

A RACE FOR

FOR

ETERNAL LIFE.

So that ye may obtain

BEING AN

Epistle to all Slothful People.

A SERMON,

in 1 Corin. ix. 24.—*So run that ye may obtain*

From the Heavenly Footman.

BY THE REV. JOHN BUNYAN.

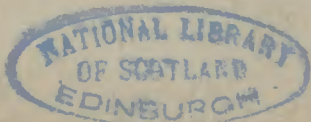
ALSO,

The Misery of Uncharitable Persons.

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SERMON.

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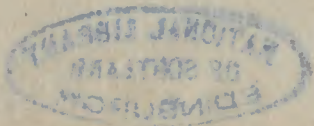
1 Cor. ix. 24.

So run that ye may obtain.

HEAVEN is that which every one desireth, yet but very few do obtain that glory. Many eminent professors drop short of a welcome from God into this pleasant place: therefore, sit not still, and wish for heaven, but run for it—so run that ye may obtain. As if the Apostle should say some, because they would not lose their souls, begin to run betimes, apace, with patience, the right way: do you so run. Some run from friends and companions, and this that they may have the crown: do you so run.—Some run through good report and evil report, that they may win the pearl: do you so run. So run that ye may obtain.

These words are taken from men's running for a wager: a very apt similitude to set before the saints; know you not that they who run in a race run all, but one obtaineth the prize? So run that you may obtain. That is, be sure you win as we do run.

The doctrine I do find in the words of the text is this: they that will have heaven, must run for it: I say, "they that will have heaven must run for it." I beseech you to heed it well. The prize is heaven, and if you will have it, you must run for it. You have another scripture, Heb. xii. Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which do



so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race set before us. Again, says Paul, I so run, not as uncertainly, so fight I, &c.

But observe (1.) That this running is to be understood of the swiftest sort of running, called a fleeing; that we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us, Heb. vi. It is taken from that of Josh. xx. concerning the man that was to flee to the city of refuge, when the avenger of blood was hard at his heels, therefore it is a running for one's life; a running with all might and main.

(2.) This running is called a pressing, "press towards the mark," Phil. iii. 14. which signifies they that will have heaven, must not stick at any difficulties, but press, crowd, and thrust through all that may stand between heaven and their souls. So run.

(3.) This running is called, in another place, a continuing in the way of life. If you continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away, Col. i. 23. not to run a little now and then, by fits and starts, or half way, or almost thither; but to run for my life, and to continue to the end of the race, which must be to the end of my life. First, because many run, yea, run far too, who yet miss of the crown, that stands at the end of the race. You know, that all who run in a race, do not win; and so it is here. What, do you think that every professor will have heaven? What, every lazy one, that scarce runneth so fast heavenward, as a snail creepeth on the ground?—2. Because the man that runs, if he does not obtain the prize, loses his labour. And ah! how many such runners will there be found at the day of

judgment! Multitudes come to heaven's gates, and there stand crying, Lord, Lord, when they have nothing but rebukes for their pains: depart from me! you come too late—you run too lazily—the door is shut. O sad state of these that run and miss! Therefore, if you will have heaven, you must run for it —“So run that you may obtain.”

3. Because the way is long; there is much work to do: there are many steps to be taken by those that intend to be saved. Out of Egypt thou must run a long journey through the vast wilderness, before thou come to the land of promise.

(4.) They that will go to heaven must run for it; because, as the way is long, so time, in which they are to get at the end of it, is very uncertain. When death comes, away thou must go, whether thou art provided or not; and therefore look to it, it is not good dallying with the salvation or damnation of thy soul.

(5.) They that will have heaven, must run for it; because the devil followeth them. He goeth about, seeking whom he may devour, and I will assure you, the devil is nimble; he can run apace he has overtaken many, turned up their heels, and given them an everlasting fall. Hell also has a wide mouth: it can stretch itself farther than you are aware of: and as the angel said to Lot, Look not behind thee, neither tarry thou in all the plain, lest thou be consumed: so say I to thee, Take heed, tarry not, lest the devil, hell, death, and the fearful curses of the law overtake thee, and throw thee down in the midst of thy sins, so never to rise again. If this were well considered then thou, as well as I, wouldst say, They that will have heaven, must run for it.

(6.) They must run for it; because, perchance, the gates of heaven may be shut shortly. "I shut and no man can open:" says Christ. If you should come but one quarter of an hour too late, I tell thee, it will cost thee an eternity to bewail thy misery in. Francis Spira can tell thee, what it is to stay till the gates of mercy be quite shut; or to run so lazily, that they be shut before thou get within them. What, to be shut out! What, out of heaven! Sinner, rather than lose it, run for it.

Lastly, So run that thou mayest obtain; because, if thou lose, thou lovest soul, Christ, and heaven, &c. Besides, thou layest thyself open to the shame and reproach that God, Christ, saints, &c. can lay upon thee. All that go by will begin to mock at thee, saying, This man began to run well, but was not able to finish.

DIRECTIONS.

I. If thou wouldst so run, as to obtain the kingdom of heaven, get into the way. It is not simply the runner, nor yet the hasty runner, that winneth the crown, unless he be in the way that leads thereto. There is a great running to and fro, and yet every one is for his life, his soul. If you say, Which is the way? Jesus says, "I am the way," &c. So then, thy business is, (if thou wouldst have salvation) to see if thou art planted in him, hast faith in him, so as to make a life out of him, and to conform thee to him. For the Lord's sake, take heed. Do not think, thou art in the way upon too slight grounds: for if thou

miss the way, thou wilt miss the prize, and lose thy soul. Mistrust thy own strength: down on thy knees in prayer to the Lord, for the Spirit of truth: search the word for direction; flee seducers; keep company with the Christians that have most experience of Christ; have a care of relying on outward obedience.

DIR. II. Be much in studying the way; what Christ is: what he has done; why he is; why he has done what is done; and what he does in heaven. Be thinking also of those places to which thou must not come near. Avoid such things as are expressly forbidden in the word of God.—
 “Withdraw thy foot from her, for her steps take hold of hell, Prov. v. And so of every thing that is not in the way. So run.

DIR. III. Strip thyself of those things that may hinder thee in the way to heaven; as covetousness, pride, lust, or whatever else thy heart may be inclined unto, which may hinder thee in this heavenly race. Men, that run for a wager, do not incumber themselves. Every man that striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things. It is but a vain thing to talk of going to heaven, if thou let thy heart be incumbered with those things that would hinder.

DIR. IV. “Beware of bye-paths:” take heed of all crooked paths that lead to damnation. Some of them are dangerous because of practice, some because of opinion. But look right before thee; ponder the path of thy feet; turn not to the right hand, nor to the left; remove thy foot far from evil. This counsel not being taken, is the reason of that reeling this way and that way, and so missing the way to the kingdom. The way to hea-

en is hard to be kept in. Yet, as the harlot's
house at Jericho was known by one scarlet thread,
so streams of Christ's blood run throughout the
way to heaven: mind that, have boldness to enter
into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

DIR. V. "Do not look too high." If thou be
riving over much into God's secret decrees, thou
mayest stumble and fall, as many hundreds have
done.

DIR. VI. "Have not an ear open to every one
that calleth after you." If men run for some
great matter, they say, I am running for a wager;
if I win, I am made: if I lose, I am undone:
hinder me not. Thus shouldst thou do, and thou
hast more cause than they: for as much as they
run but for things that last not; but thou, for an
incorruptible glory. I give thee notice of this,
knowing that thou shall have enough to call after
thee, even the devil, sin, pleasures, profits, ease,
pride, &c. one crying, Stay for me; the other
saying, Do not leave me: and a third, Take me
along with you. Let not thine ear be opened for
such sink-souls. You know what it cost the young
man that was enticed by a harlot, Prov. vii. Many
strong men have been slain; that is, kept out of
heaven by her. Soul, take this counsel and say,
Satan, sin, pleasures, profit, &c. let me alone:
stand off: come not nigh me; for I am running
for heaven, for my soul, for God; for Christ; from
hell and everlasting damnation. If I win, I win
all; and if I lose, I lose all; let me alone. So
run.

DIR. VII. Be not daunted, though thou meet
est with ever so many discouragements in thy
journey. Encourage thyself with the tender-

heartedness of Christ, the merits of his blood, the freeness of his invitations to come in. If these be not thy meditations, thou wilt draw very heavily, if thou do not give up all for lost, and so knock off from following any farther.

DIR. VIII. Take heed of being offended at the cross, that thou must go by. If thou art in the way to the kingdom, my soul for thine, thou wilt come at the cross shortly. The Lord grant thou dost not shrink at it, so as to turn thee back again. The cross stands as a way-mark to heaven, thou must go close by it; nay, thou must take it up, or else thou wilt quickly get out of the way that leads to heaven, and turn aside to some of those crooked lines, that lead down to the chambers of death.

The cross is known (1.) in the doctrine of justification. It stretches every vein in a man's heart, to be willing, in the very midst of the sense of his sins, to throw himself wholly upon the righteousness of another. (2.) In the doctrine of mortification. Is it nothing for a man to lay hands on his darling sins, that stick as close to him as the flesh does to the bone? If this were an easy matter, what need of these prayers, sighs, watchings? Nay, do you not see that some men, before they will set about this work, they will even venture the loss of heaven, Christ and all? I assure you, to cut off right hands, and pluck out right eyes, is no pleasure to the flesh. (3.) In the doctrine of perseverance. It is no great matter to begin to look for heaven, to begin to seek the Lord, to begin to shun sin, and to hate iniquity: but it is a very great matter to continue with God's approbation. My servant Caleb,

says God, has followed me, he has continually followed me fully; he shall possess the land, Numb. xiv. 24. Almost all the many thousands of the children of Israel fell short of perseverance, when they walked from Egypt towards the land of Canaan. Indeed, they went to the work at first pretty willingly, but they were quickly out of breath. It is an easy matter for a man to run a mile or two: O but to hold out for a thousand miles! he that does this must look to meet with the cross. Perseverance is a very great part of the cross. I could point out many, that after they had followed the ways of God three or four years, have been beat out of wind, have taken up their lodgings and rest, before they have got half way to heaven; some in this, and some in that sin; and have secretly, nay, sometimes openly said, The way is too strait, the race too long, the religion too holy, I can go no farther. It is the cross, which keeps those which are kept from heaven. It is that which spoileth all. Some, when they come at the cross, can go no farther: others stumble at it, and break their necks: others turn aside to the right hand or to the left, and so think to get to heaven another way. Therefore if thou meet the cross in thy journey, in what manner soever it be, take courage; knowing that by the cross is the way to the kingdom.

DIR. IX. Beg of God, that he would enlighten thine understanding, and inflame thy will. When men come to see what a heaven there is to be enjoyed, it will make them run through thick and thin. When a man's will is fully set to do a thing, it must be a very hard matter that shall hinder that man from bringing about his end. Ye self-willed

people, no body knows what to do with you. We say He will have his own will do all that we can. A man that is resolved says, I will do my best to advantage myself; I will do my worst to hinder my enemies; I will have it, or I will lose my life. Though he kill me, yet will I trust in him. I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. I will, I will, I will; O this blessed inflamed will for heaven! What is like it? I tell you the will is all; that it is one of the chiefest things, which turns the wheel either backwards or forwards: and God knoweth that full well, and so does the devil, and therefore they both endeavour very much to strengthen the will of their servants.— God is for making of his a willing people to serve him: and the devil does what he can to possess the will of those that are his, with the love of sin: and therefore when Christ comes close to the matter, he says, You will not come to me. How often would I have gathered you, as a hen doth her chickens, but ye would not.” O therefore cry hard to God, to inflame thy will for heaven and Christ. Get thy will tipt with heavenly grace, and resolution against all discouragements, and thou goest full speed for heaven. But if thou falter in thy will, thou wilt run halting all the way; and also, to be sure, thou wilt fall short at last. The Lord give thee a will and courage!

Before I take my leave of thee, let me give thee a few MOTIVES along with thee. It may be, they will be as good as a pair of spurs, to prick on thy lumpish heart in this rich voyage. (1) If thou winnest, then heaven, yea, life eternal is thine; and if thou locest, then thy loss is heaven; besides, thou procurest eternal death, with the ever-

lasting damnation of thy own soul. (2.) Death and damnation follow after thee as hard as they can drive, and therefore, for the Lord's sake make haste. (3.) If they seize upon thee before thou get to the city of refuge, they will put an everlasting stop to thy journey.—This also cries, Run for it. (4.) Now heaven's gates, with Christ's arms, are wide open to receive thee. This consideration should make thee reach out, and fly with all speed. (5.) Keep thine eye upon the prize. Be sure that thine eyes be continually upon the profit thou art like to get. The reason why men faint in their race to heaven, lieth chiefly in either of these two things: First, they do not seriously consider the worth of the prize; they must lose heaven for want of considering the worth of it. That thou mayest not do the like, keep thine eye much upon the comfort that is to be had there by those that win the prize. This made the Apostle run through any thing, peril by sea, and peril by land, &c. It made also others endure to be stoned, sawn asunder, thrown to the wild beasts. Secondly, do not say in thy heart, This is too good for me; for I tell thee, heaven is prepared for all who will accept of it; therefore take heart and run, man. (6.) Think much of them that are gone before.—When my base heart has been inclining to loiter in my way towards heaven, the very consideration of the glorious saints and angels in heaven, what they enjoy, how they would befool me, if they knew that my heart was drawing back, has caused me to rush forward, and say to my soul, Come, soul, let us see what this heaven is: let us even venture for it, and try if that will quit our cost. O therefore, throw

away striking lusts, follow after righteousness, love the Lord Jesus; I'll warrant thee, he'll give thee a goodly recompence. (7.) Set to work, and when thou hast run thyself down weary, the Lord Jesus will take thee up and carry thee. Is not this enough to make any poor soul to begin his race? Fathers encouraging their children say, Run, sweet babe, until thou art weary, and then I will carry thee. He will gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom. When they are weary, they shall ride.—Or else he will convey new strength into thy soul, which will be as well. “The young men shall utterly fail, but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.” Isa. xl. 30, 31. (8.) The devil will lose no time, spare no pains, neither will his servants, to seek the destruction of themselves and others; and shall not we be as industrious for our own salvation? Shall the world venture the damnation of their souls for a corruptible crown: and shall not we venture the loss of a few trifles for an eternal crown? Shall they venture the loss of eternal friends, as God to love, Christ to redeem, the Holy Spirit to comfort, heaven for habitation, saints and angels for company, and all this to hold, communion with sin, and a few drunken, lying, covetous wretches like themselves? And shall not we labour as hard, run as fast, seek as diligently, nay, a hundred times more diligently, for the company of those glorious and eternal friends? Shall it be said at the last day, That wicked men made more haste to hell, than you did to heaven? O run with all might and main.

Now I come to make some use and application of what has been said. You see that he who will

o to heaven, must run for it; yea, and so run
 is I have said. Well then, do you so run? And
 now let us examine a little. Art thou got into the
 right way? Art thou in Christ's righteousness?
 Search: when wast thou turned out of thy sine,
 into the righteousness of Jesus Christ? Dost thou
 see thyself in him? Is he more precious to thee
 than all the world? Is thy mind always musing
 on him? Dost thou love to be talking of him, and
 walking with him? Dost thou count all things
 lifeless, empty, vain, without communion with
 him? Does his company sweeten, and his ab-
 sence embitter all things? Soul, be serious, and
 do not take things of such weighty concern as the
 salvation or damnation of thy soul, without good
 ground.

(1.) Art thou unladen of pride, pleasures, pro-
 fits, lusts? What! Dost thou think to run fast
 enough, with thy sins and lusts in thy heart? I
 tell thee, soul, they that have laid all aside, every
 weight, every sin, and are got into the nimblest
 posture, find work enough so to run as to hold
 out.—Art thou therefore unladen of these things?
 Never talk of going to heaven, if thou art not. It
 is to be feared thou wilt be found among those
 many, that will seek to enter in, and shall not be
 able. Oh, how should the consideration of these
 things stir up the hearts of all to run the race set
 before them.

(2.) If so, what will become of them that are
 grown weary, before they are got half way? Why,
 man, it is he that holdeth out to the end that shall
 be saved; it is he that overcometh, that shall in-
 erit all things; it is not every one that begins.
 A grippa stept fair enough, but he stept short.—

Methinks I have seen how these poor wretches that get but almost to heaven, shall cry out in hell, saying, I was almost a Christian, I was almost got into the kingdom, almost out of my sins, almost from under the curse of God; almost, but not altogether. O that I should be almost at heaven, and should not go quite through!

(3.) What will become of them, that some time since were running post haste to heaven, but now are running as fast back again? Do you think those will ever come thither? What! to turn back again to sin, to the world, to the lust of the flesh, to the devil! "It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment." Those men shall be damned for professing to all the world, that sin is better than Christ; for the man that runs back again, does as good as say, I have tried Christ, and I have tried sin, and I do not find so much profit in Christ as in sin. O sad! What a doom they will have who were almost at heaven's gates, and then run back again? "If any draweth back," says Christ "my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Again, "No man having set his hand to the plough," that is, set forward in the ways of God, "and looking back," turning back again, "is fit for the kingdom of heaven;" and if not fit for the kingdom of heaven, then for certain, he must needs be fit for the fire of hell; and therefore, those that bring for these apostatizing fruits, as briars and thorns, are rejected, being nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned. If they shall not escape that neglect, how shall they escape that reject, and turn their back upon so great salvation?

And if the righteous, that is, they that run for it, will find work enough to get to heaven, then where will the ungodly backsliding sinner appear? O, if Judas the traitor, or Francis Spira the backslider, were but now alive, to tell these men what it has cost their souls for backsliding, surely it would stick by them.

(4.) He that backslides, and he that sits still in sin, are both in one mind; the one will not stir, because he loves his sins; the other turns back again, because he loves the things of the world. Is it not the same thing: shall not the same hell hold them hereafter?

(5.) They that will have heaven, must run for it. This calls aloud to those that began but a while since to run, to mend their pace, if they intend to win. They who come hindmost, have need to run fastest. There are those that have run ten years to thy one, and yet will say, they doubt they shall come late enough. How then will it be with thee? Look to it therefore, part speedily with all that is an hinderance to thee in thy journey, and so run that thou mayest obtain.

(6.) You that are old professors, take heed that the young striplings of Jesus, that began to trip out the other day, do not outrun you, so as to have that scripture fulfilled on you, "The first shall be last, and the last first." You that are hindmost, strive to outrun them that are before you; and all you that are foremost, hold your ground: that is the right running, for one to strive to outrun another.

(7.) How unlikely are they to win, that think it enough to keep company with the hindmost! If there be but any lazy, slothful, half-hearted

professors in the country, they will be sure to take example by them, not considering that the hindmost lose the prize. It cost the foolish virgins dear for coming too late. They that were ready went in with him, and the door was shut. Afterwards, mark! Afterwards came the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us! but he answered, depart, I know you not. Depart, lazy professors, cold professors, slothful professors. Oh, methinks the word of God is so plain for the overthrow of you lazy professors, that it is to be wondered men do take no more notice of it. How was Lot's wife served for running lazily, and for giving but one look behind her? It turned her into a pillar of salt? It made Judas hang himself? Yea, it will make thee curse the day on which thou wast born, if thou miss the kingdom, as thou wilt certainly do, if this be thy course.

(8.) How if thou, by thy lazy running, should not only destroy thyself, but be the cause of the damnation of some others? He is a professor, say they, and yet he seeks pleasures, profits, &c. and professes he is going to heaven; yea, he saith also, he does not fear but he shall have entertainment: let us therefore keep pace with him, we shall fare no worse than he. Look to it, thou wilt have strength little enough to give account of the loss of thy own soul: thou needest have to give an account why thou didst stop others from entering it. How wilt thou answer that, "You would not enter in yourselves, and them that would you hindered? For that saying will be eminently fulfilled on them, that through their own idleness do keep themselves out of heaven, and by giving others the same example, hinder them also."

(9.) I beseech you, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that none of you do run so lazily in the way to heaven, as to hinder either yourselves or others. If a man should venture, when he is running for his life, to step aside out of his way to pick up a straw, thou wouldst condemn him; and dost thou not condemn thyself that dost worse, that loitereth in thy race; notwithstanding thy soul, heaven, glory, and all, are at stake? Have a care, have a care, poor wretched sinner! Have a care. Look unto Jesus, who is not only the author and finisher of faith, but who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despised the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God, Heb. xii. 2.

Now, that you may be provoked to run with the foremost, take notice of this. It is said, that Lot's wife, looking back from behind her, became a pillar of salt; and yet we do not read, that he did so much as once look what was become of her: his heart was indeed upon his journey, as well it might: there was the mountain before him, and the fire and brimstone behind him; life lay at stake; and he had lost it, if he had but looked behind him. Do thou so run. In thy race, remember Lot's wife, and her doom; remember for what that doom did overtake her: remember that God made her an example for all lazy runners to the end of the world; and take heed thou fall not after the same example.

If this will not provoke thee, consider, (1.) Thy soul is either to be saved or lost: thou shalt not lose my soul by thy laziness: it is thy own soul: what shall it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? (2.) If thou

lose thy soul, it is thou that must bear the blame. (3.) If thou wilt not run, the people of God are resolved to leave thee behind. It may be, thou hast a father, brother, &c. going post-haste to heaven; wouldst thou be willing to be left behind them? Well then, sinner, wilt thou run? Art thou resolved to strip, or art thou not; Then, quickly, man; delay not in this matter. Confer not with flesh and blood. Look up to heaven, and see how thou likest it: also to hell, of which thou mayest understand something in my book, called 'The Groans of a damned soul.' If thou dost not know the way, enquire at the word of God. If thou wantest company, cry for God's Spirit. If thou wantest encouragement, entertain the promises. But be sure thou begin betimes, get into the way, run a-pace, and hold out to the end. And the Lord give thee a prosperous journey. Farewell.

An Epistle to all slothful People.

Friends,

SOLOMON says, that "the desire of the slothful killeth him." No greater shame can befall a man, than to see that he has fooled away his soul, and sinned away eternal life. The way to do it is, to be slothful in the work of salvation. Slothfulness has these two evils, to neglect the time in which it should be getting heaven, and to bring in untimely repentance. He, who shall lose his soul through slothfulness, will have no

use to be glad thereof, when he comes to hell.
 "The sluggard will not plough by reason of the
 cold." Prov. xx. 4. That is, he will not break
 up the fallow-ground of his heart, because there
 must be some pains taken by him that will do it.
 He that is slothful in the things of this world, is
 loth to set about the work he should follow—is
 willing to make delays—will make any small
 matter a sufficient excuse to keep him off from ply-
 ing his work—does his work by halves—does usu-
 ally lose the season, in which things are to be
 done. And thus it is also with them that are
 slothful for heaven; they miss the season of
 grace; and therefore they will be chid for the
 same. "Thou wicked or slothful servant, out of
 thine own mouth will I judge thee; thou saidst,
 I was thus and thus," Luke xix. 22, 23. "Where-
 fore then gavest not thou my money to the bank,
 that I might have brought it back with interest?
 Take the unprofitable servant, and cast him
 into outer darkness, Mat. xxv. 26, 30.

What shall I say? Time runs, and will you be
 slothful? Your souls are worth a thousand worlds,
 and will you be slothful? The curse of God hangs
 over your heads, and will you be slothful? Would
 you be willing to be damned for slothfulness? Was
 Christ slothful in the work of your redemption?
 All this will not move, I tell you, God will not
 be slothful to damn you.

Obj. But if I should set in, and run as you
 would have me, I must run from all my sins, and
 from the love of my friends. Ans. True; yet if
 you do not, thou wilt run into hell fire, and
 thou art sure to lose the love of God, and the be-
 nefit of heaven.

Obj. But surely I may begin this time enough

a year or two hence? Ans. Hast thou any lease of thy life? Dost thou know whether the day of grace will last a week longer or no? For the day of grace is past with some, before their life is ended. And if it should be so with thee, would not thou say, O that I had begun to run before the day of grace had been past, and the gates of heaven shut against me? But all these are the words of a slothful spirit. Arise, man, be slothful no longer. Set foot and heart, and all into the way of God, and run. The crown is at the end of the race. There also stands the loving Fore-runner Jesus. O therefore do not delay but put in practice the words of the men of Dan. "Arise; for we have seen the land; and behold it is very good: and are ye still?" Do ye forbear running, Judges xviii. 9.

THE

Misery of Uncharitable Persons.

AS the unmerciful are cursed here, so shall they be cursed hereafter. James ii. 13. "He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy." Such as have shut up the bowels of compassion against the necessities of the poor, God will shut up his bowels of compassion against them, and let forth his fury upon them: they shall have their portion in his plagues and indignation, without the least drop of mercy or pity. And at the day of judgment Christ will say unto them, Mat. xxv. 41. "Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the

evil and his angels: there is their doom; and why? For I was an hungry, and ye gave me no eat; I was thirsty, and ye give me no drink." A dreadful sentence! every word whereof carrieth much terror in it, and breatheth nothing but fire and brimstone. What! must they depart from Christ, the fountain of bliss and happiness? and into everlasting fire? Ah wretches! cursed indeed. For, as the Prophet speaketh, Isa. xxxiii. 4. 'Who can dwell with devouring fire, who can dwell with everlasting burnings?' An everlasting fever, or but an everlasting toothach, were misery unspeakable. But, what are these, to be lying in that lake which burneth with fire and brimstone to all eternity.

The misery of uncharitable persons appeareth in this, that the wants and necessities of the poor cry loud to heaven against them. God hath dealt bountifully with thee, loading thee with his benefits, and hath given thee not only food and raiment, things needful and necessary, but an abundance, an affluency of outward things, even all things richly to enjoy: but how many of Christ's ministers and members are in want, not having wherewithal to satisfy their own and children's hunger? whose miseries, like the blood of Abel, cry unto God for vengeance against thee, saying, Lord, there are not a few who have enough and to spare, a liberal portion of this world's goods, with Dives they fare sumptuously every day: but what are we thy wanting servants the better for them? Who of us are warmed with their fires, or clothed with their raiment, or so much as partake of the crumbs of their table? We are ready to perish with want, when they are surfeited with

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their abundance. Is the blessing of them that are
ready to perish like to come upon them? Will
not thou judge them, O Lord? Certainly these
bitter and lamentable complaints cry loud in the
ears of the Almighty, against such inhuman and
unchristian miseries. Beware of the cry of the
poor against you: If thou wilt not hear their cry
unto thee, God will hear their cries against thee.
Thy mercifulness to the poor will provoke God
to reject thy most religious exercises, Prov. xxi.
13. 'Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the
poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be
heard. In which words Solomon hinteth to us
two things

1. That unmerciful men, such as turn away
their ears from the cry of the poor, shall fall in
to such miseries as will bring them to their knees
and make them cry sooner or later. Here in this
world, worldly men make many prayers, and their
religion they hope will make amends, for their in-
humanity at least. But in the world to come,
they shall follow their fellow Dives in his infer-
nal devotion.

2. Though they cry, they shall not be heard;
whether they cry here upon their death-beds for
mercy, or hereafter in hell for ease, they shall
not be heard. A notable instance hereof we have
in Dives, who though he cried not here, yet he
cried in hell, saying, Father, Abraham, have
mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip
the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue,
for I am tormented in this flame, Luke xvi. 24.
But was he heard, was his request granted? it
was a small request, but yet it is denied. Be-
cause he denied crumbs of bread here in this life

to the poor, he was denied a drop of water in
hell.

O that all uncharitable persons would steep
their thoughts in a serious meditation of those
things; and as they desire to prevent those judg-
ments which accompany all merciless men, they
would put in for a share in the mercies of the
merciful, and to that end, would put on bowels
of pity and compassion towards the wants and
miseries of God's distressed ones, and stretch forth
an helping hand towards their relief.

EXHORTATION.

It is observed, that they are richest merchants
and citizens who trade boldly: whereas they who
are fearful to adventure their goods, have but
small returns. In like manner, it is found by ex-
perience, that such Christians as are most forward
to supply the wants of the poor, boldly adventur-
ing their goods upon the waters, do most of all
thrive, and prosper in the world. Why then will
any man be so unwise, as to lose his riches for
fear of losing them? and not rather seem to lose
them that he may in truth find them? these earth-
ly things are assuredly lost by keeping, and kept
by well bestowing them.

I hope you will pardon my zeal in pressing this
duty of charity upon you: I do assure you, it is
not out of any design to take any thing from your-
selves, and children, but only to shew you the
surest and safest way of thriving in the world;
and how you may entail God's blessing upon your

children, and so secure unto them the portion which you leave them.

If you be rich in this world's goods, and be not rich in good works, talk not of your faith; for there can be no true faith without good works, James ii. 17. Neither tell me of your religion; for there can be no true religion in you, so long as you make no conscience of this duty. Pure religion, saith the Apostle James, chap. i. 27. (is this) 'Go visit the fatherless and widows in their afflictions,' and you never learned other religion of us.

Rich men, therefore, ought to be rich in good works; for God expecteth fruit answerable to the seed which he soweth. Hath he abounded to you in this world's goods? you ought thereupon to be abundant in good works towards others; your pounds are expected, where the widow's mites are accepted.

to supply the wants of the poor, holdly and unfeignedly, that such Christians as are not forward in their goods upon the waters, do most of all think, and prosper in the world. What shall you say more to be so rich as to have the waters for

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them that he may in time, in their hearts, and in their things, be as richly as by looking, and hope by well bestowed that I hope you will pardon my zeal in pressing this duty of charity upon you; I do assure you it is not one of my design to take any thing from you selves, and content, but only to show you the sweet and safest way of thriving in the world; and how you may attain God's blessing upon your