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SERMONS

ON

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

BY THE LATE

REV. FLETCHER HARRIS,

AN ITINERANT MINISTER OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL
CHURCH IN AMERICA.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR'S LIFE.

"HE BEING DEAD, YET SPEAKETH."

"HE WAS A BURNING AND A SHINING LIGHT."

GRANVILLE COUNTY, N. C.

PUBLISHED BY THE REV. WILLIS HARRIS.

Sold by the Book Company of the Methodist Protestant Church.

BALTIMORE.

1837.



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PREFACE.



HAD the publisher been the author of the following work, he would not have troubled the public with any apology for it, nor would he have felt himself justifiable in asking the indulgence of his readers; whose attention and patronage he could only have expected on the ground of its own intrinsic merit.

The following discourses were written, some before and some after they were delivered: and it is probable without any expectation, on the part of the author, that they would ever be printed. And certainly it never was intended to publish them in their present form. Under such circumstances the publisher asks the forbearance of the critic, and hopes the main design of the author will be kept in view; which was to correct the morals of the profligate and unthinking and comfort and establish the followers of Christ.

Had the author lived and published for himself, he would, no doubt, have paid more particular attention to the following sermons: they might have been differently arranged: and considerable

additions would possibly have been made to some. Such as were written previous to their delivery, may rather be viewed as an outline, imperfectly filled up, and penned for the purpose of assisting the mind in the further investigation of the subject then under consideration: whilst those written after their delivery were committed to paper, it is likely, rather for the purpose of retaining ideas that presented themselves to the mind of the author when he was preaching on a subject previously selected. The perusal of these sermons seems fully to justify this assumption; and while it is to be regretted, that one so well qualified as the author was for promoting the instruction and improvement of his fellow creatures, should not have written for the press, it would have been improper not to have gratified his numerous friends by the present publication.

In reviewing the work, the publisher has carefully credited all the quotations which he knew to be such; but as they had not been particularly noticed at all times, it was in some cases a matter of difficulty and uncertainty. On this account the indulgence of the reader is requested, should any passages be discovered as quoted from an author without being marked by inverted commas: and it is presumed such indulgence will be readily granted when it is considered, that, in writing them, the author would not be particular,

as he would consider a short sentence or a few words, sufficient to induce a recollection of as much as was pertinent to the occasion.

The publisher, in compliance with the wish of many who knew the author, and many more who have become subscribers to the work, and with a firm belief and earnest desire that it may be generally useful, submits it, just as it stands, with fervent prayer to the God of all grace, that his blessing may accompany the perusal of it to the awakening, conversion, and salvation of souls.

WILLIS HARRIS.

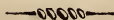
Granville County, N. C.

Jan. 1821.

MEMOIRS

OF THE

REV. FLETCHER HARRIS.



MR. Fletcher Harris was born on the 30th of April, in the year of our Lord 1790, in Granville County, North-Carolina. His parents, who are still living, have been acceptable members of the Methodist Episcopal Church for near fifty years. As they feared the contamination of his morals, which is too often the consequence of youthful association in public schools, and being in but moderate circumstances, they could only furnish him with an English education, and that mostly at home.

At a very early period of his life he had impressions of a religious nature, which were never erased from his mind during his life; and though he made no profession of religion until he arrived at mature age, yet, in justice to his memory we must say, that even in his youth his conduct was such, as most plainly to manifest his great reverence of it.

At the age of 20 he was more deeply impressed with the necessity of regeneration. He sought it with unremitting ardour for about eight weeks,

when it pleased God to give him the witness of the Spirit, at a camp-meeting, in the month of September, 1811. It was here he felt the Lord gracious, and was enabled to shout aloud the wonders of redeeming grace and dying love. He began immediately to exhort those about him to fly to the arms of divine mercy. From this time he began to feel an increasing desire for the salvation of lost sinners. So great was his concern for his fellow-creatures, that he soon forsook his father's house in quest of them, and accompanying the circuit preachers in their rounds, exhorted and prayed with the people: and such was his godly deportment, zeal, and eloquence, that most who knew him marked him for extensive usefulness in the church of God.

In the year 1813 he joined the itinerancy, and was appointed to labour in the Terrel circuit. This appointment required the exercise of self-denial, and that resignation which was a prominent feature in his Christian character. He had now to exchange the company of his affectionate parents and brethren, for the society of persons with whom he had no acquaintance; and the salubrious atmosphere of his native uplands for swamps and miry roads, to which he had till now been a stranger; and in addition to this, he had also to sustain the charge of the circuit. But whatever were the difficulties he had to contend with, or the privations he had to endure, the fervour of his zeal excited him to unremitting exertion in the great work to which he had devoted himself. Engaged in the awful work of the Christian ministry, and having

the charge of immortal souls, he was consoled and animated with the conviction, that "He who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance"—that He with whom "the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance, who taketh up the isles as a very little thing," was his FATHER. He counted the sincere followers of Jesus Christ as his brethren and sisters. The wretched condition of sinners affected his heart; and in his concern to bring them "to the knowledge of the truth," "that they might be saved," he almost forgot the painful privations connected with his situation.

In his first tour round the circuit, he diligently endeavoured to ascertain the real state of the classes. Having done this, he strove to remove all their stumbling-blocks, and whatever was an obstacle to the influence of religion in the society, or prejudicial to its character in the eye of the world. The exercise of proper discipline in the church requires much wisdom and fortitude; and in proportion to the disordered state in which a minister may find that part of the vineyard he is called to labour in, will be his difficulty: generally those who are indifferent of our rules, are so from a secret repugnance to them—the lukewarm and the worldly-minded respect religion as far as it may suit their convenience; and it is not always the case that men have influence in religious society in consequence of their more exalted piety.

The way of the man of God however lies plain before him : let him scrupulously and vigilantly regard the honour of God, in requiring consistency of character with profession in his followers, and he shall find his labour not in vain in the Lord. Mr. Harris was abundantly compensated for his labours in this respect ; his congregations now began to increase, and many entertained very different notions of religion to what they had done before ; several obtained mercy, and were added to the church. He found that promise of the Lord verified, “ Lo, I am with you.”

The labours of this year being ended, he left his friends deeply affected at their having to part with him. He paid his parents and former acquaintances a short visit, and preached once or twice among them. They heard with profit and astonishment, and perceived that he was indeed a minister that needed not to be ashamed.

In 1814 he was appointed to Neuse circuit. Here he had to renew his labours with his bodily health and strength much impaired ; but none of these things moved him from his object of publishing the glad tidings of salvation to lost sinners. He laboured in his new appointment with increasing success till the fall of the year, when he was attacked with a violent bilious complaint which brought him very near the borders of the grave. In his affliction he was favoured with the consolations of the Holy Spirit, and was enabled to submit to the divine will with perfect resignation. After his recovery he

finished the labours of the year, and was made a blessing to many.

At the conference held in 1815 he was ordained deacon, and appointed to Bedford circuit. He was now much debilitated, and was not able to perform half the labours of the circuit: he was, notwithstanding, cheerful, and at intervals enabled to preach to crowded assemblies, some of whom listened to his message with rapture, and all with astonishment.

In the year 1816 he was stationed in Richmond city. He entered on this station with many painful apprehensions. There were not a few in this place whose minds were prejudiced against the Methodists, on account of some among them who did not adorn the Gospel by their conversation. This was an evil which had resulted from neglect of discipline; and other circumstances grew out of it which threatened the destruction of some of the classes: but it was well for Mr. Harris and his flock that he knew in "whom he had believed," and that He would "guide him by his counsel." In this trying situation he enjoined those who felt concern for the prosperity of Zion, to aid him by their prayers to the great Head of the church; that He would turn their captivity and wipe away their reproach. It was not long before love and harmony was again restored in the society; and the causes of stumbling being removed out of the way, the prejudices of the citizens began to yield, and in a short time the churches could not contain the number who attended on his ministry. The power of God attended the word, and many found that Jesus Christ hath

power, on earth, to forgive sins. In the course of this summer he attended a camp-meeting about fifty miles above Richmond, when, preaching to the people, and speaking with earnestness on the glories of heaven, he said, "I believe I shall be there in the space of two years." This prediction, if we may call it such, we have reason to believe was accomplished within that time.

On the 5th January, 1817, he took leave of the society at Richmond. This was a most affecting time, and will not be forgotten by his friends. He preached twice in the day, and his farewell sermon at night, from Revelation vii. 14. "These are they that have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." He laboured until he was almost exhausted, and addressing himself to the people as if confident they should see his face no more, he said, "I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. And now I am about to leave you, not knowing where I am to go: but I am resigned to the will of my heavenly Father.

"Must I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize,
And sail'd through bloody seas?"

No, glory to God!

"I'll bear the cross, endure the pain,
Supported by thy word."

He spoke as if bidding them a final farewell as to this life, which really was the case. "Bear with me.

my brethren," said he, "my soul is happy! glory! honour! praise! and power!" Then falling upon his knees, he made an awful appeal to the hearts and consciences of the people, and after praying fervently with them, committed them to God and the word of his grace. The people wept aloud: and some who made no profession of religion said they never witnessed so solemn a scene. Mr. Harris told a friend afterward, that he had never before felt his mind in so awful a frame: for, said he, "I am impressed with a belief that I shall see my friends in this place no more till I meet them in eternity; but, thank God, I leave a goodly number on their way to heaven."

This year he was ordained elder, and was stationed by the conference at Newbern. Here his labours were very great; for in addition to his faithful discharge of those ministerial duties he had to attend to, he preached more than one hundred funeral sermons. He now commenced the study of the Greek language, and by his diligent application to it made very considerable progress. He abridged Stewart's Philosophy of the Mind; extracted the most valuable of Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric: and in addition to this, wrote about fifty of his Sermons. But notwithstanding his great success in the vineyard of his Lord and Master, and his zeal to make those who were *dead in trespasses and sins* acquainted with the *spiritual and eternal life*, which is by *faith in Christ Jesus*, we find his was the language of complaint. The consideration of the infinite value of

immortal souls, the shortness and uncertainty of time, and the awful responsibility of the Christian ministry, will lead the man who is ever so devoted to the important duties connected with the oversight of the flock of Christ, to exclaim with the apostle, "Who is sufficient for these things!"

Although the faithful minister of the Gospel well knows that his sufficiency is of God, yet he is convinced he will have to give an account for his improvement of the talents he has received. He will feel himself under solemn obligation as a Christian, and much more as a minister, to add to his faith and to his virtue *knowledge*. Nor will he assume, that though he may have been made an instrument to awaken and convert sinners, without the information or learning he is in pursuit of, that therefore the time allotted him on earth may be spent without improvement: but discovering his ignorance of things which may be known by the knowledge he acquires; and feeling that the honour of the cause of Christ, and the spiritual prosperity of those who attend on his ministry may be greatly promoted by his diligence in the pursuit and acquisition of knowledge, he will be careful to redeem every moment of his time, and improve it in the best manner he can devise, that he may be a scribe well instructed, and thoroughly furnished, so to exhibit the character and attributes of HIM, whose ambassador he is, as to confound the gainsayer, and strengthen, stablish, and settle the humble followers of his Lord and Master. Such were the sentiments, and such was the practice of

Mr. Harris, as will fully appear by the following paper written by him, and dated at Newbern, Thursday, June 25, 1817.

“For about four years and five months I have been striving to preach the Gospel. In which time my greatest desires have been to save both myself and them that *have* heard me; to this end I have endeavoured to use the means best calculated, as I have thought, to obtain both spiritual and worldly knowledge. But on the whole I fear I have not chosen the most excellent way—for I have grown in grace and holiness but little compared with what I believe to have been my privilege. I believe that I have preached sound doctrine, but I cannot see why it has had no more effect on those who have attended on my ministry, unless it be my want of the anointing unction, or the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven—I find cause to reproach myself, though I have been studious, because I have not laboured more for close communion with God, which I believe to be of much more importance than all human knowledge without it. I also find fault with the manner in which I have pursued my studies. I have been too desultory both as it relates to my hours of study and the books that I have read. Through divine assistance I am resolved to strive to do better, and I here set down a sketch of the method I design to pursue in future, with a view to a growth in grace, knowledge, and general usefulness.

“I design to rise early of mornings, (I cannot fix on any hour, because I cannot retire regularly; but I

wish generally to allow about eight hours in twenty-four for sleep,) and after the usual duties of the morning, I intend to commence the day's labour by reading at least two chapters out of the Old and New Testaments, as I may think proper; after this I purpose to read some spiritual or edifying book until breakfast, which we generally take about seven o'clock.

“After this I intend to spend about one hour in perfecting my knowledge of the English grammar, and about as much in studying the Greek grammar: I have for some time intended to study the Greek language, but never commenced it until yesterday. After this, I design to spend about one hour in the study of arithmetic, of which my knowledge at this time is but superficial. This will bring the hour say, of eleven o'clock, from which time until four o'clock in the afternoon, I design to spend in writing and close study on the Holy Scriptures, which I design as a special preparation for the duties of the pulpit; reserving, however, from the above space of time one hour to dine and for secret prayer.

“The balance of the afternoon I design to improve in reading the writings of Mr. Wesley or Mr. Fletcher, or some other useful book, church history, or geography; reserving some little time from the above last-mentioned period to visit the brethren and friends.

“I am resolved to guard my words more than I have done, and to watch against all sin. And now, in the strength of the Lord alone, and not in my own (for that is but weakness) I consecrate all the

powers and faculties, both of my body and soul, to the service of God and his church.

“According to the advice of the apostle, I wish to redeem the time. The anticipation of future prospects is frequently suggested by the fervour of youthful imagination; and what we have performed when we come to die, generally bears but little proportion to what we have projected.

“In our progress through life, impediments to the execution of our plans occur, and time, in its imperceptible march, steals away both our power and our inclination to complete what has been designed with so much ardour. Hence the maxim of Mr. Wesley, ‘Never leave that for to-morrow’s work which can be done to-day:’—similar to that of Solomon, ‘What thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.’

“FLETCHER HARRIS.”

The foregoing paper manifests sentiments and feelings highly honourable to its writer. We perceive in it an ardent longing for the salvation of immortal souls, and the determination to use every means to promote and secure so desirable an object. And we see that a diligent application to study, and the successful pursuit of knowledge, will promote humility in a man whose mind is influenced with a pure desire to glorify God. The vast importance of the objects in view; the thought that on the faithful discharge of the duties of the ministry the eternal happiness of intelligent creatures depends; and the conviction that a day is coming in which the whole conduct will be examined at the bar of God,

and the most secret motives, as well as their results, be brought into view; such considerations as these entirely prevent the contemptible self-gratulations of contracted minds: and while they show the comparative insignificance of what is already attained, inflame with new ardour, and produce stronger determinations in all things and at all times, to seek the most excellent way. Religion is not more opposed to ignorance and immorality in its professors, than it is to indolence and neglect of mental improvement in its ministers.

After finishing the labours of this year, and leaving his people exceedingly affected at having to part with one whose labours and conduct among them had endeared him very much to them, he was appointed, in the year 1818, to the town of Petersburg. Here he found religion in a languid state; but he had too often proved the veracity of the promises, and seen the love of God manifested to his church to permit himself to be wholly discouraged. He believed that the God whom he served knew how to deliver the captive from the mighty, and therefore he lifted up his heart to God, and joining with the few faithful ones of the society to implore Divine aid, it was not many days before they had an earnest of better times.

While he was thus actively and successfully engaged in bringing men to the knowledge of the redemption which is by Christ Jesus, it pleased the great Head of the church that he should be removed from a state of sorrow and suffering to his reward. The reasons of God's conduct in reference

to the world or the church are not revealed, and cannot be understood by mortals; for in the present state we are called to exercise faith in the divine goodness—to believe that those dispensations which are most opposed, even to our judgment as well as our inclinations, were necessary; and that though *clouds and darkness are round about Him*, yet *righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne*. Whether, where those who seem eminently qualified for usefulness in the church, by their being peculiarly endowed with those talents which command respect and attention, and are removed from its labours at a time when they seem most capable of instrumentally promoting its interests, from a regard to their own eternal felicity, because their longer continuance here might lead to their being *exalted above measure*; or to manifest to short-sighted mortals that the excellency of the power is of God, that thereby we may feel our dependence on Divine aid, is not for us to determine in particular cases which may come under our notice. But at all times we are called upon to resign ourselves to the Divine dispensations, convinced they are founded in infinite wisdom and goodness; and rest in the assurance, that He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, will most assuredly provide his sincere followers with such faithful pastors, as shall be to them a sufficient evidence that he will never leave them comfortless—that he will never forsake them.

A few days before Mr. Harris was seized with his last illness, when he had been preaching to a large

and attentive congregation, many of whom were deeply convinced of their sin and danger, he returned to his lodgings in a pensive frame of mind. In the evening, while in conversation with the family and some friends, he told them the cause of his dejection, which was, that there were so few seals to his ministry. He went on to relate how long he had been in the ministry, as well as the manner of his conversion. He seemed deeply to regret his too little usefulness in the church, and expressed his fears that it was owing to a want of greater vigilance. He said that, by the help of God, he was determined on more diligently engaging in the work, and declared his steady intention to live and die therein. On the Sabbath previous to his being confined by sickness, some of his friends considered him unfit for the labours of the pulpit; and, apprehensive that the consequence of his preaching in so debilitated a state might be very injurious, if not fatal in its effects: and hence one of them said to him, "Brother Harris, do not go—try and preach to live—the Lord does not require impossibilities of us." He, however, with a heart glowing with desire for the salvation of sinners, said, "Let me go and work for my Lord and Master while he spares me."

After a short discourse, which was observed to have been delivered with uncommon earnestness, he returned home and retired to his bed, from which he arose no more. He continued ill for a week, at the end of which he was so much worse that he called the family, and a few friends who

were in the house at the time, to his bed side, to take his final leave of them. Taking each by the hand, he bade them an affectionate farewell. He said to an intimate friend, "Be faithful and meet me in heaven—for I think I shall know you there. Continue in the good and right way, for you cannot get too much religion to die with. I am now going, and feel my need of more." He made mention of his friends, far and near, saying, "Tell them it is my dying request that they should meet me in heaven." He entreated his sorrowful attendants and friends not to weep on his account, adding, "I believe my work upon earth is accomplished, and I am now ready to be offered up." He then gave some directions about the manner and place of his interment.

The following morning he seemed somewhat revived. He then requested that the different churches should meet together and make intercession for him, whether living or dying, which was accordingly done with great solemnity. Day after day he would exhort those around him. He would often say, "My dear brethren, for the time to come be more like your Lord and Master. Cut loose from the world, and live for heaven."

Though he was sometimes cast down, yet was he again favoured with many glorious manifestations, and he felt that the kingdom of God is not only *righteousness* and *peace*, but *joy* in the Holy Ghost. But his exercises were various, and at times he would repeat the language of the poet,

" Oh could we make those doubts remove,
Those gloomy doubts that rise,

And see the Canaan which we love
With unbeckoned eyes!"

He manifested his gratitude and affection to his medical attendants, and those who waited on him, in a very feeling manner. Frequently opening his arms to embrace them, and thanking them for all their kindness, he would say, "You are doing it in the name of a disciple, though an unworthy one; yet the Lord will reward you for it. I cannot, for I am going to leave you." At one time he was so filled with joy, that he expressed himself with such vehemence that his friends desired him not to exert himself so much; but he refused, saying, "The Lord is with me!" He then repeated these lines,

"Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are,
While on his breast I lean my head
And breathe my life out sweetly there."

He afterward desired the Hymn to be sung, which begins

"And let this feeble body fail," &c.

A few days before his death he was so powerfully assaulted by the powers of darkness that his confidence was almost gone; but prayer was made by his flock in his behalf. The clouds were dispelled; and he requested to be raised that he might tell his friends what the Lord had done for him. He continued in this happy frame of mind till a few hours before his death, when, being supported in his bed, he delivered a short and affectionate ad-

dress to the persons present; after which, being laid on his pillow, he bade them individually farewell. Addressing himself to one with whom he was intimately acquainted, and who had been many years waring a good warfare, he said, "Is this dying! No, blessed be God, it is living; it is living for ever! Glory! glory! glory! Free grace for every man!—for every man!"—After having borne this his last testimony, he lay silent a few hours, when his happy soul was released from its bond of mortality, and made the partaker of those pure felicities which had been the object of its desire and pursuit—on the 18th of September, 1818, in the 29th year of his age.

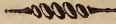
Mr. Harris was, in his person, of the middle stature, and rather spare made. In the pulpit his appearance was grave, dignified, and graceful; and his gesture seemed always to be the result of his own feeling, and was in perfect unison with the terror or glory of the subject with which he was engaged. As a man and a Christian, we are constrained to say, it would be difficult to name one virtue or one Christian grace that shone with peculiar lustre above the rest; or one in which he did not excel. His friends find comfort in their loss from the glorious conviction that he is among the blessed multitude, who

“ More than conquerors at last,
Now they find their trials o'er;
They have *all* their sufferings past,
Hunger now and thirst no more:
No excessive heat they feel,
From the sun's directer ray;

In a milder clime they dwell,
Regions of eternal day.

“ He that on the throne doth reign,
Them the Lamb shall always feed ;
With the tree of life sustain,
To the living fountains lead ;
He shall all their sorrows chase,
All their wants at once remove,
Wipe the tears from every face,
Fill up every soul with love.”

SERMON I.



The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor ; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. Luke iv. 18, 19.

IT is impossible for one who possesses a heart attuned to the soft chord of Christian sympathy, not to feel deeply interested in reading these words. To endure the degraded impotence of despised poverty—to agonize in excessive and heart-rending grief—to be immured within the mouldy walls of a loathsome dungeon—to be deprived of the faculty of vision, so as to grope at noon-day—and in addition to all this, to have the body maimed and bruised—such a tale of woful calamity must touch the heart, and overflow the eyes of him who hears it. But suppose the poverty of which we were speaking, to consist, not in the want of sustenance for the body, but in the absence of the bread which endureth to everlasting life, without which the soul perisheth forever ; suppose the heart-breaking grief, of which we were speaking, to consist in a painful sense of injustice done to God, our kind benefactor ; suppose the

imprisonment, of which we were speaking, to be the confinement of the immortal soul in the castle of sin, and chains of iniquity; suppose the blindness above referred to, to consist in the entire absence of the light of God's countenance, which alone fills all heaven with raptures; suppose the bruises spoken of in the text, to refer to the depraved faculties of a fallen soul, by which it is entirely incapacitated either for enjoyment or ease. Then you behold a sight which might make an angel weep; a sight which moved the compassion of God. Hovering with pensive grief over such an abject sufferer, our ears are saluted by the heart-reviving voice of a pitying deliverer. *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.* This deliverer is Jesus, our Saviour; and we, and all Adam's race, are the lost sinners whom he came to seek and to save.

These words point out,

I. Man's natural condition, and

II. Christ's gracious commission.

I. We are to speak of man's natural condition.

The Holy Spirit, in condescension to our ignorance of spiritual subjects, has been pleased to render them comprehensible by figurative illustrations taken

from the material world. It is difficult for us to conceive how sin deforms the soul, and deranges its faculties. But we who have the poor always with us, can easily conceive of the many privations and sufferings which they are forced to endure, and how the cloud of cheerless gloom obscures from them the sun of prosperity; while, dispirited and faint, they creep into the hut of poverty, and share with their weeping babes the cup of unmingled wretchedness. By such a scene, the Holy Spirit would have us enter more fully into a proper understanding of man's lapsed condition. Before the fall, man had unobstructed intercourse with his Maker, who was the soul of his happiness, the life of his delights, and the treasure of his riches. Into him, as an infinite ocean of fulness, all the affections of man flowed, and blended their vigorous current. But sin estranged man, and alienated his affections from his God. And God, whose inflexible truth stands firm as his throne, withdrew the kindly light of his countenance; and this being the food of the soul, man was left (the atonement apart) in a state of wretchedness. Distressed and without help, I hear the fugitive rebel cry out, "Who will show me any good? Wherewithal shall I come before God? Who will give me perfect peace? Save me from the hell I feel, and the endless horror I fear!"

Moreover, amid the various causes of distress which daily occur, it is not strange to see some pining away; no matter whether through slighted love or loss of friends. The fragrant spring scatters odours in vain around them; and the sun shines but to

reveal their wretchedness. Their hollow eyes and pale wo-worn cheeks, tell the tale of their soul's horror, their hearts know their own bitterness, and are rent by despair. By the horror of such a state, we are taught the wretchedness of man, widowed of his innocence, and rifled of his happiness. He may not indeed be fully sensible of his condition:—the stupifying opiates of sin may have deadened his alarm. But,

—————“sure 'tis a piteous sight, to see
 So many maniacs dancing in their chains;
 With eyes of horror execrate their chains,
 Then shake them in despair, and dance again!”

Again, we have heard of the shocking deeds performed in the field of battle; and how, through the petulance of kings, whole mountains of the dead have been heaped around the hostile camp, whose limbs have been torn by devouring dogs and hungry vultures; while the more ill-fated captives, cursed with protracted life, with their eyes put out, (for such was the ancient custom in war) are enclosed in the pestilential vaults of dreary dungeons, where, loaded and bruised with fetters, they linger out the remainder of their wretched existence. This gloomy picture is but a faint representation of the abject condition of the unrenewed sinner; who, taken captive by the devil at his will, is bound fast in fetters of sin and unbelief, and blind to all the beauties of religion.

Think not, dear brethren, that the picture is too gloomy. Man, apart from divine grace, is but a dunghill blanched with snow. He feels a raging

thirst which he can never quench ; he is shut up in a pit where there is no water. Pointed by the augur in his breast to the all-encircling course of a never ending eternity, he has no confidence in the mercy of his God. Through life he is torn with legion-lusts ; and when he dies unchanged, he feels in his bosom all the pressure of gloomy grief, and the flames of hell burn in his heart.

II. But Hark ! brethren, Hark ! “ There is a voice of sovereign grace.” Jesus Christ comes forth in all the love and power of God. Hear his gracious words : *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me ; he hath chosen me as a fit victim on which to lay the iniquities of man ; he hath anointed me, or set me apart, for this important commission, even to preach to the poor.*

We do not confine the meaning of the word, *poor*, to those merely who are destitute of the good things of this life ; though even in that sense, it would peculiarly apply ; for the poor, literally, have the Gospel preached to them ; and many who were cut off from happiness in other sources, have found peace in God. The poor here, as in Revelation iii. 17. may mean those who think they are rich, and know not that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. It may also apply to one who is duly sensible of his spiritual poverty, as in Matthew v. 3. “ Blessed are the poor in spirit : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

O tell me, if you can, how the gracious commission of Christ disburdens the meek and contrite heart of

its load when the world is "winked into its own insignificancy," and the soul, thirsty for immortal consolation in God, hears Christ say,—I give myself to thee as thy all-sufficient Saviour! Is thy heart broken under a sense of thy former sinfulness? Take courage, I am sent to bind up the broken heart. I do not despise the day of small things—I will not break the bruised reed, neither will I quench the smoking flax. To this man will I look, even to him who is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. Art thou thirsty? Come to me, and drink, without money, and without price. Art thou blind? Anoint thine eyes with eye-salve that thou mayest see. Hast thou been led captive by the devil, and art thou bruised with the chain of sin? I am come to set at liberty them that are bruised. I will give thee a new heart, and place thee on even ground, and enable thee to contend successfully against thy mortal foe.

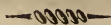
To those who feel their spiritual poverty—whose hearts are broken through a sense of their sins,—who see themselves tied and bound with the chains of many evil habits,—who sit in the darkness of guilt and misery, without a friendly hand to lead them into the way they should go; to those the Gospel of the grace of Christ is a pleasing sound, because a present and full salvation is proclaimed by it, and the present is said to be the acceptable year of the Lord. Here is plainly an allusion to the year of Jubilee, when all, both debtor and servant, among the Jews, were set free. The Gospel dispensation is the day of Jubilee to all who hear it. It is one grand, copious, and interesting display of the infinite love of God.

It is all encouragement; breathes nothing but love and mercy; is not one exclusive system; embraces the whole human family; has Jesus, the sinner's friend, for its mediator; is ratified by his blood; and is suited, gloriously suited, to all the wants and wishes of all the posterity of Adam. The kingdom of heaven is now open, and all who will may enter in.

With what dispositions do we hear these gracious assurances? When Christ uttered them, it is said that the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him, and they were astonished at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. Let us be thankful for the Gospel, and obey it; or it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for us.

To God the only wise, the author of the Gospel, and of eternal life, be all honour, and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

SERMON II.



*They are not in trouble as other men ; neither are they
plagued like other men. Psalm lxxiii. 5.*

THERE is nothing to which men are more averse than trouble and calamity ; and yet there are very few so fortunate as to be exempt from them. By prudent forethought, some troubles which we endure, might be avoided ; and others, by sound philosophy, might be mitigated ; but so many are our real and artificial wants ; so many are the avenues through which pain and affliction may pass to annoy us, that we scarcely need expect to shun disappointment and anguish while in this habitation of sorrow.

In addition to those afflictions which result from our connexion with this world, there are others which grow more immediately out of our relation to the next : these jar the tenderest strings of the soul, and wring the bitterest anguish from the mind. Conscience, that secret monitor, which God has implanted in our breast, suffers not, while it remains unseared, any real peace to the violator of God's law : "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmities ; but a wounded spirit who can bear ?"

Now that which most effectually guards the mind against this disquieting bane of human felicity, is what every votary of happiness should seek to obtain : and the friends of religion contend, both from Scripture,

experience, and the fitness of things, that they only who love God's commandments, have real peace, and that in keeping of them there is great reward. But our text seems to outrage experience and Scripture; and while the one says, "I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness;" and again, "one day in thy courts is better than a thousand;" and while the other says, "the way of transgressors is hard;" and "there is no peace to the wicked;" our text declares that *the wicked are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men.*

The Psalmist seems to cede to the wicked a sufficient pretext for their iniquity; but to do justice to his meaning we must remark, that there are two ways to heal the anguish of our naturally distempered souls. The first is, by learning the nature of our disease, and applying to Christ, the physician of souls, "whose deep wounds distil the balm which heals our envenomed wounds." The other is, by resisting the offered grace, repelling the light, and stupifying the conscience by the sleep-producing opiates of sin. For this, too, gives relief; but it is a relief, partial, transitory and deceptive. Like Joab, it professes friendship, but conceals a dagger. It is like Samson's sleep; it softly deprives us of our locks. It is a sleep obtained by opium—a loss of feeling—a prelude of death. Thus we have noticed, just before a heavy fall of rain, the wind has been unusually still: and historians relate, that before an earthquake, the air is unusually serene. It is this false peace to which the Psalmist alludes; and though in a fit of

melancholy petulance, for want of distinguishing between this false quiet and a rational peace, he had been well nigh ready to charge God foolishly; yet afterward, when in the sanctuary, he saw them to be deluded quietists, who stood on slippery rocks, while fiery billows rolled below.

Such, my brethren, is, I fear, the peace, and the condition of many among us. To disturb this tranquillity is the design of the following discourse; a design not only justified by scriptural example and ministerial fidelity, but required even by love to your souls. It is the friendship of one who rushes forward and breaks in on your pleasing reveries, when you are approaching a precipice; or knocks rudely at your door when he sees your house in flames, and ready to destroy you in its ruins. The three principal sources of self-deception and false quiet, of which I shall treat, are

I. Infidel presumption:

II. Vain confidence.

III. Practical indifference,

I. Some derive their principal peace and security from infidel presumption. My brethren, when we read in the Scriptures of the condition of the unregenerate, it is enough to freeze the warm blood, and to strike the soul with horror, to see them amused with trifles, and sleeping quite devoid of all concern. Yet these very men are under sentence of condemnation, and

waiting only the hour of execution. For "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." "Upon the wicked God shall rain down fire, and brimstone, and a horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup." "He that believeth not, is condemned already." Why then are they not alarmed? Why then this apathy? It is because they do not believe. Did they believe that "God is angry with the wicked every day," and that all the heavy denunciations of his word will shortly be accomplished; in the strong language of Scripture, "the joints of their loins would be loosened, and their knees would smite one against the other." If they had the faith of Noah, it would move them with fear, and lead them to prepare an ark for the saving of themselves. Had they the faith of devils, they would tremble; but they have not even this, and "because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." And though a hundred of their friends are hurried into eternity before their eyes, these human brutes graze on, and regard not the work of the Lord, nor the operations of his hands.

But after all, what is this ease which flows from infidel persuasion? First, it is obtained with difficulty; for, before a man can find peace in this way, he has to disprove the Scriptures; he has to reason down every species of evidence; he has to explain how weak men could deliver the sublimest wisdom, or wicked men be the most ardent lovers of virtue; he must believe that those who took nothing on trust,

and were never convicted of falsehood, were deceived in what they confidently affirmed; he has to persuade himself that he is wiser than the wisest of mankind: and, notwithstanding all his vanity, he must find this a difficult task.

But secondly, it is partial, and liable to interruption. There is an internal witness, called conscience, which, if it cannot govern, will nevertheless censure and vex him; and if for a moment he braves its chiding, he is still subject to bondage through fear of death. An alarming sermon, a sudden death, a violent disease may revive in him a dismal apprehension that all will not end well; nay, a thousand circumstances may tear from him his confidence, and leave him, like Felix, to shake and quake for fear.

But, thirdly, his quiet is the more fatal, the less liable it is to be disturbed; for it is in his *perversity* he has wearied the good Spirit, and God sheds over him avenging darkness. He received not the truth in the love of it, and for this cause God has sent him strong delusion, that he may believe a lie; that he may be damned, because he had pleasure in unrighteousness.

But, fourthly, this ease is fatal; for it must end in anguish and despair. Our disbelief of the word of God will not falsify it. If a man have swallowed poison, his belief that it will not kill him does not produce safety; and it is awful to stand and see the death and conviction of a sinner come on at once. Your denying a resurrection and future judgment, will not keep you in the grave for ever, or prevent your appearance before the judgment-seat of Christ.

Noah preached righteousness to the old world, but they derided him, and pursued their pleasures, and knew not till the flood came and swept them away. Just so, when the wicked are saying, Peace and safety, sudden destruction cometh on them, and they shall not escape. But,

II. We said some entertain false quiet through vain confidence. Of this class of men was the boasting Pharisee: "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, &c." Of this class was Saul, who was "alive without the law:" of this class was the Church of Laodicea, who thought themselves rich, and increased in goods, and knew not that they were miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Nor are such characters rare at the present day; they form the majority of our congregations, and oppose the greatest barriers to the success of our ministry. For this confidence keeps them from seeking after salvation. Were it not for this shelter, they would be induced to flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them. Knowing the danger of this refuge of lies, our Saviour saith, publicans and harlots shall enter into the kingdom of heaven before them. Few vindicate open vice, and when we charge home guilt on the openly profane, we may succeed; but no weapon can penetrate this self-righteous coat of mail. Do we urge him to flee approaching wrath?—he is in no danger. Do we press him to repent?—he needs no repentance. Do we exhort him to believe?—he congratulates himself that he is a believer. And O how great will be his surprise and regret, when, in

the height of the storm, he first learns the weakness of his house!

III. But, thirdly, the false peace of the wicked arises from practical indifference. The class of men of whom I now speak, are not chargeable with ignorance of the truths we teach. They know the Gospel in theory, but never felt its power in their hearts. They have heard it from their infancy, and are distinctly familiar with all its truths. They applaud our doctrine; but they show no more solicitude to obey the Gospel, than if we exhorted them to follow a cunningly devised fable. Their life is a perpetual contradiction to their creed; they believe that there is a hell of endless wretchedness, yet take no pains to avoid it; that there is a heaven of eternal blessedness, yet use no efforts to obtain it. I need not tell such, that they are not Christians; I need not tell them what a paradox they are; I need not tell them what a waste of means they have occasioned; I need not tell them, that above all others, they may expect to be beaten with most stripes, for they have known their Master's will, and have not done it. Such are sermon-proof. A Bible has exhausted its treasures upon you. It has, as it were, thrown heaven and hell at your feet, and neither has excited you. Surely you have reason to apprehend that such means, so long used in vain, will always be useless; surely you have cause to fear that hell will be your portion.

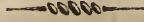
From what has been said we may learn, that the tranquillity of the wicked is deceptive and false.

This David learned when faith regained its empire in his heart: then he saw them standing on slippery places. How are they brought into desolation as in a moment: they are utterly consumed with terror; "as a dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image."

If such be their condition, how should we dread false security in religion!—It precedes awful surprise, "wo to them that are at ease!" And how should the minister of the Gospel strive to alarm their fears, and awaken their consciences. How serious will it be, to be reproached in eternity by the people of our charge, for an unfaithful handling of the word of God, or for a man-pleasing spirit; which, rather than trouble a sinner's conscience, will let him go down to eternal night.

But what we have said may be considered consoling to those who are troubled. With downcast looks you make your way toward the better country; you have your evil things, like Lazarus, while the rich and careless have their good things. But soon will he, who appoints the mourner beauty for ashes, appear in your behalf.

SERMON III.



And I gave her space to repent of her fornication ; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent. Rev. ii. 21, 22.

THIS Book was written by the apostle John, in an isle, called Patmos, which is situated in the Ægean Sea, and is about thirty miles in circumference. Thither the apostle was banished, most probably by Nero, for bearing witness to Christ, as the Immanuel and Saviour of the world.

But under this confinement it was the apostle's comfort, that he did not suffer as an evil-doer. The cause in which he suffered was worth suffering for; and the spirit of glory and of God rested upon this persecuted apostle. As to the book itself, it is called the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

In the Gospel of John we read the life of Christ on earth, as a man conversing with men, humble, poor, weak and suffering. We behold a sacrifice ready to be offered, and one appointed to sorrow and death.

But in the Revelation of Saint John, we have the Gospel of Christ, who was now raised from the dead. He speaks and acts as having conquered the grave, and triumphed over death and hell; as having entered

into the place of his glory, angels and principalities being subject unto him.

It was by the ministry of one of these *angels*, (by which term we are to understand a *messenger* sent from God) that this revelation was made to St. John.

The second and third chapters contain the seven epistles to the seven churches of Asia, which are particularly addressed, because, as is commonly believed, they were under St. John's immediate inspection. He was commanded to write to every one of them, according to their actual state and circumstances; and to inscribe every letter to the angel or minister of the church.

The form and order of the epistles are much the same. First, a command to write; then some character or attribute of the speaker, taken from the vision in the first chapter, and appropriated to the matter in each epistle; then commendations or reproofs, with suitable promises or threatenings; and, in all, the same conclusion, *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches*. In which we have an intimation, that what was written aforetime, was written for our learning.

We have the four first of these letters in the chapter in which the text is found: those to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, and Thyatira; and in the faithful reproof contained in this last-mentioned epistle, we have the words of the text.

Thyatira was a city of Proconsular Asia, bordering upon Mysia on the north, and Lydia on the south. It was a town of trade, from whence came the woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, who being at Phi-

lippi, in Macedonia, (probably about the business of her calling,) heard Paul preach there, and God opened her heart to receive the truth, and she was baptised. Whether it was by her means that the Gospel was carried into her own city, Thyatira, is not certain. But that it was there, and successful in forming a Gospel church, this epistle assures us. This church, though its piety is commended, had well nigh drawn mischief and the Divine displeasure on itself, by holding intercourse with a certain impure character or characters, denominated Jezebel. It has been thought by some eminent men, that there was in this church a great and powerful woman, who, having been corrupted herself, did afterward harbour false prophets, who endeavoured to subvert the faith of the Christians. By others, it has been thought, that by Jezebel, we are to understand Helena, the concubine of Simon Magus. But it is most probable that it is a symbol taken from the case of Ahab, whose wife Jezebel had an unhappy influence in introducing idolatry in Israel, and was a great enemy of the Lord's prophets; I say, it is most probable, that Jezebel is put for a symbol of the Gnostics and Nicolaitans, who taught the lawfulness of fornication, and eating things sacrificed to idols.

The principal fault of the church at Thyatira was, that she did not execute discipline on these disciples of mystical Jezebel: and it is to her and her adherents that the words of the text primarily refer.

We will just observe, that this Jezebel had a state of probation, which, being unworthily filled, had

stamped the most gloomy character on her eternal destiny. We hold her up as a beacon, on which we behold inserted the following useful observations.

I. Repentance is necessary to prevent the sinner's ruin.

II. Repentance requires time, a course of time, and time convenient.

III. When God gives space for repentance, he expects fruits meet for repentance.

IV. Where the space of repentance is lost, the sinner perishes with a double destruction.

O that God may this day anoint your speaker with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven!

I. And first—Repentance is necessary to prevent the sinner's ruin. Permit me to state, in this place, that I intend to act and speak under the influence of St. Peter's advice: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God."

Let it here be observed, that God, from a very early period, gave intimations of his intention to judge the world, at some future period, in righteousness. From this it appears, that man, as an intelligent being, is placed in a probationary state; of course, he must have had a law to regulate his conduct. To think otherwise will involve an absurdity, and will at once destroy the idea of his dependency and accountableness. The first covenant God entered

into with Adam, included a precept, which was given as a test of obedience. This being violated by Adam, he could no longer stand on a footing of works, or absolute righteousness: thus falling, he involved us, seminally, in his ruin.

After this, in thundering artillery and dread array, on smoking Sinai, the great Jehovah somewhat enlarged and republished his law. But it is evident that no man is justified in the sight of God by the requisitions of this law, for this plain reason, that no man has complied, or can, in an unrenewed state, comply with them: and indeed, it is only by this law that we obtain a knowledge of sin. So that considering the decalogue as a rule of life, there is no unconverted man that dares to say, that he is ready to be judged by it.

But what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God has done, by sending his Son into the world in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh. This observation brings into view the merciful economy of grace under which we live; of which dispensation it may be observed, that it does not require bare theory, but practice and experiment also. For of the new covenant saints, it is said, "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace:" from which it is easy to perceive, that the new testament requires complete renovation. According to the Gospel plan of salvation, which is a display of the divine perfections, it is necessary, through the light it affords, that we should see and repent of our sins. For till the conscience be awakened to a true

sense of the evil of sin, a man cannot enter into a state of justification: it would totally subvert the design of the Gospel, if an unawakened soul could be justified. Yea, experience as well as Scripture declares, that none ever was truly convinced of righteousness that was not first truly convinced of sin. As he, then, who is not convinced of sin, cannot be justified; and as he who is not justified, is condemned, the wrath of God abiding on him; it is evident, that repentance is necessary to prevent the sinner's ruin. This will be rendered still more impressive if we listen to the Lord Jesus Christ preaching his own truth; "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." And in that inimitable sermon on the Mount, repentance seems to have been his text; where he first shows in what it consists, and then points out its reward. St. Paul, who received his mission from Christ, comprised what he had said in Asia under two general heads—repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor did Peter omit to bear testimony to the indispensable necessity of this doctrine, where he says, "Repent, and be converted," &c. But it would be too tedious to quote all the passages in which the indispensable necessity of repentance is evident. Again, I repeat it, (and may God impress it on your hearts!) that in the book of his decrees it is written, that repentance is necessary to prevent the sinner's ruin.

I proceed, as was proposed,

II. To show that repentance requires time, a course of time, and time convenient.

However men are ready to admit, that the attainment of riches or honour generally requires time and a series of exertion; yet they seem to think that the concerns of the soul may be settled in a few hours. They seem to think that one feeble, dying effort, will be sufficient to open for them the gates of heaven, and introduce them to all that exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Hence, when the man of God would urge the necessity of repentance, they say, "Go thy way for this time; at a more convenient season I will send for thee:" the matters you speak of, say they, are important; but not so much so as the concerns of this life: these require unremitting exertion; those I can procure on a dying bed. My brethren, will not the folly of this conduct appear, if first, we view the nature of Gospel repentance, which is a godly sorrow wrought in the heart of a sinful person by the word and Spirit of God, whereby, from a sense of his sin, as being offensive to God, murderous to Christ, and defiling to his own soul; and from an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, he, with hatred of all known sins, turns from them to God, as his only Saviour and Lord. Is this the work of an hour, and that on a sick bed?

The necessity of space for repentance will further appear, if we consider the ordinary manner in which God works on men's hearts in this our day. However God, for the display of his power and mercy, might instantaneously convict, and almost as suddenly convert Paul; yet this is not his ordinary way of working of late. Paul was possessed of all the prejudice and enmity of a Jew; but we are trained up

in the Christian persuasion: and I will venture to say, that most commonly, justification follows a course of reflection, study, repentance, and prayer.

From what has been said, you have collected our views of a death-bed repentance:—it is a poor dependence. But, says one, why was the history of the crucified thief recorded, who obtained justification on the cross? Let me tell you, brethren, his case was not analogous to ours. He, perhaps, had not been blessed with a godly education; accomplices in vice might have corrupted him the more; he was young, and might have died for his first offence; he might never have heard of a Saviour before; and from all these considerations, Christ, who saw the depth of his repentance, might see fit to record his case as a prodigy of his grace. I trust you will no longer, through an impression that the hardy tree of repentance is the sickly growth of an hour, procrastinate that work till death; but that you will avail yourselves of offered grace, and according to your advantages, bring forth fruits meet for repentance. Which leads to the third thing to be considered, namely,

III. When God gives space for repentance, he expects fruits meet for repentance: “I gave her space to repent, and she repented not.” Here you will permit me to state, that when God offers his grace to the human family, he is in earnest; and being possessed of infinite wisdom, he always proportions the weight of motives to repentance and holiness, to our agency. Hence we perceive our accountability. This we are taught, moreover, by

the parable of the talents, in which those servants only were commended, who had improved their talents, according to the design of the master who gave them. And in the parable of the fig-tree that was planted in the vineyard, the owner, it seems, was disappointed, inasmuch as he came three years seeking fruit, and finding none. And the fearful sentence, that had been executed on it but for the intercession of the vine-dresser, was founded on its advantages, connected with its barrenness.

The success which our Saviour anticipated from his own death, plainly indicates, that where much is given, much will be required. "And I," says he, "if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." You see, sinner, that such a display of divine goodness was intended to captivate and fix upon himself the affections of all men. And, indeed, the heavy judgments with which the Jews were long threatened, and which at last fell upon them, were, for having long neglected the warnings of his messengers, and also rejected Christ his anointed, who did works among them which no other man could do. According, then, to the language of mortals, when God long blesses the sinner with space and means for repentance, he expects fruits meet for repentance; and it is because we frustrate the favourable designs of the Almighty, and exclude ourselves from the mercy of God, that he finally curses us with eternal misery. This leads to the last thing to be considered, namely

IV. Where the space for repentance is lost, the sinner perishes with a double vengeance, or destruction. This is inferred from many other passages of holy

writ, as well as from the words of our text, which saith, *I gave her space to repent of her fornication, and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent.*

Here I would just observe, that fornication, and adultery, which are nearly synonymous terms, are *predicated* of that union subsisting between Christ and his people, represented by the close union of the two parties in holy wedlock. In a scriptural sense, it implies the *detachment* of the Christian's affections from God, and their attachment to false and earthly lovers or idols, whether the world, the flesh, or the devil, false doctrine, or those who teach it, as Jezebel, in the text. It is Jezebel, however, who, in the words of the text, is threatened with this sore punishment for her impenitence. "Behold," says Jehovah, "I will cast her into a bed," &c. which, taken metaphorically, signifies distress of the most tormenting kind, as does the other expression, "great tribulation;" which, in scripture language, signifies the deepest trouble:—being squeezed, or threshed, as corn on a floor. But, according to Mr. Wood, in his Dictionary in this place, it signifies the torments of hell. This, however, was to be incurred by final impenitence, and this must be the end of all the incorrigible.

Many suppose, because the judgments of God long delay, that they shall never overtake them. But be it known to you, impenitent sinner, you do but treasure up to yourself wrath against the day of wrath. Though the inhabitants of Sodom long

enjoyed the instruction of Lot, yet, by its repeated abuse they pulled down upon themselves the fiercest wrath and indignation of the Almighty. And the Antediluvians, who enjoyed and abused the preaching of Noah for many years, were finally overwhelmed with the most fearful destruction. The Jews, moreover, who had received many faithful warnings, at last miserably perished. "He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." How fearful are his decrees? "Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh."

My dear brethren, what think ye of the discussion of the subject? Is repentance necessary to prevent the sinner's ruin? I think we made it appear sufficiently plain, that it is. Well, have you ever repented? If you have, you may have obtained justification; but if not, I must tell you that you are in the road to ruin.

But does repentance require time convenient? Then, I would ask, if you do not act unwisely, in putting it off to a dying hour? You will have enough to do then, to grapple with the pains of your body?

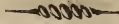
But does the Almighty look for fruits meet for repentance, when he gives space for repentance? How has he been disappointed, (speaking after the manner of men) in his just expectation. Is it not a pity that designs so fatherly should be frustrated?

Does the sinner, who long rejects offered grace, seal his own destruction? Are you not then, in dan-

ger of everlasting burnings? Surely if ever the Lord gave space to any people to repent, he has given it to you. How, O how will you answer for all the misimproved advantages you have enjoyed? Can you suppose that God will be mocked? Do you think you can deceive him? Reflect on the folly of attempting it. Who ever hardened his heart against God, and prospered?

Once more, in addition to the ten thousand warnings you have received, I call upon you, in the name of God, to repent. But it lies to your own choice: if you choose death, you must die; but if you choose life, you shall live.

SERMON IV.



Neither be partaker of other men's sins. 1 Tim. v. 22.

SIN is that conduct whereby we miss the mark of God's law and our own happiness. Sin, iniquity, unrighteousness, ungodliness, and wickedness, are words of nearly the same meaning, and denote, in general, what is contrary to the divine law; as withholding what is due to God or man; or an opposition to the nature, worship, and service of God. As to the origin or introduction of sin into the world, St. Paul informs us, that "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners." Rom. v. 19. That is, by the disobedience of Adam we were constituted semi-nally guilty persons, and in consequence of it our whole man was laid under the reigning power of sin. The effect, or end of sin is death. "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." James i. 15. "For the wages of sin is death." Rom. vi. 23. Again, "Thus saith the Lord, all souls are mine.—The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Ezek. xviii. 6. These are strong words, the words of God, who cannot lie.

I cannot persuade myself that there is any person here, who will not take at least a momentary review of life, to see if he has not sinned against God. And if it is but a glance of life we take, we shall no doubt

perceive that we have; for the apostle saith, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

If the Gospel, with which we are put in charge by God, should have its designed, its saving effect, you will next inquire, whether or not you have repented; that is, whether sin has been so embittered to you, as to cause you to cry mightily to God for power to resist it. And if you have not, you will this day set about it with serious alarm; and this alarm will probably be increased, when we assure you, that you have not only your own sins lying upon you, but that many of the sins of your fellow-creatures are pressing you down to perdition. For, however little we may have considered it in the bustle of life, there are but few, who, in a greater or less degree, do not partake of other men's sins.

The primary design of these words was, to prevent Timothy, and, through him, all who have the appointment of preachers, of every sect and party, from hastily bringing forward those into the ministry who are not well approved. "Lay hands suddenly on no man." Do not, without much prayer and serious deliberation, appoint any person to the sacred ministry; for as it is a sin for an improper person to thrust himself into that sacred office, so he that sanctions him is a partaker of his sin.

Having premised thus much, we design to improve the subject, by pointing out in general, the *nature* and *danger* of *partaking of other men's sins*.

I am led to treat of this subject by a belief that the caution which it contains is much more necessary than men are apt to suspect; both on account of the

aggravation which our own sins receive, from a participation of the sins of others, and of our liability to partake of them, either directly or indirectly.

1. To begin with the leading thought which occupied the apostle's mind—When may a minister be said to partake of other men's sins? We have already stated, that a premature ordination, or imposition of hands, was the primary allusion of the apostle. In this there is injury done to the person who is ordained—to those to whom he is recommended or sent—and to the general cause. To the person so ordained, in that he, being a novice, is liable to be lifted up with pride, and to fall into the condemnation of the devil: to those to whom he is sent, in that he cannot take care of the church of God: to the general cause, in that the office and dignity of the ministerial character are disparaged. O what a serious account will those bishops, presbyters, and others, have to give to God, who, sustaining the responsibility of a general superintendence over the church, abuse it by ill-judged sanctions; and by “laying careless hands on empty skulls, that cannot teach, and will not learn.”

2. But again, senior ministers may partake of the sins of their younger brethren in the ministry, in other ways. I say, sins; for who can doubt that pride is a sin; and what so likely to excite it as unqualified praise? Moreover, who will dispute that too great depression of spirit is criminal; and what so well calculated to produce and increase it, as that reserve, which by some has been miscalled prudence; by

which senior ministers withhold from their juniors the enlivening assurances of probable success, if they continue devoted to God, and attentive to reading? St. Paul was not afraid of doing harm, when he exhorted Timothy to stir up the gift that was in him; nor need we fear it, when we are speaking to Timothies!

3. But again; a minister may be said to partake of other men's sins in a more general sense. If he has run, not being sent, he shall not profit God's people; consequently the part of the vineyard entrusted to his care, must suffer for want of proper cultivation. If, being sent of God, he should become remiss or indolent; if, instead of giving himself to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine, he should fritter away his time in idle visits and frivolous conversation, such as is not profitable to the use of edifying; he falls under the denomination of an idler; and it is said, "Wo to the idle shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm; and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened." Zech. ii. 17. If the scruples of believers themselves are to be satisfied—if Moses and the prophets are to be brought to bear witness to Jesus of Nazareth—if the calumnies of the blaspheming Jews are to be repelled, and their misinterpretations of their own books confuted—if we are to be ready, that is, if we are to be qualified and prepared to give an answer to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us:—then a penetration in abstruse questions; a familiar knowledge of the Jewish history, and of all parts

of the sacred writings ; a sound judgment ; a faithful memory ; and a prompt elocution, (to say nothing of a quickness in philosophical discussion, and a critical knowledge of the ancient languages) are talents, without which the work of an evangelist will be but ill performed.

4. But again ; a minister may be said to partake of other men's sins in a still more direct manner. Leaving his example, when not in the pulpit, quite out of view, I shall not mention that misplaced familiarity which he indulges with the ungodly ; unlike the conduct of David, who, when the wicked were before him, kept his mouth with a bridle. Ps. xxxix. 1. A familiarity which renders them much better satisfied with their state, and much more callous under his ministry, than if he were generally to manifest a respectful reserve towards them ; as if he were sensible that the wrath of God abideth on them, till they have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them. I shall not mention that time-serving sanction, which is given by some modern ministers, when asked their private opinion concerning some of what the world would call, and have them call, the innocent amusements of the day, or rather of the night : I shall only speak here of his public ministerial duties.

The design of the Christian ministry is to convert and save men. Now, prejudice against the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, is one of the most common obstacles in the way of conversion.

The Scripture describes man as alienated from the life of God ; as in a state of enmity against God ; as in a state of wrath and condemnation ; as dead in

trespasses and sins; as incapable of discerning the things of the Spirit; as evil, only evil continually, in the imagination of the thoughts of his heart; as without hope, and without God in the world. Does the minister, either through inadequate views of man's total apostacy from God, or to court the approbation of the worldly and superficial, satisfy himself with a qualified representation of the subject? Does he, by a general and timid description, weaken the whole force of this fundamental doctrine? He runs the risk of partaking of all the sins which arise from the impenitence of his hearers.

1. The word of God, when skilfully handled, is like fire, and a hammer; it is also compared to a sword. The minister who does not unfold the law, and strive to show men all the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and their need of repentance and salvation in Christ, is, in some sort, chargeable with their destruction. "I have made thee as a watchman unto the house of Israel—when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die: and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand." Ezek. iii. 17, 18.

2. Again, the Scriptures declare the indispensable necessity of regeneration, or the new birth; and describe it as the awaking out of sleep; the resurrection of the soul from a death of sin to a life of righteousness: the translation of the soul from the power of darkness to the kingdom of God's dear Son; the new creation in Christ; and so on.

Does the minister confound this universal change of heart and life with the sacrament of baptism? Does he make it out little more than the decency of professional character? He runs an awful risk of destroying the souls of his hearers, by thus lowering the energetic influence of vital Christianity so infinitely beneath its own magnitude and design, which is to renew the heart, and save us from the world, self, and sin.

3. Once more; the Scriptures speak of God as willing the perfection or sanctification of believers, and promising that sin shall not have dominion over them; as having provided a Saviour for them, whose blood cleanseth from all sin. Does the preacher plead for the necessity of indwelling sin? He runs the risk of eclipsing the glories of that Gospel, which, proceeding from God, is as pure as its Author, and which effects not its purpose till it purifies as he is pure.

I cannot close these remarks without observing, that without a clear perception of Gospel truth, and all the freshness and permanency of its moral influences; without a sense of God, and of the rightful allegiance that is due to him; without a dexterity in comparing the heart with the requirements of the law of God; without practical appeals to the conscience; without an inward discernment of the very element and principle of rebellion in the heart, and that general coldness which prevails concerning the matters of duty and salvation; unless there is such an earnest and overpowering sense of all this, as will fix a minister down to the single object of deliverance; as will make him awake only to those realities

which have a significant and substantial bearing on the case that engrosses him; as will teach him to nauseate all the impertinencies of tasteful and ambitious description; as will attach him to truth in its simplicity; fasten his every regard on the Bible; and endear him to that plainness of speech, by which his own experience is set evidently before him; and that plain phraseology of Scripture, which is best suited to send home the doctrine of redemption in all its truth, and all the preciousness of its application: in one word, unless the wisdom of winning souls is dearest to him—throwing away all the loveliness of song, and the insignificancy of its passing fascination: unless these, which we denominate the gifts of the Holy Ghost, are possessed by a minister of the Gospel; though his deficiency may not be of a nature to be referred to any particular head, he is a solemn trifler—he is a prostitute of the sacred office—he is a canker to religion—he is dragging down his fellow-creatures to damnation, by weakening the vital influence of Christ's all-powerful Gospel, by his ill-judged eloquence, or by the spiritless impotence of a dead ministry.

My time, well nigh exhausted, will not suffer me to abstract from the primary design of these words, and apply them, as I had intended, generally to all men. I intended to show how pernicious is the influence of example; and how, by the mysterious sympathies of our nature, mankind are drawn together, and formed on each others character and model; and how they insensibly slide into manners that are continually pre-

sented to view in the public example; and how the greater part of the world follow just as they are led. We did design to point out especially, what a fatal currency actions receive from the example of the rich. For proof of this, I might refer you to the perpetual change in the article of dress, and every thing whose chief recommendation arises from fashion. The agreeable effect of an ornament arises from the principle of the association of ideas; and it is only while such an article of dress is confined to the rich, that it will please. When it is obtained and worn by the poor, who strain every nerve to keep up with the rich, it not only ceases to please, but fills the mind with disgust; being associated with the ideas of absurd imitation and vulgarity, and is accordingly laid aside by the rich. Hence too, it is, that the abettors of riotous amusements and pleasures, which debauch the mind, seek to give celebrity to an intended ball, by exhibiting a few leading names as managers: this obtains for the rout the denomination of decent. But I confess, I never could think that great names can sanctify crime, or weaken the force of God's word, which places revelling among the seventeen black marks of abomination, and declares that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven. O ye corrupters of the age, who give tone to the public manners, how many crimes, not absolutely your own, will appear against you in the day of eternity.

I did design also to show, how easily we may unawares partake of other men's sins by counsel; and

the evil effect of the counsel is greater, when those who give it are regarded as superiors.

It would be easy to show that we partake of other men's sins by ridicule, and attaching disagreeable ideas to religion, either through enmity to the cross of Christ, or to show our wit. We are, doubtless, chargeable with the sins of others, which we might have prevented by a proper exercise of that authority, which nature or Providence has given us over them. And here we can but observe, what cause we have to fear, lest, for want of parental restraint, our children should charge us with their destruction in a coming day.

We partake of other men's sins, when we furnish them with means and opportunities of sinning. How oft is this verified in the indulgences allowed to children, both in their dress, and in the company they are permitted to keep. But I cannot enter fully into these subjects; nor shall I even mention provocation, flattery, and concealment, as so many different methods by which we partake of other men's sins.

What we have said will cause every one to examine, whether, in addition to his own sins, he may not have to answer for the sins of others also. And those who have been promoters of sinful actions in others, may be well assured that they will have the greater punishment.

But as it is possible for us to partake of the sins of others, may we not also be the promoters of other men's righteousness? May not the faithful minister of the Gospel, though but a humble instrument in the hands of God, look forward with joyful antici-

pation to that day, when those who have turned many to righteousness shall shine as stars in the firmament for ever and ever? O what will he feel in the contemplation of a laborious, successful, and completed ministry, when hundreds shall arise in the face of saints and angels, and point to him as the honoured instrument of their salvation. And you, who, by a godly example, have shown the power of religion, what ecstasies will you feel, when younger saints in glory will say, In you was I first taught to set a proper value on religion. And you, parents, how will it overflow your hearts with transport indescribable, when, in the congregation of the righteous, your children shall arise and call you blessed.

My brethren, the kingdom of Jesus Christ is to be established in this world, and we may all regard ourselves as called to help in the great work. But you, the ministers of my God, you, in particular, are workers together with God. O let us bring every talent to the foot of the cross, and work for God; he will pay us by and by. Go on, honoured fathers, in the glorious work:—and you, my younger brethren, feel for Zion; take pleasure in her stones and dust. Help, local brethren, or let us help you.

O Lord Almighty! do thou help us all. Baptise us with the Holy Ghost, and the pure fire of thy love: and hasten the triumphs of thy coming kingdom. Amen.

SERMON V.



From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. John vi. 66.

IT is highly important that every man, when entering into the service of God, should maturely ponder both the nature and tendency of those flesh-crucifying and world-condemning doctrines, a thorough obedience to which is essential to the character which he is about to assume. Pursuant to this object, our Lord brings forward a maxim of human prudence, and very significantly inquires, (having first mentioned the cross attached to his religion) "Which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest all, who passing by, and beholding his unfinished design, mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish." It was for want of this forethought, that some of our Lord's too sanguine disciples, or hearers, took umbrage at the artless enunciation he gave them concerning the sublime mysteries of this Gospel, and the probable sufferings which they should endure for his sake. And although one, impressed with a lively sense of Jesus's love, might say, like a vehement Peter, "Lord, I will die for thee;" yet such was their

disgust, that from that time they went back, and walked no more with him.

My brethren, does not the undaunted courage of Moses show to great advantage, when compared with that pusillanimity which paralysed the souls of these revolted disciples? Moses, with a soul as large as eternity, and darting forward into all its immeasurable length, made light of whatever disagreeable circumstance might accompany religion in this world. The revolting disciples, with souls as little as minuteness itself, filling only the passing moment, and toned to the mere relish of sensual pleasure; said, "Give me the portion of goods which cometh to me;" and for one fleet moment's despicable joy, slung from them whole treasures of never-ending felicity. My brethren, whose conduct,—that of Moses, or that of the offended disciples—bears best the criterion of sound understanding and good sense? Ah! methinks the star of Moses's faith shines bright, through the darkness of their deplorable folly!

But whence is it, dear friends, that while we approve of the choice of Moses, we imitate the conduct of the disciples who were so soon offended? Whence is it, that our comparatively small suffering for Christ, so soon offends our delicacy, and hides from our eyes the attractions of his love, which, to those who know it, softens every thing the most painful in duty, and lightens every thing the most heavy in his yoke? Have you been decoyed into his service by a flattering promise of undisturbed tranquillity in this world? A certain scribe, struck with the dignity and beauty of our Lord, once said to him, "Master, I

will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." Jesus said to him, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." An amiable young man came to our Lord, having made up his mind to undertake the enterprize of salvation. "Good Master," said he, "what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Our Lord first told him what he must do,—“keep the commandments;” and then, though he loved the young man, plainly assured him what he must suffer, “Sell all thou hast, and give to the poor, and take up thy cross, and follow me:” which is, as if he had said, lay thy account to suffer reproach in this life. The kingdom of heaven is only gained by conquest, and none but those who do violence to themselves shall enter it. This is the time of trial. Peace and uninterrupted happiness are only known in heaven. Affrighted by the portrait, one is heard to exclaim, If these tribulations be inseparable from the Christian course, I abandon its pursuit!

Here, my brethren, here is disgust at religion. Foreseeing the offence of the cross, our Saviour said, “Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.” Aye, how many, either losing, or never having fully possessed the unction of grace, when the sun of persecution is risen, wither away—are offended,—and begin again to long for the indulgence of carnal gratification, and for the flesh-pots of Egypt? It was for a crime of this kind, that the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel in the wilderness; so that, of six hundred thousand who

left Egypt, only Caleb and Joshua entered the Promised Land.

Now, I design to enter the field, to combat that disgust which turns back many that have started, and deters others from starting in the heavenly course.

I. In the first place, it seems to me reasonable, in a world where the inquietudes and passions of the heart throw every thing into confusion, to complain of disgust, only when we meet with it in the way of duty. We seem to forget that every condition has its inconveniencies. We seem to think, that if we throw off the yoke of Christ, we at once bid adieu to trouble. But examine, in rotation, all stations. Interrogate the partizans of worldly pleasure; the envious; the ambitious; the revengeful; and you will find that they also have their inquietudes. The world is the habitation of the discontented. You will find, as Solomon well expressed it, that "The way of transgressors is hard." Joshua did not fear to contrast the service of God, with the service of the gods of the heathens. "If it seem evil to you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell." If by serving the Lord, you are deprived of happiness which the world can give, we might then accuse the Lord of treating his servants ill. But if the troubles of religion arise, not from any imperfection in virtue, but as a consequence of the condition of this mortal life; if cares are inevitable in our present state. and

we must encounter disgust, either on the part of the world or of religion; shall we not rather choose those sufferings which are meritorious, than those which add to the number of our crimes?

Peter seems to have contemplated this subject in a very rational point of view. Our Lord, seeing the general offence which his doctrines had given to the multitude, with a tenderness which forbade it, said to his disciples, "will ye also go away?" Peter said, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" As if he had said, Lord, we do not follow thee for the loaves and fishes. Thou didst not at the first promise to us a temporal recompense; from the first we learend that in this world we should have tribulation: and so far from being offended, we thank thee for it; for it makes us long for our deliverance, and for that immortal existence where nothing shall be wanting to our happiness. If happiness could be found in the world, unmingled with distress, we should find it in thy service: for thy grace bridles our passions, charms away our sufferings, and gives us a blessed foretaste of perfect felicity. If we leave thee, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and though this is a land of tears and conflict, thy doctrines reveal to us a world of eternal happiness,—our faith embraces thy promises,—and we expect that when we shall have sowed in tears, we shall reap in joy. Jesus, Master, we will not, for fear of reproach, abandon thee; for should we forsake thee, the fountain of living water, and seek happiness elsewhere, our expectation would end in disappointment,

and prove but a broken cistern that could hold no water.

II. It seems to me, in the second place, that we exaggerate the disgusts of religion. We admit that this life is the time of the birth of the new man, which is always attended with pain; that this is the time of mortification and privation; and that we must begin, in order to be Christians, by waging war with ourselves. Yet I am disposed to believe, that it is the prejudice of the senses which rises up against religion; and that it is only the first glance we take of it which paints it in gloomy and melancholy colours. What is this world? Tell me, ye men of experience, what is this world? It is a scene of revolutions, troubles and perpetual changes. It is a course where ten thousand deluded maniacs run after pleasures which continually elude their grasp. Tell me, then, if that religion, which places us above the phrenzies, jealousies, and suspicions of the world, and gives us dominion over our own hearts, is not more desirable than the giddy whirl of transient delight, which leaves behind it the envenomed sting of damning guilt? Tell me, O tell me, if Moses's choice will not bear the test of sound judgment, when he preferred the afflictions of God's people, to the bewitching sorceries of forbidden pleasure! What is this world? It is the bedlam of the universe—it is a dungeon of groans—it is a valley of tears—it is a desert cursed with briars and thorns, for the punishment of those who dwell in it. Tell me, parents, bereft of your children, is not this a true

description? Tell me, woman, widowed of conjugal bliss; tell me, helpless orphan, left to the mercy of the world; tell me, ye who are always expecting, and always disappointed, if I have painted this world in unfair colours? O then, I put it to you, is not the worst of religion better than the best of the world, if it consoles us in these events, supports us in these storms, and calms us in these agitations? Our light afflictions which are but for a moment, (admit that some of them may spring from our profession of religion) work out 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 eternal. Let me then submit to the *fatigue* of duty, (if you will call it so) if it deliver me from the bondage of sin, which weighs me down. Let grace mortify my passions, if it may but weaken them. Let the sword of affliction pierce my heart, if it may only let out the defiled matter.

III. I contend, thirdly, that there is a pleasure, even in the most painful duties of religion, which exceeds the pleasures of sin; and that there are resources of happiness in religion, of which the world cannot boast. To say the truth, there is no real happiness without it. To the ten thousand inquietudes of life, religion, and religion alone, affords a counterbalancing resource, to soothe and compose the holy soul.

In the bequest which our Lord left to his followers, when he said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you," we have an antidote to that corroding remorse, which poisons, to the wicked, every comfort of life. O, what a luxury! to carry with us at all

times a peaceful conscience, and a sense of the divine favour!—Pain then is sweet!

Again, how desirable to know (and none but the Christian can know it) that whatever we suffer according to the will of God, shall turn to our account: and that God renders the road to heaven so difficult, only to render our crown more brilliant. We know that all things work together for our good; and O how pleasant are the afflictions of the Christian, when he can view them as marks of the divine approbation; and that the Lord is carrying him in the same road in which he carried his saints; and is treating him as he formerly treated the upright.

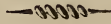
But I have not spoken of the sublime consolation which the holy soul feels, even while reading that book which promises him affliction and tears in this life; while at the same time he has that faith which brings nigh to him eternity and immortal blessedness, and which will more than repay all the sufferings of this fleeting life. And tell me, if you can, what overflowing joys exalt the soul of the humble believer, when in fervent prayer he takes hold on the truth and promise of the Eternal! And how does the river of pleasures flow through his soul, when, in the mystery of the holy sacrament, he feasts on the love of his dying Redeemer! And death, which is the most painful, is, at the same time, the most joyful circumstance of his life: it cuts off, at a blow, all sorrow from his heart, and throws him, enraptured, into the bosom of his God.

Having attempted to show that our disgust at religion is unreasonable, I shall conclude this dis-

course by a short address to two classes of people. First, those who never entered into the course of piety. Admitting that the path of religion is really as gloomy as you paint it, can the delay of your conversion sweeten the bitter potion of virtue? The longer we stay away from God, the more invincible is the distaste we take to him. O what work has the heart which has always been engrossed by the world, in consecrating itself to God! It is like a slave condemned to search in the earth for treasures of gold amid opposing rocks.

The Christian I address in the language of the Saviour:—"Will you also go away?" You whom I have called, and distinguished by marks of affection, and to whom I have revealed the secrets of the other world, in which I design to crown you?

SERMON VI.



*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation,
that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.*

1 Tim. i. 15.

THESSE words contain an epitome of the Gospel. Whatsoever we have received from God to deliver to you; whatsoever regards that mysterious plan of redemption, of which Jesus Christ is the glorious Author; that redemption, whose generous object is justification, peace, and holiness here, and glory and beatitude through the mighty range of an all encircling eternity; all is found in the abridged Gospel of the text.

As ministers of the hope-inspiring Gospel, we conceive, that opening, explaining, and enforcing the peculiar doctrines of the text, is that by which we are principally distinguished from merely moral lecturers; who speak well indeed of virtue, but overlook the only foundation on which it can be erected. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? What has their dry morality accomplished? Where is the nation whose principles and practice have been revolutionized by their harangues? Where is the town or vil-

lage from which wickedness has been expelled, by the utmost efforts of mere philosophy? Where is the heart, which, apart from the Gospel, has attained to real peace, and the satisfactory assurance of a glorious immortality?

Surrounded by darkness as we are, in a state of nature; bewildered in uncertainty, and torn by legion lusts and cruel sins, I hear the involuntary groan of the wretched sinner, who seeks in vain to satisfy himself with sin; "Who will show me any good?" I, says the blessed Jesus, I will show thee good; I will do thee good. "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

"My soul obeys the heavenly call,
And runs to this relief."

But will God indeed dwell with men? Will Christ lay down his life for his enemies? Yes, "he came to seek and to save that which was lost; and he is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him."

It has been said of the learned Athenians, that they spent much of their time in communicating, or hearing some new thing. This must have been an employment unworthy of the talents and learning they possessed; for, in the mass of news that circulated among them, either a part must have been false, and therefore, not entitled to credit; or all, even if true, could not have been interesting. But the glorious intelligence in the text is true, and firm as the broad pillars of the heavens and the earth, and challenges our utmost confidence. Nor is it one of those truths

which frightens credence, by vouching the punitive justice of God; like that which declares, that "the wicked shall be turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God." No, my brethren, it is one of those glorious truths which lays as great a claim to our gratitude, as to our faith.

The apostle, in his holy revery, does not here start a new doctrine. The event of which he speaks had been the focus where religious thought had centred for ages. Deeply interested in the same event, "the prophets searched diligently what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified before-hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow." 1 Pet. i. 10, 11. The fulness of the time, however, had now come, and the glories of the Godhead had been veiled in humanity. John had borne witness to him, as the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world; and his testimony was confirmed by a solemn voice from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

The apostle, however, did not rest his faith, entirely, on these testimonies to the incarnation of Christ; but he seems to have had his faith led into captivity by the energetic grace which had already subdued the power of sin in his heart. "We speak that we do know; and we know, by an inward consciousness which cannot deceive us, "I am the chief of sinners;" but the power of Christ's Gospel has broken my chain, and made me the Lord's freedman. *O! it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.*

You will bend your whole attention to what we shall say, while we make,

I. Some observations on the condition of mankind by nature :—they are *sinner*s.

It will be proper, then,

II. To speak of the design with which Christ came into the world ; namely, to save sinners.

III. We shall then say something of the truth, worth, and excellency of the Gospel revelation.

I. We are to make some observations on the condition of mankind by nature.

It is briefly stated in the text, that they are sinners ; that is, influenced by carnal and sinful inclinations, which they did not receive from God, but which are the effect of depravity. All men by nature are disposed to break God's holy laws, and to run counter to his will. Although this statement is confirmed by experience and observation, there are some who deny it altogether, and contend that man is now what he was when he came out of the hands of his Creator. They therefore reject the Saviour, and essay to stand before God on a footing of absolute righteousness. They pretend to acknowledge one God ; but, as for Jesus Christ, they say, with the Jews, " Away with him !" But for my own part, could I believe that men were originally what they are now ; so like a wild ass's colt, so stupid, so stubborn, so intractable, so prone to evil, so averse to good, no wiser or better than men are at present ; I could not go so far as the Deist : I must either be a Manichee

or an Atheist; I must either believe there is an evil God, or no God at all.

Others are willing to admit, (when stated as a general proposition,) that men are sinners, and that they are weak creatures, standing in need of pity and comfort. But when we urge it as a truth, founded on the veracity of God, that they are miserable sinners, and obnoxious to the wrath of a holy and justly offended God, they are ready to turn a deaf ear to our doctrine. In short, my brethren, the views which the carnal mind takes of this subject, are clouded and indistinct; and but seldom is it seriously considered, what a prominent point the doctrine of depravity presents, in the scheme of redemption.

It is not my design, at this time, to point to all the arguments furnished by reason, to prove this doctrine: it is a truth, which may be seen and felt, and needs no foreign wisdom. Moreover, the united efforts of the Christian world to circulate the holy Scriptures, in connexion with the seal of God which is affixed to them, fully authorizes the minister of the Gospel to consider the Bible, (a book received and approved by the best sense of mankind,) as of Divine origin—as a standard of appeals: and we think ourselves on too high ground, to put the doctrine of human depravity at issue before the tribunal of human reason.

The Lord hath spoken; let the kings of the earth keep silence. “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was evil continually.”—And

again, "The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

St. Paul, in a more refined age, gives us this piece of history relative to some of the most dignified of the Grecian philosophers: "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools; and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." Rom. i. 22, 23. A certain writer wittily remarked, that every thing was worshipped as God, but God himself.

Nor is man by nature less helpless than sinful; for the law by which the Almighty designed to govern him, being once broken, could not be repaired, but by him who first gave it. It being infinite, man by his best obedience, even in his pure and perfect state, could never bring his Creator in debt to him, so as to claim salvation on the ground of merit: for he is the creature of God; his powers belong to his Maker; he owes him all the service he can perform. Man is a derived and dependant creature, and has nothing but what he has received. He cannot live without the supporting energy of God, and can return him nothing that is not his own. Now, as we cannot purchase one part of a man's property, by giving him another part of his own property; so we cannot purchase from God any thing that is his own, by that to which he has an equal claim.

But consider man in his present circumstances, fallen from God, destitute of that image of God, righteousness and true holiness, in which he was created, and deeply guilty through innumerable

transgressions; then hear him ask, How shall I be delivered from the power of sin, that it may no longer have dominion over me? How shall I be delivered from the guilt of sin, that it may no longer oppress my tortured conscience? How shall I be delivered from the pollution of sin, and be prepared for, and entitled to, everlasting glory? The proper answer to these anxious questions, leads to the second thing which was proposed; namely,

II. The design with which Christ came into this world.

This is briefly stated in the text: he *came into the world to save sinners*. His errand was an errand of mercy. He did not come to condemn the world, but that the world, through him, might be saved. In the salvation of the human soul, two attributes of God appear to be peculiarly exercised and harmonized, namely, his justice and his mercy; and, however opposite the claims of these two attributes may seem to mortals, through the atonement of Christ "God can be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." His life was offered for the life of man; and this was a sacrifice which God himself required: for Christ was considered the *Lamb of God*, which taketh away the sin of the world. He, as a sacrifice for sin, was the end of the law for righteousness—for justification—to every one that believeth. Through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that alone, a sinner is saved from the power, guilt, and pollution of sin.

This brings us to speak of the third thing proposed; namely,

III. The truth, worth, and excellency of the Gospel revelation.

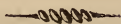
The most compendious method to attain to a knowledge of Gospel truth, is to enter into it as a scheme or plan, and to obey its requisitions. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine," &c. But few systems of religion have been set on foot, that have not had some plausible arguments to establish their truth and excellence. But experiment and utility give their evidence in favour of the Christian system. Jesus Christ is a tried stone. Notice the effect that Christianity wrought in St. Paul, as one evidence, among many, of the truth and excellency of the Gospel. Contemplate, for a moment, the inveterate prejudices of his education, and the enmity he manifested against the Gospel and members of Jesus Christ. Inquire, next, what were the weapons with which this enmity was slain, and this prejudice removed. It was not "enticing words of man's wisdom," that effected the change; but the mighty energy of Christ's own Gospel. His change was not the sickly qualm of fanaticism. He took but the two parts through life: that of Judaism, and that of Christianity. The one he defended, till slain by the sword of the Spirit: the other he defended, with all his might, from that time until his luminous sun set in blood, to rise again in glory. What but truth invincible, could have made a lamb of this lion? It was not sophistical arguments by which he was convinced; but the naked truth, attended by the Holy Spirit, found its way to his heart, and wrought the change.

The worth and excellence of religion may be seen, by contemplating that firmness and peace with which he met dangers and death. In stripes, bonds, and imprisonments, he was serene and unmoved; and his fortitude, which supported him in the trials of life, made him more than conqueror in the pains of martyrdom. Religion, as a principle, is the same in all who possess it. St. Paul, though an illustrious pattern of godliness, was not the only person who has expressed a rational confidence in a dying hour. It is one of the principal characteristics of religion, that it tranquillizes the soul in life, and gives its possessor more than victory at death.

Let me here inquire, whether you have ever attentively considered the subject of religion. If so, you must be convinced of its worth. Let me next ask, if you have embraced it? It never was designed for mere speculation: and as it relates to you, Christ has died in vain, and the Gospel revelation is made in vain, unless you embrace it, and become a co-worker with the Holy Spirit.

O brethren, shall we be amused with the trifles of life, and neglect this glorious news, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners! What must be our guilt, what must be our punishment! O how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation!

SERMON VII.



Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. Matt. xxv. 41.

OFTEN have I lifted my warning voice among you, but never, to my recollection, did I ascend this pulpit, with a mind so completely surcharged with unutterable ideas, as at this time. It is not a darkened sun, nor a bloody moon, that overwhelms me—It is not a reeling earth, nor a roaring sea, that affrights me—No, it is not the aggravated roar of resounding thunders, nor yet the irresistible glare of all-conquering fire, that convulses me. I have just heard—ah! what did I hear? I have just heard the voice of a God, the treasures of whose grace is quite exhausted. I have just heard the God of battle, whose love is turned into hate; whose riches of grace are turned into treasures of wrath. By faith, I say, I have just heard this great arbiter of our destiny utter that curse against the vessels of wrath, who have fitted themselves for destruction; which, whilst it admits of no mitigation or repeal, consigns them to the unimaginable agonies of eternal damnation. Unhappy man that I am, I have taken the children's bread, and

cast it to dogs ; I have poured forth, in strains of godly eloquence, to an unheeding multitude, the alluring calls of Christ's glorious Gospel, whilst my fruit has been but as the gleaning of the vintage. It seems as though God's word has as yet returned empty ; and, like the old prophet, I now enquire, " Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed ?" Should I be considered an unjust censor, if I were to state my fears, that there are many present who are carnal and unconverted, and consequently enemies to God ? To such it seems almost unnecessary to say any thing by way of exhortation : efforts of this kind have long been beggared, and we appear to have arisen, once more, only to inscribe the epitaph of your privileges, and the date which at once points to the end of your joys, and the beginning of your wo. *Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.*

I. I design to speak, first, of the certainty of hell torments ; and,

II. Of their greatness, and wherein the greatness of them will consist :

III. Of their eternity.

These doctrines seem to be clearly implied in the text.

I. And, first, I design to speak something of the certainty of hell torments. *Then shall he* (Christ, the

Judge of the world) *say to them on the left hand, (the wicked) Depart from me, ye cursed, &c.*

It is commonly thought sufficient, if the minister of the Gospel adduce clear and plain Scripture to prove his doctrine: indeed the word of God is a standard, from which there is no appeal. But since there are some who are not entirely satisfied with Scripture authorities, we design, first, to give the evidence of nature and reason on this important article of our holy religion, before we appeal to the irresistible authority of the sacred Scriptures; that thus, "becoming all things to all men," we may at least save some, and at the same time, show the harmony subsisting between the word of God, and the principles of nature and reason.

An argument, of no inconsiderable force, to prove the certainty of future punishments, arises from the universal testimony of mankind, that is, the concurrence of all nations in the belief of this truth. This we call the argument of nature; and this, by the glimmering light of antiquity, we may read in the most obsolete pages of the history of man, whether sacred or profane. Although its notices are not very clear, from the fall of Adam to the settlement of the Jewish nation; yet their tradition assures us, that they were impressed with a belief of future rewards and punishments. And in their Talmud and Targums, says Bishop Dawes, as well as from the particular acknowledgment of their most ancient and respectable Rabbins, we learn that they did explicitly believe, that there is a hell to punish the wicked in the next life. Hence, when our Saviour talked to the Jews

about hell, they did not express any surprise, or any disposition to contradict, except the sect of the Sadducees, who taught that there was neither angel nor spirit. And it is well known, that the Jews, at present, make the belief of future punishments a necessary article of their creed; and as they are very tenacious of the traditions of their forefathers, there is no doubt that, in this particular thing, they follow their faith.

As to the pagans, they seem evidently to testify their belief of future punishment for the wicked. Hence the repeated sacrifices which they offered to the infernal gods, joined with prayer to them, that they would be kind and propitious to their departed friends. With this sentiment Plutarch addressed a consolatory letter to his wife on the death of his little innocent daughter, and informed her, that there was no need to offer sacrifice to the gods on her account, because so sweet and innocent a child was gone to a better and a diviner state. This doctrine was taught by the Brahmins of India; by the Magi of Persia; by the Druids of Gaul; and in the colleges of Egypt. And it is evident, that the popular mythology of Greece and Rome contained the elements of a truth so grand and interesting, in the tribunal of Minos; in the happy fields of Elysium, the seat of perpetual delights to pure and innocent souls; and in the dreadful abyss of Tartarus, its wheels, its vultures, its flames, and avenging furies, that were supposed to persecute the guilty.

Moreover, a sense of right and wrong is implanted in the breast of every human being. The good man is

no stranger to the smiles of an approving conscience ; while, to the guilty, it often appears like a boding spectre, which points him to that punishment with which God has threatened the impenitent. Has God formed the nature of man with no design ; and are all his feelings but the artful springs of a delusive mechanism ? No, my brethren—Every original sentiment of human nature points to truth ; and, when properly analyzed, is what the apostle denominates, the work of the law written on men's hearts.

But it is reasonable to believe, that there is a hell to punish the wicked. For, first, God has made man an accountable and punishable being, and has given him a law by which to govern himself : a law of which he cannot be ignorant. God has left him at liberty, moreover, to act according to his own will ; to choose or refuse ; to obey or disobey this law ; so that his transgression of it must be voluntary, or of choice : this is the very constituent of sin. Now, according to the perfections of God, it is impossible that sin should go unpunished ; for if God for one moment should cease to be opposed to sin, he would that moment cease to be God. In many instances God shows his disapprobation of sin, and inflicts capital punishment on some sinners, even in this life. None are presumptuous enough to doubt his ability thus to punish all sinners : but many, we know, are scarcely punished here at all ; and those who are punished most, suffer vastly beneath the demerit of their crimes, and none in any proportion to them. From this we are surely at liberty to infer, that God has reserved some other time and place, and that is

the next life, where these things shall be adjusted, his honour fully vindicated, and the measure of his enemies' punishment filled up.

But I will now appeal to the irresistible authority of the sacred Scriptures. If thy hand, or foot, or eye, offend thee, cut it off, or pluck it out; for it is better to do so, than having two of each, to be cast into hell fire. In the Psalms it is said, "the wicked shall be turned into hell;" and, speaking of the judgment, Christ saith, "The son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." And, as in the text, *Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.* How awful is the certainty of that vengeance which God shall inflict on the contemners of his grace, when the fire which is kindled in his anger, shall burn to the lowest hell!

We proceed to speak, as was proposed,

II. Of the greatness of hell torments, and wherein their greatness will consist.

Then shall he also say, Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire. Those who are able to form any sort of correct ideas of the divine nature and majesty, will not find it difficult to believe, that sin is very inexcusable and aggravating, and that it will receive the most sore and dreadful punishment. Plato, a pagan philosopher,

had a view of this; and, in the person of one who is supposed to have seen hell, and afterward returned to this world, he tells us the dreadful spectacles he saw:—men tortured in innumerable forms; some in rivers of fire; some shivering and freezing with excessive cold; and others thrown upon thorns, or mangled by wild beasts. These ideas, though extravagant, contain, at bottom, the native idea of the divine vengeance which the wicked shall experience. In Scripture we find the same idea perfected. The doom of the rebellious angels; of Sodom and Gomorrah, and of the old world; are instances of the terror of God's wrath, and tokens of the greatness of future torment for the wicked.

But in what shall that greatness consist? They see themselves separated from God, and surrounded with fire. *Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.* Here seems to be a double punishment—They see themselves separated from the God of heaven. What is it to be separated from God? Alas! who can comprehend this dreadful phrase, separated from God! Deprived of God! O horrid reflection!—the privation of God! The greatest good man can enjoy in this life, is to have God for his portion.—The moment God shall say, *Depart, ye cursed,* there shall be no more communication between reprobate souls and God for ever; but a separation shall ensue, as complete and irrevocable, as if God should say, You wished there were no God; and no God shall you have; you would not seek God, and now you shall seek him to no purpose; you would not know your God; your God you never shall see or know. God will renounce them in

quality of a father, friend, and protector; and know them only as a judge, avenger, and enemy. Wherefore, the damned will be doubly unhappy; because God will not only be no longer favourable and propitious to them, but also declared and armed against them. After this it would seem almost useless to expatiate on the sensible pains with which this separation from God shall be accompanied; such as a remembrance of the good things they have enjoyed, of the grace they abused, and of the supreme excellence and eternal good, of which they are for ever deprived.

It appears to me, my brethren, that there is no need of any devil, to make hell a scene of torment: each unhappy soul will find a sufficient tormentor in the guilt of his own crimes which he brought with him thither. His abominable impurities—his enormous injustice—his profanation of holy things—his contempt of the Supreme Being—his rancour and animosity—his hypocritical artifices—his dark designs and insidious calumnies; and many other iniquities, which it is beyond my power to reckon up, will besiege him, will seize upon him, and burn him with the most inexpressible anguish. His misery will be completed by despair of ever feeling the divine clemency. This leads to the third thing to be considered:

III. The eternity of hell torments.

It is natural to look to futurity for comfort and relief, under any present distress. Hope is an anodyne, that alleviates the pain with which we are

oppressed. If circumstances are ever so unfavourable, we nevertheless persuade ourselves that all our present ills will have a termination; and the uncertainty of future contingencies enables us sometimes to hope for objects which we have no reason to expect. Not so, however, with the lost. They suffer without any expectation of better days. They are in an actual, and everlasting state of desperation. That which exists, torments them the more, because they know it shall never cease to exist. O for a little respite, a little mitigation of these pains!—This is the language of a reprobate soul. But, God shall answer, Of what avail are these complaints? They strike my ears, but they reach not my heart—no remedy, no redress!—And would you know the reason? Because I called a thousand, and a thousand times, and ye refused; you wilfully and outrageously held out against my grace; now will I laugh at your calamity: and though you should mourn, and groan, and repent to all eternity, it is of no avail. There is a gulf fixed between you and me.

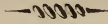
To some it may be incomprehensible, that sin, which is but momentary, should be punished eternally. To such I would observe, if the act of sin be momentary, in the disposition of the sinner, there is a secret will to be for ever a sinner. He wishes to live, only to enjoy those things which minister to sin, and foment the passions; the necessary proportion, therefore, is observed between the eternity of their pains, and the malignity of their hearts. In this life, by grace, a man may repent and satisfy God, but

without repentance there is no remission of sin. Now, as it is impossible to attain evangelical repentance in hell, the punishment there must consequently be eternal. Such are the arguments we would advance from reason, if we were deprived of the unerring light of Revelation. But, as the truth of revelation, I presume, is admitted in this assembly, you will listen to its awful testimony. *Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire:* and again, "there the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched;" and again, "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever."

My brethren, do we believe there is a hell, into which the wicked shall certainly be turned? What is it then; is it inadvertence, is it madness, is it enchantment, which keeps us from labouring to shun it? Every impenitent sinner is in the ready way to this dreadful place: every prayerless soul, every Sabbath-breaker, swearer, liar, drunkard and defrauder. And O how great will your misery be! Are your bones brass? Is your flesh iron? Can you consent to lie down in everlasting burnings? O will you persist in sin, and brave the consequences? Do you provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are you stronger than he? O how corroding will be your reflections, when you shall say, "I am tormented in this flame." Will you vainly think that you shall suffer awhile, and then come out? Hear the text again: *Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.* If I am importunate with you, it is for your good: danger awaits you—hell is before the sinner. You may escape, if you will. Christ now

invites you, and offers you his grace ; if you will, you may accept it ; if not, you must perish, and I am clear of your blood.

SERMON VIII.



For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Luke xiv. 28, 29, 30.

I THINK it may be assumed as a truth beyond all possibility of successful contradiction, that there is no pursuit of life equal in importance to that of the salvation of the soul. He who was God, as well as man, and possessed of infinite wisdom, while on earth asked, "what it should profit a man, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" There is no answer recorded to this question: indeed, an answer was not necessary, for it admits but of one. All men, who think at all, must think alike on this subject. Tell me, then, according to the sanctions of common sense, if that man, who merges all prospect of a happy immortality in the pursuit of the shadowy and transitory objects of this life, does not act unwisely? It would be well not to suffer this question to pass unnoticed. My brethren, if angels could

weep, I am persuaded they would drop a tear for a person of this description.

But are these the only characters who call for commiseration? Are they the only persons who shall miss salvation? Does the buckling on of armour entitle a man to the character of real bravery, so much as fighting valiantly, and conquering his antagonist? Does one single step in the course of righteousness, ensure a man the prize of glory? If so, why have we an account of so many, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? Why do we hear of the apostacy of Judas and Demas? And why is the case of the young man mentioned, who came to our Lord (as it appears) with pious intent; who nevertheless went away sorrowful, after he heard the terms of discipleship.

But wherefore is it, that many even of those who start for heaven, and make great pretensions to religion, afterward turn back, like certain disciples spoken of in the Gospel; who, having heard Jesus declare what it would cost them to follow him, went back, and walked no more with him? I say, whence is it that so many act thus? Is it because the preachers of salvation have used deception, and with enticing words have made them proselytes, keeping out of sight the afflictions of the people of God? We are prepared to state, that a mode of conduct, entirely different from this, has been pursued, first by Christ, and then by his ministers. How often did the blessed Jesus, whose kingdom was not of this world—the blessed Jesus, who had not a place where to lay his head—declare to his disciples the difficulties

which they would have to surmount in the Christian course? He assured them that they should be persecuted, and hated of all men. And how did St. Paul bear his testimony to the same truth, when he affirmed, that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution? Nor has any of the inspired characters attempted to keep the sufferings of Christ's people out of sight. It would seem, at first view, that they were rather exaggerated, than diminished. "Others (says St. Paul) had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings; yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment; they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented, they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens, and caves of the earth." No man, surely, will dare to say, that craft has been used in this way, by displaying the fairest side of religion, while the difficulties have been kept out of sight.

Let us then recur to the inquiry we have already made. Why have so many, who had enlisted under the Captain of their salvation, deserted the colours of the cross in so short a time? Have they found out, by an experience of religion, that it is not worth their attention? Have they found out, that hell is a more comfortable place than Jesus Christ described it? Have they found out, that a guilty conscience and a wounded spirit may easily be borne? Have they found out, that heaven is a trifling toy, not worthy to be compared to a few moments of pleasurable sin? I have seen none, who pretend to offer excuses

like these, for leaving the paths of religion. Why then are we deserted by so many, who ran well for a season? Why did they start at first; or why, having started, did they not hold out to the end? It seems to me, my brethren, that since the fall, we have lost the balance of our mind, and frequently our passions are too strong for our reason; and as it was in the days of our Saviour, so is it now; we hear the word with joy, but not forming our calculations aright, in time of persecution and conflict we fall away. Our Lord, in the words of our text, intimates that it is necessary for those who would be religious, seriously and deliberately to weigh the difficulties and dangers, before they embark in his cause; lest, after making a profession of religion, they should expose themselves to contempt, and bring heavier ruin upon their souls by drawing back to perdition. And this he illustrates by a comparison. A man, says he, who acts wisely, before he begins to build a tower, or dwelling-house, (for "according to the Asiatic manner, battlements were built on the tops of houses, both to take the fresh air, and to serve for refuge and defence against an enemy: it was also used for prayer and meditation,") would first sit down and make an estimate of the expense; lest otherwise, embarking in a work for which his resources are not sufficient, the unfinished ruins should expose him to contempt. It is not my design to strain every part of the comparison, but merely to apply it to the use for which it was intended; which was, to give a view of the necessity of deep forethought on the subject of religion.

Is it fancy, or do I perceive the countenances of some to brighten? My ears have been unused, says one, to hear any thing from our present speaker, so congenial with my own views. I have no notion of seeing persons too precipitate in religious pursuits. If I ever begin a religious course, I think that I shall hold out to the end. To such an one I would offer my own opinion. Although, like you, I love to see persons count the cost, I yet deem it extremely unsafe for them to take up too much time about it. And so thought Joshua; for when some of the Israelites seemed dilatory in perfecting the decision of their minds, he chided with them for their delay, where so many circumstances conspired to accelerate the reckoning. How much time, my brethren, is necessary to enable a man to form an opinion on the subject of religion? I have asked this question, but I think it does not admit of a definite answer: with some more time is necessary than with others. If, for instance, a man who has not been blessed with a religious education, would turn his attention to the subject of religion, and would wish to examine it before he embraces it; he will certainly require more time to collect the evidences of Christianity, and become a sound believer, than he who has been trained to the contemplation of those evidences from early youth.

But it seems to me that our Saviour assumed the truth of his religion, and that his principal object was to guard his followers, and those who should thereafter wish to follow him, from being turned out of the way by his cross. To this end he recommended

a systematical forethought, conducted on the principles of arithmetical calculation. This, my brethren, although it may appear to be something new, is, I think, a correct view of the subject. You have been for some time perplexed in making out your reckoning about the cross: I will, by the help of God, and your permission, strive to work the sum for you. But, first of all, let us state it fairly. And, first, God created man, and made him pure and upright, Gen. i. 27. "So God created man in his own image." Again, when God created man, he endowed him with agency, and entered into covenant with him, prohibiting the tree of knowledge as a test of obedience: "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Man broke the covenant of his God, became a sinner, and liable to the penalty of the law, which was death: "For by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." The loss of natural life is not the principal thing intended here, but the loss of spiritual life, and of all title to eternal happiness. In this deplorable situation God took pity on man, and, through free love, sent his Son to die for him: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This Saviour is the only foundation of our salvation, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Again, though Christ is able to save to the uttermost, he saves none but "such as come to him:" the will of God and the will of man must concur in the salvation of a sinner. "He that believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved,

and he that believeth not, shall be damned." Here is the sum—man was lost; Christ has come to seek and to save him; but saves him as an agent. Christ has laid the foundation, and given him the means wherewith to raise the tower of salvation.

We will now proceed to make our calculation of the cost requisite to complete the building. And here we will stop one minute to explain the nature of the Christian salvation. We are not to regard it as an arbitrary thing. By this I would have you to understand, that it is impossible but that salvation should include true holiness, and exclude all carnality and sin. God does not require us to perform the duties of religion, merely to torment us; but, according to the immutability of his nature, and the eternal fitness of things, it is impossible that a man can be happy in the next world, who is not holy in this. The Christian salvation consists in imbibing the spirit of Christ, and following his example. Now, it is said in Holy Writ, "love not the world, nor the things of the world"—"for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." From this you may see, that to be religious will cost you the world. But what do you mean by that? I mean that you are to live in the spirit of separation from the world: I mean that you are to renounce its false pleasures, its profane joys, its criminal intrigues, the luxury, the pastimes, the folly, the customs, and the evil practices of the world; all that is calculated to foment the passions, and nourish the dissoluteness of the world. I would not have

you to understand that a Christian is to hold no intercourse with the world: but you are, by your example, to give them a notion of the religion which you profess. In leaving the world you will irritate its spirit, and it will load you with reproach; but if you would be a Christian, you must suffer persecution. If any man come unto me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." That is, if their opinion come in contact with the duties of religion, unless we disoblige them to obey Christ, we are none of his. We may expect, my brethren, that the children of the bond-woman will persecute the children of the free. Let me assure you, that you will have to build the tower of salvation, like the children of Israel built the walls of Jerusalem, working with one hand, and holding the weapon of your warfare in the other. This spirit of persecution will be manifested under one form or other. Formerly it bound its victim to the stake, or shut him up in prison; but although persecution no longer takes away life, still it discovers its hatred to the followers of Christ in different ways. "I am come," says Christ, "to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law: and a man's foes shall be those of his own household." This seems strange; but it is impossible that it should be otherwise, unless all embrace religion: for those who do not, will suffer their enmity to show itself either in anger or ridicule.

Again, in counting the cost, it will be well to remember, that it will cost you your *self-will*. The word of God effects but little, till it casts down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of Christ. Like him who sustained the agony in the garden, your temper must be expressed in these words: "nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." Ah! my brethren, here you will find a struggle. In addition to this, you will have to apply yourselves to the duties of religion, redeeming the time, and working out your salvation with fear and trembling; repenting, praying, acting faith, watching, fasting, fighting, running, striving, pressing, agonizing to enter in at the strait gate. What do you think of trying to get to heaven on these terms? I wait for an answer. O, says one, it will not do; I never can stand it; I cannot give up the world for religion. O my friend, my friend, what hast thou said? I know that religion is true, and that without it I must be miserable through all eternity; but the cross is so great, rather than bear it, I will consent to lie down in everlasting burnings. How will one moment's torment make you see and feel the folly of your choice! Yea, the prospect of hell, when on your dying bed, shall declare your madness and presumption. But, says one—my friend, I am almost disposed to be a Christian. O may my God help you to be altogether a Christian! What shall I say to turn the scale in favour of religion. Think not that the frowns of the world will be so very terrible, when you will have, at the same time, the support of an

approving conscience, and the love and smiles of Christ. Think not that you will regret the loss of the world so much as you fear, when, in its place, you shall have a joyful assurance of an inheritance laid up in heaven, incomparably more valuable than the riches of both the Indies. Think not that the duties of religion will be irksome, when you have the spirit of Christ, and enjoy constant communion with him. Be not affrighted at difficulties, when God has promised to be with you in six troubles, and said, "in seven I will not leave thee." Take the example of saints, and may God prosper you!

SERMON IX.



For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where, and in all things, I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. Phil. iv. 11, 12, 13.

IT is an acquisition of no inconsiderable worth, to be able to view, at all times, all the various circumstances of our outward condition with perfect coolness; and to have courage to perform every duty which the most enlightened conscience enjoins. If we contemplate ourselves as dwelling beneath the planets,

“ The baleful influence of whose giddy dance,
Sheds sad vicissitude on all beneath ;”

if we consider that the most apparently trivial circumstance is quite sufficient to obstruct the current of our delight, while at the same time we are the sport of ten thousand evils; how valuable must that science be, by which we are taught, not only to look with composure at the black blast of adversity, but even to obtain tribute from our hardest trials. More

over, when we take into view the difficulty of performing our duties, and remember how closely our duty and happiness stand connected; how precious is that assistance which is communicated from Christ, the Captain of our salvation, by which we are enabled to "subdue kingdoms, work righteousness, obtain promises, stop the mouths of lions, quench the violence of fire, wax valiant in fight, put to flight the armies of the aliens;" and, in one word, *do all things*. But who is sufficient for these things? Does the philosopher affect this science? his armour is quite too large for him. He may, indeed, in some sort, divest himself of passion, but his temper becomes austere and unamiable; and if he be unmoved by the interests of the world, he is also negligent of its decencies. If he be not discomposed by the injuries of men, he enters not, with sympathetic warmth, into their social pleasures. Bow, philosophy, bow to thy superior, *religion*. She, indeed, blends the warmth of affection, and the sweetness of temper, with the firmest fortitude in affliction; and sheds on her cheerful votaries a saintly dignity, which raises them

"Above the common walks of life,
Quite to the verge of heaven."

—There Paul, there was thy citizenship.

My brethren, whatever is excellent in the whole science of salvation, is found in these words. Here is contentment, exemplified by Saint Paul. Let us attend to it for a moment. What is contentment, in a religious sense? It is a holy acquiescence, without plenary satisfaction, relative to the dispensations of

Providence: an acquiescence, however, which arises not from indolence. There are certain conditions of life, in which contentment would be a crime; as for instance, if my conduct be such as the word of God condemns, contentment, in that case, would be but as the fatal calm which precedes a storm. If, moreover, (which is more connected with the subject) I am plunged into poverty by my own indolence; if I am likely to suffer for the necessaries of life, because I am too lazy to labour for them, and would rather trust to begging, than to betake myself to a course of reasonable exertions; to be content in this condition, argues the greatest ignorance of the nature of religion, which forbids negligence in business, and enjoins perseverance and industry.

Christian contentment can only spring from a consciousness of our discharge of duty, and a firm persuasion of the wisdom and goodness of God; who will, though we should be brought into ways, the end of which we cannot see, make a way for our escape in every time of trial. Our Lord told Peter, when he was about to wash that disciple's feet, "what I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." John xiii. 7. This is sufficient to satisfy the contented Christian. St. Peter gives us an excellent view of this evangelic temper, when he says, "wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator." 1 Pet. iv. 19. It appears plainly, from the foregoing remark, that contentment implies a cheerful willingness, both to *suffer* and to *do* the will of God. *I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be con-*

tent. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where, and in all things, I am instructed, both to be full, and to be hungry; both to abound, and to suffer need:" this is suffering the will of God. And he moreover adds, *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me: this is doing the will of God.*

The apostle gives us to understand, that this holy resignation was not natural, but superinduced: *I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound.* What is it to know how to be abased? It is to sustain the infirmities of life, and not to suffer the spirit to sink in the day of adversity. It is a disposition of mind, resulting from a firm persuasion, that whatever we meet with, is from the hand of God, and that whatever we part from, is but a perishing creature; and that God is able to restore all lost comforts to us with increase, or supply their place with the diviner delight of Christian resignation, or the holy quiet of inward peace, by which the soul is enabled to say, *I know that my Redeemer liveth: to him have I committed the keeping of my soul, and, "though he slay me, yet will I trust in him;" "yea, though I walk through the valley and shadow of death, I will fear no evil; thy rod and thy staff, they shall comfort me."* *I know how to be abased.*

But he knew that which is still harder to know. *I know how to abound.* There are more duties, and harder duties, required of those that abound than of those that want; and the rich have more and stronger temptations than the poor. Hence, if "riches increase, set not thy heart upon them."

“When thou art full, then beware lest thou forget the Lord thy God, and thy heart be lifted up.” “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven.” *To know how to abound*, is the same as to know how to set a due value on the things of the world. When a man so uses his abundance as to avoid the temptations which accompany that abundance; and when he is willing to part with all at the call and command of God; in a word, when he attends more to almsgiving and the duties of his station, than to the sensual pleasures and satisfactions of his prosperous condition.

Every where and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. We see here the advantage of Christian experience: every where, and in all things I am instructed, &c. The Christian does not suffer so many things in vain: so far from it, he glories in tribulation, “knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope.” Rom. v. 3, 4.

The lesson of true resignation is very hard to learn; but, blessed be God, in the school of Christ we may learn it. I gain knowledge by seeing others in prosperity. When I see their heads become giddy, I then think, how good it is to stand in a low place. When I lost my estate, I then learned not to trust in uncertain riches. When I lost my husband, wife, or child, I then learned the vanity and instability of all earthly good. So that, though the chastisement was not joyous, but grievous, at the time of its occurrence: I now realize its advantages, so that I can well say, with the Psalmist, “be-

fore I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes."

Christian contentment also implies a willingness to do the will of God. I can, saith the apostle, *do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*. A real Christian is able to do all things that concern the glory of God, and his soul's salvation. This is evidently the meaning of the passage; for the apostle could not intend to say, he could do all things which require physical strength. Now, the glory of God implies the complete destruction of sin. "For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil," 1 John iii. 8. Again, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit," John xv. 8. Such being the object of Christ's mission, namely, to destroy the works of the devil, or in other words, sin: he, moreover, being glorified in the body and soul of the Christian who bears much fruit, the words of the apostle are tantamount to these: by the grace of God, however inveterate the disease of sin may be, I and all Christians, by a thorough application of the blood of Christ, may be entirely cleansed from the leprosy of sin; and cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, may perfect holiness in the fear of God.

A Christian can love the whole law, and pay obedience to it in an evangelical sense; else why is Abraham proposed as a pattern of our faith and conduct, and the friend of God. "Abraham obeyed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." A Christian can live above the world, and overcome it:

else why does St. John say, "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." I can deny myself, take up my cross, and follow Christ; else why is this made the condition of my salvation; and why is Moses spoken of, as a pattern of believers; where it is said, that through respect to the recompense of reward, he denied himself of the pleasures of sin, and chose to suffer affliction with the people of God? In short, I can love the Lord my God with all my heart, mind, soul, and strength, and my neighbour as myself; else why is this made the very essence of both the law, the prophets, yea, and the Gospel also?

Now, if I can keep the commandments; (and who dare say that I cannot, if I am converted to God, or have a new heart!) if I can deny myself, and bear the cross; if I can overcome the world, because he that is in me is greater than he that is in the world; if I can love God, who is the most excellent being in the universe, with the greatest ardour of my heart; if I can become destitute of all improper selfishness; who dare say, that I cannot do all things that relate to the glory of God, and my own salvation? Who dare say, that I cannot work out my salvation with fear and trembling, and perfect holiness in the fear of God, through Christ, which strengtheneth me? O the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of the love of God! Does sin cleave to our words? Are we the sport of passion? Does pride swell our hearts? Does the love of the world rule in us? Put forth thy withered hand: dip thyself again in Jordan. Sin shall not have dominion

over you. Jesus Christ will cleanse thy heart; for this is the will of God, even our perfection.

But let us remember, it is Christ that strengthened St. Paul; and it is through him alone that we are to overcome. "Without me," says Christ, "ye can do nothing." He is Alpha and Omega: to his name the praise belongs, and he shall have all the glory to eternity. Say, Christian, have you learned the contentment which springs not from apathy, but from a firm reliance on the providence of him who has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Happy scholar, if thou hast learned thy lesson, for thou art then acquainted with the whole science of salvation. If otherwise, begin to learn just now: it is requisite to your eternal peace, as well as your present happiness.

SERMON X.



Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling : for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Phil. ii. 12, 13.

IN these words the Holy Spirit teaches us the doctrine of divine grace, and that of human agency. And it is only by a connected view of both these scriptural doctrines, that we are preserved from presumption, on the one hand, and despair on the other. If God, for instance, had merely proclaimed his own grace, without issuing any commands to mankind, it would have been needless for us to use any efforts. Our case would then have resembled that of the Israelites upon the banks of the Red Sea, when the injunction was given to them, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show you to-day. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." Exod. xiv. 13, 14.

If, again, practical exhortations had been issued, without any revelation of the grace of God; our language would have resembled that of the Philistines, when the ark of God was brought into their camp: "Wo unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hands of these mighty gods?" 1 Sam. iv. 8. But

unite the two doctrines, and the sentiments and feelings of a Christian become, like those of Hezekiah, when he gathered the captains of war together, and spake comfortably unto them, saying, "Be strong and courageous, be not afraid for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him. With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God, to help us and to fight our battles. 2 Chron. xxxii. 7, 8.

I shall attempt,

I. To define the doctrine of divine grace, relative to man's salvation; as expressed in these words, *It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* And,

II. To explain and enforce the exhortation contained in these words, *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.* And,

I. We are to attempt to define the doctrine of grace relative to man's salvation, as expressed in these words, *It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

These words are made more plain by a small transposition of them. *It is God, that of his good pleasure, worketh in you both to will and to do.* As if St. Paul had said, Every good is freely given of God, and no man deserves any thing from him; yet as it pleaseth him, so he deals out to man those measures of mental and corporeal energy which he sees to be necessary; giving to some more, and to others less, but to all what

is sufficient for their salvation. This position and meaning of the words removes all imagination of merit from man, and gives God the entire glory of his work; while it shows his motive to work lies wholly in himself, in his own mere grace, and unmerited mercy. By this alone he is impelled to work in man, both to will and to do.

This expression, *both to will and to do*, is capable of two interpretations, says Mr. Wesley. First, *To will*, may include the whole of inward; *to do*, the whole of outward religion. And if it be thus understood, it implies, That it is God that worketh both inward and outward holiness.—Secondly, *To will*, may imply every good desire; *to do*, whatever results therefrom. And then the sentence means, God breathes into us every good desire, and brings every good desire to good effect. And surely it must hide pride from our eyes, if we know and feel, that the very first motion of good is from above, as well as the power which conducts it to the end.

My brethren, as many have grievously puzzled themselves with this question, (I speak in reference to the will and power of human beings) permit me to state it in a plain, rational, and scriptural point of view. The power *to will* and *to do*, comes from God; the *use* of that power belongs to man. He that has not gotten this power, can neither will, nor work; he that has this power can do both.

But it does not necessarily follow, that he who has these powers will use them. The possession of powers does not necessarily imply the use of those powers. You can easily conceive that a man might

have them, and not use them; or he might even abuse them. God has given us feet, but we may refuse to walk. He has given us eyes, but we may shut them, and refuse to see. He has given us ears, and we may close them, and refuse to hear. In like manner, he has given us power to will, and to perform good; but we may neglect this gift of God, or we may stir it up and improve it. Hence the accountableness of man. Hence also, this exhortation; which,

II. I shall endeavour to explain and enforce; *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*

Here we may observe, that the very first word of the exhortation gives us a notion of the duty enjoined. The work of salvation is no lazy man's business; but a work of difficulty, which requires close application and constant labour. Are all the efforts of life devoted to the attainment of wealth, of trash which perisheth in the using; and shall we expect to obtain heaven by mere accident? No, brethren, he who made us without ourselves, will not save us unless we save ourselves from this untoward generation. Unless we ourselves fight the good fight of faith; unless we agonize to enter in at the strait gate.

“ Lord, shall we lie so sluggish still
And never act our part ?”

Shall we be

“ So careless to secure the crown
Christ purchased with his blood ?”

It is implied in the text, that it is possible for man to work out his own salvation. And this intelligence

is of the utmost importance, seeing that the Scriptures represent all men not only as sick, but dead in trespasses and sins. But this is no longer an excuse for indolence, since God can and does quicken, and there is no man, unless he has quenched the Spirit, who is wholly void of the grace of God. Every one has some measure of that light, which, sooner or later, more or less, enlightens every man that cometh into the world. Therefore, inasmuch as God works in you, you are now able to work out your own salvation. Every true believer can say, (and faith is in the power of every man, or it would not be made the condition of our salvation) "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me."

Again, the exhortation implies the necessity there is, (according to the economy of God relative to our salvation) that we should work out our salvation. Suffer me to give you the general rule, on which God's gracious dispensations invariably proceed. "Unto him that hath, shall be given; but from him that hath not," doth not improve the grace already given, "shall be taken away that which he hath."

I would enforce the exhortation, by reminding you of the excellency of the object, and that is, *salvation*; which begins with what is called preventing grace, including the first wish to please God, and the first dawn of light concerning his will. All these imply some tendency towards life, some beginning of deliverance from a blind, unfeeling heart. It is carried on by convincing grace, commonly called repentance, which brings a larger share of self knowledge, and a further deliverance from the heart of stone. After-

ward we experience, by grace, through faith, the proper Christian salvation, consisting of two parts, justification and sanctification. By justification we are saved from the guilt of sin, and restored to the favour of God. By sanctification we are saved from the power and root of sin, and restored to the image of God. O brethren, shall we not seek these blessings? Shall the cool lectures of the schoolmen fire the soul of the student with an ardent wish to explore the field of science? Shall the glittering tinsel of fortune's plume, fire the beholder with enthusiastic desires to fly round the circle of wealth; and shall the minister of Jesus Christ, who alone teaches the science of salvation, have to address an uninterested and unfeeling multitude? Consider, brethren, it is your own salvation which you are exhorted to work out. The most laborious servitude is rendered tolerable, by an assurance that we shall receive its entire and ample product. In the work of salvation we secure our own peace and happiness, both in this life, and in that which is to come; and unless we work out our salvation, we plunge our souls into guilt and fear in this world, and into eternal despair in the next. Solemn thought! Hence, says the apostle, *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*

Consider the difficulty of the work, and the danger of miscarriage; how many mountains of difficulty to pass over; how many open enemies, as well as foes in ambush; how many difficult duties to perform, exposed, as we are, at once to the attacks of the devil, our common enemy, and also to our own hearts' lusts. Ah, brethren, we have cause to fear and trem-

ble. Yet the apostle does not refer to the paralyzing fear of the coward, nor yet the servile fear of the slave. But he refers to that fear that accords with happiness and filial affection; a fear that "a promise being left us of entering into his rest, we should come short" of it, and lose the eternal opportunity of seeing, praising, and adoring Jesus, which, to the child of God, is the highest imaginable idea of heavenly happiness; a fear of offending our God, to whom we are so much indebted for what he has already done for us. There is nothing which the ingenuous child fears more, than to offend and wound the feelings of an indulgent parent. Hence, says the apostle, in the 15th verse, "that ye may be the sons of God without rebuke;" persons against whom no charge of transgression can be justly laid.

My brethren, we have endeavoured to give you a scriptural view of this subject, in which you must have discovered that you are accountable beings. And let me now observe, that every moment of life is full before God, and we are either working out our salvation, or destruction:

"Man is the maker of immortal fates."

Would it not be well to pause, and inquire, what we may reasonably expect to be the issue of our conduct.

Consider, man, you have but little time to spend, and the work which you have to do is of the utmost importance. Seeing that you are unable to accomplish it without assistance, behold God himself comes to your assistance. Shall we, then, on whom heaven has

lavished its bounties in so many ways, be sluggish, and pass through the whole of life, without feeling solicitous about the crown Christ purchased with his blood? Shall heaven

“All lavish of strange gifts to man,”

be requited with so much ingratitude and baseness?

Have you begun, in earnest, the work of your salvation? Your situation, if you have not, is really awful. You are a neglecter of salvation. But if you have begun the work, do you feel that you are still continuing to strive? Have you shunned the snares which make the Christian tremble only to behold: or have you fallen into the snare of the devil?

SERMON XI.



Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place.
Isai. xxviii. 17.

MY brethren, the first of all truths, and the foundation of all religion is, that there is a God. It is almost as natural for us to believe that there is a God, as it is for us to be men; and there never has existed a nation, who has not acknowledged and worshipped a Divinity. If in any case the tongue dares to utter that there is no God, it either absolutely contradicts the thoughts of the heart, or is led away by the irregular motions of the soul, exhibiting rather its desire or wish, than what it really feels. Man's principal folly has not generally consisted so much in absolutely denying this self-evident truth, as in contemplating God as a being destitute of some perfection, or in whom discordant perfections concentrate.

If we look into the pagan mythology, we shall discover a disposition rather to admit too many deities, than to deny any; for, says St. Paul, "they turned the glory of the incorruptible God into an

image like to corruptible man, and into birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." And it has been observed, that every thing in the pagan world was defied, but God himself.

The ignorance of the Christian world has appeared in a different way. For while they have acknowledged but one ever-living and true God, they have robbed him of his glory, by attempting to reconcile his unblemished holiness with sin and impurity.

Although the Almighty at some times, shrouds his providences in the mantle of obscurity, so that all things seem to happen alike to all for a season; yet afterward he goeth out of that darkness and those clouds that surround him, and declares that though he is a pardoning God, keeping mercy for thousands that call upon him, yet he will by no means acquit the guilty.

In the words of the text we hear him vindicate his holiness, by assuring the Ephramites, notwithstanding their boasted strength and vain trust in the Assyrian army, which he calls a *refuge of lies*, and a *hiding-place*, that he will punish them for their apostacy and vain trust, by such agents as he shall think proper to employ; denominated, in the text, *hail*, and floods of *water*. And lest they should think that, according to his wonted forbearance, he would overlook their base and repeated provocations; he declares, that he will judge them by a standard of the most rigorous justice, which he represents by the figures, *putting judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet*.

The design of the prophet seems to have been, to convince the Ephramites of the folly and danger of

relying on insufficient means for help, while they neglected the only true rock of their salvation. And with a similar design we have selected the words as the foundation of this discourse. We shall undertake then,

I. To point out some of the *refuge of lies*, and some of the *hiding-place*, to which men resort, who continue in sin. And that such may be apprised of their danger, before it is too late; we shall attempt,

II. To show how the searching of God's righteous judgments shall confound their expectations. And then,

III. Conclude with suitable exhortations.

My brethren, on the division of the subject, you may be ready to say, as a certain king once said of a man of God, "I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." But your general neglect of the concerns of futurity, together with the hoarse thunders of the cloud of vengeance, which lowers over the sinner's head, and the overflowing billows of the wrath of God, which are almost ready to take you away with all your false hopes: these, these are our apology. Exertions made to extinguish flames, or to save property from conflagration, are usually rapid and violent; and if such should be our present movement, you will regard us as obeying the injunction of St. Jude, who commands us to save some with fear, pulling them out of the fire.

I. Then, we are to point out the false hopes of the sinner; denominated in the text, *refuge of lies*, and *hiding-place*.

My brethren, what does he do, who ventures to continue in sin? He cannot defy the divine wrath: that is not in man. Neither can he acquiesce under the terror of its consequences. How then does he support himself, when the minister of Jesus Christ charges sin on him, as Nathan did on David; saying, with the authority of our Divine Master, thou art a transgressor of the law of God, and art in danger of his wrath? Perhaps he will acknowledge the charge: I have sinned: and, God be merciful to us! We have all sinned. I hope God will be merciful to me—and so the wound is healed up. And this is one of the *refuges* of which we designed to speak. It is true, that God is merciful; but is this any reason that he should save those who abuse his mercy. Besides, God has no employment in heaven, that would make the unrenewed and unholy soul happy. But eternal salvation implies perfect happiness; therefore in your present state you cannot be saved. When you say, that God is merciful, recollect, that but “few shall be saved.” And who has told you that you shall be one of that few? You hope you shall be saved, and I fear you will be lost. Which is the best founded, your hope, or my fear? God has said, “that the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.”

Again, when beaten out of this refuge, he will betake himself to another equally deceitful. O, says one, I am in no danger; for I believe in the Lord

Jesus Christ. Are you sure of this? Have you reflected on the nature of faith? Recollect, O man, what St. James says on this subject. "Faith," says he, "without works, is dead. Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works." Recollect, that faith is a heart-purifying grace, which works by love, producing serious concern about salvation. You say you believe. But when did you believe? 'I always believed.' If this is your answer, you never believed. For we are not born in a state of faith and justification, but in a state of unbelief and condemnation: for by nature we are the children of wrath, even as others.

Again, others will shelter themselves under the fig-leaves (as one calls it) of a blameless walk. Not long since I talked to a woman on her death-bed, whose greatest refuge from the wrath of God seemed to be, that she had done no body any harm. But does the religion of the Gospel consist only in negatives? Such a religion as this might do for mountains and trees, but not for rational and accountable agents. Of what does Christ speak, as the ground (in a secondary sense) of the future blessedness of the righteous? "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:" Why! says the astonished soul. Will the Judge say, because you never did any body harm? Will he say, Well done, good and faithful servant, because you never killed any body, and have paid your just debts? No. But, "I was an hungered, 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." So that, admitting you never did any harm to your fellow-creature, this is but a *hiding-place* which the flood shall overflow. But have you even this negative good? Have you never done to any man, either white or black, any thing you would not that he should do unto you? I very much dispute it. How then can you escape, when the overflowing flood shall pass through the land?

Others, when pursued by discoveries of sin, hide themselves in church privileges. This was the case with some in Jeremiah's time, who were notoriously wicked: and yet, when a prophet pointed out their sin, and the threatened penalty, behold, they would say, "the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these." God speaks to them in the following manner: "Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not, and come, and stand before me in my house, which is called by my name?" My brethren, although we feel disposed very highly to esteem church privileges; be it known to you, that the carnal professor, whose religion has been merely external, shall find that his outward garb of religion is but a *refuge of lies*.

Others there are, who, when conviction takes hold of them, and their sins and miseries are plain before them, take refuge in their good resolutions. Like Felix, when Paul was reasoning before him, they see and feel the necessity of religion; and, like him, they

contrive to lose their present alarm, in the hope of future opportunity.

Permit me to address myself to such in a few expostulatory questions. Is the consideration of sin and misery, and the means of your escape from it, a business to be delayed? Is there any concern that should be considered so important, as the concern of salvation? Is there any hazard equal to the hazard of destruction? If a man gain the whole world, and lose his own soul, what is he advantaged? Is not God a better judge of the most proper time to seek salvation, than thou art? And does he not say, "Behold, now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation." Have you set any time, when you are resolved to begin to seek salvation? I fear you have not done even this: or if you have, when is it? It must be at some future period. And how do you know that this period will arrive? You may be cut off, and in hell, before that time. "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou canst not tell what a day may bring forth."

There is one other *hiding-place* that I shall mention, to which men resort, when arrested by the calls of grace: and that is, comparing themselves with others. When the truths of the law are pressed home to the conscience, they begin to say, I am wicked, it is true, but not worse than others. If I am lost, I shall have abundance of company. This may be. But what will this contribute to thy happiness? Though the society of the blessed shall certainly increase their happiness, yet it is past all

doubt, that the society of the miserable shall increase their pain. O sinner, what dost thou say? Art thou willing to hazard the issue, be it what it may? Art thou willing to lie down in everlasting sorrow, vainly hoping that the society of lost souls will make thy case tolerable? O consider the rich man. How anxious was he that one should be sent to his father's house to warn his brethren, lest they should also come to that place of torment? What pleasure can it be to a lost soul, to be surrounded by those who can by no means contribute, in the smallest degree, to his happiness?

My brethren, the smallest attention must convince you that these subterfuges, which we have mentioned, are unsafe. They are not the *hiding-place* of the Gospel: and when the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is, these *refuges of lies* shall be consumed. Which leads to the second thing to be considered; namely,

II. How the righteous judgments of God shall confound the expectation of the wicked.

My brethren, this is a state of discipline and probation. This is not the place designed by the all-wise God for virtue to meet with its full reward, or for vice to receive its full punishment. In this world, wheat and tares grow in the same field: wheat and chaff lie on the same floor. Vice walks abroad with an unblushing face, while virtue is abandoned to detraction, and almost perpetual tears. The Almighty seems to have distributed his talents, and to have taken his journey into a far country. But he has

given every necessary assurance that the righteous shall not always be forgotten, nor the wicked always prosper: for "he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness;" and then the tares shall be gathered in bundles to be burned, and the wheat shall be gathered into his barn; but the chaff shall be blown away into unquenchable fire.

The standard of right has met with such violent thrusts as to become reclined; indeed, Judgment has fallen in the street. But the Almighty in that day will plant the standard of equity, and with the line and plummet, will cause it to stand erect. And though the sinner may think the Almighty such an one as himself, unjust and unholy, yet God will reprove him, and set his sins in order before him. In this world men put on faces of deception, but then every man shall appear in his real character. Then we shall be judged, not according to the opinions of men, but by the standard of eternal truth. Not the actions of men only shall be judged in that day, but God will judge the secrets of men's hearts by Christ Jesus. I imagine that I hear the Judge say to the unholy, Give an account of thy stewardship. The trembling sinner begins:—Lord, I was disposed to live in sin, and I trusted to thy mercy. I did hope to be saved in my sins, notwithstanding thy word declared, that without holiness none should see thy face. As thou hast thus dishonoured me, by disbelieving my truth; I also will dishonour thee, by loading thee with everlasting chains of darkness. Stand on my left. Another says, Lord, I endeavoured to persuade myself that I had faith. But did not I tell

thee, that faith without works was dead, and could not save a sinner? Hasten to the left, for thine hypocrisy and self-deception. Lord, says a third, I did nobody any harm, and I was in thy church, and I thought this would do. But did I not tell thee, replies the Judge, that I must be worshipped in spirit and in truth? Hasten to the left, and feel, for ever feel, the guilt and baseness of thy conduct. Lord, says a fourth, I thought continually that I would repent, but I put it off to a more convenient season. Did I not often tell thee, This is the accepted time, and this is the day of salvation? What hast thou done to trifle with the calls of my grace? Turn to the left; for I have stretched out my hand, and you have not regarded; I also will now laugh at your calamity and fear. I thought, Lord, that I was as good as the rest of the world, says a fifth, and that if I was lost, I should have company enough. As thou hast lowered the standard of holiness, and hast disbelieved my truth, turn aside, and see what thy despairing companions can do for thee.

Then I hear him say to them in mass, (this is not a figure of a heated imagination) "Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire:"—and in a moment ten thousand thunders burst forth upon them, and billows of wo for ever overwhelm their souls. This must be the lot of all those who forsake the fountain of living water, and turn aside to lying vanities.

III. My brethren, my dear brethren, let me beseech you, while you may, to provide more firm support, or you must sink for ever. Let us not expect too

much from the mercy of God, or in other words, let us not expect to get to heaven, without holiness of heart. Let us never think that a dead faith, which does not produce good works, will save us. Let us not think that being in the church will do us any good, unless we are watered and fed by its ordinances. For surely our condemnation will be greater, because of our hypocrisy and deception. And let us also think of the fire that shall be kindled in God's wrath, that shall burn to the lowest hell, and consume the wicked. And let us repent and turn to Christ, the true hiding-place of the Gospel.

SERMON XII.



*There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary
be at rest. Job iii. 17.*

SHOULD one who had followed the gilded pleasures of this poor world long enough to learn the genuine character of their insignificancy, light on such a passage as this in any writing entitled to credit, he would doubtless pause, and fix his eyes upon it with peculiar attention; and we might reasonably expect he would utter a soliloquy not unlike the following: Formed by nature for the enjoyment of social intercourse with my fellow-creatures, when young I shot the shuttle of my hope through the web of fashionable manners and intimate connexions, in order to weave the spotted garment of happiness. Destitute of malignant design myself, I suspected none in others. But, alas! I have paid the tribute of inexperience, and learned at length, by sad experience, that every brother will utterly supplant; and, where I least expected it, I have confirmed the prophecy of our Lord, "a man's enemies shall be those of his own household." When young, the streamers of honour, embellished with the stars of happiness, painted with all the fervour of youthful imagination,

floated before my eager eyes: and for years did I expect that fortune would make me her minion. I followed the capricious goddess, till, quite wearied with her freaks, I discontinued the pursuit. Tired and jaded by my former efforts, I would by no means renew them. Ten thousand disappointments have taught me to expect nothing from this insolvent world. She promises uncertain bliss, but gives me certain pain. My only wish, at present, is to find some shady covert, that, retiring from this barren heath, I might rest me there in quiet. I read here of a place where *the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest*. Where, O where shall I find that enchanted bower? The grave!—In the grave the good man finds a calm and welcome retreat from the cares and vicissitudes of this life.

We do not take it on us entirely to justify the temper in which Job uttered these words. Indeed, in the context, he speaks as though the tempter had taken the advantage of him; and, in the tempest of his soul, while groaning under the accumulated load of his unequalled afflictions, he thought of little but relief from his present sufferings. He knew that in the grave no pain is felt; and for the moment he scarcely looked any further. His present miseries made him think insensibility more desirable; though in more lucid intervals he expressed a strong and unshaken faith concerning the happiness of the eternal world. Abstracting, then, from the painful association of circumstances which led Job to utter these words, we shall regard them as pointing out, in a twofold figure, two characteristics of future happiness. The first is,

I. The absence of trouble, or evil of any kind.
The second is ;

II. Positive enjoyment.

This view of future happiness will not be uninteresting to any, who, aiming at the heavenly Canaan, have to march through this wilderness,—this valley of tears. Have we not reason to believe that the wonderful power of association which dwells in the human mind, led our departed sister to choose these words as the foundation of her funeral discourse, by holding up the contrast between the afflictions of this world, (of which she shared largely) and the glory of heaven, of which, through the merits of the Redeemer, she hoped to be a partaker? To contemplate the happiness of the next life, in connexion with the termination of the afflictions of this, is certainly an association justified in Scripture. Not to mention the text, does not the holy Spirit take this view of the subject in the Revelation, xivth chapter, 9th verse:—“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.” Again, in the viith of the Revelation, and at the 16th and 17th verses, “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” Immediately after the text it is said, “There the prisoners rest

together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and great are there; and the servant is free from his master." Indeed the highest possible idea of heavenly delight is given, where it is said, "These are they who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

There seems to be something in the nature of man which leads him to regard, with peculiar respect, those joys which follow a course of laborious and manly exertion. The merchant who has made his fortune, and retired from business, enjoys, with heightened zest, the profits of his youthful toil. And the warrior delights to wear the garments died red in the blood of perilous battles. Acquainted with this innate principle in man, the poet, when he would fill the mind with every idea of sublime delight, speaks as follows,

"There on a green and flowery mount
Our wearied souls shall sit;
And with transporting joy recount
The labours of our feet."

We have reason to thank God for implanting within us a disposition by which we are enabled to take spoils from them who spoil us: in other words, to reap heightened delight from our light afflictions in this world, when we arrive at home; while, like St. Paul, we shall say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

The recollection of distress, of past and successful conflict, is a character of happiness which will be

unknown to none who are redeemed from among men; for all who have intercourse with men, will find among them those who trouble them. No matter what circle you examine, you will find an unholy influence in men who know not God; men who, in the text, are called *the wicked*. "Those who live delicately are in kings' courts." But do we find nothing of jealousies, envy, enmity, and rivalry in kings' courts? "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts?" How many, by the lust of power, have been torn from their thrones, and stripped of their robes, and forced to spend the remainder of their days in poverty, wretchedness, and chains? What treachery, rivalry, and ardent competition in every circle of society? These unhallowed monsters spoil every thing most promising in society. They enter into the temple of love, and with murderous hand separate chief friends. How many feel the tenfold smart which David felt when he said, "It was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it. But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance"—from whom I had reason to expect better treatment. Nay, sometimes we are troubled and misused by inferiors. But we have no reason to confine the term, *wicked*, in the text, to wicked men exclusively; but we may regard it as another epithet for what the apostle calls "spiritual wickedness in high places;" and elsewhere, "the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience." For though the devil frequently works by men, as agents, to discompose our peace, he has also other means. A wicked

heart is in league with a wicked world; and sometimes Satan himself arms an arrow from his own quiver. In conflict with this threefold troop, how often does the believer cry, "O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away, and be at rest!" "Blessed citizens of heaven, banished at present to these dreary abodes of misery, death shall soon lend you the wings you want. Then shall you escape from this wretched world, in which you have lived only in submission to the will of God. Then shall you hide yourselves from the errors and the weaknesses of the understanding; from the heart, that anxious seat of so many tumultuous passions. You shall also escape from the snare of the devil, and contend no more with his cruel devices. "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast."

II. But we said, the second figure of the text pointed out a state of positive enjoyment. The word *rest*, signifies ceasing from labour; and also a cheerful confidence in the promises and providence of God. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul," says the Psalmist; give thyself no uneasy doubts about the result of things, whilst thou art in the way of duty; "for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee"—he hath been better to thee than thy unbelieving fears had anticipated in former straits, therefore leave thy cause in his hand.

The word *rest*, also signifies the positive happiness prepared for the people of God. "There remain-

eth therefore a rest for the people of God." In what this rest shall consist, we know but in part. We have already observed, that it implies the absence of sin, temptation, conflict, persecution, pain, and reproach. These, however, are but the negative parts of that happiness. In what the full enjoyment of the soul shall consist, is a question which will not be completely developed until we shall know even as we are known.

But with reverence we may draw some inferences from eternal truth, which, at least, throws some light on the subject. In one place it is said, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord; yea, saith the spirit, for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." This verse not only declares, that a holy life is necessary to prepare men for the pure and spiritual joys of that high and holy place; but that the rewards of that state shall be proportioned to our advancement in holiness in this life. This is confirmed by another passage, for, saith St. Paul, "One star differeth from another star in glory—so also is the resurrection of the dead." "And," saith Daniel, "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever."

The gradations of rank and of splendour, unfold a character of eternal happiness, which we can trace but very imperfectly in this life. We are taught in another place, to contemplate heavenly happiness in connexion with the progressive endowments of the mind; "But we all, as with open face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the

same image from glory to glory." It is thought by some, and not without probability, that the apostle refers to the privilege of the Christian, even in this world; and that he was drawing the contrast between the dark dispensation of Moses, (at whom the children of Israel had to look through a veil,) and the clear revelation of eternal truth, under the luminous dispensation of Christ, whose glorious perfections were openly displayed in the Gospel, leading the believer from grace to grace, which in that text is called "glory," even till he attains to perfect holiness. But the idea may doubtless be extended to the progression that shall be realized even in heaven. And how could we contemplate the glories of heaven in a more pleasing point of view?

There is nothing more grateful to the human mind than the idea of progress. There is a degree of delight in ascending the successive swells of a cloud-capt mountain: there is still more in ascending the steep of moral and intellectual science. The human being is at first destitute of any thing like intellect, but soon his dawning genius begins to open: soon we behold him a man of mature thought, capable of the most rigid discrimination. In separating truth from error he discovers the utmost dexterity. To what a vast height of perfection may human nature attain, even in this life! What, then, shall be the state of improvement to which the soul shall arrive, when, unmixed with error, it shall drink in eternal wisdom from God, the fountain of all knowledge?—Here we might dwell upon the different employments which shall then engage our hearts and our tongues; (em-

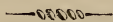
ployments not inconsistent with rest) the social pleasures and the mutual delights of the blessed above—but this would exceed our limits.

If the prospects which faith opens to the believer, when he shall have finished his course in this world, are so animating—if the rest of the grave be so desirable—if heaven be thus glorious, what folly is it that we should dread to die and go from hence? On the whole, we may well envy the happiness of the dead who have died in the Lord, for they, with the utmost propriety, may adopt the well-known verses of the poet,

“ I was a stricken deer that left the herd
 Long since ; with many an arrow deep infixt,
 My panting side was charged, when I withdrew
 To seek a tranquil death in distant shades.
 There was I found by one who had himself
 Been shot by th’ archers. In his side he bore,
 And in his hands and feet, the cruel scars.
 With gentle force soliciting the darts,
 He drew them forth, and heal’d, and bade me live.”

SERMON XIII.

(Preached before the Bible Society, Petersburg, Vir.)



The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple. Psalm cxix. 130.

IT is natural that we should wish to save from the vortex of revolution whatsoever interesting scenes or great events have been blended with our history, or have formed the pride of our character. Hence the recurrent festivals, and permanent monuments, which have been celebrated and erected in the world. Now, it seems to me, that if ever man might be indulged to feel any thing like elevation, and to rejoice in approximation to the God of love, it is when he has laid successful plans to unrol the volume of eternal truth, which, clear as the sun, discloses to the eye of faith the interesting prospects and realities of eternity. Yes, when we look at the members of the British and Foreign Bible Society, who first set on foot the plan, we can but regard them as men, who, under God, have followed the world, and prepared it for the seed of regeneration, which shall, ere long, produce the harvest of universal peace and righteousness.

While we applaud their noble charity, and pray for the speedy accomplishment of their wishes, we acknowledge our efforts to be less ostensible, but not less laudable. If our little Institution have not, like the boundless ocean, washed the shores of distant nations; it may be fitly represented by the stream which is apparently lost among the herbage, but which nevertheless betrays its course by its salutary effects.

Our object has been to put into the hands of some of our fellow-creatures, who could not, and of others, who would not, procure it, the Bible; of which it was said by David, "It is a lamp to my feet, and a light unto my path." Nor is it merely calculated to benefit those only, who, like David, are wise and experienced; for it is said in the text, that its very *entrance giveth light*, and that *it giveth understanding to the simple*.

It is, doubtless, unnecessary to observe, that by the term *words*, in the text, we are to understand the Holy Scriptures. The slightest attention to the context, will convince us that nothing else could have been intended. By the *entrance of the words*, in a general sense, we are to understand, its becoming accessible to any from whom it was before secluded. Or, in a special sense, it means, that where God's words enter the soul, being read, or heard and understood, they give a satisfactory light to the mind, on subjects of which they treat. The happy effect of a proper reception of the word of God is beautifully set forth by the figure of *light*. By no avenue of corporeal perception, is knowledge, in her full

extent, so accessible to the soul, as through the glorious and delightful medium of light. There is much beauty, therefore, as well as truth, in representing the Scriptures as shedding light on whatever surrounds us that is connected with our happiness.

The psalmist adds, *it giveth understanding to the simple*. As far as relates to spiritual science, all men are simple by nature: "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." But if we understand the term *simple* literally, we may observe, that a mere novice, by a careful attention to plain scriptural truth, can, in a short time, gain an understanding of those things which for ages bewildered the fullest light and strongest powers of philosophical acuteness.

In the further improvement of this subject, we shall briefly speak of some of the general advantages of revelation,

I. As it relates to matters of faith; and,

II. As it relates to practice or duty.

I. 1. In the pursuit of knowledge we are well aware, that in reference to any particular subject, some primary or first principles are generally, if not always, admitted; and the result of our further research is, either a more decided conviction of the correctness of those principles, and their more extended application, or a rejection of them as conceptions found

to be inconsistent with truth. If we admit the following principles to be intuitive, namely, a belief in the existence of a supreme and governing power in the universe, and that this being should be the object of our worship; that, as accountable to him for our actions, and expecting an existence after the present life, we may presume a future state of reward or punishment; if these principles are so universally received among mankind, as to give us reason to believe they are necessarily connected with the mind of man; we shall soon perceive, that it is only by the revelation which the Almighty has vouchsafed of himself, we can attain correct information on these momentous subjects.

2. Now, the inherent idea of a God, although indelible in the minds of all, is nevertheless connected, in many cases, with the most barbarous ignorance. I add, in all cases it is connected with low and confused views of the perfections of God, where it has not been enlightened by Revelation.

3. This ignorance of the perfections of Deity must lead to extravagance and absurdity in his worship. Of some of the wisest of the heathens it was said, that they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and into birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Their foolish hearts were darkened, and they contemplated God as one of the most petulant and peevish of beings; and the worship paid to him was of a piece with the ideas formed. Hence thousands of human victims have been sacrificed, in order to appease a God, made angry by the most trifling oc-

currence. If such is the ignorance of the most enlightened heathens, what must be the state of those, among whom even human wisdom is unimproved? I will not speak of the sensualist, whose wives are multiplied according to the means he has to support them: I will not speak of the misjudging female, who esteems it her greatest glory to immolate herself on the funeral pyre of her deceased husband: I shall not mention those deluded bigots, who fall willing victims beneath the wheels of a ponderous Juggernaut.

4. Now, provision is made to remove those evils by the word of the Lord. In the Scriptures God is revealed as a being of almighty power, infinite holiness, inflexible justice, and unbounded love. The Scriptures assure us, that the Lord hath no delight in iniquity; that he is a spirit, and that he principally regardeth the dispositions of the heart, in those who worship him.

5. As to the difference between sin and duty, in many cases reason must be dubious and hesitating in its decisions; in many, it is corrupted and biassed by the heart, and in all, its conclusions, when drawn through a train of deductions, which grow less evident at every step, strike with little force on the mind where they are opposed by the vices and passions inherent in our nature. The Scriptures leave us no time to hesitate. *Thou shalt, or thou shalt not*, under the authority of the seal of revelation, is quite sufficient.

6. As to the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, some faint glimmering of it is afforded by the

light of nature; but the view is too indistinct to amount to any thing like certainty, and too feeble to operate as a tie of moral obligation. The entrance of God's word hath given light on this subject: life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel. It hath rendered the future as certain as the present, and drawn, from eternity, motives the most sublime to animate and strengthen virtue, and the most awful to discourage vice. Such are the general advantages, as to matters of faith, which are derived from the Holy Scriptures.

We proceed now to speak of its advantages,

II. As it relates to practice or duty.

1. It has been already observed, that by the Scriptures we are taught the perfections of the Divine Being, and the manner in which he should be worshipped. And in addition to what has been said, I now add, there is no other book in the world, beside the Bible, in which we find either a satisfactory idea of Deity, or the manner in which he should be worshipped. It is there we learn, both that God is, and that "he is a rewarder of them who diligently seek him."

2. By the same light, by which we are taught the divine perfections, we are also taught the deformity of sin. "I had not known sin," says St. Paul, "but by the law." In the fabulous records of pagan antiquity, we read of a mirror invested with properties so rare, that by looking into it, its possessor could perceive any object he wished to see, however remote; and discover, with equal ease, things behind

and before, above and below. Such a mirror, but infinitely more valuable than this fictitious glass, do we really possess in the Bible. It contains straight rules, and therefore shows us the crooks and blemishes of life: by looking into the perfect law of God, we learn that we have sinned, and our language then is, like that of Job, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I repent and abhor myself in dust and ashes." True repentance supposes a light which never dawned on the mind of man, unaided by the illumination of God's word. Many philosophers felt the propensities to evil, but never could tell, till assisted by revelation, from whence they proceeded. Not having learned that the spring was corrupted by the introduction of moral evil, they were at a loss to determine how the streams became polluted. But by the written word we learn that God created man upright, but that he has sought out many inventions. We learn that he has incapacitated himself to stand on a footing of absolute righteousness; but that, through the merits of Jesus Christ, his atoning sacrifice and advocate, repentance will avail in his behalf; and that God can be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly who believe in Jesus.

3. The Scriptures require us to love God with filial, and our fellow-creatures with fraternal affection: they require rulers to be just, ruling in the fear of God; and subjects to lead quiet lives, in all godliness and honesty: they require the husband to love his wife even as himself, and the wife to reverence her husband: they require parents to educate their

children in the fear of the Lord; and children to honour their parents: they require masters to treat their servants with lenity; and servants to be submissive and faithful: they require, in all, temperance, contentment, and industry: they, moreover, provide for the speedy termination of animosities, and all these duties are enforced by the most interesting motives drawn from eternity. Destroy the volume of revelation, and you render us profoundly ignorant of our Maker, of the formation of the world, of our present duty, and of our future destination: you take from us every thing which prevents existence from becoming our greatest curse.

How great, then, should our efforts be to distribute this invaluable treasure? Should we not bring with us, into the discharge of the duties of this Society, all the ardour of exertion, and all the liveliness of Christian feeling? Will it be said, that few of our fellow-creatures are destitute of this volume, but by their own negligence? Admitting this to be true, it is no reason why we should neglect them. God does not deal so with us; and real benevolence bids us act without any prospect of reward in this life, save the satisfaction of a peaceful conscience, and of having done good.

This, my brethren, is the age of action. The missionary spirit has gone forth into the world, and holy men, who reckon not their lives dear unto them, are labouring on the outskirts of the world, and reclaiming another, and another section from the wastes of nature, and adding to the spreading empire of the King of Zion. And Bible societies, in our day, are

related to missionary societies, as the gift of tongues was related to the commission of the apostles, in the primitive church. If, therefore, we have an opening for Bibles in our neighbourhoods, let us show our zeal to supply the lack. If our neighbours are supplied, let us then send forth our contribution, to aid those who are employed elsewhere in this glorious work.

Let us not forget to cultivate our own field also, lest thorns should grow in it, while we gather wheat from abroad. And while, by our exertions to circulate it, we declare our faith in the Bible as the word of God, let us see to it that our hearts and lives are conformed to its precepts.

SERMON XIV.



So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Rom. xiv. 12.

IT seems very likely from this and the following chapter, that there were very considerable misunderstandings between the Jewish and Gentile converts at Rome, relative to certain customs which were sacredly observed by the one, and disregarded by the other. The principal subject of dispute was concerning meats and days. It appears, further, that mutual censures and uncharitable judgments circulated among them, and that brotherly love and charity did not prevail.

The apostle endeavours to evince the impropriety of this conduct: First, by showing that Christ, by virtue of his meritorious passion and glorious resurrection, was constituted Lord of all things, and has power to judge all persons, verse 9. Secondly, That to this supreme and absolute Lord, every one of us must give an account of our actions, and from him receive our final doom, verses 10, 11.

From a consideration of this great and final judgment, to which we are all hastening apace, the apostle draws this argument to dissuade from censuring

and judging one another: Remember the judge standeth at the door, and you must shortly stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, where every one of us must give an account of himself to God. We shall not, at the bar of God, be obliged to account for the conduct of others, but each shall give account of himself to God; and let him see that he be prepared to give up his account with joy. The rules and exhortations of the apostle are of great use: happy would it be for the Christian world, if they were still more generally practised.

Not regarding, however, the primary design of these words, we shall bend them to the practical purpose of promoting that constant circumspection best becoming those, who, filling up a state of probation, are hastening to the judgment-seat of Christ, to give an account of the deeds done in the body.

The doctrine of a final judgment is one of the most instructive truths in the whole compass of revelation. What consideration can have greater influence on the general morals of men, and their particular actions, than this, "Thou, God, seest me," and before thy awful bar shall I give an account for every action of life, while a sunbeam shall point out each secret fault. Remark the certainty of this solemn judgment: *every one of us shall give an account of himself to God.*

To say nothing of the express declarations of holy writ, we might venture to say, that a future judgment must take place, in order that God may vindicate his justice, and remove the cloud which hangs over the dispensation of his providence in this state of proba-

tion. Though God is the moral, as well as the physical Governor of the universe, we look in vain in this world for that complete discrimination of character, and that strict apportionment of rewards, which reason and the sentiments of nature force us to ascribe to God. Although we see enough to convince us that there is an overruling Providence, yet we are sometimes ready to think, surely all things happen alike to all. And when the apostle asks, "is there unrighteousness with God? we should be ready to answer in the affirmative, if we did not look forward to the time of general retribution, "when ye shall return and discern between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not." The Lord, however, hath spoken: let this suffice. "He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness." "For we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ." And, *every one of us shall give account of himself to God.* Remark, also, the universality of this judgment, *Every one of us.* Is there any thing too hard for God to do? No matter if the slumber of ages shall have intervened between our death and judgment; no matter how great, or how small we may be; none are too great to illude his power, or too small to escape his notice.

Observe, next, the subject matter of which the account must be rendered; and that is, *of ourselves.* It is easy to perceive, unless our eyes have been blinded by the dust of prejudice, that the proceedings of that great day shall be grounded on the agency of man, and approved by the justice of God.

What is it, then, which denominates man an accountable being?

1. In the first place, time is necessary to the formation of a character of agency. For the use, then, of time, we must give an account to God. Time is short, but precious: it is given to us for the most noble purpose. Though by nature we are sinners, by timely application to the Lord we may obtain pardon and renewal in the spirit of our minds; and however various and important the duties required of us may be, by diligence and perseverance we may perform them. This, however, requires great diligence and carefulness, and every moment of life being full before God, we are therefore exhorted by the apostle to "redeem the time." What account, then, shall we render to God of the time we have idled away, or spent in frivolous employ? Or (which is still more serious) what shall we say of those pursuits, whose leading object has been entirely apart from the glory of God, as seeking to deck and ornament the body, while the soul has been left to starve and perish? What shall we say of the time we have spent in reading novels, and other pernicious books, which, so far from benefiting the mind, rob it of correct principle; while at the same time, we have lived in the total neglect of reading the Scriptures? What of the time spent in idle visiting and vain conversation, in which, if religion has been introduced at all, it has been rather in the way of burlesque; and if the name of our neighbour has been mentioned, it has been only to slander him? All whom these interrogatories concern, may expect, when weighed in the

balances of eternal justice and truth, to be found wanting, and treated as those, who have murdered time and ruined their own souls. But it will be well for those who improve time.

2. In addition to time, it requires intellectual faculties to constitute a fit subject for judgment. "This is the condemnation, that light has come into the world." "For it were better for them not to have known the ways of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them."

The faculties of our minds were given us to be employed in seeking to find out God, not indeed to perfection, but in understanding the communicable perfections of Deity, and striving to imitate them. Into the infinite source of goodness, all the powers of an enlightened mind will seek to bend themselves. What, then, shall the man have to say for himself, who suffers his mind to be uncultivated; or who employs it, when cultivated, to entangle truth, to cavil at religion, or make a mock of it, and scoff at those who profess it? What shall the man say for himself, who employs his superior talents, only to impose on the credulity of the weak and unsuspecting? Such talents are capable of being applied to the best, or the worst purposes in life, and the guilt of their misapplication is to be measured, both by the good they have not done, and the evil of which they have been the active cause. What persuasive energy might they not add to the cause of religion? But, alas! what unhappy extent do they frequently give to the cause of vice? Ah! how many sins, not your own,

will you have to answer for in the day of decision: you, who have been blessed with minds susceptible of information of the most valuable description, but who live and die ignorant of the knowledge most of all important. But happy for those who shall have brought every talent as an offering to the altar of religion.

3. The means of religious information heighten the responsibility of those who are blessed with them. A sinner, enjoying the light of the Gospel, sins against the strong conviction of his own mind; against the authority of the divine law, most clearly interpreted; against the high and interesting prospect of eternity, continually presented to his mind in the institutions of religion; and against the majesty and justice of God, armed to enforce his law. What account shall he render to God, who has resisted the counsels of divine wisdom, and the invitations of divine mercy proposed in the Gospel; and, in addition to this, has abused the divine mercy, illustriously displayed to the world in the cross of the Redeemer? But happy will it be for the man, who, when called to answer at the bar of God, shall have improved the ordinances and instructions of the Gospel to their intended use. His five talents, thus improved, shall have gained five other talents, and he shall be made ruler over ten cities.

4. Property is a talent conferred by the Almighty, and in this life we sustain the character of stewards. If it hath pleased the Almighty to put it in the power of some men to enjoy the common blessings of existence with greater dignity than others, by crowning

them with affluence, or raising them to honourable stations; are not their vices marked with a guilt proportioned to their misimproved advantages? What, then, shall the man say for himself at the bar of God, who has degraded his property to the ignoble purpose of gratifying his passions, and raising him above the control of the laws of God; of fostering a spirit of pride and insolence to mankind, and unthankfulness to God, as if what he enjoyed, belonged to him by an independent possession? Have we not reason to believe, that these vain reptiles, who thus pervert the unmerited bounty of Heaven, shall have their talent taken from them, while they shall be cast into unquenchable fire?

Happy for those, who, instead of wasting their Lord's goods, shall have traded on them to advantage. Verily he will make them rulers over his house.

The solemnities of that awful day call for serious forethought. When we anticipate an interview with a superior, we are apt to endeavour to realize the approaching scene. But what scene can require such serious forethought as this of which we have been speaking? Should it take place immediately, are we prepared to give a joyful account, either of our time, intellectual faculties, means of religious instruction, or property. The consequences of not being ready will be truly awful. O that God may help you to think of it in time!

SERMON XV.



If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Colossians iii. 1, 2, 3, 4.

IN the 12th verse of the preceding chapter the apostle had told the Colossians, that they had been typically buried with Christ in baptism, and raised with him from the dead to spiritual life here, as the pledge of a future resurrection to life eternal. Every man who believes the Christian religion, and receives baptism as a token or proof of his belief, is thereby bound to a life of righteousness. For, saith the apostle in his epistle to the Romans, “know ye not that so many of us as were baptised into Christ, were baptised into his death?” As Jesus Christ, in his crucifixion, died completely, so that no spark of the natural or animal life remained; so, infers the apostle, those who profess his religion should be so completely separated from the principles and practice

of sin, that they have no more connexion with it, nor any more influence from it, than a dead man has with, or from, his departed spirit. On the principles the apostle laid down, he engrafts two very weighty exhortations. Relative to the boasted dictates of pagan and Jewish philosophy, which by baptism they had renounced for the faith of the Gospel, he thus bespeaks them: "Beware lest any spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ;" having reference, no doubt to the shadows and ceremonies of the Jewish religion, which, when opposed to the substance and sublime instruction to be received in the school of Christ, were but as elements or lessons for children. Relative to the holy life suitable to those who professed the Christian faith, he gives the practical exhortation in the two first verses of the text, *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth;* which he enforces by two arguments, taken, the one from their profession, the other from their hopes; *For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.*

In order that these words may be made useful to us, we shall take the occasion they offer to speak

I. Of the principle.

II. Of the practice; and,

III. Of the end of real religion, according to the Gospel state.

Before entering on this, we shall give, by way of preliminary, a brief and scriptural view of the natural state of man. The state of nature is fully represented in the Epistle to the Ephesians, "This, therefore, I say, 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." "Among whom also, we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others;" "and were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise." Now this is called a state of death: "and you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."

While men are thus dead to God, they live only to sin and unrighteousness, and therefore sin is said "to reign in them, and have dominion over them." In this state of corruption, the natural passions and affections are but the instruments or members of sin. Now as the body, together with the soul, which is the active principle of life, constitute the man, so, by an easy metaphor, the appetites and affections (which compose the body of sin, being under its complete control,) are in Scripture called "the old man;" the only man which lives before regeneration by Christ Jesus.

It is easy to see what must become of this old man, this man of sin, upon the appearing of the Son of God, who came to destroy the works of the devil. He and his works must be destroyed where Christ is fully revealed, to make way for the Spirit of righteousness, and to bring man to the Gospel state. But thus to destroy the old man, to root out all the corrupt principles of nature, and to implant a new principle of life and holiness;—to restore the lost image of God, and give new desires to the soul, and new affections to the heart; what is it but to new-make the man, and by a second creation, to restore him to those rights and privileges which he had forfeited by sin and disobedience? Hence, says the apostle, “if any man be in Christ he is a new creature.” “In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.” “We are his workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus.” “And be renewed in the spirit of your mind.” Sometimes we read, that we were dead before the knowledge of Christ: this signifies the state of an unawakened sinner. In that state he cannot exercise any of the functions proper to spiritual life, but lives buried under the ruins of sin.

Again, we read in Scripture, of dying, and being buried with Christ; this signifies, that you might just as well say, that all the actions of life may be performed in the grave, when a man is dead and buried, as that a Christian may continue in sin. “How then,” cries the apostle, “shall we who are dead to sin live any longer therein?”

Sometimes we read, that those who are "dead with Christ," are "risen with him," and "alive in him;" which signifies the new life of holiness which all Christians live, who sustain the true character of the Gospel state. The Scripture seems to speak of two deaths which we must undergo, and of two resurrections of which we must partake. A death to sin;—"I am crucified to the world," says Paul: and a resurrection to a life of holiness,—“nevertheless,” says he, "I live." And again, "I willingly suffer the loss of all things, that I might know the power of Christ's resurrection." The other is the death of the body, and its final resurrection to a life of eternal glory. The apostle in the text supposes the Colossians to have undergone the former of those deaths, and to have been partakers of the former of those resurrections; and to be in a state of grace, a justified or Gospel state, the nature of which I shall now endeavour more fully to explain.

I. If you have attended to what has been said, you have learned, that the principle of religion is not natural, but superinduced by the grace of God. "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." We must be careful, however, lest we be led into a mistake by the strength of the figure. For though man, in a state of nature, is represented as dead, yet connected with the Gospel provision, he is doubtless capable of making exertions for his salvation: for the Spirit of him that raised up Christ from the dead, quickeneth those who follow the light he

affords. We feel fully justified in offering salvation to all, and in stating this as the condemnation, "that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light." The principle of religion is a principle of true faith; which, while it is the gift of God, is also the act of man, leading the soul to all holiness. By faith we are both justified and sanctified. It is said in the text, of such as possess this principle, *ye are dead*; dead, as to the hope of salvation by the law: crucified to the world, so as not to seek your portion, or place your happiness in earthly things: *and your life is hid with Christ in God*—your spiritual life is carried on in secret transactions between God and your own souls, by virtue of your mystical union with Christ; and all your enjoyments are derived from him, who is essentially one with the Father; nor is it possible that the world should either understand the nature of your union, or conceive of the greatness of your joy. So far then as relates to the principle of real religion, it is the life of God in the soul of man, delivering the soul from the power of sin, and filling it with perfect peace.

I proceed to speak something,

II. Of the duties of religion.

The nature of the duty to which we are exhorted in the text, is expressed positively, *seek those things which are above, and set your affections on them*; and negatively, *set not your affections on things on the earth*. But what things are these? God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the holiness and happiness of heaven. But what is it to seek the things above, and to set

our affections on them? It comprehends, first, an act of the understanding; a knowledge of the worth of them. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Now, if for a moment we contemplate the perfections of Deity, we must acknowledge that he is an all-sufficient good; he possesses infinite wisdom to contrive our happiness, and infinite power to effect it. God is not only an all-sufficient good, but he is perfect goodness. He is willing to communicate happiness to us, and to employ his power and wisdom for our good; He made us that we might be happy: and who can doubt his goodness, seeing he has given his only Son to die for us?—God is an unchangeable good. If he were not so, we might be miserable, notwithstanding all his wisdom, power, and goodness; for that cannot be real happiness which depends upon uncertainties. God is an eternal good: nothing but what is so, can make us happy. Man, having an immortal spirit, and being designed for an endless duration, must have a proportionate happiness, and for this reason, nothing in this world is calculated to make him happy. It requires no great effort of the understanding to perceive, that holiness, which is one of *the things above*, is of unspeakable worth, for it is the only way to heaven. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." The vision of God, the society of angels, the company of saints—these are the things we Christians are to think about, and endeavour to understand their worth, for these are to be our future portion.

But, secondly, the duty of the Christian, expressed in the text, implies an act of the will to choose these

things, and with the ardour of the affections to love them. Here we may place our love without impropriety, for these are things fit to cheer the mind.

Thirdly, the duty in the text implies, an act of industry. Our affections are so many springs of motion, to excite our endeavours to obtain the object of our love.

Fourthly, it implies a clear preference of the things above, to the things below, when they come in competition. *Set your affections on things above, not on things below*; and show it by your readiness to part with these things. But what do we understand by *things on the earth*? Happiness is a primary object with mortals, and they generally seek honour and riches as the means to obtain it. The Christian, however, is not to set his affections on riches. Indeed, why should he? They perish in the using; they frequently make to themselves wings and fly away; and while they stay with us, they cannot make us happy; and if they could, “we brought nothing with us into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.” Why should a man set his affections on honour, the honour of this world? It is but as a puff of breath, and none but that which cometh from God can endure. Where are the ancient and mighty thunderbolts of war, the Roman Cesars, and the mighty kings? Ah! they are

“Cramm’d into a place I blush to name,
And despicably mean.”

—Indeed it is but by a feeble thread we hold any earthly joy. How frequently are all the fine sensibilities of the soul irritated by the loss of friends?

Turn then, turn away your eyes from beholding these vanities, and seek, mind, regard, prefer, and pursue the things above. To induce you to do so, I hasten to speak,

III. Of the end of a Christian course, *When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory.*

Here let us observe, that Jesus Christ, by whom believers have a life of grace, and from whom they expect a life of glory, shall certainly appear, yea, and have a very glorious appearance. He shall be glorious in his person, glorious in his authority, glorious in his attendants. "I beheld, (says Daniel) till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him." St. John beheld him in vision, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood, and before his face the heavens departed as a scroll, when it is rolled together. As to his attendants, it is said, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire with ten thousand of his saints. As to his authority and power, it shall be the greatest of which it is possible to conceive; from the foot of his throne issue the thunders which rend the universe, and the lightnings that set it on fire. In his hand he bears the destinies of men and of angels:

at the sound of his voice, which is as the sound of many waters, the righteous and the wicked are separated, and he deals out to each the irreversible decrees of his justice, according to their deserts. Then, O then shall the Christians, crucified by profession and practice, appear, in full glory, with Christ, their husband and friend. O what glorious company, what full delight! O that I could represent to you the triumphs of that day, when God shall bring with him his saints who have died in the Lord, to judge the world; and when those who remain, and are alive, shall be caught up in the air to meet the Lord at his coming, and so be ever with the Lord. Fain would I speak something more fully of that glory, so as to fill all the soul with longing desire to partake of it. I however will only say, it shall be a blessedness conferred by the Almighty, suitable to desires implanted by himself.

I would inquire, first, are you *risen with Christ*, having been crucified with him to the world and sin? Let us not be content with *partial views* of this subject: we may *know*. Are we setting our affections on things above? Do we daily meditate on the joys of heaven, and the society of the blessed; and do we long to be there? If so, let us rejoice in the promise.

SERMON XVI.



All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me, and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out. John vi. 37.

IN this verse, and the context, our Lord instructed the Jews who heard him, and all into whose hands this book shall fall, in the great doctrines of salvation; which he makes the result of God's grace in calling, drawing, and teaching by his Spirit, and man's co-operation with divine grace, by endeavouring to come to Christ, and the all-powerful love with which Christ receives and entertains those who come to him. Man is represented as entirely helpless, by nature: utterly unable either to feel his disease, or to see his cure—"No man can come unto me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him." But how is a man drawn? God shows him his wants, enlightens his mind, and gives him to feel himself a lost sinner; and this he effects by his word and Spirit. "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God." Every man, therefore, that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me. By the Father's drawing men, we are to understand his supplying whatever influence of his grace and Spirit are necessary to impress on men's

minds the evidences of his Son's mission. Unless God thus draw, no man will ever come to Christ, or believe on him. Settle this well in your minds, and at the same time, recollect that the passage doth not say, except the Father *drag* him, but, *except the Father draw him*. God saves no man, as a stock or stone, but as a reasonable being, and a free agent. Those who come at the call of God, are represented in the text, as given to Christ, because it is through his blood alone they can be saved. God, by his Spirit, convincing of sin, righteousness, and judgment, those who acknowledge their iniquity and their need of salvation, gives or refers them to Christ; that is, he points them to Christ, as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. It is likely that our Lord may here also refer to a prediction in the 2d Psalm; "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession:" that is, thou shalt be Lord or owner of them, and they, as a possession, shall be subject to thy power, laws, and authority. Having thus shown the manner in which we are enlightened, and the co-operation required on our part, he proceeds to give the reviving assurance, that where a penitent soul approaches him, hungering for the bread of life, and thirsting for the water of salvation; whatever his fears may be, he will by no means send him away empty.

In the further illustration of this subject, I design,

I. To show, what we are to understand by coming to Christ; and,

II. Encourage you to attempt it, by the certain success with which your efforts shall be crowned.

I. And, first, I shall attempt to show what we are to understand by coming to Christ.

To come to Christ, is the same with resorting to him as our declared Master, acknowledging ourselves his disciples, and believing his doctrines. It is applying to him for that salvation, of which he alone is the Author, and of which, we, by the drawings and enlightenings of the Father, by the Spirit, feel ourselves to be in need. To be a little more particular—Coming to Christ for help, imports, first, a knowledge that we stand in need of help. “The whole need not a physician, but they that be sick.” Never shall we come to Christ, till we feel that we have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Never shall we come to Christ, till we feel condemned by the law of God, and sensible that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness. For until we have such a knowledge of our disease, as to convince us that the help of creatures is vain, we never shall come to Christ. None come to Christ, till all other refuges fail them, and till they find that all other physicians are of no value.

Coming to Christ, imports, secondly, the confiding the work of our salvation into his hands, and giving him employment in his saving offices, looking on him as able, willing, and ready to save.

“ I give up every plea beside,
Lord, I'm condemn'd, but Christ has died.”

Thus the poet.—And thus again,

“ While full of anguish and disease,
 My weak, distemper'd soul,
 Thy love compassionately sees ;
 O let it make me whole !”

My brethren, we may utter the language common to a penitent ; but it is impossible for us to give a correct description of his real feelings. Suffice it to say, that he that comes to Christ, has humbling views of himself. He does not conceive himself to be a being of great importance : he is little and vile in his own eyes, nor does he think for one moment of meriting the favour of God. No ! no ! He sees that if he be saved at all, it will be of the free mercy of God in Christ Jesus. Indeed he has many heart-rending fears, and, like the lepers spoken of in the book of Kings, he saith, “ If I go back I must die : if I go forward I can but die :” I will, however, go to God, and if I perish it shall be at his feet. It is to such a trembling soul as is here described, that the kind assurance of divine mercy in the text is peculiarly refreshing.—*Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.*

II. In the view of this certain success, I design, secondly, to exhort you to come to Christ.

The divine compassion of the blessed Redeemer is here represented to us under the notion of a metaphor, taken from the distressing fears of a poor beggar, who, pressed with a sense of his wants, enters the house of a man of opulence. The poor man

appears with all his sores, and the owner, far from treating him with asperity, welcomes him, receives him kindly, and relieves his wants. So does Jesus. Never did he reject the suit of a penitent, however aggravated might have been his crimes. He is come to the house of mercy—he is lying at the threshold; the servants bid him come in; he obeys, and waits with trembling anxiety for the appearance of the master, doubtful whether he is to be received or rejected. The master appears, and not only grants him his suit, but receives him into the number of his family. He alleges his unfitness, his unworthiness, his crimes, his ingratitude: no matter, all shall be blotted out through the blood of the Lamb, his name be enrolled with those of the children, and on none of these accounts shall he be put out of the house.

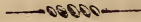
I acknowledge, my brethren, it looks almost like a profanation of the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, to offer it to those who feel not their need of it. Yet as there may be some who labour under the paralyzing fears of an awakened conscience, permit me to rehearse a few of the precious and balmy assurances of the Gospel. Thy sins, in number as the hairs of thy head, and in magnitude as mountains, make thee to fear and quake terribly. But what saith Christ, the great High Priest of our profession?—“Fear not, thou worm Jacob, I am the First and the Last: I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore.” Yes, I ever live to make intercession for thee: I have trodden the wine-press alone: mine own arm hath brought salvation unto me, salvation for the lost. The Spirit of the Lord

God is upon me ; he hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek ; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound ; to comfort all that mourn ; and, by the blood of the covenant, to send forth the prisoner out of the pit where there is no water. But, says the trembling soul, I am entirely helpless. Thy helplessness, says the adorable Saviour, is no hinderance to my loving-kindness. I break not the bruised reed, I quench not the smoking flax : and to you, and to all who have nothing to pay, I distribute the wine and milk of the Gospel. But still the trembling soul is ready to say, I have sinned with a high hand, both against thy light and thy love. I know, says the blessed Friend of sinners, that thine iniquities are more in number than the hairs of thy head, and that they are a burden too heavy for thee to bear ; and therefore I have borne them for thee in my own body on the tree. I am the man that receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. Fear not, I am with thee : be not dismayed, for I am thy God : my strength is sufficient for thee. Great as thy crimes are, poor mourner in Zion, I do not upbraid thee with them : come near me, that I may speak a word in season to thy weary spirit. Why standest thou afar off ? Come near, I say, that I may bless thee. Far from casting away thy confidence, which hath great recompense of reward, hold it fast. Why dost thou suspect the sincerity of my tender grace ? The general invitation which formerly passed my lips, is still the very language of my heart. Who-soever will, let him come and take of the water of

life freely. Am I not Jesus still? Is my love waxed cold? Is mine arm shortened, that it cannot save, or my ear heavy, that it cannot hear? Can a woman forget her sucking child? Yea, she may forget; yet will I not forget thee. And if thou canst not take my word, believe my oath: as I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live. And if thou canst not believe my oath, credit these scars. See! I have graven thee on the palms of my hands. By the mystery of my holy incarnation, and dreadful temptation; by my agony and bloody sweat; by my infamous death and glorious resurrection, I beseech thee, come to the pardoning God by me; and if thou hast nothing to pay, I freely forgive the debt, whether it be fifty, or five hundred pence.

These, O sinner, are the generous sayings of Christ to thee. You are not barely permitted to believe, but he freely invites you to do it. How, then, can we escape, if we neglect so great salvation? What excuse wilt thou have, O sinner, if found out of Christ?

SERMON XVII.



And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God. Ephes. iv. 30.

TO the care of the Gospel minister is entrusted the best interests of man. And while the politician exerts his talents to promote and defend the partial, monopolizing advantage of a small number of his fellow creatures; it behooves the ambassador of Christ, unfettered by the selfishness of party bickerings, either of church or state, to declare the whole counsel of God, and to send abroad all the wakefulness of a godly jealousy, that he may be enabled, at its first appearance, to discountenance sin, and promote and encourage all virtue.

The glorious scheme, to advance the object of which we are set apart from the world, has for its author the One True, and ever living God, the fountain of all being; He who is self-existent and independent. It has for its object the salvation of all men; and for this purpose God has made ample provision by the death of his Son; who, though he was the only begotten of the Father, was most freely given up to die for sinners. The benefit of his death is offered and applied to us by the third person of the Godhead, who is called the Holy Spirit, or Holy

Ghost, to express the mode of his relation to the Father and Son, and because he, by spiritual methods, works spiritual qualities and affections within us.

Of all the monstrous crimes which take root in the degeneracy of our nature, sure I am none can exceed, in enormity, that base ingratitude by which we shut out the light, resist the power, and stifle the motions by which the Holy Spirit attempts our salvation. You have, doubtless, heard of some, who, taken from obscurity by a pitying friend, and raised by him to a condition of ease and dignity, have requited their benefactor with contempt and insolence. You have heard of children, whose every want had been prevented by the persevering vigilance of tender parents; who nevertheless, on coming to years of maturity, so far from smoothing the bed of their declining old age, have rent their withered breasts with agonizing grief by a total disregard of their sage counsel, and a headlong precipitation into paths of profligacy and ruin. Sure I am, that public opinion, formed on principles of justice, must ever hold up such characters as despised marks for the sharpest arrows of obloquy.

My brethren, it is against such disingenuous conduct that the apostle attempts to guard us in the text. You are all ready to say, God forbid that a crime so base should lie at my door; to which petition I would give my hearty amen. But let us not flatter ourselves that we are clear in this matter. To many of us would the solemn appeal of the Divine and Holy Spirit apply, in all its humbling weight, "Hear, O heavens; and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath

spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." Isai. i. 2.: and elsewhere, "My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters; and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Jer. ii. 13. Now, my brethren, we hold that this conduct is disingenuous and unwise; and that it is also dangerous in the extreme to put by, or lightly esteem the calls of grace, and the motions of the Holy Spirit. And it is principally with a design to expose that danger, that I have chosen these words.

It is well known to most of you, that the church, of which I have the honour to be a member and minister, contends for what, in theology, is called *free-will*; yet not in that unlimited sense, in which some, through ignorance, and others through ill-will, would make us hold the doctrine. Our church hath judiciously expressed her sentiment on this doctrine in her 8th article. "The condition of man after the fall of Adam, is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and works, to faith, and calling upon God: Wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will." What is man, delivered up to the sinfulness of his nature? Revolted against God and his law, his inclinations, in spite of himself, drag him towards forbidden objects, and he is wholly unable to wage successful war with self and sin. How can he, (sold under

sin, as he is, by nature) unaided by the Holy Spirit, shun the snares that are spread for him, the examples which entice him, the temptations which surprise him, the afflictions which discourage him, and the compliances which weaken him, together with that insupportable disgust which the duties of religion give him? It is by the grace of Christ alone, that we can be supported in all these perils. It is by all the freshness of one continued energy, that we are able to make one step in the way of salvation, or to progress in it. As, in the order of nature, we should in a moment return to nonentity, did the Almighty withdraw from us his vital energy; so, in the order of grace, we immediately return to a state of sin and death, when the Spirit no longer strives with us.

Now all this would not be so alarming, if we were assured that the Holy Spirit could not be so grieved as to withdraw his kindly help from us; although it must be admitted, that our repeated abuses and neglect would be disingenuous in the extreme. But God hath said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." And it seems to me, my brethren, that nothing can be more just or equitable than the conduct of the Almighty in this affair. When we neglect and reject the grace which is offered to us; when we either totally refuse to obey the Gospel; or pretending to obedience, reckon with the Almighty, and strive to fix upon the lowest point of saving obedience; can we expect that a just God will multiply unto us the consolations of the Holy Spirit? No, such semi-Christians are already without real comfort, and there is but one step between them and final

apostacy. With these views your present condition alarms you, and you are ready to say, nothing would please you so much, as a happy disengagedness from the world, and constant union with God. Be not deceived, my brethren; you do not want holiness for its own sake; you want it, because it alone can free you from those corroding fears which break your peace. If indeed you loved holiness for its own sake, you would no longer hesitate to sacrifice, on the altar of self-renunciation, every unsanctified disposition. I tell you plainly from God, that in order to persevere in his ways, you must give yourselves up to him without reserve, and close in with the Holy Spirit in serious efforts to weaken all the passions, and to nourish every virtue; or that Spirit, which is already grieved by your indolence, will take his final departure from you, and you will be left without power to do any thing for your salvation.

Alas! my brethren, what can the soul promise itself by allowed and indulged corruption? Can the lamp, long without oil, continue to give light; or the tree which no longer draws nourishment from the earth, fail to wither and die? He has grieved the Holy Spirit till it has almost forsaken him. Tired with the yoke of Christ, and disgusted with himself; weakened by disease, and staggering at every step; he leans towards his fall, almost entangled by the snare of the devil. What, O what is to prevent his eternal ruin? Aye, of him as of Ephraim of old, it will soon be said, "He is joined to his idols; let him alone." To many present, I fear it will, ere long be said, "I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand,

and no man regarded ; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh."

The remarks already made, go to point out the danger of grieving the Holy Spirit of God. I shall not be so likely to accomplish my design, (which, if I know my heart, is to benefit your souls) unless I speak something of the different ways in which the Holy Spirit is frequently grieved by us.

It is easy to perceive that the word *grieve*, in this place, is figurative. We cannot suppose that the Holy Spirit actually realizes any of that heart-rending sensation which mortals feel, and which they call grief. But as the veriest friend, by repeated slights may be grieved, and seek to shun our company ; so the conduct in mortals which makes the visits of the Spirit less frequent in our hearts, and weakens his influence there, is, for want of a more appropriate term, called *grieving the Holy Spirit*.

It may be plainly seen, I think, that the solemn caution in the text undermines the doctrine of *bound-will*. For that bright intelligence, which we call the Holy Spirit, would never be grieved, or take its departure from a man, for that which he does as the result of a decree, made by the Holy Spirit itself. It is by the abuse of a power which he gives us, we frustrate the purposes of our salvation, and grieve him.

There are many different ways in which we may *grieve the Holy Spirit*.

When God, of his infinite mercy, sends us his Gospel, preached in the power and demonstration of the

Holy Ghost, the Spirit, ever waits to attend it to the hearts and consciences of those who hear it. More than the yearning bowels of a mother's sympathy for her sick child, is realized, methinks, by the Holy Spirit. O then, tell me, how must the good Spirit be grieved, when, instead of taking the wholesome prescriptions of the Gospel, we put it from us, and take poison in its place.—When, instead of receiving the Lord Jesus Christ by faith as our only Saviour, we reject him, and seek to drown all serious thought in gay company and dissipating amusements; as the ball, the circus, the theatre; from any of which places I defy you to bring away a mind as well prepared to worship God, as you carried there.

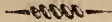
When it pleases the Lord to lay his hand upon us to afflict us, either by the loss of friends, property, or health, and we refuse to see the hand that smites us, and to break off our sins by righteousness, that we may turn to God as our chief joy; then must the Holy Spirit be grieved with our incorrigible and irreclaimable obstinacy.

When we, as professors of religion, begin to relax in the discharge of our duty, and content ourselves with the accommodating spirit of semi-Christianity, then is the Spirit grieved, and it flies us, with this serious interrogatory, "Have ye suffered so many things in vain? Are ye so foolish, having begun in the Spirit, as to end in the flesh?"

In a word, there are ten thousand little yieldings to sin, and stiflings of the Divine Spirit, which we cannot describe or name, in which we grieve or weaken the influence of the Holy Spirit.

From what has been said, it appears that the divine Spirit is in the world, working on the minds of men to turn them from the power of darkness to God. How extensive his operations! It further appears, that his aid is really required, to enable us to accomplish the enterprize of salvation. How great should be our gratitude for his aid, and how serious are the consequences of obstinately rejecting it! When our judgment tells us the necessity of religion, and the Spirit no longer aids us, how serious is our condition! Let us close with its next offers!

SERMON XVIII.



*For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear ;
but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we
cry, Abba, Father. Rom. viii. 15.*

THIS chapter opens with a reviving view of the privilege of every Christian believer, which is heightened by the view of its contrast; that is, the state of an awakened soul, (described in the former chapter) whose only resource is in an infinite and violated law.

There we hear the awakened sinner, with almost despairing anxiety, inquire, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death." But having received absolution, or being renewed by the Gospel energy, he breaks forth in the commencement of this chapter in this wise: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Having introduced these two characters to represent the two dispensations, the apostle proceeds to enumerate and

urge the strong obligations imposed on us Christians by the reign of grace, which he denominates, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," which makes the justified man free from the law of sin and death.

Such being the effects of the gracious assistance promised in the Gospel, no person under the new covenant is irresistibly forced, either by the corruption of his nature, or by outward temptation, to live according to the flesh. And, therefore, God has justly decreed, that all who live according to the flesh shall eternally die. "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to live after the flesh—For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die."

Further, to correct the error of the Jews, who contended that no Gentile could obtain eternal life who did not obey the law of Moses, and to comfort the believing Gentiles, whom the Jews thus excluded from the mercy of God; the apostle declares, that, according to the tenor of the new covenant, all who are led by the Spirit of God to mortify the deeds of the body, are the sons of God, whether they be Jews or Gentiles. And then, to define the genius of the new covenant, and to show the excellent disposition of the sons of God, whether they be Jews or Gentiles; he declares, that they did not obey God from that slavish fear of punishment which was bred in the minds of the Jews by the curse of the law, but from the filial disposition of love and gratitude to their Father. *For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*" The sense of

these words may be included in the observation, that the temper to which we are led by Christianity, is not such a servile spirit as prevailed under the law.

In the consideration of this truth, I shall show,

I. In what sense it is made the character of those under the law, to have received the spirit of bondage; and of those under the Gospel, to have received the spirit of adoption.

II. How the Old Testament dispensation contributed to a servile spirit; and how, on the contrary, the Gospel leads to a filial temper; and,

III. How, therefore, our deliverance from the one, and our participation of the other, should influence us.

I. And, first, we are to show, in what sense it is made the character of those under the law, to have received the spirit of bondage; and of those under the Gospel, to have received the spirit of adoption.

Let us define these two words, *bondage* and *adoption*.

The common acceptation of the word *bondage*, is captivity, confinement, or servitude. But in a theological sense, as in the text, it means a state of misery through fear of death. This was felt by those Jews who lived by a rule or law, which was encumbered by many rites and ceremonies; a law, by the breach of which, the Jew must be subject to bon-

dage, through the fear of death, all his life time. Or the apostle, as he was speaking to the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, might refer to those burdensome rites and ceremonies to which the Gentiles had also to attend; for they had their almost endless hosts of gods, and could not believe themselves secure of protection, while one of them, celestial, terrestrial, or infernal, was left unpropitiated. By *adoption*, understand that action whereby a man takes a person into his family in order to make him a part of it, acknowledges him as his son, and gives him a right to the privileges of a child. God doth adopt his children, when he graciously admits strangers (as all the race of Adam are by nature) into the state of children through Jesus Christ, he becoming their father in him, according to the great promise of the new covenant.

Having fixed the meaning of these two words, we proceed to observe, that when St. Paul said, *ye have not received the spirit of bondage, but ye have received the spirit of adoption*, he had reference to the different tendencies of the two dispensations, and the different tempers ordinarily manifest under them. It is true, many of the Old Testament saints manifested a filial temper; as the psalmist, when he said, "whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth I desire in comparison with thee." But it was not by reason of any peculiar advantages attached to the dispensation, that he thus expressed himself; but through a peculiar manifestation of God's goodness. On the other hand, many of the New Testament

saints have manifested something of a servile spirit; but not through any defect in the dispensation, but perhaps through their failure as relates to their high obligations.

The apostle must have intended the same in this verse, as he did in the first verse of the chapter. "There is now therefore no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." *For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*

We now proceed to show, as was proposed,

II. How the Old Testament dispensation contributed to a servile spirit; and how, on the contrary, the Gospel leads to a filial temper.

And, first, the manner of the introduction of both of them was a natural prelude to the different tendencies of them. The glory appearing on Mount Sinai made the people afraid of death, saying, let not God speak to us any more, lest we die. Thus they received the spirit of bondage to fear; whilst we have given to us the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind, and the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, *Abba, Father*. And to this the apostle alludes in Hebr. xii. 18 to 24. "For ye are not come to the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (for they could not endure that which was

commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: and so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake :) but ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

But, again, Moses, with all his glory, was only the minister of the law, written on tables of stone, which was called the ministration of condemnation. The apostles, and all real Gospel preachers, are ministers of the Gospel written on the hearts of all believers, accompanied by the Holy Spirit, which giveth life.

The glory which Moses received at the giving of the law did more and more diminish, because his law was to vanish away; but the glory which is received from Christ is an increasing glory, the doctrine and divine influence remaining for ever.

But, again, the law was veiled under types and shadows, and encumbered with almost innumerable ceremonies. The Gospel has scarcely any ceremonies; baptism and the Lord's supper being all that can be properly so called; and believe, love and obey, the great precepts of the Gospel, are delivered with the greatest perspicuity: and indeed the doctrine of Christ crucified is as plain as language can make it.

The Jews only saw the shining of Moses's face through a veil; but we behold the glory of the Gospel in the person of Christ, our Lawgiver, with open face; which glory is as a mirror, which reflects the image of Christ on believers, so that they are transformed into the same image.

From what has been said, it is sufficiently manifest, that the Old Testament dispensation contributed to a servile spirit; and that, on the other hand, the New Testament dispensation leads to a filial temper. We proceed, therefore, as was proposed, to show,

III. How our deliverance from the one, and participation of the other, should influence us.

And, first, it behooves us to see, that we have a filial temper; by which I mean, such a temper as the obedient child of an affectionate father feels towards him—a temper befitting a son. Nor is this temper to lie dormant in the soul: it is to show itself on proper occasions. As our light is to shine before men, it should be manifest that we have received the spirit of adoption. Men may give a character of adoption, but it belongs to God alone to give the *spirit of adoption*, the nature of children. It is by this spirit that we cry, *Abba, Father*. Praying is here called crying, which is not only the earnest, but the natural expression of desire. Children that cannot speak, vent their desires by crying. But in the text the children of adoption are said to cry, *Abba, Father*, (the one a Syriac, the other a Greek word) which denotes, that this adoption is common to both Jews and Gen-

tiles:—or it may mark an affectionate and endearing earnestness in the petition, and a peculiar stress laid upon the relation. Little children in begging can say little beside Father, Father—but this is rhetoric enough.

But if we avail ourselves of the advantages of this dispensation, and obtain the spirit of adoption, it will manifest itself in acts of worship. While we attend to the letter of St. Paul's precept, that is, not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, we are to observe that we have the temper of David, when he said, he "had rather be a door-keeper in the house of his God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." And again, "my soul longeth, yea, thirsteth for the living God:" and again, "whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison with thee." Let the subject be illustrated by that common occurrence of familiar, and social or domestic life, I mean that willingness manifest on the part of a child to enter into the presence of his father, whom he is not conscious of having offended. To this circumstance the apostle seems to have had reference in our text.

But this filial temper should be manifest by freedom, when we approach our heavenly Father. Considering the many promises of the Gospel by which we are made partakers of the divine nature, the utmost freedom and the most unlimited confidence should be the result. For, said David, "the Lord inclined his ear, and hearkened unto me; therefore will I call upon him as long as I live." And St. Paul

exhorted the New Testament saints, to “draw near with true hearts in full assurance of faith:”—and again he saith, “Let us come with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

Again, we are to manifest this disposition in acts of obedience. The slave manifests a servile disposition, in the reluctance with which he complies with his master’s commands. It is easy to see, that fear is with him the chief motive to obedience. Not so with the child. With David he can say, “O how love I thy law;” and with St. Paul, His commandments are not grievous, but joyous. “My yoke is easy and my burthen is light,” said Christ; and this he knows by experience. Thy will be done, says the obedient child, even though it should assign to me affliction.

Moreover this filial disposition is to be manifest in sorrow for sin. When does the ingenuous child feel such real compunction, as when he has offended his father? I will venture to say, that he feels a sensation to which the servile slave is an utter stranger. When the child discovers in his father a disposition to forgive him, his misconduct is marked in blacker colours in his own estimation. My brethren, what do you suppose were the feelings of the prodigal, when his father was weeping on his neck? O, is this my offended father! Is it possible that he will receive me? Such language as this, expresses the ordinary feelings of an evangelical penitent.

But again, this filial temper will appear in the manner in which we sustain affliction. This, whether

bodily or mental, will, by the child who discovers its end, be received with a willingness to which the slave is a stranger. To the suffering child the apostle's exhortation will not be thought unsuitable, "My Son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons: for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now, no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

But the filial temper will show itself by studious assimilation of mind and manners. Nothing is more dignified in the estimation of the affectionate child, than to imitate his father in walk, speech, and behaviour. And there are no prayers offered up more fervently by the New Testament saint, than those in which he begs for conformity to his heavenly Father in all things.

Once more, the filial temper is manifest, in loving those who appear to be children of the same parent. "For if we love him who begat," surely "we shall love those who are begotten:" for if we say we love God, and do not love our brethren, we lie, and do not the truth." Nor will we, in defining the term *brethren*, suffer it to mean only those of our own church: Christian forbearance and love will extend to all who love the Lord Jesus in deed.

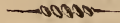
I will only add, this temper will be shown in regard to dying. The dying Christian will consider, that God, his Father, when he sends death for him, only sends for him his chariot, paved with love, to take him from school below, into his immediate presence above, there to dwell and inherit the patrimony of eternal glory.

We pause for a moment to contemplate the privileges we enjoy in this glorious dispensation. I look back, and I behold the ancient saints ascend the hill of prophetic vision, and view the glories of this dispensation: I hear them groan with desire to see the day that we see; but they die without the sight. But blessed are our ears, for they hear; and our eyes, for they see: "the lines have fallen to us in pleasant places, and we have a goodly heritage" among the host of nations. Permit me to ask, whether we have been benefited by the Gospel blessings, which God has dealt out to us with so bountiful a hand? This question will appear still more important, if we consider what the Scripture saith; that the Gospel is the savour of life unto life, or of death unto death.

Again, I ask what sin you have mortified or subdued, that you would not have done under the darker dispensations? Have you not been satisfied with a smaller portion of holiness, than was possessed by the Old Testament saints! Indeed have not some of you satisfied yourselves without any holiness at all? Are there not some present who know nothing of real holiness, and have not the smallest desire to obtain it? Surely the Ninevites shall rise up in judgment with the men of this generation; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, a greater than Jonah is here. It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for this people.—The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation.

Christians, let us avail ourselves of the advantages of this dispensation. O let us cultivate a filial temper. Let God be the object of our hearts' delight.—Let us come to the throne of grace with boldness—let us obey God with cheerfulness—let our sorrow for sin be evangelical—let us sustain affliction with pleasure—let us assimilate to the divine perfections—let us love our brethren with true hearts fervently—and let us wait with patience the happy moment when this tabernacle shall fall, and we shall go to the building of God, eternal in the heavens.

SERMON XIX.



But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect ; stablish, strengthen, settle you.
1 Pet. v. 10.

IN these words, as also throughout both of his epistles, the apostle breathes an affectionate solicitude for the Christians to whom he wrote. They had lately been converted to the faith, and he was greatly anxious, that, as obedient children, they should not fashion themselves according to the former lusts in their ignorance, but as he who had called them was holy, that they also should be holy in all manner of conversation. He wished it to appear to all the Gentiles among whom they were scattered, that Christianity wrought the most excellent effects, and that its votaries were made a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people, to show forth the praises of him who had called them out of darkness into his marvellous light.

The counsels and exhortations of the Epistle are such as we might reasonably expect from a man of God ; who, though he was not insensible of the weak-

ness of man, in this his enfeebled condition, was nevertheless fully sensible of the sin-subduing power of grace divine, and the mighty energy of the Holy Ghost. While he proposed to his brethren duties the most difficult, he urged them to their performance by motives best understood by those whose faith reached within the veil.

Having, with the highest prospects, and the most influential motives, attempted the edification of the Church, and the perfecting of the people of God; he closes his first epistle, by offering up the solemn and very appropriate prayer contained in the words of our text, namely, that *the God of all grace*—the God from whom every good and perfect gift descends—the God who sows the seeds of grace, gives them increase, and brings them to perfection—that God, who of his great mercy had called them, being Gentiles, to equal privileges with the Jews here, and eternal glory hereafter through his well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ—the God of unsearchable wisdom and almighty power, would grant them—what? An entire delivery from every trial? Did he pray that they might know nothing of affliction? That they might enjoy, without interruption, both outward and inward tranquillity? No, my brethren, this was not the petition of one who had been taught to register affliction as one of the most valuable items in the Christian inheritance. He well knew that

“Adversity is virtue’s school
To those who right discern.”

He, therefore, prayed that God would sanctify afflictions to their good, and make use of them as a mean to mature their graces, and to prepare them after they had been made perfect through them, to enjoy, with a peculiar or heightened zest, that rest which remains for the people of God.—But it is time to divide the subject.

I. We will notice the matter or thing requested or expressed, in the following brief words, *Make you perfect; stablish, strengthen, settle you.*

To encourage us to hope for an answer, we will notice,

II. The Being to whom the prayer is offered—*The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus.*

And as it is good for a man not only quietly to hope, but also patiently to wait for the salvation of God;

III. I shall speak of the time when we are to receive our reward; *after that ye have suffered awhile.* Here is our place. O that God, this day, may bless his own word, for Christ's sake!

I. We are to notice the matter or thing requested, which is expressed in these brief words, *Make you perfect; stablish, strengthen, settle you.* I shall speak of them as they stand.

What do we understand of perfection, in a Gospel sense, as it relates to the soul of man? Here it will be

necessary to speak with modesty and caution, and be very careful that we do not deviate from the oracles of God. I shall not give the opinions of different sects of religionists, but shall give you my own, founded, as I think, on the word of God. What then, did St. Peter mean, when he said, *the God of all grace make you perfect?* Perhaps he meant what St. Paul did, when he prayed that his brethren might be enabled to comprehend, with all saints, what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that they might be filled with all the fulness of God.

But the question recurs, What did St. Paul mean, or what is the Scriptural notion of perfection? 1st, It implies complete instruction in all the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel. 2d, Complete purification of the heart, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and obedience to the truth. 3d, Complete union with God and Jesus Christ, through the Spirit. 4th. And complete love of the brethren. But is this degree of grace attainable in this life? I think it is, or our Saviour would not have said, Matt. v. 48. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect:" which words include both a promise and a command. Here the question may be asked, Can we be fully saved from sin in this world? The text above quoted gives a satisfactory answer, "Ye shall be perfect as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." As in his infinite nature, there is no sin, nothing but goodness and love, so, in your finite nature, there shall dwell no sin, for

the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus shall make you free from the law of sin and death." God shall dwell in, fill, and rule your hearts, and when this is the case, Satan can have no part. Will you slight your own mercies, and cry out, this is impossible? In so saying do you not reproach the Almighty with having given a commandment, the fulfilment of which is impossible? "But who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" I answer, God Almighty: and however inveterate the disease of sin may be, the grace of our Lord Jesus can fully cure it. And who can say, that he who has laid down his life for our souls, will not use his power completely to effect that salvation which he died to procure? But, say you, where is the person who is thus saved? I answer, wherever he is found who loves God with all his heart, mind, soul and strength, and his neighbour as himself. And for the honour of Christianity and its Author, may we not hope there are many such in the Church of God, not known by any profession of this kind which they make, but by a surer testimony, that of uniformly holy tempers, piety to God, and beneficence to man.

The apostle, then, in the words of our text, prayed as an inspired man, when he besought the God of all grace, to place every faculty, passion, and appetite, in its proper place, so that the original order, harmony, unity, and purity of the soul might be restored, and the whole builded up into a habitation of God through the Spirit.

But it is time to notice the remaining words of the petition, viz. *stablish, strengthen, settle you*. In this mode

of expression the apostle appears to speak in the first place, in the aggregate, through the warmth of feelings ; and then to go back, as it were, in order to specify the different parts of the complete whole. Or possibly he might intend to convey an idea of that unceasing progress, which, so far from being superseded by what we denominate Christian perfection, is thereby greatly accelerated. The words here chosen seem to express the great importance of the petition, and the earnest desire of the apostle. When he prayed, then, that God would *stablish* them, he embraced in that part of the petition an antidote against that inward lightness and inconstancy which are natural to us, and those counterblasts of persecution and opposition, which we, as soldiers of the cross, may expect to realize, more or less, while we stay in this world. "The double minded man is unstable in all his ways." Happy the man, whose hand of faith is so fastened on God, that he can

" Bid earth roll, nor feel the idle whirl."

But he next prays that God would *strengthen* them. Here he certainly adverts to the growth of their graces, the necessity of which is implied in almost innumerable passages ; as in Ezekiel's vision of the holy waters ; or our Lord's metaphor of the corn in its different stages, first the blade, then the ear, after that, the full corn in the ear ; or St. Peter's exhortation, " besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance," &c. ; and elsewhere, " as new-

born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." O how important that we should assault the throne of grace with holy boldness, that by daily receiving fresh supplies of grace, we may grow up into Christ our living Head in all things.

Brethren, have you grown in any degree since ye were born again? If not, when, I would ask, do you expect to come to the measure of the fulness of the stature of men in Christ Jesus?

Yet again the apostle prays that God would *settle* the Christians. This, though it seems to be the same in substance with the other word, *stablish*, adds somewhat to it. It signifies to found or fix on a sure foundation; and doubtless has reference to Him who is the foundation and strength of believers, on whom they build by faith. Happy the man, whose hopes rest on this foundation; for other foundation can no man lay.

We have done with the first head, and we proceed

II. To notice the Being to whom the prayer is addressed—*The God of all grace, who hath called us unto eternal glory by Christ Jesus.*

The genius of prayer is very conspicuous in the words. Prayer is intended not only to express our wants, but our confidence in God, without which we cannot pray in faith: hence in our Lord's prayer it is said, "Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory," &c.

The apostle proposes the perfections, glory, and grace of God, which grace they had already realized,

as incentives to the most unbounded hope. First, he saith, *the God of all grace*, by way of eminence—the God who is goodness in the abstract, and as communicative as he is good—the God who is the bestower of life, spiritual and eternal life, the blest prelibations of which he had already communicated unto them, and therefore left them no room to doubt that, the residue of the Spirit being with him, he would pour it on them without measure. He goes on, *who hath called us unto his eternal glory*—who hath called us, deaf Gentiles, idolatrous people. But to what had he called them?—why, *to glory*; not only so, but it was *to eternal glory*; not only so, but to *HIS eternal glory*. He did not make free with the property of another, but *his eternal glory* is the boon conferred on the Christian soldier. Behold, Christian, the motive contained in the last sentiment, *by Christ Jesus*, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

“————Survey the wondrous cure,
 And at each step let higher wonder rise!
 Pardon for infinite offence! and pardon
 Thro' means that speak its value infinite!
 A pardon bought with blood! with blood divine!
 With blood divine of him I made my foe!
 Persisted to provoke! tho' woo'd and aw'd,
 Bless'd and chastis'd, a flagrant rebel still:
 A rebel 'midst the thunders of his throne!
 Nor I alone! a rebel universe!
 My species up in arms! not one exempt!
 Yet for the foulest of the foul he dies.”

And can we give place to the surmises of unbelief, and fear that God will not, with his Son, also freely give us all things! When we consider salvation as the work of God, and at the same time reflect on the promises and the power of God, we shall surely then open our mouths wide, with an expectation that they shall be filled.

“Thy love I soon expect to find,
 In all its depth and height;
 To comprehend th’ eternal mind,
 And grasp the infinite.”

But we will proceed to notice,

III. The time when we are to receive our reward,
After that ye have suffered awhile.

But it is said, that “hope deferred maketh the heart sick;” why then did he say, *after that ye have suffered awhile*. Perhaps he had an allusion to their actual situation, which was a very afflicting one, and he might wish them to understand, that it was no unfavourable symptom, and that God was able to sanctify it to the perfecting of them in love. But it is more probable that he was bringing into view the high genius of the Gospel, whose glorious Author was made perfect through suffering. Considering it to be a great thing to be conformed to Christ, like St. Paul, he would give them to understand, that it was their privilege to take pleasure in affliction. There is no history recorded of any man who got to heaven other-

wise than through tribulation; nor did he expect or wish them to go a different route. The hour of suffering and affliction is the good man's brightest scene. An aged saint could say, "it is good for me that I have been afflicted." St. Paul, speaking of his afflictions, and those of his brethren, saith, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the marks of the Lord Jesus;" for this special end, "that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body."

Glorious religion of my divine Redeemer! It turns my loss to my gain. So far from being overcome by my adversaries, I shall conquer, though I die; and this I know, that each painful step matures my graces, and fits me for my passage. Let us then imitate the dying martyr, who continued to repeat, "Welcome cross of Christ," till the fire was just about to take away his life; and then exclaimed, "Welcome crown of life."

The words of the text, taken in the light in which we have considered them, bring into view a grade in religion, to which, doubtless, many have not attained, and which some perhaps may think not attainable; and that the apostle, in the glow of his zeal, and the ardour of his affection, expressed things that surpass the Christian's privilege. But was the apostle inspired, or was he not, when he penned the petition? If he was not, the petition is no part of the Scriptures. If he was inspired, the petition is equivalent

to a promise: for what the Almighty inspires us to pray for, he will surely bestow upon us, if we continue to ask. That you may do this, let me beseech you again to consider to whom the Christian offers his petition.

“ The stream to which my spirit flies,
Can make the wounded whole !”

Brethren, are there not some present who are not mere novices in religion? Already has the devil thrust often at you; already have you been the butt of ridicule to the wicked; already have you suffered reproach and persecution. Have you then suffered so many things in vain, if it be yet in vain? Do you not now begin to comprehend, with all saints, what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of God's love? If you have thus felt the good effects of affliction, you indeed are prepared in every thing to give thanks. Nay, I am persuaded you do not wish your sufferings less, while you read it thus recorded: —“ Our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” Blessed be God! there is a rest remaining for the people of God.

But sinner, or ungodly man, I must present to you the Gospel glass! Are you perfect: or has the work of perfection even begun? What! you perfect, and entirely unrenewed! You perfect, and destitute of union with God! You perfect, and destitute of love for God's people! You perfect, while all your passions are disordered, and your affections flowing after

earthly objects! What, you Sabbath-breaker, you adulterer, are you *stablished*! You extortioner, are you *settled*! You swearer and drunkard, *strengthened*! Are you really religious! I have not so learned Christ. If I were to speak my opinion, I should say, You are of your father the devil, whose works you do. And, considering the terror of the Lord, and the shortness of time, I call on you, O immortal man, to repent before it be too late. Why, O why will you procrastinate a work of such infinite moment? Think, O think, before it be too late!

SERMON XX.



Because I have called, and ye refused ; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded ; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof : I also will laugh at your calamity ; I will mock when your fear cometh. Prov. i. 24, 25, 26.

IN this chapter we have the plain instructions of wisdom, or of Jesus Christ, as the word and wisdom of God, the great Prophet of the church, and Light of the world. Whether the sacred writer intended expressly to prophesy of the Messiah, or whether the Israelites would generally consider Christ as the speaker, in these addresses, needs not to be determined. To us who have the New Testament for our guide, it is by far the most simple manner of considering the subject, and it gives the exhortation of wisdom a peculiar majesty and emphasis.

Christ, by his own personal ministry, and by that of his apostles and evangelists, and ever since, by the true and zealous ministers of the Gospel, hath ad-

dressed himself to sinners in the most earnest and public manner. We are not to regard these words in the light of a definitive decree, by which the Almighty word and wisdom would notify the Jews that their crimes were already filled up, and that they could no longer benefit by the mercy of God. I say, we are not to conceive of them as conveying this meaning; but to regard them as a threat, which declared to the Jews, in the first place, and still declares to all men of succeeding ages, what is to be apprehended by persisting in obstinacy and unbelief. And is it not enough to fill the mind with horror, that it is the menace of God, who never speaks in vain—who never speaks from passion—who never speaks without unbounded knowledge: but who penetrates into the recesses of the heart, beholds the whole prospect of futurity, and foresees the catastrophe of our mortal life; this strikes me, my hearers, and should likewise strike you, with horror and dismay; for the Almighty hath nothing more terrible in the treasures of his wrath, than that with which he will punish the contemner of his grace. And from this consideration it imports us to catch at every possible means of preservation.

The three grand features of the text are,

I. The mercy of God.

II. The wickedness, ingratitude, and folly of man.

III. And the just and dreadful consequences of his sins.

I hope God will enable us to treat these topics in such wise, as to produce in you true repentance, and a serious desire to flee the wrath to come. O God! teach my fingers to fight!

I. And first, I design to make some observations on the mercy of God, and of Christ, displayed in the Gospel-plan of salvation. This mercy of which we would speak, is referred to in these words, *counsels, calls, reproofs, and stretching out the hand*. I do not purpose to speak of that benevolence, which caused the Deity to go out of himself, as it were, in the creation of the world; but I shall speak of that grace to which the apostle refers, where he says, “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”

It will not be necessary to enter into a formal detail of the arguments that relate to the fall of man; I shall content myself with saying, that by transgression man has become obnoxious to divine wrath, which is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness. To deliver us from this wretchedness and misery, what was required? Was it enough that God or Christ should only look on, and then pass by on the other side? No, my brethren, it became necessary that he should *stretch forth his hand*. To deliver us from our sins he must bear them; to terminate our sorrows, he must carry them; the chastisement of our peace must be upon him: and by his stripes alone can we be healed. There may be some, perad-

venture, who would die for their friend, but this is the extent of human love. But Christ hath commended his love to us, in that, while we were enemies, he laid down his life for us. This, my brethren, was not a sacrifice which cost him nothing. This was *stretching out the hand* indeed.

By this expression, moreover, we are to understand the free and earnest offers of the Gospel. In addition to this, while we are on this topic, we would speak also of the *counsel* of the Lord; by which we are to understand, his will and doctrine concerning the way of salvation, the direction of his word, the motions of his Spirit, and the guidance of his providence. God, of his mercy, also *calls* sinners to a state of salvation: this he doth by the preaching of the word, and the operations of the Holy Spirit. And where is the man or woman to be found to whom the greatest persuasions have not been addressed, from one or the other of these sources? The glorious Gospel you have repeatedly heard, and the Spirit has often attempted to seal instruction on your hearts. Well may Jesus say, *I have called*,—Yes, by ten thousand mercies has he *called* us.

Under the head of the mercy of God we would mention his *reproofs*: and it is a crime of no less atrocious character, to sin against the *reproofs* of the Almighty, than to resist motives of repentance proposed by his love.

The Almighty sometimes reproves us by chastisements: and though he commonly uses milder means, yet when we are stubborn and refractory, he some-

times uses the rod. But the most common method in which the Almighty reproves us, is by his Spirit, and by his vicegerent in our own bosoms, which never fails to reprove us, till, by our repeated abuse of its admonitions, it is entirely murdered or seared. When we reflect on the death of Christ, the counsels of his word, the many calls of his grace, and the fatherly chastisements of his rod; we are forced to acknowledge the justice of his claim to our attention, gratitude, and love. But we shall see, (speaking after the manner of men) how his just expectation is disappointed; while under the second head we speak,

II. Something of the wickedness, ingratitude, and folly of man.

The best and briefest method to be followed, in disclosing the sinfulness, ingratitude, and folly of man, is to resume the various items of the divine mercy, referred to under the former head.

If, my brethren, by an act of unparalleled love, Jesus Christ poured out his soul as an offering for sin; judge ye what must be the character of that ingratitude and guilt by which we profane his love, and trample under foot the blood of the covenant. And I would ask, if this is not done by every one, who refuses the offers of grace, so freely made in the Gospel? Moreover, if infinite wisdom, seeing our ignorance, has been pleased, graciously pleased, to afford us the counsels of his word, his Gospel and Spirit; is it not the height of wickedness and folly, to set at nought that counsel, and shut our eyes

against that light? And are not those who slight the Lord Jesus Christ, and refuse to obey his doctrines, guilty of this sin? Judge ye.

If it hath pleased the Lord to call us with a holy calling; if his Word, Spirit, and ministers address us, and in our wretchedness, solicit us to receive the grace which was procured by the death of Christ; if it hath pleased God to station his vicegerent in our bosoms, which, at the moment we sin, reproaches us; if, with the bounty of a God, he loads the rolling year, and attempts to conquer us by his goodness; what black ingratitude must mark the conduct of those who refuse the calls of the gracious Redeemer, to follow after vanity and lies? How deep must be their guilt, who stifle the emotions of conscience, in order that they may sin without remorse? What do you think of those, who, after they have received all the blessings of heaven, after all, I say, give just cause to the Almighty to say, "Hear, O heavens! and give ear, O earth! I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me."

Do not think that this reproach applies only to the Jews; depend upon it, my brethren, every man who enjoys the blessings of Providence, without habitual gratitude; every unconverted man in this assembly, gives the Almighty just cause to say, *I have called, and ye have refused.*

Once more, if it hath pleased the Almighty to attempt to wean us from the trifling toys of this world by poisoning your delights; if, by affliction and discipline, he has attempted to embitter sin, and we,

like stubborn children, have remained hard, and would none of his reproofs, have we not manifested a spirit of the most desperate wickedness? And are we not guilty of the most atrocious wickedness? What, then, shall we say of those, who, notwithstanding the many chastisements they have received, the many privations they have endured, and the many tears they have shed on the graves of their nearest friends; nevertheless will not consider the hand that smites them, that they may renounce their sins by righteousness, and return to God as their chief joy? Are not these the characters referred to in the text, where eternal Wisdom saith, *Ye would none of my reproofs?* The sins to which reference is made in the text, are the same of which we are guilty. And may we not apprehend the most fatal consequences, if we persist in our ingratitude, disobedience, and folly? We can surely expect nothing less, my brethren, if we attend for one moment to the solemn threat contained in the text; *I will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh.*

This leads to the third thing to be considered, namely,

III. The just and dreadful consequences of man's sin.

My brethren, vice, for a while, may triumph, and sin may, for a short time, go unpunished; but by the decree of infinite holiness, sin, sooner or later, must be punished. Nor shall the sins to which we have

pointed in the foregoing part of this discourse, meet with light punishment.

The expressions used to assist our minds in forming some sort of notion of it, are strong and forcible. It is said, that the sinner shall be assaulted by *calamity*: that is, grievous affliction and real anguish, at which the Almighty saith he *will laugh*; that is, he will sneer at them, and disregard all their cries and tears. It is said, "their fear shall come upon them:" that is, that punishment which they feared, and which follows a life of guilt, shall overtake them; while God shall *mock*:—that is to say, he shall bring on them, without pity, the heaviest strokes of his vengeance.

But when shall the time of this calamity arrive? The mind seems to shoot forward to the day of the sinner's death. We are necessarily led to infer, from the text, that those who, during life, have abused the calls and offers of grace, shall finally perish without remedy. Here one may be ready to ask, will he not at least have the opportunity of a death-bed repentance? That the sinner may repent on his death-bed, I do not dispute; but whether it will be a repentance which will turn away the anger of God, I greatly dispute. For, my brethren, it is contrary to the divine order, that a man should live all his days in sin, and then, after all, be saved by mere mercy. I cannot tell what may be the opinion of others on this subject; but I think the salvation of a man, who is stretched on his dying bed, and who has never before repented of his sins, is extremely doubtful for the

following reasons. First, because nothing is more difficult than real repentance. Secondly, because true repentance is at no time more difficult than at the hour of death. Thirdly, because of all those, who find it hard to repent at the hour of death, they find it to be the hardest, who have neglected it through their whole lives. These, my brethren, are three incontestable propositions, to which we will devote a few moments' reflection.

1. Nothing is more difficult than real repentance. True repentance implies a total change of heart. A man, to repent, must hate himself, must renounce himself, must divest himself of every thing, must destroy in himself the old man, must reduce himself to a state of annihilation:—that is, he must cease to be what he was, and he must become entirely a new man. He must conceive an abhorrence for what appeared most pleasing, and an affection for what he most abhorred. He must indulge no passion but for inward resistance; all the senses must be held in captivity; his mind must be reduced to perfect submission; and his body exercised in spiritual warfare and mortification. This is the essence and ground-work of Christian repentance. Can this be attained without great difficulty?

2. True repentance is at no time more difficult than at the hour of death. My brethren, what can grace do, all powerful as it is, when nature, which ought to co-operate, is unable to act? To say nothing of those symptoms by which the reasoning faculties appear to be entirely beclouded, the loss of strength,

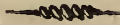
and pain of body, are generally sufficient, of themselves, to deprive the mind of all reflection, and consequently to close up the way of repentance. Besides, at the hour of death, it is not you who abandon sin, it is sin that abandons you; it is not you who abandon the world, it is the world which abandons you; it is not you who break your chains, but your chains are broken by the general dissolution of nature. Now, brethren, repentance, to be acceptable, must be voluntary; but this voluntary renunciation of the world, self, and sin, is seldom realized on a death-bed.

3. But of all who find it hard to repent at the hour of death, they find it the hardest, who have totally neglected it during the whole course of their lives. It seems to me impossible, that such characters can feel any other repentance, than that of constraint and that of nature; and these are qualities of repentance peculiar to devils in hell, and sinners at their death. Surely, my brethren, he who condemns the sins of his life, because he is under the necessity of quitting them, gives unequivocal proof that his repentance is not from good will, but from constraint. Again, such repentance is only natural, because it hath neither God nor sin for its object. Of what are such penitents afraid? Are they afraid of losing God, or of displeasing God? No, my brethren, nothing of this nature troubles them; for so long as they had nothing else to fear, they did not spend one thought about conversion to him. Theirs, then, is the repentance of nature, or of self-love. This inference disturbs you; but is it I who make it? Or could I suppress, or

weaken it, without betraying my ministry, or blotting out of the Gospel what is written there ?

I know, my brethren, that what is impossible with man, is possible with God : I know that it is possible for him to work repentance in our hearts, even at death : I know that this was the case with the celebrated penitent, who was crucified with Jesus : he lived in sin, and died in grace. But I also know that those were the times of miraculous operations, when God was engaged to perform wonders, in order to do honour to the death of his Son. And I also know, that this conversion, which has passed for a singular example in all ages of the Christian church, is calculated to fill the impenitent sinner rather with fear, than with presumptuous courage.

SERMON XXI.



Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. Matthew vi. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.

PRAYER is a duty which involves the whole compass of our intercourse with God. It includes our adoration of his perfections; our acknowledgment of the wisdom of his dispensations, and our obligations for his benefits, both temporal and spiritual; together with the avowal of our entire dependance on, and the declaration of our faith in him. Prayer is a conversation with God, in which the soul, admitted and introduced (if I may so express it) into the sanctuary of God, lays her wants before the Deity; represents her weakness, discovers her temptations, and begs pardon for her unfaithfulness. Prayer may, with

propriety, be termed the dialect of the poor in spirit; and I cannot conceive how a man, who is taught of God, and professes to teach others, can neglect to offer up prayer, according to the example of St. Paul and Jesus Christ, with and for those to whom he dispenses the instructions of the Gospel. Our Lord, in his sermon on the Mount, which may well be denominated an assemblage of doctrinal perfection, gives a complete form of prayer; not, as I conceive, to the utter exclusion of all other words, for we have many of the subsequent prayers of the apostles recorded, in which they do not follow this form to the letter: I conceive, however, that it is a pattern, according to which all our prayers should be formed, both with respect to matter and manner, short, close, full. It contains all we can either reasonably pray for, or desire; whatever is for the glory of God; whatever is needful for the happiness of the whole family, both in heaven and earth. We say not too much when we declare, that it contains our entire duty, both to God and man.

The prayer consists of three parts,

I. The preface.

II. The petitions.

III. The conclusion.

I. The preface—*Our Father which art in heaven.* These words, while they mark the essential charac-

ter of the true God as the first cause of all things, and the loving preserver of his children, lay, at the same time, a general foundation for prayer. Though the profundity and altitude of Deity are not to be encompassed by the orbit of human reason, yet hath he made known to us part of his ways; and we cannot pray acceptably, unless we believe that He is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. Assisting our minds to form some idea of his goodness and love to the human family by the familiar and well known circumstance of paternal affection, he bids us address him by the term, *Father*; beside which, though we knew all the names of love and power that ever men or angels bore, we should still say, none half so precious as *Father*. Now as the old patriarch who blessed Joseph's children, is said to have guided his hands wittingly; so are we taught to single out the proper object of supplication. There are gods many, and lords many, but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things. Who is this, Christian?

“Tis he, whose rolling chariot,
 Drawn by yoked lightnings,
 Shakes earth's foundation.”

Yes,

“This awful God is ours,
 Our Father and our love.”

Moreover, if to distinguish him from an earthly father, and from all who are called gods, we address him as *Our Father, which art in heaven*, we do not

design to limit the Holy One, who is essentially present throughout the universe. Could we take our stand on the uttermost verge of astronomical imagination, beyond that remote boundary should we behold ten thousand times ten thousand systems, suns, stars, and planets, which, in their regular rotations, would, from the solemn brow in their different orbits, utter in the ears of the paralyzed beholder, God is here. To prevent the dizzy effects of the inebriating contemplation of knowledge which is too wonderful for us, our minds are provided with a rest in these words, *Our Father which art in heaven*. Our ideas are here, as it were, located; and to preserve them from absorption, they are here brought to a focus. O Christian, do you not long to see that Holy Being? Well, he is in heaven. Let us be faithful, and we shall

—————“ Soon see his face,
 And never, never sin;
 And from the rivers of his grace
 Drink endless pleasures in.”

Observe, we are bidden to say, *Our Father*. In one sense all can say so, for he is the Creator of all flesh; but the Christian addresses him as his reconciled Father in Christ. Notice also the catholic principles of the sentiment, “Though we pray in secret, our Father, who seeth in secret, will reward us openly.” Whose Father is this? The Father of the Catholics? No. Of the Protestant Episcopal Church? Not of them alone. Of the Methodists? Of the Baptists?

Of the Presbyterians? Of the Quakers? Are not all one in Christ? Said a wicked philosopher to a buzzing, troublesome fly that he had caught, and was about to turn loose at a window, Go, you devil; the world is large enough for us both: I would deliver his idea from its hateful garb, and clothe it in the apparel of Gospel charity: Fellow Christian, there is room in the compassion of the Saviour for us both; he shed his blood to wash us both; there is room in heaven for us both. O let us bring our sectarian views and prejudices to the foot of the Redeemer's cross. Is God your Father in the sense of adoption? I trust he is mine also. *Our Father.*

II. We proceed to the petitions. They are six in number: the three first relate more immediately to God; the three last respect ourselves.

1. *Hallowed be thy name.* The name of God, signifies that idea or notion whereby we conceive him in our minds, as in the 76th Psalm and 1st verse, "In Judah is God known, his name is great in Israel." Again, Prov. xviii. 10. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." In these words, *Hallowed be thy name*, we pray that the conception of God should be so exalted in us, that all our thoughts may fall down before it; that all high conceits of ourselves, all the names of grandeur, riches, and voluptuous joy may fade, lessen, and vanish before him; and that his name may be treated with the reverence it deserves, which is the end of the Christian religion. That this may be the case, we pray,

2. *Thy kingdom come.* For the general meaning of this petition, consider we its particular import. This kingdom comes to a particular person, when he repents and believes the Gospel; when he is taught to know not only himself, but Jesus Christ also. In these events the kingdom of God is set up in the believer's heart, and the Lord God omnipotent reigneth: he taketh unto himself his mighty power, that he may subdue all things to himself, and bring every thought into the obedience of Christ. This petition, in its general sense, may be paraphrased as follows. May thy kingdom of grace come quickly, and swallow up all the kingdoms of the world: may all mankind, receiving thee, O Christ! for their king, and truly believing in thy name, be filled with righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, until they are removed hence in one general band, to see and adore thee in thy kingdom above. Amen. Hallelujah! Connected with this is the third petition.

3. *Thy will be done.* We are not to suppose these words to be a petition for resignation, or for willingness to suffer, or for angelic perfection. We only pray, that, through the establishment of the Redeemer's kingdom in the earth, the mighty power of the Gospel may enable the children of men to attain to an active conformity to the will of God, emulating the entire obedience of angels. My brethren, how do they do the will of God? They do it willingly: they love his commands. They do it continually; they cease not day or night. They do it perfectly; without sin. It is true the stars are not pure in his

sight; in comparison of him, the very angels are not pure; but this does not imply that they are not pure in themselves; and we, though we may have weaknesses of nature, may certainly attain to all the perfection of love. We pray, that we may do the whole will of God, as he willeth; and that we may do it, because it is his will.

4. *Give us this day our daily bread.* It is thought, that this petition comprises not only the bread which nourisheth the outward man, and perisheth; but also the bread which strengtheneth the inner man, and endureth unto eternal life. The term *bread*, as here applied to spiritual things, may embrace all the succours of God's Word and Spirit; and as it applies to earthly food, it implies a reasonable portion of the food most convenient for us. We are not to ask for luxuries, nor for the food of to-morrow, nor for food at all, except as a gift. *Give us this day our daily bread.*

5. *And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.* Some have supposed that it should be rendered, *Forgive us our debts or sins; for we forgive those who trespass against us.* If this be so, how dare any man or woman, who entertains hatred for a brother or sister, pray thus to God, and tell him a downright lie. Others have thought, (which is most probable,) that the petition implies, "Make my forgiveness of an offending brother, the measure of thy forgiveness to me:—with the same measure I mete to others, let it be measured to me."—Well, how do you forgive your enemies? You want a thousand acknowledgments, and you make a thousand reservations. Well, just so you

pray, that God may deal with you. You forgive your enemy, but you wish not to see him again; you desire no intercourse with him: just so you wish God to deal with you. But perhaps, you are resolved never to forgive him; you mean never to make one effort to be reconciled to your offending sister or brother, either in life or at death. Then when you offer this petition, you in effect pray, that God may punish you deep in hell, to all eternity; for, says our Saviour, dwelling on this passage with peculiar emphasis, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

6. *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.* In this petition we ask not for entire exemption from temptation; this would be to ask for deliverance from the common lot of humanity. The word which is rendered *temptation*, means trial of any kind. The petition embraces the succours of grace, in a degree sufficient to sustain us in every trial; so that our graces may shine, and God's name may be glorified. Temptation is the lot of mortals; conflict the duty of Christians; and victory the mercy of God. We are brought here,

III. To the conclusion.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory.—From a connected view of the Divine perfections and the wants of man, the doxology may be considered as putting a finishing hand to the most perfect supplication. "It may," says Dr. Coke, "be paraphrased thus:—Because the government of the universe is

thine for ever, and thou alone possesseth the power of creating and upholding all things, and because the glory of infinite perfection remains eternally with thee; therefore, all men ought to hallow thy name, submit to thy government, and perform thy will: and in an humble sense of their dependance should they seek from thee the daily supply of their wants, the pardon of their sins, and the kind protection of thy grace and providence."

My brethren, none of us shall be saved without prayer. Have we, then, a just sense of the divine character? Have we, in the true spirit of supplication, ever addressed this prayer to God; and have we had cause to believe, that it has been answered in blessings to our souls? Or are we living prayerless? If so, we are living Christless. Consider well, and examine, how stands the case betwixt God and thy soul. It is desirable to have him for a friend; but woe to the man who has to encounter God's eternal wrath. By prayer, through the merits of the Redeemer, we may escape it. Let us be wise to ask in time.

SERMON XXII.



To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it. Rev. ii. 17.

IT was once said, by a suffering apostle, both of himself and of his afflicted brethren in the ministry, that, “as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our comfort also aboundeth through Christ.” And perhaps we have had no greater instance recorded of the co-operation of affliction for the advantage of the Christian, than in the case of the divine St. John. For bearing witness to Christ as Immanuel, and the Saviour of lost man, he was banished by Nero to an isle called Patmos. But, in his confinement, it was the comfort of this holy man, that he did not suffer as an evil-doer: the cause in which he suffered was worth suffering for, and the spirit of glory and of God rested upon him. In all his affliction the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, comforted him; that he might be able to comfort them who were in afflic-

tion, by the comfort wherewith he was comforted of God.

To the angel or minister of the persecuted church in Pergamos, he was commanded to write the following consolatory assurances, by the adorable Being who characterized himself by the simile of a sharp sword with two edges; the sword of his word and his providences, to defend his faithful children, and to cut off all enemies and apostates. "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest;" I know thy works with a knowledge of intelligence and observation, as also with a knowledge of approbation and acceptance: I know thee to be good in bad places, and in the worst of times. "Thou dwellest where Satan's seat is;" that is, where Satan bears sway by idolatry and persecution. "Yet dost thou hold fast my name;" that is, the doctrine of the Gospel, preached in my name; by which I am made known to the world, as a man is by his name. "And hast not denied my faith," but openly professed it in a time of persecution; "even in those days, wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you." Mark here, what an honourable mention Christ makes of the services and sufferings of his people. "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love."

" Let saints in sorrow lie resigned,
And trust a faithful Lord."

Remark, however, the holy impartiality of the blessed Lord: while he commends this church for what is

commendable, he reproves her for what is faulty and blameworthy. "But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, and the Nicolaitans." The Hebrew word Balaam, and the Greek word Nicholas, are of the same signification, and both signify victory, or conqueror of the people. Balaam was sent for by Balak from the mountains of the east, to curse Jacob, and to defy Israel. Through desire of gain he went; but when he arrived he honestly confessed, "surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel." But though he had no power to injure them by a prophetic curse, yet by his counsel he caused the children of Israel to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab, and to eat things sacrificed to Peor, their idol god: in consequence of which, twenty-four thousand were destroyed. There was also a certain sect in Pergamos, said to be founded by one Nicholas, who reckoned adultery, and the use of things offered to idols, indifferent things. They imputed their wickedness to God as the cause, and held sundry other erroneous opinions. These errors obtained in Pergamos, by which the Christian faith was somewhat endangered; and the church is reprehended for not executing a rigorous discipline on those who were tainted with these unholy doctrines. Repent for this thy pretended ignorance, and toleration of this wicked sect, and separate thyself from them, or "I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against thee with the sword of my mouth;" (alluding to the

sword with which the angel smote Balaam) and as Balaam shared in the ruin of the Midianites, so shall you share in their ruin, unless you come out from among them. The epistle then closes with the words of the text, "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches;" *To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it.*

We have here the usual method of the Scriptures, a precept walking hand in hand with a promise. Speak we,

I. Of the duty expressed in these words, *To him that overcometh.* Then speak,

II. Of the connected promise, *To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone, a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it.*

I. I am first to speak of the duty expressed in the text.

You are not ignorant, my brethren, that the conflicts of the Christian are frequently illustrated, in Scripture, by allusions to the duties of a military character. And indeed the figure is very apt: the very term war, carries with it the notion of violent opposition between contending powers, originating from a wish in the one party to infringe on the rights of the

other. Such an opposition there is between the world and the Christian. Such an infringement on the rights of the Christian, by the grand enemy of our souls, the devil; against whom, and his angels, we are encouraged to contend with fortitude and skill. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places:"

"Your secret, sworn, eternal foes,
Countless, invisible."

Nor can we well overlook, in tracing this figure, the weapons of warfare, formed by the cruel ingenuity of man, to destroy his fellow creature, and to decide political disputes. So mighty is their force, that scarcely any redoubt can repel their assault. The Christian, too, has weapons, which, if they are not carnal, are nevertheless mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing which exalteth itself against the knowledge of Christ: Truth and righteousness, faith and prayer. What can withstand their force? With these the Christian fights; with these he conquers; with these he

"Meets the sons of night,
And mocks their vain design."

Time would fail me to run the metaphor into all its particulars, such as the watchfulness of a soldier, and the discipline to which he submits: sometimes he even lies all night on his arms; and to this there are allusions, in those frequent exhortations to vigilance throughout the Scriptures. As saith the poet,

“Leave no unguarded place,
No weakness of the soul;
Take ev'ry virtue, ev'ry grace,
And fortify the whole.”

And as to the discipline of the army, to this the apostle alludes, when writing to Timothy, he saith, “No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him that hath chosen him to be a soldier:” applying it at the same time to a soldier of the cross. Of himself he saith, “I keep my body under, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away.” In the text, Christ, the Captain of our salvation, is represented as encouraging his army. “He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches;” *To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone, a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it.* Mark, He doth not say, to him that fighteth—No. Let the almost Christian, who maintains a running fight with the enemy of souls, recollect, that unless he go farther than Felix, or Agrippa, or the

young man in the Gospel, (who came to our Lord desiring to be taught by him) he is not entitled to the promise in the text. He doth not say, to him that conquereth in one or two, or more, particular acts of resistance. No. "Let not him that putteth on the harness boast as him that putteth it off." Let the disciple of Christ know, that if, like Judas, or Demas, he turn aside for gain; if, like the disciples who from that time went back and walked no more with Christ, he become offended with the narrowness of the way; the promised good in the text shall never be his portion. But he, and he alone, who perseveringly fights, and finally overcomes, shall receive and eat of the hidden manna. But some may be ready to say, the words are not applicable to Christians of modern times? the bloody sun of persecution having set, the cool and pleasant gales of prosperity now blow on the church. It is true, the Almighty hath put a hook in the jaws of the mighty, and we are no longer assailed by the bloody tyrant, persecution, in quality of an assassin. But while there are any on earth who possess the religion of that being who came to send fire on the earth, that Saviour who came not to send peace on earth, but a sword; (for this, though not the primary design of his coming, is the natural consequence of the reception of that religion which condemns the world) the enemy of souls, who can transform himself into an angel of light, will seek to effect their ruin. "For I am come," said the Saviour, "to set a man at variance against his father, and the

daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's foes shall be those of his own household." How frequently are we hindered by a relation from being religious. Here, brethren, here we see what we have to do; the father, mother, wife, husband, or some relative or acquaintance, has beheld our seriousness, and by constraint or persuasion would draw us back: but shall we yield to their entreaties? If so, we tumble with them right into hell, instead of receiving the promise in the text. Or, though we should not be exposed to threats or persuasions, we may, nevertheless, have to withdraw ourselves from those, who, if not openly profane, are enemies to the cross of Christ.

But we have to overcome self before we receive the *white stone*; and perhaps we have not a more formidable enemy on earth. This flesh would rebel against the reign of grace. O, says the sluggard, there is a lion in the way. The man has a family; with what difficulty does he bring himself to perform the duties of family religion, family prayer, reading the Scriptures in his family, and attending to the morals of his children and servants. Yet these duties, as well as piety to God, must be performed, before we can rationally expect the fulfilment of the promise in our behalf. In short, every man has his well-circumstanced, or easily besetting sin; and however hard to detect, or difficult to cure, it must be overcome in the strength of grace. Is he a minister? he may seek to please more than to profit; he may labour for the

fleece more than for the flock. Is he in traffic? he may be tempted to take the advantage of his neighbour. Is he a mechanic? he may be given to extortion. Is he rich? he may be tempted to pride. Is he poor? he may be tempted to steal, or to murmur. Is he married? he may be solicited to incontinence; or single, to unlawful desires.—Against these sins, and such as these, it behoves the Christian to be guarded. We must overcome them, or they will overcome us.

That you may the more diligently set yourselves to overcome them, I shall proceed to speak,

II. Of the connected promise, *To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it.*

Balaam went in his error through greediness of gain; but he who, in the combat for Christ, and by the strength of grace, conquers all sin and temptation, is assured in this promise that he shall have the true riches. According to the notion of the ancients, especially the Hebrews, temporal riches consist in meats and drinks; in having many of the fruits of the earth; and much cattle, with all things necessary and convenient to human life. The *hidden manna* is the unknown meat; the riches well preserved in heaven, not subject to theft or decay; that is, immortal life. The necessary sustenance of life, is here put for life itself. It is called *the hidden manna*. Now, of the

manna which fell, some was designed for common use, and some was laid up in the ark for a memorial: that which was common was corruptible, and those who ate thereof died, though it came down from heaven; but that which was laid up in the ark, miraculously remained to future generations. It is God alone who keeps, and therefore, who gives this manna, or everlasting life; of which the manna in the ark was but a symbol.

Moreover, it is added, *I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it.* Stone whitened was the first and most ancient matter used to write upon. A new name signifies freedom, and a change of condition. Abram and Sarai received new names from God, and so did Jacob. Our Lord changed Simon's name for Peter; and Christians take a new name at baptism. The expression of the text, according to our notion, amounts to this: I will give him a new diploma or character to enfranchise him, and thereby grant him new privileges, change his condition, and make him immortal; he shall attain to that immortal life, whose glories and felicities none can fully conceive, but those who enjoy them. Our Saviour's joining the manna to the new name, that is, riches or maintenance to it, is according to the principles of the Mosaical law, by which no servant was to be set at liberty without something allowed for his present support.

Some have thought this expression of the *white stone*, alludes to a custom, by which the Romans cul-

tivated and preserved a lasting friendship between particular persons and families. The method of doing this, was usually by a small piece of ivory, which they divided lengthwise; the one party wrote his name on the one, and the other on the other, and then they exchanged them; and they were kept by each party as a badge of friendship, and when produced, ensured them and their descendants a friendly reception at the house of each other. Others have thought it an allusion to the ancient custom, in criminal cases, of absolving with a white stone, or condemning with a black one, the accused person.

The substance of the promise appears to be this: The faithful and persevering Christian shall, hereafter, be acknowledged by Christ, and received into a state of perpetual favour and friendship. There can be little doubt that this is the true meaning of the figures; and how reviving is such a promise to one who is labouring to make his way to heaven!

It only remains to inquire, whether you have ever seriously engaged in the religious conflict. Believe me, by nature every man is enlisted on the side of sin. This nature is to be subdued by the grace of God, before we are prepared for heaven. The warfare is not to be accomplished without our knowledge. No: as it would be impossible to sever a limb from our body without our knowledge, so it is impossible sin should be separated from our souls without the most painful sensations. If we are not against our foes and for the Lord, we are for our foes

and against the Lord. How serious the thought! Some have overcome in part; let them persevere, and look forward for the fulfilment of the promise.

SERMON XXIII.



But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. 1 Cor. i. 30.

IN this chapter St. Paul contrasts the Gospel of Jesus Christ with Rabbinical learning and Gentile philosophy, and brings them to the proper standard.

It was a characteristic excellence of the apostle, to judge of the utility of principles by their effects; and on this footing he challenges the wise, the scribe, and the disputer of this world. “For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God;” when philosophy had long tried its utmost, had long exerted its powers to understand the wisdom and perfections of God, which shine so clear in the works of creation, and was unable to look through nature, so as to form a proper, a soul-transforming view of nature’s God; “it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.” God was pleased to pass by the bright luminaries of the Gentile world, and, by the preaching of a few illiterate men, saw proper to convince the world that his

Gospel was his power, and that, by its own unaided energy, it could destroy sin and the power of the devil.

Having stated these facts before the bar of reason, he rests fully persuaded that his cause is the cause of truth; and while he is waiting for the decision, he takes occasion to state to his Corinthian brethren, that "God had chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty: and base things of the world, and things which are despised, yea, and things that are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence." That man has never lived who dared to say—By the strength of my own understanding I have learned the will of God, and by my own power I am able to perform it. Man is foolish, guilty, sinful, helpless by nature. *But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.* As if the apostle had said, The superiority of the Gospel over the wisdom of this world, does not consist in an ill-judged system of unqualified mercy, which admits the ignorant, guilty, and unholy into heaven. God's method of saving sinners, is by enlightening, pardoning, and purifying them; and to effect these glorious purposes, there is all-sufficient grace and energy in his Son, whom he hath appointed the Saviour of the world.

The apostle contemplates man as a fallen being in these words, and describes the effect of that stupendous condescension, which bound the Son of God

down to the burthen of his mysterious atonement. Few rightly conceive of the dreadful dilemma into which our species were brought by the malignant archangel, when he first caused them to plant the standard of rebellion against God. God is not to be mocked.—His law must be upheld in all the significance of its proclamations. In the government of heaven, as well as in the government of earth, there are certain principles that cannot be compromised, and maxims of administration which must not be departed from; and a certain character of majesty and truth, on which the taint even of the slightest violation can never be admitted; and a certain authority which must be upheld by the immutability of all its sanctions, and the fulfilment of its wise and righteous proclamations, and the severities of the law must be discharged upon the guilty; or in some other way, an adequate provision be found for its outraged dignity, and violated requisitions. Now, however little delight a corrupt and darkened world may take in the survey of God's divine perfections; how small soever the enjoyment which it yields them, to contemplate the untainted glory of God; however insipid the things of salvation may be to an earthly understanding; however the great matters of sin and salvation may fall without making any impression on the heavy ears of a listless world; the Bible tells us, that the sinless spirits that surround God's throne, who are transported with all the ecstasy of an overwhelming affection, and bend themselves in rapturous adoration at the shrine of infinite and unspotted holiness;

and behold with heavenly fascination that moral beauty, which throws a softening lustre over the awfulness of the Godhead; those pure and holy spirits, whose sinless existence lies in the knowledge and admiration of Deity; and who see sin in all its malignity, and salvation in all its mysterious greatness, desire to look into the mystery of our redemption. Arrested by that plan of recovery, of which Christ is the glorious Author, and the Finisher; that plan, in which the great adversary of our species met with a wisdom which overmatched him; that plan, which restores this sinful world, and readmits it into heaven's pure and righteous family: I see adoring myriads gazing at this plan of redemption; stretching all their faculties, and bending their eyes towards the throne, which has the firm pillars of immutability to rest upon, linked with the fulfilment of the law which had come out from it;—and viewing the justice of God embarked on the threatenings he had uttered against all the doers of iniquity, they expect nothing but that God, by putting forth the power of his wrath, will accomplish his every denunciation, and vindicate the inflexibility of his government; and by one sweeping deed of vengeance assert, in the sight of all his creatures, the sovereignty which belongs to him. Oh! with what desire do they ponder on his ways, when, amidst the urgency of all these demands, which look so high and indispensable, they see the unfolding of the attribute of mercy, and the supreme Lawgiver bending upon his guilty creatures an eye of tenderness, and in his profound and unsearchable wisdom

devising for them some plan of restoration: the everlasting Son, moving from his dwelling-place in heaven, to carry it forward through all the difficulties by which it is encompassed; and by the virtue of his mysterious sacrifice magnifying the glory of every other perfection—making mercy triumph over them all, and throwing open a way by which the polluted wanderers (with the whole lustre of the divine character untarnished,) may be readmitted into fellowship with God, and be again brought back within the circle of his loyal and affectionate family. Who would have thought it! The wonder-working God, who has strewed the field of immensity with so many worlds, and spread the shelter of his omnipotence over them, and who would shatter them to atoms, before his truth or holiness should undergo the least suspicion of a stain; comes down to dwell with men, and by his wisdom, with the fragments of a different chaos, (the wreck of rebellion) brings light, life, harmony and salvation. O Lord God! thou art great in counsel! Thou art the wonderful Counsellor!

I. Christ is the wisdom of God, and he is *made unto us wisdom*. He is indeed, an ingenious contriver; for not only does he satisfy God, offended and dishonoured by sin, but reforms man, corrupted and perverted by it. And this he does by showing us what God is: a being, for whose glory it was requisite that a God-made man should humble himself, and become obedient to the death of the cross. He shows us what sin is: an evil for which it was necessary that Christ should become anathema. He shows us

what salvation is: a good, for which Christ did not think the expenditure of his life excessive. All this he discovers to us by the Spirit, which is light, and which leads us into the way of all truth. He is made unto us *wisdom, and*

II. *Righteousness.* There are few words in the sacred Scriptures, which are taken in a greater variety of acceptations, than the word *righteousness*. In general, it implies a right understanding of the claims of justice, and acting according to its dictates. Its ideal meaning contains the notion of a beam or scales in equipoise, what we call even balance; and it is well known that the personification of justice, both ancient and modern, is the likeness of a beautiful female, with a bandage on her eyes, and a beam and scales in her hand, so perfectly poised that neither end preponderates. So Jesus Christ, understanding the claims of justice, and knowing that man could not meet the demand, but by suffering the growing vengeance of an incensed Jehovah, through the long sweep of eternal ages; arose from his seat as an Almighty Conqueror, mighty to save; and, moved by mercy, trod the wine-press of the fierceness of God's wrath alone, without which no child of Adam would ever have seen the face of God in peace. He is therefore *made righteousness*; that is, God's method of saving sinners. Through his death, it is agreeable to the righteousness of God to save sinners. "For in him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." Righteousness is imputed to sinful man

through faith in Christ, by which his past sins are forgiven, or covered, and he is acquitted and accepted, as though he himself were really righteous. "Even as David describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness, without works." "Therefore, as by the offence of one, 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." Israel, or the Jews, which followed after the law of righteousness, (that law, the end or object of which is Christ, and through him justification to all that believe) "have not attained to the law of righteousness;" have not found out God's way of saving sinners. And "wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the law:"—they did not perceive that its works, or prescribed religious observances, were intended to lead to faith in Christ, the glorious Messiah, of whom they were but types. But "the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness," who had no knowledge, by revelation, of God's method of saving sinners by faith in Christ; "have attained to righteousness," have had imparted to them God's method of saving sinner's by faith in Christ. Abraham was justified by faith, even before the law was given: and by believing, (in reference to the spiritual object held forth in the various ordinances of the law, and now revealed under the Gospel) he and all his descendants have been justified. And from the beginning, all that were just and righteous in the earth, became such by faith; and by this principle they were enabled to persevere. Hence

said the prophet Jeremiah, He shall be called, *The Lord our righteousness*.

He is also made of God unto us,

III. *Sanctification*. Sanctification is founded upon, and is greatly promoted by, our free justification through Christ. Justification frees us from the curse of the law, and the ruling power of sin. Sanctification is the consecration of all the powers, both of the body and soul, to God. Sanctification is a privilege purchased for, given to, and wrought in us, by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ; whose blood being applied to the conscience, implants and increases holy dispositions, and directs, excites, and enables us to perform good works. Sanctification comprehends all the graces of knowledge, repentance, faith, love, humility, zeal, patience, and the exercise of them in our conduct both toward God and man. Sanctification has a root, and it has a fruit. Its root is, renewal after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness: its fruit is, to cease from sin, and to live unto righteousness, loving, studying, and practising good works. But whether we consider it as a privilege, principle, practice, or preparation for heaven, it is wrought in us only by the divine influence of Christ. *He is made unto us sanctification, and*

IV. *Redemption*. This word denotes, figuratively, the spiritual redemption of men, by the blood of Christ, from the bondage of sin and death. "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." "In whom we have redemp-

tion through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Now since Christ came to redeem us from all the effects of the fall, this redemption must also include the redemption of our bodies; "for since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." "Therefore we groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." For the prophet, in the person of Christ, saith, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction."

It is wonderful, it is passing wonderful, that the God of glory should bend his pitying look on abject man. He who had thrown ten thousand times ten thousand worlds around him, and spread them over illimitable space, turns himself to our narrow habitation: the footsteps of a God-made man have been on the narrow spot of ground we occupy, and on our mysterious redemption has he impressed the whole fulness of the Godhead.

Sinner, a proper view of this condescension, requited as it has been by you with ingratitude, would break your heart; and if you do not, with all the ingenuous sorrow of unaffected penitence, abandon your sins to-day, it will be because you have not gotten a right view of them.

Christians, do you not long for the day to roll on, when you shall join the adoring worshippers of Him who washed us from our sins in his blood; those spotless souls, who with voices loud as from numbers

without number, sweet as from blessed voices uttering joy, when heaven rings jubilee, and loud hosannahs fill the eternal regions; and when you shall cry, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and glory, and honour, and blessing!"

SERMON XXIV.



My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations. James i. 2.

THE word which we translate *temptation*, has two grand meanings: first, solicitation to sin, and secondly, trial from providential situation or circumstances; as persecution, affliction, or trial of any kind. And in this latter sense it is used here; not intending diabolic suggestions, or what is generally understood by the word *temptation*.

To those who mind earthly things, or live after the flesh, our text will seem a hard saying. So far from thinking it cause or matter of rejoicing to suffer reproach or affliction, there is nothing which they endeavour to shun with greater carefulness. But the man who no longer lives to himself, but to the Lord; the man who observes the motions of sin in his members; the man who finds by experience that self has entered into league with the world and the devil, to destroy his soul; the man who considers this world

as a place of probation, and this life as a state of trial; in fine, who rightly appreciates the joys of heaven, and estimates every thing in exact proportion to its advantages as a mean of salvation; such a man, I say, will not suppose the advice of St. James in the text, a mere flourish of his imagination. He will not regard St. Paul in the vth of Romans, as speaking at random, when he represents his afflictions as cause of exultation and ravishment. "We glory, "saith he," in tribulation."

It might be well to observe, that the acquiescence in afflictions, of which we are speaking, while it is at the utmost remove from phlegmatic insensibility, is equally remote from quiescence under them, considered in the abstract. My meaning is this;—we are not called to rejoice in trial or temptation, considered in themselves; but as standing in connexion with their valuable fruits; which are nothing less than a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." The one grand aim of the Christian regards the glory of God; his next consideration stands in connexion with the other, the salvation of his own soul. If then, he finds affliction subservient to his purpose, according to the magnanimous principles of Christian philosophy, he will say, "most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong." My brethren, to those whose probation and pilgrimage lead them through

the thorny paths of this wilderness, a discourse on affliction cannot be deemed uninteresting, especially if that discourse be calculated to show its benefit.

This we shall attempt to demonstrate in the following discourse, while we speak.

I. Of their nature and design, and

II. Of their benefit.

I. We will speak something of the nature and design of affliction, or trial.

It was long since observed by Eliphaz, that “affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground.” We have an intimation here, that they are ordered according to the wise counsels of the Most High, and that they are not the result of an unforeseen casualty. You will not understand me as speaking of those troubles which men bring on themselves, by actual sin and stubborn rebellion. It would be little short of blasphemy, for a man to drink into a state of intoxication, and then to charge the Almighty as the author of every bruise and wound he might receive during the period of his phrenzy. It is not in such affliction as this, that we are called to rejoice: this would be, to rejoice in iniquity. The affliction and trial of which we speak, is that, which, if in every case it be not immediately ordered by the Almighty; if in some cases natural causes seem to lead to it, is nevertheless overruled for the ultimate good of them that love

God. A man, by natural causes, may be brought to a bed of affliction; the natural causes may nevertheless minister to the will of God, and God may make the affliction minister, at the same time, to our best, our eternal interest. Moreover, a seeming accident, or many seeming disasters, may have reduced us to a state of poverty: God can, and frequently does make a state of poverty minister to our salvation. We might say the same of persecution, and of the loss of our friends; though wickedness is the cause of both these, yet God overrules them for the good of those who love him.

It may be asked here, whether we are to consider sin as the cause of these trials, or whether we are to consider the Almighty as ordaining them. This question seems to lead to some difficulty, and perhaps it is more curious than useful. Not to pass it by in entire silence, I would observe, that there is a sense in which our trials may be said to result from sin; and that there is also a sense in which they may be considered as the order of God. It is evident, that but for sin, there would be no poverty, sickness, persecution, or death; and yet in these things we are told to rejoice: not, however, as the effects of sin, but as the sanctified chastisements of the Almighty, which are designed to take away the iniquity of his people. This may be illustrated by a circumstance taken from the Old Testament. When the Jews had degenerated into a hypocritical nation, and the Almighty designed to scourge them; he fixed on the Assyrian monarch, whom he denominated the rod of

his anger. "I will give him," saith he, "my commission, and send him against my people." The proud king, actuated by lust of power, goes forth to execute the Lord's purpose:—howbeit he meaneth not so. It is far from his heart to obey the will of God in this expedition; and when this instrument of the divine vengeance arrogates to himself the honour of his successes, the Almighty speaks of him in the following terms: "Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith, as if the rod should shake itself against him that lifteth it up?"

This, my brethren, is the light in which we are to regard the Almighty, as *tempting* or trying us. Man was created an agent; sin is the abuse of agency; affliction is the fruit of sin. The Lord, by a dispensation of infinite wisdom and goodness, overrules these afflictions for the good of his people: he guides the feeble bark of his church through the waves of a tempestuous ocean, so that those disasters and afflictions which overwhelm the wicked with confusion, work out for it a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. The Christian, therefore, views affliction in a new point of light,—new to the worldly man; he regards it as virtue's school, and says, with St. Paul, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God."

II. This will lead us to speak somewhat of the benefit of affliction.

I think it has appeared sufficiently plain, that the Almighty has purposes of mercy in the afflictions he

sends: I trust I shall be able to show that they are wisely adapted to their design.

The inordinate love of this world, is called the very essence of ungodliness. It is well known, that in the soil of prosperous fortune, unbroken health, flattering friends, buoyant spirits, and a spring-tide of success; earthly love strikes its roots the deeper. Hence, to draw the mind to God it is necessary these broken cisterns should be drained; and, in this way, the Good Being frequently brings his creatures to conviction and repentance. Under circumstances of distress, it is comparatively easy for the sorrowing heart to give up a world by which itself seems to be given up. The soul which knows not where to fly, flies to God by a sort of natural impulse, from a feeling conviction that every other refuge is a refuge of lies. In the parable of the prodigal son, sin and extravagance marked his conduct until he began to be in want, and then he said, "I will arise and go to my father."

It is not necessary that we should go back so far, for proofs of the advantages of trial. How many, by the loss of health, wealth, and friends, have begun to think of seeking more permanent blessings? I do not say that afflictions necessarily lead to such an end, but that this is their tendency. A rebellious spirit, under divine chastening; a murmuring and repining temper; the indulgence of hard thoughts of God; will pervert the best means to the worst ends: and this disposition is thus reprehended by the prophet Amos: "I have smitten you with blasting and mil-

dew: when your gardens, and your vineyards, and your fig-trees, and your olive-trees increased, the palmer-worm devoured them; I have sent among you the pestilence; your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." Thus, I say, the Almighty bespeaks and threatens rebellious Israel, when they frustrate his designs. What shall we say then of those who have their hearts torn by the most cruel bereavements, and their earthly hopes blasted by a frowning providence, and yet never seriously consider the hand that smites them, that they may break off their sins by repentance, nor lay to heart the vanity of the world, that they may return to God as their chief joy.

Again, afflictions tend to revive decaying graces. Our hearts, my brethren, are very treacherous,—and as the nation, no longer inured to toil and warfare, becomes effeminate, and exposed to the depredations of designing enemies; so the heart, in a state of tranquillity, the man at ease in his possessions, is apt to forget God; or, at least, to grow cold and formal in his devotions. A shock of affliction numbers his short comings before him, promotes self-examination, and causes a renewal of vows. Joseph's brethren made mention of their former sin of selling their brother, when they were in trouble; and though a score of years had passed since the guilty transac-

tion, they seemed unmoved by their fault until they were in trouble; and, though they might before have felt uneasiness of mind on account of their crime, it remained for affliction to give poignancy to their conviction: the moment they were in trouble, they thought of sin as the cause of it. The Psalmist says, "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy law." How often do we realize the same beneficial effects from affliction, such as sickness, loss of fortune, or of friends?

Again, afflictions are useful as evidences of our sincerity and of the power of godliness, inasmuch as by them alone our faith is tried, and we are encouraged to bear patiently, and to labour earnestly and perseveringly after perfect love and eternal glory. To imitate the religion of the Gospel in some points, is not so very difficult in certain conditions of life. For instance, we can easily exercise resignation to the will of God, when he pours in upon us a flood-tide of prosperity: but to obey God and be resigned to his will when he crosses our inclinations, this is religion indeed—this is the trial which Abraham's faith endured, and which proved it genuine; and he was called the "friend of God." But wherefore did God thus try him? Did he not know before, that he was sincere? No doubt he did. But perhaps Abraham might not have been so well satisfied of his own fidelity before, as he was afterward; nor had he made so full proof of the power of grace, as he then made. What was the result? His consolation increased, his faith was confirmed, he was thenceforth

prepared to exercise faith and patience under similar trials, and the virtue of God's never-failing grace was tested. The trial of Job was somewhat similar. The Almighty did not believe the lies of Satan, when he said, "Touch him, and he will curse thee to thy face;" but he gave Satan liberty to do his worst, only to spare his life. After a series of severe afflictions Job came out, like gold tried in the furnace and thoroughly purified; and he no doubt enjoyed more consolation afterward, and God's name was more glorified by Satan's malice on this occasion, than in all Job's life beside.

From a view of the utility of affliction in this respect, the apostle represents the Almighty as speaking to his children: "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth;" &c. And St. James, immediately after the text, saith, "Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience."—As if he had said, why should you not count it joy to fall into temptation, when it is so well calculated to try your faith, and give the satisfactory evidence that it is sincere; and at the same time to bring glory to God, and promote patience. And then he speaks of the necessity of patience,—“Let patience have her perfect work,” or its full reward. A man who puts his money on interest, has no right to receive it unless he wait the proper time; and so of tilling the ground, and of the reward of labour. He speaks of this, as the way to attain perfection,

“That you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing:” that is, that you may be skilled in all the mysteries of true godliness.

We are assured, by our own experience, that those who have suffered the greatest afflictions, and sustained them best, are the happiest Christians. As the old soldier perceives a degree of delight in speaking of his wound, so the faithful Christian rejoices in enumerating the afflictions he has endured for Christ's sake, while fighting under his banner: and like Paul in his confidence, he saith, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors,” we take spoils from our enemies.

Brethren, it must afford a man great comfort, while he is surrounded with distresses, to reflect that he is walking in the way in which all have travelled who are now in heaven, and who once were men. For could we hear them tell their travels in this life, I have no doubt that they would speak with raptures of their former temptations. Christian whatever your troubles may be, if you do not run, but fall into them, however numerous they may be, you have a right to rejoice in them. But, sinner, your afflictions are but the prelude to everlasting pain.

SERMON XXV.



He that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. Prov. xxix. 1.

THE book of Proverbs was written, it is commonly believed, by Solomon, who, through his great age, great talents, and great experience, had attained as much knowledge of human nature as was ever possessed by any man upon earth.

We are not, however, to ascribe to his talents, his age, or experience, that body of useful matter found in the book of Proverbs; but we are to include these proverbs with those other scriptures, of which by St. Paul it is said, that they were given by inspiration of God. The preacher, however, who selects his text from the book of Proverbs, does not give a view of his subject by the context; inasmuch as these proverbs are written in the way of aphorisms, or in a sententious manner.

We may, however, observe, in the introduction of this discourse, that the words of the text give us an excellent opportunity to correct a false notion that has obtained in the world, relative to the long suffering and mercy of God, which the sinner would represent as without bounds, and establish at the expense of the other attributes of Deity, which are of equal importance. We are willing that the attribute of mercy should stand foremost in the list.—It is to this, that the guilty sinner makes his appeal; it is in this, as a sanctuary, that he finally takes shelter, when pursued by the avenger of blood. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that there are bounds which mercy cannot pass? Wilt thou know, that man's salvation includes, not only repentance and faith on our part, but the harmony of the divine attributes on the part of Deity? For, says the Psalmist, "Justice and mercy have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other;" and without this divine harmony, the sinner cannot be saved.

Away then, with the soul-destroying error and vain thought, that God will govern his creatures by laws, under the influence of which, in a temporal point of view, no honest man would like to live. Who would like to live under a government, which conferred the same favours on the virtuous and vicious? And who, but the guilty, could wish the Almighty to save a guilty and unrenewed sinner? However terrible, then, the destruction of the wicked may seem, be you well assured, that it is a penalty only proportioned to the holy law of God, as given

to intelligent creatures or agents : for thus saith the just God, *He that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.*

We will first define the terms, and then proceed to make such observations as may occur.

To be *reprov'd*, then, is to be charged to the face with a fault ; to be checked, or chided, or reprehended :—this is the meaning of the term in its common acceptation. But viewed in its connexion in this place, it must mean every intimation we have had, from any source, of the impropriety of our conduct, and the necessity of reformation.

By the term, *neck*, we understand, in some places, that part of the body which is between the head and shoulders ; as where Rebekah put skins on the neck of her son, to deceive her dim-sighted husband. It is sometimes put to signify the head ; as where the elders were to bring the heifer to a rough place, that was neither eared nor sown, and strike off her neck, (meaning her head) to make expiation for sin. But it most commonly is put for the heart ; as where it is said, that the children of Israel hardened their “necks,” and would not hear : meaning their hearts, as in the words of the text.

By *destruction*, I understand, in this place, the state of being destroyed ; and, as applied to an intelligent being, it means the converting our capability of happiness into an eternal capability of receiving and suffering wretchedness and wo. By *sudden destruction*, I understand, that which comes upon us in an unexpected manner. By this destruc-

tion being *without remedy*, I understand that it is the effect of the irrevocable decree of Jehovah, which cannot admit of a repeal.

I hope, now, that black man understands every word, when we say, *He that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.*

Perhaps, however, there are some present, who, though ready to be overtaken with this destruction, are still insensible of their danger. Such have not noticed, or they have forgotten the reproofs which they have received from different quarters; and they have hardened themselves in sin, while Satan has, in the mean time, been fastening his chains the more securely on them.

As I wish to be practical, plain, and useful, I shall make the following divisions.

I. I shall endeavour to show, that we have all been *reprov'd*, and in what ways it has been done.

II. What we are to understand by *hardening the heart*, and how this is done.

III. Painful as the task may be, I must speak something of the *destruction*, the *sudden destruction*, which must be the consequence of hardening the heart:— and so conclude as I may be enabled.

I. I am to show that we have all been *reprov'd*, and how it has been done.

And here it will be necessary to observe, that what we shall say on this point, is predicated of the agency and accountability of man. The very notion of reproof, carries with it the idea of previous light, and power to choose good and refuse evil; on the abuse of which, reproof can only be founded. Let this be fixed in your minds. Hence, though man, when he fell, involved himself in ignorance and guilt, from which he could not extricate himself; he is nevertheless left without excuse, in consequence of that light which has been communicated. It is said by the apostle, that whatever makes manifest, is light: here then we might speak of two volumes that have contained this light, the rejection of which has involved reproof and guilt. The first, is the volume of nature; the second, the volume of revelation. The former has lain open for the perusal of all nations: "for the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." Under the influence of this light alone, it might be said, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard."

But this light, although sufficient to involve responsibility, yet it is but darkness when compared with the bright beams emanating from revelation: there

“Who runs may read, and who reads may understand.” There we have as much of the nature of God made known, as to convince us that he is entirely perfect—that he is entirely holy; and that man, of course, must have derived his impurity from some other source. There we have his will and his law, in which he gives us a view of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. To that law there are penalties and sanctions affixed, of a piece with itself, and to encourage the trembling sinner to seek immortal joys and shun immortal pains, the agency of the good Spirit of God is abundantly tendered.

Who then, I would ask, who lives in sin, has not been reprov'd from that great source of heavenly light which we have mentioned? Who has not felt himself condemn'd, who has taken the trouble to search that book with the attention which its importance demands? Is there one who can rise up in this assembly, and say, he never felt conviction, while reading the word of God? If so, he will permit me to say, that he did not open his eyes to the light which it contains; he did not wish to receive instruction; he was in love with his sins and his chains. I could venture to affirm, that if any man would be candid, and lay open his mind to conviction, in reading the Bible, he would obtain views of God, himself, and sin, that would cause him to seek until he found the Lord.

But in order that this book might be better calculated to effect the reformation of which it speaks, the

Almighty has provided ministers to preach, and expound, and enforce it. "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours." Who of you, then, can say, (however you have laboured to resist the light) that you were never reproved for your sin by the preaching of the Gospel? What meant those inward emotions which you felt at such a time and place, when such a minister was preaching? What meant those tears that would flow in spite of you, when you were almost ready to yield to love's redeeming power, and to fight no more against your God? Then did the good Spirit say, Yield, sinner; O sinner, yield to be saved by grace! Give up your heart to the Lord; he waits to be gracious. But, alas! where are those meltings now? Fled! fled, perhaps never to return. You can now hear all the thunders of Sinai—you can hear God speak: you can hear all the alluring whispers of the Gospel when we speak of Christ crucified for your sins, and you feel not one soft affection move. You say, "Depart from me, O God."

But there are many other circumstances which might be considered as reproofs to us, as sinners. Whose mind does not revert to the late war, and the distresses of that occasion, when Rachels were weeping for their first-born, or infants for their fathers? Whose mind does not revert to the alarming catastrophe which took place in this city some years since by fire, when many of you lost that rela-

tive who was most dear to you? Whose mind does not recur to the time when your family was visited by death in the ordinary way? Do you recollect when your mother was carried out to bury? Do you remember when you followed your child to the grave? Do you remember how you felt, when you sat down for the first time, with your children around your table, after your husband or your wife died?

But we have not been reprov'd by judgments only.—How many mercies have you enjoyed, and O, how many have you abused? You have enjoyed health—God gave it to you. You have enjoyed wealth—God gave it to you. You have enjoyed friends—God gave them to you. You have enjoyed peace—God gave it to you. And now, if God looks down, and sees and knows us, what must he behold? Pride, and vain glory, and a hard heart.

This leads to the second thing that was proposed.

II. What we are to understand by hardening the heart, and how this is done.

Sometimes *hardening the heart*, is put for an act of the Almighty, in a judicial point of view, as in the case of Pharaoh; but, in our text, it is considered as the act of the sinner himself. We have already intimated, that this is an effort in the sinner to brave the terrors of Almighty wrath, and to sin without even the checks of conscience. It is in vain with such, that the Almighty has given them a revelation

of his will: they love their sins, and therefore will not suffer his word to have its desired effect on their hearts. In vain may the Spirit strive; they resist his operations, or drown their emotions in intemperance, or company, or dissipation. In vain may the Lord speak his power in the voice of thunder; they dismiss their alarms, as soon as the cloud is removed. In vain may the Lord send them the softening influence of the Gospel: if they are obliged to feel its effects for a moment, they soon say, "Go thy way for this time:" let me get rid of my present alarm, and then I will hear you again. In vain may the Lord visit them with judgments of war, or fire, or sickness, or death: if they for a moment feel the necessity of religion, they hasten to lose their alarm in the cares, honours, or pleasures of the world. In vain the Almighty blesses them with health: they make it a curse to themselves, by abusing its ardour in the pursuit of sin. In vain does he give them riches: they make them ministers to pride, and luxury, and self-indulgence; and though the Lord cries out, "Hear, O heavens! and give ear, O earth! for I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me!" "Yet they say, who is the Almighty, that I should serve him; and what profit shall I have, if I pray unto him. Surely it is a vain thing to serve the Lord." If after war he blesses them with peace, they forget the rock of their salvation, and perhaps burn incense to their own net, or sacrifice to their

own drag. If he has blessed them with a circle of friends, they perhaps make use of their utmost endeavours to prevent them from embracing religion.

O how many ways are there for sinners to harden the heart, and blunt the emotions of conscience. If you would be candid, would you not be forced to acknowledge that you have been guilty in this respect? And what do you think will be the consequence?

This leads to the third thing that was proposed, namely,

III. To speak something of the *sudden destruction* which must be the result of this obstinacy. This is expressed in the words of the text, *they shall be suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy*. Great God! how truly alarming is the expression, issuing from the lips of eternal truth.

We said in our introduction, that this destruction was, the having all the faculties of the soul, which are calculated to be inlets to pleasure, to become eternal inlets to anguish and wo. What pleasure must it yield the pious, in eternity, to employ their improved understandings in tracing the perfections of Deity, which all stand engaged to make them blessed. But O! what destruction and perversion of this power must it be, to employ, through eternity, the wretched understanding in contemplating that power, holiness, and justice, which must ever inflict

anguish and wrath on the lost sinner, who hardened his heart, and would have none of the reproofs of the Almighty.

That memory, which will yield an exquisite delight to the upright when they get to heaven, by recalling circumstances in which they will then see that the hand of the Lord was upon them for good; will augment the misery of the sinner, by recalling the seasons of grace which he has so frequently enjoyed and so unceasingly abused, by hardening his heart and casting off his fears. That will, which, having been brought into subjection to the will of God, shall yield a perennial stream of joy to the blessed; must yield to the sinner, whose will has not been conquered, the bitterest wo, while, chained down under the awful frowns of that God whom he hates, he feels the vengeance of eternal fire. Those tender affections which the blessed shall feel, and which shall bind them to the bosom of God, shall be turned into the most invincible hatred in the case of the lost soul.

Brethren, my heart makes a noise within me. How terrible is this destruction that awaits the sinner, who, being often reprov'd, continues to harden his heart! You have read of famines, and earthquakes in divers places; but what are these to the destruction of the soul? You have heard of populous cities demolished in a day; but what is this to the destruction of a soul in hell? An attempt to express it is vain: human thought cannot reach so far, as to conceive the horrid state of that sinner,

who, having enjoyed the glorious light of the Gospel, has hardened his heart, sinned away his day of grace, and just entered into an eternity of wo.

But this destruction shall be *sudden*—unexpected. Yes, you are crying peace and safety, while sudden destruction is at the door. Yes, sinner, when you least expect it, God shall say, cut down that fig-tree, why cumbereth it the ground? Yes, swearer, you will swear but few more times. Yes, drunkard, you have almost drunk your last cup. Liar, you will soon have done telling lies. Adulterer, a few more debauches and you will tumble into hell. Yes, extortioner, you who disregard the cries of the poor, shall soon hear the groans of the damned. Yes, Gospel-slighter, you shall soon perish, *and that without remedy*. To be in pain when there is no remedy—this is hell with a witness. When you have been sick, you have had a physician; when you have been hungry, you have had something to eat; when thirsty, something to drink. When the sinner has become penitent, he has had the blood and mercy of Christ to resort unto; but the destruction of which we speak, excludes all these mitigations. Then no minister to preach—no father and mother to pray—no Saviour to plead our cause—no mountain to fall on us, and hide us from the presence of him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. No, sinner—You must stand forth as a mark for the thunderbolts of eternal vengeance. You must plunge into a fiery world. You must be punished with everlasting destruction

from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. You must for ever bear the wrath of a sin-avenging God.

Sinner, though you have often been reprov'd, and heretofore have hardened your heart; in the strength of that God whose I am, I will make one more effort. Hear it then, O sinner. If you do not repent, you must perish:—if you do not forsake your wickedness, you shall fall by the sword of eternal vengeance. Hell moves from beneath, to meet you at your coming—the scale begins to turn—already you are almost gone—thy soul shall be required at thy hands in a few days.

And now I shall call witnesses to attest the effort I have made for your good. Hear it, O God! Thou solemn God of heaven; and all ye powers above, saints, angels, ye fathers and mothers of these young people who are now in heaven, hear it! I this day have warn'd your children on earth. Yea, ye damned in hell, bear witness, and prepare fresh aggravation for the sinner, who still stands it out against the calls of mercy!

But I am not satisfied. Miserable comfort! I had rather you would repent—I had rather you would return. But, says one, what shall I do? First, fall down, and thank God that you are not damned already; and then, with the greatest speed, fly to Jesus. And will he receive me? O yes, he will receive you, and abundantly pardon you, for he waits to be gracious. “The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And

let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

I know not what more to say.—You mistake us, brethren, if you suppose that we preach for any thing but your salvation. Would to God you could feel the importance of religion.

But we will commit you to God. You must make your own improvement of what has been said. O God! do thou be pleased to make thine own word quick and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword.

To God only wise, be honour and glory for ever.
Amen.

SERMON XXVI.



Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts.

Psalms li. 6.

MAN is a being of circumscribed capacities; in consequence of which his knowledge of many subjects must be defective. But perhaps he seldom misses the mark further, than when he proposes to himself, as a subject of contemplation, the divine perfections.

Through the association of ideas in the human mind, and the help of analogy and inference, we may form something like correct sentiments on some subjects. But who, by searching, can find out God? "For who in the heavens can be compared to the Lord? Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord."

Although man, in his original state, bore the nearest resemblance to his Maker of any created being; yet, clad as he is at present with the tissue of de-

ception, by which he easily imposes on his fellow-creature; if he form his idea of his God by comparing him with himself, he will obscure, he will eclipse the glory of that Being, whose thoughts are not like our thoughts:—that Being that planted the ear, that formed the eye, that chastiseth the heathen, and teacheth man knowledge; and, of course, that Being, who must hear, see, know, and correct. These inadequate conceptions, this ignorance of God, may be denominated the mother of hypocrisy. Hypocrisy, whose fruitful womb, impregnated by the fell demon of hell without any abortion, has given birth to a progeny, odious and numerous as the croaking fry of Egypt.

But of all the offspring of hypocrisy, false piety, perhaps, bears the nearest resemblance to her mother. Indeed you would take her for the same, though she attempts to disguise herself with a veil. My brethren, it is my present design to guard you against this hellish prude, I mean false piety; for be you well assured, that thousands of the human family have been sacrificed on her altars, whose groaning ghosts fill all hell with wailings. Would you be delivered from her destroying hand? Let your piety be entire, disinterested, and internal.

I. Entire,—taking in whatever concerns the service of God, both counsels and precepts.

II. Disinterested,—seeking only God and his kingdom, without any regard to temporal advan-

tages; or, at least, not making these our leading motive in our piety.

III. Internal,—residing in the heart, and issuing from the heart.

Bend, I beseech you, your whole attention to these three points. We have not treated, nor do we ever expect to treat, of a subject more useful or important. *For behold, God desireth truth in the inward parts.*

I take up no time, my brethren, to explain the terms of the text. Every one must see, at once, that the meaning is similar to that of our Lord, where he says, “God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.” Or, in other words, our piety must be ardent, and at the same time proceed from sincerity of heart, to render us agreeable in the divine sight.

I. Our piety, to be acceptable to God, must be entire; taking in whatever concerns the service of God.

I think, my brethren, if we have studied human nature, we have discovered a disposition in man to appease the tumult of his mind, to silence the clamours of his conscience by a false piety; the character of which is, to be exact to a degree of scrupulosity in small matters, and at the same time to neglect the most important points of the law of God. A piety this, which, under the colour of an imaginary

perfection, inflames the mind with pride, and renders us detestable in the eyes of God. This is the insupportable abuse which the Son of God condemned in the devotionalists of the synagogue, when he thus addressed them: "Wo unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" your whole piety amounts to no more than the observance of certain ceremonies and customs. "Ye pay tithe of mint, of anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith." If any little matter of tradition or custom was in question, they were exact to superstition. "Blind guides, ye strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel."

Now, my brethren, is there not a striking likeness between this piety and that of these times? Does not this detestable principle still subsist even in the very centre of Christianity? A man has his fixed times for prayer, for reading the Scriptures, and going to the sacrament. He has marked himself a track, and he resolves that nothing shall induce him to omit one single point of his prescribed duty. But listen to his conversation—he spares nobody—he seems to be deputed from heaven for the general reformation of manners—he arraigns all mankind at his bar. See, my brethren, the flame begin to enkindle on his tongue, that sets on fire the whole course of nature, and is set on fire of hell. Only behold this pious man, when he thinks himself insulted: there is no satisfaction which he doth not demand—there is no reparation can satisfy him—his cause he thinks is the cause of God, nor can

you make him believe he is wrong in the smallest degree.

Look at that pious woman—Reading, prayer, and meditation, make up the duties of every day—her conscience would explode if she were to miss one duty. What the accuser of the brethren said of Job, would be much more suitable to her; touch her but with your finger, and she will curse you to your face. Let a minister of the Gospel erect its proper standard; let him take the pruning knife; let him apply the scissors of the Gospel to her, and he will find her haughty and impatient. What has that man to do with my dress? It is a great breach of manners to collect people together, and then rail out against dress, especially when he sees we are so fond of it: he shows very great weakness of mind indeed, to notice such trifles. I know some as good preachers as he is, who permit their people to wear just what they please. Will you be so good as to give me another commission? For, according to this which I received from Christ, I am to cry aloud and spare not. It bids me take the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vine. In one word, I am bidden by Christ Jesus to urge the necessity of regeneration, which will produce meekness, humility, and plainness. But you would have me to speak of man, as a fallen and weak creature; not as one who possesses a heart deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. You would have me to speak of the necessity of repentance, but to speak of it as a thing that does not entirely embitter sin, but only

makes us cut off some enormities. You would have us speak of regeneration, but you would have us believe and preach that it is nothing more than baptism; or, at most, nothing more than a sort of friendship for professors of religion that move in the higher circles. And as to the carnal amusements of the day, you wish us to let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind respecting these things. And if any thing is said about dress, you wish us to intimate that this is indifferent, and that the time is come in which we may gather grapes off thorns, and figs off thistles; or, in other words, that there are many immaculate virgins who wear the attire of harlots. My brethren, were I to preach such a Gospel as this, if St. Paul's prayer were to be answered, I should be accursed.

But to return,—let us not limit piety to certain points of devotion, and neglect the foundation; neither let us confine ourselves to the ground work, so as to give up all the practices of true religion. Our piety, to be acceptable to God, must be entire; for God looketh for truth in the inward parts. For thus saith St. Paul, although I should speak all the languages in the world, and even the language of angels; though I had the gift of prophesy, and were instructed in the mysteries of God, so that nothing could escape the extent of my knowledge; although I should work miracles, so as to transport mountains; and though I should lay out every farthing I am worth in relieving the poor;—should offer myself for martyrdom, and deliver my body to the most

cruel torments; if I have not charity or the love of God, (and how can I have it, if I do not keep his commandments?) I am nothing; or, at most, no more than a sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And again, hear what Jesus Christ saith to John, who, in the sudden perplexity into which he was thrown by the humility of his master, refused to baptise him; "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." Again, I repeat it, piety, to be acceptable to God, must be entire. And it must be

II. Disinterested.

I think we may, with great propriety, denominate self-interest the cardinal passion of the heart. It is this which gives ardour to almost every action of life. By self-interest, in this place, I would have you understand self-love. This selfish principle insinuates itself into all places, and on all occasions. Even piety hath not escaped the baneful influence of self-interest, which cankers every thing most pure and holy in religion. This detestable principle, detestable in its abuse, was noticed by Mr. Bunyan, and by him denominated By-Ends. This was the ruling passion of the Pharisees: their end was honour and profit. Hence, whatever the good and virtuous were accustomed to do from principles of true piety, they did from principles of false. In consequence of their long prayers, their fastings, their mortification, and strict attention to the duties of piety; the people, too credulous and easily mis-

led by appearances, entertained a very high opinion of them. The consequence was, that many pious women, with good intent, but with the weakness of their sex, entrusted them with their income, and made them wealthy. Hence our Saviour accused them of "devouring widows' houses;" and St. Paul says of them, that they "led captive silly women."

Let us not suppose, that this detestable principle has become extinct, since the days of the Pharisees. A man fancies that with the garb of religion he can at once accomplish his end, and conceal his design: he hesitates not to put it on—he mingles in his looks the piety of Abraham, the meekness of Moses, and the fervour of Isaiah; and according to the language of the last-mentioned prophet, he makes God to serve in his sins.

Nor are females always clear of this deception. They sometimes accomplish that by art, which would baffle their strength; and too plainly do they show, when they have effected their worldly purpose, or despair its accomplishment, that they were using a mask of deception. How abominable must that false piety be in the eyes of God? To serve the world for God, is a virtue; to serve the world for the world, is a vice; what then must it be to serve God for the world? For then we propose our interest as the end, and we consider God as a means only to obtain that end, and we would have God to serve us.

We might go further, and affirm that these interested motives have carried men even into the sacred altars. They have made a good salary a greater consideration in their call; they have had a greater regard to the emolument they expected to draw from the ministry, than a real desire to feed the flock of God. And what is worst of all, "my people love to have it so." They prefer the somnolent opiates of these downy doctors, to the bread of life. Such was not St. Paul. How carefully did he banish from his person the slightest suspicion of private interest. He endeavoured to help the Corinthians to recognize the characteristic of disinterestedness.—Consider our conduct and situation, and judge if it be a secret thirst of applause which affects us—We are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men, even to this present hour. We both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth and offscouring of all things. Happy for us, if we can attain to the same disengagement from the world;—happy for us, if our piety should be disinterested; for God looketh for *truth in the inward parts*.

III. It only remains for us to see, that our piety is internal; residing in the heart, and issuing from the heart. There is no sin more offensive to God, than that superficial piety, which offers to him only the

service of the knee, the lips, and the countenance. God has declared, that the heart is the only sacrifice which is acceptable in his sight. Indeed it is in the heart that the life of the righteous man consists, and it is with the heart only that he can please God. The heart was requisite to true piety, even under the old law, insomuch that God bespeaks the Jews, who had lost the spirit of devotion in the external service of the temple, in this way; "He that killeth an ox, is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol." Although every circumstance of their sacrifices was prescribed by the Almighty himself, yet he assured them, that they were no longer acceptable, when offered by those who chose their own ways, and whose souls delighted in their abominations. But if the affection of the heart was necessary to constitute true piety under the old law, how much more so under the evangelical law of Jesus Christ, who styles none true adorers, but such as worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

Our blessed Saviour, almost in all his precepts, earnestly endeavoured to free the world of pharisaical religion. "Wo unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter." And again, Wo unto you, because ye are like unto whited sepulchres, beautiful without, but within full of dead men's bones. "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.”

If then Christ have given us correct views on this subject, what must we think of many, even of the most specious works, done by our modern religionists? We attend the house of God: we join to sing hymns, which contain a whole body of divinity; hymns which express the liveliest sentiments of repentance, faith, hope, and love; but after all, we have not made one act of penitence, faith, hope, or love. The reason is, the heart had no share in what the lips uttered. We bend the knee, or bow the head in the most humble and suppliant posture during the time of prayer, and we listen with the utmost attention to the Gospel of God; but during the whole time we spend in this manner, perhaps we perform not one duty, we render not the least adoration to God. The reason is, religion consists in humility of mind, and the mind hath not accompanied, one moment, all these demonstrations of respect and adoration. We visit the sick, we feed the hungry, we aid religious institutions; and after all our zeal and assiduity, perhaps we perform not one act of mercy. We are impelled by a certain natural activity, or affected by a compassion quite human, or drawn on by the tide of custom, or influenced by some other object beside God and his glory. Nay, though there may be a degree of sincerity in our hearts, a frequent repetition of the duties of religion may, by little and little, diminish that

fervour which we felt at first; and though such cannot be called formal hypocrites, yet they deceive the public and themselves too. A man passes for a saint—we judge by the appearance—we extol one, and look on another as a pattern of virtue, but perhaps it is but a phantom, or false light. Alas! brother, said one, be what you appear to be, or cease to appear to be what you are not.

But we deceive ourselves: we think we lead truly Christian lives: we are not chargeable with the detestable designs of hypocrisy, as others are: and perhaps we shall not find out the mistake, until we present ourselves at the throne for a crown; and then will the Judge say unto such, “I never knew you; depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.”

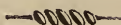
Wherefore, my brethren, let us rectify our notions in time, and let us follow the advice of the apostle, and do whatsoever we do, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and doing his will as from the heart; for, behold, God looketh for *truth in the inward parts*. For be you assured, that any thing short of a true faith, working by love and purifying the heart, will be of no avail in a coming day.

Alas! so many have made pretensions to piety, whose piety is false, that what should be considered an occasion of praise, is unfortunately become an occasion of reproach. The very word *piety*, which expresses whatever is most lovely and attractive in the Christian religion, carries with it, now-a-days, a suspicion that eclipses all its splendour and glory.

If we would restore to Christianity the true glory of which it has been deprived by unholy hands, let us give God our hearts. Let us begin with that, go on with that, and conclude with that.

May God help us. for Christ's sake !

SERMON XXVII.



And he said unto them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. Matthew xvi. 24.

MY brethren, with what intent do you suppose we have ascended this pulpit? Is it to cover the gulf to which mistaken notions of religion lead with flowery and inviting verdure; or, in other words, to entertain the false hopes of our fellow Christians, by the concealment or softening of necessary truth? Do you expect to hear us say, that it is perfectly compatible with the Christian religion to idolize the world? Do you expect us to justify that breathless pursuit of pleasure, which reason alone declares to be unworthy of thinking beings? Do you expect, this day, to receive from us a license to diversify and give zest to an eternal round of emptiness? Do you expect us to persuade you, that a life of prayer, penitence, and self-denial, (if they mean any thing at all) are not applicable to Christians in our day; or,

if they are, that they consist well with a life of carnal pleasure? Do you expect us to teach you how to obtain an immortal crown, without following the footsteps of a crucified Redeemer? No, my brethren—As Balaam said, “If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord, to do less or more.” We view, with horror, that temporal Gospel, if I may so speak, that is interpreted by the passions, and accommodated to the delicacy of semi-Christians.

My brethren, with a liberty which the Gospel allows to its ministers, and with an anxiety with which it inspires them for the salvation of their fellow creatures, I appear before you to thunder those precepts or truths, which disown that misconception of the religion of Jesus Christ, at which we have glanced: truths which assure us, that the edifice of Christian salvation can only be erected on the wreck of crucified nature; assure us, that no man can serve God and the world; assure us, that those who are full, and laugh now, shall one day weep and mourn; assure us, that the world shall rejoice, but that his disciples shall be sorrowful, and that their sorrow shall be turned into joy: in one word, assure us, that if any man will go after him, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow him.

How is it, my brethren, that even the most zealous efforts of the ministry are unequal to induce practice in accordance with those truths with which the

Gospel building is edified? That building, which shall stand when this earth shall be sought for, but in vain? Is not the cause, when analyzed, expressed in this one word,—a misguided self-love? What else is the spirit of the world, which stands in opposition to the Spirit of Christ, but a spirit of pride and self-seeking? A scheme of happiness in which God is neither Alpha nor Omega? A scheme which dethrones Jesus Christ, and banishes him from the heart; while the unrenewed will usurps the sceptre, and exercises the most tyrannical dominion over the whole soul.

Jesus Christ, who came to deliver us from this yoke of sin, points out in our text the principles of the Christian's life; and the steps by which he is to attain to perfect liberty, and regain the image of God and his original dignity. This is to be done,

I. By getting the consent of his will. *If any man will, &c.*

II. By self-renunciation. *Let him deny himself.*

III. By embracing the conditions which God has appointed, and bearing the troubles and difficulties he may meet with, in walking the Christian road. *Let him take up his cross daily.*

IV. By imitating Jesus, and doing and suffering all in his Spirit. *Let him follow me.*

I. The first step in the attainment of religion, is the getting the consent of our will. Here, without any sort of disguise, I purpose to let you have what I consider a scriptural view of the agency of man. We conceive that all intelligent and accountable beings, were created with what is called a will: that is, a power whereby they freely choose or refuse objects. Milton expresses this sentiment very beautifully:

Ingrate ! he had of me
 All he could have ; I made him just and right,
 Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall.
 Such I created all th' ethereal powers,
 And spirits, both them who stood and them who fail'd :
 Truly they stood who stood, and fell who fell.
 Not free, what proof could they have given sincere
 Of true allegiance, constant faith or love,
 Where only what they needs must do appear'd,
 Not what they would ? What praise could they receive ?
 What pleasure I from such obedience paid,
 When will and reason (reason also is choice)
 Useless and vain of freedom both despoil'd,
 Made passive both, had serv'd necessity,
 Not me ?

Of this liberty, however, man was deprived by the fall, and he became too blind to see, and too corrupt to choose, the good. To this power and light he is restored by that Day-Star from on high who hath brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel. Nor can we conceive that this expression of our Saviour, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life," savours of unjust upbraiding. Nor

are the terms of salvation incongruous to our nature, which say, "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat of the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured by the sword; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Remark, my brethren, on what the condemnation of the sinner is founded: "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

You will not regard us as wishing to intimate, that man, since the fall, has power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ assisting him. We know that those who are in the flesh, cannot please God. But let us notice here the advantages of the covenant of grace. "Ask, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find." So that we are left without excuse, and shall be speechless, if, at last, we are found without the wedding garment. A sentiment at variance with this, would destroy both the agency and accountability of man; and go as near to prove that he cannot be sinful, as that he cannot be holy. I again repeat it, the first step in religion, is getting the consent of our will. And how is this to be effected? By getting a deep sense of the holiness of God, the sinfulness of sin, and the awfulness of standing before God in judgment. If through the aid of the Holy Spirit, by our earnest endeavours, we make the former discoveries, we shall not find it difficult to obtain the consent of our will to be religious.

II. The second thing mentioned in the text, as necessary to a Christian life, is self-renunciation.

Let him deny himself.

The principle of self-will, and the principle of evangelical holiness, cannot hold equal sway in the same heart. Therefore as we yield obedience to the sceptre of righteousness, we must rebel against the law of sin and self. We are to renounce that wisdom which is earthly, sensual, and devilish; and we are to seek that wisdom which is from above, which is pure and peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, and full of good fruits. Instead of that pride and self-righteousness which mark the character of the unrenewed, we are to seek to be poor in spirit, and receive Christ not only as our wisdom, but also as our righteousness. We are to deny our carnal lusts and appetites, our worldly honour and ease, and whatever might clog, retard, or turn us back from following the Lord.

From a slight examination on this ground, we are ready to suppose that we have done all this. But alas! a very little attention to the aspect of affairs will convince us, that many professors in the higher, and sometimes in the lower classes, indulge the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. To mention one thing among many, how often do we see pride and extravagance, manifest in the article of dress. If we have measurably lost our relish for these things, as they relate to ourselves, yet we suffer and teach our children to idolize the fluttering gewgaws worn by a fine lady.

In the name of pure religion and its glorious Author, I call on parents neither to countenance this evil by their own example, nor, contrary to the reproaches of conscience, to connive at it in their children. You cannot be ignorant, that you are helping them to erect an altar on which their innocence and virtue may finally bleed and expire. You cannot be ignorant of the solemn account you have to render; you cannot be ignorant that Jesus Christ is the parent of your children, much more than you are yourselves; that he has redeemed them with his blood; that he has marked them in his cradle for his own with the seal of the new covenant; and entrusted them to your vigilance, as the daughter of Pharaoh did the child she had saved, to the mother of Moses.—“Take and nurse this child, and I will pay thee thy wages.” These precious deposits will be demanded at our hands; and, depend upon it, if there be an indisputable truth under heaven, it is this; that should our children be made victims to a divinity to whom we sacrifice their salvation, though we otherwise appear before God with accumulated virtues, our wages will be blood for blood, eternity for eternity. *If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself.*

III. The third item of duty, obligatory on those who would be religious, is to embrace the conditions which God has appointed, and bear the afflictions they may meet with in walking the Christian road. *Let him take up his cross daily.*

This is a figurative expression, and alludes, no doubt, to the Roman custom of making criminals carry the cross to which they were to be fastened; and was a strong intimation, that he who carried it, should himself be crucified. And I suppose that our Saviour intended to intimate, that no man could be a real Christian, who would not submit to every providential affliction, and be ready to expose himself, in the way of duty, to persecution, losses, and sufferings; yea, and even to death itself. We, my brethren, are so happy as to live in an age in which persecution deprives no man of life. But let us not imagine that the real Christian has no cross to bear. The young convert sometimes feels a degree of shame in deserting the thick ranks of the world, and going over to the thin and deserted ranks of religion. And the devil would frequently tempt us to sacrifice our inclinations, our conviction, our souls, from dread of the world's ridicule. But shocking is the very idea of placing the Supreme Majesty of heaven in the balance with such a principle as this. What, shall we know God only in secret, while the world has our open homage? Shall we, like Rachel, conceal and adore him in our tents; unknown to our brethren? Shall we ask the Lord to be satisfied with the private declarations of our sentiments, and at the same time beseech him to condescend graciously to spare us the mortification of adopting a system to which the world attaches shame and disgrace? What deplorable weakness! Shall the libertine glory in his vice, and shall the Christian blush

at that which constitutes his true glory? Is it to the world, then, that we shall be responsible? If we are sentenced, will the world stand between us and execution? Do you know, that the world and its judgments are to be judged? If God justify us, what matter if the world condemn us?

Do such Christians reflect, to what end such a system may lead; that it not only stands in the way of the infinite good which their example might do, but also forces them to sacrifice their consciences to the manners of the world? Do they reflect, that it forces them, with their own trembling hands, to cast their children into the vortex of worldly manners, and thus train them to perish through a spirit of cowardice? *If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross*, as it relates to profession.

And not only in profession, for we shall find a cross in many of the duties of religion, which we might particularize. We will only mention the cross often realized in attending to family religion, family prayer, reading the Scriptures, bringing up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and executing proper discipline. Here is the cross; but let a man bear it, if he will be my disciple, saith Jesus Christ.

IV. The last genuine character of Christianity, is the doing all things in the temper and Spirit of Christ. *Let him follow me*, in all humility, patience, faith, perseverance; steadfast and unmoveable in

the work of the Lord, whether to do, or to suffer, according to his holy will.

My brethren, Jesus Christ is the example of the Christian; and though we may never expect to attain to that holiness which he possessed; yet we should endeavour to imitate him, who, from the first moment of his mortal life, was eminently every thing which he taught. He is our model, without conformity to which, to the utmost of our power, we shall infallibly be lost. It is the temper and Spirit of Jesus Christ, studied and imitated, that constitutes a real Christian.

But have we not reason to think that true religion is very scarce, if this is its nature. Are we called to constant combat with the world, and our corrupt affections, and do we nourish these domestic enemies? Is the Christian a pilgrim, who, at every step, sighs for his heavenly home; and would we still establish, in this valley of tears, our everlasting abode? Does the Christian consider afflictions to be mercies, and the most exalted degree of human prosperity but a precipice; and do we recoil from the one, and attach every charm to the other? Is the Christian all spiritual, and are we all earthly; and yet do we flatter ourselves with the hope of heaven? Be not deceived: *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*

These were the terms of discipleship, when Christ himself was on the earth; and these are still the terms, and such will they remain, until the heavens and earth shall pass away: neither the force nor

corruption of times, can render them more austere, or more indulgent.

Why is it, my brethren, that we do not set about the work of reformation and salvation, when we have so much to do, and so little time to do it in? It is to the incomprehensible oblivion of our mortality, that we are to attribute the general forgetfulness of the things of God.

And why do men forget their own mortality? Is it because we have seen none of the ravages of death? Where is the man or woman who has not wept on the grave of some dear relative? But how soon has the impression been erased? Has the all-devouring tomb, instead of pronouncing on the vanity of all human pursuits, on the contrary, emitted sparks to rekindle our attachment to this poor world?

Let us suppose, my brethren, that the number of man's days were inscribed on his brow. Is it not clear, that such an awful certainty would beget the most profound and solemn reflection? Would it be possible, for one moment, to banish the fatal term from his thoughts? Would not his alarm increase, as the moment drew nigh that he should depart hence? And had I such a register before me at this moment, with what invincible effect should I not call those to mercy, who have not a year, perhaps not a month, or week,—perhaps a shorter interval, between them and judgment. My brethren, though I am not sent to you with such heavy tidings, shall I address you with less effect, when I declare, that the great feature of all nature is, rapidity of growth and declen-

sion. Ages are renewed, but the figure of the world passeth away. God alone remains the same. The torrent that sweeps along, runs at the base of his immutability; and he sees with indignation, wretched mortals, as they pass along, insulting him by the visionary hope of sharing that attribute which belongs to him alone. O! that solemn reckoning shall soon come, and then he who is filthy, shall be filthy still. Almighty God! reach down thy mighty hand, and save us from the jaws of destruction! Amen.

SERMON XXVIII.



Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you : Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. 1 Peter iv. 4, 5.

NOTWITHSTANDING the greater part of mankind believe in the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, I believe there are but few, who in defining the predisposing characters of the vessels of wrath and the vessels of mercy, would exclude themselves from happiness. And though many would be ready to acknowledge the Scripture as the standard of religious character, and confess at the same time that they do not come up to the measure of obedience required therein ; yet would they either endeavour to explain away the full meaning of the incorruptible text, or they would find some salvo in the weakness of their nature, the strength of temptation, or the mercy of God.

Here our hearers are beforehand with us. They have wrenched our weapons out of our hands, and use them to ward off Gospel truth. We would fain bring the word of God to bear on their sins, but behold! they have already guarded against that.— They have given the highest tone to every promise, and taken them all to themselves, though not one of them rightly belongs to them. And as to the threats of God's law, if they have considered them at all, they imagine they apply to some other than themselves, although they are guilty of the very sins specified in the denunciation. As to the weakness and sinfulness of our nature, and the mercy of God, which we would mention in order to induce the deepest humility and repentance, we find they have exaggerated both the one and the other. They have contemplated the mercy of God, unconnected either with his justice, truth, or holiness; and they have represented the weakness of human nature to themselves, unconnected with the promised assistance of divine grace. Or if for a moment they are compelled to feel the force of truth; if it unveil their secret hiding-places, they have yet another resort. They contrive to lose their present alarm in the prospect of future repentance.

Surely a minister has need of all the prudence and skill that human nature can attain. For though his hearers may have made up their opinions on the Scriptures; yet he must remove them, if possible, and replace them with those which are more in uni-

son with the divine perfections of its glorious Author.—And he must endeavour to convince his hearers, that notwithstanding the weakness of the flesh and the strength of temptation, in consequence of offered grace, he that liveth in sin shall die. In one word, he has to combat the self-flattering delusion of those who have so long endeavoured to believe a lie, that they seem to be cursed with fatal success; and are so far infatuated that they wonder others do not see as they do. *Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them.*

It is not necessary to detain you to give a particular view of the occasion which gave rise to those words. I have not selected them to prevent a relapse into apostacy and idolatry. I have not ascended this pulpit to explode the inhuman obscenities of Gentilism. These, which seem to have been the principal objects with St. Peter in this chapter, would not be exactly applicable to us:—not but that the spirit of backsliding prevails even among us; not but that there are many works of darkness wrought among us that could not behold the light; but that both the kind of backsliding, and the kinds of wickedness, are somewhat different now from what they were in the time St. Peter wrote.

My principal object, in the selection of these words, is to show,

I. Generally, what in the text is expressed in particular of the first converts to Christianity, namely,

the entire change both with respect to the inward principles, and the outward conduct, produced in all who become real Christians.

II. The misconception and misrepresentation to which the change exposes them from the people of the world.

III. The judgment which convicts those who revile and oppose them on account of it.

I. I am to speak something of the entire change, both with respect to the inward principle and the outward conduct, produced by a cordial adoption of evangelical truth.

There is a disposition in the world to compromise with religion. And if the real Christian would give up some of his austerities and peculiar tenets, the world would readily cede some of her most enormous and disgraceful vices; and there would be an amicable adjustment. It must be granted, that Christian laws, education, habits, and information, have had considerable effect on the tone of morals, and religious sentiments and feelings. But still the Christian recollects, that "that which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit." Every passage of Scripture which speaks of regeneration, the new birth, justification, cleansing the fountain, making the tree good, grafting into the vine by faith, and such like, applies to us in the present

day with strong, and in all material respects, with unabated force. Notwithstanding the degrees of ignorance and depravity may vary in different ages, yet the distinction between the world and the church is not less real and important, because it is less palpable. "All men are by nature born in sin:"—"the whole world lieth in wickedness." The great features of the world, apostacy, and idolatry, the forsaking of God, the fountain of living water, and hewing out for themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water;—these features, I say, remain in every age.

But all real Christians are such as, having been enlightened and awakened to a sense of their danger, have repented for their sins, and believed in the atonement and sacrifice of the Son of God:—not indeed with a cold and unproductive faith, but with that faith which, as a high and animating principle, fills the soul with love to God, and causes its possessor to walk in the Spirit, crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, and endeavour in all things to glorify God in his body, and spirit, and substance.

True religion is not merely the abstaining from gross sins, or the giving to God a part of our hearts, and some vacant moments of our time; while the bulk of both is entirely alienated from him. No,—godliness is the entire subjection and devotedness of the soul to God himself. It is the practical acknowledgment of his unlimited sovereignty, and the unreserved dedication of our whole selves to his

service.—To use the nervous language of the apostle, it is Christ formed in the heart by the powerful energy of the Holy Spirit, in consequence of which the person becomes a new creature, both with regard to his temper and practice. These are characters inseparable from true godliness;—and though they may not always be equally conspicuous, in consequence of the different capacities, habits, and dispositions of men; yet, still they are the very essence of godliness; and if we attempt to supply their place, even with the strictest morality, which does not spring from a principle of regeneration and true holiness, we do but deceive and undo ourselves. Oh God, do thou be pleased to send home this scriptural doctrine to every heart!

Having insisted on the necessary change and character of every real Christian, we come,

II. To speak of the misconception and misrepresentation to which the change exposes him. *Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.*

The operation of the Holy Spirit is a work of its own kind. Nothing similar to it is to be found, by which we can precisely illustrate its influence, or explain its nature; and whatever earthly image is used to aid our conceptions of this heavenly work, it is to be considered rather as an approximation to truth, than the truth itself. Hence it is, that though our Saviour beautifully illustrated the effects of the

divine Spirit by the motion of the air, yet we may venture to affirm, that no one understands the nature of this holy influence, but he that has experienced it: I speak of that degree of the Spirit which effects our regeneration. The enterprising mind of man, which would try every thing at the bar of human reason, being unable to fathom the deep mysteries of the Gospel with the line of human intellect, becomes palled; and the man cries out, like Bacon, who, when about to explore a new and difficult field of philosophy, said, "Either I'll find a way, or I'll make one." If he be a man of thought, he examines the word of God, he hears the experience of Christians, and at first is forced to acknowledge, "there is something here that I have not experienced. Well, what shall I do? Shall I strive to rise to the standard, or shall I bring down the standard to my own stature?" He concludes that the latter is the easiest, and immediately musters up all the fallacies of reason in order to explain away the high tone of the Scriptures, and to compare such texts as speak of the indispensable necessity of regeneration, with those which seem merely to inculcate moral honesty. Thus he reasons himself out of the necessity of repentance and amendment of life, and thus deceives his soul. Having fixed this standard, he applies it to himself and feels satisfied; and finally he becomes so rooted in his opinion, that he supposes all who carry the matter further than himself, must be hypocrites or enthusiasts, and wonders why they

do not see as he sees. Notwithstanding the difficulties he had to surmount in forming his opinion, he is now settled, and can find in his heart to retail, perhaps with increase, every supposed fault of one who makes a profession of the Gospel. My brethren, I have not launched into the sea of conjecture. I have only glanced at the true ground of that fatal calm which pervades so many of our minds, and which can be accounted for on no other principle than the one which I have mentioned. You come to this place with your minds made up on the subject, and not with that teachable meekness which marks the character of those who receive benefit by hearing the Gospel. Indeed, to suppose otherwise, would be to reflect on your good sense. If you really believed in the necessity of repentance and regeneration, as we preach it, it would be impossible, on the principle of good sense, to reconcile your faith and conduct. But the fact is, you most generally sit as critics, to see how far our doctrine meets your views; and if we go beyond them, you immediately suppose it to be the effect of ignorance or enthusiasm, or the mere consequence of our ministerial profession. Nor do the private professors of religion meet with a judgment less severe from the men of the world.

III. We come now, thirdly, to speak of the judgment which shall convict those who revile and oppose the godly.

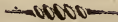
My brethren, the Scriptures give us to understand, that the righteous are as the apple of God's eye: for when Saul was persecuting the church, the glorified Redeemer cried out, "Why persecutest thou me?" and St. Jude saith, according to the sentiment of the text, "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." But if, among us, the spirit of persecution has not raged, so as to inspire the persecutor with alarming fears on that ground; yet a spirit of opposition to the Gospel, and to those who possess the power of religion, even at this time, disgraces the conduct of many, and exposes them to the wrath of a justly offended God. Yes, my hearers, God who is jealous of his own glory and truth, will assuredly enter into judgment with those who have added to the lenitives of the Gospel, and taken from the threats of God denounced against the unconverted. I fancy I see the Judge, together with the assembled universe—The book being opened, he proceeds to judge them according to the pure doctrines contained in it:—to one he says, "And are you regenerate and born of the Spirit?" "No, Lord." "And why are you not?" "Because I did not believe in the doctrine." "But was not the doctrine clearly revealed in the Bible, and was it not enforced by my

ministers?" "True, Lord, but I thought the regeneration spoken of, referred merely to morality, and did not conceive that it implied an absolute change." To this the awful voice of God replies, "Since then thou hast changed my truth into a lie, depart from me, thou cursed, into everlasting fire."

My brethren, it is not the contrary belief and practice of the whole world that can make the truth of God of none effect. And notwithstanding the doctrine of regeneration is disbelieved by many even of those who seem favourable to Christianity, yet God's truth stands firm, which says, "Except ye be regenerate and born again, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Newbern. September 7th. 1817.

SERMON XXIX.



For all things are yours ; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephass, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come : all are yours.

1 Cor. iii. 21, 22.

IN these impassioned words, we have the happy privileges of Christians, magnificently set forth in a full and vehement enumeration of particulars, and a noble gradation which rises up to heaven, and with the addition of the next verse terminates in God himself. But how is it, my brethren, that this rich inventory of blessings should belong to those, of whom, in the very next chapter, it is said, “ We are fools, we are weak, we are despised, we hunger, we thirst, we are naked, we are buffeted, we have no certain dwelling-place, we labour, we are reviled, we are persecuted, we entreat, we are made the filth of the world and the offscouring of all things.”

To which he adds, in the sixth chapter of the next epistle, as the peculiar lot of ministers, "afflictions, necessities, stripes, imprisonments, tumults, labours, watchings, and fastings."

The apostle, my brethren, evidently considers the Christian's afflictions in the one case, principally in relation to this life; and in the other, in relation to that which is to come. In another place, he seems to connect these different views; and then he speaks as follows, "We are unknown; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

In this chapter he has laboured to suppress a spirit of faction and unholy partiality, which had crept into the church at Corinth. They had departed from that rule which St. Paul had given to the Thessalonians, to regulate their affections towards their ministers, "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love, for their works' sake." Instead of this, they were extravagant in their praises of some, while they spoke in terms of indifference of others:—and leaving the standard of ministerial usefulness, they permitted their affections to be influenced by local circumstances and strange partialities resulting from knowing men after the flesh. They were "puffed up for one against another." This, the apostle seems to have thought a mark of carnality, and quite a

contracted view of things; inasmuch as the Gospel, being of divine origin, did not depend for success on the superior talents and ready elocution of those who preached it: but on a simple and plain statement of the unadorned doctrines and instructions which the preacher receives, with his commission, from the great Head of the church. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed." The names of Paul and Apollos are here used, to signify any who stood as heads of parties in the church at Corinth. The contention did not actually exist concerning himself and Apollos, but others. But when he would signify how small ministers are in themselves, through modesty he sees fit to make use of his own name, and that of his intimate friend Apollos; wisely avoiding the risk of giving offence, by using the names of others. This he expressly declares in the 6th verse of the next chapter, "and these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos."

In the text, the apostle labours to merge all party feeling in one grand, love-engendering proposition, *all are yours*. How simple would it be, for a sole heir to dispute about the worth of one small article in the inventory of his father's estate, when all belonged to him.

The sentiment which the apostle introduces in the text to promote peace in the Corinthian church, I shall this day attempt to improve, in order to promote a general attachment to the cause of religion,

which alone guarantees to us the valuable treasures spoken of in the text.

I. The apostle saith, *all things are yours*. In this comprehensive sentence he embraces every blessing connected with the grand scheme of man's redemption. It was to procure the happiness of the Christian, that the Lord Jesus Christ was pleased to lay aside the robes of glory, descend to earth, and die.

“ 'Tis for our sake, all nature stands,
And stars their courses move ;
'Tis for our guards, the angel bands
Come flying from above.”

The apostle next proceeds to a copious enumeration of particulars: *whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas*. Here we may observe, that all ministers, and ministerial abilities, are given by the Almighty for the edification of his church. The treasures of God's word he gives to us in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God. In estimating the value of a true minister, we do not refer only to his dexterous handling of the sword of the Spirit, which, it must be acknowledged, is a great part of the ministerial work; but we take into the account the private admonitions and the godly example, without which, though he should preach like an angel, his doctrine would fall unavailing to the ground. True piety and exemplary conduct are absolutely necessary for a Gospel minister, not only to secure his own salvation, but also the salva-

tion of those who hear him. By this alone he can guard himself from the reproach of those who wait for his halting, and excite a laudable ambition in his flock to follow him as he walks in the footsteps of the adorable Redeemer, and to live in all things worthy of their high vocation and their dignified hopes. Oh! what an unspeakable blessing to God's church, are its candlesticks, its stars, its angels, whose office is to teach, prune, and stimulate by example.

Permit me to conclude my observations on the subject of our spiritual inheritance, by an appeal to your own experience. How often has the scribe, instructed in the word, dealt out to you a portion to suit you in temptation, to suit you in coldness, to suit you in wealth and prosperity, and to suit you in adversity; not to mention the effort of the Spirit, of which he was the instrument, that first thundered conviction to your heart, when you were in the road to hell.

The pulpit therefore, (and I name it, fill'd,
 With solemn awe, that bids me well beware
 With what intent I touch that holy thing)
 Must stand acknowledg'd, while the world shall stand.
 The most important and effectual guard,
 Support, and ornament of virtue's cause.
 There stands the messenger of truth. There stands
 The legate of the skies. His theme divine,
 His office sacred, his credentials clear.
 By him the violated law speaks out
 Its thunders, and by him, in strains as sweet
 As angels use, the Gospel whispers peace.

II. The apostle next mentions *the world* as belonging to the Christian. This will doubtless seem strange to those who have seen the despised and destitute little flock, frequently, like their Lord and Master, having scarcely a place where to lay their heads. But the apostle, no doubt, values the world in exact proportion to its advantages, as a furtherance towards heaven. He, as all Christians should do, makes eternity a leading feature in the aspect of his existence. Christ is made head over all things to his church. And as opulent parents do not always see fit to educate their children at home, in the arms of their too fond indulgence, but send them abroad, and subject them to painful discipline, with scarcely a knowledge of their high extraction; so does Christ, the great Head of the church, sometimes expose his children to hardy conflicts with various calamities, with only this assurance, "he that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." "A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the abundance of the wicked. For God saith of the wicked, I will curse their blessings, yea, I have cursed them already." But of the righteous it is said, "Whatsoever he doeth, shall prosper." Christ, who is the Christian's Father, will deal out the things of this life in exact adaptation to the best interests of his children. If he sees that riches would ruin the soul, he can easily withhold or take them away:—or, if he sees they would promote his own glory and our good, he can as easily give them. And where is

the man that would want riches on any other terms? —May my God never let me grow rich at the expense of my salvation!

But there is another sense in which the Christian may be said to enjoy or possess the world. You have often seen a miser, who, though he was worth his thousands, would nevertheless abridge himself of the very necessaries of life.—Now, he has only the name of a rich man, whilst another, with much less property than he possesses, enjoys much more real satisfaction. So the Christian, though he possesses little, has a contented soul, a conscience at peace with God, and a thankful heart, which give the fullest zest to his common meal. He actually possesses every real enjoyment which riches can yield.—In this sense, therefore, he may be said to possess the world—peace and contentment, which is all the world to him. If the Christian has much, it is sanctified to his good, while he keeps the principle of grace in lively exercise:—if he has little, he enjoys it; and when he has nothing, his very wants work for his good. *Paul, and Apollos, and Cephas, and the world, are yours, Christian!*

III. *Life* also is yours. The apostle does not mean, that we can live as long as we please, and that we are at liberty to put an end to life, if we should see fit; but, that the real enjoyment of life is ours, and the end of life is also ours. Vain and transitory as is human life, yet, in it, by grace divine, the root of sin is eradicated from the soul, and

we are prepared to join that glorious society above, when we come to die, provided we have been diligent in redeeming the time.

Could I but lead you beside the rivers of eternal consolation, in the Paradise of God, and show you those pure and happy spirits who reign with him in glory; who in the short term of a few years' probation treasured up for themselves eternal riches; surely, you would say, "These have lived to purpose." We are placed in this world but for a moment. We have much to do for the glory of God, and for our own good.—Let us therefore, Oh! brethren, be up and doing, and work while it is called, To-day.—Let us not barter one moment but in exchange for its real worth.

How much of your precious time, Oh! man, has already run to waste!—What account could you now render of it, if called to the bar of God?—Ah! you have left God out of your scheme of happiness, and you have lived but to serve yourself and sin; but life, with its real enjoyment and true end, belongs to the Christian.

IV. *Death* also, is enumerated in the Christian's inheritance. To the carnal man, who knows nothing, and seeks nothing, but the enjoyments of this life, this may appear strange. But, my brethren, the real Christian knows that "to depart hence and be with Christ is far better." He has, all the while, been living in this world only in submission to the will of God; and, if faith is in lively exercise, he

rejoices when he obtains leave to quit his post of duty, and lay aside the cross for the crown. To die,—What is it, Oh! my soul?—It is to cease from all sorrows, and enter into eternal joy.—It is to be absent from the body, it is true; but it is to be eternally present with the Lord.—It is to be crowned with masteries.—It is to escape, like a bird from the fowler, into eternal peace.—It is to join the great assembly of the holy, just, and good;—to be set free from every evil, and enjoy every good.

“No sorrow be vented that day,
 When Jesus has called me home;
 But with singing and shouting, let each brother say,
 He has gone from the evils to come!”

It is thus, my brethren, that death forms a part of the Christian's inheritance.

V. In his enraptured style, the apostle next observes, *things present* are ours. He seems here to give an almost indefinite enumeration—*things present*, whatever they may be. Is it thy lot, at present, to submit to a series of grievous afflictions?—Know this, “that all things work together for good to them that love God.” But by *things present*, the apostle might intend the common incidents of life, whether prosperous or afflictive in their appearance; and

VI. By *things to come*, he might mean the things which relate to the future dispensations of God's providence in this life; as well as that ineffable glory which he will finally confer on all his faithful

saints:—so that, eternity being to come, eternity is also ours. And how shall we spend it? Certainly, in praise to our God, and in the most unspeakable enjoyments. Whatever the Lord hath done, which hath been revealed to mortals, has been closely connected with the scheme of man's redemption. And, Oh! what fulness of delight shall we enjoy, in the ultimate triumph of that stupendous scheme, to accomplish which the Lord Jesus Christ hath died! *Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come: all are yours.*

But as that which is counted gain to the righteous, is loss to the unrighteous; we may well say of the ungodly, "Nothing is theirs.—All the blessings of the mediatorial scheme, are perverted, and turned to a curse. The ministers of Christ—the channels which convey the healing unction of celestial grace to the upright, are to them messengers of wrath; inasmuch as they bring with them that light, the rejection of which adds to sin a character of the highest aggravation.—The world, for which they are so eager, is given to them in wrath, as God gave a king to wicked Israel of old; and as those who lusted for flesh in the wilderness, received it in wrath, so that the anger of the Lord came upon them while it was yet in their teeth; so does the curse of God attend those who abuse their riches to purposes of pride and neglect of God. Life is to them a curse: and it would have been good for that man, who lives and dies without religion, if he had never been born.

Present things, whether prosperous or afflictive, are perverted in their design; and things to come, the blessings or chastisements of future life, shall, being abused, render them greater objects of divine displeasure; and eternity shall entail upon them eternal wretchedness.

Newbern, November 16, 1817.

SERMON XXX.



And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. 1 Cor. ii. 3.

IF, in a course of desultory reading, a man should by accident light on such a passage as this, he would, at first view, suppose that he beheld the features of perturbation resulting from the appalling fears of a guilty ruffian, in the very act of attempting to guide the dagger to the bosom of innocence: or he would at least suppose, that he beheld the plainest marks of casuistical indecision. If, however, on reading the context, he should discover that St. Paul was giving, in the text, a short sketch of the exercise of his own mind, he would probably think that the apostle referred to the feelings of compunction, which, as one would think, he must have felt, when “he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison.”—Or he might possibly think, that

the apostle was giving a view of the peculiar circumstances that attended his conversion, when Jesus Christ, from the throne of his glory, sent forth his voice, which relaxed the sinews of this malevolent persecutor, and forced him to acknowledge the supremacy of his power.

Indeed, my brethren, if we were to read a letter, written by St. Paul, and directed to Judas from Damascus, where he spent the three days that he was under conviction; we should not be surprised, if, in the language of the text, he should observe, *I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.*

But, my brethren, these words are a true copy of St. Paul's exercises, while he was preaching at Corinth Christ crucified, the power and wisdom of God. But, wherefore this weakness in the midst of power?—Wherefore this fear, in the midst of the glorious hopes of the Gospel?—Why this trembling, whilst the strong hand of faith was fastened on the throne of God? I should rather expect to hear him thank Christ Jesus the Lord, for enabling him, and counting him faithful, and putting him into the ministry. What then! did he doubt his call to the ministry? Hear him on this point—"I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached by me, is not after man; for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."—Did he feel within himself a degree of shame in preaching a crucified Christ, as the only hope of salvation? Hear him on this point also—"I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is

the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Was he made to fear and tremble, from a supposed inferiority and weakness in the doctrines of the Gospel, when compared with the wisdom and popular philosophy of the day? So far from it, he challenges a comparison—"Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom, knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."—Was his fear and trembling the effect of cowardice, the dread of suffering? No, my brethren; this Christian hero would have disdained a thing so low and sordid. As a proof of this, on one occasion having mentioned a long catalogue of his sufferings, he concludes by observing, "None of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto me, so that I may finish my course with joy." Nor was his fortitude unequal to the pains of martyrdom, which he afterward suffered. Did his trembling originate in a fear, that his plain manner of preaching would deprive him of that pecuniary reward which is generally the aim of natural talents, employed in the ministry, unsanctified by grace? This could not have been the concern of one who had learned to suffer want, who had learned to be content in any station; of one who said, that it were better for him to die, than that any man should make his glorying void, as it related to preaching the Gospel free of cost.

How is it then, that St. Paul should inform the Corinthians, that he was with them in *meekness, and in fear, and in much trembling?*—Ah! my brethren, he was looking forward to that great and terrible day, when the Great Shepherd of the sheep will try the fidelity of his subordinate pastors. Nor would it have appeared strange to the reflecting mind, if, impressed with a sense of the dread responsibility which attached to his character and office—if, anticipating the transactions of that day, he should have adopted the awful language in which Eliphaz rehearsed his vision, “In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a Spirit passed before my face, the hair of my flesh stood up.”

This strong, this nervous language does by no means exaggerate the feelings of the Gospel preacher, whose mind is duly impressed with the importance of the Christian ministry, and the difficulties attending its faithful execution. On these two points, by divine assistance, we will attempt to make some observations.

I. And first, we may observe that the Gospel ministry embraces objects of the most important nature. It purports to carry on to its perfection that stupendous scheme of grace, which, from the earliest times, has been the object of God's providential care; and for the accomplishment of which, Jesus Christ was pleased to lay aside the robes of

his glory, suffer the insults of sinners, and finally pour out his soul as an offering for sin. The principal concern of our ministry, is not with the fading visions of time, but the unchangeable realities of eternity. We leave to little men, who are called great, the petty trifles which glitter in the mummery of this poor world; whilst we hover over the immortal soul, which, proceeding from God, and happy only in union with him, is in danger, through its pollution, of everlasting separation from him who is the source of light and life.

What are the feelings of a fond mother, who beholds her infant that can scarcely stand alone, sporting on the brink of a precipice, into which, if it falls, it must inevitably perish, when at the same time it cannot understand, or will not obey her solicitation, and flee from the danger? Oh! I read the agony of her mind in her very countenance:—she is weakened by her alarm, she shrieks, she fears, she trembles for the consequence.

The comparison, my brethren, is strong but striking. St. Paul felt, and every real Gospel minister feels, the most trembling fears, when they behold sinners jeopardizing their salvation, standing, as it were, on a slippery rock, while fiery billows roll below.

Here is a large assembly;—many are unconverted, and of course, exposed to the wrath of God. What if the “silver cord” should be loosed?—what if the “golden bowl” should be broken? What would you lose? You would lose heaven, and all

the society of the blessed, and you would be precluded from all possibility of receiving mercy. What would you feel? You would immediately begin your hell. You would immediately begin those fruitless and dolorous groans, which echo through all the regions of eternal despair.

What assurance have you, that this shall not be your portion in twenty-four hours? My brethren, permit me to adopt the language of the text, I labour among you at this time, *in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.*

My brethren, it is not a matter of trivial moment, to stand at the altar and administer in holy things. It is not a light thing, to labour as a principal agent, to save those for whom Christ died.

II. But if St. Paul trembled in contemplating the importance of the ministry, much more ought he, and all real ministers, feel their weakness, and fear their want of success, when they consider the obstacles lying in the way of its accomplishment. Of these, the first, and perhaps the greatest, is the latent but rooted prejudice, which subsists in the unrenewed mind against our message. The truths we teach, are not of the nature of ordinary matters of speculation and inquiry, which want only their proper evidence, to be acknowledged and believed. We speak, where the person who is to decide, is himself a party to the question; and where the strongest feelings of a proud and corrupt heart, are brought into action against us and our unwelcome

tale. Seldom are men induced, but under the influence of a superior power, to acquiesce in the humbling and distasteful doctrines, which search the sinner's heart, and bring him to the feet of the Redeemer to sue for mercy. Whilst we uncover the sinner's heart, and show him that sepulchre of dead men's bones—that cage of unclean birds—whilst we insist on his entire impurity and helplessness—whilst we exhort him to repent, and seek for justification, not in his own name, but wholly through the merits of a crucified Redeemer; have we not cause to fear that our fellow-creatures, like the deaf adder, will close their ears against the prophet of better tidings, charm he never so wisely.

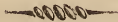
If, however, we are so happy as to gain the outward ear, we have other difficulties to encounter. We have to draw off the attention from objects which are present and agreeable, to those which are distant and uninviting: to lead those whose minds are absorbed in things temporal, to the contemplation of things spiritual and divine. We have to contend with the power of the world, which, with the most specious bait, angles for regards in favour of its short-lived pleasures. It is our aim to break the chains of a strange and deceitful master, whose spells are wound about the heart—to bring the wanderers home to their righteous Lord and rightful owner. We have to call on men to sacrifice their ardent but misplaced affections, and direct them to objects as yet untasted; and however am-

ple they may be, the unrenewed man is wholly unprepared to relish them.

We tremble for ourselves, and keep our body in subjection; lest, after we have preached to others, we ourselves should become cast-away. We have cause to fear, lest, through a false candour, we should betray the cause of truth into the hands of error. We conclude, by requesting the prayers of the people of God.

Newbern, April 19, 1817.

SERMON XXXI.



Worship God. Rev. xix. 10.

HAD the darkness of the Jewish dispensation extended its influence to the present day, then would your speaker, both from the subject and the occasion, be led to speak much of those outward forms and sensible figures, by which the Almighty was pleased to assist the minds of his worshippers; when the pomp which blazoned at Jerusalem's capital, and the ceremonies there performed, were regarded as the principal points of divine worship.

But the hour being now come, when the true worshippers have no longer to resort to the mountain of Samaria, nor yet to the temple of Jerusalem; but are required to worship the Father in spirit and in truth; the minister of the Gospel, caught away by the adorable perfections of his Lord and Master, as revealed by the clearer light of the Gospel, stoops no longer to meaner subjects, but vouches the di-

vine supremacy, and challenges such dispositions as are suitable to those who would worship the great Jehovah.

If any thing could justify, in the minister of salvation, a momentary departure from that theme, which should ever warm his heart, and dwell upon his tongue, methinks it would be the peculiarities of the present occasion, convened, as we are, for the first time, to worship God within these hallowed walls, which we now consecrate specially to his service. For sure I am, an occasion has never presented itself in which voluntary contribution ever displayed more fully the unostentatious generosity of a people; or in which greater zeal and concert conspired to effect a religious object.

But, my brethren, it would ill accord, both with the dignity and design of this place, to confer commendation on mortals for a work which, however laudable, surpasses not our duty. To your consciences I refer you for that satisfaction which results from disinterested good-will to the cause of Jesus Christ: and to the time of general remuneration I refer you for your reward from Him who has said—a cup of cold water, given to a disciple, in the name of a disciple, shall secure to the giver a reward.

This house was erected for the convenience of those who worship God; and for this purpose exclusively, I trust, we shall here often meet. It is my present design, to bring into view three of the principal points to which we should attend at all

times; and especially when we meet for the purpose of divine worship:

I. The object;

II. The nature;

III. The benefit of divine worship.

I. The first of all truths, and the foundation of all religion is, that there is a God. Whether a belief of the existence of a God is founded on innate ideas; or the grandeur of the works of nature, together with the harmony of the system of all visible things; or on the structure and powers of our own minds, of which we feel a consciousness, we shall not now attempt to determine. This however we believe, that there never was a nation but what acknowledged and worshipped a Divinity. If at any time the tongue dares to utter the impious and foolish expression, "There is no God;" it either absolutely contradicts the thoughts of the heart, or is led away by the irregular desires of the soul, exhibiting rather what it wishes, than what it believes. Indeed, the more common error of men has been to multiply to themselves gods, and to refer them all to the different parts of material nature: as for instance, to the heavens, air, earth, sun, moon, and stars.

But let it be remarked, touching the light of nature, that although it pointed out a supreme and

over-ruling power in the universe; it was quite too feeble to chase away that grim darkness that hovered over the altars of religion, even when the arts and sciences were at their acme, and human knowledge flourished like the palm-tree. They then had gods many and lords many; but they were unknown gods; nor could they conceive of them otherwise than through a carnal medium. They worshipped the air which enabled them to live; the earth which nourished them; the sun which gave them light; and the moon which ruled over the night. "They worshipped those conquerors who had delivered them from their enemies; those benevolent and upright princes who had rendered their subjects happy: and Hercules and Jupiter were placed in the rank of gods; the one for the number of his victories, and the other in consequence of the happiness and tranquillity of his reign."

So consonant is the idea of a God to the natural sentiments of mankind, that all the nations of the earth have, with one consent, agreed to institute some forms of worship. Survey the societies of men in their rudest state; explore the deserts of Africa, the wilds of our America, the distant isles of the sea, and you will find that some religious ceremonies have obtained—You will every where, in some form or other, trace the temple, the altar, the priest, and the offering; though frequently mixed with superstitions I should blush to name.

The variety of systems which men have formed to themselves on this subject, has excited the ridi-

cule of sceptics and libertines. Mr. Hume compares them to the playsome whimsies of monkeys; and infers from them that the whole of religion is a riddle, and that mystery and perplexity seem to be the result of the most accurate investigation.

For myself, I confess I should draw different conclusions from such premises; I should rather think that the follies and caprice which the melancholy history of religious superstition presents to view, direct our attention to those sacred and indelible characters on the mind of man, inscribed, no doubt, by the finger of Deity. Nay, the more ludicrous and debasing the ceremonies to which the pride of human reason has been reconciled, the stronger is our evidence, that religion has a foundation in the nature of man; a foundation, from which it is not to be beaten by all the frightful spectres of human ignorance and superstition. And here we are led to gratitude and astonishment, when we view the openings of the Divine counsels. After the cheerless darkness of Paganism, and the twilight of that dispensation, in which God was dimly seen, but which was a shadow of better things which were yet to come; it was reserved for the Son, who was yet in the bosom of his Father, to make a full declaration of the nature, perfections, and counsels of the eternal mind. The prophets, indeed, with ideas filled with the immensity, the omnipotence, and the majesty of the Supreme Being, exhausted the weakness of human language, in order, if possible, to correspond with the sublimity of the God of heaven:

they describe him, as He that measures the waters of the ocean in the hollow of his hand; who weighs the mountains in his balance; in whose hands are the tempest and thunders; who speaks, and all is done; who commands, and it stands fast. But Jesus Christ, with a knowledge which renders the idea of the Supreme Being familiar to him, speaks simply and familiarly of the glory of the Lord. He calls him a holy Father; a righteous Father; a merciful Father; a Shepherd who pursues a strayed sheep, and kindly bears it home himself; a Friend who yields to the importunity of his friend; a Father who is feelingly affected with the return and reformation of his son; moreover, as a God who taketh no pleasure in sin, and will not suffer the wicked to go unpunished.

The Christian dispensation teaches us to study and know not merely the character of God in Christ, but as the perfections of the divine nature were peculiarly manifested in our blessed Saviour, so in him we should particularly observe and consider them. It is principally in the luminous pages of divine truth, that the nature and perfections of God are unveiled, so as to impress reverence, affection, and love. There we learn, that the infinite but undivided essence of the eternal God, subsists in three distinct persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Concerning the Son, we find names and titles, proper only for God, applied to him; and he is mentioned as the object of religious worship, without any limitation; and it is stated to be the will of

God "that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." (1 John v. 23.) To the Holy Ghost are ascribed the divine perfections of omniscience, omnipresence, and almighty power, as also the divine works of creation. (Genesis i. 2.) The unity of the Trinity we acknowledge to be a mystery; and from its mysterious nature, some have taken occasion to reject it altogether. But is not all nature full of mystery? Can you explain how the grass grows, or the sun shines? Can you unfold to us the nature of that union which subsists between the soul and body? Can you discover how the small superficies of the optic nerve displays to the mind the whole hemisphere at once? If then we are formed to acknowledge mysteries in nature, why should we not submit to them also in religion; since through our ignorance we cannot know him, or how he exists, or form any adequate ideas of infinity or eternity? It is enough for us to know that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him. When he reveals this to us, he surely requires nothing unreasonable, when he commands us to worship him.

It appears then, that the one supreme and perfect Being, upon whom the existence of all other beings and their powers originally depend, is our rightful Sovereign, and the proper Object of our religious worship.

II. We come, secondly, to speak something of the nature of Christian worship. Religious worship may

be said to have a body and a soul, viz. external services, and inward adoration of God, because of his infinite excellency, mercy, power, goodness, and love. And all external services, which do not tend to the purifying of the heart and the reforming of the life, are unacceptable to God, and unprofitable to men. Hence they are so often treated in Scripture with the highest contempt, when substituted in the room of the important duties of a virtuous life. Notwithstanding this, it is certain that external services have their place, and a very considerable one, too, in the system of religion. In all times, men have consecrated places to God, which he has honoured with his special presence. The patriarchs erected altars to him on certain spots where he had appeared. The Israelites, in the wilderness, considered the tabernacle as the place where his glory and his presence continually resided. And afterward, the august temple erected by Solomon, was dedicated to him. It was the most holy place in the universe; the only one where it was permitted to offer up gifts and sacrifices to the Lord; and from all parts of the earth, the Israelites were obliged to come there to worship God. In the infancy of the Gospel, the houses of believers were domestic churches. The cruelty of tyrants obliged the first Christians to seek obscure places, to conceal them from the rage of persecution; until in after times, under the auspices of God-fearing rulers, places of worship were again consecrated to God.

But for want of making a just distinction between the means and the end, in religion, men have erred on both sides. The time was, when all religion consisted in attending the duties of the church; this alone sanctified the character, and atoned for every blemish in moral conduct. From this extreme, some run into the opposite one of holding every thing light that belongs to public worship. Such would do well to recollect, that though the form of godliness does often remain, when the power of it is wanting; yet the power cannot well subsist, where the form is altogether gone.

Let it be remembered, that God's family are but one, whether they dwell above or below. Our temples are a new heaven, where God dwelleth with men. "The heavenly altar hath no longer any advantage over ours—The Lamb of God, which they adore, is the victim immolated for our sins—The bread which we participate, is the immortal food of angels and blessed spirits—The mystical wine we there drink, is that new beverage with which they make glad in the kingdom of our heavenly Father—And our sacred songs are those which the celestial harmony makes resound around the throne of the Lamb."

Our dispositions should therefore have some accordance with the dispositions of those in the upper temple. "Now the first disposition of those blessed spirits who surround the throne of God and the altar of the Lamb, is a disposition of purity and innocence. Secondly, a disposition of religion and

internal humiliation." These two dispositions comprise the principal feelings of faith, with which we should worship God, when we enter this house.

1. A disposition of purity and innocence. * *

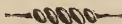
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This Sermon the Author was preparing as a dedication for the new Methodist Meeting-House, in Petersburg, but died before either were finished.

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SERMON XXVII.

<i>And he said unto them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. Matthew xvi. 24.....</i>	282
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SERMON XXVIII.

<i>Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. 1 Peter iv. 4, 5....</i>	294
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SERMON XXIX.

<i>For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come: all are yours. 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22.....</i>	304
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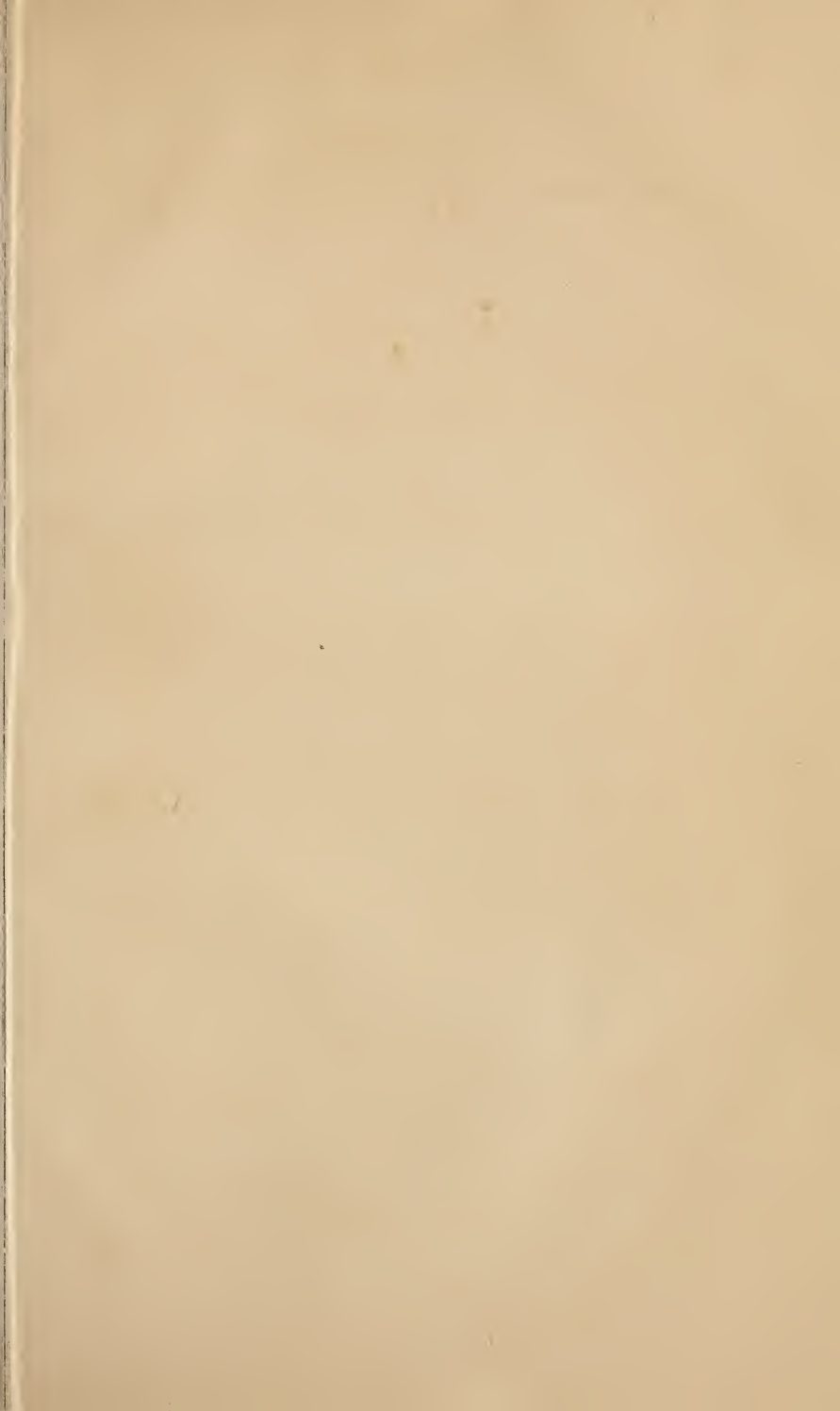
SERMON XXX.

<i>And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. 1 Cor. ii. 3.....</i>	315
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SERMON XXXI.


<i>Worship God. Rev. xix. 10.....</i>	323
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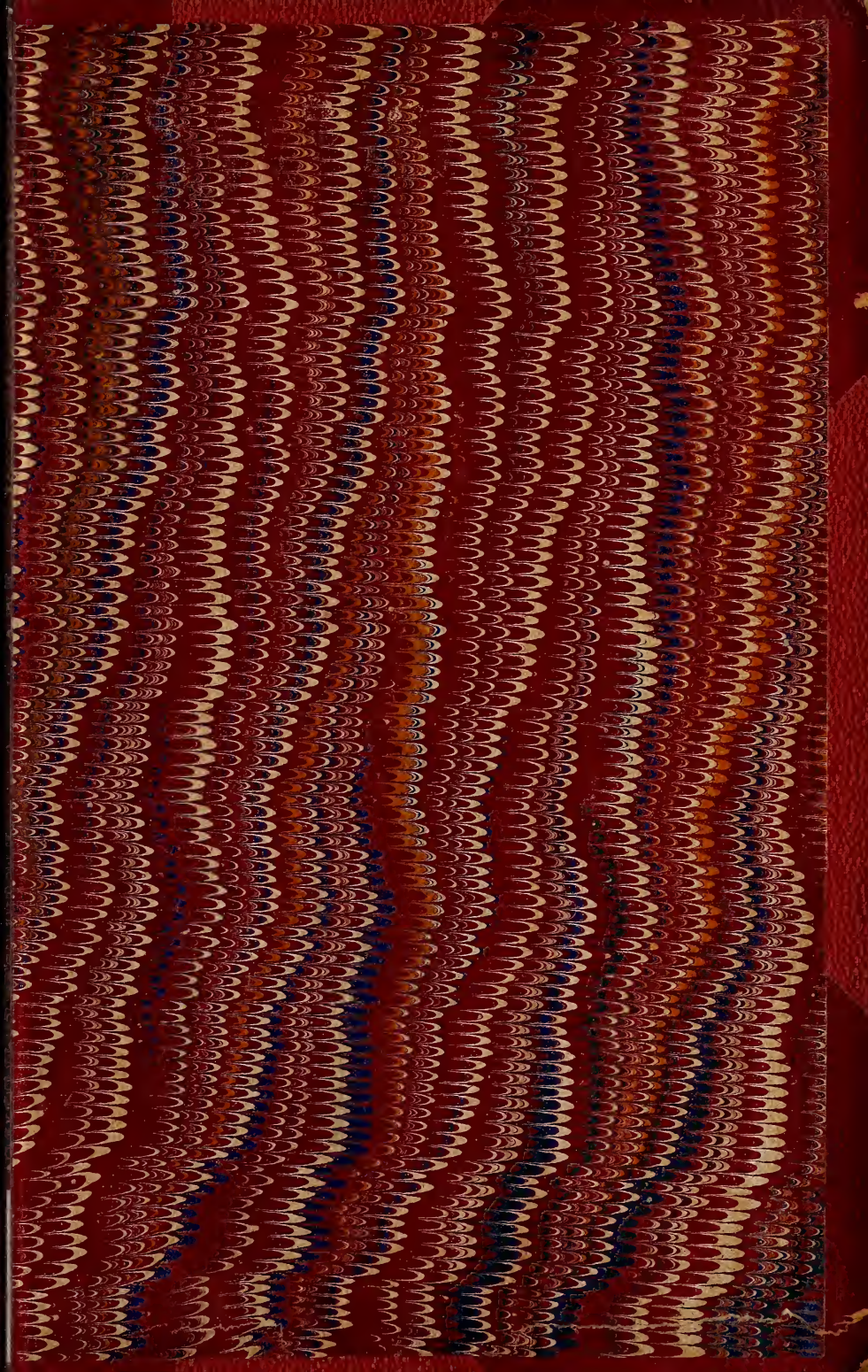


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