mortification, by convincing him of the unreasonableness of his desire, and the equity of Naboth's refusal; the efforts of Jezebel were directed to inflame the pride of her husband, and to accomplish his wishes, although by the sacrifice of every principle which is valuable among men. "And Jezebel his wife said unto him, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? Arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry; I will

give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite." And how did she give it him? By suborning "false witnesses," men of worthless and abandoned characters, "children of Belial," they are called, the slaves and ministers of the devil, against an innocent and virtuous man:—by accusing him of crimes which his soul abhorred, of impiety and treason, of "blaspheming God and the king:"—by implicating "the men of the city, even the elders and the nobles, who were the inhabitants of the city where Naboth dwelt," in the conspiracy against him, and making them the instruments and partners of her villany:—by procuring him to be condemned and executed by an ignominious death, and probably his children with him, as accessories to his crime:—and so by dispossessing him of that vineyard, which he had refused to relinquish, because it was "the inheritance of his fathers," but which now lapsed by forfeiture to the king, whom he was condemned for blaspheming; and against whom the offence was pretended to have been committed, in order that the property of the offender might be forfeited to him. Thus by an accumulation of wickedness, by a scheme of deliberate iniquity, which called down from the Lord a sentence of retribution upon the contriver, that "the dogs should eat her flesh in the portion of Jezreel, and that her carcass should be as dung upon the face

of the field ;"—thus did Jezebel give to Ahab the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.

But is Ahab answerable for the sin of Jezebel ? Was Jezebel guilty, and is Ahab to be condemned ?—Let us beware how we encourage a notion, that we can give our sanction, either expressly or implicitly, to the wickedness of others, and be blameless ! Let us beware how we suffer another to engage himself in iniquity, which by the exercise of our influence we might have prevented ! Let us beware how we flatter ourselves with the belief, that we can innocently derive benefit from the crimes of others, which are perpetrated with our knowledge in our behalf ! To encourage the crime of another, is to be partaker in his guilt : to withhold our disapprobation from the crime he is about to commit ; to unite with him after the commission in enjoying the fruits of it, is to encourage him in his iniquity. Let us by these principles examine the conduct of Ahab. When he received from Jezebel the promise, “ I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite ;” although he knew that that promise could not equitably be fulfilled, and although he must have suspected the means by which it was intended to be performed, he signified no disapprobation ; he took no measures for preventing it. When in execution of the promise, “ she sent letters in Ahab’s name ;” those letters,

by means of which her sanguinary and nefarious purposes were to be effected ; he suffered them to be “ sealed with his seal ;” he thus gave the sanction of his authority to their contents. When the diabolical scheme was perpetrated, and Jezebel, in exultation at the success of her purpose, and the completion of her promise, “ said to Ahab, Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money ; for Naboth is not alive but dead ;” he felt no compunction at the deed, by which the death of the innocent man had been compassed, although doubtless it could not have been hidden from his knowledge ; he felt no repugnance at entering without delay on enjoying the fruits of the deed : but “ it came to pass, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.” Do we still doubt, whether the sin of the murder of Naboth, actually perpetrated as it was at the instigation of Jezebel, calls for judgment upon the head of Ahab ? Hear “ the word of the Lord, which came to Elijah, the Tishbite, saying, Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, which is in Samaria ; behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it. And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Hast thou killed, and

also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the Lord, In the place, where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine." By the word of the Lord then we are assured, that the murder of Naboth, though in fact the deed of Jezebel, was in guilt the deed of Ahab also. It was not only he, who took possession of the vineyard; but it was he also, who killed the innocent possessor. As "Jezebel his wife stirred him up," so did "he sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord." And therefore, while on her the righteous sentence was declared, "The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel:" upon him also the menace was denounced, "Him that dieth of Ahab in the city, the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat."

Whilst these particulars in the narrative of a signal act of wickedness are fresh in our minds, let us not, my brethren, dismiss them immediately, but reflect on them in serious meditation, accompanied with devout prayer to Almighty God in Christ's name, that they may furnish some wholesome admonition to ourselves.

And first the history prompts us, in the expressive language of our Saviour, to "take heed and beware of covetousness¹." Beware of the

¹ Luke xii. 15.

beginnings of covetousness; you know not, whither they may lead you in the end. Wicked and unprincipled as Ahab was, and sold under sin, he probably on his first application to Naboth had no intention of accomplishing his desires by the means, to which he was afterwards instigated to resort. Wretch as he was, he probably would have shrunk from the prospect of securing to himself the vineyard, by that chain of complicated iniquity, which terminated in the murder of an innocent man. His instance is not singular. There is not a vice which more effectually contracts and deadens the feelings, which more completely makes a man's affections centre in himself, and excludes all others from partaking in them, than the desire of accumulating possessions. When this desire has once gotten hold of the heart, it shuts out all other considerations, but such as may promote its views. In its zeal for the attainment of its end, it is not delicate in the choice of means. As it closes the heart, so also it clouds the understanding. It cannot discern between right and wrong: it takes evil for good, and good for evil: it calls darkness light, and light darkness. Beware then of the beginnings of covetousness; for you know not where it will end.

Beware, too, of encouraging desires, which, although they may have a certain specious ap-

pearance, and may not seem at first to be sinful, will, if they be carefully examined, assume a character different from what they once wore. What could seem more innocent than the desire of Ahab to possess the vineyard of Naboth, in exchange for an equivalent? Yet when the peculiar circumstances of the case are duly considered, that desire could not have been gratified without doing violence to the natural feelings of the proprietor; nor without offending against the laws of the country, established by divine authority. Take heed how you encourage wishes, which may be inconsistent with a strict sense of duty. That, which may be lawful or even requisite in another, may be improper, if not sinful, in you. In comparing your inclinations with your duty, in order that you may be certified what you may innocently do, remember that there are a variety of circumstances to be considered, the omission of which will lead to error. The proposal of Ahab was fair and equitable, and in another country than that of Israel, might have been accepted: in Israel it was against the law; the proposal therefore was injurious, and the desire, which occasioned it, was sinful. After all, the law of God must be your guide: look to that with a single eye; yield to it with singleness of heart, with unreserved obedience to what you sincerely believe it to teach; and it

will not materially mislead you. Whatsoever things it teaches you to be “true, honest, just, pure, lovely, praise-worthy, virtuous, think on these things¹ ;” and “abstain from all appearance of evil² .”

Further ; the example of Ahab may warn us against the danger of brooding over our disappointment, when we fail of attaining the object of our wishes ; and may prompt us to turn our eyes aside to those instances of mercy, which a bountiful Providence has been pleased to exert in our behalf. It was but a short time after a wonderful and special display of power, which God had manifested in delivering Ahab and his people from an invading enemy, and crowning them with a complete victory, that the Israelitish monarch conceived the wish of possessing the vineyard of Naboth. On the disappointment of his hope, instead of engaging in the active concerns of his kingdom, or enjoying the great and manifold blessings, with which it had pleased the Almighty to visit him, he “came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him : and he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.” The tempter profited by the occasion, and soon scat-

¹ Phil. iv. 8.

² 1 Thess. v. 22.

tered his tares into a heart, so well prepared to receive them and to make them grow. Have you suffered yourself to cherish a desire, which you find a difficulty in gratifying, and which you know ought not to be gratified? Continue not to indulge it: brood not over it; dwell not on it; but banish it instantly from your bosom. Let your thoughts be occupied on harmless or useful subjects: let them be turned to the business of your calling: let them be lifted up in thanksgiving to the Giver of all good for the blessings, which he permits you innocently to enjoy; and in devout prayer for the aid of his grace, to enable you to resist temptation and to deliver you from evil. "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you¹."

Further; at all times, and especially at such times as these, be cautious, whom you admit to be the partner of your counsels, the friend of your inmost heart. It is recorded as a signal example of depravity in the nefarious career of Ahab, that he united himself by the closest and tenderest bond to an idolatrous and unprincipled woman. The consequence was deplorable, but natural. His own inclination to evil received a fresh impulse from hers: corrupt himself, he became

¹ James iv. 7, 8.

more and more hardened by the accession of her corrupt passions : instigated by her, in the particular example, that has now been passing before our eyes, as well as in the general tenor of his life, he proved himself an apostate from God, and by natural consequence, (for religion is the only sure foundation of morality,) the enemy of man : and he has left behind him a fatal memorial of the powerful influence of vice on social intercourse, in the testimony of the sacred historian, that “ there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.” Warned by such an example, transmitted on such testimony, be cautious in the selection of your friends ; be especially cautious in the selection of your nearest and dearest friend ; you are “ pilgrims and strangers upon earth ;” you are “ travelling towards a better country, that is an heavenly :” your present prosperity and comfort, and your future happiness, depend in no small degree upon your companions, and particularly upon the wife of your bosom. Remember the judgment of Solomon, “ A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband ; but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones¹.”

Finally ; from the narrative of the guilt and

¹ Prov. xii. 4.

punishment of Ahab let us read the awakening doctrine of retributive justice, which the Scriptures uniformly inculcate; and be persuaded, that whatever be the circumstances of the sinner, sooner or later “the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon *him* ¹.” In elder times, when the providence of God was specially manifested in the government of his peculiar people, an immediate temporal punishment was often inflicted in proportion and suitable to the offence. “In the portion of Jezreel,” where the murder of Naboth was committed, “did dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel:”—“as dogs had licked the blood of Naboth, so dogs licked the blood of Ahab,” who was the occasion of Naboth’s being shed. In these latter days, when the Almighty has ceased to interpose so conspicuously in the moral government of the world, the temporal punishment does not often appear so well adapted to the offence. But let not the sinner presume to flatter himself that he shall eventually escape the judgment of God. Whether he has been “drawn away by his own lusts and enticed;” or been tempted by the allurements of others, whom he has permitted to stir him up to wickedness; “the provocation, wherewith he hath provoked God to anger,” shall not be forgotten. In the punishments of a temporal

¹ Ezek. xviii. 20.

kind, which befell the sinful Israelites, he may perceive an emblem of the miseries, with which his sins will hereafter be visited. And as surely as dogs did lick the blood of Ahab, and eat the flesh of Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel, so surely shall "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish," be poured out upon the impenitent sinner, according to his deeds.

May it please Almighty God to grant us the grace of his Holy Spirit, that we may truly repent of and forsake our sins through faith in the blood of Him, by and through whom alone we may be saved, even our Lord Jesus Christ; to whom in the Unity of the Father and the Holy Ghost be all honour and glory, now, henceforth, and for ever!

SERMON XXI.

MALICE INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

EPH. iv. 31, 32.

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice :
And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

IF the question were to be put to us, What advantage hath the Christian over the Heathen ? or what profit is there of the Gospel ? Much every way ; we might answer : chiefly because of the hope it holds forth to its professors of the salvation of God, “ being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus¹.” But “ godliness,” as the great Apostle of the Gentiles teaches, “ is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is,” as well as “ of that which is to come².” The Gospel

¹ Rom. iii. 24.

² 1 Tim. iv. 8.

conducts men to future happiness, by means well adapted to the end ; by teaching them and enabling them to overcome those vicious inclinations, which would prevent them from enjoying the pure delights of a spiritual state, could they with such incumbrances be admitted to it ; and to acquire those heavenly tempers, which may qualify them for the enjoyment of heavenly bliss. With some particulars, that are to constitute the blessedness of that state, the holy Scriptures make us acquainted. Amongst other things, they teach us that it is to be a state of rest and peace ; of universal concord, and uninterrupted harmony. And accordingly they exhort us during our earthly pilgrimage, to cultivate the affections, whereby we may be qualified to enter into that delightful state : to “ follow peace with all men¹ ;” “ if it be possible, and as much as lieth in us, to live peaceably with all men² ;” to “ forbear one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace³ ;” “ to be perfect ; to be of good comfort, to be of one mind, to live in peace ;” encouraging us with the most comfortable assurance, that, if we do so, “ the God of love and peace shall be with us⁴ .”

¹ Heb. xii. 14.

² Rom. xii. 18.

³ Eph. iv. 2, 3.

⁴ 2 Cor. xiii. 11.

Now this sort of temper, which the Gospel perpetually and unceasingly recommends to its disciples, (for it would be vain to attempt an enumeration of the passages wherein it is recommended,) is one of those marks, which most illustriously distinguish the Christian from the Heathen; him, who takes upon him the yoke of the “meek and lowly” Jesus, and cheerfully complies with the dictates of the Spirit of peace and love; from him, who lives in bondage to “the Spirit, that dwelleth in us, and lusteth to envy¹ ;” “the Spirit, that now” and ever “worketh in the children of disobedience” and “of wrath² .”

It is upon this distinction, that the exhortation in the text is founded. For it is addressed by St. Paul to men, who had been Heathens, and who were then converts to the Christian faith: and whom he calls upon, in consideration of the conversion they had undergone, to practise the duties belonging to their new profession. “This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not, as other Gentiles walk.” And then enforcing upon them the necessity of their “putting on the new man,” and being “renewed in the spirit of their mind,” as a consequence of their having become disciples of

¹ James iv. 5.

² Eph. ii. 2, 3.

Christ Jesus ; he sets before their eyes a brief, but a delightful sketch of Christian graces, as objects of their imitation ; and having successively exhorted them to the practice of righteousness, and true holiness ; of truth, and purity of language ; of honesty, and industry, and acts of bounty to the distressed ; he concludes with admonishing them in the impressive words of the text, to banish a malignant temper, and to cultivate the fruits of Christian charity : “ Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice : And be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”

Similar exhortations upon this branch of our duty, founded upon the same distinction between the Christian and the heathen characters, between what man is by nature, and what he has the power of becoming by the divine grace, occur in other parts of the New Testament. Our Apostle, having occasion to remonstrate with the Corinthians upon their litigious disposition, reminds them of the disgrace, which they thereby bring upon their Christian profession ; warns them, that “ revilers shall not inherit the kingdom of God ;” and concludes with drawing a comparison between their natural state, and the privileges and blessings to which they had been

admitted on their incorporation by baptism with the Church of Christ: "And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God¹." To the Colossians again, whom he intreats to mortify their earthly affections, he employs a similar argument, drawn from a contrast between their former condition, as Heathens, and that in which they were placed by becoming professors of the Gospel. "For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: in the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these, anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy:" and "put ye on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye²." And to Titus he delivers the same rule of Christian conduct, founded upon the same distinction between the Heathen, and the follower of Christ. "Put them in mind," says he, giving to this his son in the faith instructions upon the points of exhortation, which he should press upon his hearers;

¹ Cor. vi. 10, 11.² Col. iii. 7, 8, 12, 13.

“ Put them in mind—to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men. For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, —, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared; not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life¹.”

From these and the like passages, which the time would not permit me to particularize, I apprehend it to be clearly made out, that a contrast and opposition were intended to be remarked, in this important article of practice, between the Christian and the Heathen characters: that whilst the Heathens allowed themselves to indulge in “bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and evil-speaking and malice,” it was the distinguishing mark of the true followers of Christ, that they were “kind one to another, tender hearted, merciful and gentle, showing meekness unto all men, forbearing and forgiving

¹ Titus iii. 3—7.

one another." And so much stress I apprehend to be laid upon this distinction and contrariety between the two, for the purpose of inculcating upon the minds of "all who profess and call themselves Christians," that, whatever be their profession, they are in truth no better than Heathens, unless they "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace¹."

The text has thus far led me only to notice the fact, that it is represented in the Gospel as a duty peculiarly incumbent upon Christians, to put away from them "all malice," with all its fruits of "bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and evil-speaking;" and to cultivate in its stead that kindness and tender heartedness, which is especially manifested by mutual forgiveness, and the forbearing of one another in love. A leading motive to the performance of the duty is alluded to in the latter part of the text, where it is said, "forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." I trust that it will not be departing from the spirit of the text, although we may not adhere strictly to its letter, if we take the subject somewhat more largely; and

¹ Eph. iv. 1—3.

consider other weighty motives, which, in common with this, are proposed to us by the holy Scriptures, for the avoiding of malice, and the cherishing of Christian charity in our hearts.

I. Now, that we may in the first instance be convinced of the hatefulness of a malignant temper, let us only look to the source, from whence the Scriptures teach us that it proceeds. From the bitterness of the fountain, we may judge of the character of the water, which it sends forth. From the corruptness of the tree we may estimate the quality of the fruit. The Author of malice is the Devil. Look to the several proofs, whereby it manifests itself; and you will be convinced of the source, from whence it sprung; of the being, who first gave evidence of its existence. Does malice betray itself by envy of superior excellence? Behold Satan aspiring with impious arrogance to contend with the Almighty, and “exalting his throne above the stars of God,” and “likening himself to the Most High¹!”—Does malice delight in the overthrow of unoffending innocence? Behold the same wily Adversary of man as well as of God, polluting the virtue, and so destroying the happiness, of man!—Is it an act of malice to seduce others into sin? By an appropriate appellation he is

¹ Isaiah xiv. 13, 14.

styled "the Tempter:" he tempted our first parents to forsake their allegiance to God, and to commit sin: he tempted Christ in the wilderness: he tempteth us continually; with what success, alas! we too well know, when in compliance with his suggestions we are betrayed into a commission of his works.—Are slander and false witness an evidence of malice? The Devil is a slanderer: his very name imports it. He was the Accuser of Job¹; he was "the Accuser of the brethren, which accused them before our God night and day²;"—"he is a liar, and the father of lies³."—Is it a testimony of malice to indulge in wrath and anger, in railing and reviling, and to "have bitter envying and strife in our hearts?" The Apostle directs us to its origin, when he calls on us "not" by such conduct "to give place to the Devil," and teaches us that "such wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish⁴."—Does murder evince a malignant spirit in the perpetrator? The Devil was "a murderer from the beginning⁵." The first murder, committed in the world, when Cain mingled the blood of righteous Abel with his sacrifice, was committed at the instigation of "that wicked one⁶:"

¹ Job i. 9.² Rev. xii. 10.³ John viii. 44.⁴ James iii. 13.⁵ John viii. 44.⁶ 1 John iii. 12.

and when the blood of one more righteous than Abel was shed by his brethren after the flesh, they supplied an additional instance of their determination to do, what He, whom they of malice persecuted, had before accused them of doing, "the lusts of their father the Devil." What shall we say then? If the Devil, and the works of the Devil, be fit for a Christian to follow, then may we consistently indulge in "bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, with all malice." But if "righteousness hath no fellowship with unrighteousness, if light hath no communion with darkness; if Christ hath no concord with Belial¹;" if it was the glorious purpose of the Gospel to "turn men from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God²:" then must the foregoing consideration of the origin of this hateful quality, in its several evidences and fruits, be a powerful motive to induce us to comply with the Apostle's admonition, and to "put away from us all malice," as one of the most appropriate "works" of that evil Spirit, whose dominion we renounced at our baptism.

II. As we thus judge of the hatefulness of malice, from a consideration of the source from whence it springs; let us after the same manner

¹ 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15.

² Acts xxvi. 18.

proceed to appreciate the loveliness of the opposite quality, the quality of mercy and loving-kindness, by a reference to its Author. And for this purpose to whom shall we refer, but to that perfect Being, who is “the Author and Giver of all good things;” and whom the Apostle emphatically styles, “the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort¹?” For what is the form, under which loving-kindness delights to show itself, of which instances are not supplied in the dealings of our almighty and most merciful Father, innumerable in quantity, and infinite in degree?—Malice is gratified by murder. Does loving-kindness take pleasure in giving and preserving life? In God “we live and move and have our being² :” he called us into existence: he maintains and upholds us in it by the word of his power.—Malice is envious. Does loving-kindness delight in the happiness of others? It is “the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy³ ;” and who takes pleasure in beholding us innocently enjoy them: and who, not content with showering upon us temporal blessings, and “giving us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, to fill our hearts with food and gladness⁴,” hath moreover “according to his abun-

¹ 2 Cor. i. 3.

² Acts xvii. 28.

³ 1 Tim. vi. 17.

⁴ Acts xiv. 17.

dant mercy begotten us again unto a lively hope, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved for us in heaven¹.”

Malice is false and calumnious. Is it the character of loving-kindness, that it “rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth²?” It was that he might “bear witness to the truth³,” that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, to give light to them that sat in darkness and in the shadow of death.—Malice is resentful and vindictive; impatient of an offence, and intemperate in requiring satisfaction. Is it the character of the opposite quality, that it “suffereth long and is kind⁴?” Behold that quality most signally illustrated in the Being, who himself “is love⁵,” who in the distribution of temporal blessings, notwithstanding the perverseness and ingratitude of his creatures, “maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust⁶,” and who still more conspicuously “commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, and consequently his enemies, he sent his Son to die for our offences⁷,” in that he still “striveth⁸”

¹ 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

² 1 Cor. xiii. 6.

³ John xviii. 37.

⁴ 1 Cor. xiii. 4.

⁵ 1 John iv. 8. 16.

⁶ Matt. v. 45.

⁷ Rom. v. 8. 10.

⁸ Gen. vi. 3

with his people by his Holy Spirit ; still “ willeth not that any should perish¹ ;” still “ waiteth that he may be gracious²” to the sinner, and “ stretcheth forth his hands unto the rebellious and gainsayers³ ;” still exerciseth “ the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering⁴ ;” that so he may lead sinners to repentance, in order to the remission of their sins. Are we then desirous of being “ followers of God as dear children⁵ ?” Do we esteem the perfections of the Almighty in their due degree fit objects for our imitation ? Let a consideration of that source, from which loving-kindness springs, induce us to cultivate the quality in our hearts and lives ; to “ be merciful, even as our Father in heaven is merciful⁶ ;”—“ to be perfect” in the exercise of this heavenly grace, “ even as our Father is perfect⁷ :”—“ to be kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven us.”

III. From the contemplation of the Father of mercies, thus delighting in the exercise of forbearance and loving-kindness towards his creatures ; let us turn for a further motive to the character and conduct of the Son of God, when

2 Pet. iii. 9.
Rom. ii. 4.

³ Isaiah xxx. 18.
⁵ Eph. v. 1.

⁴ Rom. x. 21.
⁶ Luke vi. 36.

⁷ Matt. v. 48.

he was made flesh, and dwelt among us in the likeness of men. "I have given you an example," said he to his disciples, "that ye should do as I have done to you¹." And what was that of which he had given them an example, but the most profound humility; a temper, in which malice has no portion; and which cannot exist independently of loving-kindness, and tenderness of heart? "Christ suffered for us," saith one of his Apostles, himself an eye-witness both of the sufferings which he endured, and of the disposition with which he endured them; "leaving us an example that we should follow his steps²." And what was the example, which he left us to follow? and what was the peculiar quality, which it was the design of St. Peter to recommend? "When he was reviled," adds the Apostle, "he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously." Infinitely worthy as he is of our imitation in all the particulars of his wonderful life, he is in no one to be contemplated as an example of holy living more than in his patience and long-suffering even to the very period of its close. His life was a constant endurance of "the contradiction of sinners against himself³." One of the concluding

¹ John xiii. 15.

² 1 Pet. ii. 21.

³ Heb. xii. 3.

acts of his life was an excuse for his murderers, and a prayer for their forgiveness. What more appropriate motive can be furnished to his disciples, for them to “be all of one mind, having compassion one of another; to love as brethren; to be pitiful, to be courteous; not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing¹?”

IV. Further; to the example of our blessed Redeemer let us add his commandments; and there arises another very forcible motive for his followers to “put away from them all malice, and to be kind one to another.” “Ye have heard, that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy: But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you².” Thus does our Saviour’s precept enlarge the bounds of human charity, by an universal prohibition of malice, and an universal injunction of forbearance and good-will. Meanwhile on those, who are united in the profession of his religion, and “have obtained like precious faith through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ,” he more particularly impresses the duty of the strictest mutual affec-

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 8, 9.

² Matt. v. 33, 34.

tion, as the badge of their profession, and the most unequivocal token of their faith. “ A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another ; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another ¹.” Can any man call himself a Christian, a disciple of Him, who gave this commandment to his followers ; and yet cherish hatred and malice in his heart ? Can any man call himself a Christian ; and yet refuse to forgive and be reconciled to his brother ? Hear the testimony of the beloved disciple : “ If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar.” He is no true Christian, who keepeth not Christ’s commandments. “ And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also ².

V. I proceed to remark, that it is only to those, who follow the steps and keep the commandments of our Saviour, that the visitations of his grace are vouchsafed. The Spirit of Christ, as he is the Spirit of holiness, so also is the Spirit “ of patience and consolation, of peace and love.” He “ granteth men to be like-minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus ³.” The fruit,

¹ John xiii. 34, 35.

² 1 John iv 20, 21.

³ Rom. xv. 5.

which he produceth, is “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness¹.” The wisdom, which he communicates, “is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy².” Do you then desire to enjoy the fellowship of the Holy Spirit? “Put away from you all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, with all malice;” and “above all things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness³.” Do you exult in the belief that you are made a partaker of his fellowship? Show that “the peace of God rules in your heart,” by “following after the things which make for peace⁴;” by being “gentle unto all men⁵;” by the habitual and uninterrupted exercise of meekness, and lowliness; of patience, and forbearance; of forgiveness, and Christian charity, and brotherly love. “Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish⁶.”

¹ Gal. v. 22.² James iii. 17.³ Col. iii. 14.⁴ Rom. xiv. 19.⁵ 2 Tim. ii. 24.⁶ James iii. 13—15.

VI. It may be sufficient if I bring before you one other motive to the avoiding of a malicious, and the cultivation of a charitable temper; a motive, which results from the considerations, already proposed to your attention. Would we wish to escape from the everlasting fire, prepared in another world for the Devil and his angels? We must, during our state of probation in this, renounce the Devil and all his works; we must withstand his wiles; we must resist his temptations; we must triumph over those passions, which he plants and propagates in the heart of man.—Would we be admitted hereafter to the fulness of joy at the right hand of God? We must make it our most diligent study in this life, to imitate, as far as the frailty and imperfection of our nature will permit, his glorious and infinite perfections, that so we may “escape the corruption, that is in the world by lust, and become partakers of the divine nature¹.”—Would we be received by “Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant,” and be saluted by him with the joyful greeting, “Well done, good and faithful servant?” We must copy the example, which he has left us, and follow his steps. We must obey his commandments. We must hold communion with his Spirit. But these things we cannot do,

¹ 1 Pet. i. 4.

unless we comply with the exhortation to mutual charity and forbearance. We cannot renounce the Devil and all his works; we cannot imitate the perfections of our heavenly Father; we cannot follow the pattern, and keep the commandments, and communicate with the Spirit, of our blessed Redeemer; unless we “put away from us all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, with all malice: unless we be kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven us.” And therefore, unless we do these things, we cannot enjoy the accomplishment of his “exceeding great and precious promises,” nor enter into his rest.

The Scripture is express to the point. “If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses¹.” “The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God².” “Without,” that is, excluded from the city of God and from the tree of life, “are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and whosoever

¹ Matt. vi. 15.

² Gal. v. 19—21.

loveth and maketh a lie ; these shall have their part in the lake, which burneth with fire and brimstone ; which is the second death¹." Whilst on the other hand we are assured, as one condition of future happiness, that " if we forgive men their trespasses, our heavenly Father will also forgive us : " that patience under unmerited suffering is " acceptable with God ² : " that " the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit is in the sight of God of great price ³ : " and that they, who are partakers of Christ's sufferings, by submitting, " as Christians, " to reproach and persecution, shall, " when his glory shall be revealed, be glad also with exceeding joy ⁴ ." In a word, the blessings of being called the children of God, and of partaking of mercy in his heavenly kingdom, are promised by the Gospel to " the poor in spirit, " to " the merciful, " and " the peacemakers. " And it is the design of the Gospel to prepare men for the enjoyment of the promises, by enabling them to procure those qualities, on which the blessings will be vouchsafed. Would you enjoy the delights of heaven ? You must labour to acquire heavenly tempers. A malicious and vindictive disposition cannot hope to be admitted into the mansions of everlasting

¹ Rev. xxii. 15 ; xxi. 8.

² 1 Pet. ii. 20.

³ 1 Pet. iii. 4.

⁴ 1 Pet. iv. 13.

peace : nor, if admitted, would it be capable of enjoying their delights.

To conclude : the motives, which the Gospel holds out for the putting away of all malice and the cultivation of loving-kindness, show the cause of the distinction, which I before noticed to prevail, between the Christian and the Heathen characters. With these motives the Heathens had for the most part no acquaintance. But being clearly revealed to the followers of Christ, they ought to have, and, if suffered to operate duly, they will have, the effect of improving us continually in that quality, “ which is the very bond of peace and of all virtues, and without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before God¹.” If they do not produce in us such an effect ; if, notwithstanding we call ourselves Christians, we are malicious, unforgiving, and revengeful ; we are no better than Heathens ; nay, in reality, we are worse, and in a worse state than they. Ignorance may be pleaded, as an extenuation of their sin. But we who “ have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law² ;” by that law which expressly teaches us to love, to forbear, and to forgive one another, as we hope to be forgiven of God for Christ’s sake : and which unequivocally admonishes us of the

¹ Collect for Quinquagesima.

² Rom. ii. 12.

doom reserved for those wicked and malicious servants, who “from their hearts forgive not, every one his brother, their trespasses¹.”

¹ Matt. xviii. 35.

S E R M O N XXII.

THE DOCTRINE OF GRACE A MOTIVE WITH ST. PAUL
TO HUMILITY AND DILIGENCE.

1 COR. XV. 9, 10.

For I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the church of God :

But by the grace of God I am what I am ; and his grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain ; but I laboured more abundantly than they all ; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

IN the whole compass of the sacred volume, there is no character, after that of our blessed Lord himself, which more strongly calls for our attention, and is more entirely worthy of our imitation, than the character of the holy Apostle Paul. Such zeal for the honour of the Lord God, and such lowliness of soul and self-abasement, appear perhaps in no person, whose actions are recorded in Scripture, so conspicuously as in him. These feelings seem not to have been occasionally indulged, but to have

been constantly and habitually cherished by him. It is not merely upon set occasions, that they are formally brought into notice ; but they appear to have been the predominant sentiments of his heart, and to have been always ready to start as it were into life, and to vent themselves in suitable language ; whenever the subject of his discourse afforded him a suitable opportunity for expressing them. Does the course of his observations lead him to remark on the fundamental doctrine of the Gospel, that “ Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners ? ” Smitten with a lowly sense of his own unworthiness, and with gratitude to the Lord, who had intrusted him with the glorious ministry of the Gospel, he immediately subjoins “ of whom I am chief’.” Does his argument require him to notice the communication of the Gospel-promises to the Gentiles, and his commission to engage in that ministry ; he magnifies the grace of God, which called him to the office, by describing himself as “ less than the least of all saints’.” And here again, in the passage before us, being employed in laying before the Corinthians the evidence of Christ’s resurrection, and having enumerated the several witnesses, to whom Christ had appeared after his rising from the

¹ 1 Tim. i. 15.

² Eph. iii. 8.

dead, "and last of all" (continues he) "he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." And thence taking occasion to pass from the more immediate subject before him to that which was most deeply impressed upon his heart, and to commemorate the mercy of God and his own unworthiness; "For I" (he adds) "am the least of the Apostles; that am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am; and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God, which was with me."

This passage will supply us with materials for much useful meditation: let us pray Almighty God to grant us his assisting grace, whilst we consider the several branches of the declaration in the order, in which they succeed each other in the text.

I. And here the first thing, which calls for our notice, is the signal humility, that St. Paul evinces in speaking of his situation in the church. "I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle:" nay, in another place, to which I have already referred, he humbleth himself yet more, for he describes himself as "less than the least of all saints:" not only as inferior to the other Apostles, but as inferior

also to all other believers in Christ. And yet this was the man, who, although in his own emphatical language he were “nothing,” yet, as he himself also confidently affirmed, “was in nothing behind the very chiefest Apostles¹”—this was the man, who had been favoured with a special and miraculous “revelation of Jesus Christ” the Lord²:—this was he, who had preached the Gospel over the world, “not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power³”—this was he, who had set an unerring “seal to his Apostleship⁴,” and had “wrought the signs of an Apostle among his converts in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds⁵.” Certainly if St. Paul had been disposed to glory in his spiritual gifts, he had enough to be vain-glorious of: “in the abundance of the revelations” vouchsafed to him, he had enough, humanly speaking, to be “exalted above measure⁶”—in the dispensations of Providence, of which he was the object, the pride of a worldly and carnal mind might have discovered enough to raise its opinion of its own dignity, and to suppose that God had bestowed upon it such marks of distinction, in reward for some merito-

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 11.² Gal. i. 12.³ 1 Cor. ii. 4.⁴ 1 Cor. ix. 2.⁵ 2 Cor. xii. 12.⁶ 2 Cor. xii. 7.

rious qualities of its own. Widely different from this were the sentiments of St. Paul: instead of filling his imagination with false ideas of his own fancied dignity, he fixed his thoughts upon his real unworthiness; and contrasting the sins, of which he was conscious, with the stupendous instances of divine mercy vouchsafed towards him, he sunk as it were into himself; and far from claiming any merit on account of the apostolical commission intrusted to him, he pronounced himself unworthy to be invested with so honourable and holy an office.

II. "I am not meet" (said he) "to be called an Apostle." Do we ask, wherefore he was not meet? The question might be answered in general terms; that inheriting a nature essentially corrupt, and polluted with actual sins, he could not be worthy in himself of those glorious evidences of almighty love vouchsafed towards him. But more specifically he returns an answer to the question for himself, declaring at the same time both his unworthiness, and the ground of it. "I am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." This appears to have been the offence, which in the estimation of St. Paul rendered him the most unworthy of a distinguished office in the church of Christ, that he "had beyond

measure persecuted the church and wasted it¹;" that he had been, with respect to it and to its divine Founder, "a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious²."

Now it is highly remarkable, and it serves to set the humility of this holy Apostle in a more striking light, that he explicitly avows his sinfulness and his consequent unworthiness to be admitted to God's favour, and does not pretend to plead in justification of his sin that excuse, which the circumstances of the case might have seemed to admit. It might have been expected that he would plead the goodness of his intentions, the sincerity of his heart, in doing erroneously and under a belief that it was right, what he afterwards was convinced was wrong. That he did think that he was right in persecuting the church of Christ and in being "exceedingly mad³" against the Christians, we learn from the undeniable testimony of his own deliberate and solemn assurance: "I verily thought with myself," he avers, "I verily thought with myself," I was sincerely persuaded, "that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth⁴." It is a favourite

¹ Gal. i. 13.

² Acts xxvi. 11.

³ 1 Tim. i. 13.

⁴ Acts xxvi. 9.

maxim, that an action is to be estimated by the sincerity of the agent : admit the justness of the maxim ; and the conduct of St. Paul in persecuting the church was irreproachable, for he “ verily thought with himself that he ought ” to do so. What then becomes of his own declaration, that for this very reason, because he did that which he was sincerely persuaded he ought to do, he was “ not meet to be called an Apostle,” he was “ less than the least of all saints ? ” —The truth of the case appears to lie in this : that St. Paul was guilty of sin, not because he followed the dictates of his conscience ; but because he did not first take the necessary measures for informing his conscience aright. The evidences of the Christian faith were within his reach, and had indeed solicited his attention. “ When the blood of the first martyr Stephen was shed, he himself was standing by, and consenting to his death¹,” instead of weighing the arguments by which Stephen justified his conversion to the Christian faith. Had St. Paul at that time given his attention to these evidences, to these arguments, instead of yielding to the bias of his Jewish prejudices, he might possibly have been thereby converted to the truth in Christ ; at least he might have avoided the error

¹ Acts xxii. 20.

of following the dictates of his conscience, without having been previously anxious to inform it aright. His error however may serve for our admonition : it may serve to caution us against admitting sincerity alone as a plea and a justification for our conduct : it may serve to convince us, that it is not sufficient for us to “verily think,” to be sincerely persuaded, that we ought to act in any particular manner ; unless we first take diligent heed, that we have solid and substantial grounds for our opinion. A well-informed conscience is a most excellent guide ; under Providence, it is the best we can follow : but nothing is more fruitful in mischief, or more scrupulously and jealously to be avoided, than a conscience ill or imperfectly informed. In the early ages of Christianity, it made St. Paul “a persecutor and a blasphemer :”—in later ages it has unsheathed the sword, set fire to the faggot, given strength and currency to error, destroyed men for their attachment to the truth, and deluged Christendom with blood :—shall I notice its effects in the present day ? Look around and they cannot escape your notice : in cooperation with other causes, it renders the professors of the Gospel more notorious for their mutual animosities, than for their unity and brotherly love ; it is the never-failing parent of “false doctrine, heresy, and schism ;” and it rends into innu-

merable factions, the “church, which is the body of Christ;” whilst every man sets up his own judgment in matters of religion, and does what is right in his own eyes, neglecting or abusing those means, which God has provided for his instruction.

III. But to proceed. The Apostle, having disclaimed all pretensions to desert on his own part, and having avowed his own unworthiness to occupy the station, in which he was placed, does not leave the matter there, but expressly acknowledges, what had placed him in it. “By the grace of God I am what I am.” The grace of God is that free and unconstrained love of the Almighty, whereby he was prompted to take compassion on the fallen race of man; to send his only-begotten Son into the world, for their redemption; and to “call them to the knowledge of his grace and faith in him.” As it was this, which prompted the Almighty generally to offer salvation to mankind, so it was and is this also, whereby he calls every individual, to whom he vouchsafes the revelation of his will and of salvation through faith in Christ. By the grace of God, distinguished from any worthiness of his own, St. Paul, who had been a most ardent persecutor,* became a most sincere professor, and most laborious preacher of the Gospel:—by the

grace of God, distinguished from any claim which could result from an imperfect obedience to the law of Moses on the one side, or from the works which man in his natural state can perform on the other, the Jew and the Gentile were called to salvation in Christ Jesus, and "made heirs according to the hope of eternal life¹." The same unwearied motive, the same unfailling spring of all good things, still continues to operate. It is of the grace of God, sinners as we all are by nature, and spiritually "dead in trespasses and sins," that we "are saved and called with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to the divine purpose, and grace given us in Christ Jesus before the world began²." It is of the grace of God, corrupt as we are by nature, that we are cleansed and justified "by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost³." It is of the grace of God, that he promises to enable us, weak and imperfect creatures as we always continue, to perform, however incompletely, the duties of our calling. It is of the grace of God, that he promises his Holy Spirit, both to "put into our minds good desires, and to assist us in bringing them to good effect." In a word, being natu-

¹ Tit. iii. 7.² 2 Tim. i. 9.³ Tit. iii. 5.

rally enemies to God, whatever be the spiritual blessings, with which we are endowed, it is by the grace of God that “we are what we are.”

IV. What shall we say then ; considering that our salvation is conferred upon us of the free gift of God, “shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound’?” Shall we be thoughtless, and careless, and indolent, that inactivity on our part may appear to exalt the divine mercy and benevolence and power? “God forbid !” Not such was the inference of St. Paul on the contemplation of his own case, and of the mercy which had been graciously extended to him. “By the grace of God,” he declares, “I am what I am :” and how does he then proceed? “And his grace, which was bestowed on me, was not in vain ; but I laboured more abundantly than they all.” With respect to himself, and to the regulation of his appetites and passions, he was “temperate in all things ;” resolute and earnest in “keeping under his body and bringing it into subjection, lest that by any means when he had preached to others, he himself should be a cast-away² :”—with respect to his ministerial office, he was zealous and indefatigable in preaching the Gospel of Christ, in promoting the glory of

¹ Rom. vi. 1.

² 1 Cor. ix. 27.

God, and the salvation of the souls of men; abundant, yea “more abundant¹” than the other Apostles, in the works and labour of love.

And the same conduct, which he practised himself in consideration of the divine grace vouchsafed to him, he recommends, and inculcates upon others.—Does he impress upon the Romans the doctrine of “justification unto life by the grace and free gift of God?” He guards them against perverting the doctrine into a licence for sin; and strenuously insists upon the necessity of their “walking in newness of life;” of their not permitting sin to “reign in their mortal body, to obey it in the lusts thereof;” and of their “yielding their members servants to righteousness unto holiness².”—Does he teach the Ephesians, that “by grace they are saved through faith, and that not of themselves, it is the gift of God; not of works lest any man should boast?” Guarding the doctrine at the same time from being abused by men of worldly minds, he immediately adds, that the very purpose of their new creation is that they may be zealous in well-doing: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them³.”

¹ 2 Cor. xi. 23.

² Rom. vi. 4. 12. 19.

³ Eph. ii. 8—10.

—I refrain from multiplying texts ; for I conceive it to be the unquestionable language of this holy Apostle, in common with the sacred writers in general, that, free as is that grace of God, whereby we are called to the knowledge of salvation by faith in Christ, so far from exempting us from, it necessarily obliges us to, personal purity both of life and heart, and active piety towards God, and active charity towards men. Nay, the more “the grace of God abounds” towards us, the more our holiness and diligence in his service ought to abound towards him in return : for wherefore doth St. Paul tell us, that “the grace of God, which was bestowed upon him, was not in vain, but that he laboured more abundantly than the rest of the Apostles ;” if it be not to stimulate us to greater exertion, in proportion to the greatness of God’s love ?

V. Do I mean to speak of the strength of man, as if it were sufficient of itself to support him in the observance of holiness and the practice of good works ? Far from it. If such were my intention, the remaining words of the Apostle, at present under our consideration, would convict me of abandoning the truth. “I laboured more abundantly than they all ;” he says ; and then, lest it should be thought that he was boasting of any natural power of his own, he adds, with that humility and self-abasement, with that tenderness

and jealousy for God's honour, which never forsake him, "yet not I, but the grace of God, which was with me." We are by nature weak as well as wicked; we are not only polluted by sin, but are also "compassed with infirmity¹." That infirmity extends itself over our inner, as well as our outer man; and it is no less true of our spiritual, than it is of our natural state, that "in God we live and move and have our being²." We must indeed "labour abundantly," as St. Paul did; we must be diligent in using the appointed means of grace, prayer, the word, and the sacraments; we must endeavour to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling³;" we must in a word exert ourselves, as if our salvation depended entirely upon our own exertions; but after all that we have done, or can do, we must acknowledge, that "without God we can do nothing⁴;" and must attribute with the Apostle the whole glory of the contest to "the grace of God which is with us."

The necessity of dwelling at present more fully upon an application of the Apostle's language to ourselves, is superseded by the foregoing remarks; wherein that application has been in a great measure anticipated by the consideration

¹ Heb. v. 2.

² Acts xvii. 28.

³ Phil. ii. 12.

⁴ John xv. 15.

that has been given to our own circumstances, as affected by those of St. Paul. As a summary however of what I would wish to impress upon your minds, I will briefly notice in conclusion ; that the words now considered may conduct us by the blessing of God into the sound and salutary mean between those errors, which men are often tempted to embrace, by the pride of human nature on the one hand, and by mistaken views of the divine grace on the other.—Are we then disposed to indulge a fond opinion of our own dignity : to excuse, or to extenuate, our sins against the divine Majesty ; and to rely upon our sufficiency to do what is pleasing to God ? Let us learn a lesson of humility from the holy Apostle Paul ; who with a deep sense of his own offences and unworthiness ascribed the blessings, which he enjoyed, and the strength, with which he was endowed, to the free and unmerited grace of God.—Are we liable to be deluded into the contrary extreme ; to be little careful, in our reliance upon God's free grace, to maintain good works ; and rather “ to continue in sin that grace may abound ? ” Let the example of the same Apostle prompt us to diligence and activity in our holy calling ; whilst we behold him, who in the enjoyment of God's grace was “ not a whit behind the very chiefest Apostles,” “ labouring more abundantly than they all, that the grace of God

might not be bestowed upon him in vain." Upon the whole ; our Church well expresses the doctrine of the Apostle, and of Scripture in general, upon this subject, when she says in her tenth Article, that "we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing" (or going before) "us, that we may have a good will ; and working with us, when we have that good will :"
 not working *without us*, but working *with us*: not operating upon us, as mere irrational machines ; but co-operating with us, as fallen but still reasonable beings ; as moral, and therefore responsible agents. For, although as the Apostle affirms, and as we glory with him in avowing, "neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase¹;" still we are assured on the same unerring authority, that whilst we act "according to the grace of God which is given unto us²," God regards us as "workers and labourers together with him ;" and does not disdain to promise that "every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour³."

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 7.² Rom. xii. 6.³ 1 Cor. iii. 8, 9.

SERMON XXIII.

EFFICACY AND REQUISITES OF PRAYER.

LUKE xviii. 1—6.

And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint:

Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God neither regarded man:

And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.

And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;

Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.

AND well may we hear it, my brethren; well may we hear it, and attend to it, and study to profit by it too; for it is to be feared that there are few, if indeed there be any, of us, who do not stand in need of being reminded, that we “ought always to pray and not to faint.”

Many persons, it is true, come to church almost as regularly as the Lord's day returns;

but all that come, do not seem to be well aware of the nature of the place, where they are ; nor of the business, for which they come thither.

Many are satisfied with themselves, and think perhaps that they have done as much as can be required or expected of them, if they come *once* to church : and having thus pretended to keep holy a part of that day, the whole of which God has sanctified and set apart for his service ; they seem to think themselves at liberty to spend the rest of it in whatever manner they please.

Many think and act as if the whole of their religious duty was performed by their coming to church once, or it may be, twice, on the Sabbath-day ; and dismiss all care of God on leaving his house, and never think to worship him in private the other days of the week.

Some again, who may have so much feeling of religion about them as sometimes to cast a thought towards God when they are alone, have not a care beyond this. And it perhaps never occurs to them to call their families about them ; and teach *them*, that the best way of securing the good blessing of God upon their labours is by being diligent and sincere in asking for it.

It is to be feared that there is too much occasion for these complaints not merely in this or that parish, but throughout the country. And it

is the disgrace, and will perhaps in the end be the ruin, of the country that it is so.

What therefore we have to do is to look to ourselves ; to see if we are answerable for any of these faults ; and if so, to endeavour with God's grace to amend them. It is not sufficient that we may sometimes pray to God ; but we ought, as our Saviour teaches us, " always to pray and not to faint ;" that is, we ought to be really sincere and in earnest, when we do pray to him ; and we ought to pray to him not only fervently, but regularly and frequently also.

I have made choice of this parable for our consideration, because the subject of it is such as I am particularly anxious that you should reflect on with seriousness. And I pray our most merciful Father, for the sake of his well-beloved Son, to grant you the aid of his Holy Spirit ; and to dispose your minds to such serious reflection on the duty of prayer, as may confirm you in the performance of it, where you have been in the habit of doing right, and improve your practice, where you have been careless or neglectful.

I proceed therefore to lay before you such remarks as the parable most naturally holds out to us : and shall consider, in the first place, the arguments, which it furnishes, for diligent and constant prayer ; and secondly the sense in which we should understand the moral of the parable,

“that men ought always to pray and not to faint.”

I. With regard to the first point; what are the arguments furnished by the parable to encourage us in diligent and constant prayer?

The end of our prayers undoubtedly is that we may gain the things we pray for. Now consider the parable; and see, what assurances it gives us, that we shall receive what we pray for, if we “pray and faint not.”

“There was in a city a judge, who feared not God, nor regarded man:” a man of such a character as this; without religion or humanity; without fear of what might happen to him either in this world or in another;—such a man, I say, might not be thought likely to exert himself in behalf of a poor destitute suppliant. Neither a sense of justice nor of compassion could be expected to affect him. But who now is the judge, with whom we have to do? It is God; a most merciful Judge, and a most tender and affectionate Father: who is not only just and good, but is justice and goodness itself: and who must therefore be as much, nay infinitely more disposed, to grant our petitions than the unjust judge could have been to reject those offered to him.

“And there was a widow in that city, and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine ad-

versary." The person represented as applying to the judge for relief, was a widow and oppressed: and was therefore the less likely to engage an unprincipled man in her favour. We too are destitute and unable to protect ourselves: but our weak and distressed state, so far from being an obstacle to the success of our petitions, is indeed a passport and a recommendation of us to God, "whose eyes consider the poor, and who loves to help the meek upon earth."

"And the judge would not for a while:" it was not agreeable to his selfish disposition to relieve the poor widow; it might have given him some trouble to relieve her; and so he refused to interfere in her cause. But the poor widow was not to be thus rejected. She felt her distress and weakness too nearly to submit to be repulsed so easily: she therefore persevered and was earnest in urging her suit; and at length "the judge said within himself, Though I fear not God nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me."

See now what was the conduct of the widow! and "hear what the unjust judge saith!" She was rejected; yet she persevered, and at length her petition was granted.

And shall not we persevere, and will not God grant our petitions? Is he not so kind that he is

always willing to do it, though for wise purposes he may for a time seem to refuse? Is he not so powerful, that it is as easy for him to grant as to deny them? Instead of casting us from him, does he not invite us to him? Instead of saying that he will not relieve us, does he not promise that he will, and that he will “give all good things to them that ask him” in his Son’s name¹?

Many words here would be unnecessary; for a few will sufficiently express the sum of what is to be said upon this part of the subject. We all know that we want many things, which we feel that we are too weak to be able to procure for ourselves. We know that God is all-powerful; and that he alone therefore *can* supply our wants:—that he is good and full of compassion, and is therefore *willing* to supply them:—that he has accordingly *promised* to supply them, as far as may be for our benefit; and that he is faithful and just and true, and therefore *will* supply them.

We know on the other hand that he has appointed a condition, which we must observe, if we would have our wants supplied by him: and that the same truth and justice, upon which we ground our confidence that he will fulfil his promise, and grant what we want, if we observe the condition; will also prevent him from assisting

¹ Matt. vii. 11. John xvi. 23.

us, if we do not observe it. The condition is that we “always pray and faint not.”

Now, knowing these things, (and it is to be presumed that we all do know them,) it must be folly in us to expect that we shall have what we want from God, if we do not ask him as he has appointed; and it must be something worse than folly, a stupid blindness to our own interest, and a certain mad contempt of him and of his power, if we refuse or neglect to ask him.

Such was not the conduct of the poor widow. She felt that she was distressed, and was not able to help herself; she knew that the unjust judge was able to help her; she thought that by perseverance she should prevail upon him to help her; she persevered therefore, beseeching him, we may be sure, with all her heart; and at length she succeeded. Such is the conduct which our Saviour holds out for our example: and undoubtedly this poor widow will “rise up against us in the day of judgment and condemn us,” unless we do as she did; unless we “pray always, and faint not.”

II. We now therefore proceed to consider, in the second place, what is meant by the precept that “we ought always to pray and not to faint.”

It certainly is not intended that we should be always upon our knees, to the neglect of our

ordinary business ; without a proper attention to which we cannot be doing our duty in that state of life to which it has pleased God to call us.

If however we are not hereby called upon to be always actually praying, we are required to be always in a state of mind fit for praying ; to bear about with us a habit, or, more properly speaking, the spirit of piety, and to cherish such a settled belief and fear and love of God, as will teach us to look up to him with confidence amidst all the afflictions we may suffer, and with thankfulness amidst all the blessings we may enjoy.

Such I take to be the *general* temper of mind recommended by our Saviour's direction, that we "ought always to pray and not to faint." But the words may lead us more *particularly* to consider the manner in which, and the frequency with which, we ought to perform our more regular devotions. And upon each of these points I shall speak somewhat more at length.

1. Now there are some persons who seem to be of opinion, that the whole of this duty consists in saying or hearing a few prayers, without any attention to the business that engages them. But there cannot be a more gross or dangerous error : for it is impossible that such lip-service, unattended with the worship of the heart, can be effectual ; if the Scripture be true (as it undoubt-

edly is) which tells us, that “God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth¹.”

If therefore you would have your prayers heard and regarded by God, you must not only pronounce them with your mouths, but you must keep your *hearts* fixed upon the business you are engaged in. For Christ declares of those, who “draw nigh unto God with their mouth, and honour him with their lips, while their hearts are far from him, that such persons worship him in vain².”

You must be truly penitent for all your sins, and feel the danger to which you are exposed without God’s gracious help ; for it is “a broken and contrite heart that he will not despise³ ;” as Christ showed when he forgave the sins of Mary Magdalene.

You must be heartily in earnest, when you pray for pardon of your past sins or for any future blessing ; for it is “the effectual fervent prayer, that availeth much⁴.”

You must have a deep sense of your own unworthiness, and of the infinite perfections of God ; for he “resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble⁵,” both of which he is

¹ John iv. 24.

² Matt. xv. 8, 9.

³ Psalm li. 17.

⁴ James v. 16.

⁵ James iv. 6.

represented to have done in the case of the haughty Pharisee and the poor Publican.

You must have a lively faith in your kind Redeemer and Intercessor Jesus Christ, and throw yourself upon his merits to plead your acceptance with God: for “there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby they must be saved, but only the name of our Lord Jesus Christ¹ ;” and “those that ask in Christ’s name God heareth² .”

You must rely on the Spirit of grace to give warmth and energy to your prayers; for “we are not sufficient of ourselves to do any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God³ .”

In a word, you must be *strictly serious and attentive* to your prayers; and if you are so, you can hardly fail of possessing in some degree that disposition of mind, without which so sinful a creature as man should never dare to approach a holy, an all-wise, and an all-powerful God.

2. And such inward feelings will produce a becoming *respect* and *reverence* in the *outward behaviour*. For there is such a close connection between our souls and bodies, that our hearts are scarcely ever really and truly interested by any thing, but that we show it by our actions.

Thus we continually read in the Old Testa-

¹ Acts iv. 12.

² John xvi. 16.

³ 2 Cor. iii. 5. .

ment of persons, who humbled themselves before God, with sackcloth about their loins, and ashes strown upon their heads. Thus Peter, when he repented of having denied Christ, “went out and wept bitterly¹:” when the poor publican prayed for God’s mercy upon his sins, he “smote upon his breast²:” the four and twenty elders, who are described as worshipping God in the Revelations, accompanied their words by “falling down before Him that sat on the throne, and casting their crowns before the throne³.” And our blessed Lord, who is in all things the best pattern for us to copy, whilst he was upon earth in our likeness, is repeatedly described as kneeling when he prayed.

Our Church well knows this; and she has accordingly given such directions for the behaviour of her members during the public service, as are admirably suited to the feelings, by which they are then supposed to be actuated.

She puts us in mind, that the duty of confessing our sins, and praying to God to pardon them, should be performed not only “with a pure heart,” but “with an humble voice.” She directs us to fall upon our knees when we ask God’s mercy and blessings; and to stand up, when we give him thanks or praise his holy name.

¹ Matt. xxvi. 75.

² Luke xviii. 33.

³ Rev. iv. 10.

Now, what is your behaviour with regard to these things? Do you join in the service when you are directed? For instance; do you repeat those parts of the Liturgy, which you are required to repeat with the minister, especially the general Confession, and the Lord's Prayer? Do you read with him aloud the alternate verses of the Psalms, thus expressing your adoration, petitions and thanksgivings to God, in the language of inspiration? Do you utter the responses after the minister, especially those addresses to the throne of grace, wherein you are instructed to pray for God's mercy and for deliverance from evil in the Litany, and for grace to keep his commandments in the Communion Service? And do you give the sanction of your assent to every prayer which the minister offers in your behalf, by pronouncing earnestly *Amen*, at the conclusion of it? If you thus join in the public worship of the congregation, do you join in such a manner as to show that you know and feel and pay regard to what you say? Are you never sitting at your ease, when you should be kneeling? Are you never whispering and laughing with your neighbour, when you should be listening with reverence to the word of God, or offering him your thanks and prayers? Are you never gazing about you, and suffering any trifling occurrence to withdraw your attention from your

devotions, or perhaps not endeavouring to fix it upon them at all?

For shame; let us not call this worshipping God:—call it thoughtlessness, profaneness, an evil habit, or any thing but serving God; for *that* it is not.

He who studies truly to serve God, will worship him both with body and with soul; and he will behave with such respect and reverence at his devotions, as to show, that he thinks himself to be then, more immediately, in the presence and under the eye of God; and that he has a becoming sense of his own unworthiness, and of the dignity of that high and holy Being, to whom his prayers are addressed.

And thus much may be sufficient with regard to the inward disposition and outward manner, with which we ought to pray. We now therefore proceed to consider the *frequency*, with which our devotions should be repeated, in order to satisfy the commandment that we “always pray, and do not faint:” observing at the same time, that we shall do well to take with us this caution, arising from what has been already said, that it is of no signification whether we pray much, or little, or not at all, unless to the worship of the lips we add also that of the heart.

1. I observe then, in the first place, that it is your indispensable duty to be *regular in attend-*

ing the public prayers of the Church on the Lord's day; if you are not so, you cannot possibly be said to "pray always, and not to faint."

There are very few excuses, which can be admitted as sufficient to justify an omission of this duty. Sickness, and attendance on the sick when they want it, may undoubtedly be considered sufficient: but besides these I scarcely know what other reason can be admitted, except that business, which is necessary in order to make provision for or take care of a family; and even that should not be suffered to prevent your coming to Church at least once every Sunday.

Other business is not any excuse at all; for all but necessary work is forbidden on the Sabbath-day; so that to be absent from Church for the purposes of worldly business is to be guilty of two sins at once; and to plead business as an excuse for not coming, is to justify one fault by another.

Pleasure is no excuse for not coming to Church, unless you are content to be reckoned among the number of those, whom the Apostle describes as "lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God."

The company of friends is no excuse for not coming; for your friends ought to come as well as yourselves.

Even private devotion, or the reading of religious books at home, is no sufficient reason: for however proper those employments may be the

rest of the day, (and indeed they form a part of your duty,) they must not prevent you from performing another important branch of your duty by attending the public worship of God in the congregation of your brother Christians : which if you neglect, you rob God of his honour, and yourselves of his blessing.

“ I am not inclined to go to Church”—“ it is not convenient to me to go”—“ it is too much trouble to go ;”—and other such reasons (if they be fit to be called by that word) for not discharging this duty to God, need but to be mentioned, in order that their folly and wickedness may be exposed.

Some persons seem to be of opinion, that it is enough for them to attend the public worship of God once on the Lord's day ; and they accordingly never think of coming to his house more than once, but give up the remainder of the day to their amusements, or other worldly pursuits. I am at a loss to conceive the shadow of a reasonable cause for this conduct. Almighty God has surely sanctified not a part only, but the whole of the Sabbath-day to his service :—when our Church appointed that the service should be read twice in the day, she certainly meant that the reading of it should be twice attended. And those persons, who for no sufficient cause neglect to attend it more than once, give reason to sup-

pose that they are but little inclined to “pray always without fainting.” Indeed the different appearance in a Church, when there is to be a sermon, and when there is to be none, is but too convincing a proof that many people have not a proper sense of the principal business, for which they should come hither. One part of their business is without doubt to be instructed in their duty: the other and the principal part of it, is to *do* their duty; by confessing their sins; by praying for pardon, and the relief of their other necessities; and by offering their thanks and praises to God.

The same ignorance or thoughtlessness, which keeps many persons from Church entirely or in part, makes many again extremely careless about the time of their coming. It should seem that they do not consider it of much consequence when they join the congregation, provided they are ready to go away with it. But every serious man would certainly take care to be present, before the beginning of the service, if he reflected that the Confession and the Absolution, as they are amongst the first, so also are two of the most important parts of it: and if he further considered, that, besides a certain degree of confusion and inattention, which every fresh comer is too apt to create in the rest of the congregation, such backwardness is liable to be construed into some-

thing like irreverence towards God, and a want of earnestness and zeal in his service.

A similar charge is incurred by those, who quit the Church before the service is at an end. Some persons are thoughtless enough to depart the instant the sermon is concluded, instead of waiting to join the congregation in giving glory to God, and in receiving the blessing from his minister. Of such persons it is no harsh sentence to say, that they show little regard either for God's glory or God's blessing ; and it is agreeable to Scripture to suppose, that they are " lightly esteemed of the Lord," and carry no blessing with them to their homes.

We conclude therefore with regard to the public worship of God, that he who is really in earnest in wishing " always to pray and not to faint," will be regular in his attendance at Church unless prevented by some necessary cause of absence ; will take every opportunity of coming in his power ; and will take care to be present, and to bear his part, in the whole of the devotions of the congregation.

2. I observe in the second place, that if you are willing to " pray always and not to faint," you will not confine yourselves to the public worship of God, and to calling upon his name only one day in the week. Every man feels particular wants and enjoys particular blessings,

which may be most properly made the subject of a *private prayer* to God. And *every day*, and *every night*, as it passes by, brings with it something which ought to lift up our thoughts to heaven.

If when you rise in the *morning*, strengthened and refreshed by a comfortable night's rest, you consider to whom you are indebted for that refreshment; who has protected you through the dangers of the night, and brought you in safety to the morning with health and strength to do the duty of your station through another day; you will (it is presumed) feel disposed to offer up the tribute of your thanks and praise to the "almighty Giver of all good gifts;" and to pray, that as he has "brought you safely to the beginning of the day, so he will be graciously pleased to defend you in the same with his mighty power."

And if, when you return to bed in the *evening*, you seriously call to mind what sins you have been guilty of during the day, what dangers you have escaped, and what blessings you have enjoyed; you will not be backward in offering to God your evening sacrifice of prayer and praise and thanksgiving. Nor will you be satisfied to lay your head upon your pillow, till you have endeavoured to make your peace with God; that so, if it be his good pleasure, he may "defend

you from all perils and dangers of the night ;” or, if he think fit for that sleep to be your last, that you may awake in a better and a happier world.

Such will be the feelings and such will be the practice of every true Christian : he trusts that the Lord will be merciful unto him and will comfort him, for he calls upon him daily. “ Early in the morning does he direct his prayer unto God,” and “ he lifts up his hands for an evening sacrifice ¹.”

3. These duties of attending the public worship of the Church, and of putting up prayers to God in private, are what every man is able and ought to perform. I observe, in the third and last place, that there is one other kind of worship, to be expected from those who “ always pray and do not faint.” The duty that I mean is that of *family prayers*; the performance of which must of course depend upon the masters and fathers of families.

“ As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord,” was the pious and noble resolution of Joshua ; and it is one, which every Christian master of a family ought to adopt and observe.

The same reasons which call for prayers from men, either as individuals, or as united in large bodies in society, show that prayer is also their

¹ Psalm v. 3 ; cxi. 2.

duty, when united in families. Whatever is capable of sinning against and offending God, ought to confess and ask forgiveness of him for doing so. Whatever has wants, which the assistance of God is necessary to supply, ought to have recourse to him for his assistance. Whatever receives mercies and blessings at the hand of God, ought to thank and praise him for them. But every family does sin against God; does want his assistance; and does receive blessings at his hands. And therefore every family ought, *as such*, to worship him with penitent, humble, and thankful hearts.

The promise of Christ's presence, as we find it in the 18th chapter of St. Matthew, appears to be more especially applicable to families, assembled for the purposes of devotion. "I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them by my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them:" not that the presence of Christ is by any means confined to such an assembly; but we may suppose it to be a goodly sight in the eyes of God for those, whom he has united in the same household, to offer united prayer and praise to him.

But the practice of family prayers is moreover attended with these advantages, which are con-

fined to that practice. The Parent, when he thus gathers his Children round him for the purpose of prayer, is in the most effectual way “bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord :” and is giving them the best lesson on religion, by showing them how necessary he considers a constant observance of its duties.

The Master, who thus assembles his Servants, cherishes in them a sense of religion, which would be likely to fade away between one Sunday and another ; and, if he is not thereby instructing them in their duty, (which however it is probable that he may be,) yet he at least is keeping their duty more strongly present to their minds : and he is impressing upon them the necessity of *doing* their duty by the consideration, that they have another “ Master, who is in heaven.”

And both the Parent and the Master have the satisfaction of knowing, that, although his Children or Servants might neglect their prayers, if left to themselves ; by bringing them together for that express purpose he is inviting and encouraging them to serve God, and is himself setting them an example that they also “ ought always to pray and not to faint.”

Why this duty of family prayer is so generally neglected, as we may reasonably fear it is, I con-

fess I am at a loss to conjecture : unless it is to be attributed to a most deplorable luke-warmness with regard to religion. The trouble and inconvenience to a Parent or Master of a family in reading prayers to his household at least every evening, (if it be not practicable, as perhaps is sometimes the case, in the morning,) cannot be very great. Try the experiment, you who are so situated as to have it in your power to try it. It cannot do you the least harm ; and it may do you much good. It may make your Children more dutiful, and your Servants more faithful ; and it may, and probably will, make yourselves more serious and religious. It will give you but little trouble at present :—it will be attended with no pain, and it will not be any hindrance to you in your business. But, if I am not much mistaken, you will find ample reason to be satisfied with it hereafter ; when the consciousness of your having thus been the instruments of making your families do their duty to God, at the same time that you have also been endeavouring to do your own duty, will smooth your bed in your sickness, and be a source of comfort and hope in death.

At the beginning of my discourse I said, that I was desirous of recommending this subject to your most serious reflection. Let me now beg it of you in conclusion, and that as a matter of the

first importance to your happiness, that you will not dismiss these reflections from your minds the moment I shall have ceased speaking ; but that you will, upon leaving the Church, make them the subject of your most attentive consideration. For this purpose let me suggest a few brief questions to your minds.

Has not Christ instructed us that it is our duty “ always to pray and not to faint ? ” And has he not given us to understand by the parable, that constant and earnest prayer is *necessary* in order to our being in favour with God ?

Can a man be properly said to pray at all, unless he prays *with sincerity* and *in earnest* ; with his heart as well as with his lips ?

And should not, and will not, the man, who is really sincere in his devotions, show that he is so by a *devout and decent behaviour* in the house of God ?

If we really wish to “ pray always and not to faint,” should we not take every opportunity which is afforded us of worshipping God *in public* with the congregation of our brother Christians ; and *come to Church twice every Sunday*, unless we are unavoidably prevented ?

Can we be said to “ pray always and not to faint,” if we confine our devotions to one day in the week ? Should we not then rather offer to

God *every day in private* the sacrifice of our morning and evening prayers ?

And as we cannot look upon ourselves as unconnected with those about us, should we not (as Masters and Parents of *families*) be moreover anxious to unite *them* with us in our devotions, and so take care that "*our houses*" as well as ourselves may "serve the Lord?"

It may be hardly necessary to add, that you must not expect your prayers to be effectual, unless you endeavour to live as becomes Christians. But this it is most probable that you will do, if you really pray from your hearts. It has been well said, that, "a course of prayer and a course of sinning cannot consist together; one will necessarily destroy the other. Prayer will either make a man leave sinning, or sinning will make a man leave praying." So that besides the consideration of our performing by prayer one of our positive and most important duties, it has this very great recommendation, that if properly performed, it is likely, with God's good blessing, to lead us to the performance of all our other duties.

May the good Lord give you the grace of his Holy Spirit, that you may live as true Christians, "worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called!" And may he impress upon your minds

how much it is incumbent upon you, both *inwardly* in your hearts and *outwardly* with your bodies ; both *in public, in private, and with your families*, “ always to pray and not to faint !”

Grant this, we beseech thee, O heavenly Father, for the sake of thy blessed Son, Jesus Christ : to whom with thee, O Father, and thee, O Holy Ghost, three Persons in the unity of one Godhead, be ascribed all wisdom and power now and for ever ! Amen.

SERMON XXIV.

SELF-DECEIT OF THOSE WHO ARE HEARERS, BUT
NOT DOERS OF THE WORD.

JAMES i. 22.

Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your
own selves.

AN important and necessary caution ! and if so in the times of the Apostles, then more especially in our days, my brethren ; when many make a great part, if not the whole, of their religion to consist in hearing ; as if they served God, by being only taught how to serve him, or did their duty, by being only told how to do it. A more dangerous and fatal delusion cannot be practised by “ the Father of lies ” upon any of his miserable victims, than that which such persons practise upon themselves. And accordingly the Spirit of truth graciously and plainly admonishes them by the mouth of his Apostle, that they, who do so, “ deceive their own selves.”

In order to understand the full meaning of the admonition, let us first consider what is intended by "the word," of which the Apostle speaks : what by "the doing" of the word ; and what by "the hearing" of it ; and whence it is, that there are many "hearers," who are not "doers" of it. It will then be an easy task to show, that such persons "deceive their own selves."

I. By "the word" then we are to understand that which was delivered to mankind by the inspired messengers of God, and is transmitted to us in the books of the Old and New Testaments. In this it hath pleased the Most High God to declare his mind, and to reveal to us both himself and his will. In this he hath made known to us, what he would have us believe ; what he would have us do ; and what he would have us not do. In this he discloses the punishment, which will fall upon the unbeliever and the sinner ; and the happiness, which he hath prepared for them that love and obey him. And this is called "the word," by way of eminence, because it infinitely surpasses all other words. It is not the word of men : it is not the word of angels : it is not the word of any created being : but it is the word of Almighty God himself, "who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the Prophets, and hath in these last days spoken

unto us by his Son¹." It was God himself, who spake; and it is hence not more frequently than properly denominated "his word:" when therefore we hear it delivered, we are to look upon it and receive it, "not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God:" we are still to represent to ourselves the almighty Creator of the world speaking to us his creatures, and telling us what he would have us do.

II. By "doing the word" we are to understand the regulation of our hearts and lives according to its directions; the practice of what it commands, and the avoiding of what it forbids: a fear of the threatenings, which it denounces, a trust in the promises, which it makes, and a belief in the truths, which it reveals. To regulate our language and our conduct, our thoughts and our affections, agreeably to the rules, which the word prescribes—this is to be "doers of the word."

For example, the word commands that "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind²." Do you in obedience to the precept, set your affection upon God, as the supreme object of your desires? Then are ye "doers of the word."—The word commands you, "Whatsoever ye would

¹ Heb. i. 1.

² Matt. xxii. 37.

that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them¹." Is it your practice to observe in your intercourse with men this golden rule of Christian charity? Then are ye "doers of the word."—The word admonishes you, that "all who know not God and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, shall be punished with everlasting destruction²." Do you cherish a holy fear of this alarming denunciation, and do you make it your study and endeavour to know God and to obey the Gospel of Christ? Then are ye "doers of the word."—The word assures you, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee³." In humble dependence on the truth of the promise, can you "boldly say" with the Apostle, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me⁴?" Then are ye "doers of the word."—The word saith, "I and the Father are one⁵." Do you firmly assent to the truth of this proposition upon the word of him who spake it; and do you really believe that the Father and the Son are one Being, one God? Then again are ye "doers of the word."—In short, they who hear any part of the word of God declared to them, and believe and live according to what they hear,

¹ Matt. vii. 12.² 2 Thess. i. 8.³ Heb. xiii. 5.⁴ Heb. xiii. 6.⁵ John x. 30.

they are “doers of the word, and not hearers only.”

III. But if, on the other hand, when you hear the word read or faithfully expounded to you, you go your way, and suffer it not to influence your hearts and practice :—if, when it tells you to “love God above all things,” you “set your affection upon earthly things ;” if, when it tells you to “love your neighbour as yourself,” you cherish malice and hatred against him in your heart, and act towards him with unkindness and injustice ; if, when it apprizes you of “the terrors of the Lord,” prepared for the wicked, regardless of its admonitions you rush headlong into sin ; if, when it encourages you to put your trust in God, you compromise your principles, and renounce your allegiance to him from fear of men ; if, when it reveals to you the nature of the supreme Being, you close your eyes to the revelation, and choose to retain “an evil heart of unbelief :”—then are you, “not doers of the word, but hearers only ;” then are you in that state of spiritual delusion, of which the Apostle speaks ; then are you “deceiving your own selves.”

But are there any such amongst us, my brethren ? Is it possible that there should be ? “Shall the trumpet be blown in the city, and the

people not be afraid¹?" Shall Almighty God himself speak, and shall men listen with indifference; and neglect or refuse to be guided by what they hear? The case is possible; it is real. It is a fact, and we all know it to be so, that day after day, and year after year, multitudes continually hear the word of God; but instead of becoming "doers of the word," they heed it no more than they do the wind, which passes by them, and they regard it not: they are no more influenced by it in the regulation of their hearts and lives, than they would be by "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."

The question therefore is, not whether the fact be so; but what is the cause of its being so: not, whether there be any, who hear the word and do it not, but what is the reason that there are such. This is the question, which was proposed for the next subject of our examination: and for the solution of it, several reasons may be assigned.

IV. 1. First, then, of those, who hear the word, but do it not, some do not understand it. And wherefore is this? Is it, because the word is delivered in an unknown tongue? is it, because it is wrapped up in hard and unintelligible language? is it, because they have not a capa-

¹ Amos ii. 6.

city to understand it? Nothing of all this is the case. But both the case itself, and the occasion of it, are plainly set before us by our Lord himself: for in them, as he observed of the unbelieving Jews, “is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand: by seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts; and should be converted; and I should heal them¹.” Here then, from the mouth of Christ, we have both the case itself and the reason of it. Such persons *do not* understand the word, because they *will not*. They wilfully shut their eyes against the word. They are resolved not to be converted by it. The word therefore hath no effect upon them; but, as our Saviour again instructs us, “the wicked One cometh, and catcheth away that which was sown in their hearts².”

Thus buried in ignorance of their own choosing, and their eyes closed by wilful blindness, they do not what they hear, because they understand it not. They can be diligent indeed in acquiring a knowledge of their calling, and in

¹ Matt. xiii. 14, 15.

² Matt. xiii. 19.

learning the management of their worldly concerns : but as to understanding the word of God, or even so much as the first principles of their religion, for that they care not. They were not perhaps instructed in them when they were young, and now they disdain to learn them. They choose rather to remain in ignorance, than to be at the trouble of having it removed, and seeing the pit of destruction, into which they are going. As to such "hearers of the word" as these, it is impossible that they should be doers of it. God grant that this may not be the case of some who are here present !

2. Again ; of those who do, or at least can, understand the word, if they would attend to it, there are but few, that give it more attention, than if they did not, or could not, understand it at all. Their bodies indeed may be present, where the word is read or preached : but their minds are absent. They are wandering abroad, among other things : among their houses, or their shops ; their land, or their money ; their creditors, or their debtors ; their friends, or their enemies ; in short, they are engaged with any thing but that, by which they ought to be occupied. The Prophet Ezekiel described them, when he said, "They come unto thee, as the people cometh, and they sit before thee, as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will

not do them : for with their mouth they show much love ; but their heart goeth after their covetousness ¹." Can we ask why hearers, such as these, are not doers of the word ? Wherefore indeed is it, but that, whilst they hear, "their hearts going after their covetousness," after their worldly affairs or occupations, and so being full of other things, there is not room for the word to enter in, and take possession of them, and operate to their edification and improvement ?

Is there no man here present, who knows that this is his own condition ? I presume not to judge any man ; but I appeal to every one's conscience, and I leave him to answer it to himself. Since you came into this place, are there no other places, to which your hearts have been wandering ? Since you have been hearing the word of God read and explained to you, have no worldly thoughts been crowding in, together with the word, so as to stifle and overwhelm it ? Have not some of you been altogether occupied with other concerns, totally unconnected with the word of God ? Nay, at this very moment, are not some of you engaged in thinking upon things on earth, and not at all in meditating upon what you hear, so as to lay it up and digest it in your hearts ?—And can you promise yourselves any

¹ Ezek. xxxiii. 31.

benefit from the word, thus idly and carelessly received? Is it to be believed, is it to be expected, is it to be even hoped, that seed, scattered thus thinly upon the surface of the heart, should plentifully bring forth the fruit of well-doing? Believe it not, my brethren. If thus you hear, believe rather, that, as to all essential purposes, your hearts are shut against the word; and unless it please God to open them, as he "opened the heart of Lydia," so that you may "attend to the things that are spoken¹," your hearing must be ineffectual and vain; and the word of God might as profitably be addressed to "the deaf adder that stoppeth her ears²."

3. But further: it is not sufficient for a man to understand and attend to the word, he must believe it also. For it is not by any virtue inherent in itself, that the word produces its effect; but by the special grace and power of God, which accompany it, and bring it home to the hearts of the hearers. Now the power of God is exerted, the grace of God is bestowed, only for the benefit of those, who believe in Him, and in his holy word. For, "for this cause," saith the Apostle, "thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of

¹ Acts xvi. 14.

² Psalm lviii. 4.

men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe¹." In them that believe, it works effectually; and in them only. Hence the Apostle expressly assigns a want of efficacy in the word, to a want of faith in the hearers: "The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it²." And hence he uses it as an undeniable argument, to prove that the people had not obeyed the Gospel, because they had not believed it. "But they have not all obeyed the Gospel: for Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report³?" taking it, as it appears, for granted, that as they could not believe, without obeying it, so they could not obey, without believing it.

And have not we cause, as the Prophet had, to say, "Lord, who hath believed our report⁴?" For is it not the case with too many amongst us, that they can be content to hear the word, and will not deny that it is holy, and true, and just, and good; and yet do not believe it in their hearts? Do you indeed believe it to be the word of the almighty Creator and Governor of the world? Do you believe it to be that word, by "which he will judge you at the last day⁵?"

¹ 1 Thess. ii. 13. ² Heb. iv. 2. ³ Rom. x. 16.

⁴ Isaiiah liii. 1.

⁵ John xii. 48.

And does it not make your hearts faint within you, when you hear it reproving you for your sins, and forewarning you of the judgment to come? Does it not inflame you with the true love of God, and with an earnest desire and longing to serve and honour him above all things? Does it not stimulate you to the most active and vigorous endeavours, to avoid whatever he forbids, and to do whatever he commands, lest you fall under his displeasure, and so be lost and undone for ever? It is thus, that “the word of God effectually worketh in them that believe.” But if you can sit and hear it, as we know from daily experience that multitudes can and do, with much seeming attention, but with little real anxiety to act in compliance with its injunctions; though you may make a profession of the Christian faith, you are not fully persuaded of its truth and certainty; and it is no matter of astonishment, but a consequence, which the Scriptures teach us to expect, that you should be “not doers of the word, but hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”

4. To the foregoing reasons, which explain why men are hearers only of the word, a fourth may be added; namely, that of those, who in some measure believe, whilst they hear, many have no sooner heard, than they presently forget, and therefore are deficient in practice. This

reason is suggested by the Apostle himself in the words following my text. "If any man be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man, beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was:" he forgets the spots and stains which he saw upon his face, and so neglects to remove them. "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed:" where "a forgetful hearer" is evidently opposed to "a doer of the work," on the presumption, that a powerful reason, why men do not what they hear, is because they forget it.

There are many such forgetful hearers, who hear much, but forget what they hear. And the reason, which they allege, is, that their memories are so weak, that they cannot retain it. But is this in reality the cause of your forgetfulness? Is not your memory capable of retaining other things, which you wish to impress upon it? Are you a servant? and cannot you remember your master's orders? Are you a master? and cannot you remember what is necessary in the management of your affairs? Why then cannot you remember the things, which Almighty God commands you; the things, that "belong to your"

everlasting "peace?" Is it indeed, because you *cannot*? Take heed, my brethren, lest it be, because you *will not* remember them. If men would diligently endeavour to attend to what they hear, they might easily remember all that is necessary for them to do. They might not indeed remember the very words, which prescribe their duty; but they might keep the duty itself always present to their minds, so as to be able to put it into practice. Our Lord attributes the forgetfulness of "the hearers of the word," not to the weakness of their memories; but to the hardness of their hearts, or the worldly-mindedness of their affections. "Some receive the seed into stony places, but have no root in themselves; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by they are offended. Others receive it among thorns; and the care of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful¹." Do you forget the instructions of the word of God? Are you willing to justify your forgetfulness, and your consequent disobedience to the word, upon the plea of a want of ability to retain it? Beware, lest the hardness of your hearts be the real cause, which banishes the word from your remembrance. Beware, lest it be the allurements of worldly pleasure,

¹ Matt. xiii. 20, 21, 22.

or the perplexity of worldly business, which stifles and overpowers it. Though at the moment you may be affected by what you hear, yet if you at once dismiss the subject from your thoughts, and turn them upon mere worldly matters ; it is highly probable indeed, nay it is almost necessary, that you will forget all that you have heard, and of course will never practise it. But as such a consequence might be foreseen, and obviated by the blessing of God upon attention and reflection, so the responsibility of it must rest with yourself: nor will it avail you to plead a natural defect, in extenuation of what may more justly be ascribed to moral corruption ; to a disinclination of the heart for God and religion, and to a predilection for the things of the world.

It is upon some or other of these accounts, that there are so many "hearers," and so few "doers of the word." It is because, although they hear the word, they do not understand it ; or although they understand it, they do not attend to it ; or although they attend to it, they do not believe it ; or although they believe it, yet they do not remember it, and therefore do not practise it. Neither is this the case with a few weak inconsiderate persons only ; but with the great majority of our hearers. Neither is it the case in some particular duty only, but in all, on which we have occasion to speak. Whatever we read or preach

from the word of God, however great may be the seeming attention with which it is heard, the effect, which is produced upon the conduct of the hearers, is questionable and trifling. I am not speaking of one or another parish ; of this or that congregation. Look wherever you will. How few are they in any congregation, in whom a constant attendance on the word of God produces a sensible and lasting effect ! What is the Christian duty, to which they are led ; what is the sinful practice, from which they are withdrawn, by the representations continually set before them, from the revelation, and even in the very language, of the Holy Spirit ? Melancholy as is the truth, it is at the same time not to be controverted. And melancholy indeed it is ; for they, who thus become and continue “ not doers of the word, but hearers only ; ” they, who think that they have done their duty by listening to the word of God, without diligently reducing it into practice : they are not well aware of their sin and of their danger ; they are in a state of spiritual self-delusion : they are, (and we have the testimony of God himself, by the mouth of his Apostle, to the truth of the assertion,) they are “ deceiving their own selves.”

V. How men deceive themselves, by being not doers of the word, but hearers only, is another point for our consideration.

1. They deceive themselves in supposing, that what they do is acceptable to God, and conducive to the honour of his name. I take it for granted that all the services of religion, and this duty of hearing the word in common with others, are undertaken, because men believe, that they are thereby acting in obedience to God, and for the promotion of his glory. If not, it is to be presumed that they would not undertake them ; but would live together “ without God in the world¹.” But can you reasonably imagine, can you coolly and deliberately bring yourselves to believe, that, by hearing the word only, you are obeying the commandments, you are promoting the glory, of God ? Wherefore do you hear the word of God, but that you may become acquainted with his will ? And what is his will, but that you may become “ doers of his word, and not hearers only ?” And if you neglect to do it, are you not acting in direct opposition to his will ? and is not this directly contradictory to the very purpose for which you hear ? And, if you can persuade yourselves to think otherwise, are you not “ deceiving yourselves,” and mocking and affronting, instead of serving and honouring, God ? “ Be not deceived ; God will not be mocked².” You may indeed deceive yourselves ; but Him you cannot

¹ Eph. ii. 12.

² Gal. vi. 7.

deceive. Every time you hear the word, he does not fail to notice how you hear ; and to remark, whether you hear and act accordingly, or hear only and do not. If your hearing brings forth the fruit of well-doing, He is graciously pleased to accept of it in Christ, and to give it his blessing. If you hear and do not, it will be recorded against you, and will add both to the number and to the weight of your sins at the last day ; when, if not before, ye will discover, how much and how fatally ye “deceived your own selves” in thinking, that you could perform an acceptable service to Almighty God, by “hearing, without doing, his word.”

2. If you *do* no good, be assured that you can *receive* no good from such hearing as this. For how can it possibly profit you, to hear “what ye must do to be saved,” unless ye also do it? Is a man at all the better for hearing of an advantageous bargain, unless he makes it? Is a man at all nearer his journey’s end for knowing the way thither, unless he proceeds in it? How then can you imagine, that the mere hearing of the word, the mere knowledge of the terms of salvation and of the way of life, will bring you to everlasting happiness, unless you do as it requires you ; unless you labour to fulfil the terms ; unless you strive to run diligently in the path, that leadeth to heavenly bliss? Deceive not

yourselves : it is impossible. The very word, which you hear, tells you, “ Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified ¹ :” justified for the sake of Him, who died to purchase admission into his heavenly kingdom for his “ good and faithful servants ² .” And in the passage, that follows my text ; “ Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed : ” — “ this man,” and he only ; he that both hears the word, and doeth the work, shall be blessed ; and he “ shall be blessed in his deed ;” not in hearing, but in doing what he hears. And so saith our Saviour himself, the foundation and author of all blessings ; “ If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them ³ :” not, if ye know these things, happy are ye : but happy are ye, if ye do them. The knowledge of the things, which lead to happiness, is indeed necessary to our doing them : but unless we do them, our knowledge will be of no avail.

3. But the evil rests not here. For they, who are “ hearers only, and not doers of the word,” are so far from being placed by their knowledge in a better condition, that they are indeed placed in a worse. To have heard, and so to have

¹ Rom. ii. 13.

² Matt. xxv. 21.

³ John xiii. 17.

known, the will of God, is a high aggravation of their crime, in not doing it. It is to sin against knowledge: it is to rebel against the light. Such sinners are wilful, obstinate, presumptuous: they are sinners of the worst sort; and as is their sin, so will their punishment be; punishment of the worst sort will be inflicted upon them. Do you think otherwise, my brethren? Believe me, you “deceive your own selves.” For He, who cannot lie, hath said, “Every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened to a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it¹.” Of such hearers the fall shall be great, greater than that of other men: for so our Lord himself elsewhere explains it; “The servant, which knew his Lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew it not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes².” All that do not the will of God, shall be beaten, both they that did know it by his revealed law, and they that did not know it, otherwise than “by the law written in their hearts³.” But they who knew it by the express word of the Almighty,

¹ Matt. vii. 26, 27

² Luke xii. 47, 48.

³ Rom. ii. 15.

and yet would not do it, they shall be most beaten. Their stripes shall be most numerous : their punishment shall be most severe : if there be degrees in the torments of hell-flames, and that there are the word of God assures us, more terrible shall be their portion amid “ everlasting burnings,” more agonizing shall be “ their worm,” and more intolerable “ their fire,” who, when they have heard and known the will of God, have yet obstinately refused to obey it. Now indeed they may deceive themselves : now they may lull themselves into a delusive and fatal security : they may refuse to believe it now : but hereafter they will be painfully convinced of the truth of the warning of the Apostle, that “ it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the Holy Commandment delivered unto them¹.” Surely, my beloved brethren, it were more prudent to suffer ourselves to be persuaded of this in time, than to be satisfied with barely hearing of the way whereby we may attain to heaven, and so deceive ourselves with a groundless conceit that we are advancing towards it, when in truth by hearing, and not doing as we hear, we shall only be sunk lower into the pit of hell.

To conclude. If the things, that have now

¹ 2 Pet. ii. 21.

occupied our thoughts, be as they have been represented, I pray and beseech you all, as you value your eternal welfare, do not deceive yourselves any more in an affair of such incalculable importance; but “be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only.” Whatever truth ye hear revealed in the word of God, be careful to receive it with a firm and stedfast faith: whatever sin ye hear condemned, strive to forsake and avoid it: whatever duty ye hear commanded by Almighty God, fail not to live in the constant performance of it: that so ye may grow wiser and better by every chapter that you hear read out of God’s holy word, and by every sermon preached to you which is drawn from the same divine source.

To assist you in this necessary duty; whenever you enter the house of God, there, among other things, to hear his most holy word; consider whose word you go to hear: not the word of a mortal man; not the word of an angel or archangel; but the word of your almighty Creator and most merciful Redeemer, the supreme Lawgiver and Judge of the whole universe; that “word, by which He will judge you at the last day.” And therefore humbly beseech him, as David did, to “open your eyes, that you may behold the wondrous things of his law¹;” and

¹ Psa. cxix. 18.

likewise to “open your hearts,” that you may “receive the truth in the love of it¹.”

Having thus prepared yourselves by reflection and prayer for the delivery of the word, hearken to it during its delivery with earnest attention, and strive diligently to apprehend the meaning of every sentence and expression which it contains. And if any part of it be above your apprehension, as some of the articles of our religion undoubtedly are, reflect with humility from whom it comes; bear in mind that it comes from God; and accordingly believe it with pious acquiescence in the veracity of Him, who “is not a man that he should lie².”

But when you hear of any plain truth, which God is pleased to reveal to you; of any sin that he forbids, of any duty that he requires, of any punishment that he threatens to the sinner, or of any blessing that he promiseth to his people; apply the precept and the sanction of it to your own heart and conscience. Are you guilty of the sin that is forbidden? To *you* the prohibition is addressed. Are you inattentive to the duty that is enjoined? To *you* the commandment speaks. The punishment is threatened, that it may deter *you* from wickedness. The blessing is promised, that *you* may be encouraged by it to lead a righteous, sober, and godly life.

¹ 2 Thess. ii. 10.

² Numb. xxiii. 19.

Do not be solicitous to discover to what other person the word may be applied. Apply it to yourself. Examine yourself by it. And whatever application may be made of it to others, or whatever effect it may produce upon them, do you at least endeavour to profit by it, and to do as it commands you.

Neither must you only receive what you hear, as addressed to yourself, but you must also receive it, as coming from God. You must receive it, "not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God¹." Receive it therefore with that faith, which is due to God's word. Be assured, that whatever it teaches you, cannot but be infallible; because it proceeds from Him, who is "faithful and true." Be assured, that whatever it commands you, is necessary to be done; because it is the commandment of Him who is infinitely wise. That you may be fully satisfied of the duty of implicitly receiving all that is revealed in the word of God, reflect with humility on the nature of Him who revealed it, and who, you may be well assured, hath revealed nothing in vain.

When you have thus, by a quick and lively faith, received the word into your heart, be careful to retain it there. Suffer not any vain thoughts, any idle discourse, any worldly business or amuse-

¹ 1 Thess. ii. 13.

ments, to banish and supersede it. Let your faith continue to be exercised upon it : and faith, by the grace of God cooperating with his word, will animate you to be “ a doer of the work.”

Upon the whole, as you desire never to hear the word in vain, observe the direction of the Apostle in the words preceding the text : “ Lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.” Receive it so by faith, that it may be engrafted in your hearts, and bring forth fruit unto salvation. For this purpose, continually carry in your minds the instruction of this day ; “ Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves :” that so the word, which ye have now heard, may by the blessing of God be the means of your doing whatever ye shall hereafter hear :—and the instruction of this day may make all others profitable to you, and effectual to the saving of your souls :—thus will our preaching never be in vain, nor your hearing vain : but being both “ hearers and doers of the word,” you will go from strength to strength ; and every day, “ grow more and more in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ’.” To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be honour and glory for ever and ever !

¹ 2 Pet iii. 18.

SERMON XXV.

NECESSITY AND BENEFITS OF BAPTISM.

MATT. xxviii. 18, 19, 20.

And Jesus came, and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost : Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you : and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

BESIDES those commandments of a moral nature, which are enjoined by Almighty God, and which it is the duty of all men to observe ; there are two ceremonial ordinances instituted for the use of those, who hope for salvation through faith in Christ, as means of present grace and of future happiness. I allude to the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper ; by the former of which we are admitted into covenant with God, and by the latter are continued in covenant with him. A consideration of the former of the two

sacraments, namely Baptism, is proposed for the subject of the present discourse ; wherein I shall endeavour to show you the necessity of our partaking in it, and the great benefits, which it hath pleased Almighty God to annex to it : and shall then make some remarks on the practice, which our Church agreeably to the practice of the primitive Church observes, of admitting infants to that holy ordinance.

I. 1. The first ground, upon which I shall endeavour to establish the necessity of Baptism to those who would be partakers of Christian salvation, is the commandment of our blessed Saviour, as contained in the text. “ All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore,” said he to his Apostles, “ and teach (or rather make disciples of) all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ; Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you ; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” We have here an injunction from Christ to his Apostles, who were at that time the only ministers of his Church, to “ go and make disciples of all nations ;” for so the word, which we render “ *teach*,” in the 19th verse, should be rendered ; nor will it properly bear any other signification. We find that the way, wherein disciples were to be made, is spe-

cifically pointed out; they were to be “baptized,” or washed with water, “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” We hear him farther requiring, that the persons, so made his disciples, should be instructed in the things, which he had commanded his Apostles. We hear him moreover promising, that his blessing should accompany the performance of this his injunction; “lo, I am with you always;” and we understand, that this promise of his blessing was not to be confined to the persons of his Apostles, but was to accompany those, who should succeed the Apostles in their ministry, as long as the world should stand; “lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” From this particular inspection of the words of our Saviour in the text, we perceive a general command, that persons should be made his disciples by Baptism; and we perceive a general promise, that his blessing should attend the legitimate performance of the ceremony.

2. Secondly: in the Gospel of St. Mark we find a similar injunction delivered by Christ to his Apostles, accompanied with a promise more specifically expressed of the blessing, which was to be made the companion of Baptism. “And he said unto them, 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 damned¹." By these words, which are very remarkable, we perceive, that our Lord Christ himself, He, by whom alone it is possible for any man to be saved, makes Baptism as necessary as faith, to salvation. He saith indeed, "he that believeth not, shall be damned;" but he does not say, "he that believeth shall be saved," whether he be baptized or not; but "he that believeth and is baptized;" as surely all must be, or at least must desire to be, who truly believe in him. For all who truly believe in Christ for their salvation, must believe what he has said to be true; and accordingly do whatsoever he requires in order to it. But he requires all that would be saved by him, to be first baptized into him. Baptism is the ceremony, which we see him appointing here as before: the specific blessing which he promises to annex to it is "salvation."

3. Nay, further; it is not only that this blessing is annexed to Baptism, He also tells us, that the blessing is not to be had without it. For speaking in another place of Baptism, as made up of "the outward visible sign and the inward spiritual grace, he solemnly assures us, that "except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God²." I am aware

¹ Mark xvi. 15, 16.

² John iii. 5.

that what Christ means by being born of water and of the Spirit is now made a question : I say, *now*, for it never was made so, till within comparatively a few years. For many ages together no man ever doubted it ; but the whole Christian world took it for granted, that our Saviour by these words meant only, that except a man be baptized according to his institution, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God : this being the most plain and obvious sense of the words, forasmuch as there is no other way of being “ born again of water,” as well as “ of the Spirit,” but only in the Sacrament of Baptism.

In order to understand more clearly what our Saviour means in this place by the being born again ; and to appreciate more justly the importance of the ordinance, to which this privilege is annexed ; we must call to mind what he says in another place ; “ My kingdom is not of this world ¹.” And therefore when a man is born into the world, he is not thereby qualified for the kingdom of God, nor has he any right or title to it. Before he enter into that kingdom, he must undergo a different kind of birth : he must be quickened with another kind of life : he must have the principle of a new and spiritual being infused into him : that he may enter into the

¹ John xviii. 36.

kingdom of God, which is spiritual, he must be “born again of the Spirit.”

But that we may thus be born of the Spirit, we must be also “born of water,” which our Saviour here puts in the first place : not as if there were any virtue in water, by which it could regenerate us : but because this is the rite or ordinance appointed by Christ, as that wherein to regenerate us by his Holy Spirit. Our regeneration is wholly the act of the Spirit of Christ. But there must be something done on our parts in order to it ; and something that is instituted or ordained by Christ himself, which in the Old Testament was Circumcision ; in the New, Baptism, or washing with water, called expressly by St. Paul “the washing of regeneration¹.” And seeing this is instituted by Christ himself, as we cannot be born of water without the Spirit, so neither can we, in an ordinary way, be born of the Spirit without water, used or applied in obedience and conformity to his institution. Christ hath joined them together, and it is not in our power to part them. He that would be born of the Spirit, must be born of water also.

It were unnecessary to bring forward all the various passages in the New Testament, which speak of the blessings conferred by Baptism ; yet

¹ Tit. iii. 5.

I am unwilling to quit this branch of the subject, without pointing your attention to other texts, besides those very important ones, that have been already noticed, wherein the great benefit of Baptism is asserted.

4. Baptism then is the instrument, whereby is conveyed to us “the remission of sins, together with the principle of a new and spiritual life. Thus, when they, who were convinced by the preaching of Peter and the rest of the Apostles, demanded, “what they should do to be saved,” the answer was plainly given, “Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost¹ :” whereby the Apostle not only assures them in the name of God, that upon their being baptized they should infallibly receive the Holy Ghost to sanctify and regenerate them ; but he directs them to this, as the great and principal thing, without which they should not be “saved from their sins.”

5. Again : Baptism is the instrument, whereby we are “sanctified and justified.” Thus St. Paul having described the miserable condition of the Heathen world, speaks in the following words to his Corinthian converts ; “And such were some of you ; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified,

¹ Acts ii. 38.

but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God¹." Where as the Lord Jesus is mentioned as the meritorious cause of sanctification and justification; and the Spirit of our God as the efficient and operating cause; so also is the washing of Baptism mentioned as the instrument, by which those blessings are conveyed.

6. Baptism again is the instrument, whereby we are made "members of Christ." "By one Spirit," says St. Paul, "we are all baptized into one body²:" the Spirit of Christ gives a blessing to his institution; and in the very act of Baptism, unites us unto him, and incorporates us into "his body," that is, into that church or kingdom, of which he is the Ruler and Head.

7. Baptism, again, is the instrument, whereby we are made "children of God." "Ye are all the children of God," saith the same Apostle to the Galatians, "by faith in Christ Jesus:" that is, by believing and professing his doctrine. "For as many of you," he adds, "as have been baptized into Christ," that is, baptized into the religion of Christ, and in his name, "have put on Christ³," have professed him, and thereby put upon yourselves his name, being called Christians: and this putting on of Christ in bap-

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 11.

² 1 Cor. xii. 13.

³ Gal. iii. 26, 27.

tism, the Apostle makes a ground to assert them to be “all the children of God¹.”

8. Again : Baptism is the instrument, whereby we are made “inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.” He “saved us,” saith the Apostle in a passage already laid before you, “by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; that being justified by his grace we should be made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life.” So that all those, who are rightly baptized with water, being at the same time baptized with the Holy Ghost, and so “born of water and of the Spirit,” they are not only admitted into the kingdom of God on earth; but have a title to the inheritance, and if it be not their own fault, may succeed to the enjoyment, of the kingdom of God in heaven.

In short, whatever be the privileges to which it hath pleased God to admit those, who believe the Gospel of his Son; Baptism is the instrument whereby, in the first instance, he is pleased to admit them. Being by nature “the children of wrath, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, without hope and without God in the world,” we are hereby made children of grace, adopted into his family, and made partakers of his covenant. There are persons in the present day, professing

¹ Gal. iii. 26, 27.

themselves Christians, who being led as they pretend by the light within them, think they can be saved without baptism, and therefore renounce it altogether. Such however was not the practice of the early Christians, nor indeed of any part of the whole Christian world, for many hundred years after Christ had commanded his Apostles to "make disciples by baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." What sense was entertained by the Apostles themselves of the necessity of this sacrament, we learn both from their general practice, and especially from some remarkable cases. St. Peter with the rest of his brethren, as we have already seen, referred to this as the means of salvation; when they were inquired of by the Jews, "what they should do to be saved." The same Apostle, when on his first preaching to the Gentiles, "the Holy Ghost fell on them, so that they immediately spake with tongues," although some might have thought there could be no need of baptizing those, who had already received the Holy Ghost; yet he, considering that this gift of the Holy Ghost was only to enable them to speak with tongues, not to regenerate them, inferred from hence, that they ought the rather to be baptized: "Can any man," said he, "forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who

have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And therefore he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord¹:" which we presume he would not have done, had he not conceived Baptism necessary. And though our Lord himself appeared to Saul as he was going to Damascus, and called him with his own mouth, yet it was necessary that he also should be "baptized²," before he could be filled with the Holy Ghost; and so be made a disciple, much less an Apostle, of Him who had called him.

I will just observe upon this part of the subject, what but for the perverseness of gainsayers, it would be unnecessary to notice; that our Saviour's commandment speaks only of water in general, without specifying how much, or how little is necessary; or how it is to be applied, whether by dipping, or pouring, or sprinkling. He only requires water, one of the most common things, to be used by his ministers, and applied with such a form of words, as he hath ordained; without determining the quantity of any other circumstances, which might make it difficult, or dangerous, or perhaps impracticable. And therefore, although in hot countries persons baptized may be usually dipped in water, or washed all over; yet the washing of any one part, or the

¹ Acts x. 47, 48.

² Acts xxii. 16.

pouring or sprinkling of water upon them, is equally effectual. It is not the quantity of water, but the institution of Christ, to which the promise of regeneration and salvation is annexed. One drop of water serves for this purpose as well as a river; and one part of the body is as much in this case as the whole. The reasoning of our Saviour on another subject, applies to this: "He that is washed in one part, needeth not, save to wash that one part, but is clean every whit¹."

II. Having said thus much upon the obligation imposed on those, who hope for salvation through faith in Christ, to come unto him by Baptism, it remains that we notice the case of infants, and the title which they have to be baptized.

And here I would observe, that the objection, which was first made to the baptizing of infants, arose from a misconception of our Saviour's commandment in the text.—"Go ye and *teach* all nations, baptizing them," is the commandment, as it is rendered in our own and other European translations; whence sprang the sect of the Anabaptists; for ignorant persons imagining, that our Saviour here commanded, that all nations should be first taught and then baptized, from thence concluded, that none ought to be bap-

¹ John xiii. 10.

tized, until they are first taught the principles of the Christian religion : but the original word, rendered “*teach*,” will bear no such signification ; for it never signifies to teach, but only to be, or to make, disciples ; and so it is constantly rendered in all the Oriental versions, and therefore we never heard of any Anabaptists in the Churches of the East.

2dly. Another objection to the baptizing of infants proceeds upon another misunderstanding of our Saviour’s words, where according to our translation he says, “except a *man* be born of water and of the Spirit ;” as if the benefits of Baptism were hereby confined to those of riper age. But the truth is, the original word employed by our Saviour is of the most comprehensive sense ; it means, “except *any one*,” any human creature whatsoever, man, woman, or child, except that person “be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” Our Lord is therefore so far from excluding infants from Baptism, that he rather plainly includes them ; speaking, as it should seem, in such general terms, on purpose for us to understand, that no description of persons, whether old or young, is capable of being saved without it. And to the same effect is his expression, where he commands, that “all *nations* should be made disciples by being baptized.” For under all

nations, children must necessarily be comprehended ; inasmuch as they make a great, if not the greatest, part of every nation.

3. A farther objection is, that children are not capable of some of the ends of Baptism. Allow that they are incapable of some of the ends ; yet they are not incapable of all. They are incapable of making profession of their faith and repentance ; but they are not incapable of being admitted into the communion of the Church of Christ ; of being washed from the original corruption of their nature ; of being admitted into the favour, and made the sons, of God by adoption ; of becoming inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven ; in a word, of receiving the sign of their being made partakers of the blessings of the Christian covenant. If children are not capable of these things, it remains with the objectors to show, why they are not : to show, why children are not as capable of being admitted into the Christian Church by Baptism, as they were into the Jewish by Circumcision. God not only permitted the Jewish infant to be circumcised, and so received into covenant with him ; but he enjoined it, together with a most severe penalty upon the omission. To suppose that he denies this privilege to the children of Christian parents, is to represent them as in a worse condition than were the children of Jews ; and to make the Law,

with respect to them at least, a more bountiful dispensation than the Gospel.

4. But Christ, it is contended, did not command children to be baptized : it is true that he did not, except inasmuch as he comprised them in those general expressions, whereby he instituted and declared the necessity of Baptism to all persons whatsoever. There is however one consideration, which undeniably proves, that he meant them not to be excluded. Baptism was not unknown to the Jews, before the time of Christ and of his forerunner, John the Baptist : he found it amongst them, and adopted it as the means of admission into his Church. If now Baptism and the baptizing of infants had been a new thing and unheard of until John the Baptist came, as Circumcision was, until God appointed it to Abraham ; there would have been, without doubt, as express command for baptizing infants, as there was for circumcising them. But as it was ordinary in all ages before to have infants baptized, if Christ would have had that custom abolished, he would have expressly forbidden it. So that his and the Scripture's silence in this matter, confirms and establishes infant Baptism for ever.

5. Still further, however, though Christ be silent with respect to the baptizing of children ; there is one passage, which, in spirit at least,

exactly bears upon the subject, and is irreconcilable with the conduct and opinions of those, who deny Baptism to infants. When "his disciples rebuked those, who brought young children to Christ that he should touch them, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them¹." Surely if the precept and the reasoning of Christ, recommended to us as they are "by his own outward gesture and deed," are recorded for our instruction, they plead most strongly in behalf of infant Baptism. Are we to "suffer little children to come unto him?" how are they to come, if not by the way which he has appointed?—Are we to be "blamed, if we would keep them from him?" how can we do so more effectually, than by debarring them from that ordinance, whereby alone they can be incorporated with him?—Does "the kingdom of God" consist of little children? How can they be members of it, unless they be washed in that "laver of regeneration," without which "no one can enter into the kingdom of God?"

Such, we have reason to believe, was the view

¹ Mark x. 15.

taken of the subject by the Apostles, and by the Church of Christ in its primitive and purest state. Convinced, as hath been before observed, of the necessity of Baptism to salvation ; and believing, that the blessing was designed for all, who have souls to be saved ; they did not presume to “ make the hearts of the righteous sad, whom God had not made sad,” and to shut the gates of the divine mercy upon the offspring of the faithful. They thought that “ the promise was unto them and unto their children.” Hence we find the Apostles often baptizing whole families, children if any, as well as others¹ ; and hence the early Christians excluded no one from the same holy ordinance, from the infant newly born to the decrepit old man. Nay, for fifteen hundred years which followed the time, when Christ commanded his Apostles to baptize all nations, and to suffer the little children to come unto him and to forbid them not ; for fifteen hundred years, I say, subsequent to that period, the whole Catholic Church of Christ, in all places and ages, constantly admitted the children of believing parents into the Church by baptizing them according to the institution and command of our Saviour ; until a sect arose, which pretending to superior wisdom, but in reality founded

¹ Acts xvi. 15. 33.

upon ignorance, forbade the little children to be brought unto Christ by Baptism, the way which he has appointed, and the only way by which they can be brought unto him ; denied them the privileges of the covenant ; robbed them of a blessing, which even the Jewish child enjoyed ; left them, as they are by nature, “ the children of wrath ;” prevented them from becoming “ children of grace ;” defrauded them of the favour, and excluded them from the kingdom of God. How they will answer for this conduct at the last day, I know not. I judge not another man. If however they be in a grievous and dangerous error, and as far as I can see by the light of Scripture, I cannot but think they are so, it is right that others should be put upon their guard. And therefore to guard you against it, whether you have, any of you, been misled by their delusive opinions, or have been betrayed through carelessness and thoughtlessness into their erroneous practice, has been partly the object of this discourse ; to the conclusion and application of which I now hasten.

And first, with respect to those, if any such be here present, who have arrived at years of discretion, without having ever been baptized. To such persons then I say, do not attend to what ignorant or mistaken persons may tell you, but attend to what Christ himself hath told you.

He hath told you that you are to be “made his disciples by Baptism;” and that “except ye be born of water and of the Spirit, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” If you care not, whether you are Christ’s disciples, whether you enter into the kingdom of God or not; you may continue as you are, “without Christ; aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:” as much Heathens, with regard to your title to heaven, as they who never heard of the name of Christ; and in a worse condition than they; forasmuch as you live in a place, where you may be made Christians if you will; and if you will not, it will be more tolerable for them, than for you, at the last day. But if you desire to be “fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household and kingdom of God,” delay your Baptism no longer. It was the fault of your parents that you were not baptized in your infancy: it is your own, if you are not now. Be advised to prepare yourselves for it, as soon as possible; lest as ye have lived, so ye die without it, and quit this world under a sentence of condemnation.

Secondly, with respect to those, who have been careless about the Baptism of their children; I intreat you, as you value your own and your children’s happiness, to be of a better mind, and

to bring your children forthwith to be baptized. Attend not to the unscriptural conceits of those, who have neither knowledge nor authority, to instruct you ; but abiding firm by the principles and practice, not only of your own apostolical Church, but of the universal Church of Christ throughout the world, “ suffer your little children to come unto him, and forbid them not.” Some persons indeed may fondly amuse and busy themselves with inquiring, whether, and if at all, why, any difference is to be made between children, corrupt as they all are by nature, and incapable as they all are of actual sin, accordingly as they may die, baptized or unbaptized. But if Christ himself, who giveth us salvation, requires that we be baptized ; it is not for us, who look for salvation, to examine whether those persons, who from no fault of their own have died unbaptized, can be saved ; but seriously to do that which is required, and religiously to fear the danger of neglecting it. For I pray you to remember, that however indulgent God may be to your children, who from your neglect have been deprived of partaking in that privilege, to which as the children of Christian parents they were entitled ; you can have no reason to expect any indulgence for your neglect, by which you will have done whatever was in your power towards excluding your children from salvation.

God, who did not afflict the innocent child, whose Circumcision Moses had delayed beyond the proper season, did however punish Moses himself for his neglect : giving us thereby to understand, that they who are preserved by the mercy of God without that cooperation, which we are required to give, are, as far as we are concerned in the question, nevertheless destroyed. And therefore it is, that parents, who wantonly neglect to have their children baptized, must be regarded as guilty of destroying the souls of their children, notwithstanding the children may be saved by the free mercy of God. “I do not say,” remarks a learned Divine, and once a Bishop of our Church, “that none can or shall be saved without Baptism ; that were too uncharitable an opinion and doom upon those, who are inevitably deprived of this holy institution. But this I say ; that Baptism is the ordinary means appointed by God for the sanctifying and cleansing of those, for whom Christ gave himself to bring them to salvation. And though the children shall not be damned for want of Baptism, yet I doubt whether the parents may not, for their neglect and contempt of it.”

Thirdly and lastly, in order to prevent the ignorant from misunderstanding, the vicious from abusing and misapplying, and the artful from perverting and misrepresenting this doctrine,

which attaches such importance to the sacrament of Baptism, I would add a few words with respect to the condition of the baptized. It must be observed then after all; that although in conformity with our Saviour's institution and declaration, we consider Baptism to be "generally necessary to salvation," we do not mean to say, that all will be saved, who have been baptized. It is true, all that are rightly baptized, are "made disciples of Christ;" are "born of water, and of the Spirit;" and are admitted into the Church or "kingdom of God" on earth; but unless they submit to the government, and obey the laws established in it, they forfeit all their right and title to the kingdom of heaven. They are brought into a state of salvation; but unless they continue in it, and live accordingly, they cannot be saved, but will as certainly perish, as if they had never been baptized. For, as St. Peter observes, "Baptism now saves us; not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ¹."

As for you then, who have already been baptized, remember the promise which ye then made, either by yourselves or by your sureties, and perform it. Remember, how ye then "renounced

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 21.

the devil, the world, and the flesh ;” and let them not have dominion over you. Remember “ the articles of faith,” which you then professed to “ believe,” and “ hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering.” Remember the “ holy commandments,” which you then promised to keep, and do your diligence to walk constantly in all of them. Remember also the great privileges, which Almighty God then conferred upon you. You were then “ made the members of Christ,” and so interested in all the merits of his death and passion. You were taken out of the world, and translated into the Church of Christ; to be instructed, governed, assisted, protected, sanctified, justified, and saved by him. You were then “ made the children of God :” and “ if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ ;” and therefore heirs of the kingdom of heaven, which you cannot lose ; unless you provoke your heavenly Father to disinherit you, by the neglect of your duty, and the breach of your promise ; and by refusing to repent when you may. If then you have broken your baptismal promise, which it is to be feared we all have, repent immediately ; and earnestly endeavour for the future to keep it in all respects. Ye were then “ born of the Spirit,” and so have Him always ready to assist you. The seed of grace was then sown in

your hearts, sufficient to enable you to bring forth "the fruits of the Spirit." By his gracious assistance therefore live now, as becomes the children of God and the heirs of heaven. Avoid what you know will offend your heavenly Father, and do all you can to please him. Live above the world ; and where your inheritance is, there let your conversation be. Strive to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called ; that " ye may shine as lights in the world ;" and so be " meēt to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," where ye shall " shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of your Father."

END OF VOL.

