



# Bodleian Libraries

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

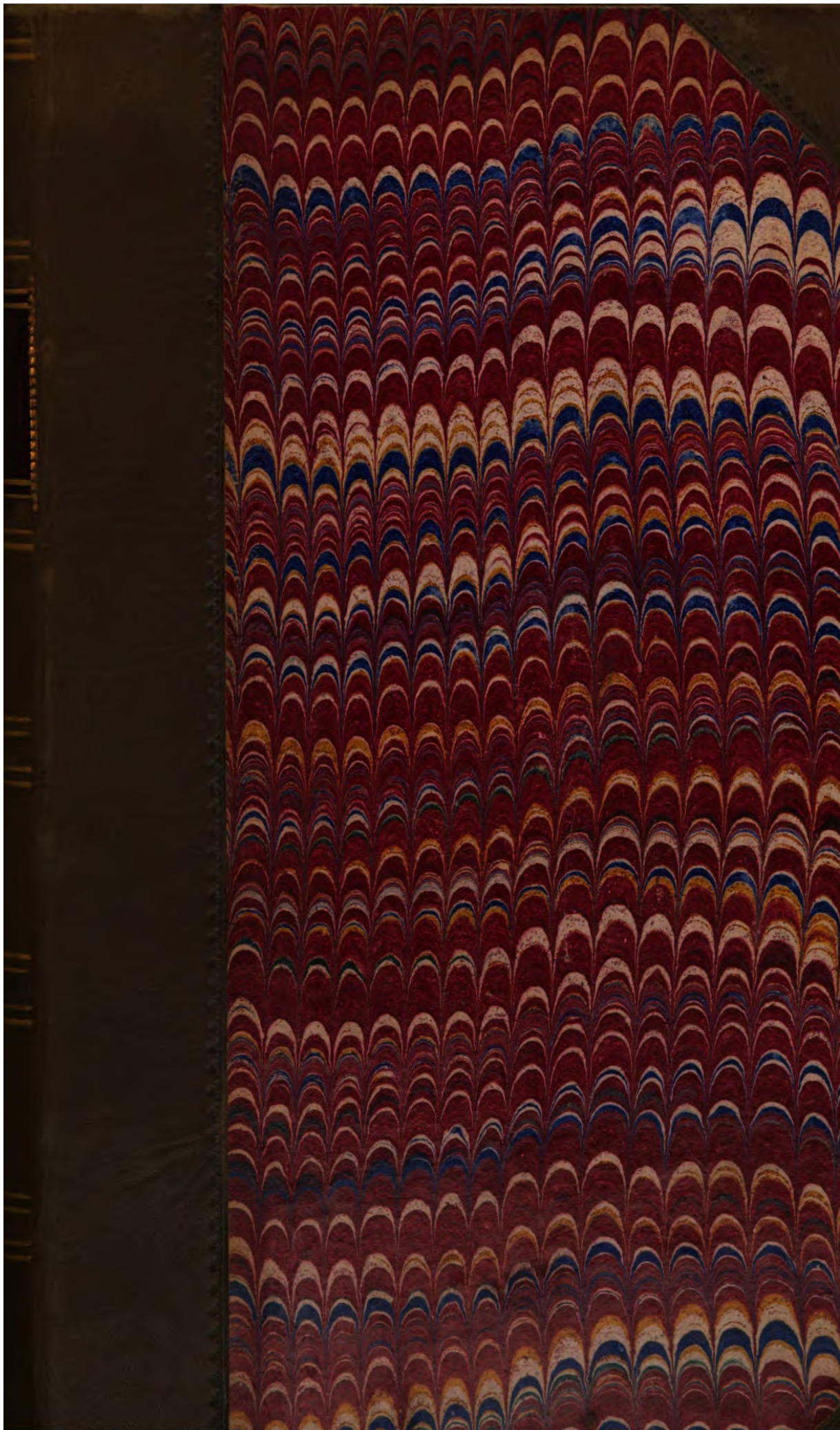
This book is part of the collection held by the Bodleian Libraries and scanned by Google, Inc. for the Google Books Library Project.

For more information see:

<http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/dbooks>

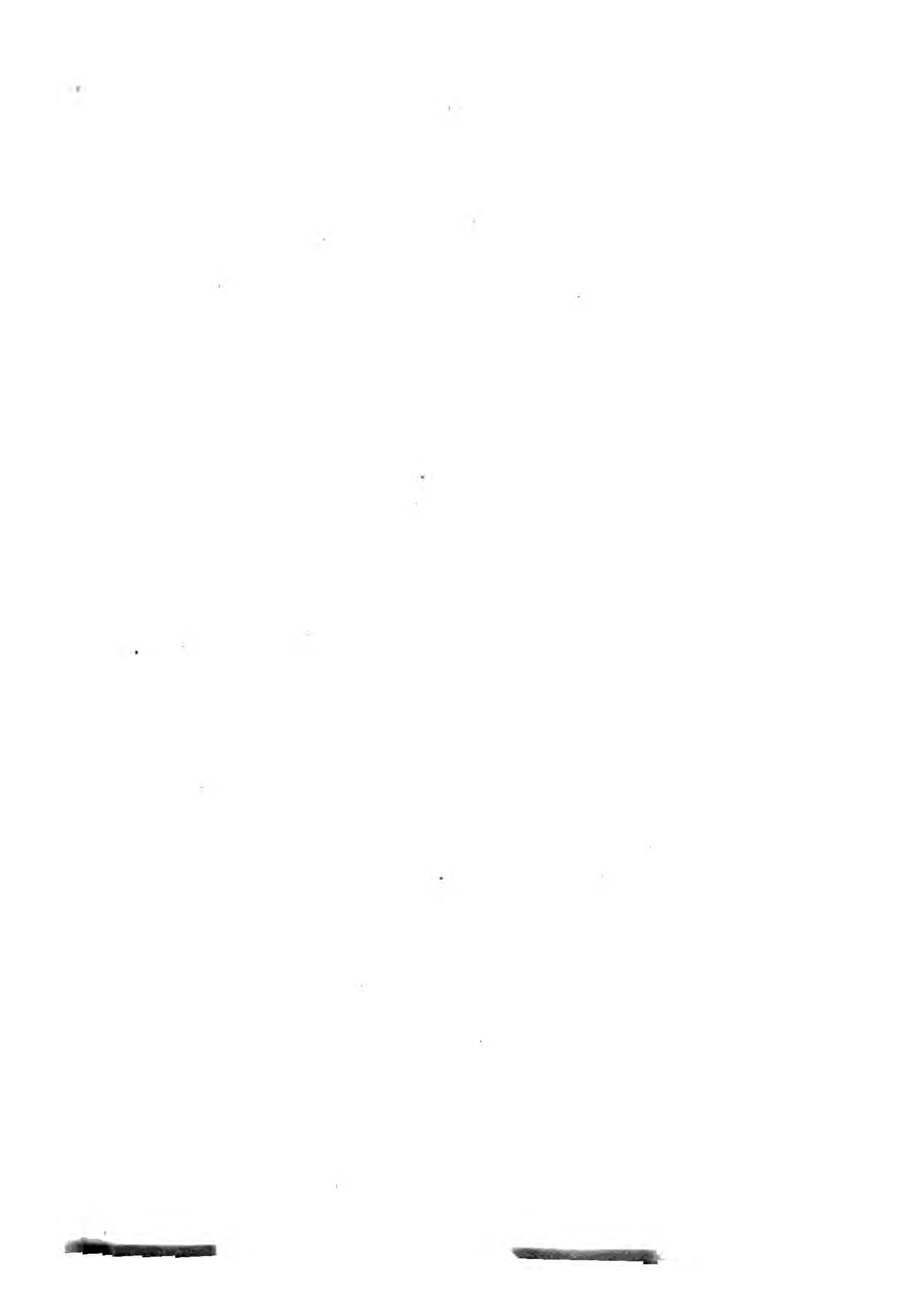


This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 UK: England & Wales (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) licence.







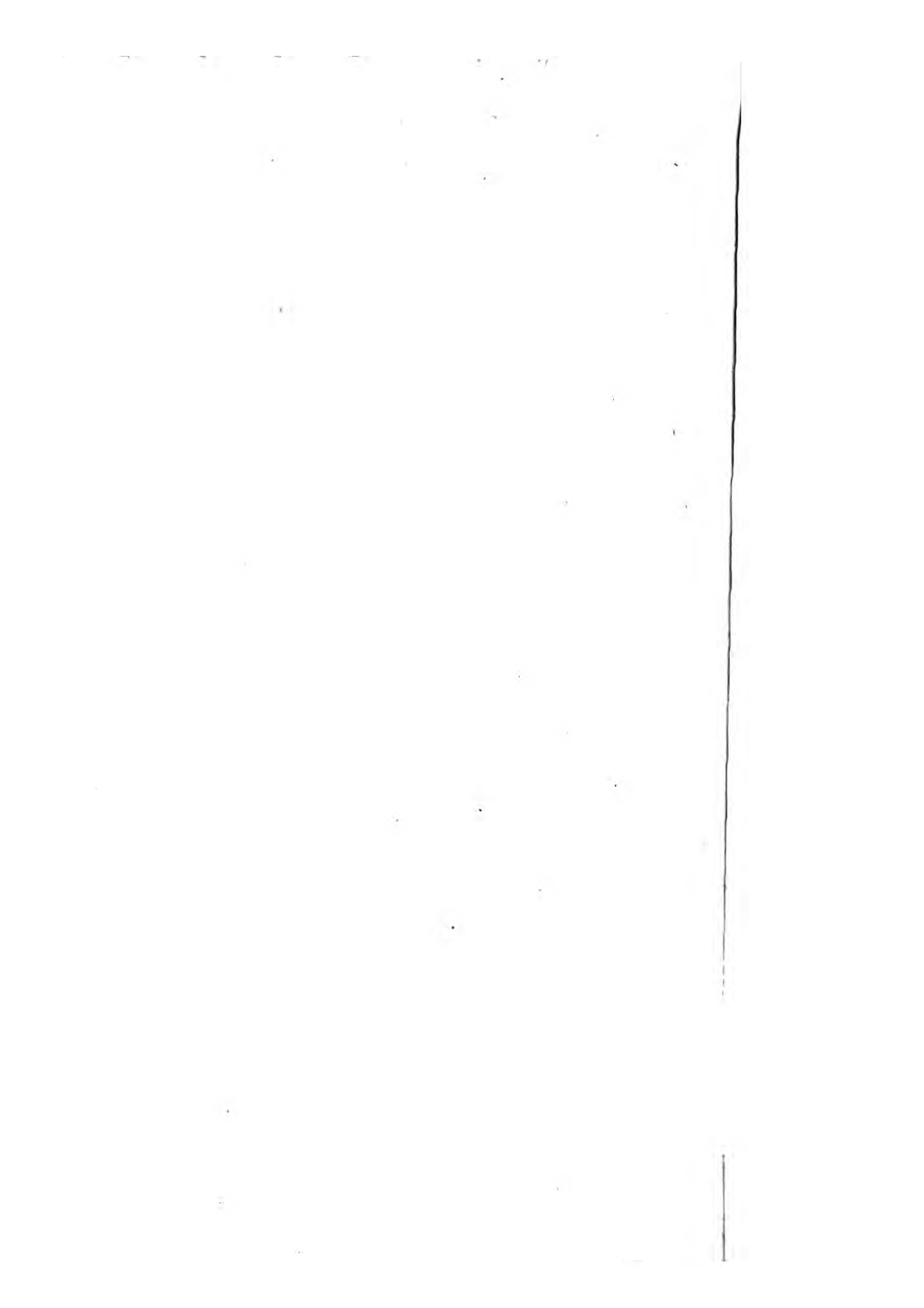












**SERMONS**  
ON THE  
**MOST IMPORTANT DOCTRINES**  
OF  
**THE GOSPEL;**  
COMPREHENDING  
**The Privileges and Duties**  
CONNECTED WITH THE  
**BELIEF OF THOSE DOCTRINES.**

—◆—  
BY J. THORNTON.

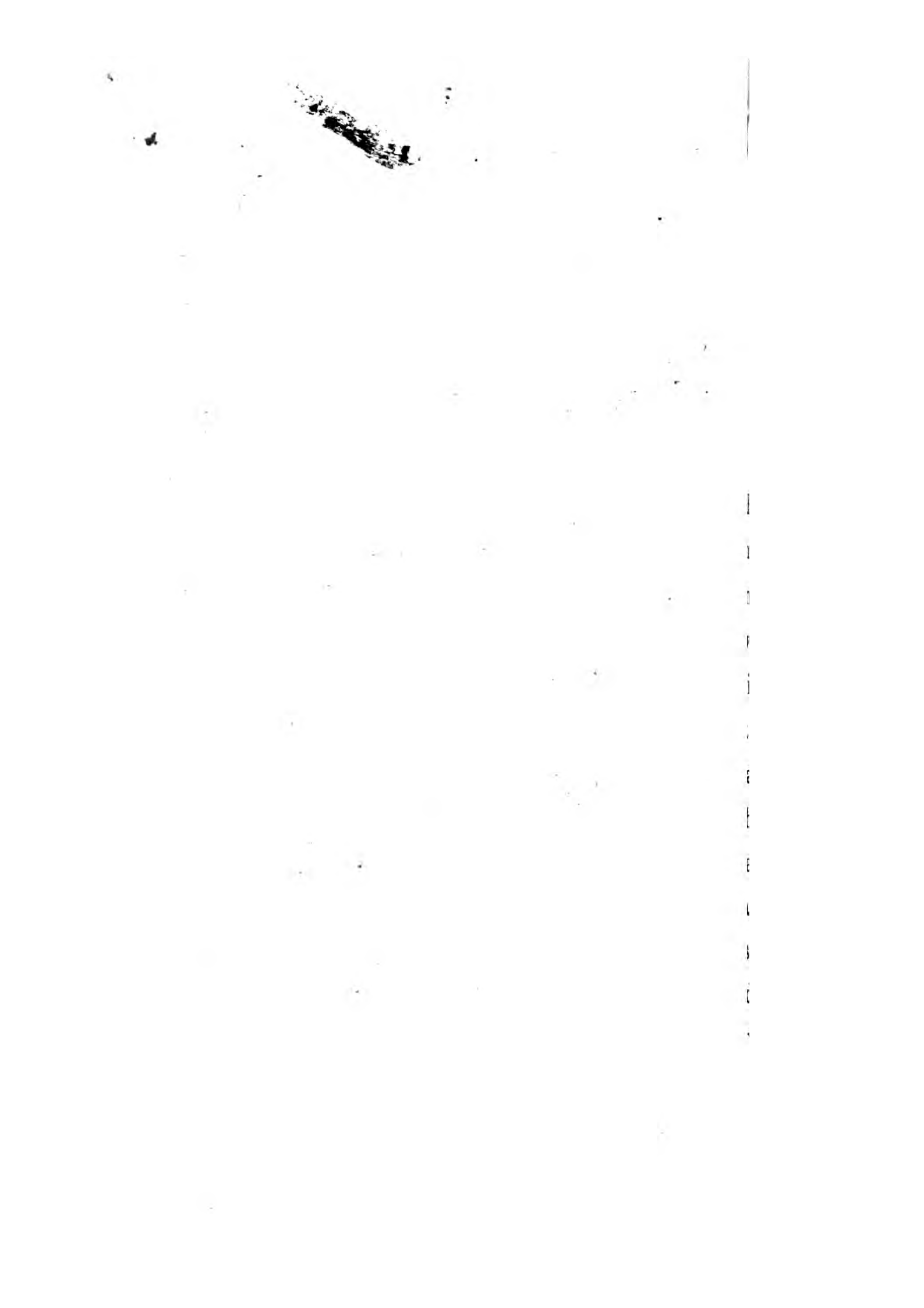
---

LONDON:  
PRINTED FOR W. BAYNES, PATERNOSTER-ROW,  
*By J. Haddon, Tabernacle Walk.*

1815.

*B<sup>c</sup>L. 356. P. 5.*





---

## PREFACE.



**EVANGELICAL** truth is the grand instrument by which the best interests of mankind are promoted. And though we look chiefly to the pulpit for the diffusion and defence of pure religion, it is acknowledged that the same great cause may be considerably aided by the press. It has indeed been often lamented, and not without reason, that a large proportion of our printed sermons are ingenious essays, which discuss religious topics in a general way, rather than enter into the essential principles of Christianity.



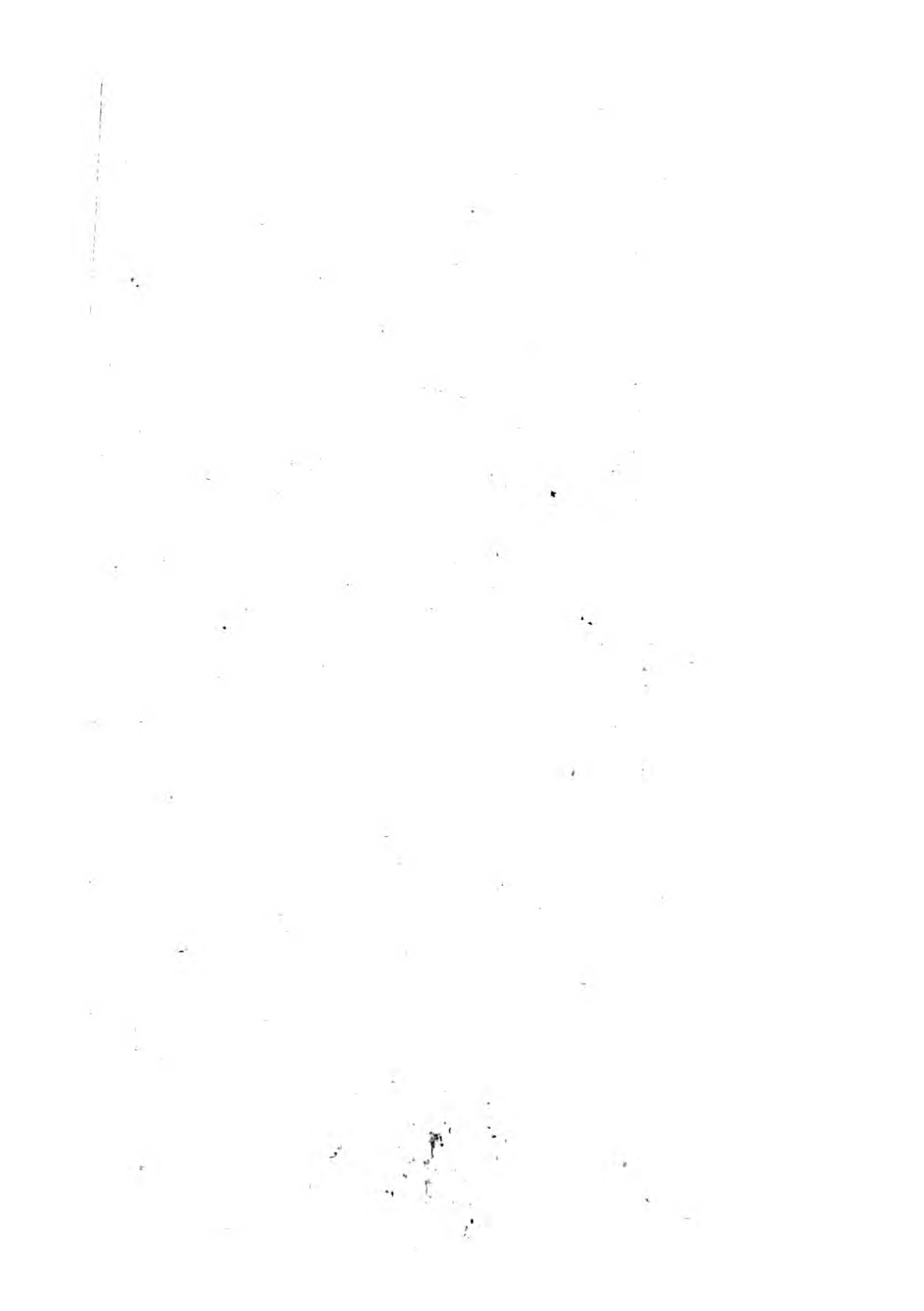
After the two first sermons, which prove the inspiration of the Scriptures, and the duty of searching them, all the rest in this volume are on subjects that embrace the leading and momentous doctrines of the gospel. As the following discourses were delivered to a congregation composed entirely of persons in the lower and middle classes of society, the style is neither elevated nor elegant.

It is not always a sufficient reason for publishing sermons, that they were earnestly requested, by those who heard them with pleasure and advantage, yet the author is ready to confess this reason has had great weight with him in the present instance. To gratify the wishes of a numerous and affectionate people, whenever it can be

**PREFACE.**

v

done with any reasonable hope of advancing the interests of religion in the world, will always afford him the highest satisfaction. While, however, it is the duty of ministers to plant and water, both ministers and people ought incessantly to pray that God may give an abundant increase.



# CONTENTS.

## SERMON I.

*On the Inspiration of the Scriptures . . . . .* 1

## SERMON II.

*On the Duty of searching the Scriptures* 22

## SERMON III.

*On the State of Man by Nature . . . . .* 45

## SERMON IV.

*Salvation wholly by Grace . . . . .* 67

## SERMON V.

*Christ our Righteousness . . . . .* 88

## SERMON VI.

*Christ our Passover . . . . .* 103

## SERMON VII.

*Christ our Intercessor . . . . .* 118

## SERMON VIII.

*On Regeneration . . . . .* 135



CONTENTS.

SERMON IX.

*On Sanctification* . . . . . 150

SERMON X.

*On Adoption* . . . . . 168

SERMON XI.

*On Christian Fellowship* . . . . . 187

SERMON XII.

*On Communion with God* . . . . . 206

SERMON XIII.

*The Christian's Last Victory* . . . . . 227

SERMON XIV.

*The Happiness of the Saints in a Se-  
parate State* . . . . . 247

SERMON XV.

*The General Resurrection* . . . . . 265

# SERMON I.

---

ON THE

INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES.

.....  
2 TIM. iii. 16.

*All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God.*  
.....

IT is a matter of no small importance, to know the certainty of the things in which we have been instructed. All our hopes depend on the truth of that book which we profess to receive as the word of God. If the grounds of our faith are solid and immoveable, nothing can be lost by examining them. It may not, therefore be useless, to call your attention to this subject. But perhaps it may be said, Are we not all Christians? Is there one among us who denies, or even doubts, the truth of the Scriptures? Why then do you to prove what we admit, and never once called in question? If we had wandered into the dan-

gerous paths of error, or drunk the deadly poison of infidelity, you might labour to reclaim and recover us. But this is not our case. I answer, some of you are, I hope, Christians on principle; settled and established in religion; knowing both what you believe, and why you believe it. Others, it is to be feared, are Christians only in name and profession. You own the Bible to be true, but yield your assent to it as a mere matter of course, without perhaps having once seriously thought upon the subject. But surely a Christian ought "to be able to give an answer to every one, that asketh him, a reason of the hope that is in him with meekness and fear." In what I have now to say, I wish to keep particularly in view those of you who are just setting out in life. There are even in this country, many crafty infidels and profane scoffers, who are often either striking a side blow at the gospel, or openly pouring upon it scorn and contempt. Now my young friends, though none of you have been warped into the paths of error, it is proper to warn you, that you may be aware of the danger, and avoid whatever allurements might mislead you. Though you have not drunk the poison of infidelity, it is possible you may

have the cup put into your hands, and so artfully mixed as to deceive you, and therefore you will do well always to carry with you an antidote. For the reasons now given, I hope to be favoured with the most serious attention of you, who are the hope of your parents and friends, and as rising plants, the ornaments of society. For want of a due acquaintance with the foundations of our holy religion, many young persons who happen to fall into the company of unbelievers, are suddenly startled and confounded by their objections, and are ensnared, because they were never admonished. The authority of the Bible as a revelation from God, might be proved by a great number of powerful arguments, I must, however, in a short discourse, be confined to a very few.

I. The inspiration of the Scriptures may be proved from the *characters* of the *sacred penmen*.

If it appears that they were men of good capacity and tried integrity, they could neither themselves be deceived, nor intend to deceive others, and are therefore worthy of the fullest credit.

1. The sacred writers were possessed of a *sound understanding*, and such a measure of capacity, as was sufficient to preserve them from being deceived. Some bold enemies of our religion, have dared to call the prophets and apostles weak and credulous men, bewildered in the dark mazes of superstition; or wild enthusiasts, dazzled and deluded by the visions of imagination. But can any thing be more improbable than such a notion as this? Who can seriously believe, that such persons as Moses, Elijah, Luke, and Paul, were so deficient in capacity or discernment as not to know the difference between the grandest realities and the dreams of fancy? Such a charge carries its own confutation on the face of it. Indeed many of the facts mentioned in the scriptures, were of a kind which could not be mistaken by men possessed of the smallest portion of common sense. I shall just instance a few of them. Could Moses and the whole people of Israel be mistaken with regard to the dividing of the Red Sea; or the manna which was daily rained down from heaven around their camp, during a course of many years? Could Joshua and the thousands he conducted be mistaken, as to the river Jordan rolling back,

to open their passage into the promised land ; or the sun standing still, while they completed a glorious victory over their enemies. Could the disciples be mistaken when they beheld Christ walking on the sea, and saw the tempest sink into a calm, as soon as his voice had addressed the winds and waves in these words, "*Peace, be still.*?" To suppose that so many persons should be deceived in matters of this kind, is the highest stretch of absurdity. We might just as well say, it is possible for all the inhabitants of London to declare and believe, that on a certain day the whole city was terrified with a dreadful storm, and shaken with an earthquake, when there was nothing of the sort.

2. The sacred writers were men of *tried integrity*.

If they feigned things which never existed ; if they professed to receive revelations from heaven, when they knew the contrary ; if they united themselves, and made use of the solemn name of God, to palm upon the world a series of lies, they were finished hypocrites and monsters of iniquity. But to every candid inquirer, it must appear impossible that they could be actuated by such base and wicked motives. In the whole



strain of their writings, we observe an artless simplicity, without any of those disguises which crafty impostors find it necessary to wear. They neither conceal nor excuse the crimes of their countrymen and friends, and even record their own faults with an impartiality which proves the strictest regard to truth. Their faithfulness shines with so clear a light, that we may wonder one infidel can be found to cast upon it the slightest shade of suspicion. With respect to the apostles in particular, we may ask, what motives had they to contrive, and heap together a mass of impious falsehoods? Was it a love of singularity? This is far too weak and wavering, to produce such arduous labour and steady constancy. Were they influenced by ambition? They gained no worldly honours, titles, or distinctions. Were they tempted by avarice? Certainly they could never choose the religion of Jesus, as the road likely to lead them to riches, or to the high places of earthly power. On the contrary, we see them freely exposing themselves to reproach and contempt, joyfully suffering the spoiling of their goods, and the loss of every endearment in life, rather than deny their Master, or dishonour his truth.

Patiently enduring the severest trials, they could neither be tempted nor terrified to forsake their profession. It were strange indeed, if they submitted to stripes and buffetings, to dungeons, and death itself, in the most dreadful forms, to support an imposition designed to deceive the world, in matters of the greatest moment. While we view them giving abundant proofs of sound judgment and disinterested conduct; breathing a spirit of compassion and benevolence to their worst enemies; maintaining the doctrine they taught amidst all sorts of tortures, and many of them at last sealing the truth of it with their blood, we cannot believe them to have been either weak enthusiasts or bold impostors, but “servants of the most high God, sent to shew unto men the way of salvation.”

II. The inspiration of the Scriptures may be proved from the *contents* of the *sacred volume*.

How interesting its histories! how weighty and important its doctrines! how solemn and impressive its sanctions! how pure and suitable its precepts! how rich, sweet, and precious its promises! There is something pecu-



liarily striking in the very language of scripture. Here we meet a grandeur and a majesty nowhere else to be found. "In the incomparable addresses of Christ and his Apostles, we have gravity without harshness, solemnity without gloom, fidelity without coarseness, simplicity without meanness, and dignity without pomp. Mild, plain, beneficent, serious, and attractive, their discourses at once fix the attention and impress the heart." The internal evidence of the Bible has often carried strong and sudden conviction to the mind; and the more closely it is studied, the more deeply it is felt. The learned Francis Junius, in his youth, was inclined to deism, and even atheism. His conversion, as he relates it himself, took place in the following manner. "Opening the first chapter of John's Gospel—'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, &c.' I read, says he, part of the chapter, and was so struck with what I read, that I instantly perceived the divinity of the subject, and the authority and majesty of the scriptures, greatly to surpass all human eloquence." We may rest assured, from the proofs which it carries in its own bosom, that *the gospel is not a cunningly devised fable,*

*but a faithful testimony, worthy of all acceptance.* And while I am reasoning from a general view of what is contained in the scriptures, two things demand particular attention, I mean the performance of miracles, and the fulfilment of prophecies.

1. The performance of miracles affords a satisfying evidence that the scriptures were given by inspiration of God. I shall now only briefly touch upon those recorded in the New Testament. When we open the gospel history, we behold Jesus Christ followed by immense crowds, who stood astonished as he instantly gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, and health to those whom no medicine could cure. His bare word cast out demons, and even raised to life the putrifying corpse from the silent grave. These being events quite out of the common course of nature, were the visible operations of almighty power, to stamp upon the gospel the deepest marks of its divine authority. For if it be allowed, that the sacred penmen have given a true statement of facts, which cannot, as hath been already shewn, be fairly denied, then it will follow, that every miracle wrought by them was a strong confirmation of their doctrine. Here

we meet a kind of proof so striking and forcible, that we are compelled to cry out, "This is the finger of God."

Some have tried to support their errors by a feeble pretence to miracles. But the lying wonders of such persons, were only the poor pitiful tricks of low cunning, the juggling artifices of bigotry, performed in private, among those who had an interest in passing off the imposition. The miracles of the gospel, grand and beneficial in their kind, and vastly varied in their occasions and circumstances, as a long bright train of glories, accompanied and recommended the truth, and filled the minds of the beholders with admiration and joy. The miracles of the gospel were not done in a corner, but openly in the midst of multitudes, the greater part of whom were bitter enemies. The Jewish doctors themselves, who were sufficiently sharp-sighted, and always on the watch to find something by which they might discredit Christ, did not dare to deny the wonders that he wrought, but foolishly ascribed them to the power of Satan. "He casteth out devils by Beelzebub the prince of devils." Thus when the lame beggar who had been so many years an object of compassion to the

people as they entered the temple, was healed in a moment by Peter and John, the council of priests and elders was perplexed and confounded, saying, "What shall we do to these men, for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all that dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it." And if we consider all the signs and wonders wrought by Christ and his Apostles, it will be evident that *the gospel is not a cunningly devised fable, but a faithful testimony, worthy of all acceptance.*

2. The fulfilment of prophecy affords a proof that the Scriptures were given by inspiration of God.

Look into the prophecies which respect the rise and fall of cities and kingdoms. It is very remarkable, that every thing said by Daniel concerning the Chaldean, Persian, Macedonian, and Roman empires, was so true, that all ancient history is, as it were, an echo which exactly answers to the voice of prophecy. In the height of their prosperity, the total overthrow of Babylon, Nineveh, Tyre, and Jerusalem, was foretold. And though at that time nothing could appear more unlikely, yet so wonderfully have these predictions been fulfilled, that the very place

where some of those famous cities stood, cannot be exactly determined. Look into the prophecies that relate to the coming of Christ and the setting up of his kingdom. What a striking agreement between the prophecy and the history! Some of the chief circumstances attending the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ, were particularly described hundreds of years before they took place. And as to the dispersion of the Jews, and the spread of the gospel, which were so plainly foretold, they are convincing evidences before the eyes of the whole world at this day. Now it must be confessed that no creature can with certainty foresee the future. We have therefore sufficient proof, that those who predicted things so long beforehand, which exactly happened according to their word, must have been guided by his Spirit, "who seeth the end from the beginning." The fulfilment of prophecy proves, that *the gospel is not a cunningly devised fable, but a faithful testimony, worthy of all-acceptation.*

III. The inspiration of the Scriptures may be proved from the effects produced by them.

Whatever comes from God will lead to God. The kingdom of Christ is like a grain



of mustard seed, was at first very small, but soon increased with a rapid and amazing growth. Gamaliel said, "If this council, or this work be of men, it will come to nought, but if it be of God ye cannot overthrow it." It is a fact, that in a few years after the ascension of Christ, the gospel was planted in most of the large cities and populous provinces of the Roman empire. And how shall we account for the success which attended it? Did the apostles use any unlawful or unworthy means to gain their object? Did they labour to win the people by feeding their pride, flattering their prejudices, or indulging their sensual passions? No: they constantly insisted on the necessity of self-denial and humility. Did they, like Mahomet, spread their doctrine by fire and sword? No: "the weapons of their warfare were not carnal, but spiritual, and mighty through God." When we attentively read the book of Acts, we are powerfully struck with the glorious success of the gospel. How did a few fishermen, without learning, without wealth, without power, or any worldly advantage, maintain their cause against the prejudices of the rabble, the fury of bigotted priests, and the subtilty of

conceited philosophers, and the violent persecutions of rulers and kings? What emboldened and strengthened them to face so many storms without fear, and bear so many trials without once shrinking? After the foundation was laid, why did the building continue to rise, though besieged and battered by hosts of enemies? Must we not say, "This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?" Under the ministry of the apostles, the gospel became the power of God to thousands of believers. They could boldly appeal to their success, and pointing to them who had been converted and sanctified by the word, say, "These are our epistles, known and read of all men." From such evidence we may fairly conclude, *the gospel is not a cunningly devised fable, but a system of divine truth, able to make us wise unto salvation.*

There is one word in my text which must not be passed over without notice. "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.*" Some persons who profess to believe the christian religion, reject large portions of the Bible, asserting that they have been forged and foisted into the sacred volume.

This idle notion has been confuted a thousand times. Indeed those who use this plea, have generally some prejudice to support, or some party to serve. The books they object to might have passed for inspired, had they not opposed their favourite opinions. When the light is too powerful, and painful to the eyes, it is prudently excluded by letting down a curtain, or raising up a screen. This is the mean and wretched device of those who have gone half way towards infidelity. The truth is, he who denies some books of scripture, in effect sets aside all, for they are so connected, that they must stand or fall together.

We shall close this Discourse with a few reflections.

1. With what *confidence* may we receive the scriptures as the word of God.

In every age there have been some open, and many secret infidels. And why do any reject and despise the Bible? Men of a captious temper and a vicious life are led first to wish it not true, and then by listening to every idle cavil, are brought to believe what they wish. Be not startled or surprised if you should meet with persons of this character, for the Apostle Peter has forewarned



us, that "in the last days shall come scoffers, walking after their own ungodly lusts, and saying, where is the promise of his coming." A Christian, after diligently examining the evidences and proofs of the gospel, has reason to be fully satisfied. He feels that the foundation of his faith is solid and immoveable as a rock. He knows the gospel is not a delusive meteor, but the day-spring from on high, to guide his feet into the paths of peace. There are indeed too many who give a blind unmeaning assent to the Bible, without either understanding or prizing it. Do not rest content with that sort of vague and useless faith. Would you receive the Scriptures with a well-grounded confidence? consider the character, the conduct, the heroic sufferings of the sacred writers, and you will have no reason to doubt whether the word has come to you pure through such hands. View the kingdom of Christ, established by the outstretched arm of the Almighty, as displayed in a multitude of most astonishing miracles, and you will see yourselves surrounded with a great cloud of witnesses. Consider the prophecies which have been fulfilled, and are now fulfilling, and you will rest assured they did not spring from false-

---

hood or fancy, but "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." How many thousands have been turned from darkness to light, and from Satan to God, by the gospel! The triumphs of the cross are multiplied and spread over the face of the whole earth! Are not millions already entered into glory, who through life and in the hour of death gave their strong testimonies to the religion of Jesus? Are there not multitudes of living witnesses, who gladly give their voice in its favour, both from a conviction of its truth, and an experience of its power? And certainly one soul converted from folly and sin, and made a bright example of holiness through the influence of the divine word, outweighs, in the estimate of a candid mind, all the frivolous quibbles of infidels. Hold fast then the form of sound words which you have received in the gospel. Should the infidel labour to withdraw your attachment from the Bible, tell him you cannot consent to cast away this anchor of your hope, while exposed to storms and dangers; tell him you will not part with this key of the heavenly kingdom for all his glittering baubles; tell him he cannot furnish you with a better book, a safer guide, or a richer

treasure, and therefore you determine to follow its precepts, and trust its promises.

2. With what *veneration* ought we to receive those Scriptures, which were given by inspiration of God.

Do we think deference and regard due to the statutes and laws of an earthly king? do we pay respect to the will of a beloved father? The Bible contains the holy and excellent laws of the King of kings; the gracious and revealed will of our heavenly Father. The inhabitants of Ephesus revered the image set up in their temple, because they believed it to have descended from Jupiter. And ought we not to revere that book, which we acknowledge was inspired by the living and true God? Ought we not to open this sacred volume with as deep a veneration as the High Priest of old felt, when he entered the Holy of Holies? What then shall we say of those who never consult the Scriptures but for strife and debate? In the days of Saul, the Israelites went to the country of the Philistines to sharpen their instruments of war. But now the uncircumcised Philistines enter the sacred ground belonging to Israel, and come to the armoury of God to whet those weapons of contro-

versy, with which they fight not for truth but for victory. What shall we say of those who profess to believe the Scriptures, and yet apply them to the most trivial affairs, or humorous conceits? Was the Bible given us for a jest book? Is it a glorious exploit to twist the sacred language of Jehovah into a thousand fantastic forms and witty allusions, to make mirth for the profane and profligate? If men must give an account of every idle word, how aggravated is the sin of mixing with their own loose and frothy discourse the awful words of the most high God. The respect which the Turks shew to their Koran, the book of errors written by Mahomet, is enough to cover many professing Christians with a blush. Beware then how you treat the Scriptures. David declares that God has magnified his word above all his name. If he magnifies it, woe to those who profane and vilify it.

3. With what *gratitude* ought we to receive those Scriptures which are given by inspiration of God.

The more we consider the dark and dismal condition of the heathen, the more are we convinced of the manifold and inestimable

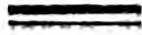
privileges of those who profess the glorious gospel of Christ. View the most enlightened and polished of the ancient nations. The Greeks and the Romans so famous for arts and arms, called all other tribes barbarians. Yet professing themselves wise, they became fools, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. And are the Pagans of the present day in a better state? Some indeed highly extol the mild virtues and eminent piety of the Hindoos. But is this representation according to truth, or supported by facts? Eye-witnesses of undoubted credit have declared their religious ceremonies to be so shamefully impure and offensive, that the very description of them would shock the mind that possesses the least modesty. And when we reflect on their self-inflicted tortures, the infants cast by parents into the river Ganges to be devoured by alligators, and the hundreds of widows burnt alive with the dead bodies of their husbands, may we not truly say with the Psalmist, "The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." We must ascribe it to the light of the gospel that we witness no such bar-

barous and bloody deeds in our country. O never can we be sufficiently thankful for this choice treasure, this precious blessing, the Bible!

May we prize it according to its value, and derive from it the wisdom which shall guide us into the paths of peace and righteousness!



## SERMON II.



ON THE

### DUTY OF SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES.



JOHN v. 39.

*Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.*



WHATEVER comes from that God who is infinite in wisdom, abundant in goodness, and glorious in holiness, ought to command and fix our attention. He is our Creator, our Father, our Lawgiver, and our Judge. The messages which the ancient prophets delivered, were mostly introduced with these impressive words, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts." We think it necessary that a servant should know and do the commands of his master; and that a son should honour and obey the declared will of his father. And shall the awful authority and endearing kindness of God be disregarded? A son honours

his father, and a servant his master; “if then I be a father where is my honour, if a master where is my fear, saith the Lord? God has written for us the great things of his law, and the glorious truths of his gospel, and shall they be neglected and despised? O that every one of you would attend to the council of Eliphaz—“Acquaint now thyself with God and be at peace, thereby good shall come unto thee. Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thy heart.” Job xxii. 21, 22.

I. From the words of my text I shall shew, that it is your duty to search the Scriptures.

The gospel was intended for Jews and Gentiles, the rich and the poor, the aged and the young. In former times, it was locked up in an unknown language. The precious Bible to the common people was a sealed book. Blessed be God, the times of such bigotry and superstition are passed away. Almost every cottage among us has a Bible. And the very purpose for which this book was given, proves that all ought to read it. Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life.



1. The Scriptures plainly reveal and teach an everlasting state of happiness and misery. The wisest of the heathen knew but little of the soul. Wandering in darkness without a guide, their minds were held in a state of doubt and painful anxiety. Through tradition and reason, they had some faint ideas of another world, but their notions were full of error and confusion. You no sooner open the sacred volume than you are instantly assured of a future everlasting state. Life and immortality, so long hid beneath thick clouds of ignorance, are now brought to light by the gospel. Reason might balance opposite arguments, and yet hang in suspense, or waver in uncertainty. Fancy finding a crude mass of fables, had power to embody them in a thousand pleasing or terrific forms. But faith, aided by the gospel, beholds as through a heavenly glass things which to nature are invisible; faith, amidst all the noise and tumult of an evil world, distinctly hears the voice of the Almighty inviting the saints to a glorious city, an unfading paradise; faith, treading on the firm ground of the promise, and stretching out her hand beyond the limits of time, pierces the mysterious vail and lays hold on eternal life.

It is clear from the Scriptures, that the soul will never die, and that the body must be raised from the grave. Heaven and hell, the mansions of angels, and the prison of demons, inconceivable joy, and unutterable anguish are placed before you! O what words can describe the importance of a future state of unending bliss or woe! Why are you so eager in pursuing the things of this world? In them you think you have a prospect of gaining wealth, honour, power, and pleasure. This however may be a vain notion, mocking you with gay delusions, and mortifying you with bitter disappointments. Yet your thoughts stir you, to form many plans, undertake many labours, and bear many vexations, while you leave nothing untried to attain your ends. Come to the Scriptures. In them, ye profess at least, to think ye have eternal life revealed. What! and is there no serious inquiry? What! where your best interests are at stake, are you indifferent? In a matter of the greatest concern are you careless and insensible? Do you profess to think the Scriptures true, and yet act as though they were fables? Awake, awake, lest you be suddenly cut off, and

launched into a dread eternity unpardoned, and unprepared.

2. The Scriptures alone make known to us the only way in which pure and perfect happiness can be ensured.

“In them ye think ye have eternal life.” These words, “eternal life,” in the lowest sense we can put upon them, denote a never-ending state of existence beyond the grave, in which man essentially differs from the beasts that perish; but in many parts of the New Testament they have a higher meaning, and signify that complete and unchangeable felicity reserved for the saints. Though all men seek happiness, how few know either what it is, or where it may be found! The Scriptures scatter our darkness, and pour a spiritual day around us. They testify of Christ, and most clearly describe his person, his work, and his kingdom. They point to Christ as the way, the truth, and the life. No man can approach the Father, but through him; no man can please the Father, but in him. The Scriptures bear testimony to the efficacy of his blood, the sufficiency of his righteousness, and the boundless riches of his grace. Do you see yourselves depraved,

defiled, and utterly unfit to appear in the presence of a holy God? Behold here is a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. Think not your stains are too dark, or too deep to be removed. Be assured the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. Are you convinced that no works of your own can justify you? Do you humbly confess yourselves guilty and condemned? The Scriptures inform you that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Do you feel yourselves helpless and undone, without strength, either for acting or suffering according to the will of God? Come to Jesus, "who is mighty to save." He requires you not to bring a price in your hand. "From his fulness you shall receive grace for grace."

In a word, "Christ is all in all." With him you cannot be miserable; without him nothing can make you happy. When, therefore, he says, "Search the Scriptures, for they are they which testify of me," is it not your duty to obey this command? Can you neglect it without bringing upon your conscience the heaviest burden of guilt? Remember, the word that Christ has spoken shall judge you in the last day.

If you feel the need of forgiveness, sanctification, solid comfort, and spiritual peace, where can you find them but in Christ? And what can lead you to Christ but the gospel? Surely then you should say with Peter, "Lord, to whom can I go but unto thee, thou hast the words of eternal life!" The Scripture is a garden full of healing herbs. Search, that you may discover the precious balm of Gilead, and apply it to cure your inward maladies, the dangerous diseases of the soul. The Scripture is a field replete with valuable treasures. Dig in this field, that you may find the pearl of great price, and be rich for eternity.

II. I shall shew *how* you must search the Scriptures to profit by them.

1. You must read the word with *serious attention*.

False religion dreads and shuns the light, but truth demands and rewards the closest examination. When John Philpot the martyr was repeatedly questioned on the articles of his faith by the popish bishops and doctors, he declared he was willing that his opinions should be judged by the Scriptures; to which the bigotted and bloody Bonner scorn-



fully answered, "The Scriptures, the Scriptures, these heretics always appeal to the Scriptures." We have no cause to wonder that errors which spring from the prince of darkness, should seek to hide themselves from the piercing beams of scripture truth. The doctrines of Christ claim attention. "He that hath ears to hear let him hear." And can any thing better reward your study than the Scriptures? Whatever is valuable and interesting to man is found in them. Deut. xxxii. 46. "And Moses said to them, Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, for it is not a vain thing, because it is your life." "We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip." Now let me ask, do you come to the Bible for life, even the very life of your souls, which has been forfeited by sin? Are you impressed with the solemn conviction, that its doctrines and precepts require the heart, the whole heart? Are you fully and earnestly intent on the things which belong to your peace? Many persons now and then read over a psalm or a chapter, in the greatest hurry and confusion, and are impatient to finish the task.

But is the duty of searching the Scriptures performed when the book is laid aside? is there no need of application? is there no work for conscience to do, no treasure for memory to keep, no food for faith to receive, and meditation to digest? Where serious attention is wanting, it is impossible that you should gain any profit by reading the word. It is not uncommon for persons to excuse their neglect of the Scriptures by saying they cannot find time, or cannot remember what they read. Will these pleas bear to be examined at the judgment-seat of Christ? You can find time for business, for company, for amusement, and can you spare none for the perusal of God's word? O beware of criminal negligence! Are not many of you often smitten with a pang of remorse? If your Bible had a tongue, would it not upbraid you, and tell you how many days and weeks you have suffered to pass away without once opening it? If you really loved the word, you would find time to read it, and if in no other way, you would steal it from your sleep. It is said Colonel Gardiner always gave up two hours in a morning to the word of God and prayer. He determined that nothing should rob him

of this precious time for devotion. If his regiment had to march at six, he rose at four, if he had to march at four he rose at two. But perhaps you say it is of little use to read the Scriptures, as you cannot remember them. Is not inattention the cause of this? "The memory," says Hopkins, "is the soul's steward, and if it be unfaithful you must call it to account." Most people can retain what they think is peculiarly valuable and useful. But if the memory be treacherous, neglecting to read will not improve it. A good vessel by long standing dry will become so leaky as to be incapable of holding water, but its seams may be again closed, by frequently setting it under a running fountain. In the same way the memory may be seasoned to retain the Scriptures, by constantly replenishing it with these precious waters of life.

2. You must read the divine word with a *humble and teachable spirit*.

The man who is under the perverting and poisonous influence of pride, will receive no real benefit from the Scriptures. Instead of becoming wise unto salvation, he only grows wise in his own conceit. Some look into the Scriptures, not to learn those things



which are necessary for their peace, but to find things strange and curious, for the purpose of parade and display. Such persons spend their time in admiring the fine carving of the vessel, while they ought to be feeding upon the rich provision which it contains. How many perplex themselves in the intricate parts of Scripture, just as children puzzle themselves and each other by solving riddles. Passing over the plain and all-important doctrines and admonitions in which they are most deeply interested, they are vainly attempting, by the dim taper of reason, to cast light upon dark passages, or with unskilful hands labouring to unravel knotty points, or with their short line and plummet trying to sound unfathomable depths. The humble Christian, the way-faring man, though esteemed a fool by the scoffing world, may easily find and cheerfully follow the way of holiness ; but he who determines to cut for himself a new path of speculation, through mountains of difficulty which are impassable, and mysteries which are impenetrable to a feeble creature, will be certainly confounded and disappointed. How often are the lively oracles of God brought forth for noisy and perverse disputes, by men of

corrupt minds! How many handle the word of God deceitfully, and warp it to a compliance with their own wishes. The consequences of trifling with things sacred are dreadful. O beware of wresting the Scriptures, lest it should prove to your own destruction! He who reads the divine word in a right temper, and a proper manner, will set out with first principles, and go on to perfection. It is great folly in any thing, but more especially in religion, to begin at the wrong end. Who would set a child to spell hard words before it knew all the alphabet? Now the Christian, in knowledge and experience, is first a babe, then a young man, and afterwards a father. Nothing is so hard to be overcome as the pride of self-sufficiency. "Vain man would be wise, though he is born into the world like a wild ass's colt." He not only needs teaching, but the dispositions also are wanting which make him willing to be taught. A meek child-like spirit fits us to receive spiritual instruction. One who possesses a gentle, yielding, and submissive frame of mind, can join with the Psalmist, and say, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak. I have esteemed thy precepts concerning all things to be right,

and I hate every false way." Do you search the Scriptures in this spirit? Where they paint man as a fallen, unworthy, condemned, and miserable sinner, do you see your own picture, and weep tears of penitence at the sight? When they unlock to you the fulness of Christ, do you count all things but loss for the excellency of his knowledge, and the unsearchable riches of his grace? When the precious promises of the new covenant are presented, do you earnestly lay hold of them, and bind them about your soul, as the only cords in the hands of the Saviour, which can snatch you from the brink of perdition? If you are actuated by these dispositions, you will not search the Scriptures in vain. But if there be any one of you, who while he reads the doctrines, commands, and warnings of the Bible, cries out, These are hard sayings; this is too strict, and that too humbling; we must answer, "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" Thy pride shall fall, but his council must stand. All who do not yield to it, must sink under it. O that you would "receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save your souls!"

3. You must read the divine word with *constant and earnest prayer.*

A judicious author has laid it down as a maxim, that prayer without reading is presumption, and reading without prayer is atheism. I have already proved the necessity of meekness and humility for searching the Scriptures with profit. Now devotion is one of the chief means by which these dispositions are cultivated. Let not an eagerness in business, or a fondness for books, keep you back from a throne of grace. I am far from wishing to undervalue the writings of good men, many of which have been eminently useful, but the best library will not make up for the want of prayer. While the talkative professor is busily examining the books of various authors to maintain his opinions, the serious Christian drops this advice in his ear, "I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause." Bishop Jewel observes, that "the Scriptures are fountains of living water, but human traditions are broken cisterns, filled with earth and dregs." Prayer is one of the main channels, through which the waters of life flow from their fountains into our souls. "If any man

lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." By prayer we seek the influence of the Holy Spirit, who was promised to guide us into all the truth. Without his enlightening and quickening unction, the glory of Christ will be hid from us, and we shall view him as a root out of dry ground, having no form or comeliness to make him desired. Reading and prayer mutually assist each other. We are commanded "to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom." But the word can have no abiding place, except in a praying heart. The petition of David may suit every believer, "Open thou my eyes, that I may see wondrous things in thy law." Daniel had been fervently praying, when the angel said to him, "I am come to shew thee what is contained in the Scripture of truth." Would you profit by the sacred volume, then neglect not to seek the guidance and grace of God to assist your researches. Let your cry be, "Lord what I know not teach thou me." All hope of an interest in Christ is vain and groundless, unless his word abide in you. And if you live in a prayerless and impenitent



state, death will overwhelm you with horror. How can you answer to God, for your countless crimes and rebellions, and contempt of his holy word? He will then say, "Ye would none of my counsels and despised all my reproofs, depart from me, ye workers of iniquity."

III. I shall mention some *encouragements* to search the Scriptures.

1. We may derive encouragement in this duty from the *brightest examples*.

"David prevented the night-watches to meditate on God's statutes." The splendours of a palace, and the cares of a kingdom, did not withdraw him from the study of the divine word, in which he found his chief delight. When Paul went to Berea to preach the gospel, the inhabitants of that town did not drive him away with tumult and violence, or rashly condemn his doctrine unheard and unexamined. They were neither blinded with inveterate prejudice, nor sunk in sluggish indolence. The testimony which the sacred historian bears concerning them, deserves to be well considered. "These," says he, "were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word

with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were so." Acts ix. 11. They became Christians from principle, and were settled and grounded in their faith! Not content with having given the preacher a patient hearing, they determined to seek the truth, and see it with their own eyes; to handle Paul's doctrine, and bring it to a sure touchstone, an unerring standard. They are called *noble Bereans*, not that they were surrounded with outward pomp, or invidious distinctions, but because their conduct gave a true dignity to their characters. And indeed all sincere and diligent Christians, who imitate them in searching the Scriptures, inherit the same honour, and though they be clothed in rags, and lodged in hovels, are more noble than the grandees of the earth who reject or disregard the word of the Lord.

There are many good books which require only a single reading. When these fields are once reaped, there remain nothing but a few gleanings. In the Bible we always find something fresh. This soil cannot be impoverished; this storehouse cannot be emptied. Augustine, who spent much time in reading the word, said, "Though I should with



**better capacity and greater diligence all my life long study nothing but the holy Scriptures, yet they are so compacted and thick set with truths, that I might daily learn something I knew not before."**

A famous statesman,\* who acted under Gustavus king of Sweden, after he had retired from public business, thus addressed our countryman Whitlocke, "I have seen much, and enjoyed much of this world, but I never knew how to live till now. I thank my good God, that he has given me time to know him and to know myself. All the comfort I have, and which is more than the whole world can give, is in feeling the good Spirit of God in my heart, and in this good book, the Bible, which came from it. You are now in the prime of your age and vigour, and in great favour and business; but all these will leave you, and you will one day better understand and relish what I say; and then you will find that there is more wisdom, truth, comfort, and pleasure, in retiring and turning your heart from the world to the good Spirit of God, and in reading the Bible, than in all courts and favours of princes."

\* Oxensteirn.

Nor are there wanting bright examples worthy of your imitation, in our own country at this day. Look around you. Who are the men most firm and consistent in their principles, most amiable and exemplary in their characters, most active and useful in their lives? Are they the persons who have read most books, or been most engaged in the things of the world? No: they are such as are most seriously and familiarly conversant with the word of God. Plain, devout, sincere, Bible-Christians, are the salt of the earth, the light of the world.

On the other hand, what do you see in those who disbelieve the Scriptures, or neglect to search them? Alas! their life is a race without a prize, a vain show, a delusion ending in bitterness and despair. After a man has given up all his time in turning over volumes of poetry, history, and philosophy; learning every thing but the lessons of heavenly wisdom; dropping buckets into empty wells, and growing old, yet drawing nothing up; how affecting is it to hear him at last cry out, as a great scholar once did on his death-bed, "Oh, I have spent my life in laborious trifling." If the examples of good

---

men have any influence upon you, begin to search the Scriptures without delay. It is dangerous to put off a duty of such importance. You know not how soon, or how suddenly you may be called before God your Judge. I have seen an account of a man, who was sitting with his family, on the Lord's day, and said he would read a chapter, for he had not read one for a long time; but he was disappointed, being struck dead just as he was reaching down the Bible! "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

2. We may derive encouragement in this duty from *our own experience*.

Happy is that man who hath tasted and received the word of life! No cavils can shake the solid proofs, or blot out the satisfying evidences of experience. Suppose an ingenious philosopher should attempt to make it appear, that fire does not warm, nor food nourish, nor sleep refresh you, I hope you could employ your time to better purpose, than in disputing the matter with him. Would he be able to argue you out of your sleep, your food, or the warmth afforded by your cheerful fire? Would not experience make you seek your bed and your table,

whatever vain words were employed to **dis-**suade you? Now let me ask, if it be **not** as safe to trust and follow experience in spiritual, as in temporal things? What is **it**, that sweetens solitude, assuages affliction, sanctifies prosperity, and gilds the prospect of immortality? You who are **Christians** indeed, will readily answer, the word of God. Had you kept a diary from the time when you first entered into the life of faith and holiness to the present, it would be full of proofs, applicable to this point. Methinks I hear the believer say, How often in my morning and evening walks, while meditating in the fields, promise after promise has sprung up in my mind, and gradually unfolding, presented to my view the glorious mysteries of redemption, and all the wonders of everlasting love! Lost in admiration and transport, I paused, and cried, "Lord, it is good to be here! It were a profitable exchange to give up a whole age of worldly pleasure, for one moment of spiritual joy! Search then the Scriptures, as you are taught by experience, that they supply matter for holy musing, and cheer the hours of solitary undisturbed retirement. When you have been visited with sickness and sorrow, amidst all your pains

---

and calamities, you could say, "I am troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; cast down but not destroyed." And what was it that soothed and supported you in such fiery trials? "This was my comfort in my affliction; for thy word hath quickened me." Psal. cxix. 50. Search then the Scriptures, as you have learned by experience, what reviving cordials they afford in the day of adversity. Are you convinced, that worldly abundance and success have a tendency to puff up the mind, and deaden the heart? Have you, like pious Agar, trembled, "lest you should be full and say, who is the Lord?" Are you well persuaded, that temporal possessions, if they be given, can only be "sanctified by the word of God, and prayer." Then diligently search the Scriptures, that you may be furnished with an antidote to the poison of prosperity. When wounded by the stings of guilt, alarmed at the approach of death, and struck with horror at the thought of judgment, have you found peace of conscience and strong consolation through faith in the testimonies of the divine word? Has the gospel opened to you a fair prospect beyond the grave? Have you, by the aid

#### **44 ON SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES.**

of the promises, had a bright glimpse of the heavenly land? Have you, even here in the wilderness, tasted its goodly fruits, and received an earnest of the purchased possession? O search, my brethren, the Scriptures, and let your conversation be of that kind which becomes those who are waiting for the coming of their Lord.

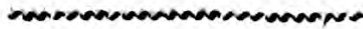


# SERMON III.



ON THE

STATE OF MAN BY NATURE.



EPHESIANS ii. 3.

*And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*



WITHOUT a knowledge of ourselves, we can never properly know God. The Scriptures plainly tell us what man was in his first state, as he came pure from the hands of his Maker, and what he is in his present fallen state, as a creature polluted with sin and plunged in sorrow. Yet few are truly acquainted with their sad condition, and concerned to be recovered and brought back to God. Most people shew a great degree of aversion to think of their state. They travel to see what is curious in the world, but are strangers at home, and know nothing of their own hearts. They are infected with a deadlv



disease, a disease in the soul, and yet think they are whole and need not a physician. Persons of this character, in general, love those teachers and books best, that flatter their pride, and keep up the good opinion they entertain of themselves. But the longer any one continues under this delusion, the greater is his danger. It is said by the Apostle Paul, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Unless this humbling truth be acknowledged and felt, the gospel message will not be heartily welcomed, and estimated according to its true value.

The apostle owns in the words of my text, that he and his fellow Christians were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. From these words, I shall lay down two propositions : First, that mankind are universally depraved and deeply polluted ; Secondly, that by reason of sin all are exposed to the dreadful wrath of an offended God.

I. Mankind are universally and deeply depraved. This point may be proved both by reason and by scripture.

The image of God, stamped upon the soul,

which consisted in righteousness and true holiness, was lost in paradise. All the sons and daughters of Adam are apostates and rebels. The mind is darkened and the heart is corrupted. Yet *reason*, dim and disordered as it is, can discern many things which few wish to see, and therefore they shut their eyes, because they hate the light and the discoveries which it makes. *Conscience*, though weakened and benumbed, whispers many things which few choose to hear, because they do not like to be alarmed and disturbed. What was the end for which man was made? Was it not, that all the members of his body, and all the powers of his soul, should be yielded up in constant subjection and cheerful obedience to God? Think what he is in himself. A Being infinite in wisdom, almighty in power, unchangeable in truth, and glorious in holiness. But does not reason itself prove, that instead of worshipping God in spirit and in truth, we have either wholly forgotten him, or been contented to honour him with our lips, while our hearts were far from him? He has preserved us from dangers, supplied our wants, and showered down his favours upon us with a bountiful hand. And have

we abundantly uttered the memory of his great goodness? As his mercies have been hourly falling, have our thanks been hourly rising to heaven? Who can lay his hand on his bosom and say, he has rendered to God a thousandth part of the gratitude which is due to him? And if in one single branch of duty, we find such barrenness, what shall we say after examining all the rest? When we describe all men as fallen and dreadfully corrupt, some charge us with blackening human nature, and giving a false representation. They tell us that there are many persons of good principles and upright conduct, who are naturally amiable and benevolent. Be not deceived with fair appearances or specious pleas. Is there to be found one in a state of nature, who supremely loves and obeys God? No. If there be then such a blank, such a vast deficiency in this first and highest duty, it is impertinent to talk of natural goodness and amiable manners. Suppose the servant of a great and generous prince should sometimes bend the knee in his presence and pay him outward homage, yet daily break his known commands, and shew more affection to the lowest slaves in the kitchen, than to his

royal master; would you not call him a very bad servant? Nor would it alter your opinion to be told, that though he hated and secretly despised his sovereign, he often shewed kindness to his own companions, for this might be ascribed to selfish motives. God is infinitely great, and infinitely good, and inconceivably glorious. Now though men should not belch out blasphemy with every breath, and commit actual crimes every day, being withheld by various restraints, yet while they are lovers of pleasure, of wealth, of ease, of honour, or of any thing else, more than lovers of God, they give undeniable evidence of their deep-rooted depravity. If the Lord has not the chief place in their heart, whatever possesses it is an idol, and idolatry is that abominable thing which his soul hateth. And who is there, but must be self-convicted and condemned? Who is there, that has not, to use the language of the prophet, set up his idols in his heart? And surely we must allow, reason itself being judge, that to prefer trifles and vanities to infinite excellency and perfection, most strikingly proves the carnality and corruption of the mind.

2. The universal and deep depravity of mankind may be proved by the *language of Scripture*.

What mournful and affecting pictures of the human race does the Bible present to us! Do you consider the state of the Gentiles? They were most deplorably sunk in the grossest ignorance and superstition, and stained with the blackest and basest vices. Even nations the most civilized and refined, such as the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans, were so degraded as to worship cats, crocodiles, and the meanest reptiles, or adore gods made of silver and brass, wood and stone. Given up to a reprobate mind, they indulged the vilest passions with unblushing impudence, and after committing crimes which ought not to be named, gloried in their guilt. See Rom. i. 23—25.

Do you turn to the ancient Jews? They had precious privileges, manifold and marvellous favours bestowed upon them. The most solemn warnings were always sounding in their ears, and the most astonishing signs and wonders were often presented before their eyes; they were allured by mercies, and corrected with judgments; and yet they broke through every restraint, and became



a sort of giants in daring impiety and wickedness. Nor was this the case at one time only, for their whole history is little else than a history of murmurs, crimes, and rebellions. The prophet declares that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Jer. xvii. 9. From this corrupt spring, flow all the polluted and poisonous streams which deluge the earth with vice and misery. By various banks, the floods of outward wickedness may be sometimes checked and abated, but the heart itself is so deceitful, that none but God can fully know it; so depraved, that nothing but grace can effectually change it. Apostacy from God, according to the Scriptures, is not partial but universal. "We all like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way." Isa. li. 6. Nor is the language of the New Testament less plain and pointed on this subject than that of the old.

The apostle, speaking of the Gentiles, says, "What then, are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no not one: there is none that

understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one." Rom. iii. 9—12. Here the language is so clear, full, and comprehensive, that it is hardly possible either to mistake its meaning or evade its force. The positive charge of sin comes home to all. Not the least room is left for a single exception. Every mouth is stopped, and the whole world is become guilty before God.

It is worth while to trace this universal depravity to its source or fountain.

Some ascribe all the evil in the world to the influence of bad example, and refuse to acknowledge any inborn propensity to sin. But it has been justly observed, that the general prevalence of bad examples is a *proof* of our existing depravity rather than a *cause* of it. Why is it, that in defiance of all the laws and punishments appointed by human governments, and all the threatenings and judgments of God, wickedness has so much abounded, that vicious examples are every where so numerous and near at hand? Had you a piece of ground, in which every good plant withered, and noxious



weeds continued to shoot up, notwithstanding all your labour to keep them under, would you not call it a bad soil? Or if you knew a certain family, that from age to age had been subject to some dreadful distemper, which no remedy could prevent or cure, would you not say the disease was constitutional, and deeply fixed in the family? How shall we account for the fact, which is too evident to be denied, that men with so much more eagerness imitate bad examples than good ones? Are not falsehood and profaneness often learnt at first hearing? Do not children readily acquire evil habits, and often slide into the paths of dissipation before we are aware of the danger? To trace the depravity of mankind to its source, we must look to the apostacy of our first parent. It would be dishonourable to all the divine perfections to say that man came out of the hands of his Maker in his present corrupt state. Adam was formed after the likeness of God. He was endowed with a noble dignity, and embowered in a paradise of bliss. But alas! man fell from honour and happiness by eating of the forbidden tree. Death, which had been wrapt up in the threatening of

God, burst upon him in all its curses. Disease instantly seized his body, and depravity tainted his soul. As it is probable that the continuance of Adam in obedience would have secured to his children unim-bittered happiness, so it is evident by the event, that the awful consequences of his fall extend to the whole human race. Rom. v. 12. "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned. By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one. The branches will have the qualities of the parent stock from which they spring, and the streams will taste of the bitterness of the fountain from which they flow. Hence we are said to be by *nature* children of wrath.

It may be necessary here to drop a few words in a way of caution.

1. Do not imagine that we mean to say all men are alike, as though there were none but wicked people in the world. The prophet was commanded to take forth the precious from the vile. Our Lord speaks of the world as a field, in which the wheat and

the tares grow together. Now these and such passages plainly express a most important distinction. Light and darkness are not more opposite, than the righteous and the wicked. True believers are a class by themselves, or as Peter calls them, "a peculiar people." But then these very persons were once in the same state as the rest of mankind. They have been translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. When the questions are put to the Christian, "Who maketh thee to differ? what hast thou that thou hast not received?" he readily answers, God is the sole author of all good. "By the grace of God I am what I am." By nature I was a sinner, by grace I am a saint. By nature I was a slave to divers lusts, and a captive of Satan; by grace I am the Lord's freeman. By nature I was a stranger, an alien from the commonwealth of Israel; by grace I have been brought into the household of faith, and enabled to cry, Abba, Father. By nature I was at enmity, by grace I am at peace with God.

2. Do not think it enough to give a general assent to the doctrine of human depravity. Many, it is to be feared, confess that they

are miserable sinners, and have no health in them, who never feel what they say. They try to shelter themselves in the croud, and take comfort in thinking they are only in the same state as others. But the solemn charge of guilt should be brought home to every bosom. Let the application of this truth be particular and personal. You need not go far to find evidence of sad depravity. Sin, wherever it reigns, turns the creature of God into a vile apostate, a condemned rebel. Do not suppose this refers merely to the shameless profligate. Look to thyself. Thou art the man. Go back as far as memory will carry thee. What were the fretful tempers and perverse wayward dispositions of childhood, but the early buddings of a corrupt tree? And as the plant grew stronger, did it not produce abundance of bitter fruit? Hence the levity, rashness, self-will, wantonness, and folly of youth. And what have been the habits of more advanced life, but mean compounds of selfishness and worldly care? Let each seriously examine his own heart and ways. You will then see that the disease of sin seated in your nature, has been breaking out in all places and at all times. In want and afflic-

tion, it has vented murmurs and repinings against Providence; in plenty and peace, it has swelled into tumors of pride, or flowed into base sensuality and excess. In solitude and in company, in business and in pleasure, under the piercing eye of God, and on the awful brink of eternity, the inveterate distemper has been working and struggling within; or bursting forth in fresh eruptions of folly and impiety. Surely you have cause to cry out, in the language of Job, "Behold I am vile;" or to plead, with David, "Lord, enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified."

II. By reason of sin, all are exposed to the dreadful wrath of an offended God.

I am now entering upon a subject which ought to make us all stand in awe. While we view the purity and majesty of the Lord, we feel the unspeakable evil of sin, and shudder at the thought of enduring the punishment due to it. Under the influence of such views, the Psalmist exclaims, "For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight:



thou hatest all the workers of iniquity." O it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God! Yet careless sinners lay it not to heart. And how are we to account for the stupidity and insensibility of those who are exposed to the fiery indignation of the Almighty? They drink in delusive and intoxicating pleasures, slumber on the lap of carnal ease, and dream of nothing but peace and safety. They make light of sin, and entertain false ideas of God, either denying his justice, or presuming on his longsuffering. Soul-soothing errors in doctrine are eagerly received to cover iniquity, and give ease to the conscience. What they dread to consider as true, they wish to disbelieve, and what they cannot disbelieve, they forget. Psal. l. 21, 22. "These things hast thou done, saith the Lord, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thee. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver." Many seem to think God is too merciful to make them miserable. Though his hand is lifted up to smite, they will not see it, and hope to escape



the stroke. Though the fire of wrath is already kindled, they sport near it, as if they should not be at last caught and consumed by the flame. It is true indeed, God is merciful, but has he not said, "Vengeance is mine?" Let me entreat you to consider the plain and solemn threatenings of the Lord, and set before you some of his terrible and destructive judgments.

"The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." Rom. i. 18. "The soul that sinneth, it shall surely die." "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, he will take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. Are not these the express testimonies of divine truth? And can you duly consider these awful sayings, and not believe them, or believe them and not tremble? O beware lest you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin! You may cast off the fear of

God, but it is at the peril of being eternally cast off from his favour, and plunged into unfathomable deeps of despair. Some of you probably treat the word of the Lord with levity and contempt. When ministers as sons of thunder, attempt to rouse and alarm you, their faithfulness is disliked, their warnings despised, and given to the winds. You have broken the law of God, and that law condemns you. Now because sentence against your evil work is not executed speedily, your hearts are fully set in you to do evil. Think, O sinner! Are the threatenings of God vain words? The arrows of divine indignation are levelled at thy naked soul, and will they never be discharged? A tempest of heavy vengeance is gathering, and blackening the heavens above, and will it never burst on thy devoted head? Rest assured, whatever thy treacherous heart may imagine, or the false tempter may suggest, the threatenings of God shall not fail, but his wrath shall come upon thee to the uttermost.

Too many can mock at the awful declarations of God's displeasure. They consider hell as the dream of weak and superstitious people. I shall therefore set before you

some of the judgments of the Almighty. How often is the candle of the wicked put out, and his vain hope blasted for ever. How many have been suddenly seized in their mad career, and set up as monuments of divine wrath, to warn others against following their pernicious ways ! Remember Dathan, Corah, and Abiram, swallowed up alive by an earthquake for their rebellion ; Pharoah and his host, buried in the Red Sea, as a punishment of their cruelty ; Herod smitten with instant death for his pride ; Ananias and Sapphira for their falsehood. Did not God bring in a flood upon the whole world, and turn the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, making them an example unto such as should hereafter live an ungodly life ? Surely these judgments prove, that though hand join in hand, sin shall not go unpunished.

I shall close this discourse with two remarks.

1. If all by reason of sin are exposed to the wrath of an offended God, all have cause to be alarmed at the sight of their danger. Every watchman in Zion gives you loud warning. The law of God thunders in

your ears, conscience at times pleads within, the judgments of heaven fly around you, death is daily carrying off multitudes, and no one knows who shall be the next victim. Are you in a state of nature? then you are liable to be driven out of light into darkness, and doomed to eternal woe. The wrath of a king is said to be as the roaring of a lion. What racking tortures and horrible punishments have been inflicted on many rebels and traitors? If you had committed some great crime against the laws of your country, you would fear day and night, at home and abroad, lest the officers of justice should apprehend you, and drag you to prison or to judgment. Now it is certain, you have rebelled against the mighty King of kings. And who knoweth the power of his anger? While you are in an impenitent and Christless state, you lie under the displeasure of God. "He that believeth not the Son is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him. And do you see no reason to tremble at your danger? If you fear them who can only kill the body, how much more ought you to fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell? Who can dwell with devouring fire? who can

dwell with everlasting burnings? If the terrors of the Lord do not now disturb you, a time is coming, when they will overwhelm you with consternation and dismay. The hour of death is near; the day of perdition to ungodly men is at hand. The Judge prepares and sends the dread summons which calls us to his bar. "Behold! he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." How will "the lofty looks of man be humbled, and the haughtiness of men laid low, and the Lord alone exalted in that day!" How many will wish to be crushed by rocks, and covered by mountains, rather than meet a holy and offended God in judgment! O may you so fear his anger now, as not to feel it throughout eternity! Are any of you unmoved and insensible? Wretched condition! better were it, that trembling should seize every limb, anguish shoot through all your nerves, and horror surround the conscience with the gloomy images of hell, so you might be awakened to a salutary concern; rather than be thus drenched in impurity, and drugged with



fatal opiates, till you are past feeling. Presumption is the strong castle, in which the Devil keeps his captives bound in chains, and locked up with a thousand bolts. And are there none here in this infernal fortress? Yes, you are the persons who have no fear of God before your eyes. Despising the riches of divine goodness, through your hardness and impenitent hearts, you are treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. And is your state desperate? While the solemn warning voice of heaven addresses you, Oh that you may hear and fear and turn to the Lord!

2. If all by sin are exposed to the wrath of an offended God, all ought without delay to seek the only Refuge which can shelter and secure them.

Why do we reason and remonstrate with you? Why do we press upon you the most earnest and solemn exhortations? Why do we so frequently set before you the evil of sin, the sting of death, the bar of judgment, and the awful scenes of eternity? It is that you may be awakened from the profound sleep into which you have fallen. It is that



you may urgently cry, "What shall we do to be saved." It is lamentable when men put away all thoughts of danger, till it overtake them as a flood; when they cannot be made to fear, before they are past the reach of hope. I beg you to banish levity and begin to think seriously of your condition. Flee, flee from the wrath to come! Jesus Christ is the only Refuge. The gospel calls you to Jesus. Millions have found a covert from the storm in this sanctuary, and yet there is room. O sinner escape for thy life, lest thou be consumed. While the Redeemer calls, though you are sitting at the receipt of custom, to carry on the trade of sin; though you are busy preparing your nets to catch the uncertain pleasures and profits of the world, you must leave all and obey his voice. Through Jesus you may enjoy pardon and peace. Believe in him, and the bitterness of death shall be exchanged for the blessing of eternal life. "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." With this privilege you may join in the triumph of the prophet. Isa. xii. 1—2, "O Lord, I will praise thee :

though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me. Behold God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.

## SERMON IV.

---

### SALVATION WHOLLY OF GRACE.

---

EPH. ii. 8.

*By grace are ye saved.*

---

IN the last discourse I proved the fallen, guilty, and miserable state of all men by nature. The heart which has long imbibed the false notions of the world, and cherished the soothing flatteries of self-love, revolts from a subject so contrary to all its prejudices, and so grating to all its feelings. But we must be abased, before we can be truly exalted. We must know that we are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; or we shall never be counselled to buy gold tried in the fire that we may be rich, and white raiment that we may be clothed, or to anoint our eyes with eye-salve that we may see. To one who is sensible of his undone and ruined

condition as a sinner, the subject of this discourse will prove highly acceptable. The substance and the very essence of religion may be expressed in this single word, *salvation*. Salvation is the sinner's hope and the saint's glory. It would confound us to think of Jehovah, if sweet mercy were not blended with terrible majesty. But his name is accompanied with the charm which allays our fears. He that is *our God*, is the *God of salvation*. The gospel is expressly called the word of salvation. Ministers are sent to shew men the way of salvation. What is the desire of the humble? Salvation. What is the end of your faith? The salvation of your souls. What is the solace of the church below, and the song of the church above? Salvation. My text then contains the most important truth that can engage your attention. May your hearts be opened to receive instruction. May the Divine Spirit give you a blessing with his word!

I. From the words of the text it may be confidently asserted, that salvation is *wholly* of grace.

To prevent mistake, it may be necessary

to define the term grace. In this passage, and in most places where the word grace is found in the New Testament, it signifies the free, special, and distinguishing favour of God. The divine favour is *free*, as being absolutely undeserved by us; *special*, as promoting the happiness of the immortal soul, and differing from the common blessings of Providence which contribute to our temporal welfare; *distinguishing*, as being bestowed, or withheld according to the wise sovereignty and good pleasure of God. A little attention to the subject will convince you that this statement is agreeable to the Scriptures. Grace from its very nature must be free. To speak of meriting, and then receiving grace, amounts to a contradiction. For proof of this, I appeal to the words of an inspired apostle. "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace but of debt." Rom. iv. 4. What a man deserves is due to him, and he may claim it not as a matter of favour, but as a matter of right. But what is received purely as a gift, it is absurd in any sense to ascribe to merit. That by the term grace in my text is meant special and distinguishing favour, is sufficiently evident from the whole connec-

tion. Those very persons who are here said to be saved, "were by nature children of wrath even as others." In their former state, they possessed a portion of that general goodness which God grants to the worst of men; but in their present state they enjoy that special grace which he bestows on his own people only, as the earnest and pledge of endless bliss. "He will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Whether we consider salvation in the original scheme or plan of it as contrived by infinite Wisdom; or in the mysterious method by which it was actually procured through the humiliation and death of Christ; or with reference to the divine power by which its blessings are personally applied to the soul, we see the grace of God shining with pre-eminent lustre.

1. Grace shines forth with the brightest lustre in the scheme or plan of salvation, which existed in the purposes and counsels of Jehovah before time began.

Short sighted mortals see but little of the past and the present, and the future is entirely hid from them. God sees the end from



the beginning, and calleth those things that are not as though they were. To think that God does any thing which he did not previously design, or designs any thing which he cannot bring to pass, is to entertain mean and dishonourable ideas of him. Peter says, "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world;" and the work of redemption has certainly the first claim on our attention. Do not however imagine, that I am going to draw you into curious and unprofitable researches. Far be it from me to waste your time and weary your patience with things beyond the reach of our understandings. Some indeed deny the decrees of God, and others speak of them rashly and presumptuously. "Secret things belong to the Lord, and those that are revealed to us and to our children." While we confine ourselves to the inspired word, and pursue our inquiries with humility and seriousness, we are in no danger. On the sacred ground of Scripture, some branches of knowledge are higher and more difficult to attain than others, but no forbidden tree grows there. With respect to God's eternal purposes in the plan of salvation, we can know nothing more than he is pleased to

reveal. Yet hence we learn, that before man fell, infinite wisdom had devised a way for his recovery; before sin spread its subtle destructive poison, divine love had provided a suitable and sufficient remedy; before death came forth armed with a fatal sting, and a cloud of worse than Egyptian darkness covered the earth, God in his unchangeable council had determined to bring life and immortality to light by the gospel. Nor is this a dry speculation. It is delightful for the Christian, as he bathes his soul in the broad and deep stream of mercy, to trace that stream through the eventful ages of time, till he find its source in eternity. The apostle congratulates the Thessalonians as knowing their election of God, and being appointed by him not to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Thes. i. 4. v. 9. It has been asserted that the choice of those who shall be finally saved, was grounded on some foreseen works of obedience, or some native excellencies of character. This opinion, as I think, opens the door for a long train of errors which invariably follow it, It puts upon human merit the honour of laying the foundation of that living temple which Jehovah deigns to

fill with his presence and his glory. I will appeal however to the word, and leave you to judge for yourselves. Eph. i. 11. "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Here we have not a syllable about the foreseen goodness, or obedience of the creature. And yet the apostle carries this matter as high as we can go, resolving it entirely into the will of God. If we believe the will of God to be perfect, and at an infinite distance from every thing arbitrary, partial, and unjust, at this point we must rest, without vainly wishing to push our inquiries a step beyond it. 2 Tim. i. 9. "Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." It is worthy of notice, that the apostle first discards works, because however necessary they may be as evidences of salvation, they can never be viewed as the cause. He next joins the purpose and the grace of God, and indeed so strong is the chain

which connects them, that it is not possible a single link should be broken. He then points to Christ as the centre, where all the counsels of God meet; and lastly dates this grand and harmonious scheme before time began its race. Now if foreseen obedience were the basis of salvation, the very hinge on which the good will of God to men turned, is it not most extraordinary, that no part of Scripture can be produced to support this doctrine? Nay more, all the passages which speak of the foreknowledge and purposes of God, seem directly to oppose and totally overturn it. I shall mention but another testimony, the language of which appears guarded as with a double fence against the mistaken notion we are now examining. I can safely appeal to the good sense and unprejudiced judgment of every considerate and candid person. The words shall be quoted and stand without comment. Rom. xi. 8. "Even so at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works then it is no more of grace, otherwise work is no more work."

2. Grace shines forth with the greatest lustre in the mysterious method by which salvation was actually procured through the humiliation and death of Christ.

We value a gift from a friend, not only for its own sake, but also on account of the sacrifices which the giver made in order to bestow it. Even a small act of kindness may from circumstances be a great favour. But should any one submit to the keenest pains to relieve your sufferings, or be willing to impoverish himself to pay your debts, and save you from the horrors of a prison, how great would be your obligation to his generous and disinterested love? Now consider the situation into which all were brought by rebellion against God. We were stripped of original righteousness, far from God, indebted and undone. That Being who is of purer eyes than to look on iniquity, could not without dishonouring his perfections suffer sin to go unpunished. But while thus bewildered and lost in guilt and darkness, "Behold through the tender mercy of our God the day-spring from on high visits us. Jesus our Surety and Saviour appears in the fulness of time, to put away sin, and bring in an everlasting righteous-



ness. Well might angels at his birth sing, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good-will to men." The incarnation of the adorable Son of God, was of all others, by far the brightest manifestation of rich grace and heavenly mercy. Prophets who foretold his sufferings and the glory that should follow, searched diligently into this mystery, and evangelists and apostles spoke of it in language of glowing admiration and rapturous joy. John iii. 16. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." And though the work our Redeemer had to perform was so difficult, and the price he had to pay was so great; how cheerfully he undertook that work, how freely he paid that price. "In the volume of the book it is written of me, lo! I come to do thy will, O God!" He laid aside his glory to put on our nature. He left the majesty of a throne in heaven, for the meanness of a manger in Bethlehem. 2 Cor. viii. 9. "For 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 made rich. Would you see his astonishing condescension and unspeakable kindness? Trace his steps through the whole course of his obedience and sufferings. View him in the agony of Gethsemane sweating great drops of blood! View him nailed to the cross on mount Calvary, giving himself as an offering and a sacrifice to God for us. He drank the cup filled with the bitterest dregs of wrath, that we might take the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. Herein is love! not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins. The work of redemption is the wonder of angels! All the other instances of divine goodness are as drops to the ocean, compared with the inestimable gift of Christ. Wisdom and power, majesty and glory, are seen in the works of creation and providence; but in the voluntary humiliation and sin-atonement death of Jesus, we behold the fullest display of sovereign grace and superabounding mercy.

3. Grace shines with the greatest lustre, in the divine power or influence by which the blessings of salvation are personally

applied to the soul. A way of reconciliation is revealed, but the carnal mind is enmity against God. A refuge is prepared, and a remedy is provided, but the blind and stupid sinner neither sees his danger nor feels his disease. And how is a radical and thorough change effected? what is it that chases away the darkness of the mind, subdues pride, produces penitence, implants faith, enkindles holy love, and turns the whole current of the soul into a new channel? These effects cannot surely be ascribed to the powers of nature, but to the operations of divine grace. The Holy Spirit is the agent, by whose influence the heart is renewed. Hence he is in the Scriptures expressly called the Spirit of grace. The gospel is the instrument by which God both informs and transforms the mind. "Gospel-grace," says a worthy writer, "is new light to the understanding, new power to the will, new regularity to the faculties that ought to obey, and a new harmony to our whole discomposed frame. In a word, grace is more to us now in a state of corruption, than we could become to ourselves in a state of primitive perfection." This representation is agreeable to the holy Scriptures. If we are made wise

unto salvation, it is because God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines into our hearts. If self-sufficiency and obstinacy are vanquished, it is because the Lord makes us "willing in the day of his power." If the bonds of iniquity are broken, it is because Christ makes us free. What the Lord said to Israel may apply to every Christian, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." The sweet and strong attraction of divine love overcomes the rooted prejudice and aversion of the carnal mind. How clearly is this proved by the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Hear his own language, (Gal. i. 15, 16.) "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." Before his effectual calling to God he was a blind pharisee, a bold blasphemer, a mad zealot, an injurious persecutor. How striking, how beneficial was the change, when he became a humble disciple, and a faithful preacher of Christ? Very far was he from attributing the change to his own

merit or endeavours. "I was," says he, "before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." But perhaps it may be said this was an extraordinary case. I answer, the manner of Paul's conversion was singular, but not so the cause. He was a wonder to many, and raised up as a monument of grace for the encouragement of all. After the remarkable words before mentioned he adds, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them who should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." 1 Tim. i. 16.

There is but one Saviour, who is the way, the truth, and the life; one sanctifying Spirit, who softens the heart, and moulds it after the image of God. It is not in our effectual calling only, that we acknowledge divine mercy. Pardon of sin, justification, adoption, communion with the Father of

spirits, peace of conscience, purity of heart, spiritual joy, a good hope, and a growing confidence, all flow from the same heavenly source. Is it then surprising, that the apostles should speak so frequently and so feelingly on the delightful theme of free grace? For is there any good thing you can desire, that grace has not laid up in the great and precious promises? Is there a single blessing you enjoy, that grace has not bestowed? Is there the least degree of sweetness in any of the privileges and exercises of religion, which grace did not infuse? The experienced Christian will to all these questions answer no.

II. I shall conclude this discourse with a few general observations.

1. The doctrine of salvation wholly by grace, must be firmly defended against those who either openly oppose, or craftily adulterate it.

Such as go about to establish their own righteousness, will not submit to the righteousness of God. They cannot bear to be indebted to free grace for all their happiness. This self-righteous spirit rises up, and rages against a scheme of salvation which



gives God all the glory. Pride is a many-headed monster, which it is the very design of the gospel to destroy. Some there are, who instead of drawing forth the sword of the Spirit to smite this heaven-defying monster, as Samuel hewed Agag to pieces, employ themselves in seeking food to nourish, and incense to perfume it. Now it is evident that the apostles laboured to cast down all towering imaginations and self-flattering opinions. It is written, "he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." The words which follow my text are instructive and forcible. "For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." The last words shew us why the apostle in so pointed and emphatical a manner asserts and confirms this all-important truth. That desire of applause which swells the heart, and is the ruling passion in corrupt nature, struggles to gain a place even in the sanctuary, and would if possible overtop the throne. But here boasting must have no footing. It is wholly and for ever excluded. Some indeed who dare not deny the doctrine of salvation by grace, craftily endeavour to

---



adulterate it. The things necessary to be believed are thinly sprinkled through their discourses, while moral precepts are piled up in heaps, and it is to be feared more for show than use. Without perhaps exactly saying so, they leave it to be concluded, that salvation is partly of grace and partly of works. This is nothing but the old leaven of the Scribes and Pharisees under a new form, poured forth to adulterate and corrupt the pure gospel of Jesus. When therefore we see men full of over-weening notions of their own ability, labouring to obscure or pervert this most glorious doctrine, it is our duty to stand up in defence of the truth.

2. The doctrine of salvation wholly by grace, must be guarded against the notions of those who misrepresent and abuse it.

It is certain no one can be saved for good works, and it is equally certain that no one can be saved without good works. Antinomians, and such as drink in a portion of their spirit, speak as though God had decreed the end and not the means. Eternal election is the only string which yields music to their ears. Every other subject sounds harshly. They seem to think Christ has released them from the obligation to obe-

dience, and thus, as one says, hide sin behind that cross which was designed to crucify it. When they speak of the operations of God's Spirit, it is in such language as sets aside the accountableness of man, and tends to fortify the heart with presumption. All earnest exhortations to serious reflection, repentance, prayer, and reconciliation to God, are then branded with the name of legality.

Though we may be grieved that any persons should embrace opinions so dangerous, we need not be surprised. Whoever attentively reads the Epistles of James and Jude, will see that some such notions began to make their appearance in the first age of Christianity. From the language of James it is evident, that because salvation was ascribed wholly to faith, as the operative principle of divine life, some took occasion boldly to deny the necessity of works altogether. Against this error, the apostle opposes the strongest arguments, and the warmest expostulations. Jude says, "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation; ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and

denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ." He who maintains the doctrine of divine grace, and makes it a plea for sensuality and self-indulgence, may talk of his faith in Christ, and his interest in a covenant God, but he is in reality a secret infidel, a practical atheist. The sincere Christian shudders at the idea of admitting or countenancing any opinion which opens a door to licentiousness. "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid." Rom. vi. 1. Indeed we may boldly assert, that God never pardons sin without purifying the soul. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men; teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." Tit. ii. 11, 12.

3. The doctrine of salvation wholly by grace, must be every day seriously contemplated, for our edification and comfort.

It is one thing to admit this truth, and another to feel its influence. If the mind be not habituated to meditate on the free abounding grace of God, you cannot maintain a spirit of becoming humility and lively gratitude. As grace reigns in the heart,

pride falls, and every rebellious passion is brought into subjection. The more you see your own unworthiness, the more will you feel your obligations to the Author of salvation. Muse then on the great and precious promises, and magnify Immanuel in whom they are yea and amen. The provisions of divine grace are set before you, not that you should view them at a distance, but feed upon them, and be refreshed and satisfied. A throne of grace is prepared, that you may draw nigh to God and confess all your sins, present all your petitions, with filial freedom and holy boldness. You have many duties to perform, many temptations to resist, many difficulties to surmount, and many trials to endure. "Trust not in man, and make not flesh your arm." "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Thus guided, comforted, and fortified, you will go through life and meet death without dismay. When that worthy and useful minister Risdon Darracot was told his end was near, he exclaimed, "All is well, I am ready. I now come to the Lord as a vile sinner, trusting in the merits and precious blood of my dear Redeemer. O grace, grace, free grace! The Lord had been just

if he had sent me to hell; it was free grace that has saved me!" May you, brethren, taste that the Lord is gracious. May you magnify through life and in death the marvellous loving-kindness of our covenant God.

Grace, 'tis a sweet, a charming theme!  
My thoughts rejoice at Jesus name:  
Ye angels, dwell upon the sound;  
Ye heavens, reflect it to the ground!

## SERMON V.

---

### CHRIST OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

.....

JER. xxiii. 6.

*This is the name whereby he shall be called, the Lord  
our Righteousness.*

.....

THE expressive and endearing titles by which the great Deliverer and Redeemer of mankind is made known, deserve the most serious and devout attention. They frequently meet our eyes as we read the sacred pages of the Old and New Testament. And indeed, for this special purpose were the Scriptures written, that we might believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that believing we might have life through his name. The prophets clearly foretold his coming into the world, his sufferings and death, his resurrection and ascension, the out-pouring of his Spirit, and the wide extension of his kingdom. The



ancient people of God, who lived in the Old Testament times, under a dispensation of dim shadows, never lost sight of the promised period, when the day-spring from on high should visit the Jews, and scatter the thick darkness of the Gentiles. In the works of creation, and the wonderful events of providence, we can trace the footsteps, and see the hand of God; but in Jesus Christ we behold "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." As in the verse before my text the prophet refers to the great work of human redemption, it was natural that he should describe the adorable Redeemer. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is the name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness.

Let us then consider the import of this majestic and significant name.

I. It denotes the high dignity and supreme glory of the Saviour.

Christ is called the *Branch* in the fore-

going verse, to denote his descent, for it was foretold that he should rise out of David. But though he sprang from the Fathers according to the flesh, yet as the apostle declares, he is "over all, God blessed for ever." Rom. ix. 5. The Jews, who expected a Messiah surrounded with the wealth and pomp of an earthly prince, were disgusted with the meanness of his appearance. They viewed this excellent Branch from the stock of Jesse, as a root out of dry ground, which had no comeliness to make it desirable. They neither knew him nor the Father. The words of our text afford us a proof of the proper divinity of Christ. He is called *Jehovah* our Righteousness. It would be blasphemy to give this awfully expressive name to a creature. The word *Jehovah* denotes a being who is self-existent, all-sufficient, unchangeable, and possessed of infinite perfections. Creatures, from their very nature, are necessarily limited and dependent. There is but one Being, the mighty God, who is self-existent and infinite. God said unto Moses, "I am that I am, and thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, *I am* hath sent me unto you." And let it be remembered, that Jesus

Christ thus addressed the Jews, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was I am." John viii. 58. In language of similar import he says, "I am the first and the last." And Paul tells us, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." These attributes and perfections can belong to none but the true God.

The Scriptures plainly declare Jesus Christ to be the Maker and Preserver of the world: "For by him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." Col. i. 16, 17. Jesus Christ is declared to be the searcher of hearts, and the universal Judge, having in his hands all authority and power. The name Jehovah is exclusively applied to the supreme eternal God, as is manifest from Psal. lxxxiii. 18. "That men may know, that thou whose name alone is Jehovah art the Most High over all the earth." Now it cannot be denied, that this name is given in my text to him who came in the flesh as the Redeemer of men;

If the Lord Jesus is infinitely exalted, and one in nature with the Father, then we ought cheerfully to pay that homage which is due to him. It would be gross idolatry to give religious worship to the highest angel in heaven. But all men are commanded to honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.

If all the fulness of the Godhead dwell in Christ, then we may fix our intire dependence upon him, without entertaining the least fear as to his sufficiency. He can save to the uttermost, on which account Paul says, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

II. This significant and endearing name denotes the interest which the true followers of Jesus have in his righteousness."

The purpose to be answered by the Redeemer's righteousness, is the justification of the soul. He became a man, sojourned in this world amidst scorn and reproach, and died an ignominious and agonizing death on the cross, for us men, and for our salvation. He magnified that law which we

had broken and dishonoured. Through his perfect obedience sinners are freely justified. Hence we are expressly said to be "accepted in the Beloved." This most precious and valuable privilege is frequently spoken of by the antient prophets. Isa. xlv. 24, 25. "Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength; even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory." This passage from Isaiah, when properly understood, will shew us the true meaning of my text. Those who are thoroughly convinced of their sin and misery, hearing the sweet invitation of the gospel, cheerfully come to Christ. Condemned by the law, without either help or hope in themselves, they find both strength and righteousness in him. By virtue of an union with Jesus, they are fully and freely justified, exalted to honour, and replenished with joy. Thus the Lord becomes their Righteousness, and they esteem it their highest glory to bear his name and his image. Hence arises the triumph of the church, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that



justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died." There is not a man upon the earth who can stand accepted before God on the ground of his own merit. Our obedience is deficient, both in its measure, and in its motives. Our purest intentions are tainted with sin, and our best endeavours are stamped with imperfection. Every one who truly sees, and deeply feels his fallen depraved state, will exclaim, "If thou Lord shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord who shall stand?" David therefore describes the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works. In the grand article of justification, there is nothing suspended on the meritorious obedience of man. To render this point more clear, examine Rom. iii. 20—24. "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all that believe; for there is no difference: for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Being justified



freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

Some object to this doctrine as unreasonable, crying out, how can the obedience of the Saviour be placed to our account? or how can millions be justified by the merits of one? But it should be remembered, that every thing is right which God approves, and every thing reasonable which he has appointed. The plain testimonies of Scriptures are to be meekly received, and not captiously disputed, or boldly opposed. It is expressly said, "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" Rom. v. 19. With regard to the sufficiency of the Redeemer's merits for this end, we must always bear in mind the essential dignity of his person. He had the highest glory with the Father before the world began, and therefore his divine perfections stamped an inconceivable value on his obedience and sufferings, acting in the character of a Surety and Mediator. The infinite merit of Christ is the broad and firm ground on which all believers stand accepted before God. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; tha

we might be made the righteousness of God in him." 2 Cor. v. 21.

But here it may be said, how do we become actually interested in the Lord our Righteousness?

Surely this important and precious blessing does not belong to all who are called by his name. We are not warranted to conclude, that every one who comes within the pale of the church is pardoned and justified. No, no, too many put on the outward garb of a religious profession, who are not clothed with the garments of salvation, nor covered with the robe of Immanuel's Righteousness. To appropriate or enjoy this blessing, there must be in the mind a principle of faith, by which we are enabled to take hold of Christ. "By him all that *believe* are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." "We through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." You may have consistent ideas of justification as a doctrine of the New Testament, and yet have no interest in it as a benefit to be personally enjoyed. The soul which remains in unbelief can have no part nor lot in the matter. Rom. v. 1. "Being justified by faith, we

have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Nor can we obtain this peace, if we have nothing more than that cold lifeless kind of faith, which gives a general assent to the truth, without feeling and cordially embracing it. We must "believe with the heart unto righteousness, and with the mouth make confession unto salvation."

In the conclusion of this discourse, I shall address a few words to several classes.

1. I shall address myself to the self-righteous.

You are building upon the sandy foundation of your own merits. You think little of Christ, but much of your duties, and virtues, and good deeds. It is possible, false teachers have assisted to support your vain hopes, with the hollow treacherous props of dry morality. Let me intreat you to examine the foundation on which you rest. Try the materials with which you build, for they shall be tried by fire in the last day. It is true, you may find many who, like yourselves, trust in their temperance, piety,

and charity, and you may feel assured that so great a multitude can never be all wrong. But though you should have heard it from the pulpit, that repentance will wash away sin, and a good life save you, trust not such an opinion without trying it. The XIth Article of the Church of England says, "We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not of our own works or deservings." And this wholesome doctrine is drawn from the holy Scriptures, "For if," says Paul, "righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." You cannot be saved by your own obedience, unless that obedience be perfect. But will you say this? Have you not left undone the things which you ought to have done, and done those things which you ought not to have done? How then can you appear in the presence of a holy heart-searching God? "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." And will you, like the old Pharisees, go about to establish your own righteousness? Your endeavours must be all fruitless, and your hopes blasted. O that you may see

**your real condition, as lost, miserable sinners! You are on the point of perishing, and yet refuse to seek the only sure Refuge! While under the law, you are certainly under the curse, and the wrath of God is gathering against you! O cast away your present vain dependence, and fly to Christ the King of righteousness and peace! No longer lean on an arm of flesh, or boast of any thing you have done, but henceforth determine for ever to trust and triumph in the Lord.**

**2. I address myself to awakened and trembling sinners.**

**Blinded by the god of this world, and hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, once you boldly pressed onward with the giddy multitude who travel the broad road that leadeth to destruction. Remember, O sinner, the interesting moments of thy first serious concern. God took away the veil of self-ignorance, and discovered thy wretched and ruined condition. The sharp arrows of truth pierced thy conscience, and filled thee with anguish. Alarmed and confounded, thou couldst see no way of escape, and find no peace. And art thou still dismayed with**



the terror of a holy and just God? What canst thou do? whither canst thou go? Dost thou look to the law of God? It condemns for every failure and transgression; Mount Sinai, covered with flames, affords no hiding place to shelter a soul conscious of guilt, and fearing eternal perdition. Dost thou hope to satisfy the demands of justice, and secure perfect peace, by a strict attention to outward ceremonies, by prayers, and tears, and alms? Canst thou work thy way out of the horrible pit by thy own native strength? Alas! such expectations are sure to be disappointed. Come then, without delay come to Jesus, who is at once our righteousness and strength. He himself invites thee, and promises to give thee rest. Through his merits, millions have been accepted, and none that come unto God by him shall be cast out. An interest in Christ will banish thy fears, and fill thee with joy and peace in believing. His imputed righteousness alone can set the soul at liberty, and raise it to partake of true honour and solid happiness. Luther said, "That upon a discovery of this glorious righteousness the gates of Paradise



seemed to fly open before him, and the dawn of heaven was all in view."

3. I address myself to sincere and firm believers.

You have been taught to renounce your own obedience in point of dependence. You have obtained precious faith through the righteousness of God our Saviour. To him you look, in him you live, from his fulness all your wants are supplied, and in his presence all your desires shall be satisfied. Truly you may exclaim, Jehovah is our Righteousness. O the confidence, the comfort, the dignity, the security, and the felicity, imparted by this sacred and sweet privilege! But remember, you have not renounced the pride of the Pharisee, to indulge the low passions of the profligate. "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." One of the best evidences of your justification, is a humble, holy, circumspect conduct. You have nothing to do with the law as a covenant, but it must still be the rule of your life. Let this then be the chief concern of your soul, to walk worthy of your high

**102 CHRIST OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

vocation, and adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things. "For of him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us, Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption: that according as it is written, he that glorieth let him glory in the Lord."

## SERMON VI.

---

### CHRIST OUR PASSOVER.

1 COR. v. 7.

*Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.*

IN this epistle the death of Christ is described in language so strong and pointed, that we may safely conclude the subject is of the highest importance. Thus the inspired writer addresses the Corinthians, "For I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." In a city of Greece, where the flattering opinions of philosophers had been so much spread and so highly applauded, the doctrine of the cross was treated with scorn and contempt. "For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolish-

ness." The apostles taught, that Jesus Christ died not merely as a martyr to truth, and an example of patience and fortitude, but also as a sacrifice to take away sin. This doctrine was the very pith and marrow of their discourses. It runs through all their writings. Neither the pomp of wealth, nor the pride of learning, could divert their attention from a truth so interesting and important. Hence Paul says, "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." In the words of my text, there is an allusion to a very instructive ordinance of the ancient church. The passover was instituted at the time, when the Israelites were about to be delivered from Egyptian bondage, and from the plague which destroyed the first born of Egypt. It was therefore both a token of divine favour, as the means of saving them from temporal death, and a type of that mysterious method by which we are saved from eternal death. As a figure, it contained the most valuable instruction and encouragement. "For the law had only a shadow of good things to come, but the body is Christ." All types are indeed necessarily imperfect, for sensible and earthly

objects cannot fully represent things which are spiritual and heavenly. In the present instance, there are some points of resemblance which it may be useful to trace. We shall notice the most remarkable circumstances of the ancient paschal sacrifice, and the great design for which it was appointed.

I. Let us notice the most remarkable circumstances of the ancient passover.

1. The victim chosen for this sacrifice was a lamb. *Exod. xii. 3.* "Speak unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year.

This creature is distinguished for its harmlessness and gentleness. Meek and patient, it suffers without resistance, and licks the hand just raised to shed its blood. This interesting animal is chosen as the proper emblem of innocence, when the prophet is describing the Redeemer. *Isa. liii. 7.* "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before

her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." John the Baptist pointed to Jesus and cried, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." He was a victim without blemish. There was no guilt in his actions, no guile in his words, no evil in his heart. He had all the faculties, passions, and sinless infirmities of our nature, without any of the imperfections and corruptions which spring from our first father's fall. His conduct was uniformly consistent, and his whole character absolutely pure and unblemished. The apostle declares he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners."

2. The lamb was separated, and set apart four days, and then killed in the evening. Exod. xii. 6. "And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening." This might be intended to shew the designation of Christ as our Sacrifice, both in the purpose and the promise of God. It was not by accident and chance, but by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, that he was delivered up to death. This event took place four thousand years from



the creation of man. The promise given to Adam and Abraham concerning the seed of the woman which was to bruise the head of the serpent, was fulfilled in due time; for one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. It is remarkable, that Jesus solemnly entered Jerusalem on the very day when the paschal lamb was set apart, and he actually suffered when the Jews were celebrating that ordinance which so clearly pointed to him. With regard to the purpose of God, he is called "a lamb slain from the foundation of the world." When he was preparing for the awful stroke of justice, he knew the exact time, and refused to commit himself to the people, till his hour was come. As the paschal lamb was killed in the evening, this might fitly represent the closing season of the Mosaic dispensation, or Jewish age. Thus it is said, "Christ appeared once in the end of the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." O the unspeakable worth of the victim! O the exquisite sufferings that victim endured to turn away the sword of vengeance from us! Words are wanting, justly to paint the awfully affecting scenes of mount Calvary, where Jesus poured

out his vital blood. Why did the sun withdraw his light? Why did the earth quake and the graves of the saints open? The dying agonies of Christ filled angels with astonishment, made the earth tremble to its centre, and covered the heavens with sack-cloth. Nor need we wonder that all nature mourned, when he bore our sins in his own body on the tree. Surely the solemn subject ought to engage our musing thoughts, and thrill our melting hearts.

3. The blood of the paschal lamb was sprinkled on the door posts of their houses.

Indeed the sprinkling of the victim's blood was required in all the sin-offerings and burnt-offerings. This circumstance must not be overlooked, as it appears to have been very particularly commanded and observed. The apostle says, "under the law almost all things were purged with blood, and without the shedding of blood is no remission." Every innocent creature which was slain for sacrifice, proved at once the evil of sin, and the need of a sufficient atonement. But this was not all, for the ceremonies attending it, proved also the necessity of a personal application. "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the

---

ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean sanctified to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" In the sacrifice of the paschal lamb, the Israelites were commanded to eat its flesh roasted with fire, and sprinkle its blood on the lintel and door posts of every house. Exod. xii. 7, 8. How admirably are the most interesting truths taught in these striking circumstances. The blood was not to be poured on the threshold, to be trodden under their feet and despised. Whatever God sets apart for a sacred and special purpose, must be revered and honoured. Nor can we forget in this place, the vengeance which the apostle denounces against those who "trample under foot the Son of God, and count the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing."

II. Let us notice the great design for which the paschal sacrifice was appointed.

It was the instituted means of deliverance from bondage, and preservation from death :

How wretched and miserable was the condition of the Israelites in Egypt! Heavy were the burdens, and hard were the labours, to which they were driven by their unfeeling taskmasters? The yoke they had to wear was sharp with thorns, and the cup they had to drink was full of bitterness. The haughty Egyptians added insult to oppression, and mocked instead of hearing their complaints. But the God of Abraham saw their wrongs, and heard their cries. Moses carried message after message to Pharaoh, accompanied with plague upon plague. Yet still he refused to let Israel go. O what mighty signs and wonders were wrought by Jehovah, to humble and confound his enemies, and to give liberty to his own people. The river Nile was turned into a stream of blood, immense swarms of noxious insects filled their houses, a dreadful storm of hail, mingled with fire, destroyed the herbage of their fields, terrible diseases smote their cattle and their own persons, and thick darkness covered the land for three days. All these judgments did not bend the tyrant to submission. Then the Lord said, "Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt; afterward he will let you

go hence." But this last was by far the heaviest stroke which God inflicted. *Exod. xi. 4—6.* At midnight the destroying angel went through Egypt, and cut off all the first-born, both man and beast. The sword of vengeance could neither be evaded nor resisted. Who can describe the horrors of that dreadful night! The poor innocent babes of Jacob's race had been barbarously murdered, and now punishment, fearful in its kind, and full in its measure, comes upon the murderers. Death visits equally the palace and the cottage, destroying the first-born of Pharaoh on the throne, and the first-born of the captive in the dungeon. The whole land was full of grief, dismay, and consternation. But God put a difference between the Egyptians and the Israelites. Now what was the reason of this difference? Both had sinned against the Lord, and merited punishment. As divine justice was displayed in the destruction of the Egyptians, so divine grace was manifested in the salvation of the Israelites. But it pleased God to make the sacrifice of the passover the medium through which he dispensed his free distinguished grace. The angel of death spared every dwelling whose door was



marked with the sacred and appointed symbol. . . Exod. xii. 13. "And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you." Is it not easy in the light of New Testament, to see the meaning and design of all this? "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Our spiritual life, liberty, and peace, are enjoyed in virtue of the atonement made by him. Have we not rebelled against the King of kings, and provoked him to anger by our iniquities? Have we not too long been the slaves of sin, and the captives of Satan? Why then hath not the minister of vengeance cut us down, and swept us away with the besom of destruction? As we have forfeited the life of our souls, why are we not now enduring the bitter pains of eternal death? The gospel only can answer these inquiries. Here we learn, that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. For he hath made him to be sin, or a sin-offering for us, who

---



knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Jesus died that we might live, and endured the curse, that we might be set free, and inherit a blessing. Peter speaks on this point in the plainest and strongest language. "For ye are redeemed, not with gold and silver, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. How mysterious and marvellous is the scheme of human redemption! Here awful justice and divine compassion are in perfect harmony. Here the eternal love and infinite wisdom of God are pre-eminently displayed. While the law is honoured and the sinner saved, we see Mercy and Truth meet together, Righteousness and Peace embrace each other. While good men are wrapt in astonishment, it is said, "Into these things even the angels desire to look.

From what has been said, we shall make some general observations.

OBS. 1. Sin, when obstinately practised, will assuredly end in destruction.

Do you give yourselves up to the lusts of the flesh, or to the vain pursuits and empty

pleasures of an evil world? Do you cast off the fear of God, and add folly to folly and crime to crime? Can you conclude that the soul is safe, when the conscience is seared; or that those who are so stupified as to be past feeling, are beyond the reach of punishment? What! is there not an all-seeing eye to observe, and an Almighty hand to apprehend you? "Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth." "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." A thousand warnings thunder in your ears; a thousand awful examples are set before your eyes. A great cloud of witnesses rise up to confirm the solemn truth. The flood that swept away the old world, the fire that consumed Sodom and Gomorrah, the plagues that desolated Egypt, prove, though hand join in hand, sin shall not go unpunished. O remember the wrath of God is poured into the cup of his indignation, and the wicked shall drink it even to the dregs. The sword of justice is sharpened and prepared, and the enemies of God can neither escape nor resist it. O presumptuous sinner, beware lest he cut thee off with a stroke, then a great ransom cannot deliver thee. Though thou

**shouldst harden thyself, and call in as many enchantments as Pharaoh did, thy ruin will be certain and unavoidable.**

**OBS. 2.** There is no way of obtaining pardon and salvation but through the blood of Christ.

Had any of the children of Israel refused to sprinkle their doors with the blood of the paschal lamb, death would have been the fruit of their disobedience. The redemption of the soul is precious, and as far as human efforts are concerned, it ceaseth for ever. There is now opened for us a new and living way to the Father, through the veil of the Mediator's flesh. If you will not come to God in this way, you cannot be admitted in any other. Jesus gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time, and you cannot be made free from sin and condemnation, but in virtue of this ransom. Do not vainly spend your time as some do, disputing whether God could have devised any other means for redeeming and pardoning guilty ruined men. Such inquiries are foolish and fruitless. All ought to be content with the things God *has* appointed. If we sin wilfully, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful looking for of

judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

Obs. 3. There must be an actual application of the blood of Christ by faith.

Many acknowledge that Jesus died as a sacrifice, who never see the evil of sin, or feel the burden of guilt, so as to seek pardon and peace at the foot of the cross. It is possible to have a clear idea of the scripture doctrine of reconciliation, and yet remain enemies to God and strangers to Christ. Paul tells us, that the blood of bulls and of goats could never take away sin from the conscience. And is there then no method of removing it? Yes, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. But how is this done? Not by entertaining empty notions, or relying on outward forms, but by a believing application of that blood to the soul. O come then to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. Leave the broad way of sin and destruction, and from this time walk with the redeemed of the Lord, in the high way of holiness. The judgments of the Almighty will soon be sent forth against the wicked. And how can you escape, if you neglect the great salvation? Come, poor trembling sinner, to the blood of sprinkling,

---

which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. The cross is thy only refuge. O fly to Christ, trust in Christ, cleave to Christ, with full purpose of heart. Once sprinkled with his blood, no fiery bolts shall strike thy soul, no terrors of death, or fiends of darkness, shall destroy thy peace. If you have obtained spiritual life, liberty, and comfort, by faith in the Lord Jesus as our Passover, let your time and strength be devoted to his service. Consider his wonderful love, remember his sin-atonement death, and walk worthy of the calling wherewith you are called. "If one died for all, then were all dead: and he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again."

## SERMON VII.



### CHRIST OUR INTERCESSOR.



ROM. viii. 34.

*Who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*



THE Christians of the first age were subject to very heavy afflictions and severe persecutions. They had to bear the reproach of the cross, and pass through many fiery trials. In this epistle the inspired writer brings the most powerful arguments and precious promises, to strengthen the hands and encourage the hearts of the believers. Ver. 32. "He that spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" The gift of Christ is always represented as the highest possible proof of God's love to man. The more we consider it, the more we are filled with wonder and admira-





tion. With this manifestation of divine love in full view, our fears subside, and our hopes rise into holy assurance. Hence the apostle proceeds, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Our hope hangs on this golden chain, all the links of which are firm and inseparable. Here is a ladder the top of which reaches to heaven, and as the believer ascends it, every step widens his prospects and increases his joy.

I. Let us inquire what is implied in Christ's sitting at the right hand of God.

1. It implies his nearness to God as our great High Priest. With God is terrible majesty. So awful was the presence of Jehovah in the Sanctuary, that the people were not permitted to enter within the vail. Now the holy of holies was a type of heaven. There was the ark with the mercy-seat, the cherubim and the shekinah, or visible cloud of glory. The high priest was not allowed to go into the holy place, except he carried

the blood of sacrifice to sprinkle, and sweet incense to burn before the ark. Lev. xvi. 12, 13. He had the names of the twelve tribes engraven on his breast-plate, and offered supplications, while the people were praying without. Jesus our great High Priest, after dying as a sacrifice, entered not into the holy place made with hands, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. He stands nearer to God than the brightest angel, and bears the names of all his saints on his heart. The heavenly mercy-seat is sprinkled with his atoning blood, and perfumed with the incense of his merits.

2. Christ's sitting at the right-hand of God, denotes the great honour put upon him as our advocate and intercessor.

In infinite condescension "he took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." "When he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high." According to the customs of the East, the right hand was the station of honour. And who so

worthy of this distinction as our gracious Saviour and adorable Intercessor? Is he not the only begotten Son, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person? To him of right belong the greatest name and the highest place, "that in all things he may have the pre-eminence."

3. Christ's sitting at the right hand of God, denotes his power and authority as our Mediator and Redeemer.

They are grossly inconsistent, who give the most exalted and glorious names to Jesus Christ, and yet deny that he has power and influence answerable to them. Can we separate his dignity from his extensive dominion? Are the honourable titles he wears empty unmeaning distinctions? For what is right without might, or authority placed in feeble hands? Mere mock majesty. Far be it from us to entertain ideas so unworthy of him. Those whom he has ransomed by his death, he will assuredly purify as a peculiar people unto himself, and put them in possession of eternal glory. He has declared that none of those whom the Father gave him shall perish, but he will raise them up to immortal honour and

happiness in the last day. He is not a nominal Redeemer, with shadowy authority and figurative dominion. In the character of Mediator, "All power in heaven and earth is given to him, and he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, even the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them."

II. Let us consider the intercession of Christ.

To intercede for another, is to espouse his cause, to plead on his behalf, either for the purpose of averting deserved punishments, or procuring desired blessings.

1. The intercession of Christ is perfectly *voluntary* and *free*.

When you have offended a fellow creature whose power you dread, and whose anger you cannot assuage, you may, by earnest entreaty, find a friend who will step forward, and urge your suit for pardon and reconciliation. It is often difficult however, even by the most diligent inquiry and pressing solicitude, to obtain such an intercessor, whose talents and opportunities

fit him for the work. Or if you have a cause of great importance, which you are unable to manage, you may hire an advocate who will appear in court, and plead merely for his reward. In such a case, his own interest, and not yours, is the motive which actuates and animates him. Take away the fee, with every hope of recompence, and his lips are sealed in silence. But Jesus, unsolicited, freely became our Intercessor. Moved by his own compassion, and influenced by love which passeth knowledge, he cheerfully sustains this office, and acts as the only friend of sinners. When we were enemies to God, and condemned by the sentence of his righteous law, this divine Advocate undertook our cause, and pleads for our forgiveness and salvation in the presence of his Father. Had it been necessary to engage him on our part, by offering a reward, all hope must have failed, because we were indebted and undone, and had nothing to give. But O the amazing condescension, the unmerited grace, and infinite love of Jesus! As a Surety he suffered to save us from eternal death, and as a Mediator he employs his glorious power to raise us to everlasting life. Through him



we all have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Every office he fills, and every work he performs, discovers his rich unbounded grace.

2. The intercession of Christ is most *effectual* or *prevalent*.

Of this we may be assured, when we consider his fitness for this office, and the manner in which he is represented as fulfilling it.

Jesus our Intercessor is *infinitely wise*, and therefore well qualified to plead for us. Sometimes a cause is ruined through want of skill in the person who is to advocate it. But Christ is perfectly acquainted with all our conditions, infirmities, dangers, wants, and woes. There is not a case of distress, or perplexity, unknown to him. He sees not only our outward troubles, but also our inward conflicts. He enters into our desires, as well as hears our prayers. Besides, he perfectly knows the will of the Father, and his designs of mercy. How vain is the dependence which Papists place in the intercession of the virgin Mary and the saints in glory. We have no assurance that they know any thing of our concerns and particular circumstances. "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man ;"



and it is highly dishonourable to Christ to trust in angels or saints, as though his intercession were not sufficient.

Jesus Christ is full of *sympathy* and *tenderness*. While on earth, he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and now that he is in heaven, he has a heart to pity and plead for his suffering followers. He is a friend who can from experience enter into all our trials and afflictions. He is an Intercessor, mighty in power, and matchless in tenderness. O how admirably is he fitted to stand between us and offended majesty! Nearly related, both to the Father with whom he intercedes, and to us for whom intercession is made, the nature of each is joined in his person. As a brother, he has a lively sympathy with man, and as a prince, he has power with God, and prevails: Heb. iv. 14, 15. "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

Jesus Christ is not only tender, but *faithful*.

We may find an advocate who has both skill and power to plead for us, and yet cruelly disappoints our hopes, by promising what he never attempts to perform. This is not the character of our heavenly Advocate. His word may be trusted, for it has been a thousand times tried and always found sure. He is mindful of his promises, and cannot deceive us. The apostle therefore calls him "a merciful and faithful High Priest over the house of God."

Have we then any reason to fear that the intercession of Jesus will be ineffectual? Is he not every way qualified for the work in which he is engaged? It is expressly said, our great High Priest "entered into the holy place not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us." That precious blood speaks better things than the blood of Abel, and pleads for our pardon and life. History relates, that when Echylus was accused, and on the point of being condemned, his brother Amintus undertook to be his advocate. Amintus had fought many

## CHRIST OUR INTERCESSOR.

battles, and merited much by his service the country. Having lost his hand, he went into court, without speaking a word, he lifted up the stump of his arm, a sight of which, the judges were so moved and affected, that they immediately set his brother free. And shall not the success of Jesus be successful, who now appears in the midst of the throne as a lamb that has been slain? Will the Father, who was pleased with his sacrifice, refuse his requests? No, the efficacy of his atonement ensures the prevalence of his intercession. We often ask and receive not, because we ask amiss, but never does Jesus plead in vain.

3. The intercession of Christ is *perpetual*. The priests under the law were not suffered to continue by reason of death. When one fell, another was raised up to take his place, and as the several individuals were frail and mortal, so the whole line of succession was to be soon set aside and abolished. Jesus Christ, because he continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. The priesthood of Melchizedech is in this respect infinitely superior to the order of Aaron.

There is another circumstance to be noticed, upon which great stress is laid. The high priest under the law, even while he continued in office, entered the holy place with the blood of sacrifice only once a year. This was regularly done, according to the divine appointment, on the great day of atonement. The very same sacrifices and solemnities were repeated from year to year. We herein see the comparative imperfection of the Levitical priesthood. But Christ, after he had by one offering perfected all them that are sanctified, for *ever* sat down at the right hand of God. *There*, while surrounded by the loftiest angels bowing at his feet, he kindly remembers the poorest of his saints on earth. *There* he manages the concerns, and maintains the rights of his church below. *There* he constantly presents our petitions, with the incense of his own merits, before the Father. You may have a friend intimate with an earthly prince, who cannot be always in the palace. Perhaps in the very hour of your extreme necessity, he is far away. You burst into fruitless complaints and unavailing wishes, how shall I go to the king without one to introduce me, and recommend my pe-

tition? O if I had my friend and intercessor, how speedily would I approach the royal throne, and embrace the golden sceptre, but alas! he is absent, and I know not where to find him. The believer has never to make such complaints. In all his straits, difficulties, afflictions, and tribulations, his help is at hand. He cannot knock at the door of mercy when his Advocate is absent. His best friend is always in the court of heaven. On this point the apostle lays an emphasis, for it is that on which our safety turns. "Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us."

#### APPLICATION.

1. The continual intercession of Christ at the right hand of God ought to fill our souls with a deep sense of the evil of sin. We are vile apostates, alienated from God, polluted with iniquity, and utterly unfit for the divine presence. When we contemplate the awful justice and glorious majesty of Jehovah, may we not exclaim, "Who can stand before this holy Lord God. Even the heavens are not pure in his sight, and



he chargeth his angels with folly." Through sin we are far from God, and without a Redeemer should have been separated from him for ever. It was death to the Israelites to enter into the holy place, or even to touch with unhallowed hands the ark of the covenant. There was no approaching the mercy-seat, but through the ministry of the high priest, who carried with him the blood of atonement, and a cloud of sweet incense rising from the burning censer. They were thus taught the profound reverence due to that God, before whom angels veil their faces in their wings. "Who is like unto the Lord, glorious in holiness and fearful in praises? He is of purer eyes than to look on iniquity." How then could sinful mortals draw near to him without a Mediator? O what reason have we to be humbled at the remembrance of our guilt and pollution! The divinely appointed method of reconciliation should remind us of our aggravated rebellion! The very merit of Jesus should impress our hearts with the desert of sin!

2. The intercession of Christ at the right hand of God ought to make us decided, undaunted, and zealous, in the profession of his gospel. Too many bear his name,



who neither wear his image, nor keep his commands. Dreading the ridicule of the scorner, and the persecution of the ungodly, they do not go forth without the camp to follow the captain of salvation, bearing his reproach. A timid time-serving spirit casts dishonour upon Christ. What! did he engage to redeem us, and forget his solemn promise? Did he leave the arduous work unfinished? Has he forfeited his claim to our gratitude and obedience? Did he descend into the grave to moulder there and see corruption? Christians, you know both where he is, and what he is doing. The eyes of your understanding enlightened by the anointing of the Spirit, you see him clothed with light and glory, continually carrying on his gracious mediation, to advance your best interests. And while he acknowledges you before God, will you not openly confess him before men? While he successfully pleads your cause in heaven, will you not boldly plead his cause on earth? Let it be made manifest, whose you are, and whom you serve.

3. The continual intercession of Christ at the right hand of God, affords the greatest possible encouragement to prayer. Prayer

is a necessary duty and valuable privilege. The command and the promise are joined together. "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." Be not afraid to venture into the presence of the Lord. No fiery cherub with a flaming sword stands to prevent you. The veil is rent, and the way to the sanctuary is now open. The mercy-seat is sprinkled, and there is much incense to mingle with the prayers of the saints. "Having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." When we attempt to pray, the subtle tempter may try to draw us from, or distract us in the duty. His fiery darts are shot at the soul, as it ascends on the wings of faith and prayer to God. Fear not this adversary, while Christ is your great Advocate. Let all your wants, and troubles, and fears be made known to God. "Come boldly to the throne of grace, that you may obtain mercy and find grace to help you in time of need." Are you sometimes ready to draw back from this duty, through a sense of guilt and unworthiness? Do you fall by surprise into

the snare of the enemy, and fear to look up to heaven? If through infirmity any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. Be constant, be earnest at a throne of grace. While life continues, you must renew your addresses to the God of all consolation. You have his express and faithful promise to encourage you. Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in the name of Jesus he will give it. If you are Christians, your own experience may animate you in this duty. You have found it good to draw near to God.

4. The continual intercession of Christ at the right hand of God should stir up our desire after heaven, and make us press towards it with greater diligence and ardour. He who bought us, is now preparing mansions to receive us. He will never cease to plead, while any of his ransomed people are in this world of sin and sorrow. And we know what he seeks and requests for them. "Father I will, that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." Happy they, who with uplifted eyes and longing hearts are waiting for the coming of their Lord. O Christian, thy prayers now enter heaven,

and are graciously received, and soon thy soul shall be there for ever. Thy path is thorny, but thy forerunner hath left the print of his steps, and made thee to hear his voice, crying, follow me. Dost thou not by faith behold the King in his beauty, and the land afar off? Dost thou not hear the music of heavenly harps? Dost thou not catch the fragrance of paradise wafted on the gales of the Spirit's influence? Look to Jesus now, and in a little while thou shalt live with him through eternity.

## SERMON VIII.

---

### ON REGENERATION.

~~~~~  
JOHN iii. 5.

*Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

~~~~~

THE discourse which Christ had with Nicodemus is recorded for our instruction. Here we have the most interesting and important doctrines of the gospel clearly unfolded and strongly enforced. Nicodemus was a Pharisee of considerable dignity, for he belonged to that council which then governed the Jewish nation. Having heard what great things Jesus had done, he wished an interview with him. Yet such was his fear of man, that he chose the night time for this visit, and doubtless hoped to be concealed by the friendly shades of darkness, from the jealous eyes of the bigotted

priests and persecuting elders. He was a teacher in Israel, and yet ignorant of the first truths of religion. When he went to Jesus, his soul was covered with midnight darkness. The Pharisees, in general, appear to have placed their religion in a number of outward ceremonies and forms. Our Lord began to open to Nicodemus the nature and necessity of that piety, which has God for its source, and the heart for the seat of its influence. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

I. Let us endeavour to shew what it is to be born again.

I would now entreat your most serious attention. Too many treat this doctrine with idle levity or open contempt. Others entertain wrong and dangerous notions on the subject. It may be proper to mention a few of these mistakes and false notions.

Some think that being born again means nothing more than being baptized with water. We grant indeed, that baptism is the outward sign of regeneration, but the inward and spiritual grace represented by it, is a death unto sin and a new birth unto



righteousness. It is strange, that any should suppose the application of water to the body is all that our Lord here meant. Even a child, who reads the Scriptures with seriousness and attention, may be convinced that something more than an outward ceremony is necessary to prepare us for the kingdom of heaven. Thousands have been baptized, who live and die in the grossest sins.

Others think the new birth means reformation of conduct. But when a vile reprobate breaks off his vices, and becomes sober and regular, is he then born again? Surely Christ would never introduce with such solemnity this doctrine, if it taught nothing more than a reformation of outward conduct. Besides, numbers have from mere motives of common prudence, forsaken their wicked practices, without paying any attention to religion. Some men were never immoral in their conduct, but even they must be regenerated or they cannot be saved.

It is a false notion to maintain, that those only are born again, who are turned from Judaism or heathenism to Christianity. A man may be converted from one system of opinions to another, and yet never converted to God.

The new birth is an entire change, wrought in the soul by the powerful operations of the Holy Spirit, from which we begin a course of life holy, heavenly, and devoted to God. In this change the understanding is opened to receive divine knowledge, the will is drawn to a sweet compliance with the will of God, and the affections are raised to seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of the Father. The antient promise which God gave by Ezekiel, is fulfilled in regeneration. "A new heart will I give them, and a new spirit will I put within them." "If any man be in Christ," saith Paul, "he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." His former principles, pursuits, companions, and delights, are given up and renounced. Brought out of darkness into marvellous light, he is as it were, placed in a new world. He has new inclinations and desires, new hopes and fears, new prospects opened before him, new feelings produced within him.

The regeneration of the soul is wholly from God. A man can receive nothing unless it be given him from heaven. That the power of God may be the more readily ac-

known in this work, the change which in my text is called a new birth, is in other places spoken of as a resurrection or new creation. Eph. ii. 1. "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." "And ye are his workmanship created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works." Nothing short of Almighty power can impart divine life to a soul dead in sin. None but the Holy Spirit can renew our fallen nature and prepare us for heavenly enjoyments. Hence it is said, those who received Jesus "were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John i. 13.

We are unable to understand in what manner the Holy Spirit works on the mind, though his influence may be known by its effects. Water and fire have the property of cleansing and purifying. Hence the operations of the Holy Spirit are compared to the power of these elements. We read of being "baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire," and Paul speaks of "the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." To object to the influence of the Spirit, because it is mysterious, and not capable of being explained, is to trifle with

a truth of the highest importance. When Nicodemus heard of the new birth, he was astonished and said, "How can a man be born when he is old?" Our Lord says, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

But though God is the sole cause in the regeneration of a sinner, it is by means wisely appointed, and by methods wonderfully varied, that this glorious change is wrought. When Ezekiel prophesied to the dry bones, and said, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live," the dry bones began to move, then were covered with sinews and flesh, and at last stood up as a very great army. Thus when ministers preach to sinners spiritually dead, a divine power often goes forth with the gospel, to quicken and arouse them. 1 Peter i. 23. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

In regenerating the soul, the Spirit of God works in a great variety of ways. Sometimes the effects produced are sudden and

striking, at other times gradual, and only to be distinguished by carefully observing their uniform tendency. The renovation of some may be likened to a house, the shutters of which are thrown open at mid-day, when a flood of light darts into the room at once; in others it is like a house whose windows are open early in the morning, and the light increases gradually from the first faint dawn to the full blaze of noon. In both cases the light is equally precious, and certainly comes from the same sun.

II. Let us shew why it is absolutely necessary that we should be born again.

1. The depravity and corruption of our nature are such, that we cannot without regeneration be fit for the service of God on earth.

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” It is easy to understand the meaning of these words. By the flesh is intended corrupt nature. “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.” “Behold,” says David, “I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me!” Now it is said, they that are in the flesh, or in an unconverted state, cannot please God. They



love sin and dislike holiness. They follow their own vain imaginations, and eagerly grasp at forbidden objects. Paul tells us "the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." This is a dark but faithful picture. How many are there, who have no inclination to read the Scriptures, hear the gospel, or engage in the duties of meditation and prayer? How many abhor what God requires, and set their hearts on what he forbids and hates? How many attend to religion as a task, which they dare not wholly neglect, and yet never enjoy? And do not all these instances prove the carnal mind to be enmity against God? Many outward means may be used which check men in their career of wickedness, but cannot change their characters. The sense of shame may confound them, the dread of punishment may alarm them, or a regard to their present interests restrain them, while sin still reigns in the heart. "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." But how can this be done, while the lusts of the flesh are indulged, and the basest idols set up in the heart? Can a



carnal mind offer spiritual worship? As soon might we extract pure gold from vile dross, or draw wholesome streams from a poisoned spring. That we may be prepared to serve God with sincerity and reverence, we must be renewed in the spirit of the mind, through the power of divine grace.

2. The depravity and corruption of our nature are such, that we cannot without regeneration be fit for the enjoyment of God in heaven.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” The Lord will be the eternal portion of his people. But men in a carnal, corrupt condition, have no taste for spiritual and heavenly joy. The holiness of good men offends them, and they shun their company lest their own deeds should be reprov'd. Now, if these stars hurt their eyes, how can they bear the sun? Could wicked men be admitted into heaven, they would there find no joy. A paradise of sensual pleasures, like that which Mahomet promised his followers would suit them, but the kingdom of God is fit for none but the saints. It is absolutely impossible that we should be made happy, if we be not first made holy.

Here I would faithfully address myself to the consciences of all. O consider seriously the doctrine you have heard, and feelingly lay it to heart. Let not toys and trifles divert you; let not worldly gains and cares entangle you; let not false notions and flattering errors delude you. It is of infinite importance that you know what you are by nature, and what you must be by grace, to fit you for the service of God now, and his presence for ever. Have you reason to conclude you are yet in an unregenerate state? And what would become of you, if the stroke of death should suddenly cut you down? Excluded from heaven, the gloomy dungeon of despair must be your dwelling place. Say not this is speaking harshly and uncharitably. Let me beg you to weigh well the doctrine of Christ in this chapter. How solemn, how pointed, how positive, and forcible are his words! "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." The faithful and true witness has laid the greatest possible stress on this important point. He knew how men would labour to pervert or evade a truth so disagreeable to

their corrupt and depraved minds. When Nicodemus expressed his amazement, our Lord, far from explaining away his doctrine, repeated it in still stronger language. And remember that not one jot or tittle of his word shall ever be made void.

III. Let us point out some evidences of the new birth.

1. He who is born again feels a deep, strong, and lasting hatred to sin.

It is possible to abstain from evil, and yet not detest it. Many cease to practise iniquity, who still continue to love it. Nothing but a change of heart can make us thoroughly forsake sin, and flee even from the temptations which lead to it. That holy disposition which the Spirit of God produces, abhors evil for its own sake, and not merely from a view of its dreadful consequences. A regenerate man cannot deliberately embrace sin, whatever fair forms it wears, whatever profits it brings, whatever pleasures it promises. In this consists the excellency of the new nature, which every real Christian receives from above. 1 John iii. 9. "Whosoever is born of God sinneth

not; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." The carnal man does evil deliberately, habitually, with full consent and impatient eagerness. A Christian may be surprised and ensnared, or as the apostle speaks, "overtaken with a fault," but he does not rush into iniquity, or find pleasure either in committing, or reviewing sin. And here I would ask, have you this evidence of regeneration? Do you fly from sin as from a dangerous plague, or deadly poison? Do you dislike not only its bitter fruits, but also the stock on which they grow, and the secret root from which they rise? Do you hate vain thoughts, cast down high towering imaginations, and crucify the lusts of the flesh? Such an abhorrence of sin is a clear and sufficient proof that the heart is changed and renewed.

2. He who is born again, resolutely sets himself against the evil maxims, customs, and spirit of the world. It is expressly said, "the friendship of the world is enmity with God." Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God. The customs and pursuits of the multitude are

vain, foolish, and sinful. If you follow them, you must offend God. "Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed, by the renewing of your mind." Again it is said to believers, "Ye have not received the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God." It is true, if you will not join with ungodly men, they will join their forces against you. Hence arises a warfare, for none can without sharp conflicts enjoy inward peace. "Whosoever is born of God overcometh the world." Have you begun to engage in this warfare? Do you avoid those companies in which levity, folly, and vice are admitted? Do you entirely forsake the time-destroying amusements, and tumultuous pleasures of the world? Would you rather be despised by scoffers, than buy their good-will with base compliances? Can you bear the reproach of the cross, and hold fast the profession of the gospel without shrinking, though hated and persecuted on this account? As of old, "he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit," even so it is now. The true followers of Christ must not wonder if the world hate them, but rather rejoice that



they are accounted worthy to suffer in so good and glorious a cause.

3. He who is born again, feels a supreme regard to heavenly and divine things.

A new nature derived from God, ardently ascends to God. A saint longs for the presence, and rejoices in the favour of the Lord. Thus David speaks, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, therefore my lips shall praise thee." The apostle, writing to the Colossians, says, "If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." And now examine yourselves. Is the love of God shed abroad in your hearts? Do you "as new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby?" Do you value the ordinances of religion, as the means of grace and the channels of mercy? Do you own and admire the image of Christ in his people? Is it your highest privilege to hold communion with God? Are you concerned to live and walk by



faith? As a spark flies upward, so a principle of piety in a heaven-born soul has a uniform tendency to God. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Those who are born again have a relish for spiritual and heavenly blessings, and all who hunger and thirst for these blessings on earth, shall be satisfied with a fulness of joy at God's right hand for ever.

## SERMON IX.

---

### ON SANCTIFICATION.

---

TITUS ii. 14.

*Who gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

---

**JUSTIFICATION** is a change of state; **sanctification** is a work in which we experience a change of nature. It is the will of God, that those who are redeemed from the curse, be also delivered from the power of sin. It is a small matter to grant pardon to a condemned criminal, if he is sick of a mortal disease. He needs his malady removed, as well as his sentence cancelled. Sin has disordered and enslaved our souls. We are depraved, wretched, and utterly undone. It is the design of God in the gospel, to restore us, and make us holy, that he may render us happy. For this purpose, Jesus

---

Christ shed his precious blood on the cross, and commanded his ministers to publish peace, and beseech sinners to be reconciled to God. To answer this end, he sends his Holy Spirit from above, and makes his people willing in the day of his power. Though they are far off, he brings them nigh; though they are impenitent, he melts them into godly sorrow; though they are in bondage, he sets them free; though they are stained with crimes, he adorns them with the beauties of holiness. In treating on the work of sanctification, I shall

I. Consider the nature, necessity, and happy effects of that purity which Christ imparts to those whom he has redeemed.

There is a great difference between outward decency and inward holiness; for the latter excels the former, as much as gold excels glittering tinsel, and painted toys. A worldling may be moral, but a Christian must be holy. And here let us guard against false ideas. Holiness consists in what the Scriptures call "a clean heart and a right spirit." The purity of which the real Christian is made a partaker, is a conformity to God. His nature is perfectly holy, and his

laws are all holy, and just, and good. The image of God was at first impressed on the soul of man. But sin has blotted out this fair image, and by the work of sanctification only it is gradually restored. The apostle calls this purity "the putting on of the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." It is said, "the natural man receiveth not the things of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." He has no taste to relish the blessings of the gospel. He is deaf to the voice of truth, and blind to the beauty of holiness. But the grace of God works a change in the heart. The powers and faculties of the mind are then improved and refined; and the passions and feelings of the soul are moved and animated with heavenly objects. In proportion to the degree in which we are thus transformed, we delight in the law of the Lord, and raise our affections from creatures to the Creator, we "worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh." Where holy desires are enkindled, holy dispositions implanted, and holy tempers cultivated, there are seen the lovely fruits of pure religion. Then the principles of the

gospel are duly prized, and its duties conscientiously practised. Various are the degrees of holiness, but simplicity and godly sincerity are essential to its very nature. All the saints of the Most High are renewed in the spirit of their mind. They make the will of God their rule, and the glory of God their end. They labour to cast down high imaginations, and subdue self-sufficiency, "not fashioning themselves according to their former lusts in their ignorance," but remembering they are called to be holy, that they may be "blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom they shine as lights in the world."

Perhaps you are ready to say, certainly holiness is valuable, though it is by few properly valued; it is an ornament to the Christian, though it is by many vilified and covered with contempt. We answer, yes, it is not only valuable, but absolutely necessary to give value to every thing else. It is not a single excellency, but a bright constellation of all the graces of the Spirit. It not only adorns, but constitutes the christian

character. Without it, your religion is nothing more than a lifeless form, an empty name, a visionary delusion. There are some kinds of knowledge, and some rapturous exalted degrees of spiritual enjoyment, which very few can attain in this life. Great talents and bright gifts are sparingly distributed. Our consolation however is, a man who is destitute of these may be a sincere Christian. But without purity of heart, there can be no true piety. God is "glorious in holiness," and cannot look on iniquity without abhorrence. "We all are as an unclean thing," deeply depraved and corrupted. How then can we appear before him, or lift up our faces without shame and confusion? As soon may we expect darkness to have communion with light, or fiends from hell to have fellowship with the angels of heaven, as that men in a carnal unconverted state can have admission into the fair unsullied mansions of eternal glory. By nature you are deeply polluted. Your souls are stained with crimes of scarlet dye, and if Christ wash you not, you will have no part with him. O think seriously and frequently on the plain, positive, and affecting declaration of the



apostle, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

We may see the blessed effects of that purity which Christ imparts. We have considered it as an inward principle, but it never fails to regulate the conduct. In the text we find the subjects of sanctifying grace are said to be zealous of good works. They not only recommend good works, but also, according to their opportunity and ability, perform them. They devise liberal things, and diligently carry their designs into execution. "They visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and keep themselves unspotted by the world. While surrounded by the ignorant, the needy, and poor, a word of counsel and comfort, or a tear of pity, is not all they bestow. They bring their talents into use, and cheerfully imitate him who went about doing good. If you be holy as he who has called you is holy, you will prove it by evidences the most clear and satisfying. Your words will be seasoned with piety, and your works marked with the genuine stamp of charity. You will act from principle, and walk with prudence. Your conduct will be a blessing to the world, and an ornament to the church. Yielding all

your members as instruments of righteousness to God, you will have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

II. I shall now consider the Agent, instruments, and means, by which Christ carries on the work of sanctification.

The grand Agent in this important work is the Holy Spirit. Before Christ left his disciples, he promised to send the Comforter to them. Nor were their hopes disappointed. Happily for us, he abides with the church for ever. No other power could make us meet to be "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." The Holy Spirit re-prints the image of God on the soul. His efficacious influence new models the carnal mind, and rectifies the perverted will. He refines and governs all the desires, propensities, and passions of the heart. Hence we are said to be "saved by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which God hath shed on us abundantly through our Lord Jesus Christ." In every age of the church, sanctification has been carried on by the same divine Agent or power. While David was shedding tears of penitence over his past sins, he

earnestly sought forgiveness and purifying grace, in language which well befits the lips of every humble contrite sinner. Psal. li. 10—12. "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

The instruments and means by which the work of sanctification is carried on, are various. God does not need means, and yet he is pleased to use them. He is not confined to instruments, yet he generally accomplishes his work by them. Now if it is the sovereign will of God to employ means and instruments, we may be assured his wisdom must choose those which are best fitted to answer every end designed. The chief means he uses in preparing a people for himself, is the gospel. Thus Christ prays to the Father on behalf of his disciples, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." The word of God is pure, and when it enters the heart it becomes a holy operating principle there. The suitable commands, the pointed threatenings, and precious promises of the Bible, when applied by the Spirit, break the reigning power of sin. The ministry of the word was appointed

“to turn men from darkness to light, and from Satan to God” “Seeing,” saith Peter, “ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth, through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently. The ordinances of religion were ordained as means of grace, not only to instruct, but also to sanctify us. And afflictions however painful, are sent for the same important purpose. “The trial of your faith is much more precious than of gold, though it be tried with fire, that it may be found to praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” When God chastens us, it is not for his own pleasure, but for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness. How ardently then ought we to pray, that the divine Spirit may abundantly bless every instituted means, to take away sin, and transform us more and more into the likeness of God!

III. I shall now touch on the work of sanctification, with reference to its beginning, progress, and completion.

Paul, addressing those Corinthians whose early years had been spent in the vilest ex-

cesses, says, "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." O that the same language could be with truth applied to you all!

Is it asked, when does the work of sanctification begin? I answer, we must trace it back to the new birth of the soul. The Giver of natural life is likewise the sole Author of spiritual life. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The reason is, because "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." From a sinful stock nothing holy can spring. If you are not born again, you yet remain "earthly, sensual, devilish." No wonder then our Lord should so strongly insist on the necessity of regeneration, seeing it is the source from which all genuine piety proceeds. Far be it from me to intimate, that every one who has experienced this change must be able to mention the day and the hour when it took place. In most instances this is not possible, nor is it at all necessary. If we find the pulse of holy desire beating, and the cry of earnest prayer breathing out towards God, these are un-



doubted signs of spiritual life. Is this your case? We may confidently declare, that without God's quickening power, you would not have panted for his special favour.

Sanctification is a gradual and progressive work.

The Canaanites were driven out of the land, by little and little, to make room for Israel. The conquests of our Joshua, the great Captain of salvation, are carried on in the same way. In a soul renewed by grace, the dominion of sin is not destroyed at once. The judgment is not fully enlightened, the affections are not entirely purified in a day. The Christian has to deny himself, to crucify his lusts, and having many excellent promises to encourage him, he must "cleanse himself from all filthiness of the flesh and the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Our advancement in the divine life is most beautifully represented to us by various similitudes. Thus the Christian is compared to grain sown in the earth, in which is seen first the blade, then the ear, afterward the full ripe corn in the ear. His path is like the shining light, which gradually increases from the first dim dawn to the perfect day. In the beginning he is



a feeble babe, fed with milk, then a young man, full of strength, and at last a father, rich in wisdom and experience. We are therefore exhorted to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

And when will the work of sanctification be complete? Some indeed have professed to believe perfection of holiness attainable in this life. But who ever attained it? The language of Scripture clearly implies, that we shall have to wage war with our inward foes through the whole wilderness, till we come to the very verge of that Jordan which divides our present lot from the heavenly land. But death, which dissolves the union of soul and body, will remove us to an infinite distance from sin. The most secret roots and fibres of our depravity will be then entirely destroyed. The soul of the believer will carry no stains into another world, nor need any purgatory, according to the idle notion of Papists, to purify it with flames of fire. Thus the Lord begins, carries on, and finishes our sanctification, to the honour of his free abounding mercy.

IV. I shall point out the grand end of sanctification.

Jesus Christ redeemed us from all iniquity, to purify us unto *himself* as a peculiar people.

The word sanctify, often signifies to set apart to a sacred purpose. Under the law, the priests, the temple, and all its vessels were sanctified, that is, especially set apart for the service of God. The apostles do not lose sight of this idea, but frequently introduce it in the most striking manner. Peter addresses Christians in this language, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." Paul declares that believers are "the temple of God," in whom the Spirit dwells, and all of them "vessels of honour, sanctified, and made meet for the master's use." Shall we not then avoid the society of the wicked? Doth not the Lord set apart him that is godly for himself? Is it not profaneness to mingle with the multitude who follow evil? O what an honour hath the Lord Jesus put upon us! He hath

bought us, and claims us for his own. He is preparing mansions to receive us, and fitting us to enter those mansions. Eph. v. 25. "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, to behold my glory." These words include all the happiness we can desire, or God can bestow. "When he who is our life shall appear, then shall we appear with him, for we shall see him as he is, and be like him." We look forward to the time, when all our sighs shall be turned into songs, and all our present trials into eternal triumphs.

1. Let me now address a few words to the profane and profligate.

It is certain that you are entire strangers to sanctification. While you do evil with both hands earnestly, while your mouths are "full of cursing and bitterness; while your hearts are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, it is evident you can have no part with Christ, or portion among his people. The word of God condemns you; your own consciences, if permitted to speak, must condemn you. But perhaps you despise all solemn warnings and affectionate counsels. You have plunged so deeply into

vice and wickedness, as to drown all serious reflection. You glory in your shame, and boast of your very crimes. Ah! wretched creatures! how madly are you rushing on to ruin! Be assured, a brutish life will soon issue in a bitter death. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness." And how can you stand before the Judge of all? After trampling under your feet the Son of God, and doing despite to the Spirit of grace, how can you lift up your heads in the great day of accounts? O think, before you are carried by the rapid tide of folly and vice into the bottomless gulph! Awake, awake, from your sleep! ere the thunder of God's indignation confound you with horror! "Behold, now is the accepted time! behold, now is the day of salvation!"

2. I address myself to those who profess religion, and yet are destitute of holiness. You may have escaped the grosser vices of the world, and be still in your sins. You have had a religious education, and have never been given up to swearing, lying, fraud, drunkenness, sabbath-breaking, and lewdness. It is probable you glory in your strictness and consistency. But what avails

it to keep the conduct clear from broad blots and disgraceful crimes, if the heart be unchanged? You are of that "generation who are clean in their own sight, and yet are not washed from their filthiness." Is not guilt the same, whether it be varnished with fair colours, or exposed in all its naked deformity? Is not poison as dangerous in water distilled, as in the gross body? Beware you do not deceive yourselves with a specious appearance of piety. Go to the Lord, and earnestly seek his Holy Spirit, without whose influence you can neither know nor serve God aright. Exercise faith in Jesus, and say, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean."

3. I address myself to those who are acquainted experimentally with the sanctifying grace of Jesus.

Prove that you are new creatures, by "putting off the old man, with his deeds." Let it appear that you are a "peculiar people," by keeping at a proper distance from a vain and wicked world. Dare to be singular, when you cannot otherwise be consistent. If you follow every idle fashion or prevailing custom; if you yield compliance to the company into which you happen to



fall, whether pious or profane; if you are as proud and passionate, frivolous and selfish as others, how can you be accounted Christians? If there be not something peculiar and excellent in you, the true character of saints is wanting. Be concerned to maintain the honour of him whose life is the pattern you must copy. In the days of Tiberius it was thought a crime to carry a ring stamped with the image of Augustus into any mean or sordid place, where it might be polluted. And if you bear the image of Christ, how much more careful ought you to be, lest you contract any defilement, and open the mouths of enemies to blaspheme that worthy name by which you are called.

A desire of happiness is natural; a desire of holiness is supernatural. Let your *walk* be holy. Turn not into forbidden paths, however flowery and tempting. There the old serpent lurks; there the contaminating vapours of hell breathe. You cannot travel safely, but in the King's high-way of holiness. Wisdom and watchfulness must direct all your steps. Let your *conversation* be holy. There are some things which must not be named among Christians, for they fix the leprosy of uncleanness on the lips. Be-



ware of levity, wantonness, falsehood, and arrogance; for if these tincture your discourse, it will be debased. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying." If you can judiciously naturalize spiritual things, and spiritualize natural things, your speech will always carry in it a savour of grace and purity. Let your *meditations, motives, and aims* be holy. What you would fear to do before men, you must fear to think before God. Impure ideas can neither pass through the lips nor through the mind without leaving a taint. Labour then to exclude those thoughts which sully the imagination, and defile the conscience. Meditate on heavenly things, till the cloudy cares of earth vanish, and a gleam of sacred and serene light invest the soul. "And may the very God of peace sanctify you wholly : and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

# SERMON X.

---

## ON ADOPTION.

ROM. viii. 15.

*But ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*

THE characters which God assumes in his word, display his awful majesty, and his unbounded goodness. He is called a Judge, to remind us that we are accountable at his bar. All our actions, words, and thoughts, are registered in the book of his remembrance, and in the last day shall be brought to light before an assembled world. He is called a Father, to teach us that we are perpetually dependent on him, and indebted to his kindness for all we enjoy. Considered as the Creator, he stands in this relation to the wicked as well as the righteous. He is the Former of our bodies, and the Father of our spirits. Isa. liv. 8. "But now, O

Lord, thou art our Father : we are the clay, and thou our potter ; and we all are the work of thy hands." Here we view God as the fountain of universal being and blessedness. The meanest insect in the dust, and the highest angel in heaven, owe their existence and support to the same great Parent. It is in a more special sense that God is called the Father of the regenerate, or of all who truly believe in Christ Jesus. " But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name : which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John i. 12, 13.

We will shew what is implied in adoption, and then notice the character of the spirit of adoption.

#### I. Shew what is implied in adoption.

It was a custom among the Romans, in the apostle's time, for persons who had no children of their own, to take those of others into their family, causing them to bear their names, that they might afterward inherit their estates. Such as were thus received, were said to be adopted, and had all the

privileges given to those who were children by nature. This new relation, founded in mutual consent, was a bond of affection; and as on the one part, provision and protection were bestowed, so on the other, submission and obedience were rendered. Adoption, in a spiritual sense, is an act of God's free grace, by which those who were aliens and strangers, are introduced into his family, and through faith in Christ made partakers of the highest and best blessings.

When a man adopts any one, it is generally on account of something amiable and promising in the person chosen. Some agreeable qualities of body, or excellencies of mind, produce affection, and affection studies to raise and dignify its object. Such were the causes which moved Pharaoh's daughter to adopt Moses, and Mordecai to adopt Esther. But there are no excellencies naturally in us, on account of which God confers this honour upon us. We are alienated in our minds, and utterly unworthy of the least favour. In this matter human merit has no influence. Eph. i. 5, 6. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of

the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved." In civil adoption, there is a new relation, but not necessarily a new character. But all the children of God are made partakers of a divine nature. It is by virtue of a covenant union with the Redeemer, who is our elder brother, that we become interested in this privilege. None but believers are adopted. Nor is a cold general assent of the understanding enough; there must be the full consent of the heart, for "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation." Whosoever is influenced by this principle, is vitally united with Christ, and in some measure conformed to him. He is no longer "a stranger or foreigner, but a fellow citizen with the saints, and of the household of God." Such as are called and sanctified, be their outward circumstances what they may, feel themselves joined by the holy bond of brotherhood. Gal. iii. 26—28. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek,

there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female ; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

The blessings connected with adoption are many and valuable. The children of God have suitable instructions, abundant supplies, precious consolations, and seasonable deliverances. God himself has engaged to be their teacher, and to guide them in all their ways, by the counsels of infinite wisdom. And he who feeds the birds of the air, will surely provide for the household of faith. He does indeed permit them to endure sufferings, but makes all things work together for their good. They are encompassed with dangers, and assaulted by enemies, but he spreads over them the broad shield of his power, and keeps them as the apple of the eye. In a word, whatever is found in the inexhaustible riches of divine grace, or the unbounded regions of eternal glory, belongs to the adopted children of God. "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 : and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."



II. Let us notice the character of the spirit of adoption.

1. The spirit of adoption is a spirit of liberty and holy boldness.

A slave cringes to the cruel tyrant, whom he calls master. He stands at an awful distance, dreads the fierce lightning of his eyes, and the loud thunder of his voice, and trembles beneath the stroke of his barbarous hand. But a child comes before a parent with the greatest freedom. He sees himself welcomed with a cheerful smile, and treated with indulgent kindness. He suspects and shuns strangers, but eagerly flies into his father's arms. With him he feels at home, and enjoys the most delightful intercourse.

The man who is under the law entertains harsh and repulsive ideas of God. He hears his commands and threatengs with alarm; and views his power and holiness, justice and majesty, with dismay. As Adam, conscious of his crime, hid himself among the trees of the garden, so the wicked would be glad to flee from the presence of the Lord. But the adopted children of God are no longer under the law. They have done with the ministry of condemnation.

They behold God in Christ as a reconciled Father. "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage, again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby ye cry, Abba, Father." Do you not hear the echo of angelic voices singing, "Peace on earth, and good will to men?" Do you not see, by faith, the rainbow of the covenant encompassing the divine glory, as the certain sign of propitiation? O then linger not, nor listen to your fears, but "come boldly to the throne of grace, that you may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Is not the veil rent? Does not the great Intercessor plead for you? Do you not feel the operations of the Spirit? "And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." "A good man," says Austin, "although he serve is free; a bad man, although he reign is a slave; nor is he slave of one, but which is more grievous, of as many lords as of vices." Do you ask, how is this liberty obtained? What is the evidence of adoption, which gives us boldness in the presence of God? It is not by any outward ceremonies, and signs, by dreams, and visions, and voices, that we know ourselves to be the children of God.

“He that believeth hath the witness in himself.” He is sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. This sealing stamps the new name in the *white stone* of our adoption. Thus privileged, we find acceptance, and feel complacence, in the presence of Jehovah.

2. The spirit of adoption is a spirit of gratitude and love.

When it was proposed that David should marry the daughter of Saul, the mingled sentiments of humility and gratitude filled his bosom, and he cried, “Who am I, or what is my father’s house, that I should be son-in-law to the king?” But how little is the dignity of an earthly prince, compared with the glory of the King of kings? The monarch of an hundred provinces is but a faint image of greatness, a fleeting shadow of authority and power. He drops his sceptre, and like the beggar mingles with the dust. But O the honour of standing in a near relation to the eternal Jehovah, who “rules in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth!” The apostle could not speak of this privilege, without bursting into the language of holy admiration and wonder. “Behold what manner

of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" What is our nature but a mass of depravity? What is our life but a course of folly and iniquity? And shall we, vile worms of the earth, be raised to the rank of angels? Shall we, condemned rebels, be numbered with the children of God? Shall the heirs of hell become heirs of heaven? O mercy without measure! O love above expression, surpassing knowledge! And can the sons of God be insensible to such marvellous kindness? No, they love him who first loved them. Their hearts glow with gratitude, and they abundantly utter the memory of God's great goodness. They call heaven and earth to assist them in the work of praise? They summon all their powers, and sanctify all their passions and affections to this delightful employ. "Bless the Lord, O our souls, and all that is within us bless his holy name! Bless the Lord, O our souls, and forget not all his benefits!"

And are your hearts filled with love and thankfulness? Do you labour to magnify him, who hath raised you from your low estate, and given you a name and a place among his people? When you were out-

casts, he spread the mantle of his love over you, and called you into his house. When you were naked, he clothed you with the garments of salvation. When you were ready to perish, he gave you the children's meat, feeding you with the pure milk of the word, and the precious bread of life. O then, offer to him the sacrifice of praise. Let your cry be, "What shall we render to the Lord for all his benefits?" Poor is the best tribute of gratitude you can bring, yet let it be duly and daily paid.

3. The spirit of adoption is a spirit of tenderness and reverence.

A dutiful and affectionate child is anxious to avoid every thing which provokes the father's displeasure. He desires to know and obey his will. The very thought of having offended him melts the heart into unfeigned sorrow. Thus a true Christian feels touched with tender contrition, when he has displeased God. Does he turn aside to folly, yield to the tempter, or commit any positive sin, he is filled with bitterness, and covered with shame. He finds no rest, till he has confessed his transgressions, and humbled himself at the feet of his heavenly Father. Those who make light of sin, can



have no regard to the will of God. And how then can they have the spirit of adoption? "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master; if then I be a father, where is my honour? if a master, where is my fear, saith the Lord?" Though we are brought nigh to God, we must stand before him with reverence. Slavish fear is joined with hatred and aversion; but filial fear is closely entwined with affection and regard. A worldly man may often forbear to commit crimes, not because he dislikes sin itself, or reveres the authority of Heaven, which forbids it, but because he dares not risk his health, his credit, his comfort, his safety, which are all at stake. A Christian, when temptation is presented, instantly turns away, and cries, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Now let me ask, do you flee even from the appearance of evil? Do you hate sin because God hates it? Do you deeply mourn over those secret faults, which none but the searcher of hearts knows? Do you exercise yourselves, daily to keep a conscience void of offence? If you love sin, and by choice live in it, how can God put you among his children? If you have no tenderness of



heart to feel the evil of sin, no reverence of mind to fear the displeasure of God: if you can see abominations, without sorrowing at the sight; or hear curses and blasphemies, without being grieved for the dishonour cast upon the Lord's holy name; talk not of adoption, for you have neither part nor lot in the matter. So long as you love the garments spotted by the flesh, drink in the poison of iniquity like water, and follow the course of this world, we know to what family you belong, by the tenure of your conduct. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lust of your father ye will do." Those who are adopted into the household of faith, must have no fellowship with the wicked. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you; and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

4. The spirit of adoption is a spirit of prayer and supplication.

Prayer is the motion of the mind towards God. Prayer is the vital breath of the new-born soul. When the thief on the cross was impressed with a true sense of his state,

he presented his petition to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. . . When Saul of Tarsus was converted, it was said, "Behold he prayeth." Never does real religion enter the heart, but it breaks out, and rises up in devotion. We naturally call on Him in whom we believe, and cry, Abba, Father. The man who knows the aggravated nature of his sins, will, like the poor publican, smite his breast, and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" He who sees his danger, as ready to be swallowed up in billows of divine wrath, will cry, "Lord save, or I perish!" He who knows his manifold wants, and the emptiness of the creature, will cry, O my God, supply all my need from the riches of thy grace in Christ Jesus.

If you think prayer consists in mere lip service, you are greatly mistaken. It is the lifting up of the soul, the pouring out of the heart to God. Though you have few words, fervent desires will ascend upward, like sparks from an intense fire. And as a tender parent listens to the stammering babe, as well as to the full-grown son, so our God hearkens to the broken and imperfect supplications of the weakest believer.

In the prayer which Jesus has taught us, we begin by addressing God as "our Father who is in heaven." Is not this endearing title full of encouragement? Shall we knock at the door of our Father's house, and gain no admission? If we ask bread, will *he* give us a stone? No, there is not a blessing in all his stores, but he will bestow in answer to prayer. And do you cry to God? If you call not on him, he will not own you as his children. By neglecting prayer, or resting in a form, which employs the tongue, without engaging the heart, you prove yourselves far from God. On the other hand, earnest persevering prayer is an evidence of your adoption. O be constant and fervent in your supplications. Your Father is always near, and he never said to the seed of Jacob seek ye me in vain.

5. The spirit of adoption is a spirit of patience and resignation.

It is not necessary for a child to know all the Father does, nor is it becoming to pry into his secret designs. Some of the dispensations of Providence are dark and mysterious. Let us not be anxious to know why some things are appointed, and others permitted, which seem unaccountable. We

see but parts of his ways, and are incapable of comprehending the whole. It is enough for us to be assured, that "he is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working. Duty requires us to trust, when we cannot trace him, and say, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." Sometimes he is pleased to blast the objects of our delight, and dry up the streams of our earthly comfort. Our fairest prospects are often darkened, and our sweetest joys mingled with gall and wormwood. He visits us with the rod, and we are filled with grief and anguish. In these afflictions, shall we murmur and repine? Shall we conclude he hath forgotten to be gracious, or in anger shut up his tender mercies? Rather let us be still, and know that he is God. Let our souls be tranquil and quiet as a weaned child. Lord Bacon observes, that the pencil of the Holy Ghost has been more particular in painting the afflictions of Job than the felicities of Solomon, and this might be intended to teach us, that adversity is generally a greater blessing than prosperity. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth even as a father the son in whom he delighteth. Moreover, we have had fathers of our flesh, which

corrected us, and we gave them reverence, how much more shall we be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live." Can you completely resign yourselves, and all you have, to God? Can you glorify him in the fires? Do you desire that he would choose your lot, and guide your ways? Do you not only adore his sceptre, but also kiss his rod? Do you equally bless him, whether he gives or takes away; and love him, whether he smiles or frowns? Such resignation is the temper of a child, who can look up and say, "Father, not mine, but thy will be done.

6. The spirit of adoption is a spirit of expectation and confidence.

Believers have great things in possession, but still greater in prospect. What were the bottle and loaf of bread given to Hagar for her son, compared with the estate reserved for Isaac, the heir of the promise? What are the riches, and honours, and pleasures of those worldly men, who have their portion in this life, compared with the happiness of the saints? Believers are "begotten again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and



that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them." No language can justly describe this excellent and eternal inheritance. It is revealed in the promise, and reserved by the power of God; but fully to know its value, we must wait till we are called to possess it. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, what things God hath laid up for them that love him." We are now like heirs under age, to whom their estates are not yet given, but certainly shall be. In the world, we are strangers, and have here "no continuing city, but we seek one to come." We are troubled on every side, but going home. In our Father's house are many mansions, and blessed be his name, they are ready furnished to receive us. Delightful thought! how ought this consideration to cheer our drooping spirits, and quicken our progress! "Beloved! now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure." Do you walk by faith, and not by sight? In full



expectation of future felicity, do you draw off your affections from present fading objects? If heaven is your home, you will pant for it, and press towards it. If your treasure is above, your hearts will be there.

7. The spirit of adoption is the spirit of Christ.

I mention this last, but it is first in point of importance. "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren." As the impression on the wax corresponds with the figure of the seal, so the characters of the saints answer to the character of the Saviour. The stamp is not in all equally deep, or equally bright, yet the likeness, though faint, is now visible, and shall in the end be glorious and perfect. "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father." The word Abba means father, and the emphatic repetition of this endearing term, may denote the very strong, ardent, and lasting affection of those who enter into the honourable and advantageous relation signified by it. And is that mind

in you which was in Christ Jesus? Are you meek and lowly, gentle and kind, like him? Do you love your enemies, and pray for your persecutors, like him? "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" Beware of setting up a wrong standard, or judging by a false rule. A stranger may take his place with the sons of God, and deceive both himself and them, but he cannot deceive the Searcher of hearts. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his," and consequently must at last be shut out from his presence. May you all live to his glory now, and reign with him for ever. Amen.

## SERMON XI.

---

### ON CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.

---

1 JOHN i. 7.

*But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.*

---

It was said of Israel, "the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. They were not absolutely forbidden to have any dealings with other tribes, but were not allowed to intermarry or mix with them. God had chosen and separated them to himself as a peculiar people, and they were hedged round with special laws, that they might be preserved from the idolatries and abominations of the heathen. Israel was in this respect a type of the church. Believers are commanded to have "no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." They

are considered as a great family, nearly related, and closely connected, under the supreme authority of Him whose name they bear, whose honour they maintain, and whose will they obey. "One is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." The unity of the church is set forth in a beautiful manner, when it is compared to the human body, every part of which is necessary to the perfection of the whole. Christ is the head, and all his people are the members. "Now God hath set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him; and the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee, nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you—that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another." There must not only be strength and firmness, but also order and proportion; not only feeling, but also sympathy; so that whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or one member be glad, all the members rejoice with it. The New Testament shews us the unity of the church, not only in a striking figure, but likewise in an interesting

fact, for on the glorious day of Pentecost, when the Spirit was poured out, it is said, "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul."

I. I shall endeavour to point out the nature and importance of christian fellowship.

1. Christian fellowship consists in our having a joint interest in the same grand concerns, a call to the same duties, and a share in the same privileges, sufferings, and hopes.

The gospel allows no invidious distinction among saints. There are different ranks and different gifts, but as all were redeemed by the same blood, so they are all sanctified by the same Spirit, and interested in the same everlasting covenant. Whatever variety there may be in their opinions, and views on points of inferior moment, they all equally believe and embrace the grand essential doctrines of the gospel. Without such an agreement in principles, there could be no solid basis, or strong bond of union.

Christians are not allowed to bury their talents, and slumber at ease in Zion. They are called to various duties, and vigorous exertions. They are *fellow-subjects* of the

King of kings, and must unite to pay the tribute of homage and praise due to him; and yield cheerful obedience to his wise and holy laws. They are *fellow-servants* of the great Master of assemblies, and must labour together, and lend each other all the assistance they can, in carrying on the work he has given them to do. They are *fellow-soldiers*, enlisted under the banner of the cross, and commanded by the glorious Captain of salvation. Furnished with heavenly armour, each has his appointed rank, and allotted post, and must fight manfully against sin, Satan, and the world. In this holy war, there is much need of co-operation. Those who march in the front of the battle, and meet the fiercest assaults of the enemy, should not be deserted, but sustained and relieved by their friends, who are engaged in the same cause.

All Christians have fellowship, by participating the same high and important privileges. By the royal charter of liberty, they are all freemen. By the act of adoption, they become sons of God, and sit down in heavenly places prepared for them. The angels are ministering spirits, sent down as a sacred guard to keep them in safety.



“Such honour have all the saints.” The everlasting fulness laid up in Christ, is the storehouse whence they receive their comforts. They do all eat the same spiritual meat, and all drink the same spiritual drink. They have mutual fellowship in the various ordinances of the gospel. Among these may be particularly mentioned the sacramental supper of the Lord. What an aspect of venerable sanctity, what a character of striking significance does this institution bear! It is both a memorial of the Saviour’s sufferings, and a pledge of his future coming. If there is any thing which can make believers feel that they are the purchase of the same blood, and the monuments of the same grace; that they have one calling, one faith, one Father, and one home, it is the communion of the body and blood of the Lord. The first Christians “continued daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people.” Acts ii. 46.

Believers have fellowship with each other, by sharing both in the same sufferings, and the same hopes. We are called to sympa-

thize with such as mourn, and not only "rejoice with them that do rejoice, but weep with them that weep." No one must shut up his bowels of compassion, or wrap himself in selfish policy, to avoid being affected by the sorrows of his brethren. Christians are *fellow travellers*, and as their souls are often discouraged because of the way, those who are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak. If they behold some entangled in the snares of temptation, and others fallen through weariness, let timely assistance be given. Christians are *fellow-sufferers*, and none are more exempt from affliction. Through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of God. And if we be *fellow-sufferers* in the wilderness, and *fellow-heirs* of the promised land, we ought to be *fellow-helpers* in the toils and trials allotted us.

2. Christian fellowship consists in that social, serious, frequent, and animating intercourse, which pious men are so anxious to maintain.

Man was made for society. It was not good for Adam to be alone in paradise, and therefore God gave him a help meet for him. Religion does not destroy, but refine

the social principle implanted in our nature. "If," says one, "you will go to heaven, you cannot well travel alone. You must either find companions or make them; the Bible knows nothing of solitary religion." There have indeed been a few of a pensive melancholy turn of mind, who have shut themselves up in retired places, or gloomy caverns, where human footsteps were not seen, nor human voices heard, but their conduct is neither to be commended nor imitated. A hermit is like a branch severed from the stock on which it grew, a member cut off from the body to which it belongs. "Moses chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasure of sin for a season." He preferred the humble tents of Jacob to the wealthy palace of Pharaoh. David said, "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts. Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." When Paul, in his journey to Rome, came to Appii Forum, and found brethren who had gone to meet him, "he thanked God, and took courage."

Christian fellowship consists in such *serious and savoury discourse* as promotes edification.

Profligates associate to form plans or lay plots of wickedness. The spirit of perverseness is in their hearts, and the poison of asps is under their lips. Tradesmen meet together to contrive and conduct the affairs of business, and scholars to confer on subjects of learning. In such cases they may inform and assist one another. But Christians, in their social interviews, ought to be actuated by nobler motives, and aim at higher objects. The important truths of the gospel supply abundant matter for their conversation. The treasures which they find in the word, they must be ready to communicate. In studying to promote the soul-prosperity of each other, they need to carry with them an ample store of divine precepts and promises. These must be introduced with prudence, and applied with faithfulness and affection. And when even a word is spoken in season, how good it is! We are commanded "to consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the

manner of some is; but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as we see the day approaching.”

Christian fellowship cannot be properly maintained without *frequent intercourse*.

It has been observed, that friendship is revived and improved by short intervals of separation, but deadened and injured by long absence, and the same may be said of christian affection. Some believers, from their situation and circumstances, can seldom enjoy the society of their brethren, but when opportunities offer the privilege, it is cheerfully embraced. Amidst so many difficulties to be surmounted, so many duties to be performed, so many trials to be endured, where is the good man to be found, who does not frequently need a friendly hand to help him, or a word of counsel and comfort to direct and encourage him? At a time when profaneness and profligacy abounded, it is said, “Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought on his name.” Mal. iii. 16.



Christian fellowship consists in that social intercourse which *enlivens* and *animates*.

Even godly men sometimes meet and part without any spiritual profit. They hang their harps on the willows, and weep when they remember Zion. They neither cheer the sad hours of grief with the pilgrim's song, nor by sweet conversation on the promises. How enlivening is the communion of saints, when the love of God is their theme! Eternal love and redeeming grace strongly fix the attention, and absolutely fill the whole capacity of the mind. Then a vain world, with its trifles, disappears, and all heaven seems opened before them! Inexpressible raptures kindle in the soul, and cause it to aspire after glory, honour, and immortality. What a delightful opportunity of social intercourse had the two disciples with Jesus, in their way to Emmaus! It was a journey to be remembered to the end of life. They could not speak of it without gratitude, nor think of it without joy. "And they said, one to another, did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?"



II. I shall point out what is necessary to qualify us for christian fellowship.

It is well known, that some substances may be brought together, which can never blend and unite. The righteous and the wicked may dwell under the same roof, but as they have opposite interests, sentiments, and hopes, it would be absurd to expect any mutual attraction, or intimate connection. Congenial minds, or kindred spirits only, can have communion with each other. There must be knowledge, purity, and practical piety, to qualify us for christian intercourse. These are all included in the language of our text. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another."

1. Light is an emblem of knowledge. The uninformed and ignorant are said to "sit in darkness, and the region of the shadow of death." False teachers are called "blind leaders of the blind." Christ is "the true light," the "sun of righteousness," the great Prophet and Guide of his church. If we are not made "wise unto salvation," by faith in Jesus; if we are not made to "discern and approve things which are excellent;" if "the eyes of our under-

standing" are not "enlightened to know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints," we are quite unfit to hold communion either with him or them. When strangers from distant countries meet in company, they are very uncomfortable, because unacquainted with each other's language. They cannot converse so as to communicate their thoughts and feelings. Now those who are strangers to true religion do not, if I may so speak, understand the speech of Zion. They have not learned the statutes, laws, liberties, and privileges of Immanuel's kingdom. While they remain in a carnal state, they are incapable of entering into the nature, or estimating the value of heavenly blessings. For "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." And has the day-spring risen in your souls? Have you received the truth in love? Has the unction of the Divine Spirit opened your understanding, and caused you to admire and value spiritual things? Can you say, "One thing I know, whereas I was once blind, now I see?" Walk then in the

pleasant paths of wisdom, and the saints of God will gladly bear you company. And be it ever remembered, that your communion will increase in interest, in proportion as you "grow in grace, and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

2. There must be purity, to qualify us for christian fellowship.

Wicked men are called children of the night, and their deeds are called works of darkness. They love and practice sin. Believers, on the other hand, are called children of light, because they are spiritually-minded. God puts a difference between his people and the world, and commands his servants to take forth the precious from the vile. Is it asked, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall dwell in his holy place?" the answer is, "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul to vanity, nor sworn deceitfully." Those whose eyes are full of adultery, that cannot cease from sin; whose mouths are full of falsehood and profaneness, pouring out lies and oaths; whose hands are full of fraud, and mischief, and violence, are utterly unfit for the society of saints. Even characters esteemed sober and moral, where a

principle of grace is wanting, cannot savour the things of God. How often in company do such persons appear alarmed, if any thing serious is introduced. A hint of religion dropped in discourse fills them with disgust. Paul therefore exhorts us not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers, and gives good reasons with his counsel. "For what communion hath light with darkness, or what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?"

3. There must be practical piety, to qualify us for christian intercourse.

We must not sit, but walk in the light. Though we are translated from the power of darkness into the *kingdom* of God's dear Son, we are yet far from his *court*. Thither we must turn our eyes, and direct our feet. He marks out our path, and shines upon it, but if we suffer ourselves to be diverted into forbidden ways, we cannot there walk in the light of his countenance. We are called to active obedience. We must work while it is day. They that sleep, sleep in the night; but those who are of the day must watch and be sober; work and be diligent. Many have knowledge, who are destitute of holi-

ness and zeal. We hear some dispute for the truth, but never see them walk in the truth: when our Lord had been teaching his heavenly doctrines, he said, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

III. I shall propose some reasons, as motives to keep up and cultivate christian fellowship.

It is necessary to every believer, that he may maintain the life of religion in his own soul, that he may promote the prosperity of the church, and that he may give due honour to the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Would you, O believer, maintain the life of religion in your own soul, keep up and cultivate intimate fellowship with the saints.

Do you not often need a friendly hand to point out your way, to lighten your load, or lift you from the miry clay? "Two are better than one; for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up." Sometimes you may be troubled and tried in a new manner, and be ready to cry, Surely my case is singular. Never was any one tempted and afflicted



like me. But by relating your experience to others, you will find, "that as face answereth to face in water, so the heart of man to man." Do not despise the day of small things in your brethren. A torch may be lighted by a feeble taper, and a father may gain instruction from a lisping child. "Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel." Have you never found your spirit thus revived and comforted? Have you not experienced, that christian fellowship divides our griefs and doubles our joys. Though you are passing through a vale of tears, and a wilderness of thorns, doubtless you have some jubilee days, some seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. And when your soul is tuned to hymns of gratitude, will it spoil the melody, if others join in concert? No, rather should you not call upon your friends, and say, "Come let us sing unto the Lord, let us exalt his name together." Or if you are cast down and distressed, can you not with them look forward to the time when you shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the redeemed in the kingdom of heaven?



What though your winged hours of bliss have been,  
 Like angel visits, few and far between,  
 Hope's soothing charm shall every pang appease,  
 And cheer when pleasures lose their power to please.

2. Would you *promote the prosperity of the church*, keep up and cultivate intimate fellowship with the saints.

Are you not a citizen of Zion? God has indeed promised to establish her, and make her the joy of the whole earth, but this must be effected by instruments. And will you not contribute your part to build her walls, and beautify her palaces? "Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! O then give yourself wholly to the Lord, and to his people, according to the will of God. Be their companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. Join them to seek the prosperity of Zion. Do not reject them whom God has received, or offend one weak brother for whom Christ died. Let your time and your talents, your gifts and your graces, be employed to promote the welfare and happiness of the church. Say not, What can I do? Wherein can such a worm as I am be useful? Are there no feeble hands that you can strengthen? no fearful

hearts that you can encourage? Have you no tear of compassion to drop over the mourner, no mite of bounty to bestow on the needy? Or, if you cannot soothe the sorrows of the afflicted, you can touch some string in the harp of praise; or you can strive together with God in prayer for the faith of the gospel.

Would you give *due honour* to the *Lord Jesus Christ*, keep up and cultivate intimate fellowship with his saints.

He has commanded us to love one another, to receive one another, and to bear one another's burden. Hear his prayer, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou Father art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Hear his promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world!" Are not his commands, his prayers, and his promises, all intended to bind us to each other in the bonds of peace and charity? Are not his ordinances as so many sacred cords, to draw us to himself, and knit our hearts together in love? Those who despise the least of Christ's dis-

ciples, dishonour him. A captious and contentious spirit is directly opposite to the gospel. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine ye have learned, and avoid them. For they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words, and fair speeches, deceive the hearts of the simple." Let all who would honour the Redeemer, love, succour, and aid those whom he has ransomed and called. And may your conversation be as becometh the gospel. May you "continue stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Amen.

## SERMON XII.

---

### ON COMMUNION WITH GOD.

~~~~~  
GEN. v. 24.

*And Enoch walked with God.*  
~~~~~

THE very end for which man was made, was to glorify God, and enjoy him for ever. He only can bless us, who gave us our being. Sin indeed has separated us from him, and it is the great design of the gospel to bring us back, to reconcile us to God, and render us happy in his presence. It is wonderful condescension, that the eternal Jehovah should look upon us, and visit us in our low estate. Scarcely should we believe it credible, had we not the strongest language of assurance in the Scriptures, that such creatures as we are, could be brought to enjoy communion with God. 1 John i. 3. "That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have

fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

The first pages of sacred history give us a dark picture of mankind. The whole human race was corrupt, and the earth was full of violence. Enoch was a solitary light shining in darkness, a pattern of piety in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. There is very little said of him, but that little is highly interesting. The leading features of his character are strongly marked, and bear the fair traits of the divine image. "Enoch walked with God, and he was not: for God took him." Enoch and Elijah were the only persons privileged with an entrance into heavenly glory without passing through the gloomy valley of the shadow of death.

I. Let us inquire what is implied in walking with God, or having communion with him.

The language of Scripture is figurative. God has used similitudes by the ministry of his prophets and servants. This method of teaching is admirably suited to our capacities and circumstances. When spiritual things are clothed in language borrowed from sensi-

ble things, they more effectually engage the attention of the mind, and leave a deeper impression on the memory. When it is said, "Enoch walked with God," we may easily understand what is meant by the passage. If two persons by choice walk together, it implies friendship, and evinces that they find pleasure in each other's company. Familiar and frequent interviews increase their intimacy, and strengthen their mutual attachment. Thus to walk with God, is to hold sweet fellowship with him. This duty requires the exercise of lively faith, of holy love, of humble and ardent devotion.

1. To have communion with God there must be a lively faith.

When we read of walking with God, we must carefully exclude all low and gross ideas from the mind. He who made us, and all things in the world, is a pure and infinite spirit. We cannot walk with him as one man walks with another. In this exalted communion, there is not a visible form presented to the eye, nor an audible voice sounding in the ear, nor any of those sensible signs by which we converse with our fellow mortals. "No man hath seen God at any time, yet the only begotten Son who



is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." By believing the unerring testimonies of the word, we become acquainted with God, and interested in his favour. We have the fullest persuasion of his being, power, and providence; of his all-seeing eye, his upholding hand, and his abounding mercy. Faith is therefore, if I may so speak, a new sense. Till we have this new and comprehensive sense in the soul, we shall have no just and affecting apprehensions of God, or consistent ideas of true religion. "Faith," says Paul, "is the evidence of things not seen." It enables us to behold the glory of God, to hear his call, to taste his goodness, and feel his divine presence. Hence we may learn, why faith is in the Scriptures represented as so necessary and important. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," and by the wonderful discoveries made to him, he is as one placed in a new world. It was by faith, that Moses renounced the pleasures of sin, and opposed the king of Egypt, for "he endured as seeing him who is invisible." Men may have notions and opinions of God, and yet be absolute strangers to fellowship with him. Fancy is content with shadows,

but faith embraces the substance. We cannot walk with God, unless we walk by faith. The unbeliever never makes one step towards approaching God. "By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death, and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." Then it is immediately added, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Heb. xi. 5, 6. When we compare this passage with the text, it must be confessed that no one can walk with God, who does not cordially believe his word.

2. To have communion with God, there must be the exercise of holy love towards him.

Men in a natural state, are said to be "alienated in their minds, and enemies to God, by wicked works." So long as they remain in this state, they are in love with sin, and in league with the world. The language of their hearts is, "Who is the Almighty, that we should serve him; and what profit shall we have if we pray unto him? Therefore they say unto God, depart from us, for we desire

not the knowledge of thy ways." After Adam had eaten of the forbidden fruit, he wished not communion with his Maker, and when he heard his voice, he hid himself among the trees of the garden. God is light, but we are by nature darkness; God is love, but we are full of hatred, and envy, and strife; God is glorious in holiness, and we are all as an unclean thing. The carnal mind is enmity against God. Now while this enmity continues, there can be no communion. "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" It is absolutely necessary to be reconciled to God, that we may enjoy fellowship with him. The grace of our Lord Jesus renews and sanctifies the soul. It is thus we become spiritually-minded. The love of God is shed abroad in the heart, by the Holy Ghost which is given to us. When a spark of heaven is kindled within, then the desire of the soul is towards God, and the remembrance of his name. The very essence of divine communion is in the manifestation of mutual love. While the eternal Jehovah is causing the streams of his marvellous loving-kindness to flow down to us, we lift up our hearts to him in warm returns of gratitude

and affection. We lay fast hold of his precepts and promises, and cleave to him as our only helper, our best friend, and our everlasting portion. "If a man love me," said Jesus, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." John xiv. 23.

3. To have communion with God, there must be the exercise of humble and ardent devotion.

Pride is the inveterate enemy of prayer. It poisons the spring of action, and alienates the heart from religion. "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God; God is not in all his thoughts." If you are wise in your own eyes, and righteous by your own works, ready always to catch the breath of flattery, but averse to wholesome counsel and reproof; if you are full of overweening opinions, swelling imaginations, and haughty tempers, you are far from God, and objects of his abhorrence. "The high and lofty One, who inhabits eternity, dwells with him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at his word." If you see yourselves to be lost and ruined sinners; if you feel-

ingly confess your total depravity and utter unworthiness ; if you renounce all self-dependence, and shrink into nothing, in the full view and contemplation of that Being whose glorious majesty overpowers the holy angels and the highest seraphim, then are you in a proper frame of mind for devotion. Be not afraid to venture into the divine presence, for you have the invitations and promises of his word to encourage you. "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Though he is high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly, but the proud he knoweth afar off." You have a new and living way to the Father, and an able Advocate to plead your cause. Go then, clothed with humility, to him who is waiting to be gracious, and exalted to shew mercy, and he shall admit you to enjoy the light of his countenance, and share the rich blessings of his salvation.

If you have a deep sense of your sins, and a clear view of your wants, be frequent and fervent in your addresses at a throne of grace. Communion with God will be enjoyed in proportion to the degree in which it is desired. When he says, "Seek ye my face," do your hearts reply, "Thy face,



Lord, will we seek?" Do you ardently aspire after nearness to God? Do you freely acknowledge your transgressions, and spread your sorrows before him? Do you find relief in pouring out your souls to God? Devotion is something more than lip-service. Many draw nigh to God with their mouths, and honour him by their words, while their hearts are far from him." If you pray with sincerity and earnestness, you will receive answers of peace! If you often cry, Let thy mercies come unto me, O God, you will have tides of consolation abundantly flowing into your souls, for it is said, "Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." As devotion affords the means, so it fixes the measure of our spiritual delight. Those who are most with God, receive most from God.

II. Let us shew how we may be assisted in communion with God.

Whatever darkens the understanding and perverts the will, whatever wounds or burdens the conscience, whatever entangles our thoughts, and deadens our spiritual affections, hinders and interrupts our walk with God. There are ten thousand obstacles,



snares, and allurements, which ought to be carefully avoided.

1. To assist us in communion with God, let us embrace every opportunity of retiring from the tumults and pursuits of the world.

Religion does not require us to neglect the duties of our ordinary calling. We may be diligent in business, and yet fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. But we are apt to be distracted and overwhelmed by the cares of the world. Retirement is the region of peace, of purity, and of devotion. There the heated passions cool, the scattered thoughts are collected, and the contracted stains of guilt are purged away. From the vile character of his fellow men, we may conclude, that Enoch spent much of his time in solitude. He found a refuge in retreat.

The counsel of the Psalmist is, "Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart, and be still." And our Lord says, "Thou when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father, which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." These precepts are wholly neglected by the men

of business, who rise up early, and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness. Secret prayer is despised by the men of pleasure, who fly from amusement to amusement, and hope, by varying the scene, to cure that vexation of the spirit, which they cannot but feel amidst the vain toys and trifles of the world. Place before you the best examples. Isaac went out at evening tide, to meditate in the field. When Jacob had sent away his family, he was left alone, and earnestly wrestling with the glorious Angel of the covenant, he at length obtained the blessing. David could say, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips; when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches." But where is the field in which you have imitated Isaac, the heir of the promise? Where is the Bethel or Peniel, at which, like Jacob, you have wrestled with God, and gained the blessing? When did you choose the silent and solemn hours of night, for serious meditation and prayer? If you have found in retirement refreshing joys, you will remember such seasons as the brightest and best periods of your life.

2. To assist us in communion with God, let us diligently study his revealed will in the holy Scriptures.

It is a common saying concerning a person of an excellent spirit, the more you know that man, the better you will love him. And experience proves, that our conversation with friends becomes increasingly pleasant, as we more fully enter into their principles, and comprehend their views and characters. It is equally evident, that we must know God, to enjoy fellowship with him. We every where find traces of his power and wisdom, in the works of creation, but it is in the Scriptures, that his special favour and love are revealed. Here his purposes are unfolded, and his perfections illustriously displayed. Here, as in a glass, we behold his glory, and are changed into the same image. "Acquaint now thyself with God, and be at peace, thereby good shall come unto thee. Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thy heart." Search the Scriptures, that you may know what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. In this in-

valuable book, you have precept upon precept, and line upon line, while every precept marks your way, and every line points to Him who is the centre of all excellency, and the source of all happiness. He who never makes the Bible his companion, is a stranger to communion with God. In this respect, we have higher privileges than those who lived in the early ages of the world. Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, walked with God, but it was under an obscure dispensation. But the shadows and clouds are vanished. Blessed are your eyes for they see what prophets and righteous men desired to see, and yet never beheld. O how closely ought we to walk with God, who have so clear a light to shine upon our path!

3. To assist us in communion with God, let us constantly attend the public ordinances he has instituted.

If you wished an interview with a king, would you not go to the palace in which he resides? And has not God said of Zion, "This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell, for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her

poor with bread ; I will also clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall shout aloud for joy ?”

As religious ordinances have God for their author, so they have the union and communion of our souls with him, as their great end. When David was compelled to wander in the wilderness, the chief subject of his complaint was, his absence from the tabernacle of the Lord. His soul longed and fainted to see the power and glory of God, so as he had seen them in the sanctuary. Do not then neglect the house of the Lord, or undervalue the public means of grace. Say not, “O that I knew where I might find him, I would come unto him, even to his seat !” He has told you, that in Zion he dwells. “Where I record my name, thither will I come unto thee, and bless thee.”

4. To assist us in communion with God, let us earnestly seek the influence of the Holy Spirit. How apt are we to wander into the paths of danger and delusion, and wound ourselves among the thorns and briars, stings and scorpions of the wilderness ! How prone are we to leave the



fountain of living waters, and labour to hew out broken cisterns which can hold none! How weak is our faith, how languid our love, how faint our hope! When we attempt to read, or meditate, or pray, what backwardness, what heaviness, what distraction of mind, what insensibility of heart! Our souls cleave to the dust, instead of cleaving to the Lord! And who but the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, can heal our backslidings, and restore the joys we have lost? What but his influence, can strengthen our faith, revive our affections, and brighten our hopes? Is he not called the Spirit of grace and supplication? O let us seek his powerful operation, to draw us to the heavenly mercy-seat! We have found by experience, that we can stand no longer than we are upheld by the arm of divine grace; we can walk no farther with God, than we are led by the Spirit. The ordinances of the gospel are but as trees without fruit, or wells without water, if the Comforter be absent. In vain do you attend the means of grace, if you do not seek the grace of the means. Through Jesus Christ, both Jews and Gentiles have access by one Spirit



unto the Father. O let us daily seek the guidance and quickening power of the Spirit, that we may walk with God, and glorify his holy name.

III. Some considerations which ought to recommend the example of Enoch to imitation.

1. A life of communion with God is our best security.

Those who walk after the imagination of their own hearts, are always stumbling on the dark mountains of ignorance, or among the traps and covered pitfalls of vice. So long as they follow the course of this world, they are every moment in danger of falling into the bottomless gulph of despair. But those who walk with God, have their heavenly Guide and almighty Keeper constantly with them. He knows both their wants and their weakness. His eyes are continually upon them, and he will not suffer their feet to be moved. O Christian, walk worthy of thy holy calling. If thy lot is cast where Satan's seat is, let it appear that thou art of God, and therefore canst not turn aside to serve idols, and trust in vanity. Set

the Lord always before thee, and because he is at thy right hand, thou shalt not be greatly moved. Seneca recommended his friend to imagine Cato always present, that he might be thus influenced to avoid every thing base and dishonourable, and live a prudent and virtuous life. But how much greater are the motives of a Christian to watchfulness and circumspection? He knows that the eyes of Jehovah behold all the secrets of his heart. O how humble, how holy, how upright, ought his conduct to be, whose privilege it is to walk with God! Let us set no wicked thing before our eyes, but hate the work of them that turn aside, and never suffer it to cleave to us. Let us wash our hands in innocency, and wear unspotted the garments of salvation, seeing we live near to that God who is "glorious in holiness."

2. A life of communion with God is our highest happiness.

The pleasures of the world are gross, debasing, uncertain, and unsatisfying; but the joys of divine communion elevate, enrapture, and fill the soul. They are not mixed with bitter dregs or secret poisons.

“His money perish with him,” exclaimed an eminent Christian, “who prefers not one hour’s communion with God to all the riches and pleasures of the world!” The Queen of Sheba said to Solomon, “Happy are these thy servants, that stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom,” but how much happier are those who walk with God, and both hear his wisdom and taste his grace. “Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts.” The dignity and the delight conferred by this privilege, infinitely surpass all description. Cyrus once called two persons into his presence, and gave to one of them a kiss, and to the other a wedge of gold, and it is said, so highly was his love valued, that he who had the gold envied him who received the royal salutation. God, in his providence, bestows earthly blessings in abundance on many of the wicked. But shall Christians envy them, who have their portion in this life? No, every one who knows what pure religion is, and what it gives, will cry, “Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me.” “Thou hast put gladness into my heart,

more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.”

And where, my hearers, do you seek your happiness? Is it in the gratification of your senses, appetites, and animal passions? Is it in the pursuits, and pomps, and vanities of this wicked world? If such are your hopes and aims, you wish not to be disturbed by hearing any thing of God and religion. You neglect prayer, and live like atheists. Perhaps you think you could be very happy without Christ or his salvation, if your desires in this world might be indulged. Let me tell you, all this proves that you are under a strong delusion. It is impossible for you to be happy without God. If you live after the flesh, and die in your sins, you must suffer the intolerable pains of eternal death. Seek the Lord then, while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. In a short time the door of mercy will be shut, and all hope of being reconciled to God entirely cut off.

3. A life of communion with God in this world, is the only way of being prepared for a better world to come.

It is to be feared, many entertain false

and flattering ideas of their own state. They think if they are not now exactly what they ought to be, it is an easy matter to repent on a death bed, and thus arrive safely in heaven. This is the rock of presumption upon which millions have made shipwreck, and yet no warnings are sufficient to arouse the careless, before the fatal shock, which at once opens their eyes, and plunges them into unfathomable deeps of woe. It is written, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." We must become new creatures in Christ Jesus, or else be shut out of the mansions of everlasting joy. The Scriptures exhort us to strive that we may enter in at the strait gate, to labour for the meat which endureth to eternal life, to put off the body of sin, and watch and wait for the coming of the Lord. And will a few transient prayers and death-bed confessions do all these? Is there now found a way to heaven so easy, that a momentary touch of penitence is enough to prepare us for it? Be assured, if you do not live the life, you cannot die the death of the righteous. True religion is the same now it was in the days of Enoch. It consists in the lively exercise of faith, of

love, and of devotion. It is by these you must be made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. None but such as walk with God on earth, shall dwell with God in heaven. Thousands of thousands have already entered into their rest! Be ye followers of them. Let their God be your God, and soon you shall behold his face in righteousness, and be satisfied when you awake up in his likeness.



## SERMON XIII.

---

### THE CHRISTIAN'S LAST VICTORY.

1 COR. XV. 57.

*But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

THE life of a Christian is always represented by similitudes, which imply the necessity of diligence, activity, and zeal. Is it called a race? we must run without weariness, till we win the great prize of our high calling. Is it termed a war? we must carry it on with vigour and fortitude, till we obtain a glorious triumph. We are admonished, not to be slothful, but “followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Thousands fearlessly rush into fields of blood and slaughter, to gain wealth, power, and renown. Life itself is hazarded for a little shining dust, or the empty breath of fame. Yet these poor re-

wards, so eagerly desired, are often lost, and cannot in any case be held long. But those who cordially believe the gospel, enter upon a warfare which must assuredly end in glory, honour, and immortality.

I. Let us consider the glorious and complete victory of the Christian.

In this holy war, the world, Satan, sin, and death, are the enemies to be conquered.

1. The world is an enemy over which the Christian gains a complete victory.

“Know ye not, that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?” Are not all believers bound to set themselves against the idle vanities, the foolish customs, the dangerous and delusive pleasures, of the world? If you do not follow the multitude to do evil, they will frown upon you. Your ears will be assailed with blasphemies, and probably your characters be loaded with calumnies. If you have not to face the heavy artillery of persecution, you must meet the light, but poisoned weapons of the scoffer. Yet in the hour of death, O Christian, you shall see the world subdued at your feet. You shall leave it not with the shame of a defeat, but with the triumph of a victory. Then

how gladly may you exclaim, "Ye empty vanities, ye anxious cares, ye wounding insults, ye fiery persecutions, ye have done your worst, and can do no more. Long has my soul been vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked, but now it shall no longer grieve me. Farewell injurious world, thy stormy tumults have lost their power to alarm. I am going beyond thy reach, thou canst not hurt me. Soon shall I be "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

2. The Devil is an enemy over whom the Christian gains a complete victory.

His very name, Satan, in Hebrew, signifies an adversary. And he is a subtle, mighty, restless, and malignant adversary. He is called a serpent, to express his guile, the prince of this world, to denote his power, a lion, to set forth his restless motions, and the evil one, to describe his malice. Such, in the scripture account, is the grand enemy with whom we have to contend. These representations are not to discourage, but to caution us. 1 Pet. v. 8. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary, the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour. We are not left

exposed to his assaults defenceless and forlorn. Lest Satan should get an advantage over us, we are made acquainted with his devices. His fiery darts, which may signify those wicked and blasphemous thoughts that are sometimes suddenly shot into the mind, and cause so much anguish, may be effectually repelled by the shield of faith. It is a comfort to know, that the great enemy is under the restraint of a superior power; that the combat is not of long duration; and that the promises and strength of our Lord are engaged for us. Satan may try us, but shall not triumph over us. "The Lord will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation make a way for your escape. The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." By the armour of the gospel, and the power of God, you will soon see this enemy cast down. And O how important and glorious will be the victory! You shall then have no more alarms to dismay, no more assaults to annoy you. The powers of darkness shall spread no more snares for your feet. Their temptations shall not harass you in duty, nor interrupt your

joys. As you enter the heavenly land, you will cast away your shield, for there you shall have no fiery infernal darts to quench.

3. Sin is an enemy over which the Christian gains a complete victory.

Sin is the nearest, most powerful, treacherous, active, and bitter enemy the Christian has to encounter.

A man's worst enemies, says the prophet, are the men of his own house. A foe within your walls can choose his time to strike, and repeat the blow. Now when sin is dethroned from the *heart*, it still lodges in our *nature*. It dwells with us, walks with us, rises and rests with us. Hence Paul says, "For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not."

Sin is the most *powerful* enemy. We read of the body of sin, which implies its strength and vigour. Its motions do work in our members, to bring forth fruit unto death. It often bursts through the resolutions set up to restrain it, as a violent torrent bears down its banks, and sweeps away every thing before it. Sin is also the most

*treacherous* enemy. Concealed by a thousand covers, it saps and undermines the foundation of our happiness. We are especially cautioned, to "take heed lest we be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." It blinds, brutalizes, and stupifies the soul. Sin is the most *active* enemy. When others are asleep, this foe is awake, and always employed against us. It molests us in the hours of leisure, and in the pursuits of business, in the devotions of the closet, and in the house of God. Sin is the *bitterest* enemy we have to encounter. What sorrows and sighs does it occasion! How many find by painful experience, that it is an evil thing and bitter, to depart from God! But though sin be an enemy so formidable, it is not invincible. You are required to gird up the loins of your minds, and abstain from those fleshly lusts which war against the soul. You must cast down imaginations, and every high thought which exalteth itself against Christ. You must fight, not uncertainly, as he that beateth the air, but keep under the body, and bring it into subjection. You are to exert every power without weariness, striving against sin. If you are not engaged in this spiritual warfare, you are strangers



to real religion. A principle of grace in the heart will oppose the corruption of nature. "For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other. I find a law in my members, warring against the law in my mind." Though the Christian in this combat may often fall, and receive many a painful wound, he shall finally prove victorious. The strong holds of iniquity, and even the body of sin shall be destroyed. None but those who know how arduous is the conflict, can form a just idea of the joy of conquest! The very prospect of it fires the believer with zeal, and fills him with consolation.

4. Death is an enemy over which the Christian gains a complete victory.

The solemn hour of dissolution is at hand. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." Through fear of meeting this formidable foe, thousands are all their life-time subject to bondage. In the book of Job, death is called the king of terrors. As a king, he has absolute dominion over the whole human race, and his terrors make the feeble frame of nature shudder. And what gives an aspect so gloomy, a power so terrific

to death? Why are so many means used to turn away his fatal dart? Why does the face grow pale, the voice falter, and the heart faint at his approach? In the verse before my text it is said, "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law." A consciousness of guilt makes death an enemy. How shall those who have broken the law, appear in the presence of their judge, without confusion and horror? But the Christian obtains a victory over the king of terrors. Nature may sometimes be agitated with fear, but when he looks forward by faith, he resumes his courage, and calmly waits for the stroke. He knows the body must sink into the pit of corruption, but his better part, the soul, is immortal. In the dark valley, the light of hope beams from heaven upon him, and discovers the golden gates of the New Jerusalem. While the frail tabernacle shakes, and every moment threatens to fall into the dust, he views before him, "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Having such hopes and prospects, he can exclaim, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

II. I shall shew how the Christian's glorious victory is obtained.

It is given through Jesus Christ. To the work which he finished on earth, and the office which he fills in heaven, we are indebted for our whole salvation. The world has been considered as an enemy, in the chains of which we are all naturally enslaved. "Ye were redeemed," says Peter, "not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers: but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot." A state of ignorance and superstition, and a course of folly and vice, are justly called vain conversation; and the sufferings of the Son of God only could rescue us from it. For Jesus Christ gave himself for us, that he might deliver us from the present evil world, according to the will of God. Gal. i. 4. Though he is seated on a throne of glory, he is not unmindful of us on the earth. Do you not hear him say, "Marvel not, if the world hate you; ye know that it hated me before it hated you. Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Is he not your Leader and Helper? Do you not follow his

steps, and enjoy his grace? Surely every Christian may say, "I can do all things, through Christ who strengtheneth me." While he is with me, I can, undismayed, meet the frowns and reproaches, or, duly warned, avoid the baits and allurements of the present world.

Through the death and resurrection of Christ, Satan and his infernal legions were conquered. One great purpose for which the Lord Jesus came into the world was, to destroy the works of the devil. He put on our nature, that "through death, he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." He took from the strong man, the armour wherein he trusted, led captivity captive, and shook the kingdom of Satan to its foundation. What a grand view of this subject does the apostle give in Col. ii. 15. "And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it." He entered heaven as a conqueror, and his triumph over the powers of darkness is the song of angels. O Christian, "resist the devil, and he shall flee from you." When this enemy cometh in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against

him. If a messenger of Satan be permitted to buffet you, be earnest and unwearied in prayer, and you shall hear the voice of Jesus whisper, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Most gladly therefore may you glory in infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon you.

Through the death and mediation of Christ, our victory over sin is obtained.

Do you ask, why was the Son of God made in the likeness of sinful flesh? Why was he numbered with transgressors? How easy is it, with the Bible in our hands, to answer these questions. Dan. ix. 24. "Seventy weeks are determined, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy." Jesus Christ bore our sins in his own body on the tree. He appeared in the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Here is the mystery, which was hid for ages from the Gentiles. Now is the believer furnished and prepared to subdue those embosomed foes which so often disturb his peace. But



how are the rising corruptions, and the powerful rebellious passions of the flesh subdued? Is it by the strength of nature, or the rules of morality, or the weapons of human learning? O no: these are as incapable of vanquishing the old man of sin, as the feeble hands of an infant are unable to withstand a giant. Your trust, brethren, is in the mighty God. "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Though vain thoughts and vile propensities may trouble you, they shall not finally prevail. You pay homage to the King of kings, and cheerfully yield the soul to his authority. Sin has still a place in your nature, but does not hold the fort royal of the heart. "Grace reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Through the death, resurrection, and intercession of Christ, we obtain a victory over the last enemy.

Jesus crushed the monster, whom none of the human race had power to resist. He took from death his envenomed sting. The king of terrors to believers has lost his power, and changed his name. Hence the apostle declares, that Christ hath abolished



death, and brought life and immortality to light. He was for a short time shut up in the gloomy sepulchre, but he burst the bars of the tomb, and rose from the dead as the first fruits of them that slept. He is the resurrection and the life, and at his command the earth and the sea shall give up the bodies of his saints. He who lives by faith, rises above the fear of death. He looks beyond the grave, and expects an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In the pangs of dissolution he gains a triumph superior to that of the greatest worldly hero. It is said the pious Ralph Erskine, though he had been much tried, yet in his last moments he lifted up his emaciated arm, and cried, Victory! and then expired. How do such instances invigorate our faith, and animate our zeal! "While the Christian conquers in death, let saints engaged in the conflict, let the spirits of the just, let angels of light and love shout victory! victory! Let earth and heaven ring with the joyful acclamation!"

1. Let me ask, have you entered upon this warfare with the enemies which aim at your destruction? You are either at enmity with

God, and in friendship with the world; or reconciled to God, and opposed to the world. If you are not for Christ, you are certainly against him. It is impossible to stand neuter. If you follow the manners, customs, fashions, and amusements of the giddy multitude, your character is known from your company. And if you are of the world, the world will love its own. While you go with them, you will have their smiles and favours, but the end will be beyond expression dreadful.

Do you resist the devil, or are you led captive by him at his will? Do you give credit to the God of truth, or to the father of lies? The old serpent generally allures by lurking amidst the flowers and forbidden fruits of sinful pleasure. The fiend of darkness can appear as an angel of light. But while you pray, "Lead us not into temptation," do you not often rush into the enemy's snares?

Sin is an evil worse than poison. Do you hate it, forsake it, and resolutely set yourselves against it? Or do you spare your lusts, and indulge your evil passions? Without conflict, you will have no crown. If these enemies are not destroyed, they will destroy you. But perhaps many of you are

engaged in the contest, only it is on the wrong side. You are fighting, not against sin and Satan, but against knowledge, against conscience, against duty, and against heaven. Wretched men! every blow you strike, must recoil upon your own heads. "Woe to him that striveth with his Maker! Who hath hardened himself against God and prospered?"

2. If you have entered upon a warfare with your worst enemies, are you properly armed and prepared to maintain the contest? It will be a vain attempt to oppose adversaries, so strong and numerous, so crafty and cruel, in your own strength. "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand in the evil day." Your feet must be shod, your loins braced with the girdle of truth, your heart guarded with the breastplate of righteousness, your head covered with the helmet of salvation, and your hands furnished with the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit. If a single part of this tried armour be wanting, you cannot stand. And above all, look to your Captain, who is both mighty and merciful to help you. "Be strong in the Lord,

and in the power of his might." It is said, the emperor Trajan was so compassionate, that he tore his own garments to bind up the wounds of his soldiers. But the tenderness of Jesus is far greater. He who shed his blood to save you, will assuredly take care to heal and strengthen you.

Experience is absolutely necessary to the christian soldier, both to teach caution, and to inspire courage. Why did David, a stripling, so boldly meet the fierce and formidable Goliath? He had received lessons in the school of experience. "The Lord, who delivered me from the paw of the lion, and from the paw of the bear, shall also deliver me from this uncircumcised Philistine." Go forth, then, in the name of Jehovah, and fear not, for you shall prevail.

III. The Christian's complete victory demands gratitude and praise. *Thanks be to God, &c.*

This praise must begin now, and will be perfected in eternity.

1. Let this praise begin now. The apostle speaks with confidence. Thanks be to God who *giveth*, not *will* give us the victory.

When valiant and skilful generals lead their armies to meet an enemy, they raise their spirits, by assuring them they shall soon receive the rewards of conquest. The soldiers answer with shouts of applause. But in such cases, there is much presumption, because the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. But God gives us the victory, in the assurance of his word. When he promises, there is no uncertainty as to the event. He sees the end from the beginning, and makes all needful provision for us. What cause then have we to offer up daily thanksgiving, for the manifold blessings we have already received from God? He has guarded us in the path of dangers. He has covered our heads in the day of battle. Amidst the darkness which surrounds us, it is but little that we see, compared with what we shall discover. How many painful falls have been prevented, and how many deadly arrows from the quiver of our infernal foe have been averted by his outstretched, but invisible hand, we shall never fully know, till we read the wonders of his providence and grace, in the register of heaven. He hath



delivered, and he doth deliver us, in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us. But shall the Christian be proud of his trophies, or vain of his victory? God forbid. For who made him to differ from the lowest slaves of sin, and the vilest captives of the devil? Who girded him with strength, and called him to march under the banner of the cross? Let him have the whole praise, to whom he owes all the triumph. In such a case, boasting is akin to blasphemy, and shocks the humble soul. No flesh shall glory in his presence, but let him that glorieth glory in the Lord.

2. The praise of our glorious victory will be perfected in eternity.

When the chosen tribes had seen Pharaoh and his host drowned in the Red Sea, in what lofty strains did they magnify their great Deliverer. *Exod. xv. 1, 2.* "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song. I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength, and my song, and he is become my salvation." But this song of gratitude sinks into insignificance, compared



with the praises of the redeemed above. For "the ransomed of the Lord shall come to Zion with singing, and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads. After the pains and perils of the conflict, in this world of woe, how sweet will be the rest which remaineth for the people of God! In the new Jerusalem you will fear no siege, for there you will see no enemy, and feel no sin. After bearing the reproach of Christ, and having your names cast out as evil for his sake, how high will be the honour conferred upon you by the King of glory! Prophets and apostles, saints and martyrs, will vie with each other in magnifying the wonders of redeeming love and superabounding grace. Their golden harps will be attuned to harmony, while they swell the chorus in Jehovah's praise. Rev. vii. 9—12. "After this, I beheld, and lo a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation unto our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the

**Lamb.** And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders, and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen."

## SERMON XIV.

---

### THE HAPPINESS OF THE SAINTS IN A SEPARATE STATE.

---

2 COR. v. 8.

*We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.*

---

WHAT is man? Is this world his last abode? Is his whole existence limited to a span of time? Here he has but few days, and full of trouble. He dwells in a house of clay, which shakes at every blast, and soon falls by its own infirmity. He travels through a thorny wilderness, and calamities meet him at every step. Were we left to the faint glimmer of reason, we might be tempted to cry with the brutal sensualist, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." But Jesus Christ hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel. The

God who made us, hath taught us both our duty and our destiny in his word. Man is not like the beasts which perish. The stroke which takes away his breath, does not destroy his being. Every page of the New Testament represents our present state as a state of trial, and sets before us a future world full of misery for the wicked, and of happiness for the righteous. As Christians, therefore, we should constantly "look, not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

I. Observe that the souls of men survive the dissolution of their bodies, and live in a separate state.

Some entertain an opinion, that at death, the whole man sleeps in the grave, till the morning of the resurrection; but this opinion, whatever plausible arguments be brought to support it, is contrary to the general tenure and express language of Scripture. Our Lord, in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, plainly represents them as entering into happiness and misery immediately after death, while their brethren were alive on

the earth. And the gracious answer of Jesus to the petition of the penitent thief, contains a direct proof of the same point, "Verily; I say unto thee, to-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." Both in the Old and New Testament, the mortal frame, and the intelligent immortal principle which animates it, are clearly distinguished from each other! Solomon, after a striking description of old age, proceeds to mention that solemn event which comes alike to all, and says, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return to God that gave it." The language of Christ to his disciples is still more forcible and explicit, "Fear not them that can kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul." If we acknowledge these words to be true, there is in every man a vital spark kindled by the breath of the Almighty, which no creature can extinguish. Even the shock that deprives us of sense, and feeling, and all connection with earthly things, cannot deprive us of consciousness. In this chapter the apostle, by a beautiful comparison, represents the body as a house of clay, or a tabernacle. As a man continues the same person, though his circumstances change,

and he removes from a tent set up for a temporary convenience, to a fixed habitation, so the spirit retains its existence and consciousness, when it is dislodged from the mortal frame, and carried to its final abode. On the principle of those who deny that the body and soul are completely distinct, or who maintain that they both sleep in the dust, this whole comparison would be destitute of meaning, and altogether absurd. In the words of our text, the same thing is declared in simple language, without a figure. "We are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." If this Scripture does not teach us, that the soul may exist, and be happy, in a separate state, it would be difficult to find words which convey such a sentiment. In the epistle to the Hebrews, where the apostle describes the heavenly Jerusalem, he joins with an innumerable company of angels, the spirits of just men made perfect.

II. Observe that the souls of the righteous enjoy exalted happiness in a separate state.

Heaven is certainly described in very grand and sublime language. It is called an inheritance, a paradise, a kingdom, a sacred



palace of many bright mansions. We read of white robes, and crowns, and thrones, and golden harps. Yet though these figurative expressions convey bright ideas, they are not the best ideas of heaven. The immediate and glorious presence of our gracious Lord and Redeemer gives the felicity of the saints above its peculiar character and chief excellency. To this, ancient patriarchs and prophets, apostles and christians of every age have directed their eyes, as the great object of their hopes, and the summit of their desires. Job says, "I know that my Redeemer liveth—and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." David exclaims, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth I desire beside thee. My heart and my flesh faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." How animating are the words of Jesus, "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, to behold my glory." Paul felt an earnest desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better than the highest station, or happiest lot on earth. Thus in my text he says, "To

be absent from the body, is to be present with the Lord."

Concerning the nature of happiness in heaven, we have but very poor and imperfect conceptions.

1. In the immediate presence of Christ the souls of the righteous will be entirely free from all sufferings.

In the present state, we are capable of far more exquisite sensations of pain than pleasure. Few could be found, who would consent to buy the most delicious joys for a month, on condition of first enduring the keenest torture for a single hour. It is probably because we are much more susceptible of pain than of pleasure, that the happiness of heaven is so often described as consisting in the absence of all suffering. "There remaineth a rest for the people of God." Here trouble rolls in tides, and rises in violent storms, but there all is calm and tranquil. "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened." But soon every incumbrance will be laid aside, every load of calamity left behind us. In our heavenly Father's house above, no wearisome labour and wasting sickness, no vexing

cares and craving wants, no threatening dangers and fiery trials are known. There, O saint, the days of thy mourning shall be ended. He who on the earth experienced all the varieties of human sufferings, and in his last awful extremity drank of the bitterest cup that was ever mingled, will with his own soft hand wipe away all thy tears. "These light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

2. In the immediate presence of Christ, the souls of the righteous will continually increase in knowledge.

The man who is ardently engaged in the pursuit of truth and wisdom, finds in every step of his progress, and every addition to his store, a satisfaction as much superior to the pleasure of the sensualist, as the faculties of an angel excel the appetites of a brute. But in the present state, how shallow our deepest researches! how low our highest flights! how scanty our best attainments! Every road to knowledge has its obstacles and difficulties; every field of contemplation has its thorns as well as flowers. Our views are indistinct, and confused, through the

mists which gather around us. Spiritual truths and eternal realities are veiled in images drawn from the objects of sense and the affairs of time. But when we enter into the presence of the Redeemer, O what grand and glorious discoveries will burst upon us! How clear will be the discernment of our unembodied spirits, when every cloud is scattered! How rapid will be our advancement, while we ascend a scale of perfection which has no limit! What wonders of providence and mysteries of grace will be then fully unfolded! "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face: now I know in part, but then I shall know even as also I am known."

We should speak with great modesty of the future world, because we can have but faint and inadequate apprehensions concerning it. Yet from the passage above quoted, we may conclude, that our knowledge in heaven will exceed our knowledge on earth, as much as

the ideas of a man surpass the ideas of an infant. In this world we gain some obscure notices of God from his works and word, which are a kind of dim mirrors that reflect his wisdom and goodness, but in the world to come, all the divine perfections will be openly displayed in the clearest light. O how will all our doubts be dispelled, and our perplexities removed, when the mild and bright rays of the Sun of Righteousness perpetually shine upon us!

3. In the immediate presence of Christ the souls of the saints will be perfect in holiness.

Nothing that defileth can enter the new Jerusalem. Heaven is a place quite unsuited to the profane and the wicked. It is filled with purity by the sacred presence of Jehovah. The seraphim cry aloud, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts!" By being transformed into the image of God, we are fitted to dwell with him. But in this world both our knowledge and our holiness are imperfect. After death, believers shall have no innate depravity to trouble them. They will awake and be satisfied with the divine likeness. Numbered with angels, they will possess equal purity, and partake equal



pleasure with them. For "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word: that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy, and without blemish." Every vessel of honour must be refined from dross, and completely purged from impurity, that it may be filled with felicity in the presence of God. Unmixed happiness can be found nowhere but in the regions of unsullied holiness. Nothing can be wanting to them who behold Christ, and resemble him. As their knowledge grows, their love burns with seraphic fervour, and their nature is adorned with divine glory. "We know that when he who is our life shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

4. In the immediate presence of Christ the souls of the saints will have perfect joy.

The highest pleasures of sin are but for a season, and while they continue, poison mingles with them, and punishment hangs over them. A single grain of spiritual consolation, a short gleam of heavenly joy, are worth more than all the delights of sense,



if they could be secured to us for a thousand years. The righteous are commanded now to rejoice in the Lord, and shout for joy. When a Christian tastes that the Lord is gracious, and standing on the high ground of the promise, sees before him the boundless prospect of eternal felicity, the world sinks into insignificance; its greatness dwindles to a point, its glory fades, and becomes as sackcloth and ashes, and its attractions lose their power and their charms. If then a few drops of divine comfort produce such effects, what language can describe the transporting delights of heaven? "I will see you again," said Jesus, "and your joy shall be full, and your joy no man shall take from you." O how soothing, how suitable, how comprehensive, is this promise! Christian, let your thoughts sweetly dwell upon it, and you will look up, and cry, "Yes, Lord, in thy presence there is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." The most enlarged capacities shall there be filled, and the most ardent desires shall there be satisfied.

In the presence of Christ we shall meet millions of happy spirits, redeemed from among men. We shall sit down with Enoch,

and Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Samuel and David, Paul and John, in the kingdom of heaven. Nor can we doubt, but those whom we have known and loved on earth, will be known in heaven ; and as they were our companions in tribulation, they will be our associates in glory. There to recount the labours and sorrows of our weary pilgrimage, will heighten the raptures of celestial bliss. While we surround the throne, our eyes shall be continually directed to Emmanuel, the glorious Sun of heaven, and the common centre of attraction. Ten thousand thousand golden harps attuned to harmony, shall sound his praise, while a new song of gratitude, in the highest strain, shall magnify the wonders of redeeming love.

“ Turn me, O thou God of my salvation, turn me from pursuing phantoms, and attach me to thy blessed self; let me henceforth steer an invariable course to Emmanuel’s kingdom. May its treasures, as I advance, open to my view, and its glories brighten in my eye. O ! may some odours, better, far better than Sabeian spicy odours, exhale from the delectable hills, and the celestial shores ! But chiefly, thou eternal Spirit, breathe upon my soul, both by thy convincing and com-

fortable influences! nor ever cease to swell my sails, and speed my progress, till I arrive at the land that is far off, and see the King, the King of grace and of glory, in all his unspeakable beauty.”

III. Nothing short of a lively faith in the promise which presents to us a future world of blessedness, can give us true comfort, and unshaken confidence in the near approach of death.

The men of the world, saith David, have their portion in this life. All their passions and pleasures, toils and gains, wishes and hopes, are confined to the earth. Is it any wonder that such persons should tremble on the brink of the grave? When the awful death-warrant comes to summon them before a heart-searching Judge, they wake as from a dream, and find themselves undone. The wicked are driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world. O how different is the condition of believers! “Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace!” Do you ask, what is it that sustains and comforts the soul of a saint in his departing moments? I reply, the promise and the pledges of a glorious inheritance. Faith takes hold of

the promise, and imparts fortitude and confidence to the soul. Faith lifts her piercing eye, and looking beyond the dark valley, descries the fair realms of eternal day. The Holy Spirit is given as an earnest of our future celestial possession. This pledge, accompanying the promise, banishes fear, and brightens the prospect of immortality. We are confident, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. When a Christian leaves the world, he does not go to a strange land. Heaven is his country, for he was born from above. Heaven is that home to which he has been looking with ardent eyes and longing heart. There are his choicest treasures and best friends. There sits his Saviour, throned in glory, with a smile on his face, ready to approve and receive him, saying, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." But it may be said, do not even pious men sometimes express doubt and dismay at the approach of death? True, nature may tremble at the apprehended agony of the last struggle, or a passing cloud may for a while darken the prospect of glory. But see the Christian raise his head, and encourage himself in the

Lord his God. Hear the faint accents of his dying voice: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded he will keep me, and bring me to his heavenly kingdom. His word is sure, and shall never fail. I have fled to Jesus as my only refuge. In the arms of his power, and on the soft bosom of his mercy, I repose. O my soul, hast thou not heard his voice, and seen his wonders, and tasted his favours? Has he not upheld and guided thee through all thy perilous journey? Has he not sent the fruits of the goodly land to refresh thee in the desert? With all the promises of his word, and all the proofs of his love, canst thou yield to despondency? Why art thou cast down, O my soul? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God. I see the world vanishing like a dream! I feel the bands of nature breaking, to give my disencumbered spirit freedom. God is my light and my salvation, whom or what shall I fear? Adieu, beloved friends, the time of my departure is at hand. Ministering angels shall convey me home. O for the signal to remove! Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!"



Are not many of you convinced, that you cannot use the language of my text as your own? How can those have confidence to meet death, who have not courage to think of it? And this is the case of all who drive this interesting subject from their minds. How can you be willing to be absent from the body, if all your time is employed in providing for it? While your cry is, What shall we eat, what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed, you plainly prove where your affections are fixed. And does not conscience testify, that so far from being willing to depart, you would shudder, if your soul were this night required of you? Attached to the world by a thousand ties, which you have been daily strengthening, would you not, if summoned away, cling round its feeble treacherous props, to the last moment, and sink into eternity with shrieks of horror? "O that ye were wise! that ye understood this, and would consider your latter end!"

But perhaps there are others, who feel confident that they could meet death with composure. But is your confidence well founded? Does it spring from the root of



faith, or from the stock of infidelity? Are you courageous, because you have fled to the strong hold set before you in the gospel, or because you have made lies your refuge? If you have not begun to fear the wrath to come, and to feel the evil of sin, your hope is presumption. It is in vain to cry, "Let me die the death of the righteous," while you live the life of the wicked. A misplaced and insufficient confidence is the ruin of thousands. O how dreadful it is to be under a strong delusion! to be bold through blindness, which discerns no danger! to think yourselves near the gates of heaven, when you are rushing to the door of hell!

I doubt not, some of you possess the principle which the apostle had, though in a much smaller measure. You have humbled yourselves before God, determined to know nothing, save Jesus Christ and him crucified, and sought the aid of the Spirit, to mortify the deeds of the body. But still you may possibly have very painful apprehensions of death. Far from being always confident, you are seldom calm and easy when you look forward to eternity. Be not dismayed. There may be little faith, and yet true faith. If your anxiety lead you to self-examination

and prayer, it is a favourable sign. Even *your* feeble hope is too valuable to be given up for a thousand worlds. The storm may rage, and the ocean swell, but your anchorhold shall not be lost. Pray for an increase of faith. Look to the mighty God of Jacob. Who knows, but after all your tempests, and troubles, and fears, you may, like a ship that comes to the desired harbour in full sail, have an abundant entrance administered to you into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

## SERMON XV.

---

### THE GENERAL RESURRECTION.

---

JOHN v. 28, 29.

*The hour is coming, in which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.*

---

As the doctrines of Christ were unspeakably important, so his miracles were wonderfully grand and impressive. Health was imparted by his touch, and life restored by his word. "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." How were the people filled with astonishment, when his voice reanimated the corpse of Lazarus, and called him back from the grave. Yet this was but a small matter, compared with what he will accomplish. "The end of

all things is at hand." When Jesus appears the second time without sin unto salvation, the displays of his mighty power will strike all intelligent creatures with amazement.

I. Let us consider the certainty, the suddenness, the grandeur and solemnity of the general resurrection.

1. The general resurrection of the dead is an event of absolute certainty.

The heathen had some vague and confused ideas of a future state of happiness and misery; but though they believed the soul to be immortal, they seem to have had no notion that the body should *rise again*. Pliny, a pagan philosopher, says, "It is a great solace of our imperfect nature, that God cannot do all things, for if he would, he can neither bestow eternity on mortals, nor recal the dead to life." When Paul, therefore, addressed the learned men of Athens, "some mocked, and others said what will this babbling say, because he preached Jesus and the resurrection." Even among the Jews, who had the lively oracles of God, the whole sect of the Sadducees obstinately maintained, there was

neither future state, nor angel, nor spirit. It appeared to them a thing incredible that God should raise the dead. The general resurrection is an event beyond the reach of human reason. The greatest philosophers were wholly in the dark concerning it. This is a matter of pure revelation, a doctrine grounded on the express testimonies of God's word. In the writings of Moses it was taught, though not in plain terms, but in the New Testament it is most clearly stated and strongly confirmed.

Though the matter of the human body is dissolved by death, not an atom is lost. He who first fashioned the frame, will build it afresh, and though its parts should be washed by the waves of the sea, or wafted by the winds of heaven into the most distant regions, they shall be collected and reunited. Let not any ask the foolish question, "How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?" Is any thing too great for the Almighty to perform? Shall we limit the Holy One of Israel? Is not Christ risen, and become the first fruits of them that slept? For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. At

the call of Jesus, the great Redeemer and Judge of men, all that are in their graves shall come forth, while some shall be received into everlasting happiness, and others sentenced to eternal woe.

Amidst the vast variety of opinions which prevail among professing Christians, there is no dispute as to the certainty of a future resurrection. Indeed the language of Scripture is so full and forcible on this point, that it carries resistless conviction to all who own its divine authority. Men too often forget this truth, but they cannot deny it without being downright infidels.

2. The suddenness of the general resurrection deserves to be considered.

Though the event itself is absolutely certain, the particular period when it shall take place is locked up in the secret decrees of the eternal God. "Of that day and hour knoweth no man." We have ground from Scripture to believe, that this interesting event will be sudden as the lightning's flash. For as it was in the days of Noah and of Lot, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, till the flood came, and the fiery storm descended, so shall the coming of the Son of man be.



“Behold I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed,” We now see our fellow creatures, one after another, committed to the grave, but in the great day, they shall at once hear the same summons, and instantly arise from their bed in the dust. Those who are then alive on the earth will undergo a mighty change, and become immortal. O what surprise and consternation will overwhelm the ungodly! How will their purposes be broken, their schemes blasted, their hopes confounded, and their high and lofty looks humbled in in that day! “For when they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.”

3. The grandeur and solemnity of the general resurrection deserve to be considered.

When the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they were commanded to sanctify themselves, and stand prepared for the giving

of the law. What sublime and awful scenes were presented on mount Sinai! The trumpet waxed louder and louder, the clouds thickened into solid gloom, and while a tempest of thunder and lightning burst forth, as if the frame of heaven were dissolving, even Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake. Yet the scene exhibited at mount Calvary, when Jesus died on the cross, was still more solemn and affecting. The sun withdrew his beams, and there was darkness over the whole land, for all nature put on the garment of mourning, the earth trembled, the rocks were rent, and many saints rose from their graves. But what were the scenes witnessed on mount Sinai and mount Calvary, compared with that which shall open upon the astonished world in the last day? Language cannot describe it, and the human mind, when most enlarged and invigorated, is too narrow and feeble to comprehend it. All we know on this interesting subject is taken from the inspired word. And O what striking and tremendous objects are there presented to our view! How are we bewildered and lost in contemplating the grandeur, and terror, and

glory of the last day! "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, and said, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints." And when he appears, beside the spirits of the just, myriads of bright angels will form the train of his attendants. "Behold he cometh with clouds," and his triumphal chariot, encircled with glory, rolls over the celestial plains. Hark! he speaks, and his voice penetrates the universe, while at the same instant the living are changed, and the dead raised. From the deep bed of the ocean, and the dark vaults of the sepulchre, immense clouds hear the awakening call, and start to life. The earth, which has become as one vast burying place, heaves with strong convulsions, and opens to set free the prisoners of death. All the tribes and nations of every age obey the powerful summons. Lo, millions of millions come forth from their graves to stand before the universal Judge, "for every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.

II. Let us consider the all-important consequences of the general resurrection.

1. The destruction of the earth and visible heavens.

This world has very long been a region of rebellion and wickedness, a stage on which levity has exhibited the wildest follies, and cruelty acted the bloodiest tragedies. How is the fair face of nature blotted and disfigured by the sin of man! What marks of desolation are every where seen! The whole creation is represented as travailing in pain beneath the curse of human guilt, and anxiously waiting for the hour of deliverance! Rom. viii. 22. When the Lord comes in glory, he will take off the curse and repair the ruins caused by sin. The works of God, which have been made subservient to the purposes of wickedness, will be swept away with the besom of destruction. Every stain of iniquity, every trace of rebellion, will be then removed. "For the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. Neverthe-

less we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." What alarm and terror are produced by the fire which consumes a single city, or the tempests and floods which desolate a few small islands? Let us then *realize* the day when the whole world shall be reduced to ashes by the kindled flames of divine wrath. Whatever the skill of man has contrived, or his labour performed; the profound treasures of learning, the curious wonders of art, the lofty monuments of power, temples and palaces, cities and empires, shall at once sink into ruin, and be found no more.

2. The general resurrection will be followed by the universal judgment.

In the present world, we are often confounded by the mysterious dispensations of Providence. The innocent suffer, and the guilty appear to escape deserved punishment. But we are assured "God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness." There is nothing hid, which shall not be brought to light and made manifest. Dan. vii. 9. "And I beheld 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 the 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 : the judgment was set, and the books were opened." *Now* profane scoffers revel in excess, and cry, "Where is the promise of his coming?" O how will they call upon rocks and mountains to cover and hide them, when the great and solemn day arrives. It will be impossible to escape the eye, or resist the power of God. Those who *would* not seek the throne of grace, *must* stand before the throne of judgment. The thunder of divine vengeance will be intolerable to all who have been obstinately deaf to the tender invitations of heavenly mercy.

3. The general resurrection will be followed with eternal happiness to the righteous, and eternal misery to the wicked.

Even in this world, the Lord knoweth them that are his, but it shall be also made known to all. "They that have done good, shall come forth to the resurrection of life."



Christ says, "By their fruits ye shall know them. Men do not gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles." But the tree must be made good, before the fruit can be good. None are righteous in the scripture sense, but those who are renewed in heart and holy in life. Influenced by a principle of divine grace, they devote themselves to God, and cheerfully give up their time and strength to serve him and benefit their fellow men. Yet they dare not indulge a thought of purchasing heaven by their works, for "the *gift* of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ." The characters of the saints, which are now frequently calumniated by vile slanderers, will be openly cleared, and highly honoured, on the great day. Their principles and motives shall no longer be obscured and discoloured by envy and malice. How gladly will they hear the sound of the archangel's trumpet! Behold they lift up their heads and see their redemption come! Each happy spirit re-enters the tabernacle, by a miracle of power, new-built, and beautified with immortal splendour. For Jesus shall fashion these vile bodies, that they may become like to his glorious body, according to the working

whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself. Angels will be employed to gather the saints, and place them at the right hand of the mighty Judge. And see the redeemed exalted to honour, and gazing with rapture on him whom unseen they loved and served! How great the multitude! how glorious their state! They shine as the brightness of the firmament, and are enriched with felicity unutterable! Never more shall they be tainted with sin, or exposed to danger, or afflicted with trouble! "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for 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 to me." But with what feelings will the enemies of God and the despisers of Christ hear the sound of the archangel's trumpet? Where then shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Their souls rise like pillars of black smoke from the infernal pit, to join the bodies in which they sinned and rebelled

against the Holy One of Israel. Driven to the dread bar of judgment, they are thunder-struck with terror, and covered with shame. Blasphemers and liars, adulterers and drunkards, persecutors and oppressors, in trembling crowds, take their place on the left hand of the Judge. Then shall all their deeds of darkness, their hard speeches, and horrid plots, be charged home upon them, and proved amidst assembled millions. Every criminal will be self-convicted, and filled with indescribable confusion! And how can they look on the Judge whom they rejected in the character of a Saviour! How can they view those saints in glory, whom they cruelly persecuted on earth, without the bitterest reproaches of an accusing conscience? Their sins will be then unveiled, and made manifest in all their odious colours and aggravating circumstances. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." What they could not be made to fear, they must now feel, and know by experience that there is a God to whom vengeance belongeth. Hark! the Judge pronounces the awful sentence, "Depart ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

1. Let the scripture account of the general resurrection and final judgment induce you to examine yourselves with faithfulness and impartiality.

Do you give full credit to the inspired word? Are you persuaded you shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory? And is it not natural and proper to ask, Who shall stand when he appeareth? Such as are walking after the flesh, and making provision to fulfil its lusts; such as give themselves up to levity and folly, profaneness and vice, are certainly unprepared for death and judgment. Is this your character? If it be, you would shudder to hear the awful summons. You must mortify the deeds of the body, and become new creatures, or else you will die in your sins, and rise to condemnation, and shame, and everlasting contempt. Such as are puffed up with the pride of worldly wisdom, and self-righteousness, having a form of godliness without its power, are certainly unprepared for death and judgment. Consider, you who are in this state, how vain it will be to go forth with an empty lamp of profession, crying, Lord, Lord, open to us. He will answer,

“Depart from me, I never knew you.” Let me earnestly and affectionately exhort you all, to examine yourselves. Let every one try his state by the touchstone of truth. Make the word of God your standard. Be jealous over your own treacherous hearts. There is nothing so much to be dreaded as self-deception. It is surely possible to know whether you have put off the body of the sins of the flesh; whether you yield your members and faculties as instruments of righteousness to God; whether you have cordially embraced the gospel, and placed all your trust in Christ Jesus. And be not satisfied with your own examination, but with David pray, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

2. Contemplate the certainty, the suddenness, the grandeur and solemnity of the general resurrection, that your attachment to the earth, and its perishing possessions, may be daily weakened and subdued.

You all profess to believe this awfully important doctrine, but how seldom does it



engage your thoughts, how little does it affect your hearts. Why is there so much eagerness to lay up treasures on earth, to obtain the honours that come from men, to enjoy the despicable pleasures which are but for a season? It is because you lose sight of eternity, and put far away the evil day. O beware you do not cherish a secret infidelity, which blinds and stupifies the soul. The world is not your rest. The date of its very existence is short, and a fiery doom awaits it. Why then will you set your eyes and your hearts on a vain show that is passing away? Think how soon it will be proclaimed by a mighty angel, that time shall be no longer. Think seriously and frequently of the descending Judge, the solemn tribunal, the trumpet's awful sound, the opening graves, the sentence that must fix your state in bliss or woe. Realize these impressive scenes, that you may awake to righteousness, and die daily to vanity and sin.

3. Set before you the coming of Christ, and the last judgment, as the best means of stirring you up to watchfulness, prayer, and all the exercises of piety.



It is not for us to know the times and the seasons, but it is certain the Lord is at hand. "He is not slack concerning his promises, but long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." He commands us to watch and pray, because we know neither the day nor the hour of his coming. Let us not then slumber at ease in Zion, or follow the careless multitude, but gird up our loins, and wait for the signal of the Saviour's appearance.

"It is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, and the day is at hand, let us therefore put off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light. Seeing then, that all these earthly things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness." When the mystery of providence is finished, when the elect of God are all gathered in, and the fulness of time is come, the earth shall be consumed, and the heavens folded up as a garment and as a vesture, while a new world is erected as a nobler theatre, in which the

wonders of infinite wisdom and unbounded goodness will be eternally displayed. May you hear the voice of the Redeemer invite you to occupy seats of honour in the regions of glory, where you shall see his face and sing his praise world without end. Amen.

FINIS.

**SERMONS**  
ON THE  
**MOST IMPORTANT DOCTRINES**  
OF  
**THE GOSPEL;**  
COMPREHENDING  
**The Privileges and Duties**  
CONNECTED WITH THE  
BELIEF OF THOSE DOCTRINES.

---

BY J. THORNTON.

---

IN TWO VOLUMES.

---

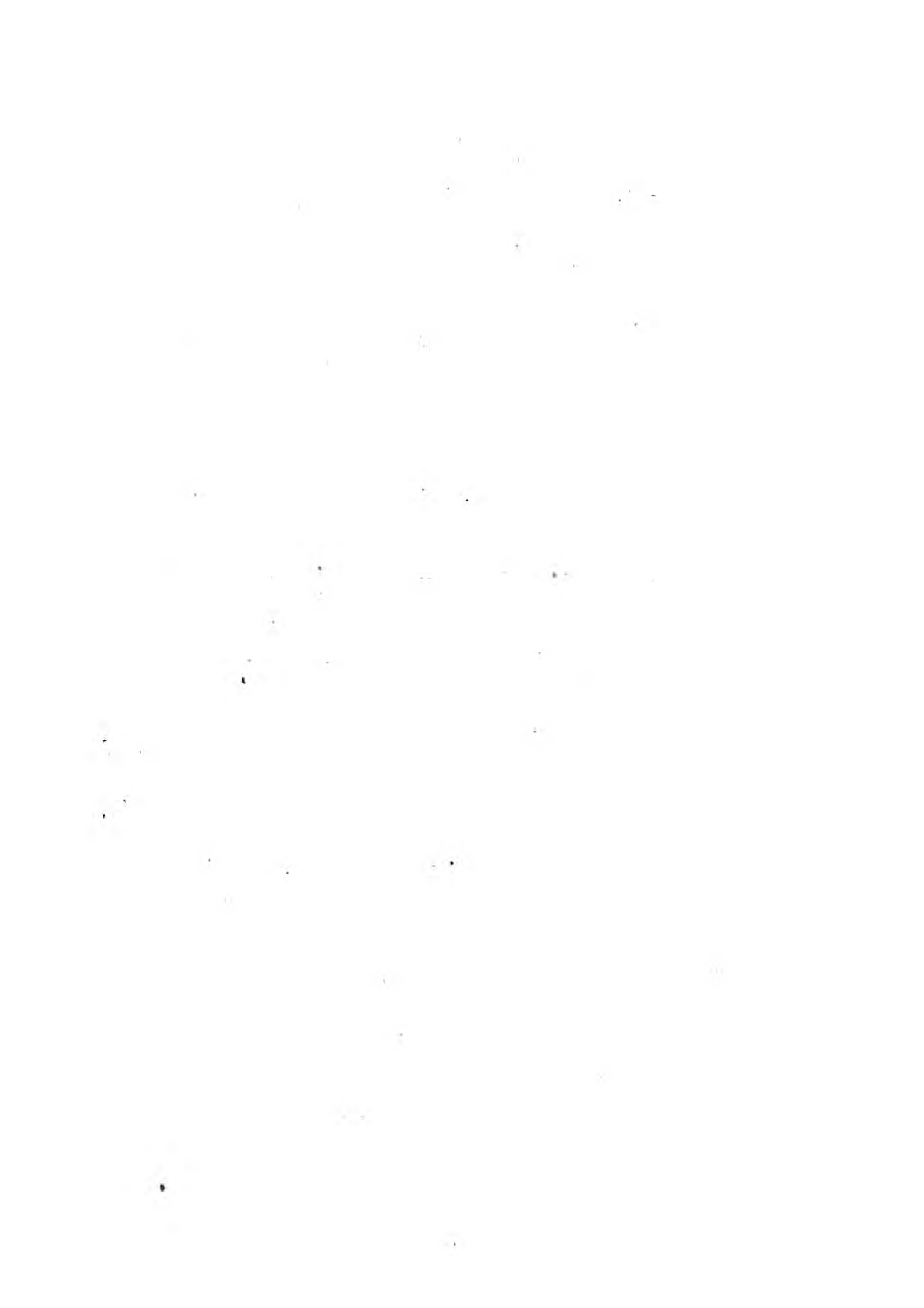
VOL. II.

---

LONDON:  
PRINTED FOR W. BAYNES, PATERNOSTER ROW,  
*By J. Hill, 32, Water Lane, Blackfriars.*

1819.

*82 X. 350. 011.*



# CONTENTS.

---

## SERMON I.

*Deceitfulness of Sin* ..... 1

## SERMON II.

*Jesus Christ the Great Deliverer* ..... 18

## SERMON III.

*On the Danger of neglecting the Great  
Salvation* ..... 32

## SERMON IV.

*The aggravated Evil and awful Conse-  
quences of Unbelief* ..... 50

## SERMON V.

*On Conversion* ..... 69

## SERMON VI.

*Forgiveness of Sins* ..... 88

## SERMON VII.

*On the Teaching of the Holy Spirit* .. 105

## SERMON VIII.

*Warning against the Love of the World* 122

## SERMON IX.

*Watchfulness against the Great Enemy* . 139

## SERMON X.

*On the Necessity of Holiness*..... 155

## SERMON XI.

*A good Conscience* ..... 176

## SERMON XII.

*A good Hope* ..... 194

## SERMON XIII.

*Christian Fortitude* ..... 216

## SERMON XIV.

*Christian Freedom*..... 236

## SERMON XV:

*The Perseverance of the Saints* ..... 257



## SERMON I.

---

### THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN:

HEB. iii. 13.

*The deceitfulness of sin.*

THOUGH imposition is most severely condemned and reprobated, there is nothing so common in the world. It prevails from the court of the prince, down to the cottage of the peasant. Men profess to hate and dread delusion, and yet are every day deluded. The world resembles a vast stage, where characters are personated to serve occasions, and every thing is accommodated to the changing and fantastic humour of the restless crowd. The painted gaudy scenes, the busy actors, and the bursts of comic mirth and tragic grief, at once amuse and fascinate. We warn indeed the young to beware of seducers, but

it is not merely in early life, that we are liable to be deceived ; at all times we must watch, and walk circumspectly. Nor are the dangers without, half so much to be feared as those which are within. " The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked ; who can know it ? " Not one of the human race has penetrated all its depths, or traced all its labyrinths. The original taint of depravity shews its symptoms to the eye, but has its seat in the heart. Solomon therefore, exhorts us, to keep the heart with all diligence because out of it are the issues of life ; and while this duty is obviously necessary, it must be owned to be exceedingly difficult. We far oftener impose upon ourselves, than get imposed upon by others. There are certainly many frauds and snares around us, but the chief source of delusion is within us. We may complain of wiles and stratagems abroad, but the grand magician dwells at home. Sin is the subtle deceiver which many cherish, and all harbour in their own bosoms. When the state of human nature is duly considered, the caution contained in the text, appears very needful and highly important.

### I. Sin deceives by the forms and names

which it assumes, the promises and pleas which it offers, and the manner in which it works.

1. Sin deceives by the *forms* and *names* which it assumes.

“Trust not to appearances,” is a proverbial maxim, well worth our daily consideration and regard. The ancients in their fables, described the sirens as certain monsters, which had countenances like beautiful women, and sung the most melodious strains, yet cruelly devoured all who came within their reach. Fiction may in some instances aptly illustrate truth. Sin is the siren which always charms to destroy. Like Jezebel, painted and attired, it has purposes of mischief ready framed for every occasion.

Sin, when view'd by scripture light,  
Is a horrid hateful sight ;  
But when seen in Satan's glass,  
Then it wears a pleasing face.

The loathsome leper, however richly arrayed and perfumed, remains a wretched offensive leper still. When iniquity puts on an attractive form, and a splendid dress, and smiles, remember you are exposed to immi-

ment danger. Be not deceived, for though her face be fair, there are seven abominations in her heart. Her eyes are full of wantonness and fascination; the poison of asps is under her lips; and beneath her garments are the spots of the plague. Be assured, ere long the alluring enchantress will be turned into a raging fury. As it is impious to give divine attributes to a demon, it is hardly less so, to decorate and recommend sin. But the disguise must be torn asunder. It is not long, that deception can play her part, by having the voice of Jacob, and the hands of Esau.

2. Sin deceives with *flattering names*.

Good men have in every age, complained of that shameful abuse of language, which in effect turns every thing upside down. We see praise lavished where censure is deserved, and censure often pointed at well-doing as its prime object. As sin is in itself odious, it borrows agreeable names and thus gains unmerited credit. Pride and revenge lay claim to commendation, when they are called bravery and noble spirit. The man whose bosom swells with arrogance, and boils with rancour, aspires to the title of hero, and to keep his honour pure and unspotted, covers himself with the horrid indelible stains of blood.

While extravagance, squandering with wild profusion the property of others, passes under the name of good nature or generosity; covetousness, at all times and at all hazards seizing and grasping money, is termed economy or prudence. And though the spendthrift despises the miser, and the miser condemns the spendthrift; each praises himself, and finds both apologists and advocates. Falsehood, fraud, and dissimulation, are hateful things, but call them shrewdness, policy, refinement, and the case is quite altered. Such is the power of this kind of current perverted language, that it works wonders, and the man who has lost all moral principle, plumes himself on knowing the world; playing his game with a skilful hand; and imitating the manners of the great. Calumny is a compound made up of the vilest ingredients; and yet, when it is artfully mixed with a little wit and humour, it is generally acceptable; and the calumniator, who is both a bird of passage and a bird of prey, eager either to fetch and carry scandal, or to feed on the mangled reputation of his neighbours, is almost every where a welcome guest. The bold infidel calls his sceptical career down the dark hideous precipice of atheism, free-thinking; and the

## 6 THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN.

base profligate his unmeasured indulgence in the lowest excesses, free-living; for the worst of all slaves borrow the fair name of liberty to pass off their errors, and conceal their brutish sensuality. "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" Isa. v. 20. Sin has, if I may so speak, a dictionary of her own, capable of furnishing soft words and palatable phrases for the most odious vices. The author of it began his work in paradise, teaching our first parents that eating the forbidden fruit was the sure means of gaining wisdom. Do not judge of things from the names they bear in the world. Religion is often loaded with abusive epithets, while impiety is adorned with all the graces, that words culled for the purpose can bestow. It is surely needful to lift up the veil of language, and examine what it covers, for without this precaution instead of a fish you may seize a serpent.

II. Sin deceives by the *promises* and *pleas* which it offers. These we can only touch upon generally.

1. Sin promises *pleasure*.



A very little acquaintance with human nature, may suffice to convince us, that this is one of the most common and dangerous allurements to which we are exposed. A desire of happiness is implanted in the heart of man. In childhood and youth, the imagination, ardent and impetuous, pants for joy. When therefore sin promises pleasure, it is no wonder the promise is believed. Whatever is expected to afford high gratification, creates a tumult in the passions, which infatuates the judgment. Alas! how many seek the joys of the world in the paths of ruin. But while sin promises pleasure, what does it bestow? This question may be answered without any hesitation. Momentous facts speak aloud to all who will think and reason. Sin promises joys to satisfy, and bestows such only as tantalize and inflame. The cup is crowned with flowers, yet the sparkling wine is blended with poison. Thus the pleasures of sin, as the Apostle says, are but for a season, and a very short and uncertain season it is. Moments of delight, are followed by years of sorrow and anguish.

2. Sin promises *great gain*, but invariably deceives.

The love of money is a powerful motive of

8 THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN.

action. While some accumulate wealth and soar to higher stations, sin points to them as examples, and urges others to follow their steps with the assurance of like success. Thus is a golden lure held out, and few can resist the attraction, especially when it is brought very near, and apparently waves within their reach. Gehazi could not suffer the rich Syrian to go away, without seeking for himself some part of the treasure which his generous master, the prophet, had nobly refused. But what is the gain of sin, weighed against the loss incurred? Words are inadequate to describe the contrast. What is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

3. Sin promises *preferment* and *power*, but deceives.

The pride of the heart, prompts all to aspire. Now in climbing the steep ascent of ambition, a thousand flattering promises are whispered in the credulous ear of hope. It has been said, every way is right which leads to a throne, every weapon glorious which obtains victory, and the generality of men act according to these odious maxims. Amidst the strange vicissitudes of time, even labourers in

the lowest class have been made rulers, and shepherds have become kings. And is there any thing too strange to happen, when pride mixes the vivid colours and paints the prospect of future years? The menial slave who smarts beneath the rod, may through the visionary medium of fancy, look towards the sceptre which he imagines his own hand is to sway.

4. Sin deceives by promising *impunity*.

There is for the most part a hope indulged, that what men do, contrary to the laws of God or injurious to society, may remain unknown. In this manner, the promise of safety, is joined with the assurance of secrecy. Such an action cannot be justified, but it may be concealed. Such a plan or purpose is dishonourable, but it is too deeply laid and well guarded to fear any discovery. We are told indeed, that "Though hand join in hand the sinner shall not go unpunished." Still however, the awful array of divine judgments is overlooked or forgotten. Thousands have fallen; yet the blind and bold transgressor concludes he shall escape. This has been one of the most effectual means of delusion, from the beginning of the world. When the arch-enemy tempted our first parents with the forbidden fruit, he said, "Ye shall not die." He

removed the threatening of God out of the way, that his own false promise might gain full credit to seduce them. The policy of satan and the progress of sin, are the same to this day. There is not one in a hundred of those who fill our prisons, but thought he should contrive in some way to evade the hand of justice.

And as sin deceives by flattering promises, for the same purpose, she employs *specious pleas*. We know, an ingenious advocate can colour and commend a bad cause. There is an almost boundless variety of reasons brought on behalf of sin. Some of the most plausible, we shall just mention.

Sin is pleaded for on the ground of *natural constitution*. One says, we are but flesh and blood; our powers are weak, and our temptations strong, and as we are what our Creator made us, it cannot surely be criminal to gratify those passions, that spring spontaneously from our very nature. Thus one man feels himself disposed to indulge low sensual appetites, another irascible and violent temper. The lewd debauchee, the beastly drunkard, and the cruel oppressor, lay the blame of their conduct, each upon his constitution. And when this plea is not urged to

justify bad actions, it is generally thought sufficient to palliate and excuse them. A person who finds himself constitutionally resentful or constitutionally intemperate, expects of course, that he must be permitted to rage and ravage like a tyger, or roll in filthy excesses like a swine, because like these creatures he yields to the impulse of nature.

Sin is pleaded for on the ground of *custom*.

It has been truly said, man is an imitative creature, and it is every day seen, for the generality are wholly guided by example and implicitly follow the crowd. In Italy and Spain, people often when the bell rings, break off in the midst of a game at cards to say their prayers, and then rising from their knees, immediately take up the cards again; or they go out of the church and instantly fly to puppet shows and plays; but nobody there blames such conduct, because it is the custom of the country. Here those who keep open shop half the Lord's day, and then go decently to a place of worship, think themselves good Christians, conforming to the custom of the country; for although the Scriptures justly applied, would convict them.



of sabbath breaking, the practice of the majority and not Scripture is their rule. A man who would not in private friendship utter a known falsehood, in carrying on business will not scruple to utter twenty in a day, and then pleads that this is the common custom, and absolutely necessary to manage trade with success. There was a time, when among us, persons who obtained goods upon credit, thought it a want of moral principle and a great disgrace not to pay for them, but now bankruptcies and failures, connected with a knavish system of villany, are become so common, that scarcely any one talks of honesty, it is a virtue out of fashion. Custom, all-prevailing custom, can wash the Ethiopian white.

Sin is pleaded for under the *pretence of expediency.*

A man in quest of promotion may see the faults of his patron, but finds it expedient to connive at them. A time-serving preacher, thinks it expedient to spare the great, and lash with relentless rigour, those from whom he has nothing either to hope or fear. Parents professing godliness, often suffer their children to go into company infected with all



the follies and vices of the world, under the pretext of forming advantageous connexions. In a word, this kind of expedience is a royal patent, bearing the stamp of king Lucifer, to enable easy accommodating Christians to serve God and Mammon.

Sin is pleaded for under the *idea of necessity*.

Some go so far as to maintain, that they are not free agents. Every thing is fixed in the irrevocable decrees of the Almighty; and, according to their notions, all are fast bound in the chains of fate. Certainly if it be so, there can neither be sin nor blame attached to man, for he is like a machine irresistably impelled by causes over which he has no controul. This is an admirable doctrine to set conscience at rest. Men of this principle may say in their high tone of confidence and their full career of wickedness, do not condemn us, we are just such characters as God would have us to be; or like those monsters spoken of by Jeremiah, who said, when they were accused of stealing, murdering, and committing adultery; "We are delivered to do all these abominations." Jer. vii. 9.

III. Sin deceives by the manner in which it works.

The operations of evil, can be but imperfectly described. We see indeed its direful effects, yet when we study the peculiar manner in which they are produced, we are soon bewildered and confounded.

1. Sin works *gradually*.

There are certain boundaries of right and wrong, which cannot in all cases be clearly ascertained. Men are often drawn beyond the line of rectitude in the first instance, from being involved in some doubt and uncertainty concerning it. You think perhaps there can be no harm, in occasionally associating with such company as you do not wholly approve. The spirit of levity is caught, you next imitate them, and at last bear their character. One act of sin paves the way for another, and the progress of vice is facilitated at every fresh step. As a current of water wears away the bank which restrained it, and increases in force as the obstruction lessens, so is sin. When Elisha wept while he foretold to his face the cruelties of Hazael, and his violence against the children of Israel, Hazael appeared to recoil with horror

at the idea of such conduct, and exclaimed, "What! is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" Yet when he rose to the possession of power, he perpetrated the very crimes which he had before abhorred, and thought a degradation beneath the rank of humanity.

2. Sin works *secretly*.

It is sapping the ground of hope, when we hear neither the sound of axes nor hammers. It is undermining our comfort and happiness, while we slumber at ease. Sin works like those poisons, which exhilarate the spirits, while they spread their deadly bane through the blood. Paul speaks of the mystery of iniquity, which was at that time beginning to work in the church, and what he said of the baleful spirit of Antichrist, may be applied to sin in general.

3. Sin works *internally*.

It insinuates itself into the thoughts, dazzles the imagination, blinds the understanding, biasses the will, depraves the affections, and stupifies the conscience. Thus the faculties and powers of the inner man are wholly perverted. And how can we expect purity of life, when the very principles and springs of action are corrupt? How can we

look for a conduct regular and consistent, when the motives which influence it are all wrong? The piercing eye of God sees the first wayward propensities to evil, and the manner in which they work till they break out into vile deeds and issue in awful consequences. When lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.

Suffer, my brethren, the word of exhortation. Let the subject of this discourse, engage your serious thoughts, and be turned to a practical use. Consider sin as your worst enemy, and beware that you are not deceived by the fair disguises and flattering names which it assumes. Lend no ear to its specious promises and pleas. Guard against the insidious approach of temptation, and the first emotions of evil. "Blessed is the man that feareth always." You can only be safe while you are humble and vigilant. Above all things, give yourselves up to God, and daily seek his guidance, support, and protection. Let every one offer unceasingly the prayer of David, "Who can understand his errors, cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptu-

ous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer."

## SERMON II.

---

### JESUS CHRIST THE GREAT DELIVERER.

~~~~~  
1 THES. i. 10.

*Even Jesus which delivered us from the wrath to come.*  
~~~~~

It is an unspeakable privilege to live under the dispensation of evangelical truth. The light destined to shine upon the people who sat in darkness and the region of the shadow of death, sheds its exhilarating beams around us. The message of heavenly mercy hath reached our ears. I need not now enlarge on the nature, design, and value of the gospel. It is the authentic testimony of the living God, the only system of doctrine which opens to us both our disease and remedy, our ruin and the means of recovery. Brethren, unto you is the word of this salvation sent.

I. We shall consider the awful danger to



which we are exposed through sin. The apostle, in the text, speaks of *wrath to come*. And who can fix the strict import, or fathom the depth of this tremendous language? It opens a glimpse of hell itself, and contains a compendious description of eternal torments. Though it is painful to enter on the contemplation of such a theme, yet it may be productive of profit. Oh that levity may give place to deep seriousness, and presumption to that profound soul-pervading reverence, which becomes fallen undone creatures in the presence of Jehovah! Wrath to come! And do you ask, Whence or from whom will it come? I reply from that Almighty Being, who fills heaven and earth. "Who knoweth the power of his anger? Even according to his fear so is his wrath." Talk not in a vague and delusive manner of his mercy, to forget your danger and fortify the mind with vain confidence. It is true indeed, his compassion and long-suffering are great, yet he is the God to whom vengeance belongeth. The anger of a creature is of little consequence compared with the dread displeasure of Jehovah. "Can thine hands be strong? or can thine heart endure when I shall deal with thee, saith the Lord?" We sometimes trem-

ble at the frown of a fellow mortal, how much more should we fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell?

Wrath to come! But why will it come? I answer, to vindicate the despised truth, the injured justice, and the insulted majesty of the adorable King of kings. Sin, however it may be veiled and excused by men, is hated and abhorred of God. Indeed, a Being of absolute and unspotted purity, cannot sanction what is directly opposite to his nature. The law of God therefore forbids sin and condemns the sinner. A heavy curse hangs over his devoted head.

Even reason itself teaches us, that when subjects rebel against their rightful sovereign, it is necessary to inflict punishment, for the support and honour of the government. A tribunal of human judgment has in it something awfully impressive! But what is the wrath of man to the indignation of God? What is the death of the body to the destruction of the soul? Surely the thought of being sentenced to suffer all the anguish of eternal misery, ought to thrill the heart with sensations of salutary fear. Say not, these are the gloomy views of superstition, the groundless apprehensions and ghastly phan-

toms of weak and vulgar minds. We proceed not on idle fables and loose conjectures, but appeal to the sacred Scriptures. Isa. iii. 11. "Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him." Rom. i. 18. ii. 8, 9. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish; upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile." What stands clearly revealed from heaven, attended with the strongest attestation, must be fully believed. To deny the punishment annexed to sin as its just desert and inevitable issue, is to cast away the divine word. But you profess to believe the Scriptures, and ought therefore to be deeply affected by these solemn and momentous testimonies.

Wrath to come! Do you ask, But when will it come? It is not for mortals, or any creature to know the times and the seasons, which the Father alone hath in his own power. Even now, the wrath of heaven comes in threatenings, which sound like distant thunder to warn you of the gathering storm.

The hour of death is near, and to the unbeliever it will be a dreadful hour! "Because there is wrath, beware lest he take thee away with his stroke: then a great ransom cannot deliver thee." The day of judgment is approaching, when you must stand at the bar of God and give an account of your deeds to the great searcher of hearts. "Then shall the wicked go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

Wrath to come! Do you ask, But how will it come? I reply it will be sudden as the lightning's flash, resistless as the thunder's flaming bolts. "Upon the wicked, God will rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and a horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup."

What striking language, what fearful imagery are employed to describe the displeasure of the Almighty. The vials of his vengeance are prepared to be poured out when he gives the signal! The last plagues, the never-dying worm, and the unquenchable fire, will fasten incurable pains and unutterable miseries upon the souls of evil men! It is affecting to review the past judgments of God, such as the general deluge and the overthrowing of Sodom and Gomorrah; but how

much more tremendous is the wrath to come!

II. Consider Jesus Christ as the great Deliverer from endless woe.

So deplorable is our fallen state, that it was impossible for us to rise again of ourselves. All our dignity, rectitude, and strength are gone. So deeply were we involved in guilt, and enslaved by iniquity, that an angel's arm could not have rescued us from thralldom and woe. But behold the Son of God, coming forth to effect the marvelous work! The angel commanded his name to be called Jesus, because he was destined to save his people from their sins. Significant and delightful name! how exactly does it correspond with the character and work of Immanuel! how sweetly does it sound in the ear of the believer! Joshua, the valient leader who conducted the chosen tribes into an earthly inheritance and conquered their foes before them, was but a figure or type of our great Deliverer. Many a patriot, or warrior, has been complimented as the Saviour of his country. Such language as applied to heroes and kings, is generally nothing more than the homage which servi-



lity pays to pride ; or at least, requires to be taken in a very limited sense. We should be grateful to the instruments, by which we are rescued from any imminent temporal dangers ; but Christ, as Paul assures us, became the *Author of eternal* salvation to all who obey him. There are all the qualities in Christ Jesus, which render him a suitable and sufficient Saviour.

He is *gracious and condescending*.

Love, divine love brought him down from the mansions of glory and immortality, to sojourn in this world of sin and woe. What but infinite compassion, could induce him voluntarily to undertake our cause, exclaiming " When he cometh into the world, sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin, thou hast had no pleasure : Then said I, lo ! I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God." The Apostles dwell with rapture and delight on this interesting theme. The matchless love and condescension of the Son of God, supplies matter for the warmest appeal to every Christian's heart. " For ye know," saith Paul to the Corinthians, " 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 made rich." "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross." Phil. ii. 6—8. At the incarnation of the son of God, angels from heaven visited our earth, to celebrate in a new song the propitious event.

He is *mighty* and *immutable*.

To be fully convinced of this, you need only consult and compare the lively oracles of truth. Isa. lxiii. 1. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." Nothing can exceed the interest excited by the peculiar and abrupt manner in which the sublime language of the prophet breaks upon us. Nor can any one, conversant with the Scriptures, be at a loss to know who is the august personage thus introduced to command and engage our attention. The words

of the Apostle may stand as a comment to those of the prophet: when speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, he says, "Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us."

We are warned not to trust in princes, for their breath goeth forth and they return to the dust. He who relies on an arm of flesh clings to a broken reed. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He is the rock of ages, the sure foundation laid in Zion."

It is most pleasing and encouraging to contemplate the grace and power of Jesus, displayed in the glorious work of redemption. Before our souls could be delivered, it was necessary that the mountain of guilt should be removed, that the law of God should be magnified, and the claims of justice answered, that the sting of death should be drawn, and the powers of hell vanquished. All this, which no creature could accomplish, hath been effected by Immanuel. Look up to the brow of Calvary. What a heart-touching spectacle is the cross! "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!" Look down into the sepulchre; he

is not there, but risen and ascended on high. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Christ is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins to Israel. Here let us fix our admiring thoughts in holy meditation, Here let us rest our hopes with firmest confidence. Jesus is not only a deliverer, but the only Deliverer. Never yet was a brand plucked out of the fire, but by his powerful arm. Ten thousand times ten thousand are now praising him in glory, for the inestimable blessings of redemption. And we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus, we shall be saved even as they. To him give all the Prophets and Apostles witness. He is the grand object, worthy of concentrated attention, and supreme universal regard. "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." Surely shall one say, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength? even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed." Peter addressing himself to the

unbelieving elders and rulers of the Jews says, "This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved."

III. Consider the possibility of knowing our actual deliverance from the wrath to come, and what are the evidences by which this may be known.

I should be chargeable with egregious folly, were I to set before you things utterly beyond your reach. To aim at what we have no good reason to expect, is the sure way to meet disappointment. But it is certain the point to which I now refer, is capable of being attained, because it has been attained by thousands and myriads. The Apostle in the text, uses a style of firm confidence and holy boldness. He does not say, Jesus will deliver, but hath delivered us from the wrath to come. The glorious work is not merely expected, but also done. The manner in which John speaks is equally confident, "We know that we have passed from death unto life." Now if such knowledge is possible, it must

be granted to be highly desirable. Nor let it be said, this was a peculiar privilege restricted to the apostles. It appears from the beginning of the chapter whence our text is taken, that the Christians at Thessalonica enjoyed it. Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. But how may this important point be ascertained? How shall we be warranted to draw the conclusion, that "We are delivered from the wrath to come?" These are questions of the highest moment, and they ought to be laid to heart. The evidences of genuine personal piety, are the same now, that they were in the first age of Christianity.

The Thessalonians, as appears from the context, gave proof that they were deeply affected by the gospel. They perceived its truth, felt its power, obeyed its precepts, and forsaking their idols, cheerfully gave themselves up to the service of the living God, though exposed to severe persecution on that account. Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father. Now the same cause will always produce the same effects. If the graces which shone



with such lustre in the Thessalonians appear conspicuous in you, then are you delivered from the wrath to come, and the bitterness of eternal death is past. Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith. Do you believe with the heart, and with the mouth make confession unto salvation? Have you been rendered deeply sensible of your aggravated sin, and awful danger, and fled to Jesus for refuge as the only hope set before you? Do you sincerely love the Redeemer, and account all things but dross for the excellency of his knowledge? Is your chief delight found in his word, his service, his presence? Faith and love are the vital principles of personal religion, and their existence is evinced by their practical effects. The man who cordially embraces the gospel, and with purpose of heart cleaves to the Lord, will cast away the chains of Mammon and forsake the follies of the world. He will labour with zeal, and suffer with patience in the cause of God, and wait for his Son from heaven. And now ask your own hearts, whether your character is here marked. Apply to the sacred word. Be willing to submit to this test. Has the gospel come home to you with power, convincing you of sin, of righteousness, and of



judgment? drawing you with strong and prevailing bonds to the divine mercy-seat? Has the change in your principles been shown to the world by a corresponding change of conduct? What efforts and sacrifices have you made to advance the glory of God? What idols and vanities have you renounced to follow Christ? If you are not delivered from the reigning power of sin, it is certain you are as yet exposed to the wrath to come. On the other hand, if you are renewed in the spirit of your mind, it is an evidence that your iniquities and transgressions are blotted out. There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

## SERMON III.

---

ON THE

### DANGER OF NEGLECTING THE GREAT SALVATION.

~~~~~  
HEB. ii. 3.

*How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?*

~~~~~

MAN stands on far higher ground than the beasts that perish, whether we regard his faculties or his obligations. When we consider ourselves as dependant and accountable creatures, it is impossible to deny that we are bound to obey that God whose hand continually supports the existence which he gave us, whose eye observes all our thoughts and ways, and whose impartial sentence shall at last fix our eternal state. Hence the dictates of conscience are often felt, where they are not followed, and sometimes feared, where but little felt. The gifts and talents which God bestows, according to the eternal rule of equi-

ty, must determine the duties which we owe. "Where much is given, much will be required; and where little is given, little will be required." Those who have received the oracles of Divine Truth, are subjected to a far higher responsibility than the poor wretched heathen. The language in which our Lord gave his commission, naturally leads to this conclusion. "Go ye out into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." Is it surprising, that those, who had received such a commission, should use great plainness of speech, and evince great ardour of spirit? Might it not be expected, that they would blend solemn admonitions with the simple statements of evangelical truth? and be constant in warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom? Accordingly we find, the Apostles adopted a mode of address, calculated to rouse the supine and careless, and fasten strong convictions on the conscience. In proof of this, we need go no farther than the words connected with our text; ver. 1—3. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken

by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken to us by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him."

I. We will shew, why the salvation mentioned in the text is called *great*.

And surely this is the most interesting subject which can engage the attention of a serious and enquiring mind. The salvation here spoken of may be emphatically called *great*, on account of the manifold and exalted benefits included in it, the mysterious and astonishing methods employed to procure it, and the mighty signs and wonders which attended its first promulgation.

We can merely glance at the benefits comprehended in this salvation. Truly, the redemption of the soul is precious! for we are thus released from the heaviest debt, emancipated from the vilest bondage, and raised from the deepest misery; yet all this forms but a small part of salvation, and to have an adequate idea of the whole, we must take in the entire range of spiritual privileges con-

nected with reconciliation to God, and grasp the vast aggregate of future happiness, which awaits the ransomed immortal spirit in heaven. The deliverance of Israel from the cruel and oppressive burdens of Egypt was a signal display of almighty power and divine goodness; but how much more important is the deliverance of a soul from the condemnation of a violated law, from the pollution and power of sin, from the captivity of Satan, from the poisoned sting of death, and the piercing torments of hell? This salvation includes also, all the positive blessings of the new and everlasting covenant, such as pardon, justification, adoption, fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. Each of these evangelical privileges, is a spring of peace and satisfaction to the Christian.

But the salvation spoken of in the text, may be emphatically called *great*, if we advert to the mysterious and astonishing method by which it was procured. The plan of redemption, which was hid for ages, is now partly unfolded, but it was formed and wrapt up in the councils of Jehovah before time began. In this grand and comprehensive plan we see mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other, the

divine perfections in complete harmony displayed through the economy devised for the recovery of fallen guilty men. Undoubtedly the most conspicuous and marvelous part of this scheme, is that which appointed the incarnation of the Son of God, and the sufferings and death by which he made atonement for sin. This is a mystery, in the contemplation of which, we discern infinite wisdom and inflexible justice, joined with sovereign superabounding grace. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John iii. 16.

The salvation spoken of in the text, may be emphatically called *great*, if we regard the mighty signs and wonders which attended its first promulgation.

The persons employed to spread Christianity among the nations, were taken from the lowest rank of society; a few poor fishermen had to teach doctrines, which opposed the prejudices of Jewish superstition, and the pestilent errors and rites of heathen idolatry. And how shall we account for the success of a cause, whose advocates as far as ordinary means might be regarded, were so ill provided for its defence? Their message car-



ried the seal of truth, the very stamp of heaven. The hand of the Lord wrought with them. To this the Apostle refers in the verse following my text, "God bearing them witness both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his will."

This salvation is *so great* that the most remarkable preservation of natural life, and recovery of civil liberty, shrink into insignificance before it. The temporal deliverance of whole nations, including hundreds of millions, is to the salvation of one soul, as a single leaf to the forest, a drop to the sea, a ray to the sun's noontide blaze, an atom to the universe. But indeed all comparison fails to illustrate, and the understanding in its utmost stretch of exertion to conceive, the infinite disparity. What was the theme which occupied the thoughts, and elevated the hopes, and gilded the prospects, and concentrated the affections, and warmed, and fired, and filled, and enraptured the hearts, of patriarchs, prophets, and ancient kings? Hear the venerable Jacob on his death-bed exclaim, "I have waited for thy salvation, O God!" 1 Pet. i. 10, 11. "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophe-

sied of the grace that should come unto you. Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." What engages the earnest attention and profound admiration of those pure and glowing spirits who surround the eternal throne? Is it not the mystery of redemption, the grand economy of provisions and means, by which guilty and forlorn apostates may be recovered? Yes, for we have the best authority to assert, that into these things the angels desire to look.

II. Enquire when, and why, men neglect the great salvation revealed to us.

The Apostles were empowered to open and explain the way of pardon, peace, and acceptance; and to urge rebellious mortals, with the most cogent arguments and pathetic exhortations, to lay down their arms of hostility, and instantly submit to the terms proposed in the gospel. 2 Cor. v. 20. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." And all who faithfully, and forcibly,

and indefatigably teach the doctrines of the New Testament; may justly address their hearers in the same language which those apostolic messengers used, "Men and brethren, unto you is the word of this salvation sent."

1. Persons neglect this salvation, who obstinately refuse to hear the gospel.

Nor is this an uncommon case. Many who reside but a few steps from the sanctuary, disdain to enter its doors. They see others walk to the house of God in company, but contemptuously turn their backs both upon it and them. The precious hours of the sabbath are partly wasted in slumber and sloth, and partly dissipated in wild and vicious amusements. When those who desire their best interests, remonstrate with them for their neglect of Divine Worship, and endeavour to persuade them to sit under the sound of the Gospel; perhaps they break out into railing and reproach; or pour forth a volley of imprecations and curses, and brand all religious people as vile hypocrites. These are the sad symptoms of an inveterate obstinacy, which rejects the council of God, and rushes blindly forward in the road to ruin. In vain does the light of truth shine, to

those who resolutely shut their eyes, that they may exclude its rays; in vain is the voice of the charmer, charming ever so wisely, to those who like the deaf adder, close their ears against the music. Such characters are described by the prophet. Jer. vi. 16, 17. "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest to your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein. Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken."

2. Men neglect the great salvation revealed to us, when they sit under the preaching of the gospel with cold formality, careless indifference, or a captious spirit.

It was not without cause that our Lord gave to the people this admonition, "Take heed how ye hear." Alas! many are all alive in company, and remarkably prompt in dispatching business, who no sooner enter the house of God, than they are seized with a sudden lethargy, and appear stupid and listless, till the close of the service returns them to their own element, and restores their

senses. Others, while there, prove by their wandering eyes, and restless motions, that the mind is either occupied with trifles, or wearied with its own efforts in warding off the pointed arrows of truth, which must not be suffered to touch the conscience, lest they should pain and wound it. Critical and captious persons attend sermons, not to be convinced and instructed, but to judge the preacher, and gratify their pride and peevishness, by pronouncing censures with an haughty air and a positive tone. It is evident that numbers, who are ready enough to acknowledge the necessity of attending the means of grace, think when they have regularly sat their accustomed hour, under the ministry of the word, they have done all they can, and all they should do, and therefore feel no anxiety, being quite at ease in Zion. This is one of those errors which are most dangerous, from the plausible aspect which they wear. Yet we may safely affirm, that to come to the house of God with frigid formality, and pass through its services in a careless manner, merely to provide an opiate for the conscience, is not to use, but abuse the means of grace, and provoke that God who appointed them.

3. Men neglect the great salvation revealed

to us, when they habitually omit the reading of the Scriptures, and prayer at home.

There cannot be a grosser inconsistency, than for any one to acknowledge the Bible to be the word of God, while he seldom so much as looks into it, and never peruses its pages with attention and seriousness. Our Lord's precept is well known, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me." If the Bible be neglected, the soul is neglected; and the awful realities of eternity are set at naught.

It will however, be needful to enquire, *Why* men neglect the great salvation? The fact is undeniable, and the cause is well worth examining.

1. Men neglect this salvation, because they are entangled in the cares, or immersed in the pleasures, of the present world. We have a striking illustration of this in one of the parables of Christ. Matth. xxii. 2—6. When the marriage dinner was prepared, and all things were ready, they that were bidden made light of it and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandize. It deserves to be remarked, that the original word which we translate, "They made light of



it," is the same which in our text is rendered, "to neglect." Those who are engrossed with worldly possessions and pursuits; which are lawful while subservient to our real welfare, treat the rich provisions of the gospel with levity and contempt. We urge the invitations of the king of Zion, and add arguments and persuasions, but they meet us with ingenious evasions, and leave us with specious apologies.

When the young have spent the brightest season of life in gay amusements and indiscretions, after forming more permanent connexions, they sometimes cut off a few wild excesses, and appear decent and regular. Their hearts, however, are perhaps, no more than before, supremely set upon the work of their salvation, but are chiefly bent on increasing their fortunes, or raising their families. The offices of religion are not their solace, but their task. They come to these sacred services with reluctance, continue in them by restraint, and quit them with gladness.

2. Men neglect this great salvation, because they yield to the temptations of the great enemy of souls.

"If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost. In whom the god of this world

hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." Satan is an artful and indefatigable foe. Now, one of his most successful stratagems is, either to take men away from the gospel, or to take away the gospel from them; to effect the first, he excites persecution; and to compass the second, he employs policy. When any one heareth the word and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. Beware lest the enemy get an advantage over you. If conscience, the centinel of the soul, is soothed by his infernal potions and spells to slumber when it should watch, you are in the utmost danger.

3. Men neglect this great salvation, because they presume on opportunities, which may never be granted.

Opinions which are generally current and practices which almost universally prevail, have a mighty influence. And what is so common in the world, as the opinion that pardon and peace may be secured in the evening of old age, or indeed on the borders of the valley covered by the shadow of death. In fact, the great majority who live carelessly, estrang-

ed from God and religion, build their hope on this loose peradventure, this sandy and treacherous ground. The messenger of heaven, reasoning of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, is put off, with something like the promise of Felix: "Go thy way for this time, and when I have a more convenient season I will send for thee."

Let me affectionately entreat you, my hearers, to reflect on the vast and incalculable value of your immortal souls. Think of the infinite importance of fleeing from the wrath to come; and laying hold of eternal life. The affairs of the world, I know, call for attention; but take heed that you be not wrapt up and ensnared in them. Be not so careful and troubled about many things, as to forget the one thing needful. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and whatever else is really necessary, shall be added to you. Be on the watch against the wiles of the devil. This subtile enemy will leave no means untried to divert your attention from sacred truths and duties. O, beware of indulging a lingering and slothful spirit. It is the most egregious folly and inexcusable supineness, to put off to a future uncertain period those solemn and momentous concerns

which demand immediate attention. "Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation."

III. Point out the inevitable misery, which awaits the continued neglect of this great salvation.

We daily see, even in ordinary things, the sad effects of negligence. If a man neglects his body, his health will be lost; if he neglects his business, his profit and credit will be soon lost; if he neglects his friends and family, the sweets of domestic peace and social intercourse will be eventually lost; but if he neglects the gospel, and the means of grace, his soul must be lost, and lost for ever! We live under a dispensation of mercy, but all who persist in rebellion will find that the Almighty has not laid aside the strict standard of equity, and the awful sword of justice. He marks the manner in which we treat the messages and doctrines of his word.

"This, my long-suffering and my day of grace,  
"They who neglect and scorn shall never taste."

The language of the Apostle, in the text, is most pungent and impressive. It is not in the

form a direct threatening, but of a searching interrogatory. "How shall we escape?" Here is the question; and which of you can answer it? There is something implied in these words; and the context shows what it is. "How shall we escape punishment?" verse 2. It requires but little attention to the dictates of the Divine word, and the events of Providence, to convince us that God has linked in an inseparable connexion, sin and woe. He will not reverse his threatenings; he cannot deny himself. The curse of heaven falls with unerring certainty, and fastens with grappling and resistless force on the soul of the impenitent sinner.

How shall ye escape? By flight? No: Whither can you flee? Where can you expect to find a place of retreat? Is there a vault or a gloomy cavern in the wide compass of creation to receive you, and conceal you from the omniscient Judge? For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings. There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.

Can you escape by policy? The human mind is fertile in expedients. A thousand arts have been devised to evade the stroke of



justice among men, and they too often succeed. But remember, you will soon have to do with a Being, who disappointeth the devices of the crafty; and maketh their council of none effect.

Can you escape by a price? No; for the supreme Judge is not to be bribed. Wealth will not even buy a reprieve, much less a full exemption. Before the dread tribunal of Jehovah you must stand, and hear your sentence from his righteous lips.

Can you escape by power? Impossible. Shall a worm of the earth contend with the Majesty of heaven? Shall a creature crushed before the face of a moth, wage war with omnipotence? As well set the briers and thorns in battle against the devouring fire. How shall ye escape? Who hath hardened himself against God and prospered? Read the records of the sacred volume, and trace the history of the world from the beginning of time to the present day. Is it not evident, that the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment? If, indeed, you would escape eternal punishment, there is but one refuge, and the gospel opens and discovers it. Oh! then fly from the vanities and allurements of an evil world; and



entrust your souls in the hands of Jesus the only Saviour. Interested in his favour, you will have nothing to fear at the approach of death, or the great day of judgment. Your life shall be hid with Christ in God; and your happiness secured against every danger and adversary.

## SERMON IV.

---

THE

### AGGRAVATED EVIL AND AWFUL CONSEQUENCES OF UNBELIEF.

---

JOHN viii. 24.

*If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins*

---

IT is manifest, that the whole economy of religion introduced by Moses, was designed only as a typical and temporary dispensation. God had indeed promised, that out of Jacob should come forth a Deliverer, and a Redeemer. To him and his work, most of the shadows and figures of the law pointed; of him and his kingdom, the prophets frequently spake. He is represented as possessed of Divine perfections, and yet as voluntarily assuming the nature of man, and appearing in the form of a servant. Hence he is called Immanuel, which means, God with us. As it was usual in ancient times for prophets,

priests and princes, to be elevated to their high office, and publicly recognized by the ceremony of anointing them with oil; the promised Redeemer was most commonly known to the Old Testament saints, under the designation of the Messiah. This title, therefore, stands connected with all those ideas of wisdom, sanctity, and power, which are calculated to inspire veneration, or command homage and obedience. Ps. ii. 6, 7. cx. 2.

When we read the New Testament, we see the shadows of the law embodied, and the predictions of the prophets fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Yet he came to his own, but his own nation received him not. In the chapter whence our text is taken, we find him reasoning with the Pharisees. They had conducted to him a woman guilty of adultery, to hear what decision he would pronounce relative to her punishment. Whatever were their pretexts, they seldom approached Christ without some malignant and insidious purpose. He well knew, as in this instance, how to disappoint their aims. After this he declares himself to be the "light of the world," and enlarges on his Divine mission, v. 12. They raised fruitless and vain objections, and shewed a disposition to

dispute, rather than to learn. “And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.”

From these words we shall take a view of the aggravated sin and awful consequences of unbelief.

I. We shall take a view of the aggravated sin of unbelief.

The grand design of the Sacred Writings, is to exhibit Jesus Christ as the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person; the sole Mediator between God and men; the Surety and Saviour of guilty perishing souls. To him give all the Prophets witness; and in what manner he was exalted and magnified by the apostles in their ministry, may be seen in every page of the New Testament. All the lines of revealed truth in their various bearings, uniformly conduct to Christ as their ultimate object; and meet at the cross as their common centre. “Search the Scriptures, said he, for they are they which testify of me.” Now the declarations of inspired Prophets and Apostles, have

every kind of evidence which can reasonably be required to entitle them to full credit. They bear the impress of veracity, and the broad and visible signature of their heavenly origin. He, therefore, who does not cordially believe in Jesus Christ, opposes the clearest and strongest testimonies, and rejects the council of God. The gospel, besides possessing intrinsic excellence which sets it far above every other system of doctrines, stands supported by extraordinary facts, firm and immoveable as the solid enduring rocks. But the unbeliever, however specious his pleas and professions, in reality treats the Son of God as an impostor, and his word as a cunningly devised fable, utterly unworthy of his attention and regard. In this respect, there is no difference between the avowed infidel, and the hypocritical or empty formalist; for while they are marked with varying lines of character, they belong to one and the same class. And if the measure of their guilt is to be estimated by the dignity of the person whom they degrade, and the worth or evidence of the doctrines which they despise, the force of the strongest language, can give but a very inadequate idea of it.

We may judge of the evil nature of unbe-

lief, by examining the dispositions from which it springs. If it be asked, Why do men reject Christ and his glorious gospel? The answer is, From pride, perverseness, and enmity. These are the elements which give the bitter root of infidelity both its nutriment and growth. It may, however, be proper to examine this matter more closely.

1. Unbelief is the offspring of pride.

The gospel brings no soothing flattery, no sweet incense, to gratify the natural vanity of the human heart. It pays no homage to worldly wealth, or wisdom, or virtue; it strips men of their fancied excellencies, and cuts up their self-importance at the root; it opens only one way of return to God, for the rude barbarian, and the lettered sage, the servile peasant and the august prince, that no flesh should glory in his presence. Is it surprising, that a religion so hostile to all conceit and arrogance, should be disliked and opposed? Can the ambitious, climbing with eager steps the eminence of promotion, or panting for the glittering prize of fame, come down to resign their lofty pretensions, and lie prostrate in the dust? Ah! no; it is the humbling tendency of the gospel, which rendered it so ungrateful to the self-righteous



pharisees and vain philosophers of old, and which makes it equally unacceptable to thousands in our own days. 1 Tim. vi. 3, 4. "If any man consent not to the wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words." Those who stand high in the esteem and favour of a world devoted to secular interests, to fashionable follies, and to intoxicating pleasures, are aware that a cordial reception of the gospel, and a conduct consistent with it, would at once expose them to the scorn and ill-will of the very persons that now meet them with smiles, and feed them with soothing compliments. This is a bar in the way of faith, which they cannot pass; a cross, which they will not bear. Hence Jesus said to some of the Jews, "How can ye believe which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only."

2. Unbelief springs from pride joined with perverseness.

By perverseness, I mean a state of mind distorted from rectitude, and obstinate in the wrong. Moses complained of the Israelites in the wilderness, and described them as a

crooked, perverse, and very froward generation; children in whom was no faith. They had seen many signs and wonders, and received many mercies and favours from the hand of God; yet still refused to obey his voice; to give credit to his promises, or glory to his great name. In a similar style of sharp reproof, our Lord breaks forth into that strong exclamation, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you!"

From these, and many other scriptures, we find that unbelief has a close connexion with rebellion and obduracy. The will warped from the right direction, in which it would correspond with the sacred and sovereign will of God, is wholly bent upon evil, and draws all the powers of the soul along with it. In this corrupt and depraved frame of mind, error is chosen and sound doctrine discarded; sin is preferred to holiness, and the vanities of time to the grand realities of eternity. The purity of the gospel, which is its characteristic excellency, is the very reason why a perverted and vicious heart distastes and rejects it. "And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. He that is of God, heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." ver. 45, 47.

The Jews frequently asked Christ to shew them a sign from heaven, that they might believe him. Was it then only evidence that they wanted? Was it their sincere wish to exercise faith in him? No such thing. The very request itself was unbelief, working its way through the unhallowed channel of vain curiosity, and foaming out in frothy and malignant cavils. They had signs, and prodigies of power and goodness, such as the world never before witnessed; but they ascribed them to the influence of Beelzebub; and it is said, Though Jesus had done so many miracles among them, yet they believed not on him.

It is no uncommon thing for infidels to make great professions of candour, impartial research, and love to truth; while they are labouring by artful insinuations and attacks, to throw discredit on the gospel, and shake the confidence of its weak or incautious adherents. They virulently blame all who are prejudiced in favour of Christianity; and prove themselves full of prejudice against it. But the perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, lose nothing of their evil, by being disguised under the mask of candour.

3. Unbelief may be traced to enmity.

That there should be in man a strong aversion of heart to the God in whom he lives, and moves, and has his being, is a fact so strange, that it fills all who, like the returning prodigal, are awakened to a sense of their guilt and degradation, with shame, and sorrow, and confusion. If any object to this statement, and say, Surely it is impossible to find among mortals a solitary individual, who can justly be called an enemy to God? I answer, This is the current language, in which the scriptures draw the characters of all, while in an impenitent and unconverted state. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be." So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. Desire and aversion, love and hatred, are the chief springs which actuate the soul of man. Now the habitual movement of these passions, in relation to their respective objects, fixes and ascertains the character. He who habitually loves and follows sin, must necessarily hate and abhor holiness. The soul-pervading principle, the predominating passion, gives a decisive cast to the character, and a colour to the conduct of life. A proud, sensual, or profligate man, dislikes the company of pious people on account of their reli-

gion, which is an element uncongenial with his mind; he would feel a still stronger dislike to the society of angels engendered by the superior and repulsive purity of their nature; but his aversion must be at the highest pitch, against that Being who is glorious in holiness, and cannot look on iniquity. As unbelief springs from this enmity, the poisonous quality of the plant must correspond with the noxious composition of the soil. Our Lord called those Jewish infidels, who rejected him, and at once derided his mission and the miracles which confirmed it, "The children of the devil." They believed the father of lies, rather than the God of truth, and loved the devices of hell better than the designs and councils of heaven.

"Unbelief," says Dr. Guise, "includes disaffection to God, disregard to his word, prejudice against the Redeemer, readiness to give credit to any other than him, inordinate love to the world, and preferring the applause of men to the approbation of God." The judicious Charnock observes, "that unbelief is the *greatest* sin, as it is the fountain of all sin: it was Adam's first sin; it is a sin against the gospel, against the highest testi-



mony; a refusal to accept Christ upon the terms of the gospel. It strikes peculiarly at God; is the greatest reproach of him, robs him of his glory, is a contradiction to his will, a contempt of his authority."

When we view this combination of pride, perverseness, and enmity, what a deformed and hideous monster does the unbeliever appear! How nearly is he allied to the infernal spirits! How deeply are the lineaments and black marks of those first apostates stamped upon his character! Yet, strange to say, there are many who vainly attempt to hide all this deformity, under a veil of sophistry. "Man," says an objector, "has in himself no power to believe, and therefore it is absurd to charge him with sin for not believing." It would be a waste of time, to point out the fallacy of this senseless and shameless cavil, which contradicts every page of the Bible. "If, said Jesus, I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin." Their obstinacy admits of no excuse. It is true, they still labour to weave a specious web, but the flimsy covering cannot conceal their turpitude.



It may not be unprofitable to refer to some circumstances, which tend highly to aggravate the sin of unbelief.

The Scriptures represent it as a wilful opposition to divine light and divine mercy, and as a daring insult offered to the Almighty. John iii. 18, 19. "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." According to this passage, we may conclude, that the enormity of the sin, will bear some proportion to the means of instruction and the measure of long-suffering and heavenly goodness, which have been slighted and abused. The Scriptures also represent unbelief as a gross insult offered to the Almighty, a daring defiance both of his authority and justice. 1 John v. 10. "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record which God gave of his Son." Who can speak, or conceive the aggravated evil, of pouring immeasurable contempt upon Jehovah! It is the substance and epitome of all iniquity!

the sublimated venom of the old serpent! the very essence of baseness, blasphemy, and rebellion!

II. We proceed to take a view of the awful consequences of unbelief.

“If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.” The last clause of this text, is full of terrific meaning. To die in our sins, is to quit this world unpardoned, and of course unprepared for a better. The harbingers and external circumstances of death, are matters of small moment. A good man may be called to die at an inn, among entire strangers; or in a hospital, surrounded with ghastly forms of misery; or even in a dungeon, loaded with chains for conscience’s sake, and yet die in peace. But he who dies in his sins, whatever pomp and splendour adorns his chamber, whatever soft opiates and studied flatteries soothe his pains and his fears, assuredly dies under a curse.

1. Unbelief forfeits the inheritance of eternal life, and effectually excludes the soul from heaven.

Presumptuous men indulge a vain hope of future happiness, although living without God in the world. But for those who have

not a grain of genuine faith, or a spark of holy love, to expect heaven as their portion, is a proof that they are given up to strong delusion. "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." There will be no place in heaven for the infidel, the scoffer, the painted hypocrite, and the fruitless professor. In ver. 24. Jesus says to the sanctimonious Pharisees, "I go my way, and ye shall seek me and die in your sins: whither I go ye cannot come." O the dreadful doom, of being eternally excluded from the glorious kingdom and beatific presence of the Lord Jesus!

Canaan, as a land flowing with milk and honey, was justly called a goodly heritage. Thousands, however, left Egypt to go thither, who fell in the wilderness. And why did they not gain actual possession of the holy land? They were prevented by the express prohibition and awful oath of Jehovah. "And to whom sware he in his wrath, that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?" So we see that they could not enter in, because of unbelief. Behold! laid open to view, the injurious and

impassable bar, which occasioned their exclusion! Yet Canaan was but a type and a figure of that inheritance, which is kept in reserve for the saints. The promise of God is sure, and hope gilds the prospect which stretches beyond the stream of death, with the mild, holy, and cheering light of immortality. But remember, unbelief will as effectually exclude us from heaven, as it shut many of the Israelites out of Canaan. The Apostle makes an excellent use of this consideration. "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." Heb. iv. 11.

2. Unbelief plunges the soul down into endless woe.

The hardened reprobate, who dies in his sins, dies under the declared displeasure of God. To him immortality will not be a blessing but a curse. His portion is assigned him in the lake of fire, the smoke of which ascendeth up for ever and ever. The law of God hath appointed his inheritance, and entailed it with solemn bonds, and who shall cut off the entail or reverse the decree? Perhaps it may be asked, Why is all this misery to be considered as the consequence of unbelief? Because it is this which

crowns all the crimes of the sinner; and, as it were, finally settles and seals the collected mass of guilt upon his devoted head. And be it remembered, that the rule of procedure, and the sentence of condemnation, may be read, long ere you are summoned to the dread tribunal. "He that rejecteth me, and believeth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." John xii. 48. The unbeliever may scoffingly ask, Where is the promise of his coming? Foolish presumption! Rest assured, the tremendous day is at hand. "And when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, he will take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power." Can you read or hear such language as this without trembling? Can you think it safe to trifle with the divine testimonies, while such scenes are vividly presented to view? How suitable and necessary is the solemn warning which the Apostle gives to those who make light of the gospel: "Beware therefore, lest that come



upon you, which is spoken of in the prophet; behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish : for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." Acts xiii. 40, 41.

1. Examine yourselves to ascertain what is your character.

I would say to each of you, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? You, perhaps, reply, Yes, I was always a believer: I acknowledge the gospel to be true, and Jesus Christ to be the only Saviour. Let me however ask, How is thy faith evinced? What are its effects? It is possible you are surprised and even shocked, at the idea of having your faith called in question. But we only want that kind of evidence, which is thought requisite in every other case. Suppose a man wasting away in disease, to be plainly and repeatedly told, that without the use of a certain remedy, and an entire change in his mode of life, he must die. He says, I believe it; but continues gratifying his appetite with the same luxury, and never tastes or seeks the needful remedy. Or suppose a person in his bed to be informed that part of his premises was on fire, and the flame rapidly spreading, and should an-



swer, I fully believe what you say; but instantly lay down again to sleep. In these cases, would not their conduct prove their profession to be insincere? Actions shew the prevailing bent of the mind more clearly than words. The Jews boasted of their religion, and gloried in their lawgiver, and yet Christ plainly told them, they did not believe the writings of Moses; John v. 46, 47. How many among us profess faith in the great Redeemer, who give palpable proof that his word has no place in us! It is absolutely necessary to examine ourselves impartially, lest we should be carried away with delusion. "As the body without spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

2. Think of the consequences of unbelief.

To be shut out of the fair mansions of heaven, and imprisoned within the fiery concave of hell; to meet the frown, and fall under the curse of God, is the last extremity of woe. It is probable, you shudder at the mention of such a doom, and welcome every means which can divert the mind from subjects so gloomy and painful. Read, I beseech you, the word of God. Realize the scene of that great day, which shall rend

away every disguise, and reveal the secrets of all hearts. It is not turning away your thoughts from death and judgment, that can save you from them. In a few more days, you will feel the clay tabernacle totter, and all the ties which unite you to this world rapidly dissolve; and what will you do then without an interest in Christ? Oh flee to him now, as your only hope and helper. In him alone you can find safety and peace. Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

# SERMON V.

---

## ON CONVERSION.

---

ACTS iii. 19.

*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.*

---

THE miracles wrought by the hands of the Apostles, were admirably calculated to awaken attention and stimulate enquiry. It pleased God, by the most striking displays of his mighty power, to open a way for the message of divine mercy. In the beginning of this chapter, we have an interesting account of the extraordinary cure received by the poor cripple, who had so many years been daily carried to the gate of the temple, and had lived upon the casual bounty of the people. Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked alms of them. "Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none;

but such as I have give I unto thee : In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up : and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God." This was indeed so notable a miracle, that even the bigotted High Priest, and the spiteful rulers, had neither sufficient effrontery to deny, nor policy to conceal a fact, which filled them with anxiety and alarm. It was on this memorable occasion, when the people crowded to the spot where this new wonder was to be witnessed, that Peter seized the opportunity of delivering to them the most salutary truths and affectionate councils. Far from wishing to draw forth any personal homage or admiration, he immediately turns their attention to his great master and Lord, and unfolds the purpose for which he came into the world and suffered an ignominious death, gradually disclosing to them the glorious plan of salvation. We have here a specimen of that holy heroic boldness, that ingenuous unaffected simplicity, that poignant and searching faithfulness, which so remarkably distinguished the ad-

dresses of the Apostles. He plainly charges them with the murder of Jesus Christ, and then asserts his resurrection from the dead. In the words of my text, he calls them to repentance, and presents the most powerful motives to work upon their minds and engage their hearts. "Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."

I. It will be needful to shew wherein genuine conversion consists.

The desire of happiness was implanted in man by the great Creator, but ever since the entrance of sin into the world, that desire has carried him furiously forward in devious and forbidden paths. The sons and daughters of Adam are all very far gone from original righteousness; and strongly entangled in the bonds of iniquity, and the snares of hell. They are universally represented in the Scriptures, as wanderers from God, transgressors of his law, despisers of his goodness, and rebels in arms against his authority and government. Eph. ii. 2, 3. "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

Among whom 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." It is impossible to view this picture of our fallen state, and contrast man as he came, pure and perfect out of his Creator's hands, with his present guilty and wretched condition, without being deeply affected. He was made only a little lower than the angels, and he has sunk in some respects below the very beasts, and is not many steps above the demons of the horrible pit.

And is it not necessary, for persons in this deplorable state, to undergo a mighty change before they can taste, or reasonably expect any solid satisfying enjoyment? The change required is called regeneration, repentance, or conversion. I am aware, these Scripture terms are not all precisely of the same import. Regeneration, or the new-birth, is the infusion of a divine principle into the soul, by the operation of the spirit of God. This doctrine is clearly taught and solemnly enforced by our Lord in his discourse with Nicodemus. John iii. 2—8. Repentance, is that melting tenderness of heart, mixed with deep self-abhorrence,



which arises from a full discovery of the odious nature and awful desert of our sin. Conversion, consists in actually turning to the God from whom we had grievously revolted. These may easily be distinguished, but must not be separated. True repentance issues in conversion, and conversion brings the soul to the feet of Jesus. It is requisite to remove an error which lies at the threshold of the subject, and has proved a stumbling block destructive to thousands. It has been supposed, by those who have recourse to every idle shift of vain reasoning, and every flimsy shelter of carnal security, that such passages as the text can apply to none but the Jews, bewildered in vague traditions and empty ceremonies, or the heathens accustomed to bow down to idols and worship the works of their own hands. If objectors of this character, were to express their opinion in words, they would say, Conversion may, indeed, be necessary for the unreclaimed sons of Africa, or the savages of America, but surely not for us who were born in Britain, baptized and regenerated in childhood, and educated according to the principles of Christianity. But let me ask, Is it not possible to have baptism the outward and visible sign, with-

out the inward and spiritual grace of the New Covenant? Is it not possible to live in a land of Bibles, and sometimes sit under the sound of the gospel, and be still as stubborn and hardened as Jews, as blind and prejudiced as Turks, and almost as brutish, stupid, and depraved as the grossest idolaters and the wildest barbarians?

There are some errors, which like deleterious drugs intoxicate while they destroy. So long as you drink in these soothing errors to keep conscience asleep, you are mocked and tantalized with visions and phantoms. You talk of your morality and religion, but all the while are only dreaming: "And, (as one observes,) to dream that you are fighting, wins no victory; to dream that you are eating, gets no strength; to dream that you are plowing or reaping, brings no harvest; to dream that you are with princes reigning in a palace, will not place a crown on your head or put a sceptre in your hand." How foolish then is it, to talk loosely about religion, and indulge fancy in dreaming of heaven and happiness, honour and glory, while you have nothing as yet to look for but Tophet, and sorrow, and shame, and everlasting contempt. So long as you continue in love with sin, and in league with

the world, you are far from God; you choose broken cisterns, rather than the fountain of living waters; you prefer the childish toys and glittering baubles of sense, to the precious and enduring treasures which enrich the soul.

Real conversion, is an entire change in the whole current of a man's mind, and the tenor of his life. It is turning from darkness to light—from folly to wisdom—from falsehood and levity, to truth and soberness—from vice and profligacy, to virtue and holiness—from the fastnesses of pride and infidelity, to Jesus the pattern of meekness, the object of faith, and the portion of believers—from the power and captivity of satan, to the kingdom and service, the favour, fellowship, and enjoyment of the living and eternal God. A true convert has his understanding informed, to discern and approve things which are excellent, his conscience probed to the quick, and rendered susceptible of exquisite feeling, his will sweetly subdued, his thoughts and affections sanctified. This is not a partial, but a radical and entire change in all the powers of the mind, and the principles of action. The sinner, arrested in his impetuous career,

turns to the great Deliverer and cries, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do? Teach me thy way, and lead me in thy truth. Remove all my guilt, and purge away the stains of iniquity. Let every habit be destroyed, every pursuit forsaken, every propensity suppressed, which thy word forbids." As the needle touched by the magnet turns to the north, so the soul touched by divine grace turns to God; as a stream flows downward, and as a spark mounts upward, so the thoughts, the passions, and the desires of a sincere penitent, uniformly tend to that Being, who is a sea of love, a sun of righteousness, the only source of life, the attractive centre of excellence, and the author and bestower of all felicity.

We often see conviction, which never issues in conversion. The sinner too frequently regards truth as the troubler of his peace, and might address it as Ahab did Elijah, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" Many things may check a man in his evil course, that never induce him to change it. Reproof may startle, affliction burden, and the thunder of divine judgments confound him; but recovering spirit and resolution, he still goes on, as Balaam was delayed on his

journey, not diverted from his object by the angel who met him with a drawn sword.

In true conversion, there is a principle of grace, which terminates in the practice of piety. Its power is felt, and its effects are seen. The unfeigned penitent breaks off his sins by righteousness. He abandons the odious and revolting excesses of sensuality. No baits or allurements can induce him to herd with the drunkards and blasphemers, whom he perhaps once loved and followed. He quits the beggarly elements of the world, and the strong holds of self-righteousness, and flies to the wells of salvation, the refuge opened by the gospel, and the salutary means which promote at once his purity and peace.

II. We shall state the reasons which require us to press the exhortation of the text upon sinners.

The persons whom the Apostle here addresses, it is evident were, at that time, estranged from God, in a state of deplorable ignorance and unbelief. Their character is drawn in dark colours, but by a faithful hand, so that every line and feature is doubtless an

exact copy of the original. They were impenitent, and therefore are earnestly called to repent; they were unconverted, and therefore are urged to turn to God. Sinners who are in the same state at this day, need to be addressed in the same manner. Alas, how many in this assembly remain still careless and stupid, wedded to the world, and enslaved by the flesh. Our exhortation is grounded on the following reasons.

1. We earnestly press you to repent and turn to God; because this change is an essential part of personal religion, and an indispensable preparative to future happiness.

Believe it, we have no pleasure in giving you pain, or in taking measures, and employing means which have the appearance of harshness and austerity. You may be disposed to think us cruel for disturbing your ease, and distressing your feelings. Many when they attend ministers who are plain and pointed, serious and searching, faithful and energetic in their address, declare that they are shocked and hurt to hear so much of hell and damnation. Are there any here to-day in the habit of making such complaints? Now if you could furnish us with a new Bible in



which none of these frightful words, these alarming things, could be found; and prove the book, which we now believe and venerate as the word of God, to be a fable, we would spare your delicacy, and no longer wound your tender feelings with threatenings and exhortations. But this is utterly impossible. We must, therefore, make our appeal to the scriptures. Here we read, that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die." If the proud be not made humble, the heedless thoughtful, the prayerless devout, the carnal and earthly-minded holy and heavenly, there is not the least ground to hope for endless bliss. The absolute necessity of a great and effectual change, to make us meet for the inheritance above, is strongly insisted on in almost every page of the sacred volume. You might as well expect a plant to grow without water, or a lamp to burn without oil, or a house to stand without a foundation, or a body to live without breath, as a man to be a subject of grace and an heir of heaven, who is destitute of the

Spirit of God, and wholly governed by the lusts and passions of the flesh. It is remarkable in what strong and impressive language our Lord warned and admonished many, who seem to have had a good opinion of themselves, and a high degree of confidence in the safety of their state. Luke xiii. 2—5. Alluding to those whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices, he says, "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam, fell and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Here the important doctrine under consideration is enforced, with a powerful and emphatic repetition. The voice of warning is like successive peals of thunder rolling from a black approaching cloud, ere the tempest discharge its fury.

O sinners, we urge you warmly; but your danger is great. Would you call that man cruel who pressed you to take a bitter medicine to cure a deadly disease? or him

who waked you from a pleasing slumber to rescue you from the jaws of a wild beast? or him who stopped you on the edge of a pit, to snatch you from instant destruction? Do not blame us for our zeal and fidelity, while we tell you the truth and point out your disease and the only remedy, your danger and the gospel refuge. Be assured, there is no alternative, but repentance or ruin.

2. We earnestly press you to repent and turn to God, because there are so many enemies to your souls, that labour to hurry you down to the gulph of perdition.

The men of the world leave no means untried to engage you in the crowd, and either drive or draw you along with them, in the broad way which leadeth to destruction. If you appear a little thoughtful, and disposed to listen to the weighty truths of religion, and lay them to heart, they will swarm around you like wasps and hornets, to sting and persecute you; they will try to argue or laugh you out of your serious concern; and rejoice when they can deafen you with the noise, and blind you with the dust, and entangle you with the vanities and tumults of the world, so as to scatter your convictions. Suffer me, then,

faithfully to set your danger before you. Beware of smothering and stifling your convictions. "Remember, (as one observes,) that the life of your souls is bound up in the life of your convictions. If these languish and die away, you must eventually perish." Satan and his agents also are unwearied in their efforts to compass your ruin. This tempter lays his snares and baits with all the policy of a practised deceiver. Though Christ has said, "Except a man be converted, and become as a little child, he shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." Satan would persuade you, that so much strictness is unnecessary. Shall the world call you, and the devil call you, with such earnestness and importunity; and shall not ministers cry aloud, and lift up their voice like a trumpet to give you warning? Shall multitudes strain every nerve to drag you down to hell, and can we forbear to rush forth, that we may pluck you as brands from the burning? We are expressly commanded and required, "of some to have compassion; and others to save with fear, pulling them out of the fire." O that some who now hear me, may be brought this day with weeping and supplication to the Re-

deemer! It would fill my heart with joy to behold you shaking off the bonds of iniquity, and fleeing from the wrath to come; to hear you asking the way to Zion, with your faces thitherward. "He that converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death and hide a multitude of sins."

3. We earnestly press you to repent and turn to God, because we are satisfied, that such exhortations are according to his divine will, congenial with the compassionate mind of Christ Jesus, and the ardent wishes of all those benevolent and happy spirits who surround the throne.

We pretend not to dive into the fathomless deep of Jehovah's eternal purposes, to conjecture what names are written in the book of life, or whom he hath included in the number of his elect. This we know, "That secret things belong unto the Lord, and those which are revealed to us and to our children for ever." God is love, and his word assures us, "he hath no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he would turn from his wickedness and live." He who is not converted in this world, must be condemned in the world to come. God is therefore graciously pleased

to remonstrate with you, saying, "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" In urging you to repent, our exhortation corresponds with the compassionate mind of Christ. He who says, "Look unto me and be saved all ye ends of the earth;" he who cries, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me;" he who poured tears over a rebellious and devoted city, and shed his blood for a guilty lost world, will not surely be angry with his servants, because they warn sinners, and weep in secret while they see them incorrigible, exclaiming Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed! Those pure spirits, who bathe in the bliss, and bask in the glory of paradise, yearn with pity, and glow with benevolence towards our fallen race. There is joy in heaven among the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth.

4. We earnestly press you to repent and turn to God, because the time is short, and the opportunity for this work precious and precarious.

Remember, God has not only a time to par-



don, but also a time to punish. Procrastination is the common cause of ruin. If a man dies to-day, of what avail is it that he intended to take medicine to-morrow? You are probably reckoning upon future years, when you have no assurance of one hour. "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" You have now the means of grace. You have sabbaths and sermons, and friendly councils and affectionate invitations, but you know not how long these privileges may be continued. It is certain your life is but a vapour. The end of all things is at hand. You will soon finish your mortal race, and close your eyes in death. For any thing you can tell, this may be the last sabbath you shall have; this, the last sermon you shall hear. "Behold! now is the accepted time; behold! now is the day of salvation." If you continue in an unconverted state, you will shudder at the gloomy passage out of this world, but there is no possibility of resisting the king of terrors. And ah! the gloomy passage will conduct you to a far more gloomy dwelling, even the dungeon of darkness and despair, where there are perpetual weeping and gnashing of teeth. Repent and be

converted. Your eternal interests are at stake. It is high time to awake out of sleep! A searching and solemn hour draws near. Perhaps the fatal warrant for your arrest is signed in the high court of heaven. Perhaps the messenger with the dread summons is on his way, yes, even at the door. And though you do not hear the gospel call, you must hear the call of death. Though you may slight the throne of grace, you must stand before the throne of judgment.

5. We earnestly press you to repent and turn to God, because it is by means of exhortation, that the spirit of God usually produces deep and serious impressions in the mind. We know the insufficiency of human efforts. It is not a mortal's voice, nor even an angel's arm, that can convert a blind infatuated sinner. His ears are uncircumcised and cannot hearken, his will is in bondage, his heart is hard as an adamant. But we seek and expect the divine power. Salvation is of the Lord.

We are not discouraged in addressing the most stupid and obdurate, while we rest our hope of success on the promise of sovereign grace. Awake thou that sleepest, and arise

from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light !  
And O, may the mighty Redeemer apply his  
word to every heart ! May he turn you,  
and you shall be turned ; and give you repent-  
ance unto life ; then shall you run in the way  
of his commandments without weariness, and  
walk without fainting.

## SERMON VI.

---

### FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

~~~~~  
ACTS iii. 19.

*That your sins may be blotted out.*  
~~~~~

THE audacious atheist, and the trembling idolater, present a curious, yet affecting contrast. The one says in his heart, there is no God; and the other bows to a false god, a fiction, which his gloomy imagination creates and invests with appalling terrors. Yet these monsters, atheism and idolatry, however dissimilar in aspect and habit, are the issue of the same parents, guilt and ignorance. For, why does the atheist find no peace till he has banished the idea of an omniscient and righteous Judge? or the idolater, till he has performed some ceremony, or presented some sacrifice to appease the wrath, which strikes

in portentous flashes upon his conscience? Every system of superstition has its origin in that fear, which naturally growing out of guilt, cannot be wholly suppressed. Man never attains just ideas of God, without the light of divine truth. Unassisted reason is but a taper, whose faint and fluctuating glimmer, serves only to shew us objects which fill us with alarm; while points of the highest importance, in reference both to our present peace and final destiny, are covered with the deepest obscurity. In these circumstances, the mind feels all the anxiety and perturbation of suspense. The holy scriptures pour a flood of day upon benighted mortals. They shew us indeed the greatness of our misery, but point out also its cause and cure. Here, the attributes of God, are unveiled and exhibited in a manner, which enlightens and enlarges the understanding, interests and engages the heart. Here, we behold God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Hence, the address of the text to the Jews, is but the language which the gospel directs to all sinners who come under its sound. "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."

Forgiveness of sin, is the blessing set before us in this passage. Let us enquire into its nature and value, the source whence it springs, the medium through which it flows, and the character of the persons on whom it is actually bestowed.

I. We shall enquire into the nature and value of the blessing held out to us in the text.

Sin is considered either as a debt, or as a crime. When the great God speaks to men, he borrows human language, and bows to our humble capacities, employing a mode of instruction adapted to our circumstances. Divine truths are veiled in imagery, or expressed in terms taken from earthly objects and familiar relations.

In the prayer taught us by Christ, one of the petitions runs in these words; "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." It is easy to perceive the reason of this representation. Our being, and all our blessings are derived from God. He feeds and clothes, supports and protects us. All the creatures minister to us as his servants. By his mandate, the cheerful sun enlightens our eyes, the vital air actuates our lungs, and the fertile earth supplies our wants. In a word, he



scatters his bounties over the path of life, and his visitation preserveth our spirit. And does he not justly claim from us gratitude, obedience, and praise? But is this claim acknowledged and felt? Have we made adequate and suitable returns for his favours? Alas! no, we are constrained to confess, that while we have received his gifts, we have forgotten the giver. We have lived as though we were not dependant on God. The debt of gratitude and obedience, remains to this hour unpaid. Through a long series of years, it has been accumulating, and every day as it passeth, adds to the vast amount. Now in reference to this view of our state, forgiveness is called the blotting out of our sins. It is an obvious allusion to the usage of trade, when a creditor, by cancelling or crossing his book, intimates that his claims are either answered, or entirely superseded. In such a case, there can be no suit at law, or warrant of distress. God has a book of remembrance, in which all our sins are written. The dark account stands against us. It is absolutely impossible that we should answer the demands, seeing "we owe ten thousand talents, and have nothing to pay." Our only hope is in the doctrine of forgiveness. If God does

not cancel the book we are undone. "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." Ps. li. 1.

Again, sin is represented as a crime, or a violation of the divine law, and forgiveness as the remission of the penalty incurred. "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. Cursed is every one, who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them. Whosoever offendeth in one point is guilty of all." God marks iniquity, when he inflicts merited judgments on the sinner, and he forgives us when the dreadful penalty is taken away. The great design of our Lord's sufferings and resurrection was, "That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Forgiveness is a blessing, the full value of which no words can describe. It arrests the arm of justice, and prevents the descending and resistless blow. It scatters the gathering storm of wrath, and brings a gleam of heavenly light on the soul. It extracts the stings, and heals the wounds of the

conscience. Think of a criminal under sentence of death, and awaiting in his solitary cell the approaching day of execution. The dreaded morning arrives, and the hour comes when the warder opens his door.

“ If then, just then, all thought of mercy lost,  
“ When hope long lingering, at last yields the ghost,  
“ The sound of pardon pierce his startl'd ear,  
“ He drops at once his fetters and his fear ;  
“ A transport glows in all he looks and speaks,  
“ And the first thankful tears bedew his cheeks.”

Such is the case of a sinner rescued from eternal punishment. It is the sole prerogative of the sovereign King and supreme Judge, whose throne is in the heaven of heavens, to suspend or repeal the sentence of condemnation. And when the trembling culprit receives from the high court of heaven a pardon, stamped with his royal seal, the bitterness of eternal death is past.

The forgiveness of sin scatters the gathering tempest of wrath ; our iniquities interpose between God and us. The angry elements wear a dark and frowning aspect. But when God says, “ I have blotted out as a cloud thy transgressions, and as a thick cloud thy sins ; return unto me, for I have redeemed

thee :” immediately the fair face of heaven again appears, and the rainbow of the covenant shines over the skirts of the departing storm. Without pardon, the conscience can have no peace. It is lashed with a scourge from an invisible hand, and finds a secret rack under every pillow which seems to promise repose. As soon indeed as the soul receives forgiveness of sin, its anguish is allayed, its wounds are healed.

II. We shall point out the source whence this blessing comes, and the medium through which it flows.

Forgiveness issues from the rich, overflowing, and everlasting fountain of heavenly mercy. This is the import of the divine name, as revealed to Moses. Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. “ And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.” This glorious name of our covenant God is but declaratory of his essential and immutable nature. David in his prayer, cries, “ For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive ; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.”

**Ps. lxxxvi. 5.** If the pardon promised in the word, were suspended on some native inherent virtues of our own, or engaged to be granted on account of some meritorious conditions performed by us, it would be placed utterly beyond our reach. But it is delightful to contemplate, in the bestowment of this blessing, the inexhaustible fulness and absolute freeness of divine grace. The rich plenitude of mercy revealed in the promises, and often dispensed to the vilest returning prodigals, is a sovereign antidote against despair. "Be thy sins," as Bishop Hopkins says, "more than the sands, and greater than the mountains; though the cry of them reacheth up to heaven, and the guilt of them reacheth down to hell; yet only believe and repent, and thou hast no reason, O sinner, to exclude thyself from pardon."

What a charming display of covenant grace and compassion, is unfolded by the prophet Micah. Breaking out with singular abruptness, and enlarging with rapture on the interesting theme, he exclaims, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He



will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." Isaiah says, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Micah vii. 18, 19. Isa. lv. 7—9. While we explore such passages as these, we are borne aloft into the region of the true sublime, and surrounded with images of grandeur and majesty, goodness and love; we are fired with admiration, and fixed in astonishment. Here the vast unfathomed sea, into which, if rocks and mountains, even islands were thrown, they would be swallowed up and lost, is introduced to remind us of that pardoning mercy which is an ocean without either shore or bottom. Here we are pointed to the azure firmament, the immeasurable fields of space, which contain millions of stars, and suns, and systems, to give us an image of Je-



Yah's infinite goodness, and aid our labouring faculties to form some faint ideas of his great designs and eternal purposes of love towards our fallen apostate world. We contrast the abounding of sin, with the superabounding of celestial mercy ; we behold sin as a tyrant reigning unto death, and grace as a sovereign reigning through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord. But nothing can enable us to enter fully and feelingly into this subject, if we do not enjoy the blessing of forgiveness. The pardoned penitent cannot think of mercy without a peculiar glow of satisfaction, nor speak of it without employing language, which the worldling brands with the charge of enthusiasm and extravagance. Hear the words of Hezekiah, " O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit. Behold, for peace I had great bitterness ; but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption : for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back." Isa. xxxviii. 16, 17. It will now be necessary to point to the medium through which forgiveness flows to us. It hath pleased God, while he absolves the sinner, to shew his hatred of sin by a wise and wonderful scheme, which

secures at once the honour of his justice and the exercise of his mercy. "Without shedding of blood, (says the Apostle,) there is no remission." Under the Old Testament dispensation, this principle was impressively taught, by unnumbered victims slain in sacrifice. Yet unhappily the type, was through ignorance, put in the place of the thing typified. "But it was impossible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sin from the conscience." Our faith is directed to a nobler victim, a far more costly sacrifice than any that indebted and undone creatures could offer. "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world! We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace." And is not the blessing enhanced in your estimation, by the very medium of its communication? Does not the precious stream, issuing from so high a spring, derive a sweetness from the channel through which it flows? What is man that he should be redeemed at such a price, and rescued from perdition by an expedient, replete with all the wonders of infinite wisdom and divine love? O look to him, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his

blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God ; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness ; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Rom. iii. 25, 26.

The well-known Colonel Gardiner, after his remarkable conversion, was for three months almost in despair. He thought himself too great a sinner to be forgiven. It was the powerful application of the last-mentioned scripture, which entirely removed his burden and expelled his fears. And, blessed be God, his word hath lost nothing of its efficacy. "The blood of Jesus Christ still cleanseth from all sin." The new and living way to the Father is still free of access. He who sits upon the throne, "is exalted to shew mercy, and waiting to be gracious." He sends his ambassadors to treat with you, to invite you to his footstool, and to assure you of his clemency and faithfulness. Moreover, he himself calls you, and condescends to remonstrate with you, saying, "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord : though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

III. We shall consider the character of the persons on whom the blessing of forgiveness is actually bestowed.

They fall into a gross error, who think that pardon can be purchased by any good qualities, or meritorious services on our part. And it is to be feared, that many who do not openly avow such a principle, secretly cherish it. The human heart is a soil in which the seeds of pride naturally take root. But the doctrine which a self-righteous spirit espouses and approves, is directly opposed to the doctrine of the gospel. The former exalts man in his own esteem, while the latter never fails to abase him.

Though no qualities in us merit pardon, yet there are certain characteristic marks which distinguish all who are pardoned. This distinction is necessary, to guard the doctrine here taught from the abuse of such as would turn it to licentiousness. And who then, it may be asked, are the persons that may safely conclude their sins are blotted out? I reply, Those whose characters are marked by genuine faith, humility, and charity.

God commands us to believe in his only-begotten Son. Jesus Christ is the grand ob-

ject exhibited to us in the gospel. His complete righteousness, his precious atonement, and his glorious salvation, are the themes which fill the pages of the New Testament. It is the province of faith to take hold of the promises, and trust wholly in the merits and grace of Jesus. Have you fled for refuge to this hope set before you? Have you relinquished every other ground of dependance, to rely on Christ? Do you lay your hand upon the head of this divinely appointed sacrifice, confessing your sin? "It is with the heart, that man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth, that confession is made unto salvation." If you have that faith, which appropriates the promises, endears the Redeemer, honours his appointed institutions, repels the tempter, overcomes the world, and purifies the heart; then are your iniquities obliterated and removed.

Again, humility is another distinguishing characteristic of those whose sins are pardoned.

All the graces of the Christian take their rise from faith and repentance. Repentance dissolves the heart, that it may be cast into the mould of the gospel, and receive a new impression. Repentance empties the soul, pouring out the poison of pride, the rancour



of enmity, the impurity of lust and sensuality, and all the vile dregs and feculence of corruption, that it may be enriched and adorned with the lovely graces of the Spirit. But can the man who comes to know all his abominations, and see as it were the interior of his depraved heart, be high-minded and insolent? Can he assume an air of self-consequence, and plead the cause of his own merit? Impossible. God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Penitence lays a man in the dust of self-abasement; there mercy finds him, and thence lifts him up to behold the countenance of a reconciled Father. See the publican depicted in the parable. He stands afar off, dares not look towards heaven, but smiting on his breast cries, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Nor was his petition refused, for he went down to his house justified, while the boasting pharisee was rejected and abhorred.

Charity is another characteristic of those whose sins are pardoned. This disposition streams forth in various directions. It flows out to God in strong affection, and to men in sincere benevolence. "He that hath much forgiven, loveth much." The emancipated debtor cannot but think highly and speak



well of him who hath cancelled the book of his arrears, or the solemn bond which subjected him to the stern demands of justice. The released criminal cannot but love and revere the generous prince, who gave him a pardon while he lay sentenced to an ignominious and horrible death. And can the sinner who receives a discharge in full, having the penalty of a broken law remitted, be ungrateful to God his Deliverer, Redeemer, and Benefactor? No; his language is "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not his benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies." But as charity rises to God in holy affection and praise, so it flows to men in various exercises of tender sympathy and good will. It banishes malignant passions, and all the latent purposes and seeds of revenge; and promotes a spirit of forbearance. Our Lord expressly says, "If ye from your hearts forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses."

The subject of this discourse is highly interesting to all. I would ask, Are any of you deeply affected by a sight of your manifold and aggravated sins? Forgiveness is not

utterly beyond your reach. The very chief of sinners may yet attain it. O seek the precious blessing in God's appointed way. The fountain of mercy sends forth its salutary streams. The sacred word opens the mysterious and amazing plan of redemption. "The blood of Jesus Christ speaketh better things than the blood of Abel." He lives, he intercedes, he reigns above. In the dispensation of the gospel, he even now holds out the golden sceptre, and encourages you to approach and receive a free pardon. Are any of you persuaded that your sins are forgiven? See to it, that your confidence be well grounded. Let your tempers and dispositions be examined, and the motives which influence you thoroughly sifted. Let your character be tried by the test of scripture. Does faith lead you to Jesus, and enable you to glory in his cross? Are your souls clothed with humility? Does charity govern your hearts and guide your actions? Can you forgive injuries, and pray for your persecutors? Is it your daily aim to imbibe the spirit of Christ, and exemplify his commands? If these are your habitual principles of conduct, I may safely say, "Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you."

## SERMON VII.

---

ON THE

### TEACHING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

---

1 JOHN ii. 20.

*But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.*

---

SOME of the heathen were of opinion, that erring mortals needed the aid of celestial light to guide them to true wisdom. The prophet, speaking of the Messiah's happy reign, says "they shall be all taught of God." Those who live under the dispensation of the gospel, enjoy this high privilege. They are not doomed to dig for the precious gem of truth in the vast and shapeless heap of pagan fables, or Jewish traditions. Jesus Christ hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel. "The mystery which was hid for ages and generations, is now made manifest to the saints." But though we have

the holy scriptures, we stand in need also of divine aid to lead us into the knowledge of them. We shall proceed to explain and vindicate the doctrine of the Holy Spirit's teaching.

I. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit's teaching must be explained.

The essential principles of Christianity are but little understood, even by many professing Christians. And perhaps, we should gain more just and clear ideas, were we oftener to fix our attention to one important point, than we possibly can by flying from topic to topic, and truth to truth, without ever fastening our thoughts upon any of them. Religion opens a field which amply repays our diligent and devout research, but it is not by rapidly passing over this sacred ground, that we can expect to gain all the pleasure and profit which it affords.

No subject more demands our attention than that to which our discourse is now directed. I am far from promising to remove every difficulty, or to scatter every cloud which may darken any of your minds respecting it. If however, under the blessing of God, this sermon should only excite serious

enquiry, and lead you to seek fuller information, my time will not be mispent, nor my labour lost.

Ye have an unction from the Holy One.

The figurative language of the text possibly contains a twofold allusion, which must be examined.

1. It may allude to the manner in which prophets, priests, and kings, were formerly set apart to their high office. This was done by anointing them in the name of the Lord, according to his appointment. The fragrant oil used on such occasions, was made with a composition of ingredients divinely prescribed, and expressly forbidden to be employed for any other purpose. *Exod. xxx. 31, 33:* "This shall be an holy anointing oil unto me throughout all your generations. Whosoever compoundeth any like it, or whosoever putteth any of it upon a stranger, shall even be cut off from his people." It is evident that the pouring of this costly perfume on the head of the priest, whose lips were to keep knowledge ever ready to disperse; or the prince, whose hands were to hold the balance of justice, and impartially administer the laws; was intended to represent the effusion of the Holy Spirit, and the precious

gifts and graces imparted by it. All the solemn ceremonies of the old dispensation were pregnant with instruction and significance, and served emblematically to prefigure the rich privileges and blessings of the New Covenant, and prepare men for them. The precious anointing oil was kept in the sanctuary, where the visible cloud of glory shone, and dispensed by the hands of the High Priest. In our text it is said, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One." Jesus, the great High Priest of our profession, is the minister of the true sanctuary. "Having entered into the holy place not made with hands," he has the sole prerogative of pouring forth the Divine Spirit upon the church.

It must be remembered, that believers are called "a royal priesthood, a peculiar people." Differing in talents and stations, they are all anointed by him to whom the Father gave the Spirit without measure, and all become partakers of wisdom and grace, dignity and joy, which the world cannot receive, nor duly estimate. Eph. i. 13, 14. 1 Cor. i. 21, 22.

2. The figurative language of the text, may allude to the practice of applying a composition of certain ingredients to diseased eyes,



for the purpose of restoring or improving the sight. What an effectual collyrium is to the impaired organ of vision, that the influence of the Spirit is to the darkened and depraved mind. Christ addressing the church of Laodicea says, "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." Rev. iii. 17, 18. In the last clause of this passage, we learn from whose hand the powerful unction comes, which illuminates the inner man.

That Son of David, who had mercy on blind Bartimeus, and enabled him to gaze with delight on the beauties and charms of the natural world, opens to us a fairer vision of the spiritual world, and aids us with kindling rapture to behold the wonders and glories of his heavenly kingdom. He sends down the Holy Spirit to guide his people into all the truth. At his command the mists of prejudice disperse, and the clouds of

ignorance melt away and vanish. By his sacred touch, the films which cover the eyes of the mind are gently removed; and the excellency of Immanuel is seen and acknowledged, after his power has been felt and experienced; for it is the peculiar office of the Holy Spirit, "to take of the things of Christ, and shew them unto us."

You have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

Knowledge is the very commencement of vital godliness. As light was the first thing in the creation of the world, so it is the first thing in the new creation of the soul. It is a spiritual perception of our guilt and misery, which causes us to cry out, "What shall we do to be saved?" and finally leads us to the only Saviour. Hence Paul says, "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." There can be no tendency to heaven, till we are taught from heaven. It is in vain to have, like the Athenians, an altar erected to the unknown God. It is an absurdity of the grossest kind, to assert as some do, that ignorance is the mother of devotion.

If God would not of old accept the blind and the lame as victims for sacrifice, he certainly cannot look with complacency on the blind, bigotted, and superstitious worshipper. The sons of Aaron were commanded, always to light the lamps of the Temple before they kindled the fire to burn the sweet incense. Enthusiasts reverse this rule, and are involved in smoke and darkness.

You have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know *all things*.

It must be admitted, that the language of the Apostle here requires limitation. This is to be gathered from the context; and indeed is absolutely necessary, that the words may preserve a consistency with other scriptures, and an agreement with facts.

We have certainly no reason to expect the teaching of the Spirit in the arts and sciences, the complex affairs of business, or the ordinary concerns of life. The word *all*, in this passage, refers to evangelical doctrines, and the things of Christ's kingdom. And even in this province it is not easy to ascertain its precise bearing, and the extent of its application. That sincere christians, men equally distinguished for diligence, humility, and fervent prayer, differ on some points of opinion, or in modes of worship and rules of

discipline, is an undeniable fact. Shall we then say, that a single class or denomination of these persons is right, and all the rest are wrong? or, on the other hand, shall we assert that though they have but one infallible guide yet they are conducted in various ways? It appears to me, that while godly men differ from each other on subjects of inferior consequence, they agree in the grand fundamental doctrines of religion. They have the same object of faith, the same ground of dependance, the same spirit of devotion, the same source of strength amidst the experience of their own weakness, the same kind of conflicts and comforts. In a word, it will be found upon close inspection, that the points of difference are but few and faint, compared with the deep marked lines of resemblance. In the household of faith, there is a diversity of features; but the great family likeness is preserved, and may be easily recognised by a discerning eye.

II. We shall proceed to vindicate the doctrine of the Spirit's teaching, against those who deny, misrepresent, or pervert it.

1. Some deny that men either need the teaching of the Spirit, or have any warrant in scripture to expect it. Persons of this cha-

racter delight to declaim on the native dignity of man, the unfettered freedom of his will, the deep reach of reason, the wide range and wondrous energy of all his mental capacities and powers. But what avail these idle strains, these pompous panegyrics? However galling it may be to the pride of those who set up themselves as lights of the world, we must maintain, that the philosopher, in a carnal state, is not a step nearer to the kingdom of God, than the rude unlettered barbarian. In the sphere of worldly science, reason indeed may make many valuable discoveries, and surmount difficulties which at first view seem insurmountable; but in the higher region of divine and heavenly doctrine, it is far otherwise. How affecting, and yet true, is the language of an inspired writer, when he says, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Even where the light of the gospel shines in full splendour, too many, alas! evince a lamentable blindness in regard to eternal realities, who are admired for their sagacity and penetration in all secular matters. To attain spiritual knowledge, there must be spiritual



perception, and no man ever did, or ever will possess this, without the sacred unction of which the Apostle speaks in the text. The floating ideas and opinions which an unregenerate person entertains about religion, do not deserve to be called knowledge. He touches on the surface, but there is a mine beneath to which he is a stranger; he comes into the outer court, but the interior of the temple he never enters. The beauty, the excellency, and the matchless glory of pure religion, are hid from him.

To assert that we are not warranted in the scriptures to expect the teaching of the Spirit, is surely a high pitch of presumption; yet it has been said, the gospel itself is sufficient to guide us in all our enquiries and duties, without any aid from above. But can it be proved, that the promise of the Holy Spirit was confined to the Evangelists and Apostles? When Paul prayed for the whole church of Ephesus, "that God would give unto them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ; that the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, they might know what was the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." Did he use words without meaning? or ask a



blessing neither necessary nor attainable? Those who dare not charge an Apostle with enthusiasm, should allow, that the promises which warranted his expectations, are in this case, sufficient to warrant ours. The gospel is, indeed, the sole means of divine knowledge, but the mind must be prepared to use the means with effect. A telescope may assist us to discover stars, and planets, and celestial wonders, which are far beyond the reach of the naked eye; but such an instrument is useless to the blind.

2. Some misrepresent or pervert the doctrine of the Spirit's teaching.

It has been said, if God exerts his immediate influence on the mind, we no longer act as free agents. In this view we are the passive subjects of resistless power, the mere creatures of necessity. But this is a glaring and palpable misrepresentation. It is a strange paradox to affirm, that free grace destroys the liberty of human will. Shall we dare to condemn the infinitely wise Jehovah? Has he laid a scheme of mercy which subverts the very foundation of justice? Can the highest privilege sap the grounds of duty, or release us from the bonds of obligation? No

part of Scripture gives the least countenance to such an idea or sentiment. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God," says Paul, "they are the sons of God." Observe, they are not driven, but *led*; gently, yet efficiently instructed in a mannerr which informs the understanding and engages the affections. The agency of sovereign grace is certainly mighty, but in no sense compulsive. It is directed by him who perfectly knows what is in man, and, while he vouchsafes his divine influence, leaves inviolate the rational faculties and moral principles of his nature, as a voluntary agent, and an accountable creature.

There are too many by whom the doctrine under consideration is grossly perverted. Nor need we be surprised, for every blessing of providence, and every truth and privilege of the gospel, is liable to abuse. They are justly chargeable with perverting this important doctrine, who draw from it a plea to cover their sloth and negligence; or those who attribute to the Spirit of God, the vagaries of their own imagination; or those who pretend to fix the exact period when, and the manner how they are taught from above. Happy they who are preserved equally from the dark

maze of infidelity, and the wild extravagance of enthusiasm.

And now my hearers I shall close this discourse with a few words of exhortation.

1. Let me entreat you to weigh the reasons which prove the necessity of this divine unction.

The Scriptures represent all men in a state of nature, as apostates, enveloped in ignorance, and sunk in guilt and woe. "They are all gone out of the way, there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." Sin has darkened the mind, and put a veil upon the heart. In reference to spiritual and heavenly things, "men have eyes but they see not, ears but they hear not." The very choicest means of instruction cannot really profit you, without that sacred and efficacious influence which illuminates the soul. It is possible to be "ever learning, and never come to the knowledge of the truth." Men may read the Scriptures and exercise their thoughts upon them, till they grow vain of their proficiency and glory in their attainments, yet remain all the while blind, or bewildered in flattering delusions.

“No man,” saith the Apostle, “can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” Take heed that you do not mistake a vague speculative acquaintance with the gospel, for that genuine experimental knowledge which is connected with salvation.

2. Daily seek the invaluable blessing of this divine unction by prayer.

A sense of our ignorance, and liableness to error, should lead us directly to the great fountain of light. “If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.” Is not that cheering promise, in which Jehovah says “I will give them a heart to know me,” a sufficient warrant for prayer? Hath he not said, “I am he that teacheth thee, to profit; that leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldst go?” And how is this effected? Assuredly by the agency of the Divine Spirit; for the same anointing that ye have, teacheth you all things. Not a single principle or precept in the whole system of revealed truth, is clearly apprehended, or duly felt and applied, without his influence. You are encouraged and exhorted to pray for this valuable gift; for the Lord says, “If ye,

being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Luke xi. 13.

3. Let your knowledge of religion, with its fruits, be brought to the test of Scripture.

The contrast drawn in the word, between earthly wisdom and the wisdom which cometh from above, is striking and instructive. The knowledge which the Holy Spirit imparts, purifies the mind and raises all its powers to heavenly objects and holy joys. It produces blessed effects, both in the heart and life of a Christian. He who walks in pride, and wallows in profligate excesses, has never yet effectually learned one lesson in the school of our great Master. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men; teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present evil world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the present God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

Have you considered the essential difference which there is, between a vague speculative knowledge of religion, and that know-

ledge which purifies the heart and regulates the conduct of life? Have you entered into the pith and essence of the gospel, and felt its transforming power and influence? It is possible to be the strenuous advocate of an orthodox creed, and yet have no saving acquaintance with divine things. "The wisdom which cometh from above," is in its own nature pure, and in its effects salutary. If you are taught of God, you will highly value the sacred Scriptures, and regard them as the authority from which there lies no appeal. You will hold all your possessions, and occupy all your talents as stewards and servants of the most high God; you will be more concerned to honour and please him, than to gratify and please men. The enlightening grace of the Holy Spirit, not only leads us into the paths of truth and righteousness, but also makes us really sensible of our deficiencies and deviations. Do you then perceive your comparative ignorance, and seek by diligent enquiry and humble prayer for larger measures of spiritual knowledge, and clearer views of heavenly and eternal things? When you look into the perfect law of liberty, do you sincerely mourn over your transgressions



and backslidings, and earnestly desire to exemplify the gospel more fully in your life? "If ye know these things, said Jesus, happy are ye if ye do them." May you abound still more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent, and be sincere and without offence till the day of Jesus Christ.

## SERMON VIII.

---

### WARNING AGAINST THE LOVE OF THE WORLD.

1 JOHN ii. 15.

*Love not the world, neither the things of the world.*

THE affections are the main springs which move and actuate the mind, it is therefore of the highest consequence, that they be suitably directed and properly governed. If we love mean and unworthy objects, our characters will be degraded. The great design of the gospel is to deliver us from the present evil world, and raise our desires and thoughts above it. The pious Archbishop Leighton observes, "that in the course of men's practice, the stream of sin runs from one age to another, and every age makes it greater, adding somewhat to what it receives, as rivers grow in their course, by the accession of brooks which flow into them; and every man

when he is born, falls like a drop into this main current of corruption, and so is carried down it, and this by reason of its strength and his own nature, which willingly dissolves into it, and runs along with it. In this is manifest the power of divine grace in a man's conversion, that it severs him so powerfully from the profane world, and gives him strength to run contrary to the great current of wickedness that is round about him, in his parents possibly, and in his kindred and friends, and in most of the men he meets with."

But though real Christians are elevated by a supernatural principle to seek heavenly happiness, yet the remains of depravity within them are continually manifest, in powerful tendencies to attachments of an opposite and far inferior kind. The Apostle, in the words preceding the text, addresses himself to Christians at different stages in the progress of the divine life. He denominates them little children, young men, and fathers, adding something appropriate to each class, while the general warning which follows in the text applies equally to them all.

I. We shall show what the Apostle means by loving the world.

From the scope of the passage, and the whole tenor of the New Testament, this phrase evidently denotes an inordinate attachment to the pleasures, the profits, and the honours of the present world. It cannot for a moment be admitted, that we are required to undervalue the rich bounties which a gracious Providence has bestowed upon us, or to rend asunder the social ties which bind man to man, or to poison the crystal cup of domestic happiness with neglect and acrimony. To retire from cities and fly to deserts, as if the world was not every where, is preposterous. "There is, as one says, a much better way: learn to be a hermit at home; begin with your own heart; estrange and wean it from the love, not from the use of the world. Christianity hath taught us nothing, if we have not learned this distinction." Earthly things claim a certain portion of our regard, and it is only when they engross the mind, so as to diminish our attention to heavenly realities, that they become injurious. "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father." Carnal and corrupt affections, which either pant after forbidden things, or fondly and tenaciously adhere to objects

which must soon perish, are directly contrary to the will of God.

“By the lust of the flesh,” we understand the pleasures of sensuality. Too many live, as if the chief end of their existence were to gratify their appetites. Luxury presents to them a thousand attractive baits, and they eagerly seize them, regardless of all consequences. They hurry into deplorable excesses, and become the victims of lewdness and intemperance.

“By the lust of the eye,” is meant covetousness. It is an insatiable passion. In eager pursuit of wealth, a man wrongs at once his fellow men and his own soul. Let the ship be cast away, if he may be benefited by the wreck. And yet worldly gain is preferred to his own immortal interests. “If he attends to religion he wears it as a cloak, as a garment that may both cover and keep him warm, and yet hang loose upon him.” And after all, what is the golden prize which the worldling grasps with eager impatient hands, and the multitude regard with emotions of envy and desire? An empty glittering toy. For as Solomon says, “What good hath the owner of riches, save the beholding of them with his eyes?”

“By the pride of life,” we understand the aspiring spirit of ambition. A love of high stations, of sounding titles, of pomp, of power, of servile homage, impels numbers to sacrifice integrity and justice, and employ the lowest and basest arts to attain their ends. Now, when the Apostle describes a worldly spirit, these three obvious characters are sufficient to mark the general outline. But the passions are seldom found in a simple uncompounded state. Wantonness, avarice, and ambition, may be so equally blended in the same man, or may each take its turn to sway the mind, in such a manner, as to render it difficult to decide to what particular class he belongs. The slaves of the world, though under one master, are variously employed. Some dig in the deadly mines, and others drive their fiery coursers amidst clashing rivals, over the beaten and dangerous paths of pleasure and dissipation, while a few toil to raise some Babel building, that shall obtain them a name and perpetuate their renown. Many indeed evince a restless impatience, flying from one pursuit to another, as fancy or fashion prompts; but under every variety of circumstances, they wear their chains, and are the devoted drudges of the world still.



It is of little consequence whether a man sink or soar, so long as he is confined to the beggarly elements of the world. Christians are called to serve their divine Master with fidelity and affection. The things of time must not engage their hearts. They are to use the world, so as never to forget their accountableness, or abuse their trust. The indulgence of sensual passions, the taint of covetousness, and the swelling tumour of pride, are utterly inconsistent with the character of that profession which they have assumed.

II. We shall point out the injurious tendency of loving the world.

1. The love of the world alienates the soul from God, and renders his commands burdensome and grievous.

A man immersed in secular business or sensual pleasure, has no time, no taste for religion. The stream of his thoughts is perpetually rolling in an opposite direction. His passions are more and more assimilated with the low and worthless objects to which they are attached. An indifference to sacred truths and duties, thus gradually grows into a settled antipathy. We have an admirable

sketch of such characters in the graphic delineation given by the venerable and afflicted patriarch, Job; xxi. 7—15. Here the wicked are represented as rising in power and flourishing in prosperity, as training their children to voluptuousness, and spending their days in wealth, amidst music, and mirth, and festivity. “Therefore they say unto God Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?” There was something amiable in the young man who came to Christ, asking, “what he should do to inherit eternal life.” The subject of his enquiry was highly interesting, and the manner of his address singularly respectful and prepossessing. But this fair flower of promise was blasted in the bud by the love of the world. He shrunk from the proposal of selling his goods to follow Christ, and rather than make such a sacrifice would lose the treasure in heaven. And when a covetous disposition does not, as in the instance now mentioned, draw the soul entirely from God, it often produces a partial alienation of heart, and is the cause of lukewarmness and backsliding.

2. The love of the world is an inlet to many powerful temptations.

In an enemy's country it is necessary to walk circumspectly. The present world is not our rest, but the wilderness through which we must pass to the promised land. There are secret dangers and insidious foes around us at every stage. "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." A strong attachment to earthly possessions is sure to entangle and embarrass us. Affluence carries with it a species of fascination, which few are found capable of resisting. When the queen of Sheba beheld the palace and the treasures of Solomon, there was no spirit in her. She admired his wisdom, but the splendour of his magnificence struck her with astonishment and filled her with ecstasy. Worldly prosperity leads to effeminacy, loosening the bonds of conscience, and unfitting the mind for those heroic acts of self-denial to which we are called. "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in perdition."

3. The love of the world is a continual check upon all our efforts to do good.

“ The liberal man deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand.” Having escaped the avenger of blood, and found joy and peace in believing the gospel, he is concerned for others, and as Augustine speaks, he is so far from wishing the bridge cut down when he has once got safe over, that he desires to draw as many as possible after him. But the spirit of the world, freezes the stream of charity, and locks up the springs of sympathy. How often are the best plans deranged, and the best purposes defeated by this spirit. He who is habitually governed by the cold calculating rules of worldly prudence, never wants a plea to justify his ungenerous conduct. If his heart is touched, or his hand opened for a moment, covetousness hardens the one, and shuts the other, before the impulse of feeling has found itself a vent; or if a fit of kindness has once issued in a bounteous act, it is followed by a train of regrets. When application is made to a man of this character for any good cause, he has nothing to *give*, though every one knows he has abundance to spend or to hoard. “ We are com-

manded, as we have opportunity, to do good to all, and especially to them who are of the household of faith." Ah! but you cry, it is necessary to put limits to our benevolence. We must not run on at random and exhaust our stores. "No, assuredly; but the measures which God marks out to thy charity are these: Thy superfluities must give to thy neighbour's great convenience; thy convenience must vail to thy neighbour's necessity; and lastly, thy very necessities must yield to thy neighbour's extremity."

4. The love of the world unfits us for dissolution, and renders the approach of death formidable.

Money will do many things, but cannot bribe the king of terrors. It never yet furnished a golden key, that could unlock the gates of paradise. "It is harder for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven, than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle." However warmly you are attached to the things of time, you must soon leave them. The severing stroke cannot be evaded. And why then do you multiply and strengthen the ties which must increase the shock of dissolution? Why settle your thoughts here,

as if this were your fixed abode, when you are only tenants at will? How affecting was the end of the prosperous worldling, as described by our Lord. "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do; I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and all my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" Luke xii. 16—20.

III. Offer some precautions and admonitions to guard you against the love of the world.

1. Beware that you do not form a false and flattering estimate of the world.

Look not on its delusive exterior. Listen not to its soft soothing voice. Taste not its intoxicating sweets. The world deceives and enslaves its votaries. This painted



harlot, has a thousand secret curses under every charm. The world is unworthy of your affections, because it is unsatisfying and transient.

Who ever found either pure pleasure, or solid peace in the service of Mammon? All the things in the world cannot satisfy the immortal soul? See the sons and daughters of gaiety, running the giddy round of vain amusement! When the ferments of the animal spirits abate, what languor and disgust are visible in their countenance! Behold the idolaters of wealth heaping up riches, and knowing not who shall gather them. When their coffers are full, and their estates are multiplied, how heavily are they loaded with cares, how deeply pierced with anxieties! Turn now to courtiers and princes, whom retinues of servants and dependants encircle, watching their motions and obeying their orders. Alas! they groan beneath the pomp of state, and it has been justly said, the crown which is gemmed with diamonds is also lined with thorns. As the soul was not made for the world, the world cannot fill its ample and expanding powers. Facts might be adduced without number, in proof of this assertion. As the world is unsatisfying,

so it is transient. Nothing under the sun is permanent. The marks of perpetual change are every where visible. "The world," saith the Apostle, "passeth away, and the lust thereof." It is like a glaring pageant, which is moving while we gaze, and will speedily disappear altogether. If then you set your hearts upon any thing here below, you are grasping at shadows. O learn to form your estimate of the world, in the light of divine truth. Strip off its sumptuous disguises. Weigh it in the balance of the sanctuary. Bring it to the touchstone of experience.

2. Beware that you do not mistake the boundary line, which separates between the world and the spiritual kingdom of Christ.

"They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." You know who hath said, "My kingdom is not of this world." Christians are required "to walk as becometh the gospel, and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." We speak against the love of the world, and many imagine themselves free from the danger who are deeply implicated. They contrive to keep

up a decent respect for the forms of religion, without entering into its spirit. They can censure, in the most vehement language, the follies and vices of the world, and yet take their part in them. One man cannot tolerate gaming, gallantry, balls, and masquerades, but can waste his evenings in idle diversions and modish visits; another abhors the close-fisted miser, but praises economy, and cherishes a covetous disposition, with an artful reserve of expedients to appear generous. The grosser maxims and manners of the world are at so great a remove from the principles of Christianity, and the fruits which it produces, that it is impossible to confound them. The man of prayer, whose deportment is amiable yet circumspect; and the man of profligacy, who plunges into the torrent of vice, are instantly recognized, as belonging to quite opposite classes. There are many however, whose characters are not so strongly marked. The most discerning mortal eye, where the lights and shades are so mysteriously blended, may be deceived. Now it is precisely persons of this character, who are most likely to draw unwarranted conclusions in reference to their own state

and conduct. They are apt to think themselves within the precincts of the Redeemer's kingdom, while they are only in the more decent regions of the world. The mistake is of dangerous consequence, for it matters not how near we approach the church of God, that sacred and secure enclosure, if we still remain without. It is necessary indeed that we should avoid the appearance of evil, but he who does not look higher, however he may obtain credit with men, will not find acceptance with Christ.

3. Beware that you do not neglect the only means by which the love of the world can be subdued.

When the constitution is radically disordered, he must be a bad physician who labours to remove the symptoms, without attacking the disease in its seat. The love of the world is an inveterate malady, not to be cured by palliatives. One set of worldly motives may be brought to counteract and overpower another set of worldly motives, without any real advantage in the result. Ambition may restrain sensuality, and avarice repress both, and the heart all the while continues untouched and the character unimproved.

To subdue the love of the world, you must get near to God, and realize the solid joys and unfading glories of the heavenly state. Be familiar with the lively oracles of truth. Ex-patiate among those great and precious promises, which are able to make you partakers of the divine nature. Exercise yourselves daily unto godliness, by acts of self-denial, by holy meditation, by ardent and incessant prayer. Look beyond the shifting and evanescent scenes of the present state, to those realms of settled and substantial bliss which are prepared for all the saints. "Provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure which moths cannot corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal. Set your affections on things above, not on things upon the earth. This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." He who like Enoch habitually walks with God, and like Abraham seeks a better country, and like David regards himself as a stranger and a sojourner here below, will be able to look with holy indifference on the things which fill the multitude with feverish desire, with fretful envy, and with keen disappointment and vexation. He will exclaim, "And now, Lord,

what wait I for? my hope is in thee. There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and wine increased."



## SERMON IX.

---

### WATCHFULNESS AGAINST THE GREAT ENEMY.

~~~~~  
1 PET. v. 8.

*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.*

~~~~~

As the Christian has many rich consolations, so he has many hard conflicts. His passage through the world is replete with difficulties and dangers. An heir of immortal glory, he looks for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, and advances with heroic firmness; but thorns, briers, scorpions, pitfalls, and perils of every kind are in his path. Happily however, his resources are equal to his necessities. "He has to wrestle not only with flesh and blood, but also with principalities and the powers of darkness." In this arduous struggle, his native courage and resolution would speedily fail; he is

therefore exhorted "to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." He is furnished with grace to guide, to support, to fortify, and to invigorate him, amidst all perplexities and depressions, trials and temptations. Enlightened by an unction from above, he sees indeed the multitude and malignant designs of his foes, yet faints not; because he sees also the sacred allies, and supernatural aids which interpose for his succour and deliverance. In this holy warfare, the Christian lays hold of the promises presented to him in the gospel, and shouts to his companions, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

I. We will consider the account here given of the great enemy with whom we have to contend.

The Apostle, in our text, plainly designates the leader of that rebellious host, which having left their first estate, are doomed to darkness, and bound in everlasting chains, to the judgment of the great day. He is called an adversary, as his name Satan in the original imports, because he opposes the government and gracious purposes of God, and besets the saints to accuse them, to despoil them of their comforts, and to entangle them in his snares.

Surrounded with sensible objects, and linked or rather clogged as our minds are with gross and cumbersome bodies, we can form but very inadequate notions of the nature and agency of spirits. When we speak on such a subject, we are too apt to go out of our depth, and "only darken council by words without knowledge." It is evident, that the account given in the Scriptures of devil, was intended not to gratify curiosity, but to awaken vigilance and caution. It is calculated for practical and useful purposes, not for speculative and amusing theories.

In the sacred word, Satan is called the god of this world, who blindeth the minds of men, the prince of darkness, the father of lies, Apollyon, or the destroyer. Sometimes he is termed a great dragon, at other times the old serpent; and in the words of the text he is fitly likened to a roaring lion, eager to seize and devour all who come within his reach. This figure gives us a most lively representation of his power and craft, his fierce malignity, and restless activity.

The devil is a *mighty* adversary.

Feeble men left to combat with him alone, are incapable of opposing any effectual resistance. Numerous facts prove, how soon

they are vanquished; just as the timorous flock, when unprotected by the shepherd, becomes an easy prey to the savage wild beasts of the desert. For this arch apostate has legions of wicked spirits under his controul, prepared to execute his infernal orders. Their power is indeed restrained, by the providence of that God, whose permissive will, for wise and inscrutable reasons, suffers their ravages; yet circumscribes them within limits which they cannot pass. This important lesson is taught in the beautiful parabolic representation given to us in the beginning of the book of Job. O what havoc would those furious demons make in the world, were there no curb, or no hand to check their violence! It is our consolation, that the great lion is in chains, held by the Lord of hosts, and cannot move a step beyond the bound which infinite wisdom has appointed.

Satan is also a *crafty* and *insidious* adversary. He deceived our grand parents, and with a specious tissue of lies drew them from their allegiance to God, and occasioned their expulsion from paradise. And the same means by which he compassed their ruin, he too successfully employs to lead many of their wretched race down to hell. Hence the

apostle repeatedly speaks "of the wiles of the devil," and such admonitions are exceedingly valuable and absolutely necessary. His attacks are preconcerted with consummate skill, being measured to a step, and timed to a moment. This lion knows when to crouch behind the thicket, and when to spring from his ambush to seize those whom he has marked as his victims. Well may those, "who are full of subtilty and mischief, be called the children of the devil, and enemies to all righteousness; because they cease not to pervert the right ways of the Lord." Alas! what numbers, in this respect, resemble Simon Magus, giving up their time to learn and practice the black arts of hell!

The devil is an adversary of *fierce malignity*.

As God is essentially good, and takes pleasure in the prosperity of his servants; so Satan is emphatically called, the Evil One, and he takes pleasure in the misery which he occasions. Some wild beasts tear and mangle more than they can consume, because they delight in carnage and blood. That fallen condemned Spirit, of whom the Apostle speaks in our text, is grieved to see others happy, and gratified to behold them bound in

the fetters of his own snares, or groaning under the wounds he has inflicted.

The restless and *indefatigable activity* of the devil, is strikingly set forth, when he is called a roaring lion, *walking about*, seeking whom he may devour. He climbs the highest summits of human power, and creeps into the lowest recesses of poverty. While men supinely repose on the lap of ease, he is ever on the alert, to execute his cruel purposes; and carry into effect his deep-laid designs.

II. We shall enforce the exhortation to watchfulness, as the only means of preserving us from the temptations, and guarding against the assaults of the grand adversary.

It is vain and foolish to ask, Why has God permitted such an enemy to molest and harass us? Why are we called to a combat so hazardous, so painful and severe? It is enough at present to know the fact, the solution of this difficulty, with many others, must be left for a future world. It is certain, that without a conflict, we shall never win and wear an unfading crown.

“Be sober, be vigilant.” Would you escape or successfully resist the temptations of your great adversary?



1. Be watchful to keep the mind in a suitable and proper frame.

He whose thoughts are intoxicated with pride, whose passions are debased with luxury, whose resolutions are relaxed with carnal ease and soft indulgence, is not in a condition to meet the onset of a fierce and formidable enemy. Christians, as the children of light, are called to holy discipline. Whatever levity, supineness, revelling, and excess may prevail among the men of the world; the followers of Christ have a character to sustain, and a part to act, which absolutely forbid these things. "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others: but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken, are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation." 1 Thess. v. 6—8. Here the images of a state of warfare are introduced, to shew the importance and necessity of watchfulness. The enemy without, has a strong party within us. And can we safely slumber, while conscious that we are surrounded with so many stratagems and plots? Dare we draw off the guards, and leave open the gates, and neglect

the rules of strict discipline, when we are sure that traitors lurk in the citadel? Is it wonderful, that the Apostles so frequently and forcibly exhort us to sobriety? Without it the spirit of man is full of disorder, tumult, and confusion. Nor is that temperance, which governs the bodily appetites, of itself sufficient. There must be sober and sedate reflections on the past; sober and calm councils, thoughts, and joys, at the present; sober and subdued desires, and moderate expectations, for the future. In a word, this sobriety is the union of genuine humility and spiritual prudence, as opposed to the swellings of conceit and arrogance, the wild and random flights of imagination, the sudden and impetuous gusts of passion, the loose and wanton indulgence of appetite.

If the mind is not calm and collected, Satan is sure to get an advantage over us. He easily finds access, and the mutiny and disorder of the soul, facilitate all his infernal projects and attempts. Our Lord could say, "The prince of this world cometh, but hath nothing in me." The pure and holy Jesus, was violently assaulted, but was invincible. The foe could find nothing on which to fasten his hold; no weak part where a breach could be

made ; no wicked purpose or thought, to be set on fire by some spark from his hellish batteries, which played so furiously upon him. But the case is quite different with us. There is much in our depraved nature to invite the enemy. Sometimes he perceives the tumour of pride, and he injects the venom which blows it up to an enormous magnitude, and then nothing can effect a cure till the great and good physician, applies the sharp lancet and the probe. It is highly probable, that David was elated with the greatness of his conquests, and nursing self-complacent thoughts concerning the extent and resources of his kingdom, when Satan moved him to number the people, and by this act of presumption provoked God to visit his dominions with pestilence. This subtle and expert wrestler never lifts a man up, without designing to give him a heavier fall. At other times he sees the fire of resentment secretly smouldering, and lets in upon it those winds and sulphurous blasts from hell, which quickly rouse it into a vehement flame. Thus the two disciples who had been rejected by a Samaritan village, heated to a high degree of intensity with a coal from the devil's furnace, had the boldness to ask their mild and gracious mas-

ter's permission, to destroy all the inhabitants, young and old, for one small offence. Instead of granting their request, he gave them a severe and just rebuke, saying, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of."

"Be sober, be vigilant." Cast down high thoughts and towering imaginations. Mortify the lusts of the flesh. Spare no traitor, that gives secret intelligence and encouragement to the enemy. Hold no parley with his agents and emissaries. While the mind remains calm, serious, and devout, Satan is beat back, and baffled in all his attempts.

2. Be watchful to walk within the limits of God's commands.

"The path of duty is the only path of safety;" is a maxim often repeated, but too little regarded. We can neither be right in point of principle, nor of practice, unless the sacred word be our constant guide. The council of Solomon is most salutary and needful, where he says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eye-lids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand, nor to the left; remove thy foot from evil."

Prov. iv. 23, 25, 26, 27. The precepts of the inspired volume, mark with the utmost precision the road which leads to a better country, even a heavenly inheritance. He who has called you, has engaged by promise to keep you, while you travel in the way which he hath appointed. But when you break down the hedge he has set up, and venture upon forbidden ground, you have no longer any reason to expect divine perfection. You no sooner quit the path of duty, than you are within the precincts of danger. Say not, What harm can there be in turning aside for a few moments? It is vain for you to think you may taste some alluring fruits, or obtain some worldly profit, without any risk. In the territories of the prince of darkness, you are surrounded with enchantments and snares, and exposed to a destructive fire from all his masked artillery. And what fruits can you pluck, but the baneful apples of Sodom? What riches can you gather, but the accursed treasures of Achan? Would you shun the serpent's crooked paths which conduct to hell? adhere inflexibly to the councils of God, which guide you to the mansions of heaven. The profession and the prayer of David present us a pattern worthy of imitation, "With my whole heart have I



sought thee ; O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." The cunning enemy observes, and improves to his own advantage and our injury, every deviation from the way of righteousness. The first deliberate act of transgression, facilitates all those which follow, in a rapid and ruinous train. The omission of one known duty, prepares for another, and opens a wider avenue to temptation, by each successive instance. He who begins to neglect secret prayer, will go reluctantly to the house of God ; and from giving only a cold and occasional attendance, will easily catch at any plausible excuse which the arch deceiver suggests, as a reason to forsake public ordinances altogether. " See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise men."

3. Be watchful to retain with firmness, and use with dexterity and effect, the evangelical armour given to you by the great Captain of salvation.

We may apply to Satan, what was once said of Cæsar, " He is a monster of incredible activity and vigilance." The Christian is furnished with celestial panoply, not for show but for service. Without this, he could ne-



ver face, much less defeat. the great enemy. From the hour the campaign commences, till the war ends, he must never lay it aside for a moment. The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, insists upon this point with much earnestness: "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." You can do nothing in this contest, without the girdle of truth, the breast-plate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation, the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Not a single article here enumerated must be wanting, for you cannot spare it. And take heed that this armour be kept bright: if some part should at any time be injured, let it be instantly repaired. The Christian soldier is called to exercise himself daily, and stand constantly prepared for conflict. His foes grant no truce, except when some treachery or stratagem is meditated. And though the Christian's armour is the best in the world, it is ineffectual without vigilance and skill to use it. The shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit avail not, in the hands of the coward and the novice.

4. Be watchful to observe the seasons and circumstances, the methods and instruments,

which your grand adversary chooses, that he may most painfully harass you with his temptations. He often fixes on a time of deep affliction, to assault us. When the believer is suffering under the chastening hand of God, this enemy throws in his odious suggestions, to produce despondency. While the light of our heavenly Father's countenance is withdrawn, he comes to thicken the gloom, by superadding his own infernal shades. He labours to excite hard thoughts concerning God; and some of his motions are so blasphemous and horrible, that they are called fiery darts, from the sudden and unaccountable manner in which they are injected into the mind, and the inexpressible anguish which they occasion. When any one "is overwhelmed with much sorrow, Satan is ready to get an advantage over him." For this, as the Apostle plainly intimates, is an opportunity favourable to his known devices.

When the saint is engaged in some honourable and arduous work, to promote the cause of religion, the great enemy besets and assaults him with unusual importunity and violence. Thus, while Joshua was employed in rebuilding the temple, Satan stood at his right hand to resist him.

A time of holy and rapturous joy, when the believer has been receiving some extraordinary communication of the divine favour, is a season in which the adversary comes forward to ply his temptations. After Paul had been elevated to the third heaven, and enjoyed the most transporting visions, "a messenger of Satan was sent to buffet him."

Be watchful to observe the methods and instruments employed by the enemy. He has a thousand fair pretexts, to cover his foul designs. While he shews the alluring bait, he always dexterously hides the hook. Sometimes his approach is soft, and gradual, and unperceived as a gliding shadow; and at other times sudden and impetuous, as a rushing flood, that we may either be inveigled by art, or overwhelmed by surprise. He can be a lying spirit in the mouths of Ahab's prophets, and knows how to quote and pervert Scripture itself, as appears from the manner in which he tempted Christ. He has his agents in the palace and in the cottage. Erroneous preachers and immoral writers, are if I may so speak, the prime ministers, and chief secretaries of the prince of darkness.

Be watchful to learn, and profit by the

conflicts which others have had with the great adversary.

We are sickened and disgusted with the accounts of bloody battles, between hostile tribes and nations. But the conflicts in which the saints have from age to age been engaged with the powers of hell, may prove both instructive and useful to us. The young soldier of Christ, ought especially to be conversant with the history of this holy war. It should be regarded as an essential part of that training, by which he is prepared to resist the devil, stedfast in the faith. Let him peruse the records of the sacred volume, and let the falls of the vanquished teach caution, and the triumphs of the victorious inspire courage. Supplied with wisdom and strength from above, armed with heaven-tempered weapons, exercised in the holy discipline of watchfulness and prayer, and led on by the Captain of salvation, O Christian, "Thou shalt tread upon this lion and adder, and trample this great dragon under thy feet!" The time is coming, when thou shalt exclaim, "I have fought the good fight, and thanks be to God, who hath given me the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

## SERMON X.

---

### ON THE NECESSITY OF HOLINESS.

HEB. xii. 14.

*Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.*

“**BLESSED** are the pure in heart for they shall see God!” Such is the emphatic language of the faithful and true witness. Real religion is something more than a decent exterior, an exact conformity to ritual observances, or a conduct by the world deemed morally correct. The very essence of personal piety is holiness. It is this which especially distinguishes the character of all those whom God designates as his own people. The term *saints*, the appellation by which they are usually known in the Scriptures, literally signifies holy ones. We are deeply involved in guilt and pollution; and the former is removed by the sprinkling of atoning blood, the

latter by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Jesus Christ gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. Holiness is not a single grace, but it is the combination of all the Christian graces, shedding their mild and mingled lustre over the whole character. It is the restoration of the image of God in the soul of man. A true Christian fears, loves, trusts, and obeys his Lord and Saviour; and rejoices in his favour and presence. He is not alternately agitated by servile dread and enthusiastic hope, or moved by fond and frivolous affections and all the raptures of a strange unhallowed fire. It is a holy fear, a holy love, a holy confidence, a holy resignation, a holy joy, which his heart feels and his life manifests. Those qualities, however fair and prepossessing they may appear, which want the stamp of sanctity, are not Christian graces; those intentions, however good they may be deemed, which have not the will of God as their guide, and the glory of God as their end, are not Christian motives.

Worldly men are often willing to speak highly of rectitude and virtue, but they have



no relish for holiness. The very word, though perpetually recurring in the Scriptures, is regarded with suspicion, as if it bore a fanatic aspect. They seldom speak of saints, but with ridicule and contempt. And shall the appropriate language of divine writ be laid aside, out of compliment to those who evidently find the precepts of Seneca more congenial than the principles of Christ? Shall a naked, meagre, and defective morality be admired; and shall that Christian morality be despised, which is "arrayed in all the majesty of truth, and the beauties of holiness?" No; ought we not rather to adhere with inflexible firmness, both to the doctrine of the divine word, and to the specific terms in which it is conveyed? Holiness is an effect of the spirit's gracious operation on the heart. We trace it back to the new birth. For that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. In vain do we look for a plant where there is no root or seed. "God," says a fine writer, "is the essence of holiness; but we can have no holiness, nor any other good thing but what we derive from him. It is his prerogative, but our privilege."

Holiness in believers is progressive. As

the principle acquires fresh strength and vigor, it becomes more conspicuous and beneficial, in all its practical bearings. "The path of the just," Solomon hath said, "is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." The artist, who has recorded, that he passed no day without drawing a line, drew it not for repetition but for progress; not to produce a given number of strokes, but to forward his work, to complete his design. The Christian, like the painter, does not draw his line at random, he has a model to imitate, as well as an outline to fill. Every touch conforms him more and more to the great original. He who has transfused most of the life of God into his soul has copied it most successfully. "As evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, so the saints are gradually advancing, and ripen in all the fruits of righteousness."

I. We shall prove the absolute necessity of holiness.

1. Holiness will appear indispensably necessary, if you consider the numerous and urgent precepts of God which enjoin it.

The plain and direct commands of Jehovah, are neither to be perverted nor lightly

esteemed. Where they relate to any object of universal importance, they are uniformly connected with circumstances the most striking, and enforced by motives the most pungent and powerful. True religion, under every dispensation, prominently exhibits the same leading features, the same sacred character and solemn obligations. Its grand design and essential principles, however the external symbols and ceremonies which accompany it may have changed, are like its author, pure and immutable. When God by Moses addressed the whole congregation of Israel, he said, "Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the Lord your God, and ye shall keep my statutes and do them: I am the Lord which sanctify you, and ye shall be holy unto me; for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people that ye should be mine." If any one supposes these commands referred merely to some peculiar mode of outward consecration, he is greatly mistaken. Isaiah uses similar language, in a more pointed form: "Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." Will it be said, What have these passages to do with us? You must know that the precepts above

recited are transferred to the New Testament, where we find them more fully illustrated, and attended with higher sanctions. It were passing strange, if those who were taught at the foot of mount Sinai, excelled those who are come to mount Zion. "Both the law and the gospel," says the venerable Leighton, "agree in this point, The necessity of holiness." None will be so hardy and bold as to assert, that our obligations lessen, as our privileges rise and increase.

After unfolding, in the most interesting manner, the grand manifestations of mercy and grace, which were foretold by the prophets; which are intently explored by angels, and freely enjoyed by Christians, Peter adds, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, be ye holy, for I am holy. Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer, to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with

mekness and fear." Here the vigorous exercise of faith, joined with an animating prospect of future bliss, is represented as the source whence all right dispositions and pure affections must flow; and the strictest temperance, the deepest humility, and the warmest zeal, are enforced with a direct reference to the peculiar and exalted relation in which believers stand. There is one point so strikingly conspicuous throughout, in the passages just quoted, that it deserves to be particularly noticed. We are not called, nor permitted to look to a low and defective standard, or to an example of great and general excellence; yet, in some small degree touched and tainted with blemishes, the pattern of perfect purity is held up to our view. We are required to be holy, because God is holy, and as it is clearly our first duty to obey, so it is undoubtedly our greatest honour to resemble him. Sin is the object of his abhorrence, and he exclaims, "O, do not this abominable thing which my soul hateth."

The term *Holy*, is the epithet so often attached to his name, his word, his temple, his throne, and all his attributes. Moses, in his grateful song, breaks out into this sublime language: "Who is like unto thee, O Lord,



among the gods? who is like thee? glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders." While we are conversant with the sacred writers, we are never suffered to lose sight of the consummate purity and perfection of that Being, who cannot look on iniquity. Every exhortation, every precept, every promise, every ordinance, presents this divine attribute. Paul addressing the Ephesians says, "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Eph. iv. 22—24.

2. Holiness will appear indispensably necessary, when you consider that nothing else can fit and prepare you for future bliss.

This reflection rises naturally out of the strong and positive language of our text. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Beyond a doubt the beatific vision of God is here intended, and as this forms the chief joy of the saints above, so it is the cheering hope of all the saints below. To see God, in the highest acceptation of this phrase, is to be admitted into his immediate presence,



to have an intuitive and ravishing discovery of his glory, and an eternal interest in his favour. When Moses was placed in the cleft of a rock, he had but a faint transient glimpse of the divine glory, compared with those clear, unclouded, enlarged, and enrapturing views, which will open upon the righteous in a brighter and better world. This sublime idea of future blessedness, seems to have been entertained and cherished by good men, even in the earliest ages, when the light of revelation was only dawning upon a dark world. Job says, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold and not another." Jesus in his prayer said, "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me be with me where I am to behold my glory." On the ground of our Saviour's promise, the apostle John rests the hope of all believers. "Beloved now are we the sons of God; and it doth not appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even

as he is pure." That the felicity of the future state will consist chiefly in the vision of God, and of his only Son our Saviour, the scriptures fully assure us. It is impossible for the mind to have a more grand and transporting prospect presented to it. But we must be made meet to become partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Those who serve divers lusts and pleasures, are absolutely incapable of relishing such exalted joys. Know ye not, that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Is not this a point so obvious, that all but the blind must at once see it? Happiness is inseparably connected with holiness. The old serpent found means to wind himself into the earthly paradise, and his poison turned it into desolation; but none of the serpent's seed shall gain admission into the celestial paradise, to blast it with their presence. It is an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and none that worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, shall possess it. Indeed the wicked could not enjoy the mansions of the blessed, if they were permitted to enter them. How can the formalist who feels the sabbath a burden, and cries out, O what a weariness it is! anticipate a sabbath which shall have no end? How can the blas-

phemmer, whose lips are full of cursing and bitterness, be prepared to sing the high praise of God, or bless Him whom he now hourly dishonours and defies? How can the wanton libertine, who rolls in vile sensuality, taste any satisfaction in the pure delights of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect? The heaven which Mahomet the false prophet of Arabia hath feigned, and furnished with all that a voluptuous imagination could supply, might gratify such persons, but they would be miserable in the heaven which the gospel promises, and Christ prepares for his followers. "He that sows to the flesh shall reap corruption; but he that sows to the Spirit shall reap life everlasting."

II. We shall point out the means for promoting holiness.

It has been already remarked, that personal religion is progressive. It is a seed that grows, a leaven that spreads, a principle that operates. In my text we are exhorted to follow after holiness. Do you ask how this it to be done? I reply,

1. Seek the rich and plentiful effusions of the Holy Spirit.

God is the eternal fountain of purity, and

it is only by the power of his grace that we can reasonably expect to be transformed into his likeness. "We all, with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." We cannot advance in the divine life by our own unassisted efforts. But both the promises and the precepts of the infallible word, encourage us to seek the influence of that grace, which enlightens the mind and renovates the heart. You know who hath said, "I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." "If ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." His commands lead us to the same conclusion as his promises. "Be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit." "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

The doctrine of divine operation, in the production and preservation of holy dispositions, and a holy character, is, I trust, a doctrine which you have not now to learn; but one which you have long cordially believed and frankly acknowledged. But you need to

be reminded of it, and urged to avail yourselves of a privilege beyond all price. When you bow your knees at the heavenly mercy-seat, forget not in the multitude of your petitions, to ask for that gift, without which no other can eventually prove a blessing. Lift up your very souls, and cry, "O God, from whom all holy desires, all good councils, and all just works do proceed! grant, that by thy holy inspiration, we may think those things that be good. Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things."

2. Deliberately, solemnly, and unreservedly dedicate yourselves to God.

There is something deeply interesting in the transaction recorded by Moses, Deut. xxvi. 17—19. "Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice: and the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments; and to make thee high above all nations that he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour; and that



thou mayest be a holy people unto the Lord thy God, as he hath spoken." Let christians take this solemn covenant as a model, and voluntarily consecrate themselves to the Lord. Say not this would be reverting to legal bondage. Are not all believers designated as a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that they should shew forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvelous light? True religion is a system of sacred and inviolable obligations. It allows no sinful compliances, no selfish aims, no half measures, or timid time-serving expedients. Being bought with a price, we are no longer our own; but bound to glorify God, both with the body and the spirit which are his. It is of high importance to enter fully into the new and everlasting covenant, according to the tenor of which, we are indissolubly engaged to cleave to the Lord with full purpose of heart. The vows of God are upon us. Let us then yield up our time, and strength, and all our talents and powers, to the divine will. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.



3. Be careful to avoid all sin, and the occasions which lead to it.

Those who are partakers of divine grace, have still many evil propensities remaining in them. They are surrounded with vice and folly, and bad examples diffuse a contagion, from the taint of which, even good men are not wholly exempt. It is our wisdom, our duty, and our happiness, to shun that society which tends to dissipate and pollute the mind. "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

There are many unsuspected avenues of temptation. Where there is nothing grossly criminal, there may be much that is dangerous. Christians are required to avoid the very appearance of evil; "hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." How forcible and full of meaning, is the last expression used by the Apostle! "It is not enough, that we should hate the flesh, the old man which is corrupt, the body of sin, but also every habit which it wears and infects"—not only the garment all over polluted, but that which is touched with its lighter stains:

4. Be attentive to all the sacred ordinances of divine appointment.

God has chosen Zion as his habitation. He has brought you to the mountain of his holiness. "He will be sanctified in them that draw nigh to him, and before all the people he will be glorified." You are favoured with the highest advantages. All the institutions of religion must be venerated and observed, both for the honour of their great author, and the advancement of your own spiritual welfare. Read with diligence the holy Scriptures. Thus you will store the mind with pure and salutary truths. Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed

thereto according to thy word. Keep the holy sabbath, and devote it to the service of God. Forget not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is. Attend the ministry of the gospel, and the holy sacraments, that you may grow in knowledge and grace, and cherish those heavenly dispositions which constitute the excellence and the evidence of the Christian character.

And now, in the conclusion of this discourse, I shall freely and faithfully address myself to every man's conscience, as in the sight of God. Have we not reason to fear, that many of you are so far from following after holiness, that you set your hearts on your iniquity, and rush onward in the broad and beaten road which leadeth to destruction? Do you not prefer frivolous and foolish pursuits, to the grand and sublime realities of eternity? Are you not attracted by what is gross and carnal, rather than by what is pure and spiritual? Is not the bent of your inclination towards the beggarly elements of the world? If you have no delight in the house of God, in the company of pious men, in the perusal of the sacred Scriptures, in serious meditation, and secret prayer, it is a

proof that you are yet in an impenitent and unconverted state. Be not deceived, by flattering yourselves with the expectation of future bliss. How can you reach the heavenly Jerusalem, when you have not taken one step in the King's high-way of holiness? Remember it is said, "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." If Jesus wash you not, you have no part with him.

Perhaps some of you think favourably of yourselves, because you are exempt from those odious vices which degrade the character in the estimation of men. "None, (say you,) can charge us with injustice, cruelty, or profligacy." But true religion does not rest in negatives. It is an operative principle, under the influence of which, we both cease to do evil and learn to do well.

Others may think their state is safe, because they make a profession of religion, and punctually perform many of its duties. But alas! how many have the form of godliness who deny the power of it. How many have a name that they live, and yet are dead; have a place in the Church below, who shall never enjoy a portion with the saints above. You may have great zeal, but not according to knowledge; and much knowledge, and not a

grain of genuine faith; and a constellation of splendid gifts, yet not a particle of saving grace! O let it never be forgotten, that whatever be your privileges and attainments in religion, without holiness you cannot see the Lord. If you die in your sins, you must hear indeed his awful voice pronouncing your sentence, and feel his powerful hand inflicting your punishment; but the blissful vision of his face you shall never behold! Boasting formalists, and sanctimonious hypocrites, will have the lowest, darkest, and hottest habitation in hell.

Do any of you ask, How may we know whether we are partakers of true holiness? This is a question which it highly concerns all fairly to settle. "There are," says one, "different degrees of holiness in the saints; but sincerity is inseparable from the being of it. All gold is not refined to the same degree and height of purity; but true gold, though in the lowest degree of fineness, will endure the furnace and the touchstone, and by that trial is discerned from counterfeit metal." It is a favourable sign, if you are willing to examine yourselves by the same test, the word of God. And permit me to ask, Have you been impressed with a deep and lively sense



of the evil of sin? Have you mourned over its polluting power, as well as trembled under its heavy suspended punishment? Did you ever cry, in the language of the penitent Psalmist, "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow?" Do you look up for the influence of the Divine Spirit, and long to be more holy? He who is sanctified in part, always pants after perfection, and finds communion with God his true element. Are those holy exercises now grateful and pleasant, which were once irksome and repulsive to you? Do you esteem the saints the excellent of the earth, in whom is all your delight? Are you grieved to see the aboundings of iniquity in the world, and gladdened by every good report of Zion's prosperity? Is the prospect of heaven cheering, chiefly for this reason, that you shall there enjoy the immediate and glorious presence of God?

If you can reply to these questions sincerely in the affirmative, you are already possessed of a principle of holiness. Nature, unrenewed nature, never rises so high. Adore the hand which severed you from the giddy infatuated throng, and rescued you from perdition. Let every Christian acknowledge and



magnify the riches of divine mercy, and exclaim, "By the grace of God, I am what I am." Let it be your concern to advance in the course you have commenced. Count not yourselves to have already attained, but forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those which are before, unweariedly press towards the mark, for the prize of your high calling, of God in Christ Jesus. Suffer nothing to divert your steps, nothing to retard your progress, and soon you shall leave a body of sin and a world of sorrow, and be presented before the throne without spot or blemish, complete in holiness, and crowned with immortal felicity among the spirits of just men made perfect, and in the presence of God and the Lamb.

# SERMON XI.

---

## A GOOD CONSCIENCE.

~~~~~  
1 PET. iii. 16.

*Having a good conscience.*  
~~~~~

MORALITY derives its best motives and sanctions from religion. Human laws have but little force, when the sense of a Supreme Being and ever-present Judge is destroyed. Superstition itself, with all its murky shades and ghastly terrors, is less pernicious to mankind than hardened infidelity. It has been questioned, whether a whole nation of atheists could subsist, or be preserved from falling into anarchy and irretrievable ruin. Certain it is that the bands of society are weakened and relaxed, in proportion as the minds of men are warped from religious worship, and entangled in sceptical notions and opinions. Conscience is the sole basis of moral obliga-

tion, and without this basis, legislators and moralists would labour in vain. Penal statutes must sink for want of support, and universal confusion necessarily follow. The enemy of religion is, therefore, the enemy of mankind. As far as his power prevails, he undermines the very foundation of domestic peace, public order, and general happiness. Whether we look into history, the records of which exhibit to us floods of profligacy often breaking down every barrier raised to restrain them ; or examine the different portions of society which come under our actual observation at this day, the importance of religious principle becomes strikingly evident. Where it is wanting, individuals, families, and nations are liable to be violently agitated by the gusts of passion, and plunged in the deeps of calamity and woe.

I. We will inquire what a good conscience *is*.

It is the part, both of the judgment and the conscience, to ascertain the limits of right and wrong, good and evil; the specific difference between them is this: the former decides indiscriminately things which relate either to ourselves or our fellow-creatures; and the

latter touches those matters only, which immediately regard our own motives and conduct. The judgment has a wider province, but a feebler sway: her views are general, and her dictates mild and moderate. On the other hand, conscience occupies a narrow sphere, but watches with a keener eye, speaks in a bolder tone, and acts on a far nobler system. Her authority is very stern and unrelenting. It gives a stamp, which either dignifies or degrades every deliberate election of the will. Our happiness or misery depends in a great measure on the conscience. If this witness disapprove and condemn, in vain does the world applaud; while the censures of thousands without, lose their effect, if all is clear and right within. But what is a good conscience? By this phrase we mean a conscience possessed of peace, purity, and tenderness. These qualities are essentially necessary.

1. An easy or *peaceful* conscience is free from bitter accusations and poisoned stings.

We can scarcely give the positive idea here meant to be conveyed, without employing the negative as a contrast. When a man has violated the commands of God, trampled upon the most sacred obligations, and triumphed in the wrongs of his fellow-creatures; it is, after all,

possible that he may evade the pursuit of justice, and the terrors of an earthly tribunal. But let not this be mistaken for impunity. He is arraigned, and tried, and condemned, at that awful bar to which every criminal is peremptorily summoned. He has to stand an internal scrutiny, the most searching and impartial. "Conscience," says an old divine, "is God's deputy Judge, holding its court in the soul; bearing witness of all a man's doings and desires. There is kept the great register. Conscience is to every man his private notary, preserving the record of all his acts and deeds. It hath the pen of a ready writer, and takes from thy mouth all that thou speakest; yea from thy heart all thou contrivest; and though its writing may be for the present, like to the writing with the juice of an onion or lemon, illegible; yet, when thou comest to the fire of distress, it will then appear; and in the day of judgment, it will discover all! There is nothing so much fastened in the memory, as that which conscience writes." It is of little consequence that the base profligate, and cruel oppressor find means of escaping the punishments which men decree or threaten; while conscience secretly smites them with a terrible scourge,

drawing blood from the soul at every stroke ; and guilt like an inbred scorpion, inflicts exquisite torments, shooting a thousand envenomed stings into the heart. Indeed the agonies and horrors of remorse, cannot be so described, as to give a just idea of them ! O what are the drops of sinful pleasure, to the floods of misery which follow ! Many a self-tormented wretch would give worlds, if he had them, for one hour's peace of conscience ! But this blessing is the fruit of real religion. Impiety never fails, sooner or later, to draw down the tremendous judgments of heaven. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." "What man is he that feareth the Lord ? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose. His soul shall dwell at ease ; and his seed shall inherit the earth. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him ; and he will shew them his covenant." Ps. xxv. 12—14. Peace of conscience is the special privilege of the righteous. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect ? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God ; who also maketh intercession for us." The saints have the testimony of the Divine



Word *for* them, and the witness of the Holy Spirit *within* them.

2. A good conscience is a *pure* conscience.

There may be, and often is, some kind of peace without purity. A man may be comparatively at ease, when he ought to shudder under a sense of his awful condition, and shrink at the prospect before him. *That* is an evil conscience, which is full of deep stains, though it should not yet be pierced with deadly stings. Religion is not a series of external ceremonies; it is an inward operative principle, which pervades and renews the soul. Touching the very springs of action, with a potent and prevailing impulse, it rectifies the will and refines the affections. "Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work, reprobate." 1 Titus i. 15, 16.

I am ready to allow, that a truly pious man is not possessed of absolute purity. In his highest duties, and in his sweetest enjoyments, he is compassed about with infirmities; yet as his aims and intentions are sincere, he can,

with the Apostle, "Thank God, whom he serves with a pure conscience." It happens not seldom, that worldly and carnal men glory in the uprightness of their conduct, and the purity of their motives. When, however, the true state of the case is known, it is found that they take credit to themselves, because they stand clear of theft, fraud, perjury, treason, murder, and such like crimes, as not only degrade the individual, but are also a foul blot upon human nature itself. Who sees not that the conscience may be greatly defiled, though a man has never plunged into those low and odious vices, which cover his character with infamy in the estimation of the world?

3. A good conscience is a *tender* conscience.

"Nothing," says one, "in the human character is so extraordinary, as the manner in which the consciences of the most enlightened and excellent men, for a time, lie prostrate and dormant, under the influence of some ruling passion. In the Scriptures, we see a highly-gifted sovereign, living in such general purity as to have been said to walk after God's own heart, yet sleeping in peace amidst the complicated crimes of cruelty,

adultery, and murder, till recalled to himself by the sublime simplicity of the Prophet." How important and needful is the warning given by the Apostle to the Hebrews, "Take heed lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." A course of deliberate wickedness, stupifies the mind and steels the heart. The most horrid crimes are then committed with unblushing audacity. Such men, the sacred word declares, "have their consciences seared with a hot iron:" no softness or sensibility is left. The keenest arrows of truth recoil, as darts shot at the scaly crocodile. "They have no fear of God before their eyes." But a tender conscience is easily touched, and trembles at the approach of temptation. It is not moved merely by great and glaring acts of immorality, but also by sins of omission and negligence. It has a quick instinctive feeling, which puts the soul into a posture of defence, and guards all the avenues by which the enemy would gain access. "In evil men, the voice of conscience is generally weak and low, gently chastising the passions, as Eli reproved his vicious domineering sons; in good men, it speaks with authority, and its dictates have the force of laws." A christian who is influenced by a sense of duty, must reject maxims and aban-

don customs, which have long had the sanction of the world. When he is invited to take part with those who hurry to the theatre, the tavern, and card table, he dares not join them, to waste his time ; to fire his passions ; to fling away the support of his family ; and lay himself open to all the ruinous vices connected with gaming and intemperance. His objections are called ridiculous scruples, and the circumspection of his conduct is attributed to affected singularity. He dares not tell a lie, and call it one of the established forms of politeness. He dares not give to deception the soft name of gallantry ; or term revelry and excess, innocent conviviality. He would rather bear the reproach of the world, than the cutting remorse of his own heart.

## II. Inquire what a good conscience *does*.

1. It fortifies us to sustain the attacks of an injurious world. As of old, "he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the spirit ;" so it is now. "Whosoever will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." The Apostle Peter, in the words of the text, meant to prepare believers for the conflict, which it was impossible in the profession and practice of true religion to evade. "Having," saith he, "a good con-

science; that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, rather than for evil doing."

No calumnies or insults, storms of malice, or effusions of acrimony and bitterness, can shake him whose heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. Though he may be called an enthusiast, and a hypocrite, and things be laid to his charge which make the ears of every one that heareth them to tingle, he fears not to face his adversaries, and with manly boldness says, "God forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live." Job xxvii. 5, 6. Experience has evinced, that a clear and approving conscience, is the best shield against all the scandals and reproaches, which malignity can discharge to injure our characters, or wound our peace. In vain does the multitude upbraid and revile the man, who knows himself free from the odious things imputed to him, and can make it manifest that every shaft shot by his enemies,



has been drawn from the quiver of falsehood, and dipped in the gall of prejudice and rancour. Paul was exposed to the furious clamours and spiteful insinuations of his countrymen, as well as to the scornful sneers and harsh invectives of the Gentiles. When he stood up to speak in his own defence, he found it impossible to gain a patient hearing, for the Jews broke out into violent outcries, "Away with such a fellow, for it is not fit that he should live any longer." His own account of himself and his fellow labourers is this; "Being reviled we bless; being persecuted we suffer it; being defamed we entreat: we are made as the filth of the earth, and are the off-scouring of all things unto this day." And were they utterly cast down, and left quite disconsolate amidst all this virulence, abuse, and contempt? No, hear his language; "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward." 2 Cor. i. 12.

2. A good conscience fits us for retirement.

Why do thousands, after living many years



in vanity and vice, appear weary of the crowd, and yet unwilling to seek the calm retreat? They dread to be left alone, because the remembrance of their wasted time, their perverted talents, their numerous crimes, together with the prospect of approaching death and judgment, fill them with uneasy reflections and dismal forebodings. They complain of low spirits, but a troubled conscience is at the bottom. Belshazzar, at his royal feast, amidst all his lords and courtiers, saw a hand, writing, in mystic characters, his doom on the palace wall; but most men, in solitude, behold the awful sentence of their condemnation, and tremble and turn pale at the sight. When the clamour of the passions begins to subside, the clamour of conscience begins to be heard. The wicked rush into the tumults of the world to drown the voice of that inward monitor, whose accents pierce them with anguish, and drive them to the brink of despair.

But he who has a clear conscience, can turn aside from the busy cares of the world, to enjoy the exquisite pleasures of undisturbed retirement. He finds employments alone, which put to shame the idle and frivolous amusements, the tedious and fruitless

toils of the infatuated multitude. He shuts out intrusion and molestation ; and when the dearest associates and friends are absent, communes with his heart. In the stillness of the night watches, his meditations on God are sweet and refreshing. Happy is the man who enjoys a serene peace in his bosom, and can review the past and anticipate the future without feeling the stings of remorse, or the terrors of dismay !

3. A good conscience qualifies us for the presence and worship of God.

After committing some crime, a child approaches his father with reluctance ; a subject appears before his sovereign with shame and confusion. Thus he who habitually commits, or secretly cherishes sin, cannot draw nigh to God with freedom and satisfaction. Holy duties require holy dispositions. "I will wash my hands in innocency, said David, and so will I compass thine altar, O God." Allowed impurity of any kind, unfits us for the solemnities of religion. In vain do we lift up to heaven, in supplication, hands stained with injustice and cruelty. "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must do it in spirit and in truth. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by

the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." Heb. x. 19—22. A carnal and unregenerate man, can feel no liberty, can taste no pleasure in the sacred service of Jehovah. But a Christian, renewed in the spirit of his mind, gains access to the throne of grace, and holds sweet communion with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. "Beloved if our heart condemn us not, then have confidence towards God."

In the conclusion of this discourse, I shall address myself to persons of different characters.

Many of you, it is to be feared, are in a state of deplorable insensibility. Neither the mercies, nor the judgments of God affect you. You sleep in your sin, and mistake carnal security for peace. Your conscience is cast into a fatal stupor. Were not this the case, how could you gaily dance on the slippery verge of eternity? How could you see

numbers cut off by the hand of death, and remain quite careless and unconcerned? How could you hear the thunder of God's word, and behold the flashings of his displeasure without some alarm and anxiety? Alas! you have gone on in the ways of sin, till you are past feeling, and work all uncleanness with greediness. O what state on earth is so dreadful as settled invincible obduracy! When every movement of compunction and tenderness has long ceased, and every avenue of conviction is fast closed, we have some reason to fear the man is given up to a reprobate mind! It may be expected, that you who are hardened and impenitent, will treat warnings with levity and scorn. Yet let me tell you, a time will come, when conscience shall awake; and what you have regarded as fancies and dreams, will be found to be awful realities! In the gloom of affliction, those crimes will rise up in full view, which are unseen amidst the glare of worldly prosperity. When Joseph's brethren were cast into prison, they began to look upon one another, and said, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon

us.” Or if affliction does not rouse your conscience, certainly death will.

Again, there are some of you, who probably pass a wretched life, between the workings of evil passions, and the remonstrances of conscience. The pleasures of sin are at best poor, but to you they are imbittered even at the time, by certain painful misgivings which cannot be wholly suppressed. You have recourse to the forms of religion, to purchase a precarious peace and allay the stings of remorse. Think not that you can be either safe or happy, in your present course. It is absolutely necessary, that your conscience should be purged, not only from deep stains of positive sin, but also from dead works of imaginary righteousness; and nothing can do this, but “the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit, offered himself without spot to God.” It is absolutely necessary, that you should be renewed by the powerful influence of Divine Grace. O then fly to the only Saviour; surrender your souls into his hands. Conscience is the guide of life, the guard of man, but without the enlightening and invigorating grace of Christ, it is a blind guide, a feeble and ineffectual guard.



There are some of you, I doubt not, who have indeed a good conscience.

You can meet the unmerited reproaches and calumnies of the world with fortitude; you can find sweet solace in retirement, and worship God with filial freedom and pleasure. Let it be your daily care, to avoid every appearance of evil. The holiest Christian, is only safe while he is watchful and humble. Even a good man may, in one unguarded hour, wound his own conscience and the cause of religion so deeply, as to fill him with grief, and in some measure darken with clouds, all the following days of his life. In proof of this, we need only refer to the fall of David and of Peter. Let me recommend to you the Apostle of the Gentiles, as an example worthy of imitation. "And herein do I exercise myself, to have a conscience always void of offence, toward God and toward men." It is indeed a difficult and arduous exercise, but essential to the peace and prosperity of your souls. Such is the depravity of our nature and the circumstances of our lot, amidst danger and temptation, that transient sins of infirmity are found in the best. He, however, who ventures upon any sin deliberately, or cherishes any evil habit, fills his



conscience with guilt, and provokes God. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the council of the ungodly; nor standeth in the way of sinners; nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful: but his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night."

## SERMON XII.

---

### A GOOD HOPE.

~~~~~  
2 THES. ii. 16.

*Good hope through grace.*  
~~~~~

WHEN we look around us, it is rarely that we behold among the busy crowd of our fellow creatures, that calm content which preachers so often inculcate, and poets so sweetly sing. Anxiety is every where too obvious to be concealed. We see it in the hurried step and haggard countenance; we hear it in the secret murmur and stifled sigh. A thousand signs betray that solicitude which has seized and infected the mind. But while content is a stranger, which seldom visits either the cottage or the palace, hope finds a dwelling in every breast. Some prospective good, real or imaginary, near or remote, has an attractive charm which commands and engages the

heart. The restless agitation and eager competition of the multitude, are only the rapid march of those passions, which move at the signal of hope. But while all are influenced by hope, how few are advancing in the way which terminates in true satisfaction. Disappointment follows disappointment, and yet the infatuated throng rush forward in the road to ruin. As the bubbles that glitter before them burst at the touch, and the flowers that bloom one after another, wither in the hand, they are troubled and vexed, but not profited by the experience of past delusion.

Those whom God has called by his grace, are taught to seek and expect happiness where alone the inestimable treasure may be found. Detached from a world which is passing away as a vain show, a fleeting shadow, they set their affections on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.

I. The Christian's hope is emphatically and exclusively called a *good hope*. This will appear if we consider its object, its ground, and its influence.

1. The Christian's hope has a good *object*.

Most men are labouring and panting, exhausting their strength and their spirits, to gain and secure a portion here below. They entertain a sanguine expectation of finding, what no mortal ever yet found, something in this life which shall render them completely happy. Wealth, power, pleasure, honour, and influence, are dressed out in all the fair forms and dazzling colours that fancy can bestow. But what enchants them in prospect, never fails to disappoint them in actual possession. After gathering and culling with anxious care earth's finest flowers, some noxious weeds are still detected, which spoil the garland; after mixing with elaborate skill earth's choicest ingredients, it is impossible to exclude some blended bitters which dash the cup, and destroy the relish of the voluptuary. Again and again, the worldling cries, "What shall I eat, what shall I drink, and wherewith shall I be clothed?" Discontent is a worm at the root of every favourite enjoyment. His scheme of happiness is formed in a systematic neglect and defiance of heaven, and cannot therefore succeed. The curse of God eats like a canker into his peace, and blasts all his flattering expectations.

The hope of the Christian has a far higher object than that of the worldling. He looks for the pure spiritual felicity, which is adapted to the enlarging faculties, and boundless desires of the immortal soul. The heir to a rich estate, through eager impatience to possess it, may think the years roll slowly, yet how small is his enjoyment when the period at last arrives. But is this the case with the Christian? No; hear the language of the Apostle Peter: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you; who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." The subjects of regenerating grace, may well exult in the scene which opens before them. All the adopted sons of God, are heirs of a kingdom utterly beyond the reach of enemies, and absolutely free from suffering, sin, and danger; a kingdom rich in solid and enduring treasures, replete with pure and permanent joys; a kingdom, the transcendant grandeur and glory of

which, surpass the powers of description and even of comprehension; "for eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man to conceive, things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Not only shall their souls be blessed with knowledge of God, of his ways, of his works, to an extent which is at present inconceivable; but their faculties shall be so exalted, as to resemble those of their glorified Redeemer. The spirits of just men made perfect, shall know even as they are known. Such is the object of the Christian's hope. It is not the elysium of pagans, or the paradise of Mahomet; it is not a scene of idle pomp or sensual indulgence, suited to a childish imagination or a vitiated taste. It is a felicity, refined and exalted in its nature, inexhaustible in its resources, and everlasting in its duration. The bliss of heaven results from the immediate presence of God. "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him." Is it possible to ascend higher? No; this is the loftiest summit to which man or angel can climb. The mind cannot frame a thought of any thing more elevated, and sublime, and delightful.

"Great, good, wise, wonderful, eternal King!"



To have an unalienable interest in thee, is the essence, the perfection of happiness! Be thou my rest, my portion, my all, and I ask no more! To see thy smile will be the joy, to celebrate thy praise, the work of heaven! O the rich ineffable privilege! O the rapture kindling prospect! Every thought, every power, every affection, shall move in harmony with thy sovereign will, and mount in transport to extol thy grace! In thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore!

2. The Christian's hope has a good ground or foundation.

He rests not on cunningly devised fables, but on the sure testimonies of the living God. Hence Paul thus addresses the Colossians; "For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel. Remember thy word, said David, on which thou hast caused me to hope." Infidels have attacked Christianity, by all the arts that subtilty could devise, with all the violence that malice could employ, yet have uniformly failed and been baffled in their attempts. The basis on which we build, is too deep laid and strong, to be shaken by the puny assault of mortal hands,

or even the rancour and rage of hell's confederate legions. Now, as the gospel is certainly true, so it is singularly important. It exhibits Christ as the only Deliverer and Redeemer. O what clear and distinct views does it open of his power and dignity, grace and faithfulness. All the doctrines lead to Christ; all the promises centre in Christ. He is the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last. If then, the gospel is the ground of our hope, it is because of its immediate relation to Immanuel. While we cordially embrace the word, we cleave to the Saviour with full purpose of heart. We look for our acceptance with God, to his propitiatory sacrifice and perfect righteousness. Renouncing all self-dependance, we entirely repose our confidence in his precious merits. "If we may suppose our transgressions put aside, and heaven suspended as the reward of one deed perfectly answering the demands of the moral law, where should the deed be found? Was the motive perfectly pure, in all points immediate and remote? In the progress from the motive to the execution, did no tinge of evil insinuate itself? In the execution itself, did no feeling of wrong temper, no emotion of discontent, of pride, or of vanity arise?" The

Christian knows himself too well, to trust either in his own heart, or his own righteousness. The Apostle commands us, "to be ready always to give an answer to those who may ask us a reason of the hope that is in us." And what can be more appropriate and important than such an injunction? what more desirable and necessary than a prompt compliance with it? Too many, however, have no reason to give, or such reasons as will not bear to be brought to the test of scripture. One expects heaven on the vague and general plea of God's mercy; another expects it as the recompense of his own merit. The moralist pays some attention to decencies and duties of relative kind, and then talks with complacency of looking back on a well-spent life, and forward with assurance to a better world. The modern pharisee fixes his reliance, on the exactness and punctuality with which he performs the external ceremonies of religion; although the weightier matters of judgment, mercy, and faith, are neglected. The scripture aptly likens the hope of such persons to the spider's web, a flimsy and self-spun covering, which must soon be swept away with the besom of destruction! How different were the views and feelings of the Apostle Paul.

“ He counted all things but dung, that he might win Christ, and be found in Him, not having his own righteousness which was of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

Examine well, my brethren, the foundation of your hope. An error or delusion in this matter is of fatal consequence. You hear the gospel indeed, but do you clearly understand, and heartily believe it? What think you of Christ? Are you so persuaded of the sufficiency of his merit, and the efficacy of his atoning blood, as to resolve, amidst all the contempt of sceptics and scorers, to trust solely in his righteousness, and glory only in his cross? There is no other name under heaven given among men by which you can be saved, but the name of Jesus. “ Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. 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. Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

Here, and here only, your dependance must be fixed.

3. The Christian's hope has a good influence. It gives tranquillity, steadiness, purity, vigour, and elevation to the soul.

The Prophet says, "It is good for a man, both to hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us." It is the Christian's happiness, to be able to trust Jehovah, when he cannot trace his footsteps, and learn lessons of resignation in the dark days of adversity. Here we are voyagers, steering under the conduct of a skilful pilot, for the fair haven of celestial rest. Hope is our anchor, sure and stedfast; while the winds roar and the waves rise, and rocks, and quicksands, and perils surround us. When deep calleth unto deep, and tempest follows tempest with overwhelming horrors, the Christian may be furiously driven by the blast, but shall not suffer shipwreck. In the midst of the storm he can exclaim, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me, hope thou in God,

for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." The influence of hope corresponds with the nature of its object. The desires and expectations of the wicked terminate on sensual joys, and, therefore, stir up and increase their corruption: the desires and expectations of the righteous terminate on sacred and sublime delights, and necessarily promote holiness. Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is: and every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he his pure.

A good man may suffer many losses, and endure many trials; but there is one jewel which he cannot lose. He may seem shut up in embarrassment; but in the valley of Achor, or trouble, there is always a door of hope, through which deliverance comes in due season.

Here we are pilgrims. The howling wilderness is barren and terrific; but we are journeying to the promised land, and "seeking a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Hope is our never-setting star. It may for a short time be clouded,



or shoot only a dim and fluctuating ray, yet nothing can deprive us of its consoling light. Here we are soldiers, fighting under the banner of the cross. Our foes are numerous, fierce, crafty, and powerful; the conflict is sharp and severe; but the victory is sure; because we have for a helmet, the hope of salvation. In a word, the opening and brightening prospect which Divine Truth exhibits to the eye of the Christian, has a most happy tendency to cheer, invigorate, and elevate the mind. Nothing which his heavenly Father enjoins or appoints, is too difficult to attempt, or too painful to endure, while he is "looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

II. The Christian's hope may be profitably traced to its origin and effective cause.

In the text it is said, "God, even our Father, hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace." Divine love is the fountain whence all our blessings flow. Such is the darkness of the mind, and the depravity of the heart, that we are apt to entertain wrong ideas, both of the nature and origin of gospel privileges.

The sacred writers teach us in plain and forcible language, our fallen state and utter unworthiness. Whatever good we enjoy, whatever we expect, stands in the New Testament, inseparably connected with the grace of God. As we peruse the inspired volume, this humbling and salutary doctrine meets the eye in every page. And, indeed, we cannot too frequently and deeply reflect upon it, as a means of casting down high thoughts, and exciting the pure emotions of gratitude and love.

A good hope is entirely through grace. The whole scheme of our salvation must be traced back to the free, unmerited, abundant, distinguishing, and sovereign grace of God, as its sole source. Why should that Being, who is supremely glorious and ever-blessed in himself, remember us in our low and lost estate, and determine to restore us? No reason can be assigned, but the good pleasure of his own will. It was pure grace, immeasurable, incomprehensible grace, which laid the wonderful plan of redemption, in those eternal councils of Jehovah, that all the events of Providence have been gradually unfolding, from the commencement of time. "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but

according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." 2 Tim. i. 9. Why did the Son of God leave the courts of celestial light and veil his divine majesty, by assuming our nature and appearing on earth in the form of a servant? Shall we ask philosophic speculation, or self-righteous pride, to solve the question and settle the point? Can we find, in the profoundest depths of nature, the reason of this marvelous, this matchless instance of condescension? Ah! no, it is from a different quarter that a sufficient and satisfying reason is obtained. Hear how the Apostle addresses the Corinthians, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, for your sakes he became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might be rich."

Nor has mercy merely given us evangelical ordinances, and spread the provisions which we need around us in abundant profusion. Is it asked, How is the fallen alienated soul of man raised and reclaimed? How is the dark understanding illuminated, and the perverted will renewed? How is the vital principle of piety introduced and preserved, to counteract the workings of corruption in the heart? We can give no just reply to these interesting

inquiries, without immediately referring to the inspired word, which points directly to the mysterious and mighty agency of the Holy Spirit. My Christian brethren, "Once ye were in darkness, but now are light in the Lord." Happy change! And say how was it effected? Who quickened and called you? To whom, or to what, do you owe your second birth, your new life, your high relations, your holy joys, your heaven-gilded prospects and glowing expectations? I know you cannot hesitate in your answer. Every Christian will gladly and confidently say, "By the grace of God, I am what I am." "The Lord hath done great things for me; he hath brought me out of the horrible pit; he hath set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings." Divine Grace, which is the source of my salvation, shall be the matter of my song through eternity.

The Christian's hope, both in its rise and growth, must be attributed to the agency of the Holy Spirit. The first operations of grace on the heart, are indeed often painful. The coming storm is generally heard with alarm and agitation, before the covert, the place of shelter, is seen or sought. Vain hopes are to be eradicated, before a good

hope can be planted. Sometimes the convert, when first awakened from the sleep of sin, is for a while filled with terrors, and almost sunk to despondency.

But a beam of light breaks through the sad gloom; and a voice softer than music whispers in his ear, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Thus a good hope is usually born, amidst the pangs of anguish and the alarms of fear. It is the influence of the Divine Spirit, which strengthens our confidence, and makes us to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle, therefore, thus prays on the behalf of the Romans, "Now, the God of hope fill you with joy and peace in believing; that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."

I shall conclude this discourse with a few observations.

1. We may observe, from what has been said, the importance of examining the nature and ground of our hope.

It is possible to be deluded with glittering phantoms; and, while we imagine we are bound for the haven of eternal peace, be suddenly swallowed up in the gulph of despair.



Most people, if questioned as to a future state, promptly reply, that they hope to be happy ; but when the matter is pressed home, they can scarcely tell why. We soon perceive them to be grossly ignorant, and habitually stupid.

Be not offended, while I appeal to your conscience in the sight of God. Has not all your concern been about the things of the world? What but worldly things have produced your hopes and fears, your joys and sorrows? What but secular business, company, dress, display, eating and drinking, and recreation, have occupied your time? When did you feel truly in earnest about your souls? When did you cry, "Lord save, or we perish?" Have you not lived, as if death and judgment, hell and heaven, were only idle fables? If so, to expect future happiness, is to expect the end without the means. You would think the husbandman mad, who hoped for a plentiful crop, where the soil had never been broken up, nor the seed sown. To hope that you shall be happy while you remain in your present impenitent state, is to hope that the Bible is not true, or that God will break his word. To hope for heaven while the mind is earthly and carnal, is to



hope that light shall have communion with darkness, and Christ concord with Belial. Such expectations must as certainly be disappointed, as those of the merchant that looks for the return of a rich cargo, who sent out only empty wishes. Others there are, who shew some religious concern, yet never seek safety where it is to be found. Instead of flying to Jesus, as their only refuge, and relying simply on his precious grace and perfect righteousness; they trust in their own penitence, their prayers, their alms, and good deeds. Is this your case? Alas! how vain and fruitless are your efforts! You turn from the foundation laid in Zion, the rock of Israel, and build on the treacherous sand! O strange and awful delusion! The pillars of your hope must soon sink; and the fair fabric you have laboured to rear, crush you in its ruins. Be not deceived; this is a matter which ought to be examined closely and impartially. There is nothing so much to be dreaded as presumption. How many, even in sickness, and at the approach of death, study to exclude every thing that might disturb their ease; while tender relatives contribute to strengthen their false and unscriptural confidence. They seek opiates, for the body rack-

ed with pain ; and errors, whose lulling tendency is to stupify the soul ; but can bear “no stimulants to self-inquiry ; no reasonings that offend their pride ; no direct flashings of truth upon the conscience.” I ask now, Where is your hope founded ? What effects does it produce ? If it does not rest wholly on Jesus, and make you earnestly seek to please and resemble Him, it is worth nothing. “Christ must be formed in you the hope of glory ; for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

2. We may observe, that the Christian's hope, like every other grace, is capable of progressive increase. “We do not, indeed, “despise the day of small things.” The sincere servants of God, in the lowest depression, could, on no considerations whatever, be induced to part with their hope. It is too valuable to be sold at any price. We behold many babes in Christ ; yet where there is but one grain of true faith, and one ray of genuine hope, the work of sanctification is begun. We must not, however, rest content at the foot of the mountain ; but go on unto perfection ; rising from height to height ; and leaving the smoke, and dust, and fogs, and all the beggarly elements of the world behind ; that

our views may be enlarged, our hopes brightened, and our souls invigorated in the service of God. Divine grace is inexpressibly precious! He who has the smallest measure of it, would not exchange it for the wealth of worlds! But why should you rest content with a few drops of this cordial, to keep you from fainting, when you may procure an ample abundance to replenish your souls with joy and confidence? Why do you beat your fluttering pinions among the thorns and thickets, when you may mount up with wings as eagles? There have been saints of strong faith, who even while passing through much tribulation, have been enabled to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. "The arm of the Lord is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor his ear heavy, that it cannot hear." The treasury of free grace is not exhausted; nor is the fountain of Divine love, a spring shut up and sealed. Beware of yielding to an indolent spirit. Set the brightest examples before you, and aim to attain the point of elevation which they attained. "And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but

followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Heb. vi. 11, 12.

3. We may observe, that those who possess a good hope, ought to magnify the riches of sovereign discriminating grace.

O Christian! whilst thou wast sitting in darkness, "it was through the tender mercy of our God, that the day-spring from on high visited thee, to guide thy feet into the way of peace." Jesus hath taken out of thy hand the cup of trembling, and given thee the cup of salvation; and instead of sinking into despair, and tasting the bitterness of the second death, thou art raised to heavenly hope, and refreshed with the blessings of divine life. And is not thy cry, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" O let gratitude break forth into songs of praise to thy Great Redeemer. Guard against every taint of pharisaic pride and worldly spirit; for, if they gain the ascendancy in thy heart, they will rob him of the honour due to his name. Thy hope will not make thee ashamed at last before God; be not then ashamed of thy hope now before men. Tell them what grace hath done for thee; tell them how thy delusions, and errors, and fears

were dispersed; tell them that Jesus is both able and willing to save all who come unto God by him. And, O let thy soul aspire more and more after heavenly things! It is scarcely possible to expect too little from man, or too much from God. "He hath delivered, he doth deliver, in whom we may safely trust that he will yet deliver us. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is: for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river; and shall not see when heat cometh; but her leaf shall be green: and shall not be careful in the year of drought; neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

## SERMON XIII.

---

### CHRISTIAN FORTITUDE.

---

EPH. vi. 10.

*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*

---

**CHRISTIANITY**, in its first propagation, had every where to meet opposition ; but in some places the torrent was more violent than in others. Ephesus, a rich city of Asia Minor, having a most beautiful and splendid temple erected for Diana, was not only the chosen resort of idolaters, but was also deeply interested in the continuance of idolatry. Hence, we learn, that the introduction of the gospel into this place, excited so much agitation and alarm, as to fill the whole city with tumult and confusion. Demetrius and his craftsmen had no sooner raised the cry, than the infuriated multitude were all in an uproar. Acts xix. 27.



This was a sphere of arduous labour for the Apostle Paul. He continued there three years, preaching the gospel publicly, and teaching the people from house to house, with the tenderest affection, the warmest zeal, and most indefatigable diligence. A people was collected, and a church formed, to which this valuable epistle was afterward sent. The Christians at Ephesus were exposed to the bitterest persecution. They dwelt where Satan had his seat, and where the reign of superstition, and the rancour of prejudice, could not fail to put their profession to a very severe test. It was impossible to be a Christian then and there, without having the spirit of a martyr. The apostle, in the latter part of this epistle, gives them many suitable precepts and admonitions, and winds up the whole in the admirable conclusion of the text and the subsequent verses. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." The lesson here inculcated, is holy fortitude; a lesson, which the first followers of Christ had all to learn and practice. Blessed be God, we live in milder times; yet, even now, it is necessary for every believer to be prepared for trials and conflicts.

I. We shall shew the nature of Christian fortitude.

It is that firmness or heroic resolution, which gives support and steadiness to the mind amidst troubles and difficulties. It is the guardian and defence of all the virtues. It is that magnanimity, which, comprising the chief moral elements of the sublime, imparts the stamp of true greatness and dignity to the character.

There is a *natural* fortitude, which enables one man to meet without shrinking or dismay, events and calamities that overwhelm another in anguish and despondency. The basis of this hardihood, seems to be in the texture and temperament of the body. There is also a fortitude which is manifestly the effect of *early habit*. The native savages of America are said to be capable of enduring hunger, thirst, watching, fatigue, and even the keenest tortures, without a complaint or a groan, because from childhood they are accustomed to them. This kind of passive fortitude is the quality in which they glory, and vie with each other for pre-eminence. It is the distinction which elevates and recommends their famed chiefs. There is also a species of what may not improperly be called

*philosophical* fortitude, because it is derived from, or greatly fostered by the moral maxims and lessons of the ancient sages. The doctrines of the Stoics on this point, are too well known to need repeating; and the authority of Cato and Epictetus was extolled in the highest strains.

But *Christian* fortitude is not the result of corporeal temperament, nor the mere effect of early habit, nor the produce of philosophic discipline: it is the fruit of a heavenly ingrafted principle. Hence, it has so often been seen, that persons naturally weak and fearful, when taught from above, and endued with divine grace, have remained firm and unterrified at the post of duty, regardless of all the fierce threatenings, and violent assaults of the most malignant and implacable enemies. Faith lays hold of the divine promises, and then the soul feels itself intrenched within the arms of the Almighty. "They that trust in the Lord, shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abideth for ever." In proportion to the strength of the Christian's faith, is the stability of his resolution, and the ardour of his zeal. Renouncing all reliance on an arm of flesh, he makes the eternal God his refuge, and sees the broad shield of heaven

held out for his protection. While the word cries, "Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength;" he looks upward and exclaims, "He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence, I shall not be moved." That firmness which has its seat in the nerves, or its source in pride, and its support from vain glory, often fails under peculiar and unexpected trials. How frequently have those, who in the heat of battle could march to the deadly breach, been filled with consternation and terror when visited with a fit of common sickness, or lost all confidence under some heavy secular loss, or painful bereavment. The world's heroes turn cowards at the moment of extremity. In the eye of the public, they appear invincible; in the shades of retirement, they languish and faint, while the wreaths of victory still entwine their brows.

But Christian fortitude, has its root in the immutable promises of Jehovah, and its supplies of succour from an inexhaustible spring. Like the palm tree, it grows stronger by the pressure which weighs hard upon it.

Let it not be concluded, that the virtue here described and recommended, is inconsistent with those amiable dispositions and winning

graces, which equally exalt and adorn the character of individuals, and shed a lustre on society. It is not a firmness void of tenderness and humanity. We have seen persons, who mistake obstinacy for decision, and prejudice for principle. They are neither to be moved by truth, nor melted by sympathy, and this repulsive hardness of character, is their boast. Christian fortitude has humility and discretion as its inseparable companions. It walks in the light, and keeps at an equal distance from rashness and timidity. It neither wantonly seeks dangers, nor shuns them when met in the path of duty.

**II. Point out the field which opens for the exercise of Christian fortitude.**

The powers of darkness, of the world, and the flesh, form a powerful confederacy against us. Now all the followers of Christ are called to wage war with these dangerous enemies. Some indeed are liable to sharper onsets than others, but every one must engage in the conflict.

1. The Christian requires fortitude to oppose the legions of hell.

In the words immediately following the text, there is an animated exhortation, addressed to



all who have enlisted under the banner of Christ. "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." It is not surely a contest of small moment which the Apostle sets forth in such language. The prince of darkness has a multitude of agents under his command, and a variety of stratagems in readiness, to use as occasion offers. Sometimes he spreads around us his infernal snares, and at other times pours upon us a storm of his fiery darts. Now the very idea of having to maintain a combat with malignant spirits, bent upon our destruction, is apt at first to strike terror into the mind. But however formidable such enemies may appear, the humblest Christian has often put them to flight. We are therefore called to stand armed at all points. Our energy is derived wholly from the Captain of salvation. Strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, we need not fear all the assaults of hell. But let not the Christian, in any circumstances, shrink from the standard of Immanuel; or in a glorious cause, betray a base and pusillanimous spirit,



by yielding to the enemy. The command is, "resist the devil and he will flee from you." This forms the decisive test of heroic courage. The mere professor of religion, the cold formalist, keeps his station while the foe ranges or threatens at a distance, but faints or flies, when the charge becomes close and furious. We must endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and if we would vanquish the great adversary, we must resist him steadfast in the faith.

2. The Christian requires fortitude to oppose the evils which are in the world.

We are surrounded with dangers and temptations. How many vain amusements and false maxims, absurd customs and egregious follies, have obtained the approbation and sanction of mankind in general. You know by what high authority we are forbidden to follow a multitude to do evil. But he who refuses to comply with the practices and pursuits of the world, must stand prepared to meet its frowns, and encounter hostility in various forms. The man needs a strong and vigorous spirit, who has to stem the torrent, and urge his progress with unwearied efforts against all its collected force and dashing turbulence. He who testified that the works

of the world are evil, and drew hatred upon himself by so doing, has called all his disciples to give, at least, their practical testimony to the same point. Let them count the cost, for it is a work which requires calculation to begin, and courage to complete it. Have you heartily engaged in the service of Christ? Do you make his word your guide and rule, his favour your portion, his life your pattern, his second coming and future kingdom your hope? Then you must go forth without the camp, bearing his reproach. "Whosoever will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." You need no small share of fortitude to bear the reviling and abusive language of the bold blasphemer, the odious calumnies of the secret slanderer, and all the sly insinuations, and covert injuries of those, who delight to strike side blows at religion, and inflict wounds in the dark. But there is no test of fortitude, to which the servants of Christ are called in our days, more common or more severe, than ridicule. Few dare to be singular, at the peril of being set as a mark for contempt. Where the laws restrain the open violence of persecution for conscience sake, the carnal mind will vent its eumity in sneers and sar-

casms, in banter and bitter irony. Human nature exquisitely feels the light and poisoned shafts of ridicule, because they pierce and inflame the tenderest part. He, therefore, who holds fast his profession amidst the trial of cruel mockings, though he may never be called to die as a martyr, undoubtedly possesses the spirit and courage of a martyr.

3. The Christian requires fortitude to subdue his own lusts and irregular passions.

It evinces great decision and intrepidity in a good man, to raise his voice and reprove the vicious around him, at the hazard of incurring their displeasure; but it is a bolder and still harder task, to rebuke and rigidly chasten himself; yet this, however difficult, must be done. A regard to his divine master's absolute authority, and a concern for his own immortal interests, imperiously demands the sacrifice of every fleshly lust, and every darling sin. It is treason against the King of kings, to harbour and conceal them; it is death to the soul, to spare them. The most specious pleas taken from custom, convenience, pleasure, and procrastination, are not to be allowed, or even heard. Here, Christian, thy fortitude is needed. When the

right eye is to be plucked out, and the right hand to be cut off, nature unaided by a stronger power, ever faints at the view of the lifted knife, and refuses to yield to the painful operation.

However severe are our conflicts with outward enemies, they are neither so frequent, nor so trying as those carried on with our bosom foes. These rebels lodge within the citadel, and daily rising anew, break our peace and fill us with grief and confusion, for "when we would do good, evil is present with us," to disturb and harass the mind.— And what can a Christian do in such a warfare as this, without fortitude? He needs it at all times, in all places and circumstances. He has now to fight against rising discontent, impatience, and fretfulness; then to suppress the virulent commotions of pride and ambition, and envy; and troops of vain thoughts, those light-armed but most injurious spoilers, even rush in upon the soul, in the calm hours of devotion! In this difficult conflict, you must never put off your armour, never relax your discipline, never suffer your ardour to cool, your courage to fail, or your confidence to sink, but persevere un-

wearied, undaunted, till your last foe is slain, and you are made more than conquerors through him that loved you.

4. The Christian requires fortitude to sustain, with cheerful resignation, the afflictions which come immediately from the hand of God.

Were there no principalities and powers of darkness to obstruct and molest us, were the lash of persecution, in former times so often marked with blood, to be no longer suspended or heard, were calumny which so frequently trumpets her lies aloud, for a thousand echoes to repeat, no longer to whisper them in corners, still the present state of probation must have its troubles. We should not mistake the mild days of winter for the spring, or look for our paradise in the wilderness. God, who has fixed the bounds of our habitations, has assigned a portion of sufferings as an indispensable part of our lot. Forget not the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto 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."

Sometimes, our circumstances are reduced

by disasters and disappointments, which no human prudence could foresee or mortal power prevent. The chilling blast of poverty is keenly felt by those who never were exposed to it. At other times, our dearest friends and relatives are suddenly cut off by death, or the hand of God touches our persons, and confines us to beds of pain and sickness. Fortitude is necessary, when in such cases affliction presses heavily or continues long, lest we should dishonour the cause of religion. For want of it, how many have impiously cut the thread of life with their own hands, and rushed uncalled into the presence of their Judge. Nor let it be forgotten, that however acceptable to God a tender and penitent spirit may be, morbid melancholy is always injurious and dangerous. It wears away, if I may so speak, the sinews and fibres which brace the mind, and leaves us in a state of helpless debility. It is a sort of slow and lingering suicide. Whatever be the nature, the number, or the duration of our trials, we need fortitude to go through them, and cheerfully resign ourselves to the divine will. When God smites, we are allowed to feel, but not faint under his strokes.



III. We shall adduce some considerations, which have a tendency to strengthen and increase our fortitude.

1. Consider the subservience of providence to the fulfilment of all God's promises.

It has been well observed, "that arguments drawn from the unendowed beauty of virtue, and the abstract fitness of things, are of too fine and delicate a texture to combat the force of the passions, or to stand the shock of adversity." When we think of a Being whose power created, and whose wisdom governs all things; a Being who is infinitely gracious and immutably faithful, we find something on which to fix our dependance. The Christian is not left to take such desperate yet dastardly councils as Brutus and Cato. He reads his Bible, and there learns what the far-famed teachers of Greece and Rome never knew. He sees God in all the good and evil which checker life. The same hand which marks our way, measures our strength for every stage, and every step of our journey. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to men, but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted able that ye are able, but will with

the temptation, also make a way for your escape, that ye may be able to bear it." The dispensations of providence, may to our narrow view, for awhile appear at variance with the divine promises, but let us wait with patience, and we shall soon see them in perfect harmony. "Now no affliction for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous, nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby. "All things work together for good, to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose." The bitterest cup is as needful as the richest cordial. Men often talk of accidents and misfortunes, but the believer well knows, that not one cross is assigned him by blind fate, nor one calamity dropped upon him from the loose hand of chance. "God hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee: So that we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." Still it may be said, there are stronger and fiercer enemies than the sons of flesh and blood. Have we not reason to dread them? No; for the Lord shall bruise satan under your feet shortly, and give you a complete victory over all his infernal hosts. It is a

consideration and cordial belief of these promises, which invigorates our fortitude, and stimulates our languishing spirits. He who in the hand of faith holds fast the sacred word, shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. Let the howling blast and the whirlwind rage, his asylum is a munition of rocks, which cannot be shaken. "I had fainted, says David, unless I had believed, to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." From his own experience, he then proceeds to exhort and animate the afflicted and trembling soul, "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage; and he shall strengthen thy heart: wait, I say, on the Lord."

2. Consider the noble examples of holy fortitude set before you for imitation.

Christian, the cause you have espoused is good, the Master you serve is great and glorious; you have, therefore, no reason to be ashamed or afraid, of openly avowing your profession. True religion has always had the multitude against it, yet some sincere friends have not failed to own, defend, and adorn it, in the darkest days of ignorance, and the sharpest seasons of persecution. "Those that know their God shall be strong, and do

exploits." Dan. xi. 32. Look into the sacred history, and you will see this prophecy amply fulfilled. What trophies have the saints of the Most High won! What victories have they gained! What prodigies performed! These are recorded in the inspired volume, to raise our drooping spirits, and reanimate our fainting hearts. The Apostle, closing his interesting sketch of ancient worthies, speaks "of Gideon, and of Barak, of David, and of Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to fight the armies of the aliens." Heb. xi. 32—34. And he who gives us this description, was himself a Christian hero of the highest order. He had to face dangers of every kind, and to maintain his ground in the hottest rage of the battle, yet hear his sublime and undaunted language; "In every place, bonds and afflictions, abide me, but none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto me, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

Every age has furnished eminent examples of holy fortitude. We cannot glance into the history of the reformation, and mark the characters of such men as Jerome of Prague, Martin Luther, John Knox, and many others, without seeing the spirit of primitive Christianity revived. When the executioner went behind Jerome to set fire to the pile, by which he was to be consumed, "Come here," said the martyr, "and kindle it before my eyes; for if I dreaded such a sight, I should never have come to this place, when I had a free opportunity to escape."

Set these examples of heroic fortitude before you. Follow their steps, imbibe their spirit, and devote yourselves to the same glorious cause. Away with all low calculations of worldly interest, and temporizing expedients, to shun the reproach of the cross; away with all those cold reserves and demurs which mark the spirit of the half-hearted Christian; away with all the dishonourable methods which have been devised, for uniting a professed regard to the principles of the gospel, with a rooted attachment to follies and vices inconsistent with them. Let him who like Caleb and Joshua resolves to follow the



Lord fully, be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus, and never on any account sacrifice truth and violate conscience.

3. To increase your fortitude consider the future blessedness in reserve for you, and turn your eyes to those prospects of immortal honour and unmingled joy, which open to you beyond this vale of tears.

Though the conflict is sharp and severe, it is neither of doubtful issue, nor of long continuance. "The sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." What are a few momentary pangs or blasts of sorrow, to the endless joy of a brighter world? When the venerable Bishop Hooper, was led to execution, one endeavoured to influence his mind and persuade him to recant, by saying "O Sir, consider that life is sweet, and death is bitter." To which he replied, "Life to come is more sweet, and death to come is more bitter." And so went patiently to the stake. When the iron work was brought to fasten him to the stake, he took an iron hoop and put it about his waist, and bidding them take away the rest said, "I doubt not but God will give me strength to



abide the extremity of the fire without binding." He died, we are told, as quietly as a child in his bed, in the 80th year of his age.

The crown of righteousness, the palms of victory, and the robes of pure unspotted lustre, which the Lord hath prepared for his servants are held up to the view of faith. O Christian, let these fire thy heart with zeal, and fortify thy soul with invincible resolution and energy. "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." Hark! the voice of thy Redeemer speaks to thee, "Behold I come quickly : hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

## SERMON XIV.

---

### CHRISTIAN FREEDOM.

---

JOHN viii. 36.

*If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*

---

**LIBERTY** is a blessing of unspeakable value. The released debtor, the pardoned criminal, the emancipated slave, can find no words capable of expressing the preciousness of liberty. The words of my text, indeed, refer to that spiritual freedom, which is infinitely more valuable than liberty of any other kind. It is the special and peculiar privilege of Christ's disciples. The great purpose for which he came into the world and was anointed of the Father, was to confer this privilege. "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to

bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." Isa. xlii. 6, 7. Such was the view given of the Messiah by the Prophet, long before he actually appeared in the flesh. But after he was come, and had proved his divine mission by many striking signs and wonders, most of the Jews continued obstinately to reject and despise him. In the chapter whence the text is taken, we have an account of his reasoning with them: v. 28—32. "Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him. As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

I. We shall shew wherein that freedom consists which is the privilege of every sincere believer.

It is a freedom from the curse and yoke of

the law, from the servitude of sin, and from the captivity of Satan.

1. The believer in Christ enjoys a freedom from the curse and yoke of the law. The persons whom our Lord here addressed, were the natural descendants of Abraham, who had received the lively oracles of God. The law under which they were placed, was partly moral and partly ceremonial. The moral law, written upon tables of stone, and divided into ten commandments, required perfect obedience, and annexed an awful punishment to transgression. Hence it is called, "the ministration of condemnation." Again, it is said, "Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." The ceremonies and sacrifices of the levitical economy, were on many accounts painful and burdensome. Peter calls them a "yoke which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear."

But all Christians are exempt, both from the dreadful sentence of the moral, and from subjection to the ceremonial law. "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Our glorious Surety, by his obedience and death, made atonement for sin, and brought in a perfect and everlasting righ-

teousness for all who believe. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." As to the oppressive rites and ceremonies imposed upon the Jewish nation, they are now entirely done away. Being most of them figurative and typical, their object was attained and their end answered, when the Messiah had by one offering, for ever perfected all them that are sanctified. And such is the propensity of men to rest in outward forms, that it becomes Christians jealously to guard against every thing which has a tendency to implicate them in this danger. When some judaizing teachers wished the believers in Galatia to be circumcised, and keep the law of Moses, the Apostle Paul strenuously exerted himself to oppose their insidious designs. "Stand fast," said he, "in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free; and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." But while Christians have nothing to do with the ceremonial law, and nothing to fear from the moral law, they are not, therefore, lawless and disobedient. The curse is removed, but the commands remain in full force. The believer never can be released from the law as a rule of life; nor does he desire it.

---

2. The believer in Christ enjoys a freedom from the servitude of sin.

Those who are compelled to obey the imperious dictates of a fierce and unrelenting tyrant, feel themselves grievously oppressed and degraded. But carnal men are in a far worse kind of bondage, and yet are strangely insensible of it. Their souls are shackled with invisible chains, and they serve divers lusts and pleasures. When our Lord spoke of granting freedom to the Jews, they said, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man, how sayest thou, ye shall be made free? Jesus replied, Verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." Look into the world, and you every way find a comment on the Saviour's words. One man is the slave of appetite, another is the vassal of ambition, a third the drudge of avarice. Some men are evidently under the influence of many violent and corrupt passions, which like relentless task-masters, take their turn to tyrannize, and drive them into the vilest crimes and the deepest miseries. But the true disciples of Christ are emancipated from this ignominious and hateful bondage. Furnished with a heavenly principle, which engages the will in the



culture of holiness, they detest and oppose those things which they once loved and pursued. Though they daily sin through infirmity, yet they do not serve sin. It is a law warring in their members, not a sovereign ruling in their minds. Sin, though not destroyed, is dethroned. It is the business and aim of the believer, to bring all his powers and passions into absolute subjection to the obedience of Christ. The lusts and propensities of nature occasion many an inward conflict, but he finds encouragement in that divine promise, "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." The tyrant may, by frequent incursions and rebellious commotions, sometimes break your peace, but shall never regain the empire of the heart.

3. The believer in Christ enjoys a freedom from the captivity of Satan.

Those who continue in impenitence and unbelief, are the slaves of the prince of darkness. They hearken to his suggestions, obey his mandates, follow his motions and footsteps. That any should be in a state so degraded might seem incredible, had we not the strong and explicit testimonies of sacred w  
to assure us of the fact. It was by listening

to the malignant deceiver, that man first fell from his allegiance to God; and he who beguiled the parents by his subtilty, has also inveigled and enslaved their descendants. In this 8th chapter of John's gospel, Christ assigns a reason for the perverse obstinacy of the Jews: v. 43—45. "Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not." Those who are full of pride, deceit, envy, and cruelty, by the leading features of their character, clearly prove whose they are, and whom they serve. But when the gospel comes with power to the heart; the infernal spells and charms of the tempter are dissolved; and the rivetted chains of the great enemy are broken asunder. "When," as the Apostle says, "God gives men repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; then they recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who were led captive by him at his will." How precious

is that freedom which the heaven-born soul enjoys! The heart glows with gratitude; the eye sparkles with pleasure; and the tongue breaks out into strains of praise, as we meditate on the delightful theme! Never did a criminal released from his dreary dungeon, or a slave delivered from the deadly mines, feel half the rapture of the man who is called out of the darkness of nature, and the bondage of sin, into the marvelous light of the gospel, and the glorious liberty of the children of God! The fatal sentence of the law is cancelled. He has passed from death unto life. He looks upward, and behold! the curse is gone! The gloomy storm that seemed ready to burst upon him is dispersed! He looks inward, and perceives a new government established there. The heart once alienated, now cheerfully bows to the will of Immanuel; and even his conflicts with inbred sin, prove the reign of grace.

II. We shall shew how this freedom is obtained.

The old Romans had so many high privileges, that thousands of strangers eagerly sought the honour of being enrolled among the citizens of that famous capital. Some

purchased their freedom with large sums of money, and others procured it by the display of extraordinary talents, or the performance of arduous services. But the spiritual liberty of which we have been speaking, can never be obtained either by money or by merit. "If the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Jesus Christ is the sole King of Zion. He sways a sceptre of righteousness, and must reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. It is his royal prerogative, to grant pardon to the guilty; and freedom to the sin-bound, heavy-laden soul. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto 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." Isa. lxi. 1. There is nothing in us to render us worthy of such a blessing. We were far from God, full of enmity, deeply corrupted, and utterly undone. But Jesus signally displays his power and love, his condescension and mercy, in snatching us from the jaws of destruction, and raising us to a high rank of dignity, and a heavenly portion in his kingdom.

For our redemption he laid aside the glory which he had with the Father before the world began, that he might clothe himself in human flesh, and sojourn in this wilderness of woe, and die as a sacrifice. Oh the wondrous, the amazing, the inestimable price paid for our freedom! The collected treasures of a thousand worlds, were light in the scale, weighed against the worth of one immortal soul, and utterly unfit to be offered as an equivalent, or as a means of procuring its emancipation! "We were redeemed not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb, without blemish, and without spot. He gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." Does the declaration appear almost incredible? Are you struck with astonishment, and staggered with doubt as you read the statement? It is attested and confirmed by unnumbered miracles. The interesting fact is attended with a meridian blaze of evidence which cannot be resisted, except by those who are shut up in wilful blindness, because they love darkness better than light. And, indeed, it was necessary, not only that an infinite price should be paid, but also that an infinite power should be ex-



erted to set us free. "When Christ ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them." He whose tears, and agony, and bloody sweat, rendered him an affecting spectacle to angels and men in the garden of Gethsemane, who was numbered with transgressors, and nailed to the cross on Mount Calvary, now shines and reigns in peerless majesty on Mount Zion above. "All power in heaven and earth, is given to Him." Never did any soul receive spiritual life and liberty but from Jesus. The same voice which called Lazarus from his grave and said, Loose him, and let him go; raises a sinner from the moral corruption in which he lies buried, and causes him to walk forth in the ways of God.

Is it asked, How does Christ impart this freedom? We answer, By the instrumentality of the Gospel, and the influence of the Spirit. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." This weighty and sententious declaration of the great Teacher, points out the nature of genuine religion. It is not, however, by cold, hasty, and negligent enquiries, in the flippant manner of Pilate, who asked What is truth? without really wish-



ing or waiting to receive an answer, that we must come to the possession of this knowledge. "Satan, the god of this world, blinds the minds of them that believe not," and then enslaves them; Christ enlightens, and thus liberates us. Divine truth is the only instrument which cuts asunder our fetters: The Apostle James calls the Gospel, the perfect law of liberty, with which we ought to be intimately acquainted. Let us attentively look into it, and we shall find what it is vain to seek in any celebrated code, ancient or modern, issued by fallible human legislators. "For it is the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, which makes us free from the law of sin and death." O how blessed is the state of those who have felt, and cordially received the whole system of revealed truth! The vaunting stoics of old, boasted that they were the only freemen; how vain and idle was their boast, every page of history proves. Even Porphyry, who was so determined a foe to the Christian religion, and so perfectly acquainted with the most refined and mysterious doctrines of paganism, says, "He had not learned that any universal method of liberating the soul, had yet been discovered by the wisdom of philosophy." You, my

brethren, are better taught. What the heathen knew not, is revealed to you. "God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." Rom. vi. 17, 18. Yet, however valuable and necessary the sacred word may be as a means, its efficacy depends entirely on the agency of the Spirit. This gives it point to penetrate the conscience, power to sway the will, influence to attract and engage the affections. This clears the mind of those prejudices which obstruct and darken our views, and rectifies those passions which corrupt and pervert our motives of action. The man in whose heart the truth permanently dwells, is already a partaker of the Holy Spirit, and "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Those ignoble restraints which cramp the faculties, those terrors which agitate and depress the superstitious mind, are effectually removed. There is free access to the Lord of heaven and earth. "For God hath not given us the spirit of bondage again to fear; but the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

The freedom of which we speak, is an ef-

fect of the Saviour's rich grace. The authentic charter in which it is bestowed ; a charter ratified by the immutable promise of Jehovah, bears evidence throughout of the munificent favour from which it issued. On our part, it was unsolicited and unmerited. We had lost every privilege through sin, forfeited every claim through rebellion. It follows, therefore, as a necessary consequence, that this sacred charter of liberty, which secures to Christians so many invaluable immunities and benefits, is purely an act of royal grace, which we owe to the Prince of Life, who settled its whole form and tenor with his own hand, and sealed it with his own blood.

In the conclusion of this discourse, I shall speak a few words in the way of caution.

1. Beware that you do not mistake the nature of this freedom, and put something else in its place.

Most men are charmed with soothing sounds, or cheated by mere names and appearances. You read in the Scriptures of some " who while they boasted of their liberty, were themselves the servants of corruption." This is no uncommon case, for the propensity to self-deception is as general

as it is dangerous. "But if the Son make you free, ye shall be free *indeed*." You will not be put off with an empty name, an idle unmeaning form, or carried away with a fond and foolish illusion. This freedom, is a reality, a substantial unalienable privilege, a pure, precious, and permanent blessing, which truly dignifies, gladdens, and exalts the soul.

Some contemptuously throw aside the lively oracles of God, and while they wander into the wildest speculations, glory in having, as they tell us, escaped the narrow confines of ignorance, and burst away from the trammels of vulgar prejudice. But the freedom which the Son of God imparts, differs essentially from the freedom of the infidel. A Christian is not left to rove at large, in all the devious paths and intricate mazes of error, but keeps within the range of revealed truth. He wishes not to seem wise above what is written, and puts the reins of restraint upon unhallowed curiosity. Like the Psalmist, he can say, "I have esteemed thy precepts, O Lord, concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way."

Too many, alas! glory in their shame. Rushing into folly and wickedness, and break-

ing down every mound of justice and temperance, they scorn the timorous wretch, who dares practice vice and villany only by halves. We tell them of a future reckoning, and a fiery lake, but they remain unmoved. Exempt from troublesome scruples and fears, they have made a covenant with death, and with hell are at agreement, and act just as if they were secure against the sudden arrests of justice: but the freedom which Christ bestows, differs in all points, from the freedom of the profligate. There are persons who speak in high terms of gospel doctrines, but cannot bear the mention of Christian duties. They imagine themselves released, both from the curse of the law, and the burden of obedience. If God has any promises they will receive them, but they will not submit to his commands, or be bound to serve him. "These are ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness." But the freedom which Christ bestows, has nothing in it that resembles the freedom of the Antinomian. A Christian wants not a system which weakens, much less destroys the force of moral obligation. He cannot accept, were it possible to be offered, a license to sin.

**Examine then the nature of spiritual liber-**



ty, that you may perceive its excellency, and distinguish it from every counterfeit. The sceptic, who calls his dangerous speculations and deadly errors, free thinking; and the profligate, who calls his profane language and brutish excesses, free speaking and free living; and the Antinomian, who prides himself in being the only staunch advocate for the doctrine of free grace; are all of them wretched slaves.

2. Beware that you do not despise or neglect the means by which spiritual freedom is obtained and enjoyed.

Jesus is crowned and exalted as "a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and the remission of sins." His servants blow the jubilee trumpet, proclaiming liberty to the captives, and crying, "Behold now is the accepted time! behold now is the day of salvation!" Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound! And will you turn a deaf ear to the trumpet? Will you slight and discredit the glad tidings which are sent to you? Dare you trifle with the word of God? Do you prefer the thralldom of sin, to the liberty of Christ? O think of your condition, as rebellious, condemned, and degraded creatures. You have incurred a tremendous



curse, and yet God hath sent Jesus Christ to bless you, in turning every one of you from his iniquities. See that ye despise not him that speaketh to you by his gospel, and invites you to his mercy-seat, to deliver you from death. You have forsaken God, and now a way is opened for your return and reconciliation to him. You have forged your own shackles, and till this hour, have been busily employed to rivet them upon your own souls. And be assured, none but Christ can set you free. Without his interposition, your awful fate is irrevocably fixed. His hand alone can remove the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity. And do you still despise this merciful and Almighty Saviour? Do you love the darkness of your dungeon better than light and liberty? What! will you bar the door to shut him out, when he comes with the hammer, and the fire of his word, to strike off your chains, and consume your fetters? Remember how short your time is, how soon you will be gone beyond the reach of warnings, and calls, and kind entreaties, and faithful remonstrances. "Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope," lest suddenly seized by the strong hand of death, you should speedily become the

wretched prisoners of despair! O may you this day hear the voice of the Son of God! and partake of his grace, and walk in the way of his truth!

3. Beware, that you who possess this freedom, do not pervert and abuse it.

You have reason indeed to exult in your high privilege. Tyrants may wrench from us that civil liberty which patriots poured forth their blood to procure, but spiritual liberty, the purchase of the Saviour's blood, and the gift of his grace, they cannot take from us. Daniel enjoyed this noble privilege when cast into the den of lions, and Paul and Silas, when thrust into the inner prison at Philippi, and their feet made fast in the stocks, were in full possession of it, and at midnight sung praises to God.

But what cause is there, it may be said, for warning and caution in reference to this matter? The inspired writers themselves shall tell you. Thus the Apostle Paul addresses the Galatian Christians, "Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." Gal. v. 13. Let him that is free, remember he is, and always must be, the Lord's servant. The yoke of Satan is put off, that

the yoke of Christ may be worn. The spirit of bondage is exchanged for the spirit of adoption.

“ The prisoner sent to breathe fresh air,  
 “ And bless’d with liberty again ;  
 “ Would mourn, were he condemn’d to wear  
 “ One link of all his former chain.”

The language of the poet, not unaptly describes the present lot of the Christian. We have reason to be penitent and humble, as well as thankful. The links and broken fetters are still hanging upon us, so that without constant watchfulness and circumspection we are liable to be again entangled. “ Live as free,” saith the Apostle Peter, “ not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness but as the servants of God.” Every Christian privilege has been borrowed as a pretext, to cover vile purposes and base deeds. Let the sincere believer abhor such hypocrisy; and never employ liberty either to sanction the indulgence of fleshly lusts, or to veil the projects of malice, and the poisonous eruptions of envy and ill-will. “ Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal bodies, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness

to sin ; but yield yourselves unto God, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God." " A good man," saith Augustine, " although he serve, is free ; a bad man, although he reign, is a slave ; not of one, but which is more greivous, of so many lords as of vices." O Christians, " what fruit had ye in those things whereof ye are now ashamed ? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

## SERMON XV.

---

### THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.

---

JOB xvii. 9.

*The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.*

---

IT was a wise and weighty maxim, which the King of Israel addressed to Benhadad his imperious adversary; "Let not him that putteth on his harness, boast himself as he that putteth it off." It is a position confirmed by all history, and by the daily occurrence of melancholy facts; "That pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." On the contrary, "he that walketh humbly, walketh surely." Many make a flaming profession of religion for a time, who soon grow luke-warm, and at last become apostates. Indeed that religion which kindles the passions, often produces a greater blaze, than that which consists in steady permanent

principles. He who has not been thoroughly renewed in the spirit of his mind, can only be expected to continue his adherence to the cause of Christ, till some searching trial comes. It is said of the ancient Israelites, while under the divine judgments, that "they returned and enquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their Redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto Him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant." Ps. lxxviii. 34—37. This is a just picture of what we often see under the dispensation of the gospel. The good seed is sown, and suddenly springs up, but for want of root soon withers beneath the beams of a scorching sun. Yet, genuine personal piety is not a precarious and perishing principle. Though thousands should fall from their stedfastness, and relinquish their profession, there are some who cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart, and shall never draw back unto perdition, because they believe to the saving of the soul. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more to the perfect day." "Still (saith the



pious Leighton) making forward and ascending towards perfection, moving as fast when they are clouded with affliction, as at any other time ; yea, all that seems to work against them, furthers them. Divine grace, even in the heart of weak and sinful man, is an invincible thing. Drown it in the waters of adversity, it rises more beautiful, as not being drowned indeed, but only washed ; throw it into the furnace of fiery trials, it comes out purer and loses nothing but the dross, which our corrupt nature mixes with it." The righteous also shall hold on his way.

I. The character of the saints must be briefly delineated.

There is no term in scripture more frequently used to designate them, than the word righteous employed in the text. We can scarcely look into the pages of the Old and New Testament, without becoming familiar with this epithet. But to be acquainted with the word is one thing, and to understand its meaning, or accurately to mark the ideas comprehended under it is another. The righteous and the wicked are set in contrast, and they are also often called the godly and the ungodly, the children of light and the chil-

dren of darkness. The saints are denominated righteous, both on account of that perfect righteousness which is imputed to them, and on account of their personal obedience to the divine commands. It is repeatedly declared in the scriptures, "that by the works of the law can no man be justified." It is by virtue of an interest in Christ, that we appear with confidence before God. "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength : even to Him shall men come ; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory." Isa. xlv. 24, 25. Abraham believed God, and his faith was counted unto him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him ; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead ; " who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." Every adopted child of God is accepted in the beloved. " As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one, many are made righteous." Faith appropriates the merits of Jesus, and has no other ground of trust.

For Christ is the end of the law, for righteousness to every one that believeth. Rom. v. 1. Here we fix our hope; hence we draw our peace. This furnishes our only prevailing plea in judgment, and enables us to lay hold on eternal life. The saints are also denominated righteous, on account of their personal obedience to the divine commands. The faith which interests a man in the blood and merits of Christ, is always an operative and sanctifying principle. It works by love, and overcomes the world. It leads us to follow Christ, as well as trust him. "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." 1 John iii. 6, 7.

Those who cordially receive the gospel, must necessarily be influenced by it in their conduct. As motives are the springs of action, whatever rectifies them contributes to elevate the character. In our text it is said, "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." The latter part of the passage is explanatory of the former. Can he be called righteous whose hands are dipped in

blood, or stained with bribery and corruption, or filled with the gains of fraud and injustice? It is unnecessary to give any answer. No pretensions to religion can sanctify immorality. "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart." Psalm xv. 1, 2.

II. The grounds on which the saints' final perseverance is secured must be stated.

The righteous shall hold on his way, because he hath the love, the power, and the faithfulness of God, all engaged on his behalf.

1. Let believers, for their encouragement, contemplate the unmerited and immutable love of God, engaged for their perseverance.

The regard which one creature feels for another may by various causes be diminished, and in process of time wholly destroyed. The attachment of beings radically frail and imperfect, is necessarily liable to decay or disruption. The bond which at one period seems so strong, as to promise a permanence of friendship, has its cement dissolved by the heats of resentment, or its threads entwisted

or broken by the clash and opposition of interfering interests. But the love of God to his people is like himself, without variable-ness or shadow of a turning. From this high source, proceeded the fixed eternal purpose, the wise and wondrous plan, the great and glorious work of redemption. There was certainly no goodness, no amiableness in us, to attract the regard, or engage the complacency of the King of kings. No; he shewed the riches of his free grace and undeserved kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. Why did the Son of God become incarnate? Why did he purchase the church with his blood? Why does he now intercede for his people at the right hand of the Father? Why are they favoured with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit? It is impossible to answer these questions aright, without immediately referring to the love of God. While we intently gaze on the sacred and symbolical ark of the covenant, the beams of divine glory irradiate the mercy-seat. "O Zion, the Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing." After reading such language can one think it possible for the kindness of



God to abate, or his purposes to change, or his councils to miscarry and fail? What! shall the souls purchased with Immanuel's blood, fall into the cruel hands of the enemy? Shall the living members of Christ be torn from his mystical body, and become the prey of malignant fiends? Will he who redeemed and called us, who grants us the bread and water of life, the robe of righteousness and the garments of salvation, who gives us daily supplies of grace, the seal of his spirit, and the earnest of the heavenly inheritance, at last abandon us to destruction? "That be far from him! the thought be far from us! No, while there is compassion in his heart and power in his hand; while his name is Jesus and his work is salvation; he must see of the travail of his soul and be completely satisfied." The Apostle Paul makes this the matter of exultation. "Who shall separate from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which



is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom. viii. 35, 38, 39.

2. Let believers, for their encouragement, contemplate the almighty power of God, to secure their perseverance. "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." Are we commanded "To work out our salvation with fear and trembling?" It is immediately added as a motive to animate us, "For it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure." "He who trusteth in his own heart is chargeable with egregious folly, and he who leaneth upon an arm of flesh clings to a broken reed." How high was the carnal confidence of Peter, when he said to Christ, "Though all men be offended because of thee, yet will not I be offended;" yes, in the impatient ardour of his zeal, he adds, "though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." How soon is the solemn promise forgotten! The same day the storm rises and his resolution fails. He disowns his divine Master again and again, with horrid oaths and imprecations. This instance of human weakness in a good man is set up as an imperishable monument, to warn presumption and promote humility. And does not daily

experience also teach us the humbling lesson of our own insufficiency? Yet we have no cause to fear, while the strength of Israel is our stay and defence. All believers "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." Omnipotence is their impregnable fortress; around and underneath them are placed the everlasting arms. Jehovah of old said, "Fear not Abram, I am thy shield and exceeding great reward." And the same privilege which that illustrious Patriarch enjoyed, belongs in fact to all the spiritual seed of Abraham. "No weapon which is formed against them shall prosper, and every tongue that riseth up in judgment against them they shall condemn: this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord."

An earthly parent may yearn over his children with the tenderest sympathy, and yet in many cases be incapable of affording them any help; he may see them writhing in the agonies of pain, and be unable to administer the least relief, or hear their piercing shrieks while surrounded with devouring flames, and be unable to snatch them from the imminent danger. But our heavenly Father is not only full of pity, he is also infinite in power, his eyes are constantly over the righteous, his ears

are open to their cry, and his hand is stretched out for their support and protection.

The good and the great Shepherd will lose none of his flock. They all bear his mark, they hear his voice, they enter his fold, they rest secure under his care. Let the wolves of the evening howl, and the fierce lion roar, not even the weakest lamb shall be left within their rapacious power, or yielded up to their ravenous jaws. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my father are one." John x. 27—30.

3. Let believers, for their encouragement, contemplate the faithfulness of God engaged for their perseverance. The new covenant is ordered in all things by infinite wisdom, and rendered sure through divine veracity. The Apostle calls it a better covenant than that which was made with Israel in the wilderness, because it is established upon better promises. According to the tenor of this inviolable contract, true believers are se-

cured from final apostacy, and provision is made to fit them for the eternal happiness to which they are chosen and called. "They shall be my people," saith the Lord, "and I will be their God: and I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: and I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Jer. xxxii. 38—40. When the saints rely on the faithfulness of Jehovah, they cannot be shaken in mind, or removed from the hope of the gospel. "God hath promised never to leave nor forsake them, and all the promises are yea and amen in Christ Jesus." "He who hath begun a good work in them, hath assured us, that he will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." "Since," says Bishop Reynolds, "we stand not like Adam upon our own bottom, but are branches of such a vine as never withers, members of such a head as never dies, sharers in such a spirit as cleanseth, healeth, and purifieth the heart, partakers of such promises as are sealed with the oath of God; since we live not by our own

life, but by the life of Christ; are not led or sealed by our own spirit, but by the spirit of Christ; do not obtain mercy by our own prayers, but by the intercession of Christ; stand not reconciled to God by our own endeavours, but by the propitiation wrought by Christ, who loved us when we were enemies and in our blood, who is both able and willing to save us to the uttermost, and preserve his own mercies in us; to whose office it belongs to take order that none who are given unto him be lost—undoubtedly, that life of Christ in us, which is thus under-propped, though it be not privileged from temptations, no not from backsliding, yet it is an abiding life. He who raised our souls from death, will either preserve our feet from falling, or if we do fall, will heal our backslidings and save us freely.”

1. Observe, the doctrine which inculcates the final perseverance of the saints is not, as hath been falsely asserted, calculated to produce spiritual slumber, or promote sensuality and self-indulgence.

All the principles of the gospel, rightly understood, lead to holiness of heart and life. And whatever tenet can be clearly proved to



have a contrary effect, is certainly unscriptural and dangerous. It has been often said, to teach that Christians through grace shall persevere to the end and eventually attain the bliss of heaven, is equally inconsistent with the testimonies of the divine word and with facts. Why are so many cautions, and admonitions, and solemn warnings, addressed to good men in the Scriptures, but to intimate that their future destiny is precarious? Why are the examples of those who fall from their steadfastness, make shipwreck of faith, and turn apostates, held up before us, but to impress us with a lively sense of our danger? We reply, The admonitions and warnings of the word are addressed to the whole church of God collectively, in which there has ever been a mixture of true believers and mere professors. The tares grow up with the wheat. Judas and Demas became apostates, but they never were the sincere servants of God, the living members of Christ. The Apostle John, speaking of some who had abandoned their profession and began to set themselves against the Lord and his anointed, says, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have con-



tinued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

Should it be said, But does not the persuasion that divine power is engaged to ensure their final happiness, tend to lull even the *real* Christian into slumber and encourage his negligence? By no means. This were to sin that grace may abound. That man has not the least ground to conclude himself a Christian, *indeed*, who draws such conclusions. Shall we say, that the people of God are incapable of being actuated by noble and ingenuous motives? Shall we deny all salutary influence, but that which operates upon their fears? Those who know what genuine religion is, will acknowledge, that they never feel more alive to God and dead to the world, never are more watchful against sin and earnest in following after holiness and obeying the divine commands, than when their faith rises into high confidence, so that they can at once realize heaven as near, and anticipate it as their own certain inheritance.

2. Observe, the doctrine which inculcates the final perseverance of the saints, imparts special and seasonable succour to believers,

in difficult circumstances and arduous conflicts; and in conjunction with all the other principles of the gospel, tends to magnify the glory of Divine Grace. When Paul embarked in a voyage for Italy, after the angel of God had assured him he should see Rome, and that his companions also should be spared, the tremendous and long continued tempest did not sink his spirits. When all hope was taken away from the ship's crew, his confidence was unshaken, yet he thought it as necessary to use every precaution and proper means of safety, as if no divine promise had been given. Thus Christians, in difficulties and distresses, find support and succour in that gracious covenant, which forms the guarantee of their safety. Their property may be lost, their friends cut off, and every earthly comfort withered, or swept away by the blast, but their life is hid with Christ in God. Keen sufferings and fiery trials require powerful cordials and supports, and the Christian has them. "God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his council, confirmed it by an oath; That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a

strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us." Go on then, my brethren, and let not your souls be discouraged by the difficulties of the way. Look to Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith, bind his word as the girdle of truth about your loins, banish those fears which relax your holy efforts, and press towards the mark for the prize of your high calling. He who now conducts you through the wilderness, shall soon welcome you to the heavenly seats of paradise, where you shall spend eternity in magnifying the riches of redeeming grace.

END OF VOL. II.

