



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:

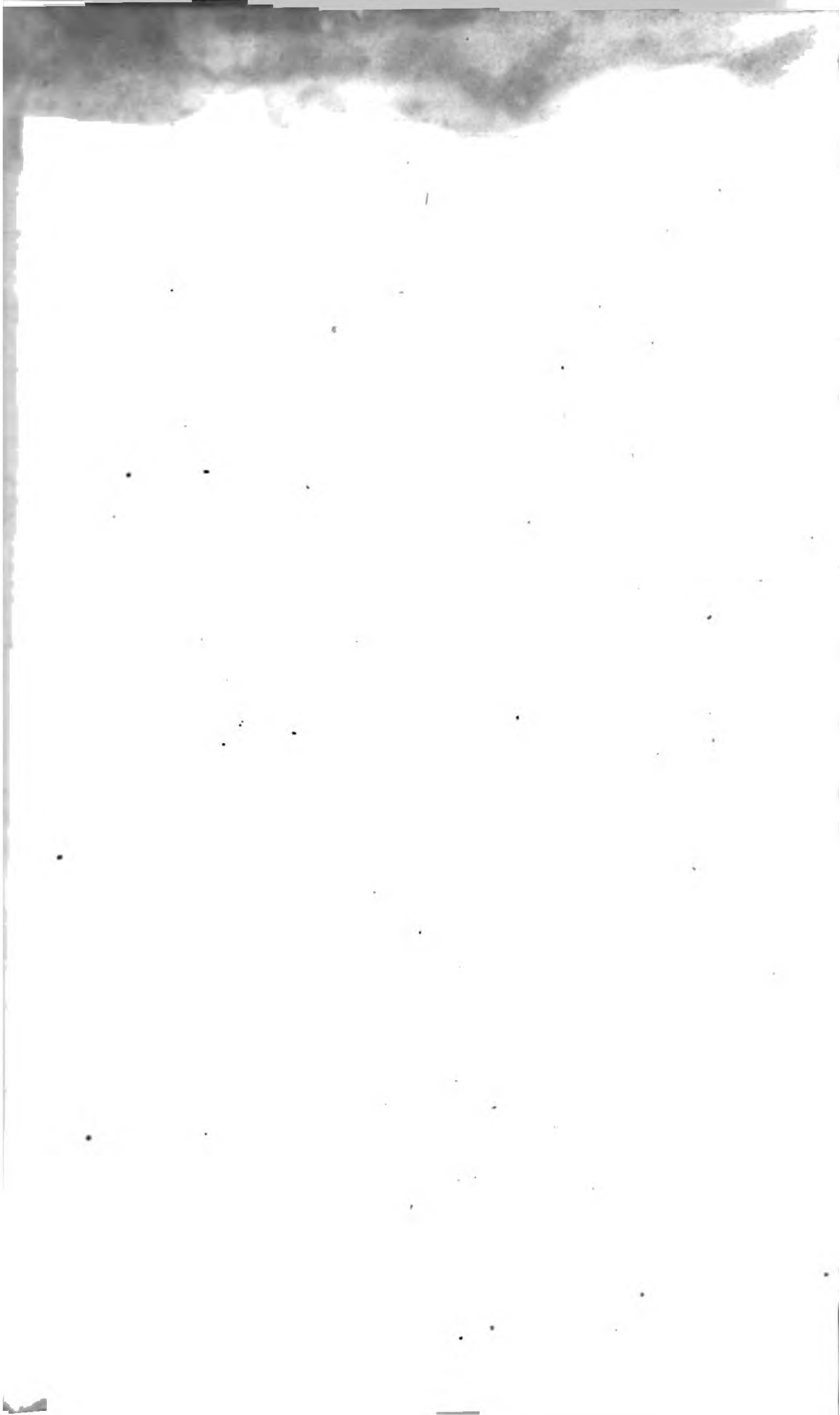
<http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/dbooks>



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



80 Bl. X. #5.91.



SERMONS,

SELECTED AND ABRIDGED FROM THE

WORKS

OF THE

RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD

WILLIAM BEVERIDGE, D.D.

LATE LORD BISHOP OF ST. ASAPH.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

FOR THE USE OF FAMILIES.

VOL. I.

COLCHESTER:

Printed for the Editor.

SOLD BY SWINBORNE AND WALTER, COLCHESTER; W. KEYMER,
DITTO; OGLES, DUNCAN, AND COCHRANE, PATERNOSTER-ROW,
AND 295, HOLBORN; J. HATCHARD, PICCADILLY; AND BALDWIN,
CRADOCK, AND JOY, PATERNOSTER-ROW, LONDON.

1815.

SERMONS,

SELECTED AND ABRIDGED FROM THE

WORKS

OF THE

RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD

WILLIAM BEVERIDGE, D.D.

LATE LORD BISHOP OF ST. ASAPH.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

FOR THE USE OF FAMILIES.

VOL. I.

COLCHESTER:

Printed for the Editor.

SOLD BY SWINBORNE AND WALTER, COLCHESTER; W. KEYMER,
DITTO; OGLES, DUNCAN, AND COCHRANE, PATERNOSTER-ROW,
AND 295, HOLBORN; J. HATCHARD, PICCADILLY; AND BALDWIN,
CRADOCK, AND JOY, PATERNOSTER-ROW, LONDON.

1815.



Printed by Swinborne and Walter, Colchester.

TO HIS WORTHY
FRIENDS AND PARISHIONERS,

THESE VOLUMES,

PUBLISHED WITH A VIEW TO PROMOTE THEIR
SPIRITUAL WELFARE;

AND IN SOME MEASURE TO EXPRESS A SENSE OF
HIS OBLIGATION TO THEM;

ARE RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED BY

Their faithful and obliged Servant,

JOHN DAKINS,
Rector of St. James, Colchester.

MAY 1, 1815.

PREFACE.

THE following Practical Discourses have been selected from the valuable Works of Bishop BEVERIDGE, with a view to extend the reading the Compositions of that excellent Divine. Some years ago a selection was made at Oxford of the most useful Sermons of another great Luminary of our Church, the learned Doctor BARROW; and it would seem that this was done to encourage an imitation of so clear and perspicuous a model. Indeed, the labours of both these Divines have conferred such deserved celebrity on their names, and they have given such elucidations of the Scriptures, that, to draw from them, is, as it were, to derive, at the fountain-head, the pure water of truth, and to drink of those streams which nourish to life eternal.

The motive, therefore, for the appearance of the present Publication, will, it is pre-

sumed, in some measure, apologise for the putting forth part only, or what may be considered, a mutilated edition of a select number, of the Discourses of Bishop BEVERIDGE. The Editor rests on the candor of his Friends and Parishioners, by whom that motive has been approved, and for whose more immediate edification and comfort this selection is intended.

Having begun and for some years continued a Sunday Evening Lecture at his Church, and been favoured with a numerous congregation, the Preacher conceived it his duty, from the first, to adopt such a series of Discourses as might tend to do most good; and, consequently, answer the solemn purposes for which the Lecture was instituted. "To pray with the spirit and with the understanding also," and to dispense the Word of God in the plainest and most intelligible manner, this surely is the end and design of public worship.

The Liturgy of the Church of England is remarkable for sublimity. It is plain, but affecting; sufficiently elevated to impress the

mind with awe and reverence, and yet simple enough to comprehend the utmost stretch of solid and sober devotion. The heart, when affected as it ought to be, in the exercise of public worship, is raised above the world by the fervour and the pious strains so conspicuous in this Divine Composition, and it is comforted and encouraged in the act of prayer and praise to God.

Sermons, too, when plain and practical, remote from enthusiasm on one hand, but warm in their application on the other, seldom fail of effect on the generality of hearers. And, perhaps, none are better adapted to the purposes of instruction, and the amendment of the heart, than those of our pious Bishop.

The length of some of them, it is true, fits them more for the closet than the pulpit; and therefore a judicious selection, with some abbreviation, has been suggested. The attempt is made, but with what success the candid reader will judge.

If to promote the reading such pious and excellent Writings as came from the pen of Bishop BEVERIDGE, be of importance to

the cause of religion, the Editor of these volumes will congratulate himself on having attempted it; first, from the pulpit, where the faith and doctrine of the Church of England ought to be maintained; and now, from the press; by which means sound learning and wholesome devotion, the “words of soberness and truth” are most widely diffused and recommended.

The Editor having offered this apology, is induced to give an outline of the Life of Bishop BEVERIDGE, who may, with great propriety, be considered as one amongst that constellation of Divines which, under God, has illumined the Church with the bright radiance of truth, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures.

WILLIAM BEVERIDGE was born at Barrow, in the county of Leicester, in 1638.* On the 24th of May, 1653, he was entered at St. John's College, Cambridge, and admitted in 1656, to the degree of A.B. A.M. in 1660, and D.D. in 1679.† He was so well versed

* From his Will, in the Prerog. Court. † Coll. and Univ.
Register.

in all the learned languages, that, at eighteen years of age, he wrote a Treatise on the Excellency and Use of the Oriental Tongues, especially of the Hebrew, Chaldee, Syriac, Arabic, and Samaritan. This he published in octavo, when he was about twenty. He also distinguished himself by his early piety and seriousness of mind.

In 1660, Doctor SHELDON, Bishop of London, collated him to the Vicarage of Ealing, in Middlesex. In 1672, he was chosen by the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of the City of London, Rector of St. Peter, Cornhill, on which account he resigned Ealing.* Upon his being thus placed in the Metropolis of this Kingdom, he applied himself, with the utmost labour and zeal, to the discharge of his Ministry, in its several parts and offices. And so instructive was he in his Discourses from the pulpit, so warm and affectionate in his private exhortations, so regular and uniform in the public worship of the Church, and in every part of his pastoral function, that, as he himself was justly styled “The

* Wood's *Æth.* and Newcourt.

great reviver and restorer of primitive piety," so his parish was deservedly proposed as the best model and pattern for the rest of its neighbourhood to copy after.* His merit having recommended him to the favour of his Diocesan, Bishop HENCHMAN, he was collated by his Lordship, on the 22d of September, 1674, to the Prebend of Chiswick, in the Cathedral of St. Paul,† London; and, by Bishop COMPTON, in 1681, to the Archdeaconry of Colchester.‡ This dignity he sustained, with great benefit to the Church, in a most regular and exemplary manner. For, not satisfied with the reports of the Churchwardens at visitations, he visited, in person, every parish within his Archdeaconry; and took an exact account of every Church he visited, the condition it was in, what requisites it had for the due solemnization of Divine Service, what repairs were necessary, and, what was of the last importance, how the duty was discharged. He was likewise very minute in his inquiries with regard to the houses of the Clergy.

* Preface to Private Thoughts. † Newcourt. ‡ Ibid.

The office of Archdeacon is one of great importance; and, unless it be sustained with the zeal, attention, and ability of our worthy Doctor BEVERIDGE, it cannot be said to embrace the duties, or answer the purposes for which it was instituted.

On the 5th of November, 1684, he was installed Prebendary of Canterbury, in the room of Doctor Du Moulin, deceased. He was likewise appointed Chaplain in Ordinary to King William and Queen Mary.* In 1691, on the refusal of Bishop Ken, from a conscientious principle, to take the oaths of allegiance to their Majesties, Doctor BEVERIDGE was offered the Bishopric of Bath and Wells, but he could not bring himself to accept it, because, in the language of those times, "He would not eat Doctor Ken's bread." Doctor Kidder, Dean of Peterborough, succeeded; but, on the translation of Bishop Hooper to the See of Bath and Wells, which happened in 1704, Doctor BEVERIDGE was consecrated, on the 16th of July, of the same year, Bishop of St. Asaph.

* Wood.

From the time he became a Parish Priest, he earnestly desired and fervently endeavoured to render his flock a pattern to others for true piety and holiness. He revived amongst them the primitive practice of administering the Sacrament every Lord's day, and his diligent and faithful discharge of every part of his sacred office was crowned with remarkable success. One particular instance of the success of his labours ought not to be omitted. One of his flock, when he was near his end, expressed a wonderful resignation to the will of God, and very little fear of death; great comfort in reflecting upon the better part of his life, especially his charity to the poor, and his zeal in recommending that duty to those about him; and, above all, in a very delightful anticipation of those extasies of joy and happiness, which he was going to in another world; as well as an uncommon and enlarged understanding of the mysteries of religion. In the midst of these holy raptures, he owned his great obligation to Doctor BEVERIDGE, for those spiritual blessings. Vigilant and faithful in

the care of a single parish, when he was advanced to higher stations in the Church, his anxiety and diligence increased in proportion. He was very faithful in watching over both the Clergy and Laity; imparting to them all necessary instructions for the regular discharge of their respective duties. On his being consecrated to the Episcopal Dignity, he, in a most pathetic and obliging manner, addressed a circular to the Clergy of his Diocese, recommending to them the duty of catechising the children, and instructing the people committed to their charge in the Principles of the Christian Religion; "to the end they might know what they were to believe and do, in order to salvation." And told them "He thought it necessary to begin with that, without which, whatever else he or they should do, would turn to little or no account, as to the main end of the ministry." And to enable them to effect this in the best manner, he sent to them a plain and easy exposition upon the Church Catechism. In short, he so conducted himself in the discharge of his high function, that he was, with great justice, esteemed a truly primitive Prelate,

As he was remarkable for his great piety and zeal for religion, so was he highly respected for his ability and learning, which he wholly applied towards promoting the interest of his great Master. His reading was extensive—almost universal. His skill in the Oriental languages, particularly in the Hebrew tongue, appears from many of his Sermons. Indeed he was furnished, to a very eminent degree, with all useful and important knowledge.

His readiness in the Scriptures excited much admiration; for he made it the business and study of his life, to acquaint himself thoroughly with those sacred oracles, whereby “he was furnished unto all good works.” On all occasions he was able to produce suitable passages from them, and with great facility and happiness he explained them to others.

Thus did this worthy man improve his time and talents in the service of God, and in the exercise of active benevolence, till he attained a good old age; when it pleased his great Master to give him rest from his labours, and to assign him a place in those mansions of bliss, where he had always lain up his

treasure, and to which his heart, throughout the whole course of his life and actions, had seriously and devoutly aspired. He died at his lodgings in the Cloisters of Westminster Abbey, on the 5th of March, 1707-8, in the 71st year of his age, and he was buried in St. Paul's Cathedral.*

As his whole life was spent in acts of piety and charity, so his death exhibited remarkable instances of both. His character is represented in a most amiable and interesting light. When he was dying, one of the chief of his order deservedly said of him, "There goes one of the greatest and best of men that England ever had." The pious and excellent Mr. NELSON says, "that he cannot forbear acknowledging the favourable disposition of Providence to the present age, in blessing it with so many of those pious Discourses which our truly primitive Prelate delivered from the pulpit; because the Bishop gave no orders himself that they should be printed."†

Doctor FELTON, in his Dissertation on Reading the Classics,‡ and forming a just Style,

* Biog. Britan. † Life of Bishop Bull, p. 75. ‡ P. 190.

observes, “ that our learned Bishop hath delivered himself with those ornaments alone which his subject suggested to him, and hath written in that plainness and simplicity of style, which gives authority to the sacred truths he teacheth, and unanswerable evidence to the doctrines he defendeth. There is something so great, so primitive, and apostolical in his writing, that it creates an awe and veneration in our mind, that the importance of his subjects is above the decoration of words, and that what is great and majestic in itself, looketh most like himself, the less it is adorned.”

The Author of No. 74, Vol. I. of The Guardian, having made an extract from one of the Bishop’s Sermons, tells us “ that it may, for acuteness of judgment, ornament of speech, and true sublime, compare with any of the choicest writers of the ancients who lived nearest to the Apostles’ times.”

He left the greater part of his estate to the “ *Society for Propagating the Gospel*,” and to that “ *For Promoting Christian Knowledge*.” He augmented the Vicarage of Barrow, in his

native county of Leicestershire, £53 a year, and bestowed the Patronage of it upon his own College. To the Curacy of Mount Sorrel and Vicarage of Barrow, in thankful remembrance of God's mercies vouchsafed to him therein, he bequeathed £20 a year for ever; on condition, that prayers be read in the morning every day, according to the Liturgy of the Church of England, in the Chapel and Parish Church aforesaid; with the sum of forty shillings yearly, to be divided equally, upon Christmas Eve, amongst six poor housekeepers of Barrow, as the Minister and Churchwardens shall agree; special regard being had to those who had been most constant in their attendance at prayers and at the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper during the foregoing year. "And if it shall so happen, which God forbid! that the Common Prayer cannot be read in the Church or Chapel aforesaid, my will is, saith this good father of our Church,* "That what should have been given, in either place, for that, be in each place allowed to one chosen by the Vicar of Barrow, to teach schools and instruct the youth in the

* Vide his Will.

principles of the Christian Religion, according to the doctrines of the Church of England.

Thus lived this good Prelate, and thus he died; and as he was a bright and shining ornament to our Church whilst living, so his memory will ever continue to be revered now he is dead. The Works he has left behind him will consecrate the name of their pious Author; who, though departed from amongst men, still loudly calls upon them "to repent and believe the Gospel."

His Works are many, and full of great variety of learning.—Those published by himself are the following:—

De Linguarum Orientalium, præsertim Hebraicæ, Chaldaicæ, Syriacæ, Arabiacæ, et Samaritanæ Præstantiâ, et usu, &c. 1656, 8vo.

Institutionum Chronologicarum libri duo, una cum totidem Arithmetices Chronologicæ libellis, Lond. 1669, 4to.

Συνοδικον Sive Pandectæ Canonum S. S. Apostolorum, et Conciliorum ab Ecclesiâ Græcâ receptorum: necnon Canoniarum S.S. Patrum Epistolarum; unâ cum Scholiis

antiquarum singulis eorum annexis, et scriptis aliis huc spectantibus; quorum plurima è Bibliothecæ Bodleianæ Aliarumque MSS. Codicibus nunc primum edita: reliqua cum iisdem MSS. summâ fide et diligentia collata.
—Oxonii, 1672, 2 vols. fo.

Codex Canonum Ecclesiæ Primitivæ vindicatus et illustratus.—Lond. 1769, 4to.

The Church Catechism explained, for the use of his Diocese of St. Asaph.—Lond. 1704, 4to.

A Defence of the Book of Psalms, collected into English metre, by Thomas Sternhold, John Hopkins, and others; with critical Observations on the New Version compared with the Old.—Lond. 1710, 8vo.—In this book he gives the Old Version the preference.

Next follow Bishop BEVERIDGE's Works published after his decease, by his Executor, Mr. Thomas Gregory:—

Private Thoughts upon Religion, written when he was twenty-three years of age, 1709.

Private Thoughts upon a Christian Life, in 1709.

Thesaurus Theologicus, 1711, 4 vols. 8vo.

**The great Necessity and Advantages of
Public Prayer, and frequent Communion,
1720.**

**One Hundred and Fifty Sermons, in 2 vols.
fo. and 12 vols. 8vo.**

**Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles.—
Lond. 1710, 1716, fo.**

Should the publication of the two Volumes
now offered prove acceptable, the Editor
may be induced to make a further selection
from the Works of our pious and learned
Bishop, to whom the Church of England is
so much indebted for his labors in the vine-
yard of our common Lord and Master Jesus
Christ.

J. D.

CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST.

Page.

1

JOHN, Chap. 1.—Verse 14.

*And we beheld his Glory, the Glory as
of the only-begotten of the Father, full
of Grace and Truth.*

SERMON II.

CHRIST THE ONLY SAVIOUR.

18

ACTS, Chap. 4.—Verse 12.

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

SERMON III.

THE NEW CREATION.

38

EPHESIANS, Chap. 2.—Verse 10.

*For we are his Workmanship, created in
Christ Jesus unto good Works, which
God hath before ordained, that we
should walk in them.*

SERMON IV.

MYSTERY OF OUR RECONCILIATION
BY CHRIST EXPLAINED.

56

2 CORINTHIANS, Chap. 5.—Verse 18, 19.

And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them: and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

SERMON V.

WORKING OUT OUR SALVATION WITH
FEAR AND TREMBLING.

78

PHILIPPIANS, Chap. 2.—Verse 12.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

SERMON VI.

CHRIST THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND
THE LIFE.

99

JOHN, Chap. 14.—Verse 6.

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

CONTENTS.

3

Page.

SERMON VII.

CHRIST IS OUR LORD AND MASTER. 115

JOHN, Chap. 13.—Verse 13.

*Ye call me Master, and Lord ; and ye
say well, for so I am.*

SERMON VIII.

ON THE CRUCIFIXION.—CHRIST THE ATONE-
MENT AND SATISFACTION FOR SIN. 139

JOHN, Chap. 19.—Verse 30.

*When Jesus therefore had received the
vinegar, he said, It is finished : And he
bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.*

SERMON IX.

RESURRECTION OF CHRIST. 159

1 CORINTHIANS, Chap. 15.—Verse 20.

*But now is Christ risen from the dead,
and become the first fruits of them
that slept.*

SERMON X.

BLESSEDNESS OF THE BELIEVER. 183

JOHN, Chap. 20.—Verse 29.

*Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because
thou hast seen me, thou hast believed :
blessed are they that have not seen,
and yet have believed.*

SERMON XI.

PERSEVERANCE IN THE FAITH OF CHRIST 204

HEBREWS, Chap. 10.—Verses 23, 24.

*Let us hold fast the profession of our
faith, without wavering; for he is
faithful that promised.*

*And let us consider one another, to
provoke unto love and to good works.*

SERMON XII.

CHRIST THE FOUNDATION OF ALL
THE PROMISES.

223

2 CORINTHIANS, Chap. 1.—Verse 20.

*For all the promises of God in him are
yea; and in him Amen, unto the
glory of God by us.*

SERMON XIII.

STEDFASTNESS IN OUR ESTABLISHED
RELIGION RECOMMENDED.

243

1 CORINTHIANS, Chap. 15.—Verse 58.

*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye
stedfast, unmoveable, always abound-
ing in the work of the Lord, foras-
much as ye know that your labor is not
in vain in the Lord.*

SERMON XIV.

MAN A NEW CREATURE IN CHRIST JESUS. 262

ROMANS, Chap. 8.—Verse 9.

*Now if any man have not the Spirit of
Christ, he is none of his.*

SERMON XV.

ADVANTAGES OF BEING HOLY. 285

1 TIMOTHY, Chap. 4.—Verse 8.

*For bodily exercise profiteth little, but
godliness is profitable unto all things.*

Sermons.

SERMON I.

THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST.

Gospel of St. JOHN,—Chap. 1.—Verse 14.

And we beheld his Glory, the Glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth.

THERE are two great works, in which it pleased the eternal God, in a most wonderful manner, to exert and manifest his divine perfections—the creation of the world, and the redemption of fallen man. Of both which he himself hath given us a full account in his holy Word. Of the first, in the Old Testament, by his servant Moses—of the other in the New Testament, by four several Evangelists; whereof St. John was one. Moses begins the history of the creation thus: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth;”—and then he goes on to shew, how he

made all things by his Word—God said, “Let there be light, and there was light.”* So all his works were made. Much in the same manner St. John begins his history of our redemption—“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”† And then he goes on to tell us, that all things were made by him, and that without him was not any thing made that was made: and as Moses acquaints us, that the first thing that God formed by his Word was light, so St. John assures us, that in the same Word was life, and the life was the light of men—and that, this is the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. From whence we may observe, that as God made the world by his Word, so he likewise redeemed mankind by his Word—and that it is only by the same Word, as the true light, whereby men can see the things which belong to God or to their everlasting peace.

That we may the better understand this, the Evangelist, among other things concerning it, here says—“The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” In which words is briefly comprehended all that is necessary to be known or believed concerning our Saviour’s

* Gen. 1.—v. 1, 3.

† John, 1.—v. 1, 3.

Incarnation. And I shall therefore, by his assistance, endeavour to explain them for our present meditations.

“The Word was made flesh.” Here, by the Word, we are certainly to understand the same Word he speaks of long before—particularly that of which he saith, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” If he was in the beginning, he was long before he was made flesh. If he was with God, he must needs be a person of himself distinct from God, otherwise he could not be said to be with him—for no person can be said to be with himself.

And if he was God, as he is here said to be, he must needs be of one and the same nature or substance with God—for there is but one God. And none can be truly said to be God, as he is here, but he that is that one God, blessed for evermore. So that we have here both the personality and the divinity of the Word, as plainly revealed to us as words can do it.

But lest any should mistake or doubt of it, the Evangelist, by God’s direction, tells us further, that “the same Word was in the beginning with God,” and that “all things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.”*

* John, 1.—v. 2, 3.

But if he made all things, so that there is not so much as one thing made but what was made by him, he himself certainly was never made, and therefore must needs be from all eternity, and consequently is the *one eternal God*.

But he who is here called the Word, in other places of Holy Scripture is commonly called the Son of God, and in my text, the only begotten of the Father. But why is he here called the *Word*?

To which I observe, that he is often called the Word in the Old Testament as well as in the New. St. John seems here to call him by that name, in this place, because he here speaks of him as he was the Maker of all things. For as it is certain that all things were made by the Word of God, so it is certain that all things were made by the Son of God; from whence it appears, that the Son is the same with the Word of God, and may be properly called, as he is here, by that name.

To which we may also add, that, as we make known our minds to one another by words, so God has been pleased to make himself and his will known to us by his Son; and upon that account also he may be properly called his Word. St. John seems to intimate this. Having often before called him the Word, soon after my text, he says, "No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son,

which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.* For, seeing it is by the Son that God the Father is declared or revealed to us, he is properly the Word of God, according to that remarkable passage in Samuel, to this purpose—"For the Lord revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh, by the Word of the Lord;"†—which must be understood of the Son, by whom alone the Lord is pleased to reveal himself to any of us. From whence, I suppose, it is, that we never find him called the Word, but with respect either to the beginning of the Creation, when God spake all things out of nothing—or else with respect to the revelations which he hath made of himself unto the world.

This essential Word of God, who in the beginning was with God, and who was God, by whom all things were made, the Apostle saith, was made flesh. And therefore, when it is said, The Word was made flesh, it is the same as if it had been said, the Word was made or became man, a real and true man, consisting of a reasonable soul, and such a body as all other men have—so that he was now the man Christ Jesus. But that we may have more light in this great mystery, and that we may see what we ought to believe concerning it, it may be proper to observe—

* John, 1.—v. 18. † 1 Sam. 3.—v. 21.

1st. It is not said, that the Word was turned into flesh, but that he was made flesh; for he did not then cease to be what he was before, but he began to be what before he was not. He was the Word from the beginning, and God from all eternity, and so he continues for ever. But now he was made flesh; or, as St. Paul explains it, "He being in the form of God, thought it no 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 was found in fashion as a man."* He was made man, therefore, by taking upon him the likeness, the fashion, the form or nature of man.

He did not put off his divine nature, but took upon him the human, and so became man, as well as God. He had now the human as well as the divine nature in him; not blended or confounded together, as if the two natures were now made one, but so that they both remain distinct from one another in themselves, although they be so united in him as to make but one person. I say, one person; for here we must observe, that this expression, "The Word was made flesh," implies, that as the Word was the person that was made flesh, so when he was made flesh, he was still one and the same person that he was before. And

* Phil. 2.—v. 6, 7, 8.

as the reasonable soul and flesh together is one man, so God and Man is one Christ—the Word and the flesh one divine person—so that whatsoever he did or suffered, was done and suffered by a divine person.

His blood was, as St. Paul says, the blood of God;* and therefore of infinite value and merit; and, consequently, a sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction or propitiation for the sins of the whole world—and he accordingly gave himself a ransom for all men. Hence it is, that when the Word was made flesh, and died in it, he died for all—and for every man—because he died in that nature which is common to all and every man alike—so that all and every man may now be saved by him whom God hath sent into the world, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.†

But how can these things be? How is it possible that the Word, the essential Word of God, who himself is God, should be thus made flesh? that God should become Man? or, as St. Paul expresses it, “God manifested in the flesh.”‡

To which I answer, that we know not how our soul and body, spirit and matter, are joined together in ourselves, much less do we understand how the divine and human nature

* Acts, 20.—v. 28. † John, 3.—v. 16. ‡ 1 Tim. 3.—v. 16.

are united in Christ Jesus. All that is necessary for us to know concerning it, may be learned from what the holy Angel said to the blessed Virgin—"The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee—therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."*

From whence we may learn, that this wonderful work was effected by the immediate power of the Highest, to whom nothing is impossible.

"And dwelt among us"—which is the next thing here asserted of the Word—that being made flesh, he dwelt among us.

When he had taken our nature upon him, he did not lay it down again, or go up immediately to heaven with it—but he continued a considerable time upon earth, living among men, and conversing familiarly with several of them, of which St. John, who wrote this, was one—who therefore saith, "He dwelt among us."

But the original words mean, that he dwelt in us, in our nature—as he is called Emmanuel, God with us†—God with our nature united to him. He not only assumed our nature for a while, but took it unto himself, so that he was made or became flesh,

* Luke, 1.—v. 35.

† Matt, 1.—v. 23.

really and truly man, like unto us in all things, sin only excepted.

And this is what the Apostle means, where, speaking of Christ, he says, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;"*—that is, in him, as man, all the fulness of the Godhead, the whole divine essence and glory dwelleth, not in a figure, or in appearance only, but in a bodily substantial manner, in his very body. And although he was truly man, and while he was upon earth, in all outward appearance, seemed to be no other than an ordinary man, of an earthly body, informed with a reasonable soul, as other men have; yet in that body dwelt the fulness of the Godhead; the whole divine essence being united to it, in such a wonderful and divine manner, that he was, and is also truly God manifest in the flesh, the one living and true God, the Creator and Governor of all things, Jehovah, the Lord, the Lord God, gracious and merciful, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; or, as the text expresses it, "full of grace and truth."

Again—we may observe, that the Evangelist having said, that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," adds,—“ And we saw his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.” St. John was

* Col. 2.—v. 9.

one of the three that saw his glory at his transfiguration, when "his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light—and there was a voice which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."* All his disciples also, and St. John among the rest, saw his glory, in the wonderful and glorious works that he did in their sight. And that this also was the glory, as of the only begotten of the Father, appears, in that he himself appealed to the works he did, as an undeniable argument that he was the Son of God; and that too in such a sense, that he then said, "I and the Father are one;"† in which he plainly signified, that he is so begotten of the Father as to be of one substance with him.

And therefore, when he came into the world to be incarnate, or made flesh, he himself saith, "That God gave his only begotten Son," to shew, that he was not only begotten of him before, but that he was his only Son, such as none but himself ever was or can be. And whereas the Word being made flesh, and having in that been obedient to death, even the death of the cross, God in him, and for his sake, hath promised us all the favors and mercies that we can ever want or desire, and continually shews forth his truth in the per-

* Matt. 17.—v. 5. † John 10.—v. 30.

formance of his promises to all that believe and trust in him for it. So that he came into the world "full of grace and truth," for grace and truth come to us only by him. But by him we may all have whatsoever we can have occasion for, either in this world or the next. By him we may have grace truly to repent of all our former sins, so as to forsake and avoid them for the future. By him we may be discharged and absolved from all the offences that we ever committed against God, so as never to suffer any of the punishments that are due unto us for them. By him we may be as perfectly reconciled to the Almighty Creator of the world, as if we had never done any thing to displease him. By him we may be justified, or accounted righteous in the sight of God, notwithstanding the manifold imperfections that he beholds in us. By him we may be continually enlightened, directed, influenced, excited, and assisted in our whole duty, by his Holy Spirit, so as to say with St. Paul, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."* By him we may be preserved and delivered from all evil; and obtain whatsoever we ask in his name that is good for us, through the whole course of our lives; and when we depart this life, by him we may go to heaven, and there live for ever

* Phil. 4.—v. 13.

with him and his holy Angels, in the full possession and enjoyment of all things that were ever made, and of him too that made them.

All this, and infinitely more than I am able to express, we may have if we will, by the Word that was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.

When we seriously consider these things, we are astonished and confounded at them. Oh! the mystery of godliness! God manifest in the flesh! Oh! the height, the depth, the length, the breadth of the love of God to mankind, that he should give his Word, his Son, to be made flesh, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life! That the eternal Son of God, whom the heaven of heavens is not able to contain, should come down and dwell among us! That he who is full of grace and truth in himself, should communicate it so freely to us, that "of his fulness we may all receive, and grace for grace," even all things necessary to make us holy and happy, both now and for ever!

What shall we say to these things? Where shall we find words to express the thanks that are due for them? What shall we do for him, that hath done all this for us? All that we can do, is only to receive the grace, and believe the truth that he hath manifested to us,

and to praise and thank him for it. Let us therefore ever rejoice and be glad, and give honor unto God, "for the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." The eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ, came into this lower world. He came to save sinners, such as we all are.* He came to wash us from our sins, in his own blood; and to make us kings and priests unto God and his Father.† He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. He came to be made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.‡ He came to bless us, by turning every one of us from his iniquities.§ He came to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.|| He came to earth, that we might go to heaven, and there be happy for ever and ever. "O! therefore, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and declare the wonders that he doth for the children of men!"

Now, my brethren, from what ye have heard upon these divine arguments, ye may observe, how necessary it is for all men to believe that Jesus Christ is God, seeing he was pleased to work so many miracles, on purpose that we might believe. It is indeed the foundation

* 1 Tim. 1.—v. 15. † Rev. 1.—v. 5, 6. ‡ 2 Cor. 5.—v. 21.

§ Acts, 3.—v. 26. || Titus, 2.—v. 14.

of our whole religion—and our hopes of pardon and salvation depend not only upon the truth itself, but likewise upon our believing it. And therefore, as ye desire to be saved, be careful **of doubting it, and of those whom the devil employs to make you doubt.** To me it seems a great mystery, far greater than any they deny, that there should be any such among us, who profess to believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and yet will not believe that which is so plainly revealed in it. But the holy Jesus hath given us the plain reason of it, and a sad one it is for such men, where he saith, “But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep.”*

From hence let us learn, what firm ground we have to trust in Christ our Saviour for all things necessary to our salvation, seeing he is one with the Father, the almighty and eternal God. For what cannot he do for us, who can do all things whatsoever he pleaseth? How well then may we say with David, “The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?”† and with St. Paul, “I can do all things, through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

Moreover, by this we may see what cause our Redeemer had to say, that “all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father,” seeing “he and the Father are one;”‡ and

* John, 10.—v. 26. † Psalm 27.—v. 1. ‡ John, 5.—v. 23.

consequently, how much we are all bound to do him all the service and honor that we possibly can, by vindicating his divine glory from the blasphemies of those who have the assurance to speak against it; by taking all occasions to come into his holy temple, and to worship him with great reverence and godly fear; by observing religiously his Sabbaths, his Sacraments, his Ministers, and all things whatsoever he hath commanded; and by walking in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life; remembering that he himself said, "If any man serve me, him will my Father honor,* and we will take up our abode with him."†

On the other hand, all such as live in their sins unrepented of—such as are unjust, covetous, hard-hearted, revengeful, malicious, drunkards, profane, and the like—these cannot, and ought not to rejoice, forasmuch as this same Jesus, we are assured, will come to judge the world in righteousness, and to give to every man according to the works done in the body, whether good or evil.

When Christians hear such gracious words as these, that God sent his Son into the world to save sinners—that such as receive and believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life, they are too apt to imagine that

* John, 12.—v. 26.

† John, 14.—v. 23.

they are in no great danger, since Jesus Christ has paid our ransom. But let us beware of abusing, instead of magnifying the mercy of God.

Jesus Christ has indeed redeemed us from the wrath to come—but then he must redeem us first from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people zealous of good works.

We may be assured that the case of sinners and their punishment will be unspeakably dreadful, since the only Son of God left the glories of heaven, to lead a poor and humble life on earth, to convince sinners that if they were not reconciled unto God, their loss would be great, and their misery beyond expression and without remedy.

You will also observe, and it ought to increase our gratitude, that our redemption, and all the steps leading to it, is matter of mere grace. When God sent his only begotten Son into the world, there was nothing in us to move him to it, but his own infinite goodness, and our infinite misery. Whatever pretence Adam and his posterity might have to the favor of God before the fall, all was forfeited by his transgression; and this is the reason that the free grace of God is so much spoken of in the gospel; that men may not claim any thing to themselves, but be humble, thankful, and obedient, to the Lord that bought and redeemed them.

Let all such, therefore, as value themselves for being Christians, and who hope for any benefit from Christ's coming into the world, resolve immediately to repent sincerely of those sins for which he gave his life and blood—and they will not only have joy in themselves, but will occasion joy in the kingdom of heaven.

And lastly, from hence let us learn what infinite cause we have to praise and magnify the eternal God, our Saviour, seeing he is one with the Father, and yet was most graciously pleased to become man, like unto us—and all this to make us like unto himself, partakers of his divine nature and glory. O let us now be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him. Let his praises be always in our mouths, that we may be always singing with angels, and archangels, and all the company of heaven, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth, heaven and earth are full of thy glory! Glory be to thee, O Lord, Most High! Amen.

SERMON II.

CHRIST THE ONLY SAVIOUR.

ACTS,—Chap. 4.—Verse 12.

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

~~NO REPLYING~~

WHEN it pleased Almighty God to create the world, and all things in it, he did it by his Word; “He said, Let there be light, and there was light.”* Thus the whole work was finished. “By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth;”† and St. Peter gives the same account of Creation, “that by the Word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water, and in the water.”‡ It was by that

* Gen. 1.—v. 3. † Psalm 33.—v. 6. ‡ 2 Peter, 3.—v. 5.

Word, who, subsisting from all eternity in the form of God, at the beginning of time, exerted his divine power in the production of all things out of nothing: for, “in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.”* This we are assured of by St. John, in the beginning of his Gospel, where he also tells us, that “this Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us;” that is, he took on him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And then he was called Jesus the Saviour, as being the only Saviour of men, whose form and nature he for that purpose had so assumed. So that we can now be saved only by him, by whom we were at first created. For that this Jesus, called also the Christ, is that Word of God, by whom all thing were made, appears, not only from the Gospel of St. John, but likewise from the Epistles, wherein it is said, that “God created all things by Jesus Christ;† whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.”‡ And especially from that remarkable place, where the Apostle, speaking of Jesus Christ, ascribes our redemption and creation to him both

* John, 1.—v. 1, 2, 3. † Ephes. 3.—v. 9. ‡ Heb. 1.—v. 2.

together, saying, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins; who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature; 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 that this glorious and Almighty Creator of all things, is not only our Saviour, but the only Saviour, is positively asserted by St. Peter, in my text, where, speaking of Jesus Christ, he saith, "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." We read that St. Peter and St. John, having restored a lame man to his perfect health, only by saying, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk;" and being afterwards examined by the rulers of the Jews, by what power they had done it, St. Peter, full of the Holy Ghost, tells them boldly, That it was done in the name of Jesus Christ, whom they had crucified, and whom God had raised from the dead; and that this Jesus is the stone the Prophet speaks of, which was set at nought by these builders, and which is now become the head of the

* Col. 1.—v. 14—17.

corner ; and then he adds, “ Neither is there salvation in any other ; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved :” that is, there is no person, no way, no thing, that is or can be named under heaven, given or granted by Almighty God to men, whereby they must be saved, but only by the name of Jesus Christ.”

In which words, I do not see any thing can be doubted of, except it be the true sense of the word salvation, or what the Apostle means here, by being saved. For salvation is a word that hath various significations in Holy Scripture. Sometimes it is used for deliverance from temporal troubles ; sometimes for safety and protection from them ; sometimes for grace to eschew evil and do good ; sometimes for the remission of sins, and reconciliation unto God ; sometimes for eternal life and happiness in the other world. Now the question is, In what sense the word is to be understood in my text ? To which I answer, In all senses. All sorts of salvation are here signified by it ; for the Apostle speaks, there is no salvation in any other but in Christ : no name whereby we can be any way saved but his. He is the only saviour of mankind in all respects. Whatsoever evil any of us are saved from, whatsoever good we enjoy, it must be wholly ascribed to Jesus Christ, without whom we should never have received any

favor or mercy at the hands of God, no more than the apostate angels do. They are his creatures as well as we. But God never extended any mercy towards them, but "hath reserved them in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day;"* because they never had a Saviour to save them from his wrath and just indignation against them. Our condition would have been every way as bad as theirs, if we had not had a Saviour, and such a Saviour as Jesus Christ, who is able to save us, not only from temporal, but from spiritual and eternal miseries, and to advance us to the highest degree of glory and happiness in the other world; and therefore he is called "the Captain of our salvation."†

But here it must be observed, that when the Apostle speaks of eternal salvation as attainable by Jesus Christ, he is not to be so understood, as if Christ brought any man to heaven, without first leading him in the way thither; for the salvation here spoken of begins in this life; Christ saves us from our sins; both from the guilt and from the power of all manner of sins. He gives us repentance, and faith, and grace, to love, serve, and honor God truly and faithfully in our generation. He applies the merits of his death to us, for the pardon of our sins, and that God may be reconciled to us. He

* Jude, v. 6.

† Heb. 2.—v. 10.

makes us pure, humble, holy, and every way meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light—so that the whole of our salvation, from first to last, is begun, continued, and perfected only by him ; and without him none of us are able to do any thing towards it to any purpose ; much less to attain the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls.

He that really believes the words of my text, will need no other argument to convince him of this great truth. Yet, however, that we may be able to form a clear idea of it, and also be more firmly established in our belief, it may not be amiss to call to mind some of the many other arguments which may be produced for it. For which purpose, we may first observe, in general, that there are two things absolutely necessary to any man's attaining everlasting happiness or salvation. *1st.* It is necessary that his mind is at least in some degree inclined to God, and disposed to virtue and goodness, so as to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world ; and it is certain, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord ;"* he is not capable of enjoying him, the only good, and in which all our happiness consits.

It is necessary also, that all the sins and failures that he hath been guilty of be par-

* Heb. 12.—v. 14.

doned, that so God may be reconciled to him and accept of him, as a righteous and a good man, fit to live with him, and to enjoy him for ever. For so long as God is angry, and displeased with man, it is impossible he should be happy, as might easily be shewn.

But let us therefore lay aside our prejudices, and impartially consider how far men can of themselves go in these ways that lead to salvation, and we shall find they cannot so much as make one true step towards them without Christ.—For, 1st. Men by nature, as it is now corrupted, have no true knowledge of God, nor yet of virtue and vice; what they ought and what they ought not to do, in order to their being saved. And if we cannot know, much less can we do any thing as we ought without him. I know some have highly extolled and magnified the powers and faculties of man, as if we were able to do great things of ourselves; when, God knows, that “we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves.”* But “every imagination of the thoughts of man’s heart is only evil continually;”† and therefore they who boast so much of their own strength do but betray their own weakness. They take the height of man’s power by nature, from that which they themselves have by

* 2 Cor. 3.—v. 5.

† Gen. 6.—v. 5.

Christ. For they, living under the light of the Gospel, which hath always something of efficacy attending it, are able thereby to understand and do some things that seem to be very good. And from whence they conclude, that they or any other may do so by their own natural strength, without Christ. This is not only a great mistake, but an horrid abuse of the grace which Christ hath given them; for he gave it that they might serve and honor him with it; whereas they employ it against him, by making themselves and others believe that they are not beholden to him for it.

And certainly, whatever proud and groundless conceits some men have of their own gifts and parts, and power to do good, I am sure they have none without Christ, for our Lord himself hath told us, “without me ye can do nothing;”^{*} and also by his Holy Spirit, saying, “who is he that overcometh the world, but he that *believeth that Jesus is the Son of God.*”[†] From whence it is plain as words can make it, that neither Pagan, nor Jew, nor Turk, nor Christian, no person whatsoever, can overcome the world, so as to live soberly, righteously, and godly in it, but only by Jesus Christ. Of this St. Paul was so fully sensible, that he ascribes all the ability he had of doing any thing that was

^{*} John, 15.—v. 5.

[†] 1 John, 5.—v. 5.

truly good and virtuous wholly to him, saying, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."* From which, and many such like places of holy scripture, we may infallibly conclude, that there is none other name given among men, whereby they can do any thing towards their salvation, but the name of Christ.

But what if it were possible, as it is not, for a man to do some good works by his own strength, without Christ; doth it thence follow, that he can be saved without him? By no means. For whatsoever good works a man be supposed to do, it must be granted that he doth, or hath done some that are really sinful. This all must acknowledge, who believe either God's word or their own experience. But how then shall a man be freed from the guilt he hath contracted, and from the punishments he hath deserved by his sins? Can he be freed by the good works he is supposed to have done? No, surely. When he hath done all he can, he is still but an unprofitable servant; he hath done no more than what was his duty to do, and therefore cannot possibly merit any thing, much less so great a favour as to have his sins pardoned; neither hath he any ground to expect such a mercy at the hands of God,

* Phil. 4.—v. 13.

without Christ; for we do not find that God was ever merciful to any of his creatures, but only through Christ. We may therefore be certain, that his mercy in the pardon of men's sins, is never shewn but only for the sake and upon the account of that death, whereby Christ made compleat satisfaction to his truth and justice.

But, to put the whole matter out of dispute, let us briefly consider St. Paul's case, both as he was a Jew, and as he was a Christian. As a Jew, he was born and bred in that religion which God himself had revealed and settled in the world. He was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, one of the most eminent Rabbies the Jews ever had. He was taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the Fathers, and was as zealous towards God as any man. He lived, after the strictest sect in that religion, a Pharisee. "He profited in the Jews' religion, above many of his equals in his own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of his fathers."* He could say, "I have lived in all good conscience towards God until this day."† He could and did assert, when inspired by God himself, that he had more ground to trust in the flesh, or Jewish religion, than any other. "If any other, saith

* Gal. 1.—v. 14. † Acts, 23.—v. 1.

he, thinketh that he hath whereof he may trust in the flesh, I more, circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, as touching the law; a Pharisee, concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.* Where shall we find a man, out of Christ, that ever went farther than this, in religion and morality? No where, certainly, upon the face of the earth; and yet this was St. Paul's case in the Jewish religion; and if any mortal man could have been saved without Christ, it cannot be doubted but he might; and so he thought, as long as he continued in that religion. But did he think so afterwards, when he was enlightened, and directed by God's Holy Spirit what to think and say? So far from it, that he no sooner said these things of himself; but he immediately adds, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ; yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the

* Phil. 3—v. 4, 5.

faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."* In which words we may observe that, notwithstanding the great advantages he had, and the extraordinary proficiencies he made in the Jewish religion, he slights them all as nothing worth, nor contributing any thing at all towards his justification without Christ. No, not although as touching the righteousness which is in the law, the whole Mosaic law, both moral and ceremonial, he was blameless.—As he saith, in another place, "I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified."† Though he was not conscious to himself of any one wilful sin, yet he doth not look upon himself as thereby justified; nay, he positively saith, he was not. And therefore he most earnestly desires, above all things in the world, to be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. And if this be not another righteousness from that which is of the law; if it be not the righteousness of God himself, and not a mere man; if it be not made ours by faith in Christ; if it be not the only righteousness whereby we can be justified or accounted righteous before God, according to the doctrine of our Church;‡

* Phil. 3.—v. 7, 8, 9. † 1 Cor. 4.—v. 4. ‡ Art. 11

and, consequently, if there be any other way whereby it is possible for us to be justified or saved, but only by Jesus Christ ; I do not see what sense can be put upon the words, without wresting them to our own destruction.

And indeed, if they who presume to affirm, and that too from holy scripture, that a man may be saved in any religion, without faith in Christ ; if they do not wrest the scriptures to their own destruction, for my part I know not who can. For there is no heresy can be more destructive to men's souls, or more repugnant to the whole design of the Gospel, than this is ; for to what purpose did Jesus Christ come into the world to save sinners, if sinners could be saved without him ? To what purpose did God give his Son, that " whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,"* if any man may have everlasting life without believing in him ? To what purpose did he give himself a ransom for all, if there be any that have no occasion for it ? To what purpose was he delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification, if we could be justified from our offences, whether he had been ever raised again or not ? To what purpose did he require that repentance and remission of sins † should be preached in his name, among all

* John, 3.—v. 16, 17. † Luke, 24.—v. 47.

nations, if people of any nation might repent, and be pardoned by any other name as well as his? To what purpose doth he now appear in the presence of God, and there make intercession for us, if our salvation doth not depend upon it? To what purpose was the Gospel written? Was it not that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, we might have life through his name? Doth not Christ himself say, "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me?"* Doth he not say, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me?"† Doth he not say, "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?"‡ Doth he not say, "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned?"§ What can be the meaning of these, and many such expressions, if there be any "other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved," but the name of Christ?

And yet it is strange! There are some who would wrest the scriptures so far as to make

* John, 15.—v. 4. † John, 14.—v. 6. ‡ John, 3.—v. 18.

§ Mark, 16.—v. 16.

them prove the contrary; especially that place, where St. Peter saith, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."* But this is only to shew that men, when they have espoused an error, will catch at any text to maintain it, without considering the design of the place. The case, in short, is this: St. Peter being admonished by a vision to go to Cornelius, though a Gentile, accordingly went: and being come, Cornelius tells him, that he was commanded by an angel to send for him, to know what he ought to do; now therefore saith he, "we are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." St. Peter then opened his mouth and said, "Of a truth, I perceive that God is no respecter of persons;" that is I see now that the Gentiles must be brought into the Church of Christ, as well as the Jews; and then he adds, "but in every nation, he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." He doth not say, that such a one shall be thereby saved, but only that he is accepted with him, so as that he may be admitted into the Church of Christ, to be saved by him. Cornelius was doubtless as devout a Gentile as ever lived; yet it seems he could

* Acts, 10.—v. 34.

not be saved without the knowledge of Christ : if he could, what need all this stir about it ? Why must an angel be sent to him, and St. Peter warned by a vision, and by the Spirit, to go to him, and all to get him into the Church of Christ, if, after all, he might have been saved as well without it ? Certainly, if there were no other in all the Bible, this one place is sufficient of itself to demonstrate, that no man ever was or can be saved without Christ, how devout or pious soever he may seem to be.

Let us therefore all take heed, lest we neglect so great salvation, which is revealed and offered to us by Jesus Christ. Let us look upon him as our only Saviour, and believe and trust in him only for all things necessary to our salvation ; not only for the pardon of our sins, and to bring us to heaven when we die, but to lead us in the way thither all the time we live upon the earth ; “ To open our eyes, to turn us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that we may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified, by faith that is in him.”* For which purpose let us ever be constant, hearty, and sincere in the use of all the means which he hath appointed for obtaining grace and salvation. We must

* Acts, 26.—v. 18.

pray without ceasing, both in public and private. We must read and hear his most holy Word, that we may know what he would have us to believe and do, and we must strive all we can, by his assistance, to believe and do accordingly. We must omit no opportunities we can obtain, to receive the blessed Sacrament, which he hath ordained in memory of that great sacrifice which he offered for the sins of the world. And in the use of all these means we must keep our faith always fixed upon him, to make them effectual, that we may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, still pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in him. These things all must do that design in good earnest to be saved by Christ. But as for those whom he sends to administer his Word and Sacraments, for the salvation of other men, it is their duty also to do all they can to make him known in the world; and especially to those whom he hath for that purpose committed to their care. His great Apostle determined to know nothing among the Corinthians, but "Jesus Christ and him crucified."* The same necessity is laid upon the Ministers of religion, and "Woe be to them if they preach not the Gospel." If they preach not the Gospel of

* 1 Cor. 2.—v. 2.

Jesus Christ, that people may know him, and the divinity of his person, the mystery of his incarnation, the perfect innocency and holiness of his life, the infinite merits of his death, the power of his resurrection, his glorious ascension and exaltation at the right hand of God, and the continual intercession which he there makes for us: unless people know these and the like fundamental articles of our faith, as they are revealed to us, they can never apply themselves to him, nor believe as they ought in him for salvation; and so will perish everlastingly through their negligence, and for which they must answer at the tribunal of God. For when we have preached, and you have done all you can, it is only by Jesus Christ we can be saved. But by Him, blessed be God, we may all be saved, if we are not wanting to ourselves; and as we have no other, so need we no other Saviour besides Him; "For he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. He is almighty to save; and, therefore, if any be not saved, it is not for want of power in him, but the fault is in themselves. They will not come to God by him. They will not mind their salvation, or they will look for it in some other way. How,

* Heb. 7.—v. 25.

then, can it be wondered at that they fail in it? But, my Brethren, let others do as they will, and save themselves if they can, let us adore and praise the Most High God our Maker, that he hath been pleased to become our Saviour, yea, and our very salvation. And so the Prophet calls him: "Say ye to the daughter of Zion, behold thy salvation cometh, behold his reward is with him, and his work before him."*. And again, "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."† Moses and David uttered the same words before, and agree in saying, "He is become my salvation; to shew that he is not only our salvation as he is strength and perfection in his own nature, but in ours, which he at this time hath taken upon him, and is become salvation to every one of us. This is such an unspeakable, such an inestimable expression of his divine love and goodness, that we can never sufficiently extol and admire it as we ought; and therefore should be always doing it as well as we can, by ascribing the glory of our salvation entirely unto God, rejoicing and trusting in him, and giving thanks continually for it; saying, with the blessed virgin, "My soul doth

* Isa. 62.—v. 11.

† Isa. 12.—v. 2.

magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour." And with the Psalmist: "My soul shall be joyful in the Lord, it shall rejoice in thy salvation. The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom then should I be afraid? O come, let us sing unto the Lord, let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation, O sing unto the Lord, bless his name, shew forth his salvation from day to day. Hosannah to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, Hosannah to the Highest."

This is the way, as we find in the Revelations, the Church triumphant in Heaven, useth in praising him; and therefore we of the Church militant here on earth, may well join with them, in ascribing, "Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power unto the Lord our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever."* Amen.

* Rev. 5.—v. 13. Rev. 7.—v. 10.

SERMON III.

THE NEW CREATION.

EPHESIANS, Chap. 2.—v. 10.

For we are his Workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good Works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them.

THE Apostle, in this chapter, gives us a plain description of the state of nature, and the state of grace. What we are as we proceed from the first Adam, and what we are made when we are engrafted into the second. He first puts the Ephesians in mind how they had been dead in trespasses and sins, and that not only they, but we also; we, the disciples of Christ; we are all by nature the children of wrath, even as others. The children of wrath, because the children of disobedience, walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the

air, and so directly contrary to the laws of God. He is therefore justly displeased with us, and hath passed the sentence of death, even of eternal death, upon all, and will most certainly execute it upon every one that goes out of this world, no better than he came into it.

But on the other hand the Apostle saith, "That when we are thus dead in sin, God hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together." He hath raised us up to a new and spiritual life, that we may not only escape the death, to which we were before condemned, but enjoy everlasting life and happiness.

But this the Apostle ascribes wholly to the grace of God; "For," saith he, "*By grace ye are saved through faith.*" By grace on God's part, and through faith on our part; through faith in Christ, as the way whereby we come to be interested in his merits and mediation. And that, too, is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God. "Not of works;" not of any thing which we ourselves can do, either to effect it or to deserve it, lest any man should boast; but that God may have all the glory.

Now, for the further illustration and proof of this great doctrine, the Apostle adds these remarkable words: "For we are his workmanship, created in Jesus Christ unto good

works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them."

In which words, rightly understood, there are many things much to be observed by all that concern themselves in good earnest about their future and eternal state. And which, therefore, I shall, by God's assistance, endeavour to explain for our present meditation, and, I trust, future comfort.

The Apostle, to shew that the great change which is made in us, when we are brought out of the state of nature into that of grace, is wrought in us wholly and solely by God himself, first observes, in general, that we are his workmanship, not only as men, but as Christians; not only as creatures, but as new creatures: we are made such also by him, by whom we were first made. Whatsoever means or instruments may be used in bringing it about, he is the efficient cause, he is the principal agent. "Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but it is God that giveth the increase."* So that the whole new man also, with every part of it, is his workmanship.

It is his workmanship as much as the creation of the world was. For, as the Apostle adds, "We are created in Christ Jesus, unto good works." Here it seems, a new creation, or production of something out of nothing;

* 1 Cor. 3.—v. 6.

though not of matter and substance, yet of qualities and endowments; piety and virtue being made to spring up where there was no such thing before; nothing like it, but rather the contrary; and therefore David prayed, that "God would create in him a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within him."* He had an heart before, but it could not be a clean heart, unless it was created again. He had a spirit before, but that spirit must be renewed before it could be a right spirit, right in the sight of God, and resolute to obey his commands.

But, to distinguish this from the first creation, the Apostle here saith, that we are created in Christ Jesus; and elsewhere, that "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation,"† as the words there signify; and, "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."‡ It is still in Christ that this creation is effected, or the new creature made. This is the great mystery of godliness, which is revealed in the Gospel, but of which I shall endeavour to place it in such a light that we may all see what to believe concerning it, and what to do that we may be eternally the better for it.

* Psalm, 51.—v. 10. † Gal. 6.—v. 15. ‡ 2 Cor. 5.—v. 17.

For which purpose we may first observe, that this Jesus Christ was both God and man in one person.—As God, he was neither made nor created, but as man, he was made of a woman. “Being in the form of God, he thought it no robbery to be equal with God;”* and yet, nevertheless, took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. He was made so by the immediate act of God himself, as the first man was; for as the Lord God formed Adam of the dust of the ground, so he formed Christ of the substance of the Virgin Mary.

“The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.”†

Now the manhood in general, or whole human nature, being thus in God our Saviour, whatsoever he did or suffered as man, was done and suffered by the whole nature of man; and it being done and suffered in an infinite person, it could not but be of infinite worth and merit for those who are of that nature. Hence it is, that as our whole nature was corrupted in the first man, so it is cleansed and sanctified in the second. “As in Adam all

* Phil. 2.—v. 6, 7.

† Luke, 1.—v. 35.

die, so in Christ shall all be made alive."

"As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."* And as in Adam we fell from the happy estate in which we were created, so we were restored to it by being created in Christ Jesus.

Thus they are created much in the same manner as all things were at first; for as all things were at first created by the Word of God, so are they, by the Word, made flesh, and by the Word made known unto them; for they are created or "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."† There is only this difference, that whereas in the first creation of all things, there being nothing to believe or disbelieve his Word, God only commanded and they were created. But in this new creation, men being before made, and made free agents capable of believing or not believing what is said, the Word worketh effectually only in them who believe; and that is the reason that none but they who believe are created in Christ Jesus; but all who are so created do so believe.

Again, when God in the beginning had created the heavens and the earth, it is said,

* Romans, 5.—v. 19.

† 1 Peter, 1.—v. 23.

that "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."* So that "by the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them, by the breath of his mouth."† He first, by his Word, raised the heavens out of nothing, giving them a being or existence in general. Then by his Spirit he made all the host of them; that is, all things wherewith they were to be furnished and adorned, bringing them all into their proper place and order, that every thing might be, and act, and move, as he designed it should! and so here, when any are created in Christ Jesus, his Spirit moves upon their souls, and reduces all their powers and faculties into a right order and disposition again, so as to quicken, renew, regenerate, and to make them another sort of creatures than they were before; before they were carnal, now spiritual creatures. For "that which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit, is spirit."‡ And therefore, as before they were the offspring of Adam, they are now made the children of God. "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ,"§ in whom they are thus created. Such a wonderful change is wrought in those who are created in Christ Jesus.

* Gen. 1.—v. 2. † Psalm, 33.—v. 6. ‡ John, 3.—v. 6.
§ Rom. 8.—v. 17.

It is in all respects as much to be admired as the first creation of all things out of nothing.

Moreover, as in the first creation, the first thing that God made was light, so it is in this new creation. Before God made light, it is said, that darkness was upon the face of the deep. And so it is in this case; darkness is upon the face of all mankind, by nature; the worst sort of darkness, even spiritual darkness: and though they have eyes to see things, they cannot see the things that belong to their everlasting peace, nor discern the true difference between good and evil; much less can they see the pure God, though he shines continually around them; and as for the Gospel of Christ, they are so far from seeing any thing beautiful in it, that they deride those who profess to observe any thing in it. The preaching of Christ crucified is, "to the Jews, a stumbling block, and, to the Greeks, foolishness." And it is because "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."*

But, my brethren, there are many such natural men in the world; indeed the greatest

* 1 Cor. 2.—v. 14.

part of men are such. But the condition of all such is very sad and deplorable; for however they may flatter themselves at present, they will find the Apostle's words to be true: "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."* If they believed, the God of this world could have no power over them: but seeing they will not believe, he carrieth them captive at his will; keeps them in the dark, and leads them blindfold to the place allotted to unbelievers. Neither is it possible to be avoided, without having their eyes opened. They must first be turned from darkness to light, before they can be turned from the power of Satan unto God. "But God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines in the hearts of those who are created anew, to give them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ;"† "who" as St. John saith, "is the light of the world; the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." therefore, all who believe and are created in him, are so far from abiding any longer in

* 2 Cor. 4.—v. 3, 4.

† 2 Cor. 4.—v. 6.

darkness, that they see and feel the wondrous things of his law, and all other things that belong to their everlasting peace.

But, passing over the other parts of the creation, let us for a moment consider how man himself was made. That which is chiefly to be observed is, that God created man like to himself; and as the first man was made in the image of God, so the second, even Christ Jesus, is the image of God—"the express image of his person."* And when any are created in him, they are said to put on Christ; "and to put on the new man, which after God (or according to his likeness,) is created in righteousness and true holiness."† Thus, then, we may see how truly they who believe as the Gospel requires, are here said to be created in Christ Jesus; what excellent creatures they are made, and how far they exceed other men, and themselves too, before they were so created!

Before, their souls were disordered and irregular; now they are restored to a right frame and temper. They have a right judgment in all things. They always exercise themselves to keep their consciences void of offence towards God and men. They look upon the world and all things in it as nothing, in comparison of him that made them; and therefore they

* Heb. 1.—v. 3.

† Ephes. 4.—v. 24.

love him with all their hearts; they put their whole trust and confidence in him, and fear nothing but him; they rejoice continually in him, and think it their only pleasure to please, and their greatest honor to honor him.

It grieves them to see his holy name dishonoured, or his service slighted. They set the Lord God almighty always before them; and therefore are always humble and lowly in their own eyes, meek, and patient, and submissive to his divine will, "Knowing that all things work together for good to them who love God."* In short, the law of God being written again in their hearts, their whole nature is changed, inasmuch that they do that for which they were created; and what that is, the Apostle here teacheth, saying, that "we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

But to make this still more plain, we may instance some of those works which are truly good, and are therefore commanded, because of their tendency to the end of all things, even to the glory of our almighty Creator. As, for example, we must make open and public profession to the world of our faith in God and our Saviour, according to the revelations which he has been pleased to make of himself, and his will to mankind; to testify and confirm that our holy profession, by our regular

* Rom. 8.—v. 28.

and constant attendance at public worship; to adore, magnify, and pray continually to him, and to him alone; to ask him for all that we want that is convenient and needful for us, and to praise his holy and great name for the wonderful works that he hath done and still doth in all the world. We should frequent that holy sacrament which he hath ordained in memory of the death he suffered in our nature and for our salvation, and vindicate and defend his church, wherein alone he is truly served and glorified, against all its enemies; that, according to his promise, "the gates of hell may never prevail against it." We must do what we can, that his name may be known, and his blessed Gospel propagated all over the world: that all kings may fall down before him, and all nations serve him. We should ever be ready to contribute to support, endow, and adorn places where God may be duly and devoutly worshipped, and to see that his worship is accordingly performed by all that we have any power over, especially by ourselves. We should instruct, both by precept and good example, young and ignorant people in the principles of our most holy religion, that they may be taught to know the true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, and what he would have them to believe and do, that

they may serve him, and be eternally happy. We must instruct also in meekness those who oppose themselves, if the merciful God peradventure will give them true repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth. We must reprove and rebuke such as blaspheme or profane God's holy name, or dishonour his Gospel by any immoral practices; to use all our means to bring them to a sense of their sins, and so to turn them to righteousness and true holiness. Those in authority must administer justice truly and indifferently, to the punishment of wickedness and vice, and to the maintenance of God's true religion and virtue; and compose any differences that arise in church, state, or between private persons. As individuals, we must do all we can to make peace, to succour, help, and comfort such as are in danger, necessity, or any tribulation. As disciples of the blessed Jesus, we must defend and provide for the fatherless children and widows, the sick and needy, desolate or oppressed, and all for his sake, who hath promised to take care of such. We must be true and just in all our dealings with men, that they may see we prefer our duty before any worldly interest whatever; choosing resolutely to suffer the loss of all we have, even of life itself, rather than do any thing whereby we may seem to deny our God, dishonour his holy

name, or wilfully break his laws. These and such like, which appear at first sight to tend to the glory and honor of the Most High God, are the good works unto which we are created in Christ Jesus, and which we are, therefore, all of us bound to do, according to our several stations and abilities. Which I therefore add, because it is implied in the words of my text.

The Apostle here saying, "that we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained," or, as the word signifies, "prepared, that we should walk in them." For they who are created in Christ Jesus, are thereby restored to a sound mind, and every way qualified and disposed to do what their Creator would have them. For as every good tree bringeth forth its own proper fruit, so every one that is created in Christ Jesus doth such good works as God hath fore-ordained or prepared for them. None of them can do every thing, but every one may do all he can in that state and condition of life in which it has pleased God to place him.

Some men he advances to an higher degree, to greater authority and larger estates than others; and for them he therefore hath prepared greater and more works to do than for those whom he confines to a lower rank, and narrower circumstances.

And there is no condition that a man can be in, be it never so low or mean, but he hath some good works or other prepared for him, which he may do if he will; and he certainly will, if he be created in Christ Jesus; otherwise he may conclude himself not to be created in him. He, in the parable that had but one talent, was bound to improve that one, as he who had five, improved all his five, for his master's use. And because he did it not, he was judged to be a wicked and slothful servant, and punished accordingly.

Wherefore it highly concerns us, who believe in God, and a future state of rewards and punishments, to be careful to maintain good works; not only some few, but all which God hath prepared for us to walk in, following the steps of our blessed Master, who went about doing good continually; and so should we, who profess ourselves to be his disciples, and are created in him unto good works. "And if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, not according to what he hath not."*

It is accepted, not for any worth or merit in what we do, but through him by whom we do it, who does not only supply us with grace to obey the will of God, as far as it is required

* 2 Cor. 8—v, 12.

in this our imperfect state, but makes our defective obedience acceptable, through the merits of his own. For he having in our nature been obedient through the whole course of his life unto death, as God is pleased to accept of his death instead of ours, so he accepts of our obedience for the sake of his. For though what they do be not perfect in themselves, yet God is pleased to look upon them as good, through him in whom they are created; otherwise they could not be called good works, as they are in this and many other places of holy scripture, wherein we are also assured, that all the spiritual sacrifices we offer, all the good works we do, although imperfect in themselves, yet are acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

And to this end we may observe, that as none can do good works, but they who are created in Christ Jesus; so, to manifest ourselves to be created in him, it is absolutely necessary that we do all the good we can in our several stations and callings in life, and that they who do so are the most happy persons upon earth, whatever their outward condition may be, whether rich or poor, high or low, and however other people may think or say of them: for they do the will of the blessed God upon earth, as it is done in heaven; they shine as lights in the world; they have the honor to honor God, and to be

honored of him; they have the pleasure of pleasing him who governs the whole world, who therefore takes them into his own immediate care and protection; and makes their enemies to be at peace with them; who supplies them in the time of need with all things requisite both for life and godliness; who directs, controuls, and prospers them in all their undertakings, making all things work together for their good while they live, and then saith to every one of them, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."*

Let us then "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,"† striving who should be the foremost in it, who should do the most good in the world, according to our several abilities; who should love, fear, and serve, worship and obey Almighty God best; who should be the most pious and devout, the most sober and temperate, the most humble and meek, the most just and kind, merciful and charitable towards all men. In short, let us all strive who should come the nearest to perfection, and so to "the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ."

* Matt. 25.—v. 21. † Heb. 12.—v. 1.

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make us all perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in us that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom, with the Father and Holy Ghost, be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”*

* Heb. 13.—v. 20, 21.

in the blood of Jesus Christ, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them: and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

**MYSTERY OF OUR RECONCILIATION BY CHRIST
EXPLAINED.**

2 CORINTHIANS, Chap. 5.—v. 18, 19.

And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them: and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

MAN is properly called a reasonable creature, notwithstanding there are many who do not use reason aright. There may, perhaps, be some particular men in the world, who have no knowledge of God, and a few who live as if they had some, yet mankind in general may truly be said to agree in the acknowledgment of that invisible being whom we call

God, who made and presides over the whole world. There is no nation we know of, so barbarous and savage, but where people some way or other express their sense and fear of such a being, and do something or other whereby to conciliate his favour. And it is much to be observed, that almost all mankind, in all ages and places upon earth, have concurred and agreed in the use of blood for that purpose; some killing beasts, others men, and some their own children; thinking thereby to obtain the favour of him who governs the world, and so to procure something which they think would be good for them, or else would avert some evil which otherwise might fall upon them.

How this should come to pass, deserves our most serious enquiry. That all mankind should have some general notions of God, we cannot wonder, seeing the knowledge of him was imprinted at first upon our very minds: and though the first impressions are so much defaced and worn out, yet there are such footsteps of them still remaining, as are plainly visible to the very light of nature: so that no man who uses his reason can deny or doubt the existence of the Almighty, without being thought destitute of common sense.

But that God would be pleased with man's taking away the life which he himself gives

to his creatures, is not only above, but seems contrary to our natural reason, and to those notions of the divine perfections which were interwoven, as it were, into our frame and temper. And therefore, as no man could ever have thought it to be an acceptable service to God, unless he himself had appointed and declared it, so the knowledge and practice of it could never have spread itself over the earth, unless it had come from some common source of information. But how it should do so, he could never have known, but from the holy scriptures; this being one of those many wonderful things which no certain account can be given of but by divine revelation.

But there we find that the common parents of all mankind having transgressed the command, and so incurred the displeasure of Almighty God their Maker, and thereby made themselves and their posterity liable to the death which he had threatened in case of disobedience; he was graciously pleased to promise and declare that one should be born of the seed of the woman, who should suffer death, and redeem *them* from it, who would believe the said promise, and trust on his word for the performance of it. Which, therefore, that all might do, he was pleased to ordain, that the death of this great Redeemer of mankind should be foreshewn and represented by sacrificing and killing of beasts, that men

might depend wholly upon his word for it, and give him the glory due unto his goodness and truth. And accordingly, Abel, the first of Adam's children who is reckoned among the righteous, offered of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof; * which he would not have done, if it had not been first commanded by God. But doing it in obedience to his command, and in confidence of his promise, God had respect to him and to his offering; that is, he both approved of what Abel did, and accepted of him as a righteous person; which being so remarkable a thing, his brethren could not but take notice of it, and for the future do as he did, that God might shew the same respect to them as he had done to Abel: and likewise teach their children the same way, whereby to obtain the favor of God. And so doubtless this practice continued until the flood: which was no sooner over but righteous Noah "built also an altar, and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the Lord smelled a sweet savour;" † that is, he was well pleased with what Noah did; which his children observing, such of them as feared God, and desired his favor, could not but take the same course, and transmit it to their posterity; and all the

* Gen. 4.—v. 4. † Gen. 8.—v. 20.

earth being overspread by them, it came to be received and continued, more or less, in all the parts of it. But although this way of appeasing the wrath and conciliating the favor of God, by killing and offering living creatures to him, hath been thus received by universal tradition, and people generally have used it in all ages, yet in process of time they came to use it only as an old received custom from their forefathers, without knowing any thing of the reason or design of it; therefore God was pleased to remind his people the Jews, by ordering their sacrifices to be offered in such a manner as plainly shewed the respect they had to the sacrifice which was to be offered, according to his promise, for the sins of the world. They were only types and shadows of that; and therefore had no virtue in themselves, nor power to effect what was designed by them; and which God's faithful people understood so well, that in all those typical sacrifices they had still an eye to that which was typified by them, as the great and only effectual means to have Almighty God reconciled to them. All others, having a veil upon their faces, could not see through the types and figures under which this great truth was then represented.

But now the veil is taken away, so that all may see it. This grand sacrifice, which was promised and typified from the beginning of the

world, hath been offered up by Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, in the body which he for that purpose assumed; therefore it is evident to all that do not wilfully shut their eyes, that it is only in him, and by virtue of his sacrifice, that Almighty God is reconciled to mankind, so as to shew them any grace or favor. This is now brought to light by the Gospel; and is indeed the chief thing that is there revealed, particularly in this place, by the Apostle saying "that God hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ; and hath given unto us the ministry of reconciliation: to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation."

These words contain the great mystery of our reconciliation to the Most High God. I shall therefore give as full and clear an explanation of them as I can, by considering, 1st, What is here meant by God's reconciling the world unto himself. 2dly, That he hath done it by Jesus Christ. And 3dly, In what sense the Apostle here saith that the ministry and word of this reconciliation is given and committed unto us.

That we may clearly see into the meaning of God's reconciling the world unto himself, it will be necessary to look back upon the reason of his being angry with it; without

which there would have been no occasion for such reconciliation. I shall therefore endeavour to explain the first question in this way.

Almighty God being infinitely great, and good, and happy in himself, we cannot imagine what other end he could propose in making the world, than his own glory; even to manifest the glory of his perfections. According to what the wise man observes, "The Lord hath made all things for himself."* And as this was the end of his making, so is it of his preserving and governing the world. Whatever he doth, he doth it for his own glory.

Hence he made all things to serve that end. "For God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good;" that is, every thing was exactly fitted to set forth his glory. All the material world, and all creatures whatsoever, which are not endued with reason, always did, and still continue, to accomplish this end. They act and move always according as he would have them, and thus discover the glory of his infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, in the contrivance, production, and government of them. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work."† And so doth every one of the least, as well as the greatest things both in heaven and earth.

* Prov. 16.—v. 4.

† Psalm, 19.—v. 1.

If he had made none but the material world, although he displayed his glory in the making it, yet there would have been nothing to have seen it but himself; wherefore God was pleased to make some creatures of a spiritual nature, enduing them with reason and understanding to contemplate, admire, and celebrate the infinite perfections which he manifests in the world; and also with liberty and freedom of will, that they might do what he commanded for his glory. Of these he made two sorts—the one purely spiritual, called angels; the other partly spiritual and partly material, which we call men.

Of these two sorts of reasonable creatures and free agents, the first, called angels, being left to the freedom of their will, the greatest part of them chose to continue in the same estate in which they were created, and have accordingly been ever since glorifying their Almighty Creator, and doing the work which he for that purpose hath set them, and therefore always continue in his love and favor. But many of them, abusing the freedom which God had given them, chose to leave their first estate, and transgress the laws which he had prescribed whereby to advance his honor and glory. Wherefore he that made them was angry with them; and seeing they would not give him the glory that was due to the goodness which he mani-

fested in making them, he declared the glory of his justice in casting them down to hell; and "delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." As a potter dashes that vessel to pieces, which is not fit for the use to which he designed it.

As many of the angels, so all mankind fell from their first estate; not, indeed, as they did, every one by his own act; yet all in their common head, Adam; for being all contained in him, when he ate of the fruit which God had forbidden him, they were all thereby corrupted and made unfit for the service for which they were created; insomuch "That there is none that doeth good, no not one."* None that serve and glorify their Almighty Creator, by observing the laws which he hath set them. "But they are all gone out of the way:" they all neglect the business for which God sent them into the world, and have frustrated his holy end in making them: therefore they are altogether fallen under his displeasure; they are all "by nature the children of wrath;"† and might justly have been all condemned to that everlasting fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels. Neither could they expect any other; seeing they, as well as the fallen angels,

* 2 Peter, 2.—v. 4. † Psalm 14.—v. 3. ‡ Ephes. 2.—v. 3.

offended him that made them, dishonored his holy name, and rendered themselves incapable of serving him.

But how can we imagine that the Lord Most Holy, should ever be reconciled to a fallen world? He made men to honor him, but they would not do so. They acted contrary to what he commanded them; and they affronted and dishonored his divine Majesty. For which, therefore, his wrath was highly incensed against them; and who is able to abide it? "If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall intreat for him."* None certainly can do it effectually, without making satisfaction to him for the dishonor which he hath received; which being impossible for any creature to do, God himself was graciously pleased to undertake it, as we are here assured by his Apostle saying, "that God hath reconciled us to himself." But how did he do it? He did it, as it is here also said, by Jesus Christ.

This is the great mystery revealed in the Gospel of Christ; who is therefore called "the Prince of Peace;"† because it is by him that our peace is made with God. According to what the same Prophet says of him, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the

* 1 Sam. 2.—v. 25.

† Isa. 9.—v. 6.

feet of him that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth peace;”* and accordingly, when he was born, a multitude of the heavenly host sang, “Glory be to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will towards men;”† whereby we are taught that by him, whose nativity was then celebrated, Almighty God was in peace with the earth, and had a good-will or kindness again for men, and in such a way, that thereby his glory was secured and advanced. “It is glory in the highest.” And truly, if we could look as far into this great mystery as the holy angels do, we should soon be of their mind. But that we can never expect to do till we come to them. However, that we may have as clear a sight of it as we are capable of in this mortal state, we must first observe, in general, that the glorious person who was then born, purchased for us our peace at the price of his own blood; as the Apostle saith, “When we were enemies, we were reconciled unto God, by the death of his Son.”‡ “For he is our peace, he hath made both Jew and Gentile one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make in himself of twain, one new man, so

* Isa. 52.—v. 7. † Luke, 2.—v. 14. ‡ Romans, 5.—v. 10.

making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.* It was, therefore, by the blood which he shed, and by the death which he suffered, that our peace and reconciliation with God was made. And it was typified also, in the Mosaic law, by the priests making atonement and reconciliation for the sins of the people, with the blood of the sacrifice which he had before offered. And accordingly we read, that in king Hezekiah's time, "the priests brought forth the lambs and goats for a sin-offering, and killed them, and made reconciliation with their blood, as an atonement for all Israel."† This was only a type or shadow of that great sacrifice which our true High Priest offered in his body upon the cross, to make atonement for the sins of the world, that Almighty God might be at peace again with us. "Wherefore," saith the Apostle, "in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."‡

* Ephes. 2.—v. 15, 16.— ‡ 2 Chron. 4.—v. 20, 21.

† Heb. 2.—v. 17, 18.

But that we may fully understand how we are thus reconciled to God by the death of his Son, it will be proper to observe, 1st, That the Apostle not only says that God hath reconciled us to himself, by Jesus Christ, but likewise, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself. It was still God's own work, but he did it in and by Christ. As we learn also from him, saying, "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doth the work."* Every thing, therefore, that was done by the man Christ Jesus, was done also by God dwelling in him: "for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."† It was substantially united to his human nature, so that he was God and man in one and the same person. And therefore, when he offered up himself, it was God that did it: "The blood he shed was the blood of God."‡ "And hereby," saith St. John, "perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us."§ Which being so plainly revealed by God himself, how much soever it may seem above the reach of our finite and corrupt understanding, we have all

* John, 14.—v. 10. † Col. 2.—v. 9. ‡ Act, 20.—v. 28.

§ 1 John. 3.—v. 16.

the reason that can be to believe it. And it is well we have, seeing the main stress of our reconciliation lies upon it: insomuch, that he who doth not believe this, can never believe it possible for him to find any favor in the sight of God. Whereas he who believes this, as all must do who believe the Scriptures to be given by the inspiration of God, may easily perceive what ground we have to expect all the favor we can desire from him.

Hence it appears, in the next place, that the death which Christ suffered for the sins of the world, was more than the death of all the men in the world; insomuch as the death of all the men in the world could have been no more than the death of so many finite persons: whereas his was the death of a person that is infinite, and so did not only satisfy the justice, but likewise merited the favor of God for them, and that too in the same way wherein they had before lost it. They had lost the favor of God, by not giving him the glory which he designed to himself in his creation of them. But now his glory was advanced more than they could ever have done it, if they had continued in their first estate; for a divine person having suffered the punishment of their sins, the glory of this justice appeared more gloriously than it did or could have done any other way.

Again, his only begotten Son having thus offered up himself as a propitiation and sacrifice for the sins of mankind, God in him, and upon the account of his most meritorious death, hath promised them his grace and favor again: and so hath engaged his truth for the performance of all such promises, which he made in Christ: "for all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, to the glory of God by us."*

And hence, lastly, it is, that although Jesus Christ died for the sins of the world, and the promises are accordingly made to all, yet none have his grace actually conferred upon them, without believing his word, and giving him the glory of his truth, which he designed to himself in the redemption of them. Therefore we see the reason why faith is absolutely required, in order to our obtaining any of the blessings which Christ hath merited, and in him are promised to us; even that God may be thereby glorified, as he is in all that believe. And all who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, according to what God hath revealed of him in his holy Word, and trust on the promises which are there made and confirmed to mankind in him, have the said promises actually fulfilled to them, and will

* 2 Cor. 1.—v. 20.

enjoy all the benefits of Christ's death for the pardon of their sins, and for their justification before God: "In him they have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."* And though they are not righteous in themselves, yet through his merits they are accounted righteous before God. "For he hath made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."† Thus he, who was no sinner, suffered as a sinner for us, that we, who are not righteous, may be accepted as righteous through him. As our sins were laid on him, his righteousness is imputed unto us, and so "we are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, 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."‡

These things being thus briefly considered, we may easily see how God was, in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself; for as he tells us by his Apostle, "being justified by

* Ephes. 1.—v. 7.

† 2 Cor. 5.—v. 21.

‡ Rom. 3.—v. 24, 25, 26.

faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ ;”* and being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. “ You that were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable, and irreprovable in his sight, if ye continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel.”†

Thus it is that God was, in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, he suffering the punishments which were due unto their sins, and therefore absolving all that believe in him, and accepting of them as righteous. And now he looks upon them as his own children, his elect and peculiar people: and all because they believe in his Son Jesus Christ, in whom he is always well pleased, as we learn from Christ: “ The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.”‡

But here we may observe, that the Apostle saying, that God was, in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, declares, that this is no transient, but a permanent, or rather a continued act. He did not only do it once,

* Rom. 5.—v. 1.

† Col. 1.—v. 21, 22, 23.

‡ John, 16.—v. 27.

but is always doing it. He is still reconciling the world unto himself by Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who is always taking away the sins of the world. Though he offered up himself but once, "yet, by virtue of that one oblation of himself once offered, he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world."* He is always their advocate with the Father, now appearing in the presence of God, and ever living to make intercession for them.†

Thus have I endeavoured to set before you the great mystery of the Gospel, to wit, "God was, in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself;" whereby you may see how you also may be reconciled to him, if ye will. Nothing now remains, but briefly to consider in what sense the Apostle here saith, that "God hath committed unto us the ministry of reconciliation." Now if the Lord of Hosts, the almighty Governor and Creator of the world, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen nor can see"—now if he himself should speak to us, in his own divine person, as we could not see him that speaks, much less should we be able to bear what comes immediately from his infinite height and glory. And therefore, as he was graciously pleased to take

* 1 John, 2.—v. 2.

† Heb. 7.—v. 25.

upon him our nature, and in it to reconcile the world unto himself, so he is pleased to make use of some, who are of the same nature, to declare and apply this his reconciliation to the rest of the world, that they might receive it from him by the hands of such whom they themselves could see, and accordingly give him the glory of his grace and truth, by taking it upon his word, delivered to them by such as he sends. I say such as he sends; for none can take this office upon them, unless they be called and sent by God himself; "for how shall they preach except they be sent?"* Other people may speak the same things; but they cannot preach the gospel of reconciliation, no more than he who hath no commission can execute the office of an ambassador; wherefore the Apostle, speaking in the name of all that are sent by God, saith, "that God hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation;" that is, he hath given us commission and authority to offer you peace and reconciliation in his name, as his ambassadors sent by him for that end and purpose. And therefore the Apostle immediately adds, "Now then are we ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God." Thus you see what our office and ministry is.

* Rom. 10.—v. 15.

We are ambassadors for Christ; we come not in our own name but in his: neither do we come to proclaim war, but to offer peace; that peace which passeth all understanding, which he hath procured with his own blood. You have all rebelled against Almighty God your Maker, and are therefore obnoxious to his displeasure. But he hath reconciled you to himself in our Lord and Master Christ, and sends us to declare and offer this his reconciliation to you. And we, according to our instructions, pray you in his stead to accept of it; that you would no longer stand out, but be reconciled to God, or partake of that peace and reconciliation which he hath made for you.

And for which purpose, therefore, let me earnestly exhort and pray you, in Christ's stead, to repent and believe the Gospel, forsake and avoid the sins wherewith ye have hitherto dishonored and offended the Most High God, your Maker and Preserver, and study for the future to serve and honor him, by doing all such good works as he hath commanded you. "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ," believing and trusting on him to make your peace with God. He will reconcile you to Almighty God, and restore you to his love and favor, as much as if ye had never lost it. And then how happy will

you be, when he who governs the whole world shall become your friend, and have a peculiar kindness for you? His grace will then be always ready to direct you what to do, and to assist you in the doing it. His holy angels will minister unto you, and keep you, by his favor, in all your ways. His blessing will be upon you and all you have, and upon all you do. His power will protect you from all evil, and make all things work together for your good all the time you are here below; and when ye go hence, and be no more seen, you will go to Christ in paradise, and enjoy all the fruits of that blessed place. Then "you will taste and see how good the Lord is," and what infinite cause you all have to bless God, to praise him, to worship him, to glorify him, and to give him thanks for his great glory, in reconciling you to himself, by his only begotten Son Jesus Christ.

Tell me now then, all ye who admire this world, what is there in it to be compared to an interest in Christ our Saviour? Where will ye find a friend that can do so much for you, as he both can and will, if ye do but believe as ye ought in him? And therefore, if ye have any regard to your own good, if any love for yourselves, if ever ye desire to be truly happy, make it your constant care to believe in him as the great prophet of the world, so as to be fully persuaded of the truth

of all that he hath said and done; to believe in him as your great High Priest and Advocate, so as to trust in him to make reconciliation for you, and to believe in him as your Lord and King, so as to obey and serve him. Do but this, and I dare assure you, in his name, ye will find all that I have now said to be not only true, but far short of what ye will hereafter experience; so that ye shall say, with his Apostle, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. 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 8.—v. 38.

SERMON V.

WORKING OUT OUR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

PHILIPPIANS, Chap. 2,—v. 12.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

SALVATION is a word that is often used in Scripture for preservation or deliverance from any sort of trouble or distress, in mind, body, or estate. But here, and in many other places, it signifies particularly that whereby we are saved from the wrath of God and eternal death, so as to be advanced to everlasting life and happiness; which is therefore called “the salvation of our souls;”* and “the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory;”† who is said to be the

* 1 Peter, 1,—v. 9.

† 2 Tim. 2,—v. 10.

author of eternal salvation. "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we may be saved."* But that you may all understand the nature of this salvation, so as to be inflamed with desires and stedfast resolutions to work it out, I shall lay it open to you in these propositions: 1st, As all the angels, so all men were at first designed to live and abide for ever. When a man is once formed, and begins to exist, he is never after annihilated, but always continues in his being or existence. So that Adam himself, and all that proceeded from him, in all ages and places, from the beginning of the world to this day, still live, and move, and have their being somewhere, as really as we now live upon the earth. Though their souls are separated from their bodies, they are not separated from their being, but still exist, and act as reasonable souls, and will continue so to do, in their separate state, until the last or judgment-day; when their bodies, being united again to them, shall live together unto all eternity.

Now, as all men live for ever, so all live more or less in this world. Some, perhaps, may live but a few minutes, or an imperceptible time, but some they must live; for

* Acts. 4.—v. 12

no man can go into the other world without taking this in his way. His soul must first live in a body upon earth, before it can be translated into another state. Some, in former times, lived two hundred or three hundred, some near a thousand years. Now, it is rare for any to live an hundred; neither doth any know how much longer he shall live, than he hath lived already.

But this we all know, that how long soever any man lives in this, he must at last go into the other world. This is designed only for our temporal, the other for our eternal state, and which we shall enter immediately upon leaving this; the soul being no sooner separated from the body, than it is at the same moment in the other world. So that death is a departure or translation out of one state into another; out of this into another existence.

According as men live here, well or ill, so hereafter they must live in pleasure or torment: "For every one shall receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or evil."* Therefore they who live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, shall live happily in the other; "but they who know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, shall be punished with everlasting

* 2 Cor. 5.—v. 10.

destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power,"* "And so these shall go into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."† The place where all impenitent and unbelieving sinners must live for ever, is called hell, a dark and gloomy place, outer darkness, "where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," where they live in the extremity of pain and torment; "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched;"‡ where their consciences are continually gnawed and fretted with the remembrance of their former sins, and the anger of Almighty God is always kindled, and never to be abated; where they are confounded, afflicted, tormented with a quick sense of God's wrath and fiery indignation against them, for not obeying the law, nor believing the Gospel which he had revealed to them. This is the portion of the wicked, the bitter cup which they must drink in the other world.

But they who repent, and believe the Gospel in this world, at their departure out of it, go to a place of a different nature, called heaven, a place as full of satisfaction, as the other of astonishment and confusion. Here the spirits of just men made perfect, live in

* 2 Thess. 1.—v. 8, 9.

† Matt. 25.—v. 46.

‡ Mark, 9.—v. 44.

rest and peace together, fearing nothing, having all they can desire; being made equal to the holy angels in every perfection. Here "the righteous shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father,"* always adoring the eternal God, and the Lamb that sitteth upon the throne. Then shall we see clearly his infinite love and goodness to us, and partake of all the felicities that he hath purchased for us with his blood. This honor have all his saints; this perfection of bliss and glory have all they who live the life and die the death of the righteous. This they always have, not for some time only, but to all eternity.

This is that salvation, that eternal salvation of which the Apostle here speaks, and would have us to work out. He supposes that we all are capable of it, and may have it if we will; for it is offered to all, and therefore to us as well as any other. But we must not suppose it will fall from heaven, or be forced upon us whether we will or no. If we desire it in good earnest, we must labor for it, and make it the great care and business of our lives to obtain it; or, as the Apostle here speaks, we must work it out "with fear and trembling;" where every word hath its weight, and deserves to be duly considered by us.

* Matt. 13.—v. 43.

"Work out your salvation with fear and trembling."

And, 1st, we must work. Salvation is not a thing to be trifled with, much less to be obtained with sloth and idleness. They who would have it must labor and work hard for it. He who hath purchased it, and by whom alone we can have it, saith, "Labor not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you."* It is he who gives, but he gives it only to those who labor for it. As in the parable, the master of the vineyard gave to those who had wrought in his vineyard but one hour, as much as he did to those who had borne the burden and heat of the day, but he gave to none but to those who had wrought there; so here, eternal life is "the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is God alone who gives, and he gives it only through Jesus Christ; so that whatsoever a man doth, he cannot merit or deserve it. He is wholly beholden to the free grace of God, for it is his free gift, and he never gives it, but only to such as labor for it, by doing all such good works as he hath prepared for them to walk in. Now there are several works which

* John, 6: v. 27.

God hath appointed us to do, as the means whereby to receive salvation from him.

† Among which, prayer is one thing we must constantly exercise. For as salvation itself, so every thing that is requisite or necessary towards it, comes from God, and we have no ground to expect it, unless we ask it of him: but if we ask it of him, he will most certainly give it us, even his Holy Spirit itself, to direct, sanctify, and govern both our souls and bodies in the ways of his laws, and in the works of his commandments, so as to work in us both to will and to do whatsoever he requires of us, in order to our obtaining eternal life: for we have his own word, that “he will give his Spirit to them that ask him.”* But then we must take his word, and accordingly trust and depend upon him for it; we must “ask in faith, nothing wavering.” Neither must we ask it only occasionally, or now and then, but every day. We must “pray without ceasing.”† We must continue instant in prayer, and that too both privately in our closets, and publicly in his own house, “where he is always in the midst of those who meet together in his name, ready to give whatsoever they jointly ask in it.”‡

* Luke, 11.—v. 13.

† 1 Thess. 5.—v. 17.

‡ Matt. 18.—v. 20.

† And for that purpose to our praying we must often join also the hearing of his holy Word, as the ordinary way whereby he is pleased to convey his Holy Spirit to us, with all the gifts and graces for which we pray. And as he made us at first, so he renews or restores us to our first estate by his Word, speaking or declaring his will and pleasure to us. His Holy Spirit moving upon our hearts, while his Word is sounding in our ears, and so forming us new and holy creatures. As we often read in Scripture how the Spirit of God came down, whilst the people were hearing him speaking to them by his Prophets and Apostles. This Word is the same still. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."* Therefore, all that really desire faith, and consequently whatsoever else is required to the saving of their souls, must not only search the Scriptures, and read the Word of God themselves, but must often hear it from some that are empowered and sent from him to declare it to them; and must accordingly receive it, not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, "the Word of God, which worketh effectually in them that believe."†

These are the ordinary means whereby the great work of our salvation is begun: but

* Rom. 10.—v. 17.

† 1 Thess. 2.—v. 13.

then to carry it on, and finish it, we must frequently receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. It was ordained on purpose to put us in mind of, and to exercise and confirm our faith in our blessed Saviour, by whom alone we can be saved. For, after all that we can do, we can never obtain salvation any other way than by him. And we have no ground to expect that he should save us, unless we do that which he himself hath required of us, and which he certainly would never have done, if we could have been saved as well without it. And therefore, all that live in the neglect of this duty, and yet hope to be saved by him, will find themselves greatly deceived. But they who receive this blessed sacrament, as faithfully and as frequently as he requires them, receive by degrees such a measure of his grace and Holy Spirit, to direct, assist, and govern them in what they do, that they are thereby not only enabled to work, but to "work out their salvation with fear and trembling."

What it is to work it out, is the next thing to be considered. And it had need to be well considered, as we desire not to labor in vain: for whatsoever pains we take about our salvation, all will come to nothing, unless we work it out, that is, unless we work so as to obtain it. I say obtain it, not effect it. That is not in our power. It is God our Saviour

only that is the author or efficient cause of our salvation. It is he only that can effect it in us and for us, and therefore we are not here commanded to effect or make it ourselves; but we must work and labor for it, so that we may at last obtain it by him, in the use of those means which he hath appointed.

For which purpose, we must first use not only some, but all the means. We must carefully avoid that dangerous rock, upon which so many have made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, and of their salvation, by doing only some things that are required towards it, and neglecting others. As some are altogether for bodily exercise, for mortifying and subduing the flesh to the spirit, rarely using the means by which to obtain the Spirit of God, so others are only for saying their prayers; which, if they do occasionally, they think enough is done, never concerning themselves in meekly hearing the Word, or receiving the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as if these were useless insignificant institutions; whereas others are for hearing sermons only, placing the whole of their religion, and rashly venturing **their eternal salvation upon it, as if hearing how to arrive at heaven would bring them thither without any further trouble.** And of those who do use some of these means, yet how many live in the shameful neglect of the Holy Sacrament, seldom or never partaking

of the blessed body and blood of Christ, as if it were of no use to their souls, although it was ordained by our Saviour for that very end and purpose, that we might be saved. And how many are there who put it off to the last moment of their life, thinking by then receiving it, they shall atone for their neglect for many years past.

Now many here present, I fear, know this to be true of themselves, by their own experience; and I pray they may not know it hereafter to their sorrow. They certainly will, if they continue in the neglect of any of the means that are appointed for their salvation; for they can never work it out by any one, but by all together. He that only ploughs his land, can expect no crop unless he sows it too; and although he both ploughs and sows, yet unless he cleanses and weeds it, his expectations will still be frustrated; so here, by fasting and prayer, the fallow ground of our hearts is ploughed up, and made fit to receive the seed of God's Word. But it is by hearing that the seed is sown, and by the sacrament that it is preserved and strengthened, so as to grow up to perfection. And therefore he that doth one without the other, though he labor ever so much for salvation, can never work it out, but will still want something that is necessary to his obtaining it. And this, I really believe, is the

great reason why so many, as our Saviour saith, shall seek to enter in at the strait gate, and shall not be able, even because they seek it partially. They do some things, but they do not all that is required of them; and then it is not to be wondered at if they lose their labor.

Wherefore, as you desire not to labor in vain, but to work effectually, and obtain eternal life, you must go through the whole course which God hath prescribed. You must pray and hear God's holy Word, and take all opportunities of receiving his blessed body and blood. Neither must you only do these things, but work with all your strength in every one of them. You must keep your bodies under, and bring them into subjection to your souls. You must pray sincerely, so as to be heard; hear attentively, so as to receive the truth in the love of it; receive the Holy Sacrament with that faith and reverence that you may really partake of Christ's body and blood, to strengthen and refresh your souls.

And as you use all the means of grace sincerely, so must you do it constantly, not only occasionally, when you have nothing to do, but make it the great business of your lives, how long so ever they may be. Thus "Anna, the prophetess, when she was eighty-four years old, still served God with fastings

and prayers night and day ;” * so must you continue to exercise yourselves, not only in these, but in the other means of salvation, whenever you can have them administered to you, all the days of your life. You must never think you have done enough in this great work, but still be striving to enter in at the strait gate, “ pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus ;” † till ye come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” ‡ Till ye have added “ to your faith virtue ; and to virtue, knowledge ; and to knowledge, temperance ; and to temperance, patience ; and to patience, godliness ; and to godliness, brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kindness, charity.” § Till you are wholly sanctified in soul, and body, and spirit, and are meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Then, and not till then, can you be truly said to work out your salvation.

This the Apostle advises you to do with fear and trembling ; that is, with all humility, care, and diligence. Fear and trembling are not here opposed to that faith and confidence which we ought to have in God ; but, to

* Luke, 2.—v. 37.

† Phil. 3.—v. 14.

‡ Eph. 4.—v. 13.

§ 2 Peter, 1.—v. 5, 6, 7.

pride, conceit, and confidence in ourselves; as it is said, "Be not high minded, but fear."* And to that carelessness and indifference which is too common and apparent in most men about their salvation. They pretend to look after it, and hope to be saved, when they die, and yet take no pains about it while they live; as if salvation was so inconsiderable a thing that they ought not, or so easy to be attained, that they need not trouble themselves much concerning it. Thus they never think of it unless perhaps at the return of the Lord's day, or when they go to church; and even when there, how much indifference prevails with some, and with what little attention do they carry themselves in the presence of the Lord. This is the only care that many take for their salvation, and yet hope to be saved.

And this is what the Apostle here forbids, by requiring us to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling;" not to be careless and secure, but solicitous, diligent, and industrious in it. As servants must obey their masters "with fear and trembling." And we must all "serve God with reverence and godly fear;"† so must we "work out our salvation," fearing lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, "any of us

* Rom. 11.—v. 20.

† Heb. 12.—v. 28.

should seem to come short of it ;” * lest we should at last lose it, through our own fault and negligence in looking after it.

And certainly, if we do any of us come short of it, it must be our own faults ; for notwithstanding our weakness and inability to do so great a work ourselves, yet, if we do but use the means as well as we can, and trust on him for it, God will make them effectual to our salvation. And this is the argument which the Apostle here uses to encourage us to set upon this great work. Having said, “ Work out your salvation with fear and trembling,” he immediately adds, “ For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

I know much hath been said about these words, why the Apostle should require us to “ work out our salvation,” and yet tell us at the same time, that it is God which worketh in us both to will and to do. For if it be God that worketh in us, why need we work ? What can we do, when he does all for us ? Therefore, to make both the meaning of the words, and the force of the argument plain, we will suppose a husbandman negligent of his business, and advise him to till his ground, to plough and sow his seed, that it may increase and multiply ; but he, to excuse himself, an-

* Heb. 6.—v. 1.

swers, Why should I take all these pains? Why harass out my horses in ploughing my ground; and throw away my corn upon it, when, after all, I cannot make it take root, increase and grow up, and thus lose all my labour, my time, and my seed? To which I reply, It is true, you cannot do that; but you can plough and sow, and though you cannot, yet God can give the increase. He hath done it, and still doth it every year; and you have no reason to doubt but that he will do it for you, if you prepare your ground, and do every thing that is usual to be done for it. So here the Apostle bids us "work out our salvation." But some will say, what can we do? Why bid us do so great a thing, when "we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves?" Why then should we set upon such a work as this, when we know beforehand we can never effect it? To which the Apostle answers, It is true, you cannot save yourselves, nor so much as *will* to do it as of yourselves; but yet, you need not be discouraged from undertaking so great a work, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do. And if you do, as you easily may, all things that he requires on your parts, he will work in you whatsoever is farther necessary to your obtaining salvation. If you sit still and do nothing, you can expect no favour or assistance from him;

but if you plough and sow, he will give the increase.

If you pray, hear his Word, and receive his Sacraments, he will bless and sanctify what you do, so that you shall work out your salvation, though not by your own strength, nor by any virtue in the means themselves, yet by his grace and Holy Spirit co-operating with them, and working in you both to will and to do whatsoever he requires of you.

I doubt not, but that some here present have found this verified in themselves. It is the common experience of all God's faithful people, that, while they have been exercising themselves with all their power in the great duties which God hath ordained, whereby to work out their salvation, they have found him working in them both to will and to do. While they have kept their bodies under subjection, they have received the Spirit, to mortify the deeds of the flesh. While they have been presenting their prayers and supplications unto God, they have found his Holy Spirit moving upon their souls, clearing up their apprehensions of his divine glory and goodness, confirming their faith in him, fixing their thoughts upon him, inclining their will towards him, possessing them with such a sense both of his majesty and of his mercy, as they themselves are not able to express. "While they have been hearing God's holy

Word, they have found themselves touched powerfully in their consciences, and their hearts opened, as Lydia's was, to receive the truths delivered to them."* And while they have been feeding upon Christ's body and blood, they have found their souls strengthened and refreshed by it, with joy unspeakable, and full of glory; and are now able to say, with the Apostle, "The power of Christ resteth upon me, and I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."†

Thus, while Christians labor after their salvation, God himself worketh in them both to will and to do. But that he may do it for us, as we must keep our minds wholly intent upon the work we are about, so must we keep our faith fixed upon him to carry us through it; and I really believe, that as there are many divine sentences inserted and recorded in Holy Scripture, on purpose that we may have God's word whereupon to build our most holy faith; so, particularly in this place, the Apostle hath no sooner desired us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, but he immediately adds, "it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do;" and having God's own word for it, we may believe and trust on him to enable us to do what he here commands. For God

* Acts 16.—v. 14. † Phil. 4.—v. 13.

having said this by his Apostle, if we accordingly take his word, and depend upon him, he will most certainly influence the means we use, and work in us while we are using them so effectually, that we shall work out our salvation, and do all things requisite to our obtaining eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

These considerations, I hope, by the grace of God co-operating with them, have already prevailed upon some here present to set about this great work in good earnest; and if there are any, as I fear there are, who have not yet resolved upon it, I desire you will further consider,

That this is the most profitable work you can ever do. Whatever you do besides will turn to little or no account at last. By all your care and toiling about other things, you may perhaps get something considerable in the eye of the world; but you know you must ere long leave it, and you know not how soon, and yourselves will have nothing of it, but eternal grief and torment in your minds, for having taken so much care and pains for nothing, for worse than nothing, even eternal destruction. "For what shall it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world, if at last he lose his own soul?" Whereas, by working out your salvation, you may obtain all the good things you can possibly desire,

whatsoever can any way contribute to your being perfectly and eternally happy, to your living in ease and plenty for ever.

Consider also, as this is the greatest good you can ever attain to, so it is the hardest matter that can be to obtain it. There is a great deal of work to be done, before you can work out your salvation. Praying and hearing now and then, which is all that most men do, will never be effectual. You must exercise yourselves continually, both in those and all other means that conduce to this end, or you will never be able to accomplish it; and whatsoever you do, you must do it with all your might, for your eternal life depends upon it. And after all, it is well if you can attain it, for you will meet with many difficulties; which, however, should not discourage, but rather make you more active and diligent, knowing that heaven will make amends for all. And consider, lastly, how hard soever it may be, it is possible for every one of us to work out our salvation, for many have done it already.

There are many glorified saints at this time in heaven, who once were sinful mortals upon earth, as we now are. But when they were here, they could do this great work effectually. Why then may not we? We have the same faculties, the same scriptures, the same Saviour, the same promises, the same sacraments, and

all the same means of salvation as they had. Why then may not we work out our salvation as well as they did? If we do not, the only reason is, because we will not. If we would but apply our minds wholly to it, there is not one of us but may certainly do it; especially considering that we have the power of Almighty God himself always ready to assist us in it. His grace is always sufficient for us; his strength is made perfect in our weakness. "It is he who worketh in us to will and to do;" and what may we not do by him, who can do all things by himself.

Let us therefore now resolve, by God's assistance, to do this work, this great work, and do it effectually. Let others labor, if they please, for the meat that perisheth; let us make it the chief study and business of our lives to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Let us neglect no duty, no opportunity, no means that may keep us in it; still keeping our eye fixed upon the eternal God, our Saviour; trusting and depending upon him alone, to direct, assist, and carry us through the whole work, so as to bring us at last to live for ever with him, who ever liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, blessed for evermore. Amen.

SERMON VI.

CHRIST THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE.

JOHN, Chap. 14.—v. 6.

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

THE occasion of our Lord's uttering this divine sentence was this: he being now to leave the world, lest his disciples should be overwhelmed with too much grief and sorrow for his departure from them, acquainted them that he was only going home to his Father's house, and that he went thither to prepare a place for them, and all that should believe in him. But St. Thomas, one of the twelve, not apprehending his meaning aright, said, "Lord, we know not whither

thou goest, and how can we know the way?" Upon which our blessed Saviour, according to his usual way of replying to every thing that would be of consequence for mankind to know, took occasion to utter this divine sentence, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." And the better to assure them of it, he not only says "I am the way," but adds "the truth, and the life;" that is, the true and living way, so that we may certainly depend upon him as the way to the Father, seeing he is the truth, and not doubt but he can carry us through that way, and bring us to the end of it; and that he is the life, and can quicken, actuate, and enable us to walk in that way, without fainting or stumbling. And then he adds, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me."

But, that we may fully understand, and be duly affected with this great truth, it will be necessary to consider, what he means by coming to the Father by him; how he is the way; and that any man may thus come unto the Father.

Who is here meant by the Father we all know, even the Most High God, the Maker of heaven and earth, whom our Lord Jesus Christ, being his only begotten Son, usually calls Father; where coming to the Father

by him is the same which is elsewhere expressed by coming unto God by him.*

But he whom we call God, is an infinite, eternal, incomprehensible Being, “dwelling in that light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see.”†

How then can any man ever come to him? We that are but worms, creeping upon the surface of the earth, how can we come to him that made both heaven and earth? to him whose glory the heaven of heavens is not able to contain? We, who cannot behold the innumerable worlds about us, how can we ever come to him, who created and upholds them all by the power of his word, and is infinitely more above them, than they are above us? Our very thoughts, at their utmost stretch, at the greatest height they are able to ascend, are so far from reaching him, that we cannot think aright of him, but as of one infinitely above the highest of our thoughts. How then can we come to him, or so much as think what it is to do so, seeing that we are so infinitely below, and likewise corrupted and defiled, and so directly contrary to him? He is a most pure, just, and holy Being; we are all impure, unrighteous, and sinful creatures. How then can we approach him? We that are, as the Prophet

* Heb. 7.—v. 25. † 1 Tim. 6.—v. 16.

speaks, stubble, how can we come near him, that is a consuming fire? We could never have thought it possible, if he had not told us what he means by our coming unto him, and unless he had explained it to us; and that he hath so done, even by Jesus Christ, who being the only way whereby we can come unto the Father, we can never understand what it is to come unto the Father any other way than by considering how we may now do it by him, who here saith "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me."

1st, Therefore it is by Jesus Christ, and by him only, that any man can come to the knowledge of God the Father. Though we have still, even in our corrupt state, some general and confused notions of such a Being presiding over the world, yet we could never have known what he is, or what we ought to believe concerning him, if Jesus Christ had not revealed him to us; as but too plainly appears from those who never had his Gospel made known unto them. What strange and ridiculous resemblances did they make of him! "Though they knew God, or that there was such a Being in the world, yet they did not glorify him as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened: professing themselves to be wise, they became foolish,

and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.*

It is from such as these that we must gather what to think of that natural religion which has been so often supported in opposition to the revealed. Hence it is, that they who do not believe that God hath revealed himself and his will to mankind, as well as they who never heard of any such revelations, live as without God in the world; and thus would all mankind have always lived, but for Jesus Christ our Lord.

But our blessed Lord hath informed us of all that is necessary or indeed possible for mankind in this imperfect state to know concerning God. This he did of old, through his Spirit, in the Prophets; and hath since done in his own person, and by his Evangelists and Apostles in the New Testament. And that we may be sure it is he alone that hath done so, he hath declared to us, with his own mouth, saying, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."† And St. John says, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of

* Rom. I.—v. 21, 22, 23.

† Matt. II.—v. 27.

the Father, he hath declared him."* He who alone could do it, as being the only begotten of the Father, of the same nature with him, hath declared and revealed all that we need to know or believe concerning God, to our serving him in this world, and to our enjoyment of him hereafter in the next; and he is therefore called "the Sun of righteousness,"† and the light of the world, "the true light, that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." And as, by the light of the sun, we see the things of this world; so, by the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, we may see into what relates as to the other. It hath so much power and efficacy, that he doth not only enlighten the eye of our minds, that we may see the wondrous things that are written in the law of God; as he opened his Apostles understandings, that they might understand the Scripture, and Lydia's heart, "so that she attended to the things which were spoken of by Paul."‡ So, if we consult the oracles of Christ, and keep our eye fixed upon him, he will not only shew us what we ought to believe and know of God, but likewise open our hearts to receive and digest it. I do not say that we shall be able to comprehend his divine nature and properties, so as to form any clear ideas or notions of him, as

* John, 1.—v. 18. † Mal. 4.—v. 2. ‡ Acts, 16.—v. 14.

he is in himself, for that is impossible for us mortals to do; and therefore they who pretend to it, or attempt it, are guilty of high presumption, and betray their pride and folly. But the knowledge of God, which we are taught by Jesus Christ in his holy Word, is quite of another nature. It consists not in having ideas and speculations of him in our heads, but in having such a quick and lively sense of him in our hearts, that our whole souls are filled with admiration, love, and fear of his divine perfections, so that we "taste the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come, and are assured that the Lord is gracious."*

Thus, Christ is the way to know God effectually: that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, these three are this one Jehovah: that "he is from everlasting to everlasting, God blessed for ever:" that he is everywhere, knows all things, and can do what he will: that he made all things according to the pleasure of his will: that a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his permission, and that the very hairs of every man's head are numbered by him: that he is the Lord God of Sabaoth, the Lord of heaven and earth, the Lord God omnipotent, who reigns and rules

* Heb. 6.—v. 5.

over the nations of the earth, and doeth whatever he pleaseth in them: that he is the chief, the only good in the world, "in whose favor is life, in whose presence there is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore." All this, and far more than I am able to express, we may all know of God by his Son, who hath revealed him to us, and still doth it in us, by his Spirit moving upon our souls, imprinting what he hath revealed upon our hearts, that we may read it there, and be affected with it.

But no man can ever attain to so much as this, even to know God and the Father, unto whom he shall come, any other way than by his Son Jesus Christ; and therefore no man can come unto the Father but by him.

And what other way can we propose to ourselves, whereby we can possibly find any grace or favor in the sight of God? God, as I observed, is an infinite, almighty, eternal Being, the Lord and Governor of the whole world. We, at best, a number of little creatures, that were formed out of the earth, and must shortly return to it again. How then can we expect that he should have any regard for us? "When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the Son of

man, that thou visitest him?"* Especially if we consider it was he that made us for himself, to serve and honor him. But we have not done so, nor are we capable of doing it of ourselves. We are so far corrupted, we are not fit for the work for which he made us; and therefore are justly fallen under his displeasure. How then can we look for any kindness from him? What can we do to deserve it? and to whom can we go to restore us to the favor of God? I know there are many holy, many glorious creatures in heaven; but how holy, how glorious soever they are, they are still but creatures, and, as such, infinitely below God. "How then can I go to God? What can I say to him? How can I answer for what I have done to provoke him? He is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and that we should come together in judgment. Neither is there any umpire betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both."†

But though we could not, God, by his infinite wisdom and goodness, hath found one; or rather himself hath raised up one on purpose to do so, even his only begotten Son Jesus Christ. And for that purpose he was made flesh, and offered up himself as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind, suffering that death in their nature which they themselves must

* Psalm 9.—v. 3.

† Job, 9.—v. 2.

otherwise have suffered, every one in his own person, for the offences which they had committed against God; and therefore he is called "the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world; and the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world;"* and thus God is become propitious, merciful, and gracious to them, pardoning their offences, and receiving them again into his favor, "to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."†

This indeed is a great mystery, such as could never have entered into the heart of man to conceive, unless God himself had revealed it. And thus the whole way of our coming unto God by Christ is made plain and easy to us; for the Apostle saith, "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, having given himself a ransom for all;" so that now any man may come unto God, though not immediately, yet by this one Mediator between God and him. To the same purpose St. John speaks, "If any man sin (as we all have) we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins." And thus, if we go to him, he presents us to the Father, who is graciously

* John, 2.—v. 2.

† Ephes. 1.—v. 6.

pleased to accept us for the sake of that mediation which he makes for us.

But how doth he present us? Not in our corrupt and sinful state, not such as we are by nature, but upon our repentance and faith in him. He first washes us from our sins in his own blood, purgeth our consciences from dead works, and purifieth us to himself a peculiar people, real members of his own body, the Church; and then he presents us as such to God. Thus, as the Apostle elsewhere expresses it, we are "found in him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."* So that being found in him, besides our own righteousness, which is imperfect, we have another righteousness, the righteousness of God himself, which being absolutely perfect, we appear and are accounted righteous before God, and he is pleased to accept of us as such, in his Son. "And although we were sometimes alienated and enemies in our minds by wicked works, yet Christ hath now reconciled us unto God, in the body of his flesh through death, to present us holy, unblameable, and unreprouvable in his sight."† So that "we who were sometimes afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ, who is our

* Phil. 3.—v. 9. † Col. 1.—v. 22.

peace; and through him we have access by
on Sepirit unto the Father."*

“Behold what manner of love the Father
hath bestowed upon us, that we should be
called the sons of God.” What cause have
we to admire the height, the depth, the
length of this divine love! Thus are we
become the sons of God; who will accord-
ingly take care of us and bless us, defend us
from evil, and make all things work together
for our good; who will provide all things
necessary for us in this life, and then bring
us to our inheritance, “an inheritance in-
corruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not
away, reserved in heaven for us.”

Thus have I endeavoured to make these
things as plain as I could, both for your sa-
tisfaction as well as my own. There being
nothing that we are more concerned to un-
derstand than what we ought to believe and
know concerning that invisible Almighty
Being who made us and all the world; and
notwithstanding our manifold provocations
of him, we may regain his favor, so as to be
happy in him for ever. And, as we have seen,
there is no way whereby it is possible for any
man to do this, but only by Jesus Christ;
so he saith, “No man cometh nnto the Father,
but by me.”

* Ephes. 2.—v. 18.

In order, therefore, that ye may come to the Father by the Son, ye must first come unto the Son; that is, you must believe in him, as he hath taught us; ye must believe that he is the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father from all eternity, so as to be one with the Father, and that in the fulness of time the Father sent him into the world, to reveal his will to mankind, to reconcile them to himself, by dying in their stead, so to be the Mediator between God and man; and accordingly you must believe and trust on him alone, to restore you to the favor and kingdom of God; and you must love and honor him with all your hearts. He that doth not this, doth not come unto the Son, and therefore cannot come unto the Father by him; "but must die in his sins."* But God hath that infinite love for his Son, that whosoever liveth and believeth in the Son, is for that very reason beloved by the Father. "The Father himself says, he loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God."†

But then you must express this your faith and love unto the Son, by serving him, in doing whatsoever he hath commanded; and for that purpose you must adhere strictly to the rule laid down by the Apostle, "What-

* John, 8.—v. 24. † John, 16.—v. 27.

soever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by him." That is, whatsoever ye do, do it in obedience to his commands, for his sake, trusting and believing in him to direct and assist you in it, and to intercede with the Father to accept of it. This is indeed to serve the Lord Christ; and whatsoever is thus done, is acceptable to God through him; and they who thus serve the Son are so highly in the favor of God the Father, that he will honor them.

Especially in all your addresses to God, for any grace or blessing you desire, you must ask it only in the name of the Son of God; for you who have so often offended God, would never have been capable of any favor from him, unless ye desire it in his name, and on account of his merits and the mediation he maketh for you; but in that way ye may come to God, so as to obtain any thing that is good for you. We have his own word, saying, "Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name, he will give it you."* And in all your prayers, ye must not only make use of Christ's name, but you must keep your minds and your faith fixed wholly upon him, firmly believing that God, for his sake, will grant whatsoever you ask, that is

* John. 16.—v. 23.

really good for you, and then will ye obtain it; so powerful is the name of Christ with Almighty God. He is the Son of his love, with whom he is well pleased, and in whom he is therefore pleased with all those who come to him in his name.

Let us therefore now resolve to do so, inas-
much as we desire to go unto the Father, so as to be happy in the enjoyment of his love and favor; let us first go unto the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, so as to become his disciples indeed, believing and practising all that he hath taught us. And let none of us doubt but he will accept of us, seeing he hath said, "He that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."* In humble confidence whereof, let us, by a lively faith, apply ourselves to him, and take all opportunities we can of waiting upon him; that believing and depending stedfastly upon him, we may come to God the Father, so as to have him for our God, and our Father. How happy shall we then be! We shall be fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; we shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty, and have his truth to be our shield and buckler; his grace will be always sufficient for us, and his Spirit ready to assist and direct us in all our ways. "He will never leave us nor for-

* John, 6.—v. 37.

sake us, but will guide us by his counsel, and after that will receive us into glory." So that all things shall work together for our good, through the whole course of our pilgrimage upon earth, and then shall we come to God in the kingdom of heaven, and there live with, behold, and adore his Divine Majesty, throughout everlasting ages; and all through Him, by whom we come unto the Father, even the ever blessed Jesus, our only Mediator and Redeemer: To whom be glory and dominion ever, world without end. Amen.

SERMON VII.

CHRIST IS OUR LORD AND MASTER.

JOHN, Chap. 13.—v. 13.

*Ye call me Master, and Lord; and ye say
well, for so I am.*

THAT Jesus Christ is our Lord and Master, we all acknowledge. We acknowledge it in our daily prayers, in the praises we offer up to God, every time we repeat our creed, and in our common discourse; and we seldom speak of Christ, but we call him our Lord. We confess him to be so with our mouths, but I fear there are few who do it in their hearts; few who duly consider what they say, when they call Christ their Lord, but speak it only as a word of course, to which they have accustomed themselves, and repeat it continually, without considering its true

meaning. If when men speak of Christ as their Lord and Master, they really thought and believed him to be so, they could not but take more care than they commonly do to please and honor him.

The plain truth is, we serve this as we do the other articles of our faith; we own it in general to be true, but never make any particular application of it to ourselves, and thus are no way affected with it; and, notwithstanding our profession to believe it, we live as if it were not so. Whereas, if we lived with a constant belief and sense of this upon our minds, that Christ is our Master and Lord, we should always look upon ourselves as bound in duty and conscience to do the works that he hath set us, and act according to the rules and laws which he hath prescribed. Thence it is that he here puts his disciples in mind of this great truth, saying, "Ye call me Master, and Lord; and ye say well, for so I am." In which words he gave them to understand, that when they called him Lord, or Master, he would not have them do it out of compliment and flattery, nor think by that title they gave him more respect than was his due; but would have them remember that they said well and truly whenever they called him so, for that he really was and is their Lord and Master. Neither did he say this only for their sakes, but for

us also, for whom it is recorded, that we may observe the relation we stand in to him, and behave ourselves accordingly. And which that we may do, with his assistance, I shall point out to you,

1st, In what sense Jesus Christ is our Lord and Master.

2dly, What obligations this relation to him lays upon us, and what use and improvement is to be made of it.

And, 1st, Nothing is more plain and certain, from the holy Scriptures, than that Jesus Christ is Lord, in the highest and most proper sense of the word. He is sometimes called the Lord Jesus. "They found not the body of the Lord Jesus,"* saith St. Luke. "All the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,"† saith St. Peter. And St. Stephen, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."‡ Sometimes he is called "the Lord Christ," as where St. Paul saith, "Ye serve the Lord Christ."§ Sometimes, "the Lord Jesus Christ,"|| as, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ;"|| Sometimes, "Christ Jesus the Lord."¶ Sometimes, and very often, he is called "the Lord," without the addition of any other name or title; as where it is written, "And the Lord

* Luke, 24.—v. 31. † Acts, 1.—v. 21. ‡ Acts, 7.—v. 59.

§ Col. 3.—v. 24. || Acts, 16.—v. 31. ¶ Col. 2.—v. 6.

saw her ;”* and “They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre.”† The very angels give him this title. “Come,” saith the angel, “see the place where the Lord lay.”‡ Neither do men and angels only, but the infallible Spirit of God himself calls Christ The Lord. In the Old Testament, this great name is very often given to God the Son, as well as to the Father, and can be understood of no other than the Lord Jesus ; as where he is called “The Lord our righteousness ;”§ where God saith, “That he will save his people by the Lord their God ;”|| where Daniel beseeches God to hear his prayer for the Lord’s sake ; and wheresoever it is said in the prophets, “Thus saith the Lord,” it is always to be understood of the Lord Christ. It was his Spirit that was in the prophets, as St. Peter assures us.¶ From all which it appears, that by him all things were made, all things depend upon him, all things have their being or subsist continually in him, and he doth whatsoever he pleases in heaven and in earth, making all things in their several places to serve him, the supreme Lord, the universal Governor of the whole world.

But besides his original and essential title to absolute dominion over all things, as he is

* Luke, 7.—v. 13. † John, 20.—v. 2. ‡ Matt. 28.—v. 6.

§ Jer. 23.—v. 6. || Hos. 1.—v. 7. ¶ 1 Peter, 1.—v. 11.

God, he hath another also, as he is Emmanuel, "God with us," and therefore Jesus, or the Saviour of mankind; "for as such he is appointed heir of all things."* "He is Lord of lords, and King of kings."† "He is Lord of the whole earth."‡ "He hath the heathen given him for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession."§

"He reigns over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end."|| "He is Lord of all;"¶ "and over all."** "He hath authority given him to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man." "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son."†† In short, "seeing he, being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God, and yet took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; therefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should con-

* Heb. 1.—v. 2. † 1 Tim. 6.—v. 15. ‡ Josh. 3.—v. 11, 13.

§ Psalm 2.—v. 8. || Luke 1.—v. 33. ¶ Acts, 10.—v. 36.

** Rom. 10.—v. 12. †† John, 5.—v. 27.

ness, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Thus have I thought it good to lay all these places of holy Scripture together, that we may at one view behold what we ought to believe concerning our blessed Saviour's authority and dominion.

For here we see that he is the Lord of the whole earth, and of all the kingdoms and nations that are on it; that all the kings and princes, how absolute soever they may be in respect of one another, or of their subjects, are all subject to the Lord Jesus, and hold their power under him; that he executes judgment upon the sons of men; that his jurisdiction is not confined to the earth, but extends as far as heaven, and to the utmost bounds of the whole creation; that he is far exalted above all angels and all the power of the other world, as well as this; that all this supreme authority is committed by God the Father to him; and, because, as he was the son of man, he became obedient even to the death of the cross, and by that means merited or deserved it at the hands of God: that all creatures in heaven and earth are therefore bound to acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, and that this is highly for the glory

of God the Father; and that this his dominion and power shall be continually exercised to the end of the world, when his enemies being all destroyed, and his saints made perfect in glory, "he shall then deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father;"* and he himself also shall reign as King and Lord for ever. All must acknowledge, that he only is the Lord; and all creatures in heaven and earth are bound to own him for their Lord and Master.

But mankind in general, and particularly all the members of his church, have another and more especial obligation thus to acknowledge him: forasmuch as, when we were sold under sin, and therefore subject to the wrath of God, the Lord Jesus was pleased to purchase and redeem us to himself, on purpose that he might be our Lord and Master, and we his subjects and servants; as it is written, "He purchased his Church with his own blood."† "We are redeemed from our vain conversation with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."‡ "For he gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."§ Wherefore we, being thus bought

* 1 Cor. 15.—v. 24.

† Acts, 20.—v. 46.

‡ 1 Peter, 1.—v. 19.

§ Tit. 2.—v. 14.

with a price, are none of our own, but are his flock, his inheritance, his servants, his elect, his treasure, or peculiar people. Thus is he, in a peculiar manner, our Lord and Master. Having redeemed us to himself, as our great Lord and patron, he nourishes and maintains us at his own charge. He supplies us with all things necessary both for life and godliness: he feeds us at his own table, appoints us our several stations in the world, and blesses and sanctifies all occurrences to us, and makes all things work together for our good. If our consciences are wounded for sin, he binds them up and heals them again. He animates and strengthens us with his grace and Holy Spirit in the inner man; so that "we can do all things, through Christ that strengthens us." In short, he gives us whatsoever we have, he supplies us with whatsoever we need, he directs and assists us in whatsoever we do; and when our day shall be gone, and our work done, he will give us a great recompence of reward, saying, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

The joy of thy Lord—a phrase very much to be observed; for hereby he puts us in mind that he is not only a Lord in general, but that he is our Lord in particular; and that we ought to look upon him as such.

In the Old Testament, they did not only call him the Lord, but our Lord; as the holy David says, "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth."* And again, "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand."† And Daniel, "And now, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, for the Lord's sake." And so in the New Testament, when the Apostles, disciples, or such as believed in him, spake of him, with relation to the Church in general, they usually call him, as we do in our public prayers, Jesus Christ our Lord, as being the Lord of the whole Church, and of all the members of it. "Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God;"‡ and St. Paul, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." And so we all may, or rather ought to do. It is not enough for me to acknowledge Christ to be the Lord of all believers in general, but I must look upon him as my Lord and my Master in a particular manner; and so ought every one of us to do. "He tasted death for every man."§ And when we were baptized into his death, we then covenanted and promised to be his servants, and to own him for our Lord and

* Psalm 8.—v. 10.

† Psalm 110.—v. 10.

‡ John, 20.—v. 28.

§ Heb. 2.—v. 9.

Master; and which we are every one bound to do all our life long.

I say all our life long: for it is not enough for us to acknowledge it in general, or to think of it only now and then; but we ought to live in a firm belief, and with a constant sense of this upon our minds, that Jesus Christ is our Lord, our Master, and Governor; and that we are always at his service, under his command, entirely subject to his will and pleasure. He may command us what he pleases, and we are bound to do it. Neither must we look upon him as our Lord only at a distance, but as one that is always present with us; wheresoever we are, especially when we are at church; we are then to look upon ourselves as in the house of the Lord, in his holy temple, where he assures us he is particularly present; saying, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."* But above all, while we are at his holy table, where every thing hath the nearest relation to him that can be upon earth: the table itself is "the table of the Lord;"† the bread which we there eat is the body of the Lord;‡ the cup we there drink is the cup of the Lord; the whole feast is called the

* Matt. 18.—v. 20.

† 1 Cor. 10.—v. 21.

‡ 1 Cor. 11.—v. 24.

Supper of the Lord,* of our Lord and Master Christ: and therefore, all the while that we are there, we should carry ourselves with that reverence and godly fear which becometh servants in the presence of their Lord, their Almighty Lord, the Lord of the whole world.

O that we could keep this great truth always fixed upon our minds! It would be of mighty use and advantage to us through the whole course of our lives; which is the next thing I promised to shew you.

And, first, take notice that one great reason, why so many of those who profess the Gospel of Christ, take no care to live according to it, is, because they look upon Christ only as their Saviour, not as their Lord and Master. They have been taught, and accordingly believe as they ought, that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world, that he died for them, and was thereby a propitiation for their sins, and not theirs only, but for the sins of the whole world. And therefore they hope that he will save them from the wrath of God, and from all the punishments which are due unto them for their sins; and this is all that men generally expect from Christ their Saviour; and it is true, they have all the reason that can be to expect it, if they do but observe what

* 1 Cor. 11.—v. 20.

he has appointed, in order thereunto. But this they seldom do, upon this account, because, looking upon Christ only under the notion of their Saviour, Mediator, and Advocate, to make atonement for their sins, they are apt to be secure, and take no further care of doing what he hath appointed and commanded, in order to their obtaining pardon and salvation from him. Whereas, if they would look upon Christ as their Lord as well as their Saviour, their Master as well as their Redeemer, and therefore their Lord and Master, they would then see themselves as much obliged to obey his commands as they are concerned to believe his promises. There is no temptation they can be under, there is no duty they can set about, there is no place, no employment, no condition or circumstance of life they can be in, but this, if duly considered, would be a check upon them, and help to keep them within their line of duty.

I shall therefore instance such uses which the holy Scriptures direct us to make of this great truth, that the Lord Jesus is our Lord and Master; and I shall lay before you the use which our Lord himself makes of it in this place.

After his last Supper, he condescended to wash his disciples' feet; but, when he came

to Simon, Simon said to him, "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" Our Lord, among other things, answered, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me:" upon which Simon Peter said, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head:" where we may observe, that when St. Peter spoke to him, he still called him Lord; from whence our Lord seems to take the occasion of uttering these words: "Ye call me Master, and Lord; and ye say well, for so I am:" and then he adds, "If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet; for I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord, neither he that is sent, greater than he that sent him." His washing of his disciples' feet was a great instance of his kindness to them, and likewise of his humility and condescension. This, therefore, is the use that he made of this doctrine, that seeing he is our great Lord and Master, and yet he stooped so low, as to do such a mean office for his disciples; we, who are his disciples and his servants, should think nothing too mean, nothing too low, that we can possibly do for one another. And this is that virtue, wherein he would have us, in an especial manner, to follow his example. "Learn of me," saith he, "for I

am meek and lowly in heart."* And it is very observable, that he would have us learn meekness and patience, as well as humility, of him, upon this account, because he is our Lord. "The disciple," says he, "is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord; it is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. "If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?"†

And certainly, if our Lord Jesus was reproached, afflicted, and persecuted, it can be no wonder if we be so too. For how can we, his servants, expect to fare better in the world than he, our great Lord and Master, did? And if he, for our sakes, underwent all that was laid upon him with so much patience and meekness, that "when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously;"‡ what cause have we patiently to submit to whatsoever God, for his sake, shall see good to lay upon us, without being discomposed in ourselves, or disturbed and vexed at the instruments of it?

How well might the Apostle say, "The servant of the Lord Jesus must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach,

* Matt. 11.—v. 29. † Matt. 10.—v. 35. ‡ 1 Pet. 2.—v. 23.

patient?"* For otherwise, he would be far from carrying himself as the servant of such a Lord, and far from doing him any service. "For they that cause divisions, serve not the Lord Jesus Christ."†

Hence also, they who have servants under them, remembering that they have so great a Master above them, should learn to be as just and equitable unto their servants, as they desire their Master should be kind and merciful unto them. This is the use which the Apostle makes of this doctrine, saying, "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven."‡

But that which I would chiefly put you in mind of at present, is the duty which you owe to Christ, as he is your Lord; for as such you are certainly bound to carry yourselves towards him as becomes his servants in all respects. For, first, is Christ your Lord? Then you must prefer and love him above all things and persons upon earth; for as much as there is no thing nor person upon earth that hath so much authority over you as he hath, nor that expresses so much love and kindness to you as he doth. It was he that loved you, so as to give himself for you, on purpose to redeem you to himself. It was he that delivered you from the bondage of

* 2 Tim. 2.—v. 24. † Rom. 16.—v. 18. ‡ Col. 4.—v. 1.

corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God. It was he that purchased all manner of blessings for you, with the price of his own blood; and it is he who conferreth them upon you, and continues them to you. So that whatsoever good thing you have, whatsoever blessing or mercy you receive from the hands of God, you are indebted to Christ for it, and hold it only during the will and pleasure of him your Lord and Master. For, as God would never have been merciful unto you at all, unless Christ had died, so he would not continue any mercy to you, unless Christ your Lord continued to make intercession for you.

What infinite cause then have you to love and value him above all things, without whom you could have nothing to love or value? Hence it is that our Lord himself says, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me;"* whereby he gives us to understand, that he who loves any thing more than him, is not worthy to be his servant, or to call him Lord. And therefore we may truly say, with the Apostle, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha;"† that is to say, Accursed when the Lord shall come. "But grace shall be with

* Matt. 10,—v. 37.

† 1 Cor. 16.—v. 22.

all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."*

Again, Is Christ your Lord? What honor and respect then ought you to shew him upon all occasions? Far more than you do to any creature; yea the same that you give to the Creator himself, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." All, not only men but angels; for "God hath given him a name that is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in the earth, and things under the earth."† And when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, "And let all the angels of God worship him."‡ And if the angels themselves worship him, how much more ought men to do it? Especially they who own him to be their Lord, and profess themselves to be his humble servants.

Certainly you ought to shew him all the respect which is due to so great a Lord; and in a special manner when ye meet together in his name; for he himself hath said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."§

* Ephes. 6.—v. 24.

† Phil. 2.—v. 10.

‡ Heb. 1.—v. 6.

§ Matt. 18.—v. 20.

But is the Lord Jesus Christ here present? Is he in the midst of us? With what humility, with what reverence should we carry ourselves before him? Let us but remember, my brethren, that our Lord is now with us, wheresoever we meet together in his name, and we shall, I am sure, need no other argument to persuade us to worship him with reverence and godly fear. Moreover, is Christ your Lord? Then ought ye to obey him, and do whatsoever he commands you.

This is no more than what you expect from your servants, and they are bound by their covenants to do it. How much more are you required to observe what your Lord and Master, the Sovereign of all the world, requires of you? Besides all other considerations, this very relation you stand in to him obliges you to it; so that it is in vain to pretend that he is your Lord, and yet not to obey him: as he himself argues, saying, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

But I hope better things of you; and that as you own Christ to be your Lord, ye are ready to shew it, by doing whatsoever he hath commanded, so soon as it is made known unto you.

Therefore, that you may not pretend to be ignorant, I will, in his name and presence, put you, even the most unlearned, in mind

of what he would have you all do; and that it may have more force upon you, I will mention only such things as he himself was pleased to utter with his own mouth, when he was upon earth. Be it known, therefore, unto you, my brethren, that Jesus Christ, your Lord and Master, commands you all “to repent and believe his Gospel, to break off from your sins, and to cast away their cords from you;” to believe in God, and to believe also in him;* “to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind;”† “not to fear them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul, but rather to fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”‡ Always to pray to God;§ and “when ye pray, to say, Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.” “To seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, in the first place, and to take no thought for the morrow.|| To be merciful, as your Father is merciful; and perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.¶ To beware of false Prophets, which come to you in sheeps cloathing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.” To do unto all men as you would have them to do unto you; not to take advantage of their

* John, 14.—v. 1. † Mark, 12.—v. 30. ‡ Matt. 10.—v. 28.

§ Luke, 18.—v. 1. || Matt. 6.—v. 34. ¶ Matt. 5.—v. 48.

ignorance or necessities. To give alms of such things as ye have, or as much as ye are able. To take heed and beware of covetousness. To love one another, as he hath loved you. To "love your enemies, to bless them that curse you, to do good to them that hate you, to pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you."* To take his yoke upon you, and to learn of him to be meek and lowly in heart. To celebrate the sacrament which he instituted at his last supper, in remembrance of him. To take heed, lest your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life. In a word he commands, that "your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

These are the express commands of the Lord Jesus; and unless you obey him in such plain and necessary things as these are, you may call him Lord and Master as often as you please, but he will never own you for his servants or disciples. Neither have you any ground to expect salvation from him; for though he is the author of eternal salvation, he is only so to them who obey him.†

But besides that, Is Christ your Lord? Then are you his servants, so are all that are called by him, and own him to be their Lord;

* Matt. 5.—v. 44.

† Heb. 5.—v. 9.

as the Apostle says, "He that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is Christ's free man;" or rather is made free by Christ, though not in respect of men, yet in respect of him whose service is perfect freedom. Likewise, he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant.* However free or noble he may be in respect of other men, he is still the servant of the Lord Christ, and is bound to serve him, and him only. As the Colossians did, to whom the same Apostle says, "Ye serve the Lord Christ." God grant that the same may be truly said of every one of us.

But you will say, perhaps, What service can we do for so great a Lord? To which the Apostle answers in general, saying, "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."†

God our Lord and Saviour, hath bought us with a price; and therefore we are not our own, but his; both our body and our spirit are his, and we should glorify him in both. And that is the only way we can serve him, by setting forth his honour and glory in the world; which we are bound to do, by confessing him before men, and owning that he is our Lord and Master; by asserting and vindicating, against all gainsayers, his divine

* 1 Cor. 7.—v. 22,

† 1 Cor. 6.—v. 20,

power and authority over us and all the world; by waiting upon him in his house and at his holy table; by worshipping and adoring him as our Lord and our God; and by celebrating and praising his glory, his power, his goodness, and the wonderful works that he hath done for the sons of men. By putting up all our prayers to God the Father only in his name, and trusting on him alone for God's acceptance of them; by comforting his disconsolate, supporting his weak, and relieving his poor members; by reproofing such as dishonour his holy name, and persuading as many as we can to enter into his service, and glorify him in the world. In a word, as we desire to serve the Lord Christ, we must do all we can to shine as lights in the world, so as to excel all other professions in piety, in justice, in humility, in temperance, in patience, in purity, in charity, in every thing that is commendable and praise-worthy.

By this means we shall "shew forth the virtues and praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light." And truly, he being our Lord and Master, we are all bound in duty and conscience thus to serve and glorify him in every thing we do, according to the words of the Apostle, "Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God; and whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the

name of the Lord Jesus." And that too, not only through the whole course of our life, but also when we are called to it, in our death. "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."*

To encourage us to this, let us hear what our Lord himself says: "If any man serve me, let him follow me, and where I am, there also shall my servant be; if any man serve me, him will my Father honor."†

And what can we desire more? What greater happiness can we have, than to live with our Lord himself, in whose presence there is the fulness of joy? What greater honor than to be honored by him whom all things in the world honor? Yes; this happiness, this honor, have all they who serve the Lord Christ in sincerity and truth; which therefore God grant we may all for the future do. I am sure it highly concerns us all to do it. For, is Jesus Christ our Lord and Master? Then will he certainly one day, and that perhaps ere long, call us all to an account how we have served him, and reward and punish us according as we have, or have not, done as we ought. We may be confident of it, for he himself hath said he will; and

* Rom 14.—v. 8.

† John, 12.—v. 26,

hath told us withal, that they who serve him truly and faithfully upon earth, shall be advanced to his kingdom and glory; but "that every idle and unprofitable servant shall be cast into outer darkness." And therefore we had need to look about us, and make it the whole study and business of our lives to do him all the service we can; to improve all those opportunities and talents which he puts into our hands, for his use; and to finish the work which he hath given us to do, even to glorify him upon earth.

"Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find him so doing."

His need, and the great reward he hath promised to those who serve him faithfully, and the great punishment he hath promised to those who serve him unfaithfully, are all things which we should be very careful to consider, and to put in practice. For if we do not, we shall be cast into outer darkness, and shall be damned forever. But if we do, we shall be advanced to his kingdom and glory, and shall be blessed forever. Therefore let us be very careful to serve him faithfully, and to finish the work which he hath given us to do, even to glorify him upon earth.

SERMON VIII.

ON THE CRUCIFIXION.—CHRIST THE ATONEMENT
AND SATISFACTION FOR SIN.

JOHN, Chap. 19.—v. 30.

*When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar,
he said, It is finished: And he bowed his
head, and gave up the ghost.*

WHENEVER we commemorate the death of Christ, as we do this day, we ought also at the same time to remember the sins that caused it. And not only the sins of mankind in general, but ours also in particular; the sins which we all know we have been guilty of, and the condition they have brought us into: for until this is done, we can never be duly affected as we ought with the consideration of what the Son of God hath suffered for us.

For this purpose, therefore, let us look back a little upon our former lives, and take a short review of what we have, and what we have not done; what duties we have neglected, and what sin and wickedness we have committed since we came into the world. And if we do this with a single and impartial eye, we may easily perceive that our whole lives have been but as one continued sin against him, "in whom we live, and have our being;" and all our thoughts, words, and actions, a plain contradiction to those holy, wise, and righteous laws which he that made hath set before us. Our childhood and youth, at best, were spent in ignorance and vanity. And since we came to riper years, how little good and how much evil have we done? What spiritual duty did we ever perform, but we failed some way or other in the performance of it? Which of us have answered the end of our creation? We were all created to serve and honor our Creator—which of us have done it as we ought? And, instead thereof, how have we broken his laws, abused his mercies, slighted his judgments, mistrusted his promises, despised his threatenings, and thus dishonoured his sacred and most glorious name through the whole course of our lives?

I need not to descend to particulars; every one must know the several miscarriages of his

own life; and in the best of us they are many and grievous to be borne. By our sins we have offended the Almighty Creator and Governor of the world; for his law being, like himself, pure, holy, and perfect, every transgression of it is not only an affront to his Majesty, but repugnant to his very nature, and must be displeasing and offensive to him. Especially, if we consider withal, the sad effects of this divine displeasure and vengeance which we have deserved, and which may justly be executed upon us. Shame and pain, grief and poverty, sickness and temporal death, are the least, and but the beginnings of them. We are liable every moment to be cast down where "the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched;"* that is, where the consciences of men are perpetually tormented with the remembrance of their former sins, and subject to the wrath of God for ever.

This we have all deserved, and cannot but look upon ourselves at this time as so many guilty criminals, assembled before the Judge of heaven and earth, who may justly condemn us when he pleaseth to these our deserved punishments. We lie at his mercy; and yet we have no ground in the world to hope for any at his righteous hands, unless there is some way or other found out by which his

* Mark, 9.—v. 44.

anger may be appeased, and his justice satisfied for the dishonor we have done, and by the sins which we have committed.

This is the great work which the Son of God himself undertook, and as upon this day accomplished for us, when, as it is here said, "he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." Which that we may rightly understand, we shall consider three things:

1st, Who the person here spoken of was, who thus undertook to make atonement and satisfaction for our sins,

2dly, What he did for the accomplishment of it; "He gave up the ghost."

3dly, How we come to be so far interested in what he then did, as to obtain pardon and salvation by it.

1st, As to the person, he is here called Jesus, that is, a Saviour; which name was given him before he was born, and for this reason, because "He was to save his people from their sins."* But to know what kind of person this was, and is, so as to have a right idea of him in our minds, we must observe three things; which, if we consult the oracles of God without prejudice, we may easily find to be so peculiar to him, that they never did, nor can meet together in any other person in the world, but only in him.

* Matt. i.—v, 21.

1st, That he was "the only begotten Son of God, begotten from eternity of the essence or substance with the Father, and therefore of the same substance with him. The second person in the most blessed Trinity; really and truly God; co-equal, co-eternal with the Father and Holy Ghost; one and the same God with them.

2dly, That in the fulness of time he became man, born of a woman, and therefore of the same nature and substance with the rest of mankind, consisting of such a soul and body as other men have.

3dly, That as he was both God and man, so he was not one person as God, and another person as man, but one and the same person, both as God and man. So that, as the reasonable soul and body is one man, so God and man is one Christ.

If you ask how this could be done, that the infinite and immortal God should become also a finite and mortal man? I answer, that we being fully assured by God himself that it is so, as we cannot question the possibility of it, so ought we not to be too curious in searching into the way and manner how it was effected. What is necessary for us to know concerning it, is as clearly revealed to us as so great a mystery could be, in that answer which the angel Gabriel gave to the Virgin, saying, "The Holy Ghost shall come

upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”*

Hence it is, also, that he is called Adam, by the Apostle saying, “The first man, Adam, was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.”† And the same Apostle shews at large, that Adam and Christ were equally the common heads and representatives of all mankind, that all might recover by the one, what they had lost by the other. “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”‡ And in another place, “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”§ Which brings me to consider, secondly, how this divine person, having thus taken our nature upon him, made atonement and satisfaction to God for the sins of mankind, so as to put us again into a state of salvation. He did it by laying down his life; when, as it is said in my text, “He bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.” Then did he make full and complete satisfaction to God for the sins of mankind. But before we speak of his death, let us look back upon his life. And for this

* Luke, 1.—v. 35. † 1 Cor. 15.—v. 45. ‡ Rom. 5.—v. 19.

§ 1 Cor. 15.—v. 22.

purpose we may observe, that Christ, after he was born, lived about thirty years in a state of obscurity in the world; but being baptized and consecrated by the Holy Ghost descending visibly upon him, he publicly entered upon his office, and began the work he came to do, even to save mankind. And, from that time forward, whatever he spake, did, or suffered, was doubtless some way or other in order to that end. His words were all as so many oracles, uttered by God, to direct and instruct mankind what to believe and do, that they might be saved. And as "never man spake as he spake," so never man did as he did; for he went about continually doing good, and dispensing his miraculous charity among the people; by which he not only saved their bodies but their souls also, by convincing them that he was their Redeemer, and confirming their faith in him, without which they could never be saved.

And at the same time that he began publicly to do good, he began likewise to suffer evil. Not that he had deserved any, for as he was conceived and born, so he lived and died, perfectly free from sin; therefore all his sufferings, from first to last, could be for the sins of mankind only, in whose nature he underwent them. And that whatever kind

of punishment we have deserved, he suffered the same for our sakes and in our stead.

He was no sooner baptized, but he was led into the wilderness, and there tempted by the devil; who, from thence, carried him to Jerusalem, and there set him upon a pinnacle of the temple; and then "led him to the top of an exceeding high mountain," and all to prevail with him, if it had been possible, to sin against God. My brethren, have we deserved hunger, and thirst, and weariness? Remember how "Christ fasted forty days and forty nights, and was afterwards hungry."* And at another time "he was weary with his journey, and so thirsty, that he desired a woman of Samaria to give him a little water to drink."† Have we deserved to live in penury, and want of all things? Recollect, your Redeemer "had not where to lay his head:"‡ "Nor money enough to pay his tribute, without working a miracle:"§ "Nor had he food, but what he was beholden to some good women for, who ministered to him of their substance."|| Have we deserved shame and reproach? Never did man bear so much, as our Lord did for our sakes! "He was despised and rejected of men." He was

* Matt. 4.—v. 2. † John 4.—v. 6, 7. ‡ Matt. 8.—v. 20.

§ Matt. 17.—v. 27. || Luke, 8.—v. 3.

reproached for being mad, and for dealing with the devil. He was called a Samaritan, a glutton, a wine-bibber, a friend to publicans and sinners. He was made the derision of the rabble. He was stripped and then cloathed in scarlet. He had thorns put upon his head for a crown, and a reed put into his hand for a sceptre. He was mocked, he was spit upon, he was smitten upon the head, he was driven from one judge to another, and at last hanged upon a cross, between two notorious malefactors.*

Have we deserved grief and sorrow? He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He wept, he was grieved "his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death."† Have we deserved pain and torment? He was in such pain and torment that he sweat great drops of blood, which fell from his body to the ground."‡ Have we deserved to be forsaken of all our friends? He was forsaken of all his disciples, and betrayed by one of them. Have we deserved to be accused, arraigned, and condemned for our sins? He was accused, arraigned, and condemned for them. In a word, have we deserved death? He hath suffered it, "even the death upon the cross."

And having now brought our Lord unto the cross, let us observe one remarkable thing he

* Matt. 27.—v. 44. † Matt. 26.—v. 18. ‡ Luke, 22.—v. 44.

did while he was upon it; that was, that he prayed for those who nailed him to it, that God would pardon that very sin they committed in it, saying, "Father forgive them; for they know not what they do."* He softens their crime as much as possible, by imputing it to their ignorance; but as it was a sin never to be pardoned without him, so he prays for the forgiveness of it. Whereby he hath not only taught us, by his example as well as precept, to love and pray for our very enemies, but hath declared also, that it is only by his merits and mediation that our sins can be forgiven. "After this, seeing his mother standing by, he committed her to the care of his beloved disciple;"† and thus hath left us a great example of that care and honor which children ought to have of their parents, not only while they live, but when they die. Then he converted one of the thieves, to shew that conversion comes from him.

While, therefore, we attend our blessed Redeemer through all the trials he underwent for our sakes, may our hearts be filled with the devotion, the gratitude, and the godly sorrow which such an instance of his affection for his creatures rightfully demands. If suffering innocence, if patience under the most aggravated insults, and mute resignation to

* Luke, 23.—v. 34.

† John, 19.—v. 26.

the most dreadful tortures, if unexampled constancy under the heaviest afflictions of mind and the sorest pains of body, can move our sympathy, and call forth our admiration, these surely will be excited to the utmost, by the review of those occurrences which embittered the last hours of our crucified Saviour.

- The severity of his afflictions exceeded all utterance and all conception, as we learn from his own words: "O my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me."* And that moment too, we witness his resignation: "Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done." The usual agonies of the death of the cross were increased by the ingenuity of his murderers, and awfully embittered by the mysterious distresses of his own soul, when the sorrows of the Saviour burst forth in that pathetic exclamation, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me! And he bowed his head, and gave up the Ghost."

And this brings me to the last question I promised to consider, even how we come to be interested in what Christ hath done and suffered, so as to obtain pardon and salvation? A question which should raise our souls into joy and thanksgiving to the Almighty, that he hath thus made it possible for us to obtain salvation by what Christ hath done for us.

* Matt. 26.—v. 39.

For by him our sins may be as certainly pardoned, as ever they were committed; and our souls saved as easily as we can in reason wish they should be: and, blessed be his great name! we have a Saviour, "who is able to save to the utmost all that come unto God by him."* A Saviour, who being God as well as man, is of infinite power, and therefore can do what he will; and of infinite love and pity, and therefore will do what he can for us. A Saviour, who is perfectly acquainted with our temper, and "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," and perfectly knows both what we want, and how to help us. A Saviour, who being both God and man in one and the same person, most properly qualified both to suffer and to satisfy the divine justice, and so reconcile both God to us and us to God. In a word, a Saviour, who this day died to purchase pardon and salvation for us, and ever lives to apply it to us.

But now the question is, how he doth so? and what he requires on our parts in order to it? And indeed this he hath done abundantly in his holy Gospel, where his divine sayings are recorded, on purpose that mankind may always know from his own words what to do in this case. If we look into his Gospel, we shall find these and the like expressions:

* Heb. 7.—v. 21.

“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”* “He that believeth in the Son hath everlasting life, but he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.”† “I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in me should not abide in darkness.”‡ “I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die.”§ And in the very last words he spake to his Apostles, before he left them, he said, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”||

Now, as no man can be saved, unless his sins are first pardoned, so no man's sins can be pardoned, until he hath first repented of them. And, that we may be saved by Christ, we must believe and trust on him, both for grace to repent, that so our sins may be forgiven; and also for the pardon of our sins, when we have so repented. For both these things are at his disposal, “whom God hath exalted with his right hand to be a Prince

* John, 3.—v. 16. † John, 3.—v. 36. ‡ John, 12.—v. 46.

§ John, 26.—v. 26. || Mark, 16.—v. 15, 16.

and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."* And therefore, immediately before his ascension, he said "That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations."†

The first thing, therefore, which we ought to believe and trust in Christ our Saviour for, is, that he will save us from our sins, or that God for his sake will give us grace to repent and forsake them, and to walk for the future in newness of life. And as we have all the reason in the world to trust in Christ for this, it being the end of his incarnation, passion, resurrection, ascension, and intercession, as the Scriptures every where testify; so what he has thus graciously designed, we cannot doubt but that he is able and willing to accomplish. He sanctified our human nature in general, by uniting it to his divine person; and he sanctifies our human person in particular, by making us partakers of his divine nature, which he communicates to us by pouring out his Holy Spirit upon all the sound members of his body, that is, on all that truly believe in him. And therefore, he saith, "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing."‡ From whence it is plain that with him, as St. Paul

* Acts, 5.—v. 31. † Luke, 24.—v. 47. ‡ John, 15.—v. 5.

saith, "I can do all things, through Christ which strengtheneth me."* And if we do but believe in him, as St. Paul did, we also shall receive from him such supplies of strength as St. Paul had, so as to be able to do all things by him. By him we can resist the devil, and make him fly from us; and not only withstand, but conquer all temptations. By him we can crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts, so as to suffer sin no longer to reign in our mortal bodies, that we should obey it in the lusts thereof. By him we can live above the world, even whilst we are in it. By him we can be contented in all conditions of life, whether poor or rich, adverse or prosperous, and rest fully satisfied with whatever happens to us. By him we can pray, and read, and hear, and receive his mystical body and blood, to his glory and our own comfort. By him we can feed the hungry, clothe the naked, instruct the ignorant, support the weak, relieve the oppressed, and do good to all men, out of pure obedience to his commands. By him we can be meek and patient, humble, sober, and just in all our ways. By him we can love, fear and honor, obey and serve God, with all our hearts and souls, with all our might and

* Phil. 4.—v. 13.

mind. In short, by him "we can be holy as he who hath called us is holy, in all manner of conversation;" for he is the fountain of all goodness, and therefore by him we may be holy, and by him we may do good, all our days, if we believe and trust on him to enable us.

Thus, therefore, it is, that we may be all interested in the merits of Christ's death, even by faith, "which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen;" causing them to subsist in us, and putting us into the actual possession of those glorious things which God hath promised, and which we hope for, upon the account of what his only Son hath done and suffered for us. By this we may regain what we lost by the sin of our first parents. By this our lusts may be subdued, our hearts cleansed, and our whole man sanctified, in soul, body, and spirit. By this our sins may be all pardoned, our punishment remitted, and our person justified before God. By this our duty, though imperfect, may be accepted, and our souls eternally saved. In short, by this all we, who are here assembled, may as certainly be glorified saints hereafter in heaven, as we now are miserable sinners upon earth. And if any of us be not, the fault will be our own; for we have reasonable encouragement to believe and put our whole trust and confidence in

our blessed Redeemer, for all things necessary to make us holy here, and happy hereafter. We have the miracles he wrought to confirm us in it; we have the examples and experience of his Apostles, martyrs, confessors, and all the saints that ever lived, to assure us of it; and, above all, we have the word, the promises, the oath of God, of eternal truth itself, for it; so that we have more ground to believe in Christ, for grace, pardon, and eternal salvation, than we have to believe what we see, or hear, or understand: for our senses may deceive us, and so may our reason also; but God is of infinite wisdom, that he cannot be deceived himself, and of infinite goodness, that he cannot deceive us.

Nevertheless, what saith our blessed Lord? "When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith upon the earth?" I fear, if he should come now, he would not find much. Nothing is more common than to talk of faith, and pretend to it; and nothing more rare than to have such a faith as the Gospel requires, and of which we have now been speaking. Such a faith whereby "we look not at things which are seen and which are temporal, but at the things which are not seen, and which are eternal; and so live by faith and not by sight." Such a faith as overcomes the world, purifies our hearts, and adorns our lives with

holiness and good works. This is that faith which applies the merits of Christ's death to us for the pardon of our sins, and the salvation of our souls.

1. Let us therefore use those means which God hath appointed for it. Let us often converse with the Word of God, the object of our faith; "For faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."* Let us earnestly beseech the Almighty, by prayer and supplication, to give us faith; for, as the same Apostle tells us, "Faith is the gift of God."†

2. Let us be constant and serious, both in our public and private devotions, wherein, as we exercise our faith in Christ, he usually increases and strengthens it. We must often receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, instituted on purpose to put us in mind of his death, and to confirm our faith in it. Let us keep the blood of Christ always fresh in our minds, and memories; and take all occasions to reflect upon it; especially at such times which our Church hath set apart for that purpose. The same should be the subject of our meditations during the solemn season of Lent, particularly this last week of it, in which our Church hath wisely ordered:

* Rom. 10.—v. 7.

† Eph. 2.—v. 8.

the history of our Saviour's passion to be read every day, that we may exercise our faith in him. And, above all, this day is consecrated to the memory of Christ's death, that so we may repent of the sins for which he suffered, and rely on him for the pardon of them.

O the breadth, the length, the depth, the height of the love of God, in Christ Jesus our Lord! Who is able to comprehend it? Who can but admire and adore it? That the Almighty Creator of the world should have so much love and pity for his sinful creatures upon earth, as to send his only begotten Son to die upon the cross, and for sins committed against himself! Shall we then commit such sins against him, which nothing less than the blood of his Son could expiate? "Oh that our heads were waters, and our eyes a fountain of tears, that we might weep day and night;" and this day especially, because we are the occasion of his dying for us.

Why then should we despair of salvation, who have such an all-sufficient Redeemer as this is? One who is able to save to the utmost all that come to God by him. By him, therefore, let us go to God: let us put our whole trust and confidence in him, to be cleansed from our sins, and to be justified before God by him.

And now, O blessed Redeemer, who as on this day didst suffer death upon the cross, and art now at the right hand of God the Father in heaven, interceding for us, our eyes look up to thee, all our hopes and expectations are from thee. Send down thy Holy Spirit, we beseech thee, into our hearts; work in us true repentance, and open our eyes, to turn us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto the living God.

“For we can now do all things, through Christ that strengtheneth us.”

SERMON IX.

RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

1 CORINTHIANS, Chap. 15.—v. 20.

*But now is Christ risen from the dead, and
become the first fruits of them that slept.*

WHEN we seriously consider what the Son of God underwent for our sins, we cannot but be highly concerned and troubled at the remembrance of them, for which so great a person suffered. And, certainly, it was the greatest demonstration that ever was, or could be given, of the divine displeasure, against the sins of mankind, that no less a person than the Son of God himself was able to expiate them, nor by any less means than his own blood.

The consideration of which should not only deter us from the commission of sin hereafter,

but should make us loath and abhor ourselves for those which we have committed heretofore. But lest this consideration should lie heavy upon us, so as to sink us into despair, we must consider, that, as the remembrance of Christ's sufferings for our sins affords us great matter for humility and sorrow, so the remembrance of his resurrection supplies us with as much cause of joy and comfort. We had great reason lately to lament and bewail those sins which brought our blessed Lord with sorrow to his grave; and we have as great reason at this time to rejoice and triumph that he was raised again from it; which was so great a blessing to mankind, that it ought to be our constant employ while we are upon earth, as it will be when we come to heaven, to praise and magnify the eternal God; at least upon every Lord's day, which was therefore set apart for this service, because he rose upon it; and, above all, on that Lord's day which succeeded the Jewish passover, and which hath been ever since devoted by our Church to the memory of his resurrection, and to our rejoicing and praising Almighty God for so great a mercy as that was.

This, therefore, being the proper work of this day, I shall endeavour to shew you what you ought to believe concerning the resurrection of Christ, and what cause you have to

rejoice and to give thanks at every return of it, that you may say, with the holy Apostle, "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept."

In which words you may observe,
I. That Christ did truly rise again.

II. That he thereby became the first fruits of them that slept.

And, in order to explain these words, I shall consider,

1st. In what sense Christ is said to have risen from the dead?

2dly. What ground we have to believe he did so?

3dly. What benefit we have received by it, for which we ought to rejoice and give thanks unto God this day?

And, 1st. In what sense Christ is said to have risen from the dead? That we shall easily understand, if we consider how Christ so took our human nature upon him, that he became really a man of the same nature and substance with other men, in all things, except sin; consisting, as other men do, of a rational soul, and an earthly body, and both so united together, as that his body was quickened, informed, and actuated by his soul, by which means he performed all actions, and therefore was properly said to live as we do, and that for several years toge-

ther, until at length his body, by the excessive pain and torture that he suffered upon the cross, being made incapable of vital motion, and unfit for the soul to inhabit any longer, his soul was separated from his body, and so continued for some time. In this state he continued from Friday till Sunday morning, when his body being made a fit receptacle for his soul again, the same soul was again united to it; and thus the same man that before was dead, now lived, and is therefore said to be raised from the dead, or out of that state of death wherein he had continued all that time.

The next question is, What grounds have we to believe that Christ thus rose from the dead? In general, we have as much ground to believe that Christ rose from the dead, as we have to believe that we ourselves are now alive, or as much as it is possible for a thing of that nature to be capable of. For, besides that it was plainly foreshewn in the types, and infallibly foretold by the prophets under the law, and so could not but come to pass, we have the testimony of two angels for it, who were both eye-witnesses of the fact itself; for they saw him not only risen, but rising, and assisted him in it, by rolling away the stone which was at the mouth of the sepulchre where he lay, and told his disciples that

came to the place to see him, "that he was not there, but was risen."* And after he was risen, his disciples saw him frequently, conversed with him, eat and drank with him as really as they had done it before his passion. And that it was the same person they knew, by his visage, by his voice, by the print of the spear in his side, and of the nails in his hands and feet; which was so clear a demonstration, that it was the same body that was before crucified, that when one of his disciples doubted it, he said to him, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side;" which that disciple had no sooner done, but he was fully convinced it was the same person that had those wounds given him upon the cross.† Thus his doubting proved the occasion of our being confirmed more in the truth.

And indeed it is to be observed, that both St. Thomas and the rest of the Apostles were so fully assured that their Master, Jesus, was risen from the dead, that all the troubles and persecutions they afterwards underwent for his sake could never make them so much as doubt, much less deny it; but they all attested it to the last, and sealed it with their blood. This certainly they would never have

* Luke, 24.—v. 4, 5, 6. Matt. 28.—v. 6. —† John, 20.—v. 27.

done, had they not been as sure that they had seen him alive after he had been dead, as that they had seen him so before he died. And doubtless there never was any matter of fact, since the world began, so fully proved by the concurrent testimonies of so many persons, not only hazarding, but actually laying down their lives in the defence of it, as this was.

Neither must we think that this fundamental article of our Christian religion is grounded only upon the testimony of men and angels, for Christ himself hath given us so full, so clear a demonstration of it, that though no creature in the world had ever seen him after his resurrection, yet none could deny but that he did rise again, in that he did so exactly fulfil what he had promised; for he told his disciples, before his passion, that when he was gone from them, he would send them another comforter, even the Holy Ghost;* which he accordingly did upon the day of Pentecost, the Holy Ghost descending in a miraculous manner upon his disciples, and enabling them to speak all manner of languages.† But how was it possible for Christ to have done this, except he rose from the dead? Can a man that lies in the grave, and is not able to lift up himself from the earth; can such a one go up to heaven, and

* John, 16.—v. 7.

† Acts, 2.—v. 1, 2.

from thence send down the Spirit of God? It is impossible; for a dead man can do nothing, much less so great a miracle as that was. And therefore his doing it is an undeniable argument that he is indeed risen from the dead.

To which we may add also that infallible testimony which Almighty God himself hath hereby given to this truth. He bore witness to them that preached it, "both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will, as the Apostle speaks.* And would he, who is truth itself, bear witness to a lie? Would he have given such extraordinary power, and courage, and success to the Apostles in publishing this unto the world, if it had not been true? No, certainly. Every sermon the Apostles preached, every miracle they wrought, every suffering they underwent, every danger they were in for Christ's sake, was a divine demonstration that he is risen from the dead; especially considering, that how incredible soever it might appear at first, yet by the almighty power of God accompanying the publication of it, the whole world was soon convinced of the truth and certainty of this fact, that Christ is risen from the dead; and therefore

* Heb. 2.—v. 4.

I need not dwell any longer upon shewing what grounds you have to believe it, seeing God himself hath proved it so effectually to you, that I dare say you are all by his grace fully persuaded of it.

The other and principal thing to be considered in this subject is, What are those great benefits we have received by Christ's resurrection, for which we ought to rejoice and give thanks to God at each commemoration of it? In general they are so many and so great, that did we but fully understand, and were we but truly sensible of them, nothing would be nearer our hearts than thankfulness to God for so unspeakable a mercy as this was. It is not in my power either to describe or number them to you; and therefore I shall endeavour to lay before you some considerations whereby your hearts may be duly affected and raised to a more than usual degree of gratitude to God for the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Hereby he was declared to be the Messiah, and the Son of God, as the Apostle expressly asserts, where, speaking of our Saviour, he says, "That he was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."* That is, God, by raising Jesus from the dead,

* Rom. 1.—v. 4.

by his almighty power, did thereby fully declare and demonstrate to the world, that this Jesus, whom he thus raised, was his Son; not a mere man only, but the only begotten of the Father; so that, by raising him from the dead, he confirms what he said of him when he was baptized; "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."* And the Psalmist speaks of Christ in general, saying, "I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee."† This the Apostle‡ applies to the resurrection of Christ, because by that means God did declare to the world, that this Christ was his only begotten Son; otherwise he would never have raised him, and have confirmed all that he ever said or did; and thus the question which the High Priest proposed to our Saviour, saying, "I adjure thee, by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be Christ the Son of God,"§ was now effectually answered by his being raised from the dead.

Now what a mighty consolation is this unto us all, that our Saviour is, by his resurrection, declared to be no less a person than the Son of God? One so far above all creatures, that he hath absolute authority over them.

* Matt. 3.—v. 17.

† Psalm 2.—v. 7.

‡ Acts, 13.—v. 33.

§ Matt. 26.—v. 63.

One, who being raised from the dead, "is set at the right hand of God in heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come."* One so highly exalted by God, that he hath a name given him which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."† One whom the angels themselves are commanded to worship and acknowledge to be their Lord.‡ And it is very observable that they did so immediately after his resurrection. "He is not here," said the angel, "he is risen: come, see the place where the Lord lay."§ He is their Lord, it seems, as well as ours; "all power being given to him both in heaven and earth." Now what can, if this doth not, transport our hearts into holy ecstasies of joy and thankfulness to God, who hath provided so great, so mighty, so almighty a Saviour for us? What cause have we all to exclaim, with the blessed Virgin, this day, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoiceth in

* Eph. 1.—v. 20.

† Phil. 2.—v. 9, 10.

‡ Heb. 1.—v. 6.

§ Matt. 28.—v. 6.

God my Saviour?" In God my Saviour! What a comfort is this, that God himself should be our Saviour, or, which is all one, our Saviour God; and this is plainly declared to us, by his resurrection from the dead.

The joy and comfort this affords us, the Apostle intimates, saying, "We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again."*

Glad tidings indeed! That as there are no good things but what God hath promised us in Christ, so there are none of his promises but what he hath fulfilled and confirmed, by raising him from the dead. And now we have no cause to doubt of any thing that is either said or promised in the Gospel, seeing God hath fully approved, established, and set his own Almighty hand and seal to it. Therefore we boldly say, nothing was ever affirmed by Christ, but what was true; nothing foretold, but what shall be fulfilled; nothing commanded, but what is just and good; nothing threatened, but what shall be executed upon impenitent and hardened sinners; nothing promised, but what shall certainly be performed, to all that repent and believe the Gospel. Away, therefore, with all doubts

and diffidence about any thing that is there revealed. "Heaven and earth may pass away, but Christ's word shall never pass away."* He hath said "I and my Father are one;"† and whether we understand it or no, we may be confident of the truth of it.

Hath he foretold that he will one day come in glory, and all the holy angels with him, and "that he will then sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations?"‡ Then may you be as certain that you shall one day see him upon his throne, as that ye are now in this place and in his presence. Hath he commanded you to deny yourselves, to take up your cross, and to follow him? Then may you be assured it is good, and just, and necessary so to do. Hath he threatened destruction to all that live and die in their sins without repentance, saying, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."§ Then there is no avoiding it; you must either repent, or be condemned to utter darkness. And hath he promised rest to "all that labor, and are heavy laden," if they come to him? Then no question can be made of it, but that he will most certainly do it; for we have not only his own word, but God the Father hath

* Matt. 24.—v. 35.

† John, 10.—v. 30.

‡ Matt. 25.—v. 31.

§ Luke, 13.—v. 3.

confirmed it to us, by raising him from the dead; which, as it strengthens our faith, must needs be matter of joy and comfort to us. Yea, all the joy and comfort that we can expect from Christ is grounded upon this article of our faith, that he is risen from the dead.

Thus, then, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, we are fully assured that the work of our redemption was finished, and that, if it be not our own faults, our sins may be pardoned, and our persons justified before God, upon his account "who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification;"* that is, who died for our sins, and rose again, that by virtue of that death he might justify our persons before God.

Consider this, all ye that are sensible of your sins, and tell me whether you have not cause to rejoice, and bless God for the resurrection of your Saviour? If Christ had not risen again, what a dismal condition had you all been in? Like the evil spirits, "reserved in chains under darkness, to the judgment of the great day;" whereas, now that Christ is dead, and risen again, whatsoever sins you have committed, it is but repenting of them, and they shall all be pardoned. However

* Rom. 4, v. 25.

you have incensed the wrath of God against you, it is but believing and obeying the Gospel for the future, and he will be reconciled to you; "For Christ was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." We have sinned, but he hath suffered for our sins; we have deserved death, but he hath undergone it for us. Neither did he only die, but is risen again to confirm and apply the merits of his death to us. "Who then 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."* Let us, therefore, lay aside all melancholy and desponding thoughts, and put our whole trust and confidence in him who died and rose again for us.

From whence it appears also, that Christ, being upon his resurrection advanced to heaven, distributes not only his pardon for those sins which we repent of, but likewise grace to repent of them, that they may be pardoned; and, consequently, all the graces of his Holy Spirit are comprehended under that of repentance: so that whatsoever is necessary to be performed in order to our pardon and salvation, Christ, being raised from the dead, can now enable us to perform

* Rom. 8.—v. 33.

it; or, as the Apostle words it, "We can do all things, through Christ which strengthens us,"*

How great a comfort is this to all such amongst you as are weary of their sins, and desire to be eased of them! You cannot but find, by your own experience, what a mighty refreshment it is in all your spiritual conflicts, to consider that your Saviour, being risen from the dead, is always ready to assist you, and to supply you with such measures of his grace whereby you may be enabled either totally to subdue your lusts, or effectually to withstand all temptations to them. For my own part, I really think there is no joy, no pleasure, in this world, to be compared to that which arises from a firm faith, and right apprehensions of Christ's being always not only interceding for us in heaven, but also present with us upon earth, to direct, support, and carry us through the various changes and chances of this mortal life, till he hath brought us to himself in glory: that he is always more ready to help, than the devil can be to tempt us: that his grace is always sufficient for us. When we are perplexed, and know not what to do, he presently conveys such light into our minds, that we plainly see the way we ought to

* Phil. 4—v. 13.

walk in. When our souls are dejected, distressed, tormented with the remembrance of our former sins, he saith to us, as he did to the man in the Gospel, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee." When we meet with crosses and troubles in the world, which are apt to distract our thoughts, and make our passions turbulent and unruly, he by his Spirit reduces them into order, and gives us strength not only to bear, but to improve whatever happens, to his glory and our good. When we are touched with a sense of our present infirmities, and the sin and corruption still remaining in us makes every thing uneasy and uncomfortable to us, he binds up our wounds, he heals the troubled breast, and gives rest to our souls; assuring us, that he himself will stand by us, and enable us not only to resist, but overcome all these our spiritual enemies: so that when we exclaim, in the words of the Apostle, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" we may add with him, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."* He that thinks not this to be a matter of real joy, knows not yet what it is to be a Christian.

By the resurrection of Christ, we are fully assured, that he will be our Judge at the last

* Rom. 7.—v. 24.

day; as the Apostle long ago observed, saying, "That now God commands all men every where to repent, because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."* It is true, his commission to judge the world was granted to him before his passion; "for the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son;" but it was sealed and published at his resurrection from the dead, whereby God publicly owned, declared, and confirmed him to be, as the Saviour, so also the Judge of mankind. This is one great end of his being raised again, "that we may all appear before his judgment seat, and there receive according to what we have done in the flesh, whether it be good or evil."†

And this, certainly, is no small comfort to them who believe in Christ, that they shall give up their accounts at the last day to him in whom they have believed; that he, who is now their Advocate, shall then be their Judge. Then we may be confident that we shall have all the favor shewn us, that either the law or the Gospel can allow of: neither can we doubt, but that all the promises which he made us,

* Acts, 17. vv. 30.

† 2 Cor. 5. vv. 10.

when he was upon earth, will be exactly fulfilled by him when he sits upon his throne. Hath he promised, "that those that come to him he will in no wise cast out?"* Then we need not fear being rejected by him to eternity, if we do but come unto him in time. Hath he promised, "that they who believe in him shall never perish, but have everlasting life?"† Then certainly will he make it good at that day. So that no one ever did, or ever shall believe aright in him, but shall then be saved by him from ruin and destruction. In short, hath he promised to prepare a place for us, and to receive us to himself, that where he is, there we may be also? Then need we not, we cannot question but that the place will be ready for us, and that we shall live with him for ever. The consideration of which cannot but make us grateful, and fill our mouths with joy and thankfulness to Almighty God for the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the great foundation of all these our hopes and expectations from him. Especially considering that not only our souls, but our bodies too, will be at that day advanced to the highest glory they are capable of; for as Christ is risen from the dead, "so is he become the first fruits of them that slept." And as the Apostle argues, "Since by man

* John, 6.—v. 37.

† John, 3.—v. 10.

came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead: for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." The first Adam died, and we must die; the second Adam rose again, and therefore shall we rise again. So that Christ's resurrection is not only a proof, but the cause of ours, and we shall as certainly rise again as he did.

In which respect, Christ's resurrection affords us as great matter of comfort, as any hitherto mentioned.

This is that wherewith Job comforted himself in the midst of all his troubles: "I know," says he, "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 mine eye shall behold, and not another."*

But here we must observe, that though the substance of our bodies will be the same as they now are, or as they will be when we die, yet the disposition and qualities of that substance will be much altered. "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." And though it be still the same body,

* Job, 10.—v. 25, 26.

yet that body shall be so disposed and ordered, that it shall far exceed that wherein our souls are at present confined; for, as the Apostle assures us, "He shall change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself."*

Who then can express the comfort that a soul, which is truly pious, must needs receive from a firm belief and serious consideration of this, that the very body he now hath, shall not only be raised again, but it shall be made much better than it was before; fashioned like unto Christ's body: that is, as pure, as glorious, as spiritual, as it is possible for a body to be. We cannot but all find, by sad experience, that the bodies we now carry about with us, are a great clog and hindrance to us in the performance of all religious duties, as also in the pursuit and enjoyment of real happiness; and that too, not only when they are in pain or sickness, but also when we have all outward ease and health. For our souls are so closely united to our bodies, that so long as they are in them, they cannot act without them; but in all their operations are forced to make use of the animal spirit in our bodies, which are gene-

* Phil. 3.—v. 21.

rally too gross or heavy, or else irregular and disorderly. Hence it comes to pass that we are commonly very dull and heavy in all religious exercises; our imaginations are disturbed, our passions unruly, and our thoughts so inconstant, that we find it difficult to fix our minds to serve the Lord without distraction.

And, besides this, our bodies, by reason of the several humours which are apt by turns to be predominant in them, do not only impede and hinder us in doing what is good, but excite and stir us up to what is evil and sinful. Hence it is, some are passionate and fretful, others melancholy and dejected; some are inclined to lust and uncleanness, others to drunkenness and intemperance.

But it will not be so when our bodies are risen again: then they will be pure and spiritual, and so free from petulant humours, that they will be perfectly subject to the soul, and obedient to the dictates of reason and religion; as ready upon all occasions to serve the soul, as the soul shall be to serve God.

And it is no small addition to their comfort to consider also the manner how they shall rise again; even with greater joy and triumph, with more pomp and solemnity, than can be possibly expressed or imagined.

And "he will send his holy angels, with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."*

What a joyful day then must this needs be to all that love Christ's appearing! It will be, it is true, a sad and terrible day to all those that have lived and died in their sins: but I speak not now of these, but of such as live and die sincere members of Christ's body. How pleasant will the trumpet sound, how welcome will that day be to such as these! when these bodies, which they had mortified and kept under by watching, prayer, and praise, shall now be re-assumed by them to partake with them of glory and immortality.

This the Apostle looked upon as a matter of extraordinary comfort to all that truly believe in Christ, and obey his Gospel. "For the Lord himself," saith he, "shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we be ever with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."†

* Matt. 24.—v. 31.

† 1 Thess. 4.—v. 16, 17.

Having therefore considered how many and great advantages accrue to us by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ; that he was thereby declared to be the Messiah and Son of God; that his Gospel was established, and our faith confirmed in it; that we are assured he hath finished our redemption, and made complete satisfaction for all our sins; that he is able to mortify our corrupt nature, and make us holy; and that he is thereby become the first fruits of them that slept, so that by the means and virtue of his resurrection, we also shall rise again to life immortal; hence, as we cannot but acknowledge we have cause, it must needs be our duty to rejoice, and to praise and magnify the eternal God, for so unspeakable a mercy as this was. And, as the Psalmist observes, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad therein. The Lord is my strength and my song, and he is become my salvation."*

O let us then, my brethren, ever keep the feast of Christ's resurrection; as the Apostle says, "Not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."† Let us not keep it at any time with rioting and drunkenness, not with strife and envying,

* Psalm 118.—v. 23, 24.

† 1 Cor. 5.—v. 8.

but with praising God for raising our Saviour from the grave, to turn us from these and all other sins whatsoever. Neither must we content ourselves with barely remembering Christ's resurrection; but, as St. Paul gave it in charge to Timothy, saying, "Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead, according to my Gospel."* And so let me exhort you. Remember always that Christ is risen from the dead, that he is now making intercession for you. "And if ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, and not on things in the earth."† For where should your heart be, but where your treasure is? Where should your affections be, but where your Lord and Saviour is, the best friend, the greatest treasure that you have in the whole world? Let us therefore now bid adieu to all things here below, and go up to dwell with Christ in heaven; that our hearts may be there now, where we hope both our souls and bodies shall be for ever, in and through him who is risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.

* 2 Tim. 2.—v. 8.

† Col. 3.—v. 1, 2.

SERMON X.

BLESSEDNESS OF THE BELIEVER.

Gospel of St. JOHN, Chap. 20.—v. 29.

Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

ALL holy Scripture being given by divine inspiration, may truly be called the oracles of God. But so much of them as was spoken by Christ, was not only inspired or dictated by the Spirit, but actually uttered by the mouth of God himself. And therefore it is no wonder that so much wisdom and goodness, as well as truth, appear in all his sayings, as might be easily shewn in many respects. I shall mention, at present, only one; which is, that when he spake, as he often did, only upon some particular occasion,

he ordered his words so, that they were not only proper to that occasion, but likewise of constant and general use to all mankind, that all might be some way or other edified by every thing he said. As when some told him of the Gallileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. he said, "Suppose ye that these Gallileans were sinners above all the Gallileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."*

When some asked him whether it was lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar? He, upon the sight of a piece of money current among them, gave them a general rule to be observed, not only in this, but by all men in every thing relating either to God or the King, saying, "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's."†

When he heard a certain woman crying out and saying unto him, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked;" he told her, and all others, "Yea rather blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it."‡ The same may be observed throughout the Gospels. Whatever our Lord said, though the occasion

* Luke, 13.—v. 3. † Matt. 22.—v. 21. ‡ Luke, 11.—v. 28.

of his saying it was ever so particular, yet it was generally necessary for all mankind to know.

Thus far I have observed, because it will serve to explain the words of my text, spoken by our Lord upon a particular occasion, which was this: He being risen from the dead, the same day, at evening, appeared to all his Apostles, except St. Thomas, who happened not to be with them. The rest, soon after meeting with him, told him they had seen the Lord; but he was so far from believing it, that he said, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe."

The Apostle little thought that his Lord heard and knew what he said, as he most certainly did; for eight days after, appearing again to his Apostles, St. Thomas also being with them, he singles him out from among the rest, and bids him try the experiment, without which he had said that he would not believe; saying to him, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing;" which St. Thomas having accordingly done, he presently professed his belief, by saying unto him, "My Lord, and my God." Whereupon the holy Jesus saith unto him, "Thomas,

because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

In which words he first gives the Apostle reproof for his not believing without seeing; "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed;" implying that this was not believing him, or his Apostles, but his own eyes: which, though it may be truly called, as it is here, believing, yet it is such believing as is of little value with men, of less with God, in that it is not grounded upon his authority, but upon a man's own senses.

But having said this to his Apostles, our Saviour, according to his usual divine manner, turns his discourse from him to all mankind, that all may know what that true faith is which hath blessedness entailed upon it; and how blessed a thing it is to believe those things which we never saw, saying, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." He speaks not of believing his resurrection only, which gave him the occasion of saying it, but of believing in general whatsoever God hath revealed; and we are therefore bound to believe, although we never saw it, nor have any other ground to believe it, but only his Word.

This is what I shall now endeavour, by his assistance, to explain. For which purpose, we shall first consider, What it is to believe

things in general. Thus our Saviour saith to St. Peter, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"* and to all his disciples, "If ye have faith, and doubt not."† And St. Mark says, "If he shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass."‡ To the same purpose St. James adds, "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering, or nothing doubting;"§ from which it appears, that a man can be properly said to believe a thing only so far as he doth not doubt, but is fully persuaded of it in his own mind.

Thus St. Paul expresses the greatness of Abraham's faith, by his being fully persuaded "that what God had promised, he was able to perform."||

Now there are several ways by which we come to be thus persuaded of a thing, or to believe it. Some things we are persuaded of from the testimony of our senses; as we see a thing to be white or black, we taste it to be sweet or bitter, and therefore do not doubt, but are persuaded it is so, and so may be truly said to believe it; as it is said of St. Peter, in this chapter, "that he saw and believed;" and of St. Thomas, in my text, "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast be-

* Matt. 14.—v. 31. † Matt. 24.—v. 21. ‡ Mark, 11.—v. 23.

§ James, 1.—v. 6.

|| Rom. 4.—v. 21.

believed." For in such cases, although our senses move, or induce us to think, or be persuaded a thing is so as they represent it, yet the thought or persuasion itself is an act not of the senses but of the soul, and as such may properly be called faith, or believing, as it is here. Other things we are persuaded of by our reason, either immediately upon the first proposal of them to our consideration, or else by consequence, till we come at last to that which fixed our thoughts; so that our minds rest satisfied with it, as a necessary result from such premises; and therefore we are said to be persuaded of it.

But such kind of rational persuasions also, take their rise very often from our senses; as, in the case before us, St. Thomas saw Christ after he had been dead, of the same visage and stature in all respects, just so as he used to see him before; and he put his finger into the holes which the nails had made in his hands, and the spear in his side, and so felt them to be really such as the nails and spear had made; and from thence concluded, that this must be the same person that he knew before, and saw thus pierced upon the cross and dead: and consequently, he was persuaded, or believed, that he was indeed risen from the dead. But this he could not but now believe in a manner whether he would or no, having so plain and sensible a demonstra-

tion of it; and which is the reason why his faith is here reproved, as not comparable to that whereby a man believes what he never saw. But there are other things which we are persuaded of, or believe, upon the testimony, not of our own senses or reason, but that of other men; who, telling us of any thing which they have seen, or heard, or know, we, without consulting our own senses or reason, usually take their word, and believe it to be so, only because they say it. Such kind of belief or persuasion is very common, and it is indeed that without which we could have no satisfaction with one another.

But behold now and admire the infinite goodness and mercy of the blessed God to fallen sinners, who, knowing what uncertainties we are put to, even in things of the greatest moment, and such as belong to our everlasting peace, hath found out another way whereby we may come to know them, and such a way as can never fail. For he, being willing that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth, hath revealed and declared such truths as are necessary to our salvation; so that we have his Word for them, which is infinitely more than the testimony of our senses, our reason, and that of all mankind. Yea, so much that it is impossible that any thing more could be done, whereby to assure us of them.

For God being truth itself, as the Apostle saith, he cannot lie;* yea it is impossible for him to lie.† And therefore, what God saith must be true, and to be believed, because he says it. And how much soever any truths may seem above our understanding and comprehension, yet if they come attested by his divine infallible authority, we have infinitely more reason to be persuaded of them, than we have of any thing that we ourselves may seem to comprehend or understand. And if our minds are inclined to receive any truth at all, they must needs receive such in the highest manner, and with the strongest faith they are capable of.

And yet this is the course which Almighty God hath taken to inform and persuade mankind of all necessary truths, from the beginning of the world. Adam was no sooner fallen by the instigation of the old serpent, but God himself said, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head;"‡ and so passed his own word for it, that Adam himself, and his posterity, might have the firmest ground that could be to believe that one should be born of a woman, who should destroy the works of the devil, and restore mankind to their first estate.

* Tit. 1.—v. 2.

† Heb. 6.—v. 18.

‡ Gen. 3.—v. 15.

But seeing this word was not to be actually fulfilled till about four thousand years after, and therefore by the Apostle called "the fulness of time,"* when about half that period was passed, God was pleased to renew and repeat it again to Abraham, who living two thousand years after Adam, was just the middle person between him and Christ Jesus; for it was God himself also who said to Abraham, "In thee, and in thy seed, shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;"† whereby he plainly signified, that what he had before said, concerning the seed of the woman in general, should be fulfilled in Abraham; and that all nations and families upon earth, as well as his should be blessed by it, and therefore ought to believe so.

After this, God in all ages raised up prophets, by whom he spake his mind, and revealed his will, till at length he did it by his only begotten Son, as the Apostle observes, saying, "God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath, in these last days spoken unto us by his Son."‡

The prophets were no more concerned, but as his heralds, to proclaim the divine will and pleasure. The words they uttered were given them by inspiration; as our Saviour

* Gal. 4.—v. 4. † Gen. 12.—v. 3. ‡ Heb. 1.—v. 1, 2.

said to his Apostles, "It is not ye that speak, but the spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."* So it was with the prophets; "For the prophecy came not in old time, by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."† They spake not of themselves, but it was his word, his will, they declared. Therefore they exclaim "Thus saith the Lord," that people might observe, that what they were now to say, was not their own, but God's word.

Now in this his most holy Word, as it hath pleased Almighty God to command many things which we are bound to do, and to forbid many things which we are bound to avoid; so there are many things which he is pleased to reveal, all which we must therefore believe, because he saith them. As, for example, some things he affirms concerning himself, his wisdom, his power, his omnipresence, his goodness, his justice, his mercy, and all his perfections: concerning his Son, his divinity, his incarnation, life, passion, resurrection, and ascension: concerning his Holy Spirit, his divine power, his gifts, and wonderful operations in the world: and concerning the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, and many other remarkable persons, and what they did in their several generations. Some

* Matt. 10.—v. 20.

† 2 Peter, 1.—v. 21.

things he hath been pleased to promise to those who believe and obey him ; as that he will be merciful unto them, and bless them, and keep them from all evil, and give them all the good things they can desire, both in this world and the next. Some things he hath said by way of threatening, to those who refuse to believe and serve him ; as that he will punish and afflict them in their souls, bodies, estates, relations, or the like ; and at last give them their portion in outer darkness, with the devil and his angels. Some things also he hath been pleased to foretel, concerning particular persons or nations, or else concerning all mankind in general ; as that they shall all rise again at the last day, and stand before the tribunal of the Lord Christ, and there receive according to what they have done, whether it be good or evil ; and accordingly, the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal.

These things hath God spoken in his holy Word ; and they who are thus accordingly persuaded in their hearts of the truth of such things, which they never saw, merely upon God's Word, they may be truly said to believe, in a Gospel sense, as having exercised that faith which the Apostle says " is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of

things not seen.”* And these are they which the holy Jesus here pronounces blessed, saying, “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”

That they are blessed we cannot doubt, having Christ’s own word for it. Wherein this blessedness consists, and how great it is, is a matter that deserves our consideration and enquiry. For which purpose we may observe, that as God made the world by his word, so it is by his word also that he upholds and governs it in general, and mankind in a particular manner, ordering and disposing them according as they do or do not believe it. If Adam had believed what God said, he would never have ventured to eat of the forbidden fruit; but believing what the serpent said to the woman, rather than what God said to him, he eat thereof, and so destroyed himself and his posterity. But so great is the mercy of God to mankind, that notwithstanding their fall, through unbelief in their first parents, yet he was pleased so to order it, that all of them might rise again, and be restored to their first estate, unless they themselves, every one in his own person, were guilty of the same fault, even of unbelief. The Judge of the whole world hath told us,

* Heb. 11.—v. 1.

saying, "He that believeth not shall be damned;"* and "He that believeth on him, is not condemned; but he that believeth not, is condemned already."†

Whereas, on the other hand, they who believe God, and so give him the honor that is due to his most sacred name and word, are so far from being condemned, that they are blessed by him; blessed in the highest manner that he himself can bless them. It is not in my power to enumerate the blessings he confers upon them, much less to describe their greatness; but those who are acquainted with the holy Scripture will see such divine truths as these:

"Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

They are blessed with profit and comfort from the Word of God, whenever they read or hear it read or preached to them; "For it works effectually in them that believe."‡

They are blessed with the pardon and remission of all their sins, through the blood of Christ; "For to him gave all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."§

* Mark, 16.—v. 16.

† John, 3.—v. 18.

‡ 1 Thess, 2.—v. 13.

§ Acts, 10.—v. 43.

They are blessed with the righteousness of God, whereby they are justified or accounted righteous before him. "For they are justified by faith;"* as "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness,"† which is therefore called "the righteousness of God by faith,"‡ and "the righteousness of faith itself."§

They are blessed with the nearest relation that can be to the Most High God; they are his children by adoption and grace. "For as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name."||

They are blessed with a principle of new life, which directs and governs them in all their actions; "for they live by faith."¶

They are blessed with success and prosperity in all their undertakings. "Believe the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper."**

They are blessed with a kind of omnipotence. "For all things are possible to him that believeth."†† "I can do all things, through Christ that strengtheneth me."‡‡

* Gal. 2.—v. 16. † Gen. 15.—v. 6. ‡ Phil. 3.—v. 9.

§ Rom. 4.—v. 13. || John, 1.—v. 12. ¶ Habak. 2.—v. 4.

** 2 Chron. 20.—v. 20. †† Mark, 9.—v. 23.

‡‡ Phil. 4.—v. 13.

They are blessed with joy unspeakable and full of comfort, amidst all the changes and chances of this mortal life, through him in whom they believe, even Christ their Saviour; "Whom having not seen, they love; in whom, though now they see him not, yet believing, they rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."* And they are blessed at last with everlasting life, consisting of all the blessings of which mankind is capable. And then they receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls.†

Thus blessed are all they that believe. Thus Abel and Enoch, Jacob and Joseph, and Noah and Abraham, Sarah and Isaac, Moses, and Joshua, and Rahab, were blessed, all by their faith, as the Apostle shews at large. And then he adds, "What shall I say more? For the time would fail me, to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Sampson, and of Jephthah, of David also, and 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 flight the armies of the aliens."‡ And so he goes on recounting the

* 1 Peter, 1.—v. 8. † 1 Peter, 1.—v. 9. ‡ Heb 11.—v. 32.

glorious things which the saints of old performed by their faith; "that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen,"

From all which we may certainly conclude, that if we have faith, we must needs believe what our Saviour here saith: "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

But where shall we find such blessed persons now? Our Lord himself said, "When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"* If he should come, as we do not know but he may, in our days, I doubt he would find but little. There are many who profess to believe, but there are few who do so. They who are born and bred where the Christian faith is professed, they, of course, profess it; and because they acknowledge, or at least do not deny the articles of it to be true, they take it for granted that they believe them. Whereas, if they search into their hearts, they may easily find that they are not fully persuaded of any one of them, so as to believe it as firmly as they do those things which they see or hear; "For it is not with the mouth, but with the heart, that man believeth unto righteousness."†

* Luke, 18.—v. 8.

† Rom. 10.—v. 10.

When the heart is convinced and persuaded of the truth and certainty of God's Word, and of every thing in it, then, and not till then, can a man be truly said to believe.

Men too commonly profess to believe some part of God's Word, although at the same time they do not believe the rest. As, for example, they profess to believe that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world, and hope to be saved by him: but if they really believed this, they could not but believe whatsoever is affirmed, or promised, or threatened, or foretold in the Word of God; and consequently they would live accordingly. But, seeing that men do not, it is plain, that for all the great noise that is made about it, there is but little true faith in the world; there are but few so blessed, as to believe those things which they never saw.

But, my brethren, let us strive to be of the number of those few. We profess to believe the books of the Old and New Testament, as given by the inspiration of God. I dare say, there is not a person here present, that can or will deny it. But let us do what we profess; let us really believe, so as to be fully persuaded in our minds, as we can be of any thing in the world, that whatsoever is there written, is written by God himself; and consequently, that what is there recorded, affirmed,

or said, is infallibly true, although we never saw it; and what is promised, threatened, or foretold, shall as certainly be fulfilled, as if we saw it fulfilled already; which that we may, we must constantly and earnestly pray to God for it: for, as the Apostle tells us, "Faith is the gift of God."*

But we have no ground to expect he should give us it any other way than in the use of those means which he hath ordained in his Church. Now, as the same Apostle saith, "Faith comes by hearing;"† not only by hearing sermons, as some imagine, but by hearing the Word of God either read, or any way made known to us, and by hearing it, so as to lay it up in our hearts, keep it in our memories, ruminate upon it in our minds, and exercise it upon all occasions, especially at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, where the great objects of our faith are represented to us, on purpose to strengthen and confirm it in us.

By the constant and sincere use of these means, there are none of us but may attain the divine power of believing those things we never saw; and then how blessed, how happy, shall we be! Then we shall never hear or read God's holy Word, but it will go to the

* Eph. 2.—v. 8.

† Rom. 10.—v. 17.

bottom of our hearts, and have its due effect upon us. Then we shall never doubt of the great mysteries of our religion, but take God's Word for them, whether we understand them or no. Then we shall see the finger of God, in all the wonderful works and miracles recorded in the holy Scripture, and adore him for them, as if we had been present when he did them. Then shall we constantly expect the great day, wherein God hath foretold us we must give an account of all our actions, and accordingly strive to be always ready for it. Then shall we tremble at every threatening that God hath denounced against impenitent and obdurate sinners, and dread the thoughts of being in the number of them. Then all the promises which God hath made us will seem as so many "strong holds, to us prisoners, of hope," to which we may resort upon all occasions, and therefore "shall never be afraid of evil tidings; for our souls will be always fixed, trusting in the Lord." Then, he that made us will have mercy upon us, pardon and accept us, admit us into the number of his own children, and will lift up the light of his countenance upon us. Then shall we know that all things work together for our good, and that "these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”*

Then we shall be able to crucify the flesh, to withstand the temptations of the devil, to overcome this world, to have our conversation in heaven, where our treasure is, where our Lord and Saviour is, where our inheritance is. Then we shall always live as under the eye of God, and have respect to him in every thing we say or do. Then all things here below will appear to us in their proper colours, for we shall look upon them as nothing in comparison of those great and glorious objects which our faith will continually represent to us. Then we shall have fellowship with the Father, and with the Son, and with the Holy Ghost, protecting, assisting, and abiding with us upon all occasions. We then shall be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, as knowing that our labor is not in vain in the Lord.”†

What can I say more? When we have once learnt to live with a constant belief of those things which God hath revealed to us

* 2 Cor. 4.—v. 18.

† 2 Cor. 15.—v. 58.

in his holy Word, although we never saw them, we shall then be every one as blessed as we can wish to be; blessed wheresoever we are, blessed in whatsoever we do, and blessed in whatsoever we have; blessed while we live, and blessed when we die; and all by him in whom we believe, though we never yet saw him, even our ever blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all glory and dominion, world without end. Amen.

SERMON XI.

PERSEVERANCE IN THE FAITH OF CHRIST.

HEBREWS, Chap. 10.—v. 23, 24.

*Let us hold fast the profession of our faith,
without wavering; for he is faithful that
promised.*

*And let us consider one another, to provoke
unto love and to good works.*

IN order to our holding fast the profession of our faith, it is necessary that we first hold fast our faith or hope without wavering; and certainly we have all the reason in the world to hold fast our hope in God's mercy, through Christ, seeing he hath atoned for our sins, with his own blood, and is always making intercession for us in heaven.

This the Apostle makes the chief ground of all our hope. And so, in another place, says, "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which

entereth into that within the veil whither our forerunner is for us entered.* An anchor that is fixed in the ground is a sure stay for the ship in all weathers; but the anchor of our soul is entered into that within the veil, into that rock which is in heaven. It is fixed upon Christ himself, our Almighty Mediator or Advocate, and therefore will keep the soul both sure and steadfast, whatever storms or tempests may beat upon it. Unless our faith fail, Christ will certainly never fail us; and therefore let us hold fast our faith, as the Apostle here speaks, without wavering or doubting: "For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind, and tossed."† He is not like a ship, whose anchor is fixed at the bottom of the sea, but like a wave at the top of it, that is tossed to and fro with every wind that bloweth. Such a one is unstable in all his ways; whereas he, whose heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord, is stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; "forasmuch as he knoweth his labour shall not be in vain in the Lord;"‡ therefore we ought to hold fast our faith or hope without wavering. The only question is, what we ought thus to believe and hope for in God our Saviour? To which I answer, that we ought to believe and

* Heb. 6.—v. 19. † James, 1.—v. 6. ‡ 1 Cor. 15.—v. 58.

hope in him, for whatever God hath promised in his holy Word. "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen."* That is, in him they were all made, and in him they are all good to such as believe and trust in him for the blessing promised.

And the sum and substance of them all is contained in that promise which the Apostle here quotes out of the prophet Jeremiah: "This is the covenant that I will make with them: after those days saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."†

He here promises to put his laws into our hearts and to write them in our minds. He once wrote his laws upon two tables of stone, but he here promises to write them upon the fleshly tables of our hearts, to put them into our minds, to give us a right understanding of his will, and power to perform it; to fill our souls with a sense of our duty to him, to give us grace to repent and turn to him, so as to walk in all his commandments and ordinances blameless, and to serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.

This is the first thing promised in the new covenant made to mankind in Christ; and

* 2 Cor. 1.—v. 20.

† Heb. 10.—v. 16.

this is the first thing we ought to believe and trust in him for; even “to open our eyes, and to turn us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God: that we may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in him.”* These are his own words to St. Paul, in which he plainly acquaints us, that we must first be turned to God, before we can receive forgiveness of sins from him. The want of observing this has been the great reason why so many perish, notwithstanding Christ suffered for them. For many who profess to believe in him, usually believe only for the pardon of their sins. However they live, they hope, when they come to die, God will have mercy upon them, and forgive them their sins for Christ’s sake. But this is a great and dangerous mistake. It is the occasion why many are condemned, who otherwise might have been saved. They should have taken the course which he himself hath prescribed; in the very covenant itself which he hath made with the Father for them; in which the first thing that God promised, is, to put his laws into our hearts and to write them in our minds.

And then it follows, “And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.”

* Acts, 26.—v. 18.

He first promised grace to know and keep his laws, and then to pardon our former transgressions of them, and so to pardon as to remember them no more, but to be as perfectly reconciled to us, as if we had never offended him. If we would have the benefit of this covenant, wherein all our hopes are founded, we must carefully observe the method in which it runs: we must first believe and hope in our blessed Saviour, for such a measure of God's grace and Holy Spirit to be bestowed upon us, by means of his mediation, whereby we may be created in him unto good works, so as not only to repent of our former sins, but to live for the future according to his laws.

Neither must we hold fast our faith only, but likewise the profession of it, without wavering. As we hope for grace and pardon only from Christ, we must profess and own to the world that we do so. We must not be ashamed to acknowledge that we can do nothing of ourselves whereby to obtain the favor of God, but that we are beholden to our Saviour for it; and that we do not doubt but that by him we shall have it. "We must sanctify the Lord God in our hearts and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope that

is in us, with meekness and fear."* If any man ask us, why we hope for mercy and salvation? we must freely tell him, it is because Christ died and rose again, and is now in heaven, making intercession for us: that we hope for nothing but from him, and that from him we hope for all things we can desire to make us happy.

This we must do, as we expect to be saved by him; for the Apostle saith, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."† And himself saith, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."‡ And therefore, as we desire to attain the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls, we must hold fast the profession of it, without wavering, as long as we live.

And truly we have all the reason in the world so to do; for, as the Apostle here saith, "He is faithful that promised." If an honest man hath promised us a kindness, we take his word, not doubting but that he will do it; but we have infinitely more cause to take God's word to believe what he hath said, and

* 1 Peter, 3.—v. 15. † Rom. 10.—v. 10. ‡ Matt. 10.—v. 32.

to hope for what he hath promised ; and not only promised, but confirmed it too 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 upon the hope set before us.”*

Why then should ye doubt? What need ye fear? “ The Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.”† Do ye fear, that though “ ye are called ye shall not be chosen?” “ Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.”‡ Do ye fear temptations? “ God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”§ Thus, whenever any fearful or doubtful thoughts arise in your hearts, you ought to suppress them all with the serious consideration of the faithfulness of God, who, for the merits and mediation of your Advocate in heaven, “ hath given you such exceeding great and precious promises, that by those ye might be partakers of the divine nature.”||

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthi-

* Heb. 6.—v. 18. † 2 Thess. 3.—v. 3. ‡ 1 Thess. 5.—v. 24.

§ 1 Cor. 10.—v. 13.

|| 2 Peter, 1.—v. 4.

ness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”* Let us keep our bodies under, and bring them into subjection to our souls. Let us read and hear God’s holy Word, that we may know what he hath either promised or required of us, and resolve to believe and act accordingly. Let us pray daily to him, in the name of Christ our Saviour, for wisdom and grace, and all things necessary to our being saved by him. Let us take all opportunities of receiving the sacrament of his Last Supper. Let us be always thinking and exercising our faith on him, as ever appearing in the presence of God for us. Let us openly profess our dependance upon him, and our obligations to him, for all the promises God hath made us. Let us hold fast this profession of our faith, without wavering. “He is faithful that promised.”

The Apostle adds, “Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love, and to good works.” This is the next inference he draws. He advises, that we who profess the faith of Christ, being all of the same body, should not live as strangers, but should consider, or take notice of one another, so as to provoke and excite, not to wrath and anger, not to envy and malice, not to hatred and emulation, not to strife and contention, but to love

* 2 Cor. 7.—v. 1.

and good works; to love one another, as Christ hath loved us, and to do all such good works as he hath prepared for us to walk in, that our "light may so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven."*

But that you may better understand how this ought to be done, it will be necessary to consider what is required in order to it.

1st. It is required, that when you see a brother,—any one you are acquainted with, that is called a Christian; when you see such a one walking in rioting or drunkenness, chambering or wantonness, in strife or envying, or any way disorderly or unbecoming his holy profession, you must shew your love and kindness to him, by admonishing, reproving, and rebuking him for it; by using all means to reclaim and bring him to himself again. "Thou shalt not," saith the law, "hate thy brother in thy heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him;"† plainly implying, that he who doth not this, is so far from loving, that he hates his brother.

But how this ought to be done, St. Paul teaches you, saying, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken with a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of

* Matt. 5.—v. 16.

† Levit. 19.—v. 17.

meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."* You must do it with that calmness of temper, with such mild and gentle words, that he may see your Christian love and charity; that you do not "count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."†

But there are some who, to all outward appearance, are sober and innocent, at least so far that none can accuse them of any gross or notorious sin, but yet, in the mean time, live only to themselves, without any regard to their duty either to God or their neighbours, unless it be now and then from motives of worldly policy.

But, in order to your performing what is required in my text, it is necessary to consider these also: To provoke them to love and to good works.

Now I suppose there are but few of you who know not some such among your acquaintance, and none but may be very serviceable to them, by putting them in mind, as you have occasion, that they must not only eschew evil, but do good in the world; that it is not enough for them to avoid what God has forbidden, but to do what he hath commanded. And accordingly, you must provoke and stir them up all you can, to

* Gal. 6.—v. 1.

† 2 Thess. 3.—v. 15.

perform the great duties of religion in good earnest ; to love God above all things, and their neighbour as themselves ; to make conscience of performing their daily devotions ; to spend the Lord's day especially in his service ; to be constant at his public worship ; to frequent the sacrament of the Lord's Supper ; that they may be careful to maintain good works, ready to distribute, and willing to communicate : in short, that "they follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."* Thus St. Paul did what is here required. "If by any means" says he, "I may provoke to emulation them which are flesh, and might save some of them."† And thus all Christians ought to do ; and there is none of you but may, if he will, whatsoever his state or condition of life may be in this world.

You have all your several relations, neighbours, and acquaintance, with whom you often converse, and therefore cannot but know how they live. Now, if you perceive that they are careless and negligent of any of the great duties they owe to God or man, ye ought to put them in mind of it, and use all means you can to persuade them to take more care of themselves, and of their future and immortal state. You do not know what

* Heb. 12.—v. 14.

† Rom. 11.—v. 14.

a word spoken in season may do; it may possibly save a soul from eternal destruction; perhaps they may slight it at present, but the blessed God can bring it to their remembrance when he pleases, and fix it so firmly upon their minds, as to make it a great means of their salvation, as he often doth. And however it prove, you have discharged your duty both to God and them; you have endeavoured to provoke them to love and good works; and whether they mind it at present or no, they will one day see cause to thank you, and you will receive benefit and comfort from it, especially when, by the blessing of God, it proves successful: for thus saith the Holy Ghost, "If any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his ways, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."* "And they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever."†

As for such among you who make it your care and study to serve God, you also in the next place must consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works, by exhorting, assisting, directing, and encouraging one another in all the great duties of religion;

* James, 5.—v. 19, 20. † Dan. 12.—v. 3.

by shewing all Christian love and brotherly kindness to each other; by often advising and consulting together how to improve the talents which your great Master hath put into your hands to the best advantage; how you may bring most glory to God, and how you may do the most good in your generation, and in that station of life in which the providence of God hath placed you. "Then they that feared the Lord," saith the Prophet, "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 upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels, and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."* "Let us therefore hold fast the profession of our faith, and let us 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." Whereby he plainly intimates, that the best way to hold fast the faith, and to provoke one another to love and to good works, is to keep close to the Church, and to the public assemblies which are there kept for the service and worship of God; this being

* Mal. 3.—v. 16, 17.

the great means appointed by God himself, whereby to confirm our faith, to inflame our love, and to excite one another to every good work.

This it does in a wonderful manner, whenever it is performed as it ought to be, with that reverence and godly fear which is due to the immediate presence of the Most High God! And this I doubt not but many here present have found to their comfort; for, although you have sometimes gone dull and cold into the church or assembly of the faithful, have not your devotions been warmed, have not you hearts burned within you, when you have seen how attentive they are in hearkening to God's holy Word read or explained to them? how cheerfully they lift up their voices together in praising his holy name? and how humbly they prostrate themselves upon their knees before his throne, in the prayers and supplications which they offer up to his divine majesty!

Such solemn performances as these, when duly observed, cannot but very much awaken and stir you up to join heartily with them; but much more, as being actuated and influenced as they always are, by God's Holy Spirit moving upon them, and blessing and sanctifying them to the great ends and purposes for which he hath appointed them. Insomuch, that many of those also, who have

come to church only out of custom, without any desire or design to serve God there, have by this means been strangely wrought upon to join as well as they could in it. St. Paul observes, in the like case, when speaking of the Christian assemblies at Corinth, "If all prophesy, or perform their religious duties there as they ought, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all. And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth,"* Much more they who come with pure hearts, and sincere desires to perform their devotions to Almighty God; they seldom or never fail of having such a sacred fire kindled in their breasts, which will soon break forth, and provoke them to love and to good works. This many have already found, and you would all do so, if you would but make sincere trial of it.

On the other hand, they who forsake or leave off the assembling themselves together, they do not only sin in not performing their duty, but expose themselves to all manner of sin and mischief in the world. They can never hold fast their faith, nor be provoked to love and good works; in that they do not

* 1 Cor. 14.—v. 24.

use the means for it: and yet this was the manner of some, as the Apostle saith, in his days. And we find by experience that so it is now. There are too many, who never make any conscience of frequenting the public worship of God; no, not upon the Lord's day, but spend it about worldly business or in sloth and idleness, and live as without God in the world. But they will one day find, to their cost, that there is a God who judgeth the world, and will judge them most severely for neglecting the duty and service which they owe to him. There are others also, who have for some time made conscience of attending upon our solemn assemblies, and have done many things gladly; and yet afterwards have fallen into such a coldness and indifference in religion, that they concern themselves no longer about the duties of it, or else take up with the form instead of the power, and so leave off our public assemblies altogether.

I should hope there are none such here present at this time. However, to prevent your ever being of that number, let me beseech you to consider what the Apostle here says, "If we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin." But, lest you should mistake his meaning, observe, that by sinning, he doth not mean any one

particular sin, but a complication of sins, like that whereby the angels fell. St. Peter says, "God spared not the angels that sinned;"* or, as Jude says, "That kept not their first estate."† This was their sin, and this the Apostle here means by sinning, when men keep not their first estate, but, after having received the knowledge of the truth, reject and apostatize from it. "He that despised Moses's law, not any one commandment only, but the whole law, died without mercy; of how much soever punishment suppose ye shall be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the Spirit of Grace."‡

Where, by sinning, he means when men fall from Christ, despise him and the Holy Ghost, by which he spake and wrought so many miracles, and so are in effect guilty of that which he calls speaking against the Holy Ghost; which he there saith, "shall never be pardoned." This is what St. John calls the "sin unto death." This is that falling away, from which they who are guilty of, the Apostle says, "it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, seeing they

* 2 Peter, 2.—v. 4. † Jude, v. 6. ‡ Heb. 10.—v. 28, 29.

crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." This, in short, is the plain sense of these difficult places in Scripture. From whence we may learn what a dangerous, what a desperate condition they are in, who, when they have taken upon them the profession of Christianity, do afterwards apostatize and forsake the means of grace which are administered in it. It is true, if they recover themselves, it is a sign they did not quite fall away, and therefore may still find mercy. But this happens very seldom; and therefore we should be careful not only of a total apostacy, but of every thing that leads to it. Keep therefore from it as far as you can; come not near the borders, lest you perish from the right way. "Be not tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." "Take heed of those false teachers among you, who privily bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." Be not in the number of those "who will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears." "Mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have heard, and avoid them; for they that

are such serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own bellies ; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." Let not every trifling occasion keep you from the public worship of Almighty God or the holy Sacrament, lest at length you come to slight them altogether. " But hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering, and consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works ;" not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, exciting, confirming, and building up one another in your most holy faith.

In a word, strive all you can to shine as lights in the world, to be patterns and examples to one another in your piety and devotions towards God, in your contempt of the world, in humility, in temperance, in purity, in meekness, in patience, in justice, in charity, in all manner of Christian virtues, all the days of your life ; and never cast away your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. " But be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, " He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved ;" and which God of his infinite mercy grant us all, through Jesus our Lord. Amen.

SERMON XII.

CHRIST THE FOUNDATION OF ALL THE PROMISES.

2 CORINTHIANS, Chap. 1.—v. 20.

*For all the promises of God in him are yea;
and in him Amen, unto the glory of God
by us.*

ALL Scripture being given by inspiration of God, must needs be of infinite advantage to mankind; and it certainly is so in all points wherein it is possible for a writing to be of any real advantage to us. There we have the only infallible, as well as the most ancient history extant: an history of things spoken and done from the beginning of the world; a complete system of such truths as are necessary for men to know and believe, in order to their being eternally happy, revealed and attested by the God of truth. There we have a body of laws, made and published by the

Supreme lawgiver, for all his creatures to observe and obey. There we have an impartial account of the punishments he hath heretofore inflicted upon those who transgressed his laws, and such as he hath threatened against those who shall presume to do so hereafter. There also we have the great charter of all the privileges and favors which he hath granted and promised to his faithful people; which is a matter of such infinite advantage to us, that if there was nothing else, we could never sufficiently value and prize that writing in which it is recorded. The holy Scripture is the only book in the world in which we have any promises we can rely upon for grace and favor in the sight of God.

But there we have promises made and confirmed by the Almighty Governor of the world; some to his saints and servants, as they are a body united under one head; others to every single member of that holy communion; some in a manner absolute, others upon such conditions as may be easily performed by us; some for this life, others for that which is to come. In short, we have there given us such "exceeding great and precious promises, that by them we may be partakers of the divine nature"* in this world, and, in the next, eternal life, through

* 2 Peter, 1.—v. 4.

Jesus Christ our Lord: that is, they are all affirmed in him; so that without him God would have denied us all grace and favor, whereas in him, or upon his account, he hath promised or affirmed, that he will give us all we can desire. But, in order to inform our judgments, and to exercise our faith aright, I shall endeavour, with all plainness, to state the following observations.

1st. When God created man, he at first made only one person, whom he called Adam, in whom was contained the whole human race; and therefore, when Adam eat of that fruit of which God had said "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die,"* all men became guilty and obnoxious to the death then threatened. They fell from their first estate, into the displeasure of Almighty God, and incurred all the judgments and curses which attend it; as it is said, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."† But as all broke God's commandments in their first parents, and as no man in his own person continueth in all things which are there written, "Therefore all men by nature are under the curse of God, and are the children of his wrath;"‡ so that if we look upon mankind as in their

* Gen. 2.—v. 17. † Deut. 27.—v. 26. ‡ Eph. 2.—v. 3.

degenerate and corrupt state, however some may flatter themselves, no man hath so much as one real blessing in the world, nor can ever hope for any, for all things are accursed to all men, because all have sinned.

Mankind being thus brought into this state by the fall of the first Adam, God, to shew forth his grace and truth, raised up another Adam, upon whom the death which he had threatened might be accordingly executed, and the curse taken off to as many as would not continue in the same sin of unbelief by which they fell at first. This he did by promising "that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, and the serpent should bruise his heel."* For though this was not to be actually fulfilled till many years after, yet the promise being made by God soon after the fall of the first Adam, was from that time of full force and virtue, inso-much that he who was then promised is called the second Man,† because he was promised before any other was born, as well as the last Adam, because he was the head and representative of all mankind, as the first was. But, as the effect of this promise was to depend upon all men's belief of it, God was therefore pleased often to renew it by his prophets in all ages, till the time drawing

* Gen. 3.—v. 15. † 1 Cor. 15.—v. 47.

near when it should be accomplished, the prophet Jeremiah expressly said, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform the good thing that I have promised to the house of Israel, and to the house of Judah."* This was that good thing which he had foretold, and which is therefore called in a peculiar manner by St. Paul, "The promises made unto the Fathers," as being the greatest of all the promises, and that in which the rest were comprehended.

Hence, therefore, "when the fulness of time was come, God," according to his holy Word, "sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law."† His only begotten Son, therefore, was made of a woman, and took upon him the nature, not of any one or more particular men, but the nature of man in general, so as to become another Adam; and as such suffered the death which God had threatened to the first, and he suffered it upon the cross, and "so redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."‡ And seeing he who suffered this accursed death, was not only man, as was the first Adam, but God also, his death was not only equivalent to that which was threatened to all men in Adam, but was of that infinite

* Jer. 33.—v. 14. † Gal. 4.—v. 4, 5. ‡ Gal. 3.—v. 13.

worth and value, that he thereby not only took off the curse, but merited all manner of blessings for those who are of that nature in which he suffered. He did not only redeem them that were under the law from the curse which was due unto them from that law, but “that we might receive the adoption of sons;”^{*} And if sons, then heirs of God and of all the blessings which he, being now reconciled and become our most loving and gracious Father, can bestow upon us.

And lastly, Almighty God being thus reconciled to mankind by the death of his Son, for his sake hath promised them all the blessings which were merited for them; so that it is only in him, and upon the account of his merits, that the promises were at first made, as the holy Scriptures testify. Let us hear what that general promise made to Abraham was: “In thy seed,” said God, “shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.”[†] In thy seed, that is, in Christ, as the Apostle observes.[‡] It was therefore in him that God promised all nations should be blessed, or that all blessings should be conferred upon them, in and through him, according to what the Apostle adds: “Blessed be God, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in

^{*} Gal. 4.—v. 5.

[†] Gen. 22.—v. 18.

[‡] Gal. 3.—v. 16.

heavenly places in Christ."* It is still in Christ that we are blessed, according to the promise that God made in him, as the same Apostle often observes, saying, "Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus;"† and again, "That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ."‡ In another place he saith, "That the covenant in which all the promises are contained, was affirmed of God in Christ;"§ "and that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the Fathers."||

To all which I shall only add, that to shew how this new covenant, or system of divine promises, is founded and confirmed in Christ, it is represented in holy writ under the name and notion also of a testament; and the Apostle, speaking of it under that notion, saith, that "Christ is the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the New Testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance; for where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of

* Eph. 1.—v. 3. † 2 Tim. 1.—v. 1. ‡ Eph. 3.—v. 6.

§ Gal. 3.—v. 17. || Rom. 15.—v. 8.

the testator."* Here Christ is represented as the testator. The eternal inheritance and all the blessings that are promised to mankind, are as so many legacies thus given to them.

But a testament supposes the death of the testator, without which it is of no force, as the Apostle argues; and therefore concludes, that it is by means of that death which he suffered for the redemption of transgressors the promises are received; which plainly shews they are founded upon him, and upon his atonement, by which the curse is removed which was threatened by the law, and the blessings merited which are promised in the Gospel; so that, if the Son of God had not been born of a woman, and if the serpent had not bruised his heel, that is, if he had not been put to death by the instigation of the devil putting it into the heart of Judas to betray him;† if this, I say, had not been done, mankind could never have hoped for any mercy; for God would never have promised them, any more than he did to the angels that kept not their first estate: whereas, by means of his death, the serpent's head is bruised, his power and all his wicked designs are broken, God is now reconciled and at peace with them. Thus, being the God of peace, he will bruise Satan under their feet.‡

* Heb. 9.—v. 15. † John, 13.—v. 2. ‡ Rom. 16.—v. 20.

He is now become gracious and merciful to them, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; and he hath promised them all the good things they can desire, to make them happy: but he hath promised them only for the sake of his beloved Son, Christ Jesus, and upon account of that meritorious death which he suffered in their nature, and therefore it is in him, as the Apostle here saith, "that all the promises of God are yea." And as in him they are yea, so in him also are they Amen: that is, as the word signifies, firm and stedfast; as certainly fulfilled as they were established in him. He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end of all the promises; they are all begun, continued, and finished in him, so as to be fulfilled exactly according to the nature of each of them. For the understanding of this, it will be necessary to consider how the promises of God are always fulfilled.

This God's faithful people have observed in all ages, and have taken particular notice of it, how, notwithstanding all the difficulties that have intervened, such as might seem to make it impossible, yet such promises were always fulfilled, as we see in the promise that God made to Abraham, that his posterity should be delivered from the bondage of the Egyptians after 430 years; for, notwithstanding all the strength and policy that was used

to prevent it, yet it came to pass, at the end of 430 years, even the self-same day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt.* The same king Solomon notices in the promise which God had made to give the children of Israel quiet possession of the land of Canaan, saying, "Blessed be the Lord, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promises, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant."† So it is in all such promises; there never fails one word of what he hath once said shall be, how great, how hard, how impossible soever to us finite creatures it may seem to be. The same may be observed also of promises which he hath made upon certain conditions; as "that he will pardon those who repent; that he will give rest to those who labor and are heavy laden; that he will add all things needful for this life to those who first seek his kingdom." There is never any failure on God's part. If the promise is not fulfilled, it is only because the conditions are not performed. The persons are not such to which the promise is made, and therefore it cannot be fulfilled to them; but all who do what is required on their part, and are such to whom

* Exod. 12.—v. 41. † 1 Kings, 8.—v. 56.

God hath promised any kindness, they are as sure of it as God is true. "Heaven and earth may pass away, but his word can never fail." These promises are fulfilled also in Christ: "Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins."

It is he, therefore, that gives eternal life, the greatest blessing that God ever promised, and that to which all the other promises tend. And he gives it, as he is glorified by the Father for that end and purpose, "that the Father may be glorified by him." All the blessings that God hath graciously promised are effectually conferred upon us by our blessed Saviour, as he is now sitting at the right hand of God, and there appearing in his presence for us, our only Mediator and Advocate; and therefore it is written, "That grace and truth came by Jesus Christ;"* because it is only in him that God hath promised us any grace and favor. Thus, "All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen."

Hence we may learn what firm ground we have to believe and trust in the promises of God, seeing they were not only made by him who cannot lie, but are likewise confirmed in his only begotten Son, who ever liveth to

* John, i.—v. 17.

see them fulfilled; so that we have both the immutability of God the Father, and the all-sufficient merits and mediation of God the Son, whereupon to build our faith and confidence in them; that, as the Apostle argues in the like case, "By two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an High Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec."* And being an High Priest for ever at the right hand of God, he is ever making intercession for those who believe in him, that all the blessings which he hath purchased for them with the price of his own blood, and which the Father therefore in him hath promised, may be accordingly conferred upon them; by which means, though in themselves they have none, yet in Christ they have the firmest ground that could be made, wherein to fix the anchor of their hope, and to put their confidence in the promises of God. To which I shall only add, that the promises being all made and fulfilled in Christ, we are thereby instructed in the

* Heb. 6.—v. 18.

great use and necessity of the Sacraments which Christ hath ordained; not to confirm his promises to us, but to confirm our faith in them, they being so many visible signs and pledges of the new covenant, in which all the promises are comprehended.

The Sacrament of Baptism is of such necessity, that without it we have no right to them; for they, being all founded in Christ, belong only to those who are made members of his body, which none can be any other way than by being baptized into him. But they who are so baptized have such an interest in all the promises of God, that they cannot fail of having them actually fulfilled to them, if they do but perform the easy conditions upon which they are made. And as for the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"* Yes, truly it is; so that he who eateth this bread and drinketh this cup of the Lord worthily, partaketh of the body and blood of the Lord Christ, in whom the promises are all made, and so has them all actually fulfilled to him; which, if people generally were but as sensible of as some are, they would neglect no opportu-

* 1 Cor. 10.—v. 16.

nities of receiving that holy Sacrament. They who neglect it, have too much cause to suspect that they care not for any of the blessings which God hath promised, nor whether they live in eternal happiness or misery hereafter, so that they may but live in ease, and plenty, and credit, while they are in this world. This is plainly at the bottom of that gross neglect of this holy Sacrament which is so visible among us. But it is not long before all who are guilty of it will wish with all their souls they had not been so. But, alas! wishing will then do no good; and therefore, before it is too late, I beseech you to consider how you will answer this short question: If you care not whether you have the mercies and favors which God hath promised in his Gospel or not, why do ye ever pray for them? If you really desire to have them, why do ye not come to that ordinance where you may receive them; and where Christ is always ready to bestow them upon all who come to him for them? This you cannot doubt of, seeing, as you have now heard, that all the promises of God are both confirmed and fulfilled in him, and that you may there receive his body and blood as a pledge and earnest of them.

Neither do we receive only these and such like instructions from this great doctrine, but such advice also, that if we follow it, we shall

live and be happy for ever. For, as it hath pleased the Almighty Creator and Governor of the world to make us so many great and precious promises, and to confirm them in our Lord and Saviour, we should therefore be advised to believe and trust on them with all our hearts, that being the great condition required of us towards their being performed; "For the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe."* "Therefore it is of faith," saith the Apostle, "that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, even of all the faithful."† And the Apostle acquaints us here what that faith of Abraham was, "That he staggered not at the promise of God, through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; being fully persuaded, that what he had promised he was able to perform; and therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness."‡ This therefore is that faith whereby we attain the righteousness of God, with all the blessings he hath promised to it, when we do not stagger or doubt of what he hath promised, but are fully persuaded that,

* Gal. 3.—v. 22.

† Rom. 4.—v. 16.—.c.† Rom. 4.—v. 20.

however difficult or impossible it may seem, he both can and will perform it; whereas "he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar,"* which is the highest affront that can be offered to his divine glory.

Let us, therefore, take heed, that we never doubt any thing that God hath said; but that we may be as fully persuaded of it in our minds, as we possibly can be of any thing in the world. The stronger our faith is in the promises of God, the greater will our share be in the blessings that he hath promised: as our Saviour said to the two blind men in the Gospel, "According to your faith, so be it unto you."†

The same may be said to every one of you here present; according to your faith in God, so is his grace and favor unto you: the more you believe in him, the more you receive from him. Of this the holy David was so sensible, that he made his prayer accordingly, saying, "Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in thee."‡

So that if our faith fail not, all our spiritual enemies shall never hurt us, nor "God withhold any thing that is good from us."§

"Let us therefore fear, my brethren, lest a promise being left us of entering into his

* John, 5.—v. 10.

† Matt. 9.—v. 29.

‡ Psalm 33.—v. 22.

§ Luke, 22.—v. 32.

rest, any of us should seem to come short of it," by reason of unbelief.* "Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward."† "But let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for he is faithful that promised." Yea, none of his divine perfections are more frequently celebrated in his holy Word, than his truth and faithfulness; on purpose to confirm and strengthen our faith in him. Let us, therefore, rejoice and give honor to him, by putting our whole trust and confidence in him for all the good things that he hath promised; for he hath promised them who cannot lie or deceive; and he hath promised them in Jesus Christ, who also is truth itself: "who ever liveth to make intercession for us;"‡ and who himself hath said, "that whatsoever we ask in his name, the Father will give it."§ And therefore, whatever good thing it hath pleased Almighty God to promise, let us but ask in his name, and we have his word for it, that we shall have it; but we "must ask in faith, nothing wavering;"|| but, firmly believing that he will do as he hath said; "Therefore I say unto you, that what things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them."¶

* Heb. 3.—v. 19. † Heb. 10.—v. 35. ‡ Heb. 7.—v. 25.

§ John, 16.—v. 23. || James, 1.—v. 6. ¶ Mark, 11.—v. 24.

But what good things hath God promised us? or rather, what hath he not promised? He hath promised all things necessary both for life and godliness. He hath promised to defend us from all evils, and to make all things work together for our good. He hath promised to be our God, and to make us his own peculiar people. He hath promised to pardon all our sins, and to accept of all the duties that we sincerely perform to him. He hath promised his own grace and free spirit to enlighten our understandings, to lead us into all truth, and to sanctify or make us holy in all conditions. In short he hath promised to give us eternal life, and all things requisite in order to it; and what can we desire more?

“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.”* This is a great work; but we can very well do it, seeing God himself hath promised to assist us in it, and to carry us through it.

What shall I say more? Did we ever receive any grace or favor at the hands of God? Are we able to overcome the world, to resist the devil, or crucify the flesh? Did we ever think a good thought, speak a good word, or do any one good act as we ought to do? Do

* 2 Cor. 7. — v. 1. — 2 Cor. 7. — v. 1.

we enjoy the means of grace, or find any benefits by them? Did we ever escape any danger seen or unseen? Are we preserved from any evil or afflictions that attend the children of men? Do all things work together for our good? Have we any thing that is good for us, and do we take any comfort in it? For these, and all other mercies that we ever did or can receive from the Almighty Governor of the world, we are wholly indebted to God our Saviour, and to that powerful mediation and intercession he is continually making for us in his kingdom. And therefore we have all the cause that can be to rejoice in his promises, with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.

Who can hear this, and not rejoice and be glad that it has pleased the great and good God of heaven to make such promises to us his sinful creatures upon earth? There is nothing certainly on this side heaven that affords so great matter of joy and comfort, especially to those who have so much true reason and wisdom, as to look upon God's Word as the best security they can have for any thing in the world, and accordingly put their whole trust and confidence in him for every thing that he hath promised: these are the happiest people upon earth, or rather the only people that are happy. While others are tossed to and fro with every wind that bloweth, these are always stedfast as a rock; "They will not

be afraid of evil tidings, for their hearts are fixed, trusting in the Lord,"* "who never faileth them who seek and trust to him,"† but saves, and delivers, and keeps them in perfect peace. "Trust ye therefore in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."‡ And he hath passed his word: he hath promised, in Christ our Lord, that they who believe and trust in him shall want no good thing. Be exhorted therefore now to do so. Hear what he saith to every one of you: "Trust in the Lord, and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart; commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass. He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day."§ "His truth shall be thy shield and buckler;"|| "wherefore blessed are all they that put their trust in him,"¶ and in the promises that he hath made, in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour: to whom, with the Father and Holy Ghost, be glory and dominion, for evermore. Amen.

* Psalm 112.—v. 7. † Psalm 9.—v. 10. ‡ Isaiah, 26.—v. 30,
§ Psalm 37.—v. 3, 6. || Psalm 91.—v. 4. ¶ Psalm 2. v.—12

SERMON XIII.

STEDFASTNESS IN OUR ESTABLISHED RELIGION
RECOMMENDED.

1 CORINTHIANS, Chap. 15.—v. 58.

*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast,
unmoveable, always abounding in the work
of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your
labor is not in vain in the Lord.*

AS certain as we are now alive, it is not long before we shall be all dead; and as certainly as we die, we shall one day rise again to judgment. The same bodies out of which our souls depart, however they are dissolved and dispersed, shall be put together again, and be quickened and informed by the same souls which departed from them; that so the same persons that died before shall live again, and so live as never more to die.

This is that great article of our Christian faith which the Apostle, in this chapter, not only proves from many undeniable arguments, but likewise discourses at large concerning the cause, the manner, and the effects or consequences of it, especially with reference to those who die in the true faith of the Lord Christ, real and sound members of that body whereof he is the head. Concerning them, he assures us, that every one of their bodies, though it be as seed sown and rotten in the ground, shall afterwards grow up and flourish more than ever. "It is sown," saith he, "in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body;" that is, it will be a fit and proper vehicle for the soul, which therefore shall never any more depart from it; and so it will become incorruptible, always influenced and governed by the immortal spirit that dwelleth in it. So that death shall be swallowed up in victory, and so perfectly overcome that it shall cease to be.

The Apostle having thus observed in this chapter concerning the resurrection of the dead, concludes it with the words I have just now read. It is as if he had said, seeing the dead shall all rise again, and that they who die in the Lord Jesus shall live with him, and

be happy for ever; "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

Having thus prepared the way, he acquaints them with three great duties incumbent on them, and which he earnestly exhorts them to observe: "Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." And then he enforces his exhortation with this urgent reason, drawn from what he had said concerning the resurrection; "forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

And which, that we may fully understand, I shall consider and explain the true meaning of them in due order.

First, "Be ye stedfast;" that is, well grounded and settled in the Christian religion, as the way to obtain a glorious resurrection. If we continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel, we shall awake to the resurrection of life. "And as ye have received Christ Jesus," says the Apostle, "so walk ye in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."*

But what it is in the Christian religion that we ought in a more particular manner

* Col. 2.—v. 6, 7.

to be stedfast in, we may learn from what the Holy Ghost hath left upon record, concerning the first converts after our Lord's ascension; where he saith, that "they continued stedfast in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."* These are plainly the true marks of a Christian Church, whereby it may be distinguished from all other assemblies or bodies of men; and consequently all persons must be stedfast in it, who desire to continue real and sound members of that Church which Christ Jesus hath established in the world.

They continued stedfast in the Apostles' doctrine. They did not only hearken to what they said, and believed what they taught, but they continued constant, firm, and stedfast, so as to believe nothing as necessary to salvation but what the Apostles taught them, being confident that they were directed by the Spirit of the Most High God, who would never teach them any thing untrue or useless; nothing but what was infallibly certain and absolutely necessary for them to know and believe, in order to their obtaining eternal salvation by Jesus Christ. They would not hearken to any Jewish fables or speculations, nor yet to their own fancies,

* Acts, 2.—v. 42.

or the opinions of other men, but kept close to the doctrine of the Gospel, as delivered to them by the Apostles of Christ, the first founders of it, who gave them authority to preach, and assisted them in the preaching it.

Thus St. Paul directs Timothy: "Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."* And St. Peter, writing to all Christians, saith, "This second Epistle, beloved, I write unto you, in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy Prophets, and of the commandments of us the Apostles of the Lord and Saviour."†

The Prophets and Apostles being actuated by the same spirit, what they commanded men to believe or do, was necessary to be accordingly believed and done, and therefore he advises all to continue steadfast in their doctrine, without paying attention to what others said or taught. It is by this we believe aright in God, and in Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent; it is by this also that we rightly understand our duty both to God and man, and without this we can neither believe nor live according to the Gospel of Christ, and consequently never be saved by him.

* 2 Tim. 1.—v. 13.

† 2 Peter, 3.—v. 1, 2.

And hence appears the excellency of our Church, in that it requires nothing to be believed as an article of faith, or as necessary to salvation, but what the Apostles first taught, and what the Church of Christ in all ages hath believed to be agreeable to the doctrine contained in their writings. Whatever opinion hath no ground or foundation in the Gospel, that our Church rejects as false; and therefore, in order to your continuing stedfast as the first Christians did, the surest way is to adhere to that doctrine which is the same with that of the Apostles in all points, without any alteration or addition whatsoever: and this is the great glory of our Church, and should make us not only continue stedfast and dutiful to it, but likewise thankful to Almighty God, that we live in such a Church, wherein we are duly intructed in the great truths which our Redeemer and his Apostles taught, by which means our minds may be enlightened, and our hearts purified by that faith which was once delivered to the saints.

But the first Christians, as they continued stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine, so likewise in fellowship or communion with them.

And in this also we ought to follow their good example. It is our great happiness that we are of the same Apostolic Church as they were. It is true, there were not so many schisms and divisions in the Church then, as

there are now ; and the reason was, because people did not make them, as too many do in these days ; who, notwithstanding they are admitted into our Church, are so far from continuing stedfast in communion with it, that they never think they can separate themselves far enough from it.

But let such persons do as they please. Suffer me to exhort you, in his name, who laid down his life for you, and for that purpose hath brought you into his Church, that you would hold constant communion ; as by believing the doctrines, so by loving the members, observing the orders, and submitting to the discipline of it ; thus exercising yourselves continually in the means of grace, as they are duly and constantly administered in it.

For while you live constantly in the communion of the Church, you will enjoy all the means which Christ hath appointed for your salvation, faithfully administered in the same way and manner that he appointed, and you will be fully instructed in your whole duty both to God and man ; and so will you pray together in such a form as exactly agrees with the Word of God. You will be sure to have the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper administered unto you, according to Christ's own institution, and that by Ministers rightly ordained and authorized

by Jesus Christ. You are assured that what they teach is the same doctrine which the Apostles of Christ taught; for when they are ordained, they solemnly profess and promise, in the presence of Almighty God, that they will instruct the people committed to their charge out of the holy Scriptures, and that they will teach nothing, as required of necessity to eternal salvation, but what they are persuaded may be concluded and proved by the Scriptures.

And besides all this, so long as you continue in the communion of our Church, you are sure to have the Word and Sacraments administered by those who have the charge of your souls, and who are therefore obliged, both in duty and interest, to take as much care of you as themselves; their own eternal salvation depending in a great measure upon their faithful discharge of their office towards you. To which also God hath promised the assistance of his own grace and Holy Spirit, to make it effectual for the great ends and purposes for which it is ordained; so that all things considered, it is morally impossible that you should be led into error, be ignorant of the truth, or fail of grace and salvation, if you hold constant communion with our Church, and sincerely believe and live according as you are therein taught.

But if you forsake the communion or fellowship of our Church, or join yourselves to any of the sects which are risen up among us, as you will be certain to want many of the means of grace which you here enjoy, you will be uncertain if you shall enjoy any of them, so as to attain the end for which they are appointed, “even the salvation of your souls;” for you will be uncertain whether they who administer them are lawfully called and sent by Christ to do it, as certainly *many of them are not*. You will be uncertain whether you can join with them in prayer; because you know not what they intend to say. You will be uncertain if you shall receive any benefit from the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, for some never administer it at all, or do it so imperfectly, that its virtue and efficacy is much impaired, if not destroyed; and therefore the most charitable and favorable construction that can be put upon the separation from our Church is, that it is leaving a certainty for an uncertainty, which no wise man would do in any thing, much less in a matter upon which his eternal happiness and salvation depends. From whence we may easily observe, that it is your wisdom and interest, as well as duty, to be stedfast, as in the doctrine, so likewise in fellowship or communion with the Church, as the first disciples of Christ were.

The next thing they continued steadfast in was breaking of bread, or the celebration of the Lord's Supper, which is so necessary to our holding communion with the Church, that it is called by that word, because in it we communicate both with Christ the head, and with all the sound members of his mystical body. And, blessed be God for it, you have the same opportunity they had, and from their example you should learn to be as constant as you possibly can. You are not to let every little worldly business deprive you of the greatest blessing you can enjoy on this side the kingdom of heaven. You cannot but acknowledge that the merits of Christ's death, which are there offered to you, are infinitely superior to the things of this world; and many of you, no doubt, have found by your own experience the unspeakable comfort and advantage of frequently applying yourselves to your blessed Redeemer in that holy mystery; and you would all do so, were you but to make trial of it. We, who are the Ministers of Jesus Christ, and stewards of his mysteries, must give an account of our charge at that important day to our great Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, and therefore dare not but administer this as well as the other appointed means of salvation. In his name, therefore, we admonish and exhort you to be constant and careful in the use of it, that we

may deliver up our accounts with joy, and not with grief; and indeed I know of nothing in this world that, by the grace and blessing of God, contributes more to our stedfastness in the doctrine and communion of our Church, than the frequent receiving of the holy Sacrament, and a constant attendance at her public prayers; which, whosoever heartily and seriously attends to as he ought, may defy the very gates of hell, and they shall never prevail against him; whereas they who make no conscience of these great duties are in perpetual danger.

Thus you see what are the chief things in which you ought to be stedfast; in the Apostles' doctrine, in fellowship or communion, in breaking of bread, and in prayers. But yet the foundation of a building may be so well laid, and the superstructure so carefully raised, that it may continue strong and stedfast for some time, and yet such storms and tempests may afterwards beat upon and shake it, that it may cause it to fall down to the ground. And so it is in religion: a man may be well grounded in the fundamental articles of the Christian faith, and make some considerable progress in the practice of it, so as to continue stedfast for a while, and yet, after all, by the violence of temptations, or by some other way, be moved and seduced from it; and therefore the blessed

Jesus tells us that it was the part of the wise man to build his house upon a rock; “and the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell not, because it was built upon a rock:”* or, as the Apostle expresses it, “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.”†

This was a necessary caution in those days, and surely it is so in ours also; for there is so much cunning and craftiness used now, to pervert and draw men from the Church, that all who attend to religion in good earnest, so as to obtain the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls, had need be careful not to suffer themselves to be tossed to and fro with every new wind of doctrine that is raised among us, but resolve, by the grace of God, to continue not only firm and stedfast to the Church, but *immoveable, as the rock on which it is built.*

And indeed, as Christ and his Apostles foretold, so there always have been false prophets, and false teachers in the Church; who, under the colour of greater purity in doctrine and worship, have seduced men into

* Matt. 7.—v. 25.

† Eph. 4.—v. 14.

all manner of sin and heresy. "This know," saith the Apostle, "that in the latter days perilous times shall come, for men shall be lovers of themselves, covetous, boasters, proud, having a form or shew of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from which turn away, for of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women, laden with sins, led away with divers lusts."* Such were many in the primitive Church, who pretended to greater purity and sanctity than others: such have been in all ages, and are still in our times also. But, my brethren, if you do but truly believe all that our Church teaches, and practise all that she requires, you may be as pure and holy as any of the first Christians, or as the Apostles themselves were. If you do your part and take care to walk worthy of your profession, you cannot possibly miscarry in your way to salvation: you will be so far from being affected by the arguments that are produced, that nothing will be able to move you to forsake your Church; no, not any seeming miracles themselves, which is the highest sort of argument that can be offered in matters of religion.

But the greatest danger that people are in of being perverted or seduced into error, or

* 2 Tim. 3.—v. 1, 2.

schism, is from their own lusts and passions ; which either corrupt or overpower their judgments, which carry them headlong into any thing that seems to gratify their prevailing humors, especially the love of this world. The hopes of getting, or the fear of losing something in it, commonly stifles all the sense that people have of religion. Thus the blessed Jesus tells us, “ that the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choak the Word and make it become unfruitful.”* “ Demas hath forsaken me,” saith St. Paul, “ having loved this world.”† There have been many such Demases in all ages, who, out of love to the world, and preferring it before the favor of God and their own eternal happiness, have apostatized not only from the true religion to a false one, but from all religion to none at all. Hence it is, that as some are allured from their religion by the hopes of gain, others are alarmed by the fear of losing this world, or something in it which they esteem better ; such as their honor, their ease, liberty, their property, or life. These are things that are very dear to most men, and therefore, although they are not really in any danger, yet if they do but fear it, many are ready to do any thing to prevent it, even to the parting with their religion itself. We

* Matt. 13.—v. 22.

† 2 Tim. 4.—v. 10.

have had many instances of this in all ages; God grant that we may have none in ours, at least, not among us; and for which end it will be necessary to possess our minds with a true fear of God above all things in the world, and then shall we never be moved with the fear of any thing else, according to that remarkable promise which God hath made us, "I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me;"[†] and which we see so remarkably exemplified in St. Paul, who, having the fear of God always before his eyes and in his heart, he could never be moved from his duty to God, by all the dangers and troubles that he met with in it. "The Holy Ghost," saith he, "witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might 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."[†] Oh blessed temper of mind. This indeed is to be immoveable, when nothing is able to make us depart from our duty to God, but we still continue firm and constant, let what will happen. And thus the Apostle teacheth us, by his own example, how to do what he requires in my text, saying, "Be ye

[†] Jer. 32.—v. 40. [†] Acts, 20.—v. 24.

stedfast, immoveable;" and then he adds, "always abounding in the work of the Lord;" that is, in such works which the Lord, the Lord of Hosts, the Supreme Governor of the world, hath commanded us to do, whether they are works of piety to himself, or of justice and charity to our neighbour.

And what are those works of piety which Almighty God hath commanded you to do to himself? He hath commanded you to love him with all your hearts and souls, with all your might and mind. He hath commanded you to sanctify his holy name, and to make him your only fear and dread. He hath commanded you to put your whole trust and confidence in him, to rejoice continually before him, and to give up yourselves wholly to him. He hath commanded you to submit yourselves to his divine will, and to make it your constant care and study to please and honor him. He hath commanded you to read and hear his most holy Word, "to pray without ceasing, and in every thing to give thanks unto him;" and also, that you should frequently receive the mystical body and blood of his dear Son, in remembrance of that death which he underwent for you. In short, he hath commanded you to worship and glorify him, "both in your souls and bodies, which are his."

And as to your neighbours, you are to bear no malice or hatred against them, but to love

them as you love yourselves; to honor and respect your parents, and to be loyal, obedient, and submissive to the King; and to carry yourselves lowly and reverently to all your Governors, both in Church and State; that you be meek and humble in your own eyes, faithful to your word, just and righteous in all your dealings. He hath commanded you to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to instruct the ignorant, to comfort the disconsolate, to relieve the oppressed, to help the weak, to admonish the wicked, to love your very enemies, and to be true, kind, and charitable to all men: in a word, he hath commanded you, "that whatsoever you would that men should do to you, that you do even so to them."* These are those works of the Lord which we are here commanded, not only to do, but to abound in.

But in what respects are we to be always abounding in the work of the Lord, both to ourselves and others? In respect to ourselves, we are to be always abounding, by growing wiser and better, and in doing more and more good, if it be possible, every day we live; according to the Apostles' advice. "Furthermore we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus Christ, that as ye have received of us, how you ought to walk and to please God, so you would abound more

* Matt. 7.—v. 12.

and more."* You are not to content yourselves with the exercise of some graces only, but as St. Peter exhorts, saying, "Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity;"† "For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that you shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."‡ And unless we thus abound in the work of the Lord, we can never continue stedfast in it; therefore the same Apostle concludes his Epistle, saying to all Christians, what I now say and exhort you: "Ye, therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness, but grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom be glory, both now and for ever."§ And as we must abound, not only in respect to ourselves, but of others too, so as to strive all we can to excel each other in virtue and goodness, to be strong in faith, rich in good works, eminent in every thing that is pleasing and acceptable to God; more constant in our devotions, more frequent

* 1 Thess. 4.—v. 1.

† 2 Peter. 1.—v. 5, 6.

‡ 2 Peter, 1.—v. 8.

§ 2 Peter, 3.—v. 17, 18.

at the communion, more reverent in the worship, more fervent in the service, more zealous for the glory of God, more sober in ourselves and liberal to the poor, more just to all men than others commonly are; "that our light may so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven;"* "that we may shine as lights in the world;" that all who are about us may be enlightened, inflamed, and excited by our example to serve the same Master, and to prosecute the same designs. This, my brethren, is the best way to convince gainsayers of the excellency of our religion, when they shall behold us, who profess it, excel others in piety and virtue. All other arguments can never prevail upon them so much as this one; and this would be of itself sufficient to demonstrate that our religion is indeed the best, when they who profess it are the best of men, and not only shew themselves "stedfast, immoveable, but always abounding in the work of the Lord." Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

* Matt. 5.—v. 16.

SERMON XIV.

MAN A NEW CREATURE IN CHRIST JESUS.

ROMANS, Chap. 8.—v. 9.

*Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ,
he is none of his.*

THESE words may give us just occasion to speak of the Holy Spirit of God, and the wonderful works he hath done, and still doth, in the world. But who is sufficient for these things? “Who can express the noble acts of the Lord, or shew forth all his praise?” This is a subject fit for the tongue of an angel. We mortals upon earth know nothing of him, but what he is pleased to tell us in his holy Word; and what we there read, can never enter into our minds unless he also is pleased to open our understandings. But our comfort is, that our blessed Saviour hath assured

us, that our heavenly "Father, will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him."*

"In confidence whereof we therefore humbly beseech thee, O heavenly Father, to give us thy Holy Spirit, to lead us into all truth, that, by his inspiration and direction, we may have a right judgment in all things, speak nothing of him but what is true, and receive the truth in the love of it, to the glory of thy great name, through Jesus Christ our Mediator and Advocate, now appearing in thy presence for us."

Having thus prayed to Almighty God, in the name of his Son, to direct and assist us by his Holy Spirit, in speaking of him, and nothing doubting but that he, according to his Word, hath granted our request; we shall now make bold to do it, from the words which I have now read: "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his."

Where we may first observe, that in the former part of this verse he is called the Spirit of God, in the latter, the Spirit of Christ, to teach us, that he is the Spirit of Christ, one with the Father; otherwise the same Spirit could not be the Spirit of Christ and of God too. And as he is usually in holy Scripture called sometimes the Spirit of God, and sometimes the Spirit of Christ; so, at

* Luke, 11.—v. 13.

other times he is called absolutely the Holy Spirit, or, which is the same, the Holy Ghost; especially where the three divine persons are all named together, as Matt. 28. v. 19. 2 Cor. 13. v. 14. 1 John, 5. v. 7.

Therefore, whatsoever personal distinctions (which we can never comprehend) there may be between the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, either among themselves, or in their ways of working, yet we must still apprehend and **believe them all three to be but one and the same God**; for, as St. Paul expresseth it, "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit: And there are differences of administration, but the same Lord: And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all."* Here is one Spirit, one Lord Jesus, one God the Father; these all and every one worketh all in all, and therefore must needs be one and the same first cause of all, or, as we say, one God.

It is true our finite understandings, in their highest perfection, could never reach this, no more than they can any other of those infinite perfections which we believe to be in God; much less can we do it in our corrupt and imperfect state. But the best of it is, as we are not able, so we are not bound to understand, but only to believe it: and we have

* 1 Cor. 12.—v. 4, 5, 6.

all the reason that can be to believe, in that it is revealed to us by God himself, and therefore revealed, that we might believe upon his Word, without troubling ourselves about the way and manner how three distinct divine persons subsist in one and the same divine essence, so as to be one and the same God; which being infinitely above us, would be the height of pride and presumption in us to offer at bringing it down to our capacities. It is sufficient for us that we have the Word and testimony of God, and that we accordingly believe, that the Father is God, the Son God, and the Holy Ghost God; and yet they are not three Gods, but one God: that God the Father made us, God the Son redeemed us, and God the Holy Ghost sanctifieth us; and yet that one and the same God made, redeemed, and sanctifieth us: for whatsoever is said in the holy Scriptures to be done by any of these divine persons, the same, in other places, is said to be done by God. But there is only one living and true God; and therefore, although we must believe in each person distinctly, contemplate upon what he hath done, and address ourselves to him as such, yet we must still keep close to the unity of the divine essence or substance, which, if it was divided, would not be divine.

Thus when I think of God the Son, as in a peculiar manner my Redeemer and Saviour,

I must not apprehend him as any other but the one living and true God, that made and governs the world, and accordingly praise and magnify him as such, as the blessed Virgin did, saying, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, my Spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour." And when we read, as we do in my text, or speak of the Spirit of Christ, although we must believe the Spirit to be one person, and Christ another, yet we must still believe them both to be one in nature or substance, both the one Almighty and Eternal God; who, whether he act as Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, it is still one and the same God that doth it.

As in the former part of this verse it is said, "If the Spirit of God dwell in you;" in the next verse, "If Christ be in you;" so in several other places of holy Writ, sometimes Christ is said to be or dwell in us.* At other times the same thing is expressed by the Spirit being or dwelling in us;† in which we believe, that Christ and the Spirit is the same God; so that wheresoever either dwells, that is the "Temple of God." Hence also it is, that as our Saviour often promised his disciples, that when he was gone from them, he would send them his Holy Spirit.

The next thing to be considered is, that the Holy Spirit is here called the "Spirit of

* Eph. 3.—v. 17.

2 Cor. 13.—v. 5.

† 1 Cor. 3. v. 16.—c. 6.—v. 19.

Christ, the Son of God ; as he is also, 1 Pet. 1. v. 11. Phil. 1. v. 19. Gal. 4. v. 6. And therefore, although it be nowhere expressly said that he proceedeth from the Son, as it is that he "proceedeth from the Father,"* yet we have the same ground to believe the one, as we have to believe the other.

1. God the Father is represented to us in holy Scripture as the Maker and Governor of the world in general ; and God the Son, as the Saviour and Redeemer of the world in particular.

2. As God the Father made and preserveth all things by his Word and Spirit, according to that of the Psalmist, "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth ;"† so God the Son carrieth on and accomplisheth his great work of saving men, by the same Spirit proceeding from him.

3. By this it was that he revealed himself and his will, and all things necessary for men to know, believe, or do, that they may be saved. For as he raised up Prophets in all ages, so what they spake as such was first dictated to them by the Holy Ghost, which came upon and entered into them, so that "they were filled with the Holy Ghost when

* John, 15.—v. 26.

† Psalm 33.—v. 6.

they spake."* And it was he that spake by them.† Thus "all Scripture was given by inspiration of God."‡ "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."§ And whatsoever they spake as Prophets, is expressly said to be spoken by the Holy Ghost; "David said by the Holy Ghost," || saith our Lord: "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Isaiah the Prophet," ¶ saith St. Paul. Yea the very types and ceremonies of the Mosaic law were all ordained by the Holy Ghost; as we learn from the Apostle, where, speaking of the high priest's going once every year alone into the second tabernacle, he saith, that "the Holy Ghost thereby signified, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest."** And as the Prophets under the law, so under the Gospel the Evangelists and Apostles never said, or did, or wrote any thing as such, but by the motion and direction of the Holy Ghost, as we find in the New Testament.

And this Holy Spirit by which the Prophets and Apostles were actuated, is expressly said

* Num. 24.—v. 2. Ezek. 2.—v. 2. Luke, 1.—v. 41, 67.
 Luke, 2.—v. 25, 26. † 2 Sam. 23.—v. 2. ‡ 2 Tim. 3.—v. 16.
 § 2 Peter, 1.—v. 21. || Mark, 12.—v. 36. ¶ Acts, 28.—v. 25.

Acts, 1.—v. 16. Heb. 3.—v. 7. Heb. 10.—v. 15.

Heb. 9.—v. 8.

to be the Spirit of Christ; and that by his own direction in St. Peter, saying, "Of which salvation the Prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you, searching what and what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify."* The same thing appears also in the Prophets; for they, speaking as they were moved by the Spirit, Christ himself often speaks in them, as one with that Spirit by which they speak; as where he saith, "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture."† "They pierced my hands and my feet."‡ "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced."§ "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell."|| There are many such places where Christ speaks of himself in his own person, to convince us that it was by his Spirit they spake, and that it was he they meant when they said, "Thus saith the Lord." Hence also it was, that Christ promised his Apostles that he would send the Holy Spirit unto them, to let them know it was by his Spirit they should be directed in preaching and propagating his Gospel. So that all the Revelations that

* 1 Pet. 1.—v. 11. † Psalm 22.—v. 18. ‡ Psalm 22.—v. 16.

§ Zech. 12.—v. 10. || Psalm 16.—v. 10.

• I C A 2 — 9 . 1 7 •

Almighty God hath given us of himself, and his will, come by his Holy Spirit; as he is, in a peculiar manner, the Spirit of Christ, the great Prophet of the world.

4. As God our Saviour hath thus revealed his will to mankind by his Holy Spirit, so by the same Spirit he enables them both to know and perform it. "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."* As sensible things can be discerned only by our senses, and rational by reason only, so spiritual things can be discerned only by the same Spirit that revealed them; without which we can discern no more of them than we can the proper objects of our reason without the use of our reason, or such as are sensible without our senses. Hence it is, that men of parts and learning, and great capacities, are often incapable of judging of such things as are purely of divine revelation. They cannot imagine how such things should be, therefore oppose and argue against them, as if they were impossible, or at least improbable, because not agreeable to the ideas or notions which they have formed of them; when, after all, the only reason why they cannot apprehend so far, at least, as to believe such things

* 1 Cor. 2.—v. 14.

as are revealed by the Spirit of God, is, because they are not taught of God, nor endued and assisted by that Spirit by which they are revealed.

But it is quite otherwise with those who are actuated and influenced by the Spirit of Christ. By him their minds are so enlightened, that they see into the truth of all that is revealed more clearly than other people can the most obvious things that lie before them. By him they are taught effectually to know all things that are necessary for them.* By him they are led into all truth, so as to receive it in the love of it.† By him they are fully assured of the great mysteries of the Christian religion. By him, moving upon their souls, and reducing them into a right frame and temper, they are regenerated, sanctified, and renewed in the spirit of their minds, so as clearly to discern the vast difference betwixt good and evil, between what God hath commanded, and what he hath forbidden; and therefore cannot but, of their own accord, chuse the one and refuse the other: their thoughts, their understandings, their judgments, their affections, are all so renewed, as not only to see, but feel and relish all those divine truths and laws which are revealed in the holy Scriptures,

* John, 14.—v. 26. 1 John, 2.—v. 20, 27. † John, 16.—v. 13.

by the same Spirit by which they are so renewed. These are they which are here said to have the Spirit of Christ, and therefore belong to him.

But "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." If any man be not thus sanctified by "the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his," he is not in the number of those whom Christ looks upon as his peculiar people, so as to take particular care, and intercede continually in heaven for them, that they may be preserved from all evil here, and live with him for ever hereafter.

That we may understand this aright, we must observe, that although it be certain that Christ died for all men, so that all men are capable of being saved by him, yet it is as certain also, that all men shall not be saved; and that none shall be so, but only such as believe in him, and apply the merits of his death to themselves, for their pardon and justification before God. But this the greatest part of mankind will not do. I speak not only of Jews, Turks, and other Infidels; but they also who profess to believe in him, generally do no more than profess it. There are but few that really do so; few that believe in him, as he requires in his holy Gospel, with such a faith as purifies their hearts, and unites them to him, so as to make them sound members of that body of which he is the head:

yet these are the only persons whom Christ reckons his own. None else have any part or portion in him, nor he in them, no more than as if he had never died for them. Therefore he leaves all such to the wide world, to the general providence of God, to shift for themselves as well as they can. And however they may seem to live in the world, they can never be truly happy, neither in this nor the next. But as for such who constantly live with a quick and lively faith in him, as their only Lord and Saviour, and always behave themselves accordingly, Christ looks upon them as his own, his inheritance, his lot, his peculiar people, his elect, his friends, his treasure, his sheep, his flock, his disciples indeed, his brethren, yea, his very members, according to their respective places and stations in his body the Church, as we find in his holy Scriptures: these he hath a special kindness for, and is now appearing in the presence of God, making atonement and reconciliation for them. These, considered together, are properly the household of God, the communion of saints; his servants, who make it their constant business to serve him, and continue always in his love and favor. He prays for these, he prays not for the world, but for these which God hath given him out of the world.*

* John, 17.—v. 9.

These, all and every one, approach to God by him, and he is always interceding for them,* that they may want nothing that is good, nothing that is needful to their obtaining eternal salvation.

Now, how happy must they be, who have such a powerful Mediator and Advocate always at the right hand of God? But who are they who are thus happy? They who have the Spirit of Christ, and none else; for the Apostle here speaks, "If any man, whatsoever he be, if he hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his," whereby he plainly shews, that no one man in the world, whatsoever his condition is, belongs to Christ, so as to be saved by him, unless he have "the Spirit of Christ."

And the reason is obvious, for it is only by his Spirit that any man can be made his. It is impossible that we, who are so infinitely below him, could be so nearly related to him, as to be his, in such a high manner as this expression imports, any other way than by his own Spirit; but by that we are incorporated into him, and made members of his body. For "by one spirit we are all baptized into one body,"† even the body of Christ. By which means, as all the members of a natural body, being informed by the same soul

* Heb. 7.—v. 25. † 1 Cor. 12.—v. 13.

which is in the head, and from thence is diffused into them, they therefore properly belong to that head. So we are therefore only the members of Christ, and belong to him, because the same Spirit which is in him is likewise in us, and moves, animates, and influences us in all the actions of the new and spiritual life. Hence it is, "that as many as are led by the Spirit of God are the Sons of God;"* for having the same Spirit that is in his only begotten Son, they, according to their capacities, thereby stand in the same relation to God as he doth: they are properly his sons also, insomuch that Christ himself "is not ashamed to call them brethren."†

And the reason which the Apostle gives for it is, because he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one: both he and they have one and the same Spirit, and therefore must needs be the children of one and the same Father. And by this it is that we know we are so: for "if we have received the spirit of adoption, we thereby cry, Abba, Father;" the Spirit itself bearing witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God."‡

Hence it is also, that St. John saith, "Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.§ " And

* Rom. 8.—v. 14.

† Heb. 2.—v. 11.

‡ Rom. 8.—v. 15, 16.

§ 1 John, 3.—v. 24.

hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.* For if he hath given us his Spirit, our bodies are thereby made the temples of the Holy Ghost.† And when the Holy Ghost continues to dwell in us, we are no longer our own, but his whose Spirit the Holy Ghost is; “and joint heirs with him,”‡ “who is heir of all things,”§ in that “he hath given us earnest of the Spirit.”|| And this earnest of the Spirit is so certain and infallible a sign of our right and title to the said inheritance, that we are said to be sealed by it to the day of redemption.¶ For, by giving us his Holy Spirit, Christ sets, as it were, his seal upon us, marks us out for his own, and distinguishes us from the rest of the world. It is by this that the sheep shall be known from the goats, the heirs of heaven from the children of disobedience, at the last day. And then it will appear to all the world, that “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

And if so, how much doth it concern us to have the Spirit of Christ? Infinitely more than any thing else in the world besides. For as Jesus Christ is the only Saviour of mankind, seeing he saves none but such as belong

* 1 John, 4.—v. 13. † 1 Cor. 6.—v. 19. ‡ Rom. 8.—v. 17.

§ Heb. 1.—v. 2. || 2 Cor. 1.—v. 22. ¶ Eph. 4, v.—30.

to him, so as to be properly his; and seeing none are his but only they who have his Spirit; unless we have his Spirit, we shall be lost and undone for ever; and therefore, as we tender our own welfare, we must make it our chief care and study to obtain the Spirit of Christ. Whatsoever we get besides will signify nothing to us at the last day, unless it be to torment and vex us: but if we have the Spirit of Christ, we shall then have all things we can desire; then we shall be found in the number of his sheep, and accordingly shall be placed on his right hand, and hear him pronounce that blessed sentence upon us, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."*

But the great question is, How a man may have the Spirit of Christ, or what he must do to obtain it? To which I answer, that Christ having assumed the common nature of all men, all are doubtless capable of his Spirit; but none actually receive it, but such only as are united to him, and made members of his body: they partake of his Spirit, as the members of a man's natural body do of that which is in the head.

Now, in order to our being thus united to Christ, as to have his Spirit, it is first neces-

* Matt. 25.—v. 34.

sary that we believe in him: "He that believeth on me," saith Christ, "as the Scripture saith, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. This spake he," saith the Evangelist, "of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive."* And his Apostle, speaking of him to the Ephesians, saith, "In whom, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise."† From whence it appears, that no man can have the Spirit of Christ, until he believes in him, whose Spirit it is; but that all who believe so, have it effectually conferred upon them.

And, for that purpose, he who believes in Christ must be baptized into him; that being the Sacrament appointed by himself, whereby we testify our belief, and the usual means whereby he gives his Spirit to us. For "Baptism is the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;"‡ we are thereby "born of water and of the Spirit."§ Water is the sign, the Holy Ghost the thing signified, whereby we "are born again and made the children of God;" because we are, by that means, inserted into the body of his Son Jesus Christ, as appears from the words of the institution: "Go ye therefore, and make

* John, 7.—v. 38, 39.

† Eph. 1.—v. 13.

‡ Tit. 3.—v. 5.

§ John, 3.—v. 5.

all nations disciples, by baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* And seeing we are made his disciples, by being thus baptized, we are admitted to be members of his body, and partake of his Holy Spirit.

From whence we may see the great necessity of this Sacrament, and what a sad condition they are in, who live in the contempt or neglect of it, as too many do. But I sincerely wish all such would seriously consider that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour of the world; that he saves none but those who are of his own body the Church, and that none can be made his, but by being baptized according to his appointment; and that all who wilfully neglect or refuse this holy Sacrament, and live and die without it, are none of Christ's flock, and have no more ground to expect to be saved by him, than infidels and heathens have, nor indeed so much; forasmuch as they know not that Christ ever ordained this Sacrament for their admission into his Church, and so to a state of salvation; these know and condemn it. Wherefore, if there be any here, who, through the error or negligence of their parents, were not baptized in their infancy, and, through their own default, have not yet had this Sa-

* Matt. 28.—v. 19.

crament administered to them, I beseech you, as you tender your own salvation, put it off no longer, but prepare yourselves as soon as possible for it, lest you die without it, and so be found at the last day, not among the sheep of Christ, but among the goats, which will be "condemned to everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power."

And as for you who are so happy as to be born of water and of the Spirit of Christ, and so made his, take heed that ye do not lose the Spirit which you then received; as you certainly will, if you either renounce the faith into which you were baptized, or live in the constant breach of the vow which you then made. And seeing that you cannot but be conscious to yourselves that you have kept neither the faith, nor your promise, so strictly as you ought, but have many ways offended, and therefore have cause to fear that God hath or will withdraw his Holy Spirit from you, you must constantly pray, as David did, saying, "Cast me not away from thy presence, O Lord, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me."*

But there are some, too many I fear, who were once baptized with water and the Spirit, and so made the children of God, and heirs

* Psalm 51.—v. 11.

of heaven, but afterwards have proved so undutiful, disobedient, and to every good work reprobate, that their heavenly Father hath, in effect, cast them off, disinherited them, and suffers his Spirit to strive no longer with them. The condition of such is very deplorable, but not altogether desperate; for they having been once admitted into the number of his children, Almighty God hath still so much respect and favor for them, that, upon their repentance and return to duty, he is ready to receive them again, and to give them his Holy Spirit to assist them in their performance of it, if they do but ask it of him: for our Saviour saith, "If ye then, 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."* To them who have been thus adopted into his family, and made his children, their heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit, but to none else; nor to them, unless they ask it according to the rules that he hath prescribed, that is, heartily, importunately, in faith, in the name of Christ, instantly, and without ceasing. If you thus ask, he will give you his Holy Spirit, though not immediately, yet in the use of the appointed means, especially in the faithful

* Matt. 7.—v. 11.

performance of your public devotions when you are met together to pray jointly to him, to praise his Most Holy Name, and to hear that Word which he hath given by the inspiration of the same Spirit, and receive the holy Sacrament. Christ himself is always in the midst of such assemblies of his saints, ready to distribute the gifts and graces of his Holy Spirit among them,* as we often find he did, both in the Old and New Testament. And therefore, as you desire the continual assistance of the Spirit of Christ, you should neglect no opportunity of waiting upon him in his own house, and at his own table, where he usually moves upon those who come rightly disposed, and takes them under his own care and conduct. But then you must take special heed not to "grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption,"† Do nothing that may offend so divine a guest, lest you provoke him to withdraw himself from you: "Quench not the Spirit,"‡ stifle not those holy motions he puts into your hearts, but do all ye can to stir them up,§ that ye may be "fervent in spirit,"|| "zealous of good works; stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch

* Matt. 18.—v. 20. † Eph. 4.—v. 30. ‡ 1 Thess. 5.—v. 19.

§ 2 Tim. 1.—v. 6. || Rom. 12.—v. 11.

as ye know your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord.”*

Having thus shewn, that they only who have the Spirit of Christ are truly his, and likewise how ye may all have it, if ye will but seek it as ye ought, there will be no occasion, I hope, of persuading you to endeavor after it all ye can. I shall only desire you to consider, that unless you have the Spirit of Christ, you are still in the flesh; that is, in your natural state; no better than when ye came into the world, or rather much worse; and, as such, you can never please God, nor do any thing acceptable in his sight: you are enemies to him, and he is an enemy to you: you have nothing that ye can truly call a blessing; you have no interest in the merits of Christ's death, nor in the intercession that he makes at the right hand of God; for you are without Christ, “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise; without hope, and without God in the world.”†

Whereas, if you have the Spirit of Christ, what a happy condition will ye then be in? Ye will then be free from that bondage of corruption to which others are subject; for “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”‡ Ye will then “through the Spirit

* 1 Cor. 15.—v. 58. † Eph. 2.—v. 12. ‡ 2 Cor. 3.—v. 17.

mortify the deeds of the body," and live continually in "newness of life."* Ye will then bring forth the "fruit of the Spirit; love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," and whatsoever else can adorn either your hearts or lives, and make you amiable in the sight of God.† Ye will then partake of the divine nature, and be "holy, as he who hath called you is holy, in all manner of conversation." Ye will then have Jesus Christ, whose ye are, always making intercession for you, and washing you from your sins in his own blood. Ye will then be secure under the protection of the Almighty, and need not fear any evil that can happen to you. Ye will then live under the light of God's countenance, and have it shining continually upon you, cheering and refreshing your spirits, more than ye can imagine. Ye have already the earnest of the inheritance, and therefore need not doubt but that ere long you will be possessed of it; "An inheritance incorruptible undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you;"‡ and all because ye have the Spirit of Christ, and so are his, whose are all things. To whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

* Rom 8.—v. 13. † Gal. 5.—v. 22, 23. ‡ 1 Peter, 1.—v. 4.

SERMON XV.

ADVANTAGES OF BEING HOLY.

1 TIMOTHY, Chap. 4.—v. 8.

*For bodily exercise profiteth little, but godliness
is profitable unto all things.*

WELL might the Prophet say, "The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" For who ever yet could fathom the bottom of his own heart, or thoroughly understand himself? who ever yet was acquainted with all the secret recesses of his own breast, so as fully to know himself? or whoever yet could say that his heart was faithful to him, or that he was faithful to himself?

Men believe there is a God, and yet strive not to serve him; they look for a future

judgment, and yet will not prepare for it; they know there is eternal punishment for sinners, and yet will be sinners still; they hope to go to heaven when they die, but do not look after it while they live; they condemn sin, and yet commit it; they commend holiness, but do not practise it; they desire to be happy, but how hard is it to persuade them to live holy, that they may be so? Inso-much that although we come unto you in the name of God, exhort, advise, and charge you from time to time to devote yourselves to his honor and service, yet you will not be prevailed upon: so desperately wicked and deceitful is the heart of man, that nothing but omnipotence is able to effect or move it.

But seeing, by the ministry of his Word, that God is pleased to draw off your hearts from sin, and to incline them to himself, whether you are faithful to yourselves or no, we are bound to be so to you, and to use all means imaginable, which, by the blessing and assistance of Almighty God, may conduce to the making you in love with piety, and seriously to endeavor after the practice of it.

And among the many means that may be employed for this end, I know of none more probable, than to represent holiness under the idea of such things as most concern us. There are three things especially which mankind desire: pleasures, honors, and profit.

Not to insist upon the two first, profit is what all look after; for none would be poor who can be rich; and how much soever a man hath, he is still willing, if not desirous, to have more. For this reason it is that some dig into the bowels of the earth, and others dive into the bottom of the sea, to find it. This keeps some at home and sends others abroad after it. This confines some to their trades, and makes others wander about the world, encompassing both sea and land in search of it. In short, profit is the universal engine that draws men's hearts and affections, yea, both their souls and bodies, which way soever it turns. And although I cannot pretend to point out ways to increase your temporal goods, or to manage them to your best advantage in this world, yet I dare assure and promise you, in the presence of Almighty God, that I can direct you to such a course of life as will be really profitable and advantageous; and that is, by devoting yourselves to the service and honor of God, or to live godly and religious lives, by which you will certainly obtain more than you have, and as much as you can possibly desire. And this way of living would bring you a constant income of true and lasting riches; for there is nothing that you can in reason or justice desire, but by this means you may gain it to yourselves. But, because you may suppose me an incom-

petent judge of matters of gain or profit, I shall wave my own opinion; and appeal to him whose judgment is beyond exception, even to the all-wise God, who cannot but be acknowledged to understand, infinitely better than we do, what is and what is not good and profitable for us. And he hath plainly and expressly declared it by his holy Apostle, in the words I have now read: "For bodily exercise profiteth little; but godliness is profitable unto all things."

By bodily exercise, we are to understand such exercises of the body as are wont to be undertaken upon account of religion; for it is of such the Apostle is here treating. But whatever profit we may reap, it is certainly little or nothing, in comparison of the great advantages which accrue to us by real and universal piety. "For," saith he, "bodily exercise profiteth little; but godliness is profitable for all things." And what that godliness is we will now endeavor to explain.

It consists in the rectitude or right disposition of the whole man; every faculty of the soul and member of the body being reduced to a conformity to the laws and commands of God. For as the heavenly bodies, the sun, and moon, and stars, and other inanimate creatures, keep their stations, observe the motions, and act according to the rules, which were at first prescribed them; so he

that is, truly godly, all his thoughts, words, and actions move according to the will of the Supreme Being, keeping themselves within the bounds he hath set, and discharging the several offices and duties which he that made us first enjoined them.

It doth not manifest itself only in some few particular actions, but in the devotion of ourselves and our lives unto him, in whom we live and have our being.

This is that godliness which the Apostle here speaks of, even such an excellent temper and constitution of the mind, by which we serve and honor, please and obey God, to the utmost of our power, in every thing we set our hands or hearts about. This is that godliness which is here said to be profitable for all things.

What it is for a thing to be profitable, I need not tell you. You all understand that a thing is profitable when it conduces to your obtaining something good and advantageous; in which sense godliness is said to be profitable, because by it we may attain whatsoever is or can be necessary and convenient for us, either in this life or that which is to come; indeed all good things whatsoever are promised to it, which is the reason the Apostle here brings, "Because it hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

As for this life, it is certain that godliness answers all the concerns of it, and is profitable to all things in it. But as you will not easily be persuaded of this, I shall explain and demonstrate it to you, and prove that godliness, even in this life, is not only more profitable than any thing else, but itself is profitable unto all things.

1st. It is profitable as to the acquiring riches; such riches, especially, as are most convenient and necessary for every man; for it secures to him a sufficient maintenance and subsistence in this life, as firmly as Truth and Omnipotence itself can make it: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these shall be added unto you."* So that he who takes care to please and obey God, need take care of nothing else; and besides, godliness hath the blessing of God always attending it, which is the only thing that maketh rich; "for the blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it;"† "and that God's blessing shall always go along with godliness, is expressly promised;"‡ so that the who is godly is sure to be provided for; he is sure to have as much in this world as is good and advantageous for him: nay, godliness in itself conduces much to the getting wealth and riches, because it

* Matt. 6.—v. 33. † Prov. 10.—v. 22. ‡ Deut. 28.—v. 1.

Brings a man into that credit and repute in the world, that all men will strive to deal with him who deals truly and faithfully with all men, as surely every good man doth. And certain it is, that they who are truly godly shall never want any good thing, for God himself hath passed his word, "O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him. O fear the Lord, ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear him."* "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."† And as far as any thing in this world is good for them, they are sure to have it; so that godliness is profitable for the getting of all the real goods or good things of this life.

It is also for the keeping them when gotten, not only because it always moderates a man's affections, so that he is sure to live within the compass of his estate, and not squander it away upon lust and luxury;‡ but likewise, because God himself hath engaged to provide for him: and therefore, to preserve what he hath given him for that purpose, and which he certainly will do for all who trust in him, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delighteth in his way: Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth

* Psalm 34.—v. 9, 10. † Psalm 84.—v. 11. ‡ Luke, 15.—v. 13.

him with his hand. I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.”*

Godliness conduces much also to the right enjoyment of what we have. A wicked man often wants what he hath. “A man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honor, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it: this is vanity, and it is an evil disease.”† Whereas a good man always enjoys what he hath: “This is the gift of God:”‡ and oft-times what he hath not, taking a great deal of pleasure and contentment, not only in his own, but in others wealth too, rejoicing in the goodness of God, who is so bountiful to others as well as himself.

And if you speak of improving your wealth, nothing doubtless conduces so much to that as godliness; for it will teach you how to manage every thing you have to the best advantage. It will teach you how “to make friends of the unrighteous mammon;”§ how to return your property into the other world;|| and how, even in this life, to receive an hundred fold.¶ Therefore godliness must needs be acknowledged to be a very profitable thing.

* Psalm 37.—v. 23, 24, 25.

† Eccles. 6.—v. 2.

‡ Eccles. 5.—v. 19.

§ Luke, 16.—v. 9.

|| Matt. 6.—v. 20.

¶ Matt. 19.—v. 29.

Where riches can stand you in no stead at all, there godliness will be profitable to you. "For riches profit not in the day of wrath."* "Their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord."†

Riches cannot profit you when you come to lie upon your death-bed, but so can godliness.‡ Riches, while you have them, cannot afford you contentment or satisfaction; but, the more you have of them, the more thirsty will you be after them; "but godliness begets content, and so becomes gain."§

Riches cannot free your hearts from cares and fears, but so doth godliness. It makes a man "take no thought for his life."|| It makes the Christian repose his trust upon God, and depend on him for every thing necessary for life and godliness; so that, all things considered, the good man is the only rich man, even in this life. He hath all he desires, for he desires nothing but what he hath. Though he may want something which others have, yet he wants nothing that is good for him; for he hath one thing which is not only better than all things else, but profitable for all things besides, even true godliness, which, whosoever is endowed with, hath all good

* Prov. 11.—v. 4. † Ezek. 7.—v. 19. Psalm 49.—v. 16.

‡ Isa. 38.—v. 1, 2. § 1 Tim. 6.—v. 6. || Matt. 6.—v. 25.

things secured to him, both in this life and that which is to come.

Thus, had we nothing to attend to but the concerns and affairs of this life, yet godliness must needs be acknowledged to be the most profitable and beneficial way of living any one can possibly take, as having the promise of all good things made and confirmed by him who cannot lie.

But if there were no promise made unto it, yet godliness of itself, in its own nature, may justly be accounted not only profitable, but the greatest gain, the surest riches, that even in this life we can be possessed of; for it keeps a man's mind continually in such an excellent frame and temper, which not only answers all the ends of other riches, but makes him infinitely more happy than all the riches in the world can do.

It raises a man's thoughts and affections so far above the world, that he is not anxiously concerned or affected with what happens in it, but whatever storms arise without him, he hath calmness and tranquillity, peace and assured confidence within. Hence it is that God gives the name of riches to the several acts of holiness: the godly man is said "to be rich towards God."* "For he is rich in faith:"† "and rich in good works."‡ So

* Luke, 12.—v. 21. † James, 2.—v. 5. ‡ 1 Tim. 6.—v. 18.

he is said to be rich in love towards God, rich in charity, rich in heavenly mindedness, rich in humility, and all true grace and virtue.

These are true riches indeed ; and were we to look no farther than this life, godliness must needs be acknowledged to be profitable for all things in it.

But why do I speak so much of this short, this transient, this uncertain life, when "godliness hath the promise, not only of the life that now is, but likewise of that which is to come," which as far exceeds it as light doth darkness, or heaven the earth : for by the life to come we are to understand all the glories of heaven, which are plainly promised to true godliness or piety, in the law and gospel.

And here we would persuade you of this great truth, that you will gain infinitely more by being godly than you can by any other way of living whatsoever.

The profit which we shall receive by godliness is true and real, which cannot be said of the wealth and riches of this world, which have no real being in themselves, nor any other existence but what they receive from the delusions of men's distracted fancies. Gold and silver, for example, are no farther riches than as they are thought so to be ; and

were not our thoughts and imaginations corrupted and deceived, we should never have put the name of riches upon them. Hence our Saviour makes earthly riches to have no other subsistence, but only in men's imaginations; and Solomon declares them to have no being at all. "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings: they fly away as an eagle towards heaven.*

These are the riches which deluded mortals give the name to; such as houses, lands, and money; and which cannot in themselves profit or do them good; and yet these are all the riches your care and pains, your anxiety and industry, for this world can bring you.

But the profit that accrues from godliness is quite of another nature; it is real profit, true wealth, substantial riches indeed, such as makes the owners thereof rich in the sight of angels, yea, of God himself. Godliness entitles a man to every thing that can conduce to make him happy. It gains an interest in God, and in all his perfections; an interest in Christ, and in the merits of his death and passion; an interest in the Holy Ghost, and in all the comforts that flow from him. And what is, if this be not, true profit, thus to be

* Prov. 23.—v. 5.

interested in him who is all things in himself? What are the riches of the world compared to these? What if you can say such houses, such lands, such riches, are mine? What are these to a man who can say, God is mine; his mercies are mine, to pardon me; his wisdom is mine, to direct me; his power is mine, to protect me; his grace is mine, to make me holy; and all his perfections are mine, to make me happy? For he is my God. Of such a one we should say, behold a rich man indeed; one who has thriven so well in the world that he hath more than the whole world is able to afford him; one who wants nothing that is necessary, or can be any way profitable or advantageous for him, because he hath God, in whom all things desirable are concentrated. Yet thus rich is every godly man; he is entitled to all the glories of this life, and in the life to come hath actual possession of them; and all because he fears God and keeps his commandments, believes in Christ Jesus for pardon and acceptance, according to the tenor and purport of the Gospel. They who are truly godly must needs be acknowledged to be rich, and in comparison of whom no one else can be properly called so, whatever outward enjoyments he may possess: theirs are real and substantial riches; his nothing but dreams and shadows, the mere chimeras of his own distracted brain.

The profit that comes of godliness is full and satisfying; the riches of the world are vain and empty;* the more we have of them the less generally are we contented; the more we have the more we crave, never resting satisfied, until we come to the enjoyment of the infinite God, which we can never do, without godliness, and in whom alone all our desires can be ever satisfied. But whosoever is truly godly, is thus fully rich; not in silver or gold, not in houses or lands, but in God himself, the chiefest, the infinite, the all, the only good, "in whose presence is fulness of joy."† Inasmuch that though all things in this world are not able to fill and satisfy one soul, he is able to fill and satisfy all the souls in the whole world, as he will do those who are truly godly, in the life to come. "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness."‡ O the glory, the happiness, the riches of a glorified saint! How full, how excellent, how infinite is the wealth that he hath gotten by being holy, in and through the merits of Jesus Christ! seeing the riches he there enjoys as far exceed his desires, as the wealth of this world comes short of ours. How then are we able to forbear breaking forth into that pathetic expression, "As the

* Eccl. 1.—v. 2. † Ps. 16.—v. 11. ‡ Ps. 17.—v. 15.

hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." *

The riches which godliness in and through Christ produceth, are sure and constant; they are not like the riches of this world, "which make themselves wings and fly away." † They do not ebb and flow, as all those sublunary riches do, which never continue in one stay: but he that is rich to day may be as poor to-morrow; and he that is poor to day may be as rich to-morrow; so uncertain and inconstant are all things here below: but so are not the riches that are above; they never fail nor diminish in the least. He that is once admitted a citizen of the New Jerusalem is in no fear of sustaining any loss, for all things are made as sure and firm to him as Omnipotence could make them: neither have those blessed souls any mixture of grief or trouble in the bliss and happiness they there enjoy; "For God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." ‡

And this is the next thing wherein the profit that ariseth from godliness infinitely surpasseth all the riches of this life; for the riches of this life are but the riches of this

* Psalm 42.—v. 1. † Prov. 23.—5. ‡ Rev. 21.—v. 4.

existence, and so are more uncertain than life itself; for you are never sure of them while you live, and you are sure to part with them when you die. Thus the rich man that fareth sumptuously every day, when he is once dead, the next news we hear of him is, that he is in hell, and hath not so much as a drop of water to cool his inflamed tongue.* How many such Dives are there in the world, who, whilst they are here, are accounted rich and wealthy, but when they go out of it, leave all they have behind them, which others dispute about, and they are ingulphed in misery and without help: but it is not so with those who are rich towards God; for as they have no term of years there, so every thing they have is finally settled upon them for ever. "It is an immortal and an eternal life." † "An inheritance incorruptible, and that fadeth not away." ‡ "Every one hath his mansion, and that is eternal in the heavens." § Every one hath his fill of pleasures, and that "for evermore." ¶ So infinitely doth the profit that comes by godliness, exceed the fading and impertinent riches of this transient world!

But I shall instance only one more particular wherein the extraordinary profitable-

* Luke 16.—v. 19, 20. † Matt. 25.—v. 46. ‡ 1 Peter 1.—v. 4.

§ 2 Cor. 5.—v. 1. ¶ Psalm 16.—v. 11.

ness of godliness may be easily seen; and that is, that by it a man may certainly and infallibly attain to the riches we have now been speaking of, which is infinitely more than can be said of the things of this life. For it is possible for a man to use all the art and cunning that ever man used to obtain earthly wealth and riches, and yet go without them, when all is done. This many have found by their experience, who could never attain to any considerable estate, do what they could. But after all their care, and pains, and trouble, they have still been as poor and indigent as ever. But it is not so with heavenly riches which godliness is profitable for; for never a soul of you but may most certainly attain to them, who will use his best endeavors to live in all godliness and honesty; not by any virtue that is in godliness itself, as if that could merit such transcendent riches as these are, but by reason of the promise which is made to it, both for this life, and also for that which is to come; which promise being made by God, who cannot lie, must be faithfully and exactly performed; especially considering that it is sealed and confirmed by the blood of Jesus, who came into the world and died on purpose that they who believe and obey him, and so are godly persons, "might have everlasting life;* so that we have the

* Job 3.—v. 16. Heb. 7.—v. 25. 1 John 5.—v. 10, 11.

word, the testimony, the promise of God himself, that if we be truly good, we shall have eternal life in Jesus Christ : from whence we may confidently assert, that no true Christian ever missed of heaven, or that true godliness never yet was, nor ever can be unsuccessful or unprofitable to any; but that where-soever it is, it is always profitable for all things.

Thus you see what godliness is, and how profitable a thing it is to all who sincerely follow after it, it being the only way whereby you may every one attain to true and real, to full and satisfying, to firm and constant, to eternal and everlasting riches ; and that as certainly and infallibly as if you were already in the actual possession of them.

Go to, now, all ye who admire and covet riches, and see if you can find out any better way of thriving in the world than by serving God ; if you can, then follow it with all your diligence and zeal. Go to, now, ye who think it not worth your while to devote yourselves wholly to the service of God, and say with them, in Job, " What is the Almighty, that we should serve him ? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him ? " * Or with the Prophet Malachi, " Ye have said, it is vain to serve God ; and what profit is it that we

* Job 21.—v. 15.

have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts?''* Consider what ye have heard, and tell me whether you have any cause to say so; or rather, whether you have not all the cause in the world to believe that the heavenly is indeed the most profitable calling; and that there is more real advantage to be obtained by serving God, than there is by all other artifices, designs, and practices whatsoever; and therefore be exhorted to act accordingly, for the future. I know you all desire to be rich, yea, much richer than you are; but I am sure you can never be truly rich unless you are truly pious, and that all your care and pains about other things will stand you in no stead, nor bring you any real profit; but if you sincerely follow after godliness, you will infallibly find it to be profitable for all things you can desire: for God himself hath said it, and therefore all such among you as are so wise as to prefer God's judgment before their own, as you desire to be rich indeed, take this course: call in your thoughts and affections from this world, and fix them only upon God; set yourselves in good earnest to honor and obey him in all you think, or speak, or do, firmly believing and trusting on Jesus Christ for the accept-

* Mal. 3.—v. 14.

ance of your persons and performances, and then you will be rich indeed, both in this life and that which is to come. "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever. Amen.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

SERMONS,

SELECTED AND ABRIDGED FROM THE

WORKS

OF THE

RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD

WILLIAM BEVERIDGE, D.D.

LATE LORD BISHOP OF ST. ASAPH.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

FOR THE USE OF FAMILIES.

VOL. II.

COLCHESTER:

Printed for the Editor.

SOLD BY SWINBORNE AND WALTER, COLCHESTER; W. KEYMER,
DITTO; OGLES, DUNCAN, AND COCHRANE, PATERNOSTER-ROW,
AND 205, HOLBORN; J. HATCHARD, PICCADILLY; AND BALDWIN,
GRADOCK, AND JOY, PATERNOSTER-ROW, LONDON.

1815.

Printed by Swinborne and Walter, Colchester.

CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL AMBASSADORS
FOR CHRIST.

Page.

1

2 CORINTHIANS, Chap. 5.—Verse 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 re-
conciled to God.*

SERMON II.

CHRIST, AS MAN, IS HEAD OVER ALL
THINGS.

20

EPHESIANS, Chap. 1.—Verses 22, 23.

*And hath put all things under his feet,
and gave him to be head over all things
to the Church: which is his body, the
fulness of him that filleth all in all.*

SERMON III.

PROFESSION WITHOUT PRACTICE USELESS. 41

ST. MATTHEW, Chap. 7.—Verse 21.

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

SERMON IV.

CHRISTIAN PRIZE. 54

PHILIPPIANS, Chap. 3.—Verse 14.

*I press toward the mark, for the prize of
the high calling of God in Christ
Jesus.*

SERMON V.

CHRIST'S ASCENSION. 70

JOHN, Chap. 14.—Verses 2, 3.

*In my Father's house are many mansions :
If it were not so, I would have told you.
I go to prepare a place for you.
And if I go and prepare a place for you,
I will come again, and receive you unto
myself; that where I am, there ye may
be also.*

CONTENTS.

3

Page.

SERMON VI.

WHIT-SUNDAY SERMON.

90

ACTS, Chap. 2.—Verses 1, 2.

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place: and suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

SERMON VII.

GOD'S OMNIPRESENCE THE BEST GUARD
AGAINST SIN.

107

PSALM 16.—Verse 8.

*I have set the Lord always before me:
because he is at my right hand, I shall
not be moved.*

SERMON VIII.

HOLINESS THE CONSPICUOUS TEST OF
BELIEVERS.

130

ST. MATTHEW, Chap. 5.—Verse 16.

*Let your light so shine before men, that
they may see your good works, and
glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

SERMON IX.

Page

REGENERATION THROUGH CHRIST. 150

2 CORINTHIANS, Chap. 5.—Verse 17.

Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are past away; behold, all things are become new.

SERMON X.

TRUST IN GOD. 172

PSALM 9.—Verse 10.

They that know thy name will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast never failed them that seek thee.

SERMON XI.

NOT HEARERS BUT DOERS JUSTIFIED. 190

Epistle of JAMES, 1.—Verse 22.

But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

SERMON XII.

ONE THING NEEDFUL. 211

LUKE, 10.—Verse 42.

But one thing is needful: and Mary has chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

CONTENTS.

5

Page.

SERMON XIII.

FAITH THE PRINCIPLE OF INWARD
PURITY.

231

ACTS, Chap. 15.—Verse 9.

*And put no difference between us and
them, purifying their hearts by faith.*

SERMON XIV

THE CHAIN OF EVANGELICAL GRACES. 253

2 St. PETER, Chap. 1.—Verses 5, 6.

*And besides this, giving all diligence,
add to your faith, virtue; and to
virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge,
temperance; and to temperance, pa-
tience; and to patience, godliness; and
to godliness, brotherly kindness; and
to brotherly kindness, charity.*

SERMON XV.

REPENTANCE AND FAITH TWO GREAT
BRANCHES OF THE EVANGELICAL CO-
VENANT.

272

St. MARK, Chap. 1.—Verse 15.

Repent ye, and believe the Gospel.



Sermons.

SERMON I.

MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL AMBASSADORS FOR
CHRIST.

2 CORINTHIANS, Chap. 5.—Verse 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.

ST. PAUL, in my text, the better to prepare the Corinthians, first reminds them, in the foregoing verses, that God hath reconciled mankind to himself by Jesus Christ, and that he hath committed the word and ministry of this reconciliation to us, the Apostles, and their successors, in all ages; and that we, in his name, and by his authority, might publish it to the world, and persuade men to accept of the peace which he now offers to them, so as to be reconciled to him, as he is to them, by Jesus Christ. And having said this, he draws

this conclusion from it: "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."

~~This is a truth so necessary for all Christians~~ to know, that it is the first thing which St. Paul put those he wrote to in mind of in all his epistles; beginning them by saying, "Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ," or "Paul called to be an Apostle;" that they to whom he wrote might know that he did not write to them as a private person, but as an Apostle of Jesus Christ; that is, as a messenger of Christ, sent and empowered by him *to write*, that so they might receive what he was about to write to them, not as coming from him, but from Christ himself; an Apostle, in effect, being the same with an ambassador. But foreseeing that this name would in process of time be appropriated only to the twelve, and such as were called immediately by Christ himself, as he and some others were; therefore, in my text, speaking not only of these, but of such also as should succeed them in any part of their apostolical office in all ages, he alters the phrase, not saying, we are Apostles, but we are ambassadors for Christ; a word which is commonly known to signify such as are sent by a prince into a foreign country, to treat in his name about matters of state, either of peace or war. And so

Christ himself useth the word, where, speaking of a king going to make war with another king, he saith, that "he sits down first, and consults whether he be able to meet him or no: or else, while the other is a great way off, he sendeth an embassage, and desireth conditions of peace."* So here, although Almighty God can meet with us when he pleaseth, and we are no way able to withstand him, yet is he graciously pleased to send some men to treat with others in his name about peace with him; to acquaint them with the easy conditions he hath made and expects; and to assure them, that upon their performance of the conditions, he will be reconciled to them. And therefore, all who are thus sent or commissioned by him, to act in his name, are called ambassadors for Christ, or in the place and stead of Christ.

Wherefore, Jesus Christ being the mediator between God and men, and as such having all power given him in heaven and earth, for transacting the great business of reconciliation between them; when he was about to leave the earth, as man, and go up to heaven, to reside there as our advocate with the Father, he appointed some men to supply his place upon earth, and to carry on the great work which he had begun among men. These he

* Luke, 14.—v. 32.

called his Apostles or ambassadors, because they were sent by him, and empowered to act in his name and stead, and according to the instructions he gave them. Of which, that the world might in all ages be fully assured, he ordered the commission which he granted them to be recorded; where it is written, that the same day on which he rose from the dead, in the evening, he came to them where they were assembled, and when he had convinced them that he was the same person who had been crucified three days before, by shewing them his hands and feet that were nailed to the cross, he said unto them again, "Peace be unto you; as my Father sent me, even so I send you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained."*

Where we may observe, that he sent them after the same manner as the Father had sent him. And therefore, as the Father had sent him by anointing him with the "Holy Ghost," which was signified by the Spirit descending like a dove, and lighting upon him, even so he sent his Apostles; for he "breathed on them, and saith, Receive ye the Holy Ghost;"

* John, 20.—v. 21, 22, 23.

the Holy Ghost proceeding from him, as it doth from the Father. And that they might know this was designed not only for them, but for all that should succeed in that office to the end of the world, when he afterwards gave them his instructions for the execution of it, he said to them, "Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world."* From whence the Apostles, clearly understanding that their office was to continue to the end of the world, took care to confer it upon others, by laying their hands upon them, and so transferring to them of the same Spirit which they had received from Christ, the same way that Moses had done it by God's own appointment to Joshua.†

It was necessary to make this as plain as I could in a few words, that you may understand how we came to be ambassadors for Christ, as the Apostle here speaks, so as to act in his name, and by his commission, without which nothing we do can signify any thing. Any man may read the Scriptures, or make what is often called a sermon to the people; but it is not that which the Scriptures call preaching the Word of God, unless he is sent by God to do it. "For how can they preach, except they be sent."‡ "And no man taketh this honor to himself, but he that

* Matt. 28.—v. 20. † Num. 27.—v. 18. ‡ Rom. 10.—v. 16.

is called of God, as was Aaron."* Any man may treat of public affairs as well as an ambassador, but he cannot do it to any purpose without a commission from his prince; and yet this is the case of many among us, who, as the Apostle foretold, "cannot endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears."† But such teachers as men thus heap to themselves, however they may please the fancy, they can never touch their hearts: for that can be done only by the power of God, accompanying and assisting his own institution and commission. Insomuch that if I did not think, or rather was not fully assured that I had such a commission to be an ambassador for Christ, and to act in his name, I should never think it worth the while to preach or execute any ministerial office. For I am sure that all I did would be void of itself, and of none effect, according to God's ordinary way of working; and we have no ground to expect miracles. But blessed be God, we, in our Church, by a successive imposition of hands, continued all along from the Apostles themselves, receive the same Spirit that was conferred upon them for the administration of the Word and Sacraments ordained by our Lord and Master, and therefore

* Heb. 5.—v. 4.

† 2 Tim. 4.—v. 3.

may do it as effectually to the salvation of mankind as they did. For, as they were, so are we "ambassadors for Christ."

And then it follows, in my text, "We pray you, in Christ's stead," as if Christ himself was here present. For he, being now, as to his body, in heaven, sends his ministers or ambassadors to represent him, and supply his place upon earth, and to do in his name what he himself did when he was here, and would still do if he was now present in his body, as he is by his Spirit; according to the promise which he made to his Apostles and ambassadors in all ages, "Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world;" and according to what he told them upon another occasion, saying, "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me."* Whereby he plainly signified what he afterwards told them in express terms, that as the Father sent him, so he sent them, as his ambassadors, to treat in his name; and that, as the persons of ambassadors are always reckoned sacred and inviolable, so what an ambassador doth in the name of his prince is looked upon as done by the prince himself; and as an affront offered to an ambassador reflects on the prince that sent him, so whatsoever is

* Luke, 10.—v. 16.

done to the ministers or ambassadors of Christ, as such, is done to Christ himself. "They who hear him, will hear them; and they who despise them, despise him who sent them."

From hence, therefore, you may see how truly the Apostle here saith, "We pray you, in Christ's stead;" and how necessary it is for you to hearken to what we say in his name, lest ye be found in the number of those who despise Christ, together with his doctrine that he teacheth you by us; for it is in his stead we pray you. But what do we pray you in his stead to do? Nothing but what is really for your good; nothing but what tends to your eternal happiness and welfare; and therefore nothing but what it is your interest to do, whether we prayed you to do it or no. For seeing Christ came into the world for no other end but to make you happy, and hath done and suffered so much as he hath for that only purpose; you cannot imagine that he by us, or we from him, should pray you to do any thing but what is indispensably necessary in order to your attainment of true felicity. And although we do not command, but only pray you, in Christ's stead, yet it being in his stead we pray, you ought to give the same deference to it as if we commanded you. The request of an earthly prince is taken by his faithful subjects

as a command; how much more, when the King of kings and Lord of lords is pleased to condescend so far as to make a request to you? which surely is to be received as the highest sort of command, in that it doth not only signify his will, but also lays a fresh obligation upon you to observe it, seeing he is graciously pleased to deal so gently and kindly with you; not being forced into it only by his positive command, but drawn with the bands of love, and of love the highest that can be shewn you. For, after all, what is it that we thus pray you, in Christ's stead? Nothing more but to be reconciled to God. "We pray you," saith the Apostle, "be ye reconciled to God." One would think there was no great need that such a request should be made. If men did but consult their own real interest, this certainly would be the first thing they would strive after. And yet God knows there are but few that do so; and therefore, out of his infinite love and mercy, he is pleased to send his ambassadors, one after another, rising up early and sending them, to call upon men, and to pray them, in his name, to do it. And he hath sent me at this time to make the same request and prayer to you, even that you would be reconciled to him.

But that you may fully understand what it is that I pray you, in Christ's stead, to do,

and likewise how you may do it aright, you must take notice that by nature you are all "the children of wrath,"* one as well as another. For he that made you is angry with you, for not answering his end in making you, which was to serve and glorify him, in obeying and observing the laws which he for that purpose hath set you: whereas ye have all broken his laws, and instead of glorifying ye have dishonoured him through the whole course of your lives, and are justly fallen under his displeasure; but he, notwithstanding, hath been graciously pleased to find out and put you into a way of being reconciled to him; not by suffering your sins to go unpunished, but by not imputing them to you, by laying the punishments which were due unto you for them upon another, even upon his only begotten Son; as the Apostle here informs us, saying, "For he hath made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, or an offering for our sins;" that is, as the Prophet expresses it, "He hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."† And his only begotten Son having thus borne the punishments which his justice required for our sins, he is now ready to extend his mercy to us, and to receive us again into his favor, upon such easy terms and conditions, that it is our own faults

* Eph. 2.—v. 3.

† Isaiah, 53.—v. 6.

unless we perform them, so as to be again reconciled to God.

For all that is required on your part is only "to repent and believe the Gospel."* This was what our Lord himself called all mankind to do, when he first entered upon his ministry; and the substance of all that he taught afterwards, and commanded his Apostles to teach. He himself saith "that he came to call sinners to repentance;" and told his disciples "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations."† And accordingly, when the people desired to know of St. Peter and the rest of the Apostles, what they should do, St. Peter said unto them, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ," so as to become his disciples, and to have your sins pardoned. This Christ also gave in charge to his Apostles, at the same time that he sent them out as his ambassadors into the world: "Go ye, and teach, or rather make all nations disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."‡ These are the instructions which

* Mark, 1.—v. 15.

† Luke, 20.—v. 47.

‡ Matt. 28.—v. 19, 20.

he gave them and their successors, together with their commission to be his ambassadors to the end of the world. He requires them to go and call upon all nations to become his disciples. These therefore being the commands and instructions which Christ Jesus, the Lord and Saviour of mankind, hath given to all whom he sends and employs as his ministers upon earth, in his name, and in his stead, I pray and beseech you all here present to be reconciled to God. Repent of all your former sins. You must all know, every one for himself, the sins which he hath hitherto been guilty of, and is still addicted to. If you do but look into your own hearts and lives, you must see how little good, and how much evil you have done, since you came into the world. You must be conscious to yourselves that you have often transgressed the laws and commands of Almighty God, who sent you hither, by doing what you ought not to do, and by not doing what you ought; and so you have broken that solemn vow and promise which you made to God when you were baptized, and made the members and disciples of Jesus Christ, and are still doing so every day of your lives.

Now then, I pray you, in Christ's stead, break off your sins, by repentance and amendment of life. "Let not sin reign any longer in your mortal body, that ye should

obey it in the lusts thereof," but mortify the deeds of the body, and destroy the ill habits you have contracted by a long continuance in any sort of vice or wickedness. Set yourselves in good earnest upon "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." Take heed that your hearts be not overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, or the cares of this life. Be just and righteous in all your dealings; shew yourselves truly religious to those who differ from you; and if you have wronged any man, be sure to make him restitution. "As ye have opportunity, do good unto all men, especially to them who are of the household of faith; and whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye unto them. Love the Lord your God with all your hearts, and with all your souls. Pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks. Sanctify his holy name, and make him your only fear and dread." Live in a constant dependance upon him, and submission to his will. Acknowledge him in all your ways, honor him with all your substance, "serve and worship him with reverence and godly fear." Let your souls be reconciled and inclined to him, and your spirits rejoice in him and in those holy ways which he hath prepared for you. Study all you can to pro-

mote his glory in your several situations in the world, whether high or low, rich or poor; and for that purpose "cease to do evil, learn to do well; and whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." Believe on him, as your only Saviour, Mediator, and Advocate with the Father, "who ever liveth to make intercession for those who come to God by him;" and doubt not but that he will intercede so effectually for you, that for his sake, and upon the account of his merits and mediation, your sins will be pardoned, and God will be reconciled to you, before you go hence and be no more seen.

Having thus prayed you, in Christ's stead, and in his own words, to be reconciled to God, it may seem needless to use any arguments to persuade you to it; for if ye will not attend to what Christ desires you, much less will you regard any thing I can say. But in this also I shall not speak in my own, but in his name, and in his stead pray you to consider, first, who it is that desires this of you; not I, your fellow worm, but Christ himself; Christ, the eternal Son of God, the only begotten of the Father, the Lord God Almighty; "Christ, who, being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God; and yet, for your sakes, made

himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant; Christ, who, being thus found in fashion as a man, became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; Christ, who is now at the right hand of the Father, and is made head over all things to the Church," that nothing may hinder their reconciliation to God who apply themselves to him, and do what he requires in order to it. And will ye not do any thing for him who hath done and suffered so much for you? Surely you can never deny him any thing, when he desires nothing of you, but only that ye would be reconciled to God. This is the end of all he did for mankind upon earth, the end of all that he is now doing in heaven, and the end of his sending his ministers to solicit and pray you, in Christ's stead, to do so. And if ye stand out, and refuse to come in upon his most gracious request, what favor can ye ever expect? "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh."* And who can imagine the dismal effects and conse-

* Prov. 1.—v. 24.

quences of his displeasure? If his "wrath be kindled; yea, but a little," who is able to stand before him? The thoughts of which are sufficient to make the stoutest heart among us tremble. To have the Lord of Hosts, the Supreme Governor of the world, to have him angry with us, who can think of it without amazement? Who can describe the deplorable condition which they are in, who are under his displeasure? Surely "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God:" for so long as he who governs all things in the world is angry with you, there is nothing in it that can do you good; nothing but what will contribute some way or other to your ruin and destruction. All the world cannot help you, unless he who made and governs it be reconciled to you; but ye must be punished "with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe in that day."* If these things were seriously considered, as they ought to be, they would make men restless and uneasy, until they had made their peace with God, and done all that you have heard to be required in order to their reconciliation with Him.

* 2 Thess. 1.—v. 9, 10.

And how happy would they then be? as happy in the love and favor of the Almighty, as others are miserable under his wrath and displeasure? For when you are at peace with God, all things else will be at peace with you; he that made them all will make them to be so. You shall, as Job speaks, “be in league with the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with you.”* Yea, “when a man’s ways please the Lord, he maketh his enemies to be at peace with him.”† And not only they, but all things else shall work together for your good, so long as ye continue in his favor, who governs and disposes of all things as he pleaseth. For when ye are reconciled to him, he will look upon you as his friends, his favorites, his children, and will deal accordingly with you. He will take you into his own peculiar care and conduct. He will hide you under his wings, that no evil may come near to hurt you. He will bless and sanctify all occurrences to you, whether you are high or low, in prosperity or adversity. He will provide all things necessary for you. He will cause the light of his countenance to shine upon you. He will guide you by his counsel, assist you by his grace, protect you by his power, and enlighten, actuate, support, and

* Job. 5.—v. 23.

† Prov 16.—v. 7.

strengthen you by his Holy Spirit, that you may pass through all the changes and chances of this mortal life, and finally attain everlasting joy.

But why do I thus endeavor to describe the happiness of those who are reconciled to God; when to be in his favor is itself the greatest happiness that a creature is capable of, and such as none can comprehend, but they who have it? Yet this is that happiness which the eternal Son of God hath purchased for mankind, and to which he sends his ambassadors to invite them. It is in his name, therefore, I come to all who are present at this time, "and pray you, in his stead, be ye all now reconciled unto God," while the day of grace lasts. Blessed be God, you may all as yet be reconciled to him, if ye will but take that course which hath been now described to you out of his holy Word. But if ye turn your backs, and refuse or neglect to hearken to him now, ye know not if he will ever call upon you any more. Wherefore I pray you, in his stead, put off this great work no longer, but begin it immediately: "For why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Why will ye destroy yourselves, when ye need not? Why will ye continue any longer under the displeasure of the Almighty, when ye may be restored to his favor, if ye will but seek it? But then you must seek it in his own

way, in the constant use of the means which he hath appointed, whereby to obtain his grace and assistance to do what is required of you. And therefore, as I have now prayed you, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God, so in his name I pray God to be reconciled to you, "and to open your eyes, that ye may see the things that belong to your everlasting peace before they be for ever hid from you."

Now to God, the Father, God, the Son; and God, the Holy Ghost, be all honor and glory. Amen.

SERMON II.

CHRIST, AS MAN, IS HEAD OVER ALL THINGS.

EPHESIANS, Chap. 1.—Verses 22, 23.

And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the Church: which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

ALTHOUGH the Most High God be infinitely happy in himself, yet he made all things to shew forth his wisdom, power, goodness, and all such perfections as could any way be exerted in the making of them. But if all things had continued in the same state wherein he made them, there could not possibly have been any fit and proper objects for some other of his divine perfections to work upon. Therefore he was pleased to suffer some of his creatures to fall from their

first estate, as many of the angels did in their own persons, and all mankind in their first parents. Upon the angels that sinned, he immediately discovered his infinite justice, in condemning them to their deserved torments. But as for men who fell, he was graciously pleased to find out a way, whereby to manifest his justice in the punishment of their sins, and yet to extend his mercy and truth unto their persons. This is the great mystery revealed in the Gospel; where we find, that as God made all things by his Word, he also redeemed mankind by the same Word, incarnate. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."* The eternal Word, the only begotten Son of God, of the same nature with the Father, was made flesh, and took upon him the whole nature of man, uniting it to his own divine person, so as to become man, of the same nature with us.

How this mysterious union could be effected would be great presumption in us to inquire, who understand not so much how our own souls and bodies are joined together; how spirit and matter could be so united, as to make one person. It is sufficient for us to know what is revealed concerning it; even that as the creation of the world, so this wonderful union was made by the immediate

* John, 1.—v. 14.

power of God. The Holy Ghost, who at first moved upon the face of the waters, now coming upon and overshadowing the blessed Virgin, so as to cause her to conceive that holy thing, Emmanuel, God and Man in one person; who was afterwards born into the world, and in the nature of man, which he had so assumed, grew up to the ordinary stature of other men, and appeared publicly among them, discovering who he was, and what he came into the world about, by the miracles which he wrought, and the divine doctrine which he taught them; until, at last, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, he was taken, and by wicked hands was crucified and slain, as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind. He was afterwards raised again to life, and went up to heaven, where he hath been ever since, is now, and ever will be, the only Mediator between God and men.

This is that glorious and divine person who is called Jesus, our Saviour; and he may well be called by that name, seeing it is only by him that God manifests his mercy and truth to mankind; and therefore he is the only Saviour that men ever had or can have in the world, "For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."*

* Acts, 4.—v. 12.

And by him there is no man living but may be saved, if he will apply to him for it; and which, that we may do, it infinitely concerns every one of us to understand how great a person he is, and how able and willing “to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him;” for otherwise it is impossible to believe and trust on him, as we ought. Therefore St. Paul, “determined to know nothing among the Corinthians, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified;”* and St. Peter, advise all to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;”† implying, that this is the only way whereby to believe in him, and to address ourselves to him, for all things necessary to our eternal salvation.

Now, although there is nothing revealed in the holy Scriptures concerning our blessed Saviour, but what was there revealed that we may know it; yet there are some things, doubtless, more necessary to be known than others; especially such as immediately respect the offices which he undertook, in order to the accomplishing our salvation; as that he is the greatest prophet of the world, who hath made known the will of God to mankind; that he is an High Priest, to offer up sacrifice, and to make atonement and recon-

* 1 Cor. 2.—v. 2.

† 2 Peter, 3.—v. 18.

ciliation for the sins of the world; that he is an Almighty King, who rules and reigns over the whole world; which last, although it is one of the fundamental articles of his religion, yet it is seldom thought of, or at least not so duly considered as it ought. Therefore, I shall endeavor to explain it to you, that you may be able to form such an idea or notion of it in your minds, which, by the blessing of God, may incline your hearts to love and honor him, to obey and serve him, to believe and trust on him, and him only, for all things required, in order to your obtaining eternal salvation. This I shall endeavor, by his assistance, to do from the words of this text; where the Apostle, speaking of what God did for Christ, after that he had raised him from the dead, saith, "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the Church: which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

In which are three things much to be observed.

1st, That Christ is the head over all things.

2dly, That he is so to the Church.

3dly, That the Church is in a peculiar manner his body.

1st. We must observe, that the glory and power which are here attributed to our blessed Saviour, are declared to be given him by God,

after he was raised from the dead ; and therefore it cannot be understood of his Godhead : for, as God, he never died nor rose again : as God, he was always at the right hand of the Father : as God, he was not only far, as it is here said, but infinitely above all principalities and powers : as God, he could have any thing put under his feet, for all things were always there : much less could he be given to be the head over all things ; for, as God, he was so in himself, in his own nature ; and therefore all this must be understood of his manhood, as distinct, though not divided from his godhead ; so that as the Apostle, speaking of his power in heaven, saith “ There is one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.”*

This being promised, we may next observe, the Apostle here saith, “ That God raised Christ from the dead, and set him at his own right hand, in the heavenly places, far above all principalities, and power, and might, and dominion ;” that is, above all the orders and degrees of angels, both good and bad ; and likewise of men. Neither is he only thus far above them, but above all things else ; above every name that is named ; above every thing that is, not only in this world, but also in

* 1 Tim. 2.—v. 5.

that which is to come. "And he hath put all things under his feet."

This was foreshewn and typified long ago in Joseph; who, having been sold and put into prison, was no sooner delivered from thence, but was made ruler over all the land of Egypt: only in the throne, said Pharoah to him, "I will be greater than thou."* Though the regal authority was still in Pharoah, yet the exercise of it was committed to Joseph, over all the affairs and persons in the whole kingdom. So here, Christ was no sooner raised from the grave, but, as himself saith, all power was given to him, both in heaven and in earth; or the whole kingdom of God. And so, though all power is committed to the Son by the Father, yet it is the same that is in the Father, and is exercised by the Son, in his name, over all things that are in heaven and earth.

This is what is meant by Christ's sitting, or standing, or being at the right hand of God.† Thus it is expressed by his sitting on the right hand of the Majesty on high;‡ by being set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;§ and by the son of man's sitting on the right hand of Power.||

* Gen. 41.—v. 40. † Mark, 16.—v. 19. ‡ Heb. 1.—v. 3.

§ Heb. 8.—v. 1. || Matt. 26.—v. 64.

For all these expressions amount to the same thing, “ even that all power is committed unto him ;” so that he reigns over all things that are. Thus St. Peter explains that phrase, where he saith, “ That Christ is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God ; angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject unto him.”* And David, speaking of Christ, saith, “ The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”† St. Paul interprets it of his reigning, “ till he hath put all things under his feet.”‡ And St. Peter, having quoted the same words, draws this conclusion from them : “ Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ.”§ This is his “ sitting on the right hand of God ;” even his being made the Lord, the Lord of all things, the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords. From all which we may conclude, that Christ our Saviour is the supreme Governor of the world, and doth what he will with all and every thing that is in it ; as he himself also hath assured us, saying, “ The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.”||

* 1 Peter, 3.—v. 22. † Psalm 110.—v. 1. ‡ 1 Cor. 15.—v. 25.

§ Acts, 2.—v. 36.

|| John, 5.—v. 22.

Wherefore, that the man Christ Jesus is exalted far above, and vested with absolute authority over all creatures whatsoever, so as to be the universal Monarch of the world, none can doubt, who believe what God himself saith, it being so fully and clearly revealed in his most holy Word.

From hence we may see what great reason there is that the man Christ Jesus should be preferred above all other creatures; for he in himself far exceeds all other, there being no creature in the world so near to God as he is; none united to God but only Christ. How excellent soever any of the angels may be in themselves, they are still but creatures, subsisting in no other but their own finite nature, upheld by the power of God; and therefore not to be compared to him who subsists in the very form and substance of God, and is so united to him, as to be God as well as man.

But, besides the great excellency of his person, the extraordinary merits and consequences of the death which the man Christ Jesus suffered, entitle him to all the honor and power that is or can be conferred upon him. This we learn from the Apostle, where, having said, "That Christ, being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God; and yet having taken upon him the form of a servant, and being found in

fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross": he immediately adds, "wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in the earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."* Thus his sufferings are declared to be the way whereby he entered into his glory. "Ought not Christ," says St. Luke, "to have suffered these things, and enter into his glory?"† And this Apostle saith, "When he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."‡ And again, "Who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."§ To the same purpose is that also, which we read in the Revelations of St. John; where Christ himself saith, "To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am sat down with my Father in his throne."|| To all which I shall only add, that the very angels

* Phil. 2,—v. 9, 10. † Luke, 24.—v. 26. ‡ Heb. 1.—v. 3.

§ Heb. 12.—v. 2.

|| Rev. 3.—v. 21.

in heaven, over whom he is so highly exalted, acknowledge him to be worthy of all the honor that is given him, because he was slain for the sins of the world; for we read of an innumerable company of them, crying out with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb, that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."*

I have insisted the longer upon this, because some have conceited that Christ merited nothing for himself, but only for us; and that he looked not at his own glory, but only at ours, in what he did and suffered for us: whereas, in truth, he looked at ours, in order to his own; and at his own only, in order to the glory of God the Father, the ultimate end of all his, as it ought to be of all our actions. "For this it was that he was so highly exalted, that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father."†

But, that we may rightly understand how Christ merited so much for himself as well as for us, by what he suffered in our nature, and how justly he is therefore advanced in that nature above all creatures in the world, we must call to mind, that God doth all things for himself, and for the manifestation of his

* Rev. 5.—v. 12.

† Phil. 2.—v. 11.

own glory. The glory of many of his perfections appeared in the creation of the world, and still does so in the government of it. There are also other of his perfections, which shine forth in all their glory, even by the redemption of fallen man. This God himself is graciously pleased to account his glory in an especial manner; for, when Moses desired to see it, he, in answer to his prayer, promised to make his goodness pass before him; and, accordingly, the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness."* This is his glory, which we thank him for, after the Holy Communion, and this his glory appears only in Jesus Christ. All the creatures in the world could never have opened a way for the discovery of it. It was only Jesus Christ, God and man in one person, that could expiate the sins of the world so, that God, without the violation of his justice, could shew forth his mercy and truth unto them; and therefore, it is no wonder that God hath set him at his own right hand, above all creatures, "and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the Church."

To the Church—which is the next thing to be observed. As he is said to be the head of

* **Exod. 33.—v. 18.**

all things, so he is said to be so to the Church, or that congregation of faithful people which he hath purchased with his blood. It is for that reason he is vested with such absolute and supreme authority over all things, that he may be able to defend her, and bring all her sound members, even all that truly believe in him, to eternal life. This he himself asserts to be the end of all the power that is given him of the Father; for in his prayer he saith, "Father, the hour is come: glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee; as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."* To the same purpose St. Peter speaks of Christ: "Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins;"† both which are necessary to eternal life.

Thus the Father governs and manages every thing that is for the good of the whole creation, in general; and the Son doth the same for the good of his Church, in particular, "That all things may work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called, according to his purpose."‡ He

* John, 17.—v. 1, 2. † Acts, 5.—v. 31. ‡ Rom. 8.—v. 28.

is the head over all things to the Church; orders all things, so as to make them turn to the benefit and advantage of those who love God, and of them only. They are his own people, members of his own body; and therefore he takes special care that all things may serve them, and conduce to their happiness and salvation. The holy angels are sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation; the gates of hell can never prevail against his Church, nor against any one sound member of it. And as the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment, the righteous shall go into life eternal.* “And when all things shall be thus subdued unto him, then shall the Son also be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.”† Not that he will then cease to be a king, “For of his kingdom there shall be no end;”‡ but he shall no longer exercise his regal power, in subduing his enemies, because he will have none to subdue; and then the man Christ Jesus shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father: and so the whole work of man’s redemption will at last centre in God, that he may appear to be, as he is, “All in all.”

But while his Church is here militant upon earth, he exercises his regal power not only

* Matt. 25.—v. 46. † 1 Cor. 15.—v. 28. ‡ Luke, 1.—v. 33.

in subduing its enemies, but likewise in appointing and sending forth regularly ordained ministers, to administer his Word and Sacraments, and the discipline he hath settled in it, for the increasing, strengthening, and well governing of the whole, and also of every part of it. For “when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men;” and he gave some Apostles and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”* This he did most sensibly, when he first ascended up to heaven, by sending down his Holy Spirit in a visible manner upon his Apostles, that all the world might know that the gifts and graces of the Spirit come from the Lord Christ, as he is exalted at the right hand of God. It was by him that the Patriarchs and Prophets were inspired in the Old Testament, and also the Apostles and Evangelists in the New; and it is he who still appoints and empowers ministers in his church, for the edifying and well governing his people. They are his ministers, his ambassadors, acting only in his name; and it is he alone who makes their ministry and labors effectual to the ends for which he ordained

* Eph. 4.—v. 8.

it ; and for which purpose also he is always present with them, in the execution of their respective offices under him : “ And lo ! I am with you alway, even to the end of the world.”* Therefore, the Apostle adds, “ The Church is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all :” which is the last thing to be observed concerning the power of Christ ; that he is head over all things for the Church, as it is his body. St. Paul says, “ Christ is the head of the body, the Church ;”† and writing to the Corinthians, he saith, “ As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ : For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, because I am not the hand, I am not of the body ; is it therefore not of the body ? Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”‡

Here he plainly compares the whole Church to the body of a man, of which every believer is a member in particular, according to his place and station in that body. One is an eye, another a hand, a third a foot ; one is a higher, another a lower member ; but still every one is a member, and Christ the head of the whole body. He rules and governs it, he influences and directs, and he gives life,

* Matt. 28.—v. 20. † Col. 1.—v. 18. ‡ 1 Cor. 12.—v. 12.

and vigor, and motion, to every member of it, as the head doth to the body of a man. From him the head, as the Apostle saith, "The whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love:"* And again, "All the body by joints, and bands, having nourishment ministered and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God;"† which shews the stickest union that can possibly exist between Christ and his Church; and likewise, his wonderful way of working upon it by his Holy Spirit, which, proceeding from him, as the head, is diffused into the whole body, and into every part and member of it. By this the whole is preserved, and strengthened, and increased. By this every particular member is nourished, quickened, excited, and enabled to perform all the functions of the new and spiritual life: "For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body,‡ and so are made members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."§ And by the same Spirit, administered in the holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, we are strengthened and refreshed:

* Eph. 4.—v. 16.

† Col. 2.—v. 19.

‡ 1 Cor. 12.—v. 13.

§ Eph. 5.—v. 30.

For hereby we being many, “are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread, the staff and support of our spiritual life.”* And it is no wonder that Christ takes so great care of his Church, seeing it is so nearly related, so intimately united to him. And the Apostle truly calls the Church his fulness: “The fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

These things may seem perhaps to some to be matters only of theory and speculation; but, if duly considered, they will be found to have as great influence upon our minds and actions as any articles of our faith whatsoever. For is Christ our Saviour exalted at the right hand of God? Are all things put under his feet? What a glorious, what a mighty Saviour then have we now in heaven! How well may we believe and trust on him for all things necessary to our salvation! “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. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” All these things are conquered and overcome by Christ our Saviour: “Nay, in all these things we ourselves, too,

* 1 Cor. 10.—v. 17.

are more than conquerors, through him that loved us."* What then can impede or hinder our salvation by him? Can men, or devils themselves? No, they are all under our Saviour's feet, and cannot so much as stir without him. Therefore we may defy them all, and say boldly, with the Apostle, "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."†

Is Christ given to be head over all things to the Church? How then can the gates of hell ever prevail against it, or against any sound member of it? What can we want? What need we fear, who have him that hath all things under him always ready to supply and help us? What can he not do for us that he will? And what will he not do for us that he can? He that is the head over all things, he can do all things for us: he can subdue all things under us, he can give all things to us, he can prevent all things from doing us any harm, and he can make all things work together for our good. And he that is head over all things to the Church, we may be sure, will do all he can for us; that

* Rom. 8.—v. 35.

† Rom. 8.—v. 38, 39.

being the end of his being exalted over all things, that he may dispose of all things so as will best conduce to our happiness and salvation by him. And we may well be confident, that he will fully answer the end of his resurrection and exaltation in heaven, where he is always sitting upon the throne of grace, ready to receive the petitions we put up to God in his name, and to see that they are granted according to the promise which he made us, when he was upon the earth, saying, "Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name, he will give it you."* Is the Church the body of Christ, the fulness of him that filleth all in all? What love and care then must Christ have for his Church, nourishing and cherishing it even as his own flesh? And what love should all the members of the Church have for him, as well as for one another? What care to serve, honor, and obey him? How soberly, how righteously, how godly should we live, who are so nearly related to him that is the head over all things! Who would not be of the number of them?

God grant that all here present may be so; that we may all be real members of that body of which Christ is the head, and live accordingly; that we may be influenced, directed,

* John, 16.—v. 23.

strengthened, governed, and protected continually by his power and Spirit; that we may always do those things that please him, and so always live under his particular care and conduct, "who hath put all things under his feet, and is given to be head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all:" and who liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

SERMON III.

PROFESSION WITHOUT PRACTICE USELESS.

St. MATTHEW, Chap. 7.—Verse 21.

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

SEEING the Son of God was pleased to come from heaven on purpose to exalt the sons of men thither, it behoves us to take notice of what he hath said concerning it. For as the end of his conversing so long with sinful men was to shew them the direct way to bliss, so whatever he said concerning it is absolutely necessary to be observed by us.

Now there are two things in this chapter, with which our blessed Lord acquaints us; namely, that it is a very narrow way to heaven, and that it is very hard to walk in it: he would have us understand, that as

heaven is the highest happiness, so it is difficult to obtain it. The way thither is so exceeding narrow, that no man can possibly keep himself within its bounds and limits without the utmost care and circumspection. The allurements of the world on the one hand, and our own corrupt hearts on the other, are so apt to entice and draw us aside, until we have gained the conquest over our lusts, that it seems impossible for us to walk directly towards heaven. So that there is no sin can be subdued, no duty performed, no grace acquired, without a great deal of care and pains. But, that you may not be discouraged, your Redeemer hath assured you of it, by exciting you to a diligent and vigorous prosecution of it. He advises you to "strive to enter in at the strait gate;" intimating that though it be strait, yet it is possible to enter; that though it be hard, yet the kingdom of heaven is to be obtained; and that though there are not many, yet that there are some who come thither; and therefore, why may not you be in the number as well as others. No one in this congregation, whether high or low, rich or poor, but is as capable of enjoying eternal happiness as those who already enjoy it. Yea, you are all invited, commanded, and entreated to walk in the narrow way, and enter in at the strait gate that leads to life. The arms of Christ are ever open to embrace all that

go unto him ; and therefore we should resolve to devote our lives “ to the working out our salvation with fear and trembling, and to the making our calling and election sure ;” so that it may be our great care and study in this world to prepare for a better, and to attain that eternal life which Christ hath purchased for us with his own most precious blood.

Our blessed Saviour having thus taught us how difficult it is to attain the kingdom of heaven, informs us, who shall not come thither : “ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Although I am come down from heaven on purpose that by me men may go thither, yet I would not have you imagine that your calling me Lord, or barely professing that religion which I teach, will ever bring you thither. Much more must be done before you can be made partakers of such transcendent happiness.

These words plainly intimate that we may not only profess the Christian religion, but also make a very considerable progress in the practice of what it requires, and yet come short of the kingdom of heaven. And as this is a matter of infinite importance, I shall endeavor to explain how far we may profess the name of Christ, and yet fail of heaven ; and, consequently, how far we must proceed

in the Christian religion, if we desire to receive any benefit from it.

And 1st, We are all baptized into the name of Christ and initiated into the Christian religion. But we must not think that baptism is all that the Christian religion requires of us, or that all who are baptized shall be saved, whether they repent or not. By baptism, indeed, we are admitted into the society of Christians, and are put into a capacity of obtaining pardon and salvation by him into whose death we are baptized; but if we look no further we are not likely to attain it; for at the same time that our Saviour gave his Apostles their commission to baptize all nations that turned to his religion, he directed them likewise “to teach them whatsoever he had commanded;”* and therefore, without observing the commands of Christ, baptism will avail us nothing: this is but our entrance into the Christian religion, and if we go no further, it is impossible we should attain the end of it, even the salvation of our souls. Christ himself tells us, that “except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” For “not every one that saith Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”

* Matt. 28.—v. 19.

I need not mention who it is our Saviour means by his Father which is in heaven; even the Most High, whose Almighty power created all things, and by whom they all subsist. This blessed God hath been pleased to make use of several means in order to discover his will to mankind. To Adam he revealed his will by immediate inspiration; to Noah, Abraham, and the rest of the Patriarchs, by visions and appearances; to the Jews by Prophets; and to all the world by his Son Jesus Christ, and his Apostles. These several revelations of God's will are, by his wonderful providence, gathered together and preserved in the Books of the Old and New Testament, which consequently contain the whole will of God, all that is necessary for us to do, in order to obtain everlasting happiness. To know what is the will of his Father, which our Saviour here speaks of, we must consult the Scriptures, wherein alone it can be found; and if we search them, they tell us, "That this is the will of God, even your sanctification."* That is, the devoting ourselves to the service of the living God, that we become holy. By holiness we are to understand the rectitude of all the faculties of the soul, that they be kept within those bounds and limits, and perform those several

* 1 Thess. 4.—v. 3.

acts and duties which he that made them hath prescribed. So that we live as those who are none of our own, but wholly God's: "For we are bought with a price, and therefore should glorify God, both in our body and spirit, which are his."*

Moreover, he hath shewed us, in a particular manner, the several acts of holiness which it is his will and pleasure we should perform, both to himself and also to one another.

As to himself, it is the will of God, that we know and acknowledge him the only Creator, Preserver, Governor, and Disposer of the world; "Glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders."† "That it is in him we live and move, and have our being."‡ It is the will of God that we really love and prefer him before all things in the world, so that we love nothing above him, nothing beyond, nothing equal to, and nothing at all in comparison of him. For thus hath he commanded us, saying, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."§

It is the will of God also, that all the desires of our hearts be fixed upon him as their proper object, and all the inclinations of our

* 1 Cor. 6.—20.

† Exod. 15.—v. 11.

‡ Acts, 17.—v. 28.

§ Deut. 6.—v. 5.

souls concur to meet in him as their only good. That we stoop not so low, nor debase ourselves so much as to make the uncertain riches, low pleasures, or deceitful honors of this transient world the object of our souls' desires. That this is his will and pleasure he hath told us by his Son, saying, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."* And again by his Apostle "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth."†

Furthermore, it is the will of God, that we fear and dread nothing in the world but him; that our hearts be possessed with such awful and reverential apprehensions of his greatness, wisdom, justice, power, and sovereignty over the world, as not to dare do any thing that is offensive or displeasing to him; but still we must "sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself, and make him our fear and our dread."‡

It is the will of God that we trust and confide in nothing but him; that in all our fears, dangers, and afflictions, in all occurrences and conditions whatsoever, we still support ourselves and keep up our spirits with the serious consideration of the benignity of the Divine Nature, and with an humble and implicit confidence in the promises which

* Matt. 6.—v. 33. † Col. 3.—v. 2. ‡ Isaiah, 8.—v. 13.

God hath made unto us in Jesus Christ, without depending upon created helps, or expecting any thing from second causes, according to the rule laid down by the wise man: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding."*

It is the will of God that we submit to his providence, and patiently acquiesce in all his dispensations, so as not to murmur against, nor be troubled at them; but, knowing them to proceed from Infinite Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, to say, with Eli, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good."† "Yea, so as still to rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of our salvation."‡ In a word it is the will of the Most High God, that we humble ourselves under his mighty hand, confess our sins unto him, implore his pardoning mercy, and grace for the assistance of our souls in the performance of what he is pleased to require of us; that we delight ourselves in drawing nigh unto him, and esteem it our highest happiness to enjoy communion with him; that we admire his power, adore his goodness, praise and magnify his great and glorious name; "that whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we

* Prov. 3.—v. 5.

† 2 Sam. 3.—v. 18.

‡ Hab. 3.—v. 18.

do, we do it to his glory."* That we "know the God of our fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart, and a willing mind."† That "our light so shine before men, that others may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven."‡

And then, as to our behaviour towards one another, it is the will of God "that we do unto others as we would have others do to us."§ That we "do not go beyond or defraud each other."|| That "we love one another, as Christ hath loved us."¶ That "we walk with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."** It is the will of God, that we be loyal to our King, obedient to our Governors, peaceable with our neighbours, faithful to our friends, loving to our enemies, liberal to the poor, helpful to the weak, just and equitable towards all; and, in a word, "that we deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world."††

Having thus pointed out what is the will of God, and how we must perform it, if we desire to enter the kingdom of heaven, I need

* 1 Cor. 10.—v. 31. † 1 Chron. 28.—v. 9. ‡ Matt. 5.—v. 16.

§ Matt. 7.—v. 12. || 1 Thess. 4.—v. 6. ¶ John, 15.—v. 12.

** Eph. 4.—v. 2, 3. †† Tit. 2.—v. 12.

not spend much time in proving that, unless we do his will, we shall never come thither. It is true, indeed, that Jesus Christ hath, by his death and passion, made full and complete satisfaction to the justice of God for the sins of mankind ; but we must not think that this satisfaction of Christ will be imputed, or this righteousness applied, to any person that doth not repent of his sins, and obey the gospel ; “ For without holiness no man shall see the Lord.”* He hath told us, in plain and familiar terms, that none shall enter his kingdom but he that doth the will of his Father which is in heaven.

Wonder not, therefore, at our Saviour's assertion, “ that they only shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, who do the will of his heavenly Father.” For certainly no man can arrive at that place, but such as are capable of enjoying the pleasures of it. However, give me leave to add, that our knowing this great truth will signify nothing, unless we live conformably to it ; and therefore, all such as unfeignedly desire to be happy for ever, I would exhort, without any more delay, to set themselves in good earnest to do and perform whatsoever they know to be the divine will ; and, for their encouragement, I would observe, that doing the will of God

* Heb. 12.—v. 14.

is not only the most honorable, but the most pleasant and profitable employment any one can be engaged in.

That it is the most honorable employment in the world cannot be denied, because it is the employment of the saints upon earth, whom the Holy Ghost asserts to be the only honorable and excellent persons.* “Yea, more excellent than their neighbours.”† It was the employment of Christ himself, “for he went about doing good.”‡ It is the employment of the spirits of just men made perfect; of saints and angels now in heaven; nay it is the work of the great God himself, who is always fulfilling his own will, and doing whatsoever pleaseth him.

And what an honor must it be for us poor mortals to be always employed as the angels of heaven are; to walk as Christ himself walked when he was below; to carry on the same designs in the world, which the Most High God himself doth, and consequently to receive honor not from men, but from God himself! “For them that honor me,” saith he, “I will honor.”§ And this honor may all have that do the will of God.

Neither would I have you imagine that you must bid adieu to all true joy and pleasure,

* Psalm 16.—v. 3.

† Prov. 12.—v. 26.

‡ Acts, 10.—v. 38.

§ 1 Sam. 2.—v. 30.

when once you have devoted yourselves to the will of God. So far from it, that you will then only experience what true pleasure is; not only from that inward quiet and satisfaction of mind, arising from the consideration of having performed your duty; but likewise from the apprehension of God's love and favor, which he hath promised to all those that do his will. Hence the wise man observes, "The ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace;"* and in another place, the Apostle tells us to "rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, rejoice."† Thus having a foretaste of the joys of heaven; doing that in time which it will be our happiness to do for ever.

And, lastly, The profit and advantage which will arise from doing the will of God, is infinitely more than I am able to express. For God hath promised his wisdom to direct, his mercy to pardon, his power to protect, his righteousness to clothe us, and his goodness and all-sufficiency to satisfy our souls for ever.

Thus have we seen, not only how necessary it is, in order to our everlasting happiness, to do the will of God, but also how honorable, pleasant, and profitable it is to do it. Do you therefore believe the word of Christ to be true, or do you not? I know you do.

* Prov. 3.—v. 17.

† Phil. 4.—v. 4.

Resolve then, by the grace and assistance of God, to set yourselves in good earnest to perform what is his will and pleasure. Let us not trifle in a matter of such importance as this is; but, if we really desire to be admitted into the kingdom of God, and to live with Christ for ever, let us not take up with a mere formal profession of the Christian religion, nor rest in external performances of some particular duties. Let us not think it enough to attend divine service, and hear the Word of God; but let us repent of all our former sins, and be converted from the error of our ways; and, in future, let it be our study and ambition to order our thoughts and affections, our words and actions, according to the laws and commands of God. Love the Lord above all things, trust in his promises, fear his threatenings, obey his precepts, believe in his Son, reverence his name, his Word, his Sabbaths; and, for his sake, do nothing that you know to be a sin, omit nothing that you know to be your duty. Do thus, and you need not fear but your souls shall live, not only with angels and just men made perfect, but with Christ himself for evermore. Amen.

SERMON IV.

CHRISTIAN PRIZE.

PHILIPPIANS, Chap. 3.—Verse 14.

I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

THE Apostle, in these words, is discoursing of the great advantages he enjoyed by being a Christian, above what he could have expected in the Jewish religion, notwithstanding he had as much to trust to in it as any other, or rather more.

He was "circumcised the eighth day," as the law required, "of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews," his ancestors having been all along not proselytes, but of the Hebrew race. And "as touching the law, he was a Pharisee;" which was the strictest sect of their religion, and yet he had lived in it from the beginning.

By which means he was not only a professor, but a great zealot for the law; so that for the sake of it, he persecuted the Church of Christ. "And as touching the righteousness which is of the law, he was blameless." No man could accuse him of having ever broken, any part of the Mosaic law, either moral or ceremonial; for, like Zacharias and Elizabeth, "he had walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless."* And all this he had done, not like other Pharisees, hypocrites, to be seen of men, but sincerely out of pure conscience; for, when inspired with the Holy Ghost, he said, "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day."†

These certainly were very great things to which St. Paul had attained in the Jewish religion, and such as one would think sufficient to justify him before God. And doubtless he thought so as long as the veil was upon his face; but when that was done away, he presently saw the contrary. Therefore, saith he, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." And then he adds, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may

* Luke, 1.—v. 6.

† Acts, 23.—v. 1.

win Christ; and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Where he plainly speaks of a two-fold righteousness; the one he calls his own, the other that which is through the faith of Christ. And thus he had made conscience of keeping the whole law of God, moral as well as ceremonial, in that he saith, "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day."

This, therefore, was his righteousness, which was of the law, and which he might well have confidence in, as much as any man. And doubtless he had, till his eyes were opened; then he looked upon it as nothing, as to his justification before God. For, saith he, "I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified."* Yea, he counted this and all other things else but loss in comparison of that righteousness which is of God by faith; which expression can mean no less than that this righteousness is not of ourselves by any thing that we can do, but wholly of God. And accordingly, our Church hath declared, that we are accounted righteous before God, only for the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings.†

* 1 Cor. 4.—v. 4.

† Art. 11.

The Apostle having thus discoursed of the great privileges and advantages which they who are in Christ have above other people, proceeds to shew us what care he took to improve these mighty advantages to his own eternal good. "Brethren," saith he, "I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

As if he had said, in general, Brethren, I would not have you think I have as yet made that full use of the grace which is offered me in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, so as to attain to a state of absolute perfection, for I myself think that I have not. This one thing, indeed, I can say, that, not regarding what I have already done, and what I have still to do, I make it my constant business to approach it as near as I can, that so I may be sure at last to obtain that crown of glory to which God in so high and heavenly a manner hath called me in Christ Jesus.

This is the plain meaning of the words. But the Apostle wrote to the Philippians, who, living in Macedonia, where men commonly contended for a certain prize, which he who came first to the goal or mark received, were very well acquainted with the

terms used upon those occasions. Therefore, to make his meaning clearer to them, he expresses it in that language. Heaven, or eternal glory and happiness, he calls a prize.

That degree of evangelical perfection to which this prize is promised, the Apostle calls the mark ; which, whoever attains, shall certainly have the prize : therefore the Apostle pressed towards that mark, had it ever in his eye, and did all he could to reach it. And for that purpose, as they who ran in a race were not accustomed to look behind, but before them, so he, forgetting those things which were behind, taking no notice of what he had hitherto done, pressed all he could to the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

And what the Apostle did in this case, though he did it for himself, he wrote for our imitation. He in effect tells us so, by saying, " Brethren be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample." God grant we may all do so. I am sure it is as much our interest as it is our duty. And that we may be persuaded and directed in the right way of doing it, I shall, by God's assistance, first set before you this prize, and then shew you the mark, and how you must press towards it.

A prize in general was always something of profit or honor, declared to those who contended in any game, as an encouragement to excite them on, and as a reward to him that excelled; particularly in the races to which the Apostle here alludes. In the Grecian races, the prize was usually a crown or garland, which was reckoned a great ensign of honor. And in our Christian race the prize is a crown too, but of a much higher nature: "A crown, not of fading leaves, but of real honor and glory, that fadeth not away."* "A crown of righteousness."† "A crown of life;"‡ "and of eternal life."§ This is the crown that is given to all that overcome in the race which Christ hath set before them. And it is given to them, not as to strangers and foreigners, but as to sons and heirs, and therefore is called "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them."||

In this spiritual warfare the King of kings hath passed his word, "that he who overcomes, shall be his son; and if a son, then an heir, an heir of God and joint heir with Christ."¶ This is that glorious, that incorruptible, and everlasting crown, which is

* 1 Pet. 5.—v. 4. † 2 Tim. 4.—v. 8. ‡ James, 1.—v. 12.
§ Matt. 25.—v. 46. || 1 Pet. 1.—v. 4. ¶ Rom. 8.—v. 17.

proposed in the Gospel as the prize to all who overcome in the race which is set before them.

It is the prize of the high calling of God ; it is he alone can give it, and he alone can call us to it. He called mankind to this prize by his Prophets, and afterwards by his Son, who came into the world on purpose to call sinners to repentance. "Come unto me," saith he, "all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest; take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."* Afterwards he continued to do so by his Apostles, and still does it by his ministers appointed and ordained by him for that purpose. "For 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."†

Where you may observe, that as God doth, as it were, beseech you by us, so we pray you in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God, that you may obtain this prize. It was Christ that purchased this Crown. Hence he is said "to be the author of eternal salvation;"‡ "and eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord."§ It is

* Matt. 11.—v. 28, 29.

† 2 Cor. 5.—v. 20.

‡ Heb. 5.—v. 9.

§ Rom. 6.—v. 23.

only by him that we can obtain this prize. It is by him only that God calls us to it. He declares, "As I live," saith the Lord God, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for why will ye die." * "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not? Hearken then diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear; come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." † "Strive to enter in at the strait gate;" ‡ "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life, which the son of man shall give you." § "Know ye not that they which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain." ||

The next question is, What the Apostle here means by pressing towards the mark?

* Ezek. 33.—v. 11. † Isa. 55.—v. 1, 2. ‡ Luke, 13.—v. 24.

§ John, 6.—v. 27.

|| 1 Cor. 9.—v. 24.

By the mark, he understands such a degree of evangelical perfection to which the prize is promised. And for our better understanding this, it will be proper to observe, that no man ever yet did, or can attain to a state of absolute perfection in this life. For no man can be said to be absolutely perfect, but he whose understanding knows all things he is bound to know; whose judgment is so perfect, that he remembers all things he is required to remember; whose will and affections are so perfect, that they are placed upon their proper objects in a right and perfect manner; whose life and conversation is so upright, that he never thinks or speaks any thing but what he ought, and does every thing he is bound to do; without sin, error, inadvertency, or deviation from God's revealed will. This would be a perfect man. But where shall we find or did ever hear of such an one, except Him, who is God as well as man? "For who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from sin?"* There is no man that sinneth not; "And if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."†

There are many such places in the holy Scriptures, wherein God, who knows all men's hearts and lives, positively asserts, that they

* Prov. 20.—v. 9.

† 1 John, 1.—v. 8.

are corrupt and sinful. The same hath been acknowledged by his saints and servants in all ages. The best of men have ever been conscious to themselves of many imperfections in their lives; particularly St. Paul, who certainly attained to as divine a temper of mind as ever man did: yet he here owns that he was not perfect. Indeed, if he had been so, he needed not to have pressed towards the mark, for he would have attained it already.

In the next place, though none ever did or can attain to absolute perfection while they are in the body, yet all should aim at it, and strive to come as near to it as possible. And though we have brought ourselves into such a condition, that we cannot now perform a perfect and exact obedience to the whole moral law; and though we cannot do it so well as we ought, yet ought we to do it as well as we can. How far soever we have gone in the narrow path that leads to life, we must still proceed further. How much soever we have hitherto learned and endeavored to walk so as to please God, "we must abound more and more."* Whatever grace we have already attained to, we must not be content, but be always laboring for more: "We must give all diligence to add to our faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge,

* 1 Thess. 4.—v. 2.

temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity."* This every man is bound to do, and by that means to draw daily nearer to perfection, until he hath approached as near as he can to it in this life, all things considered. I say, all things considered, because the circumstances of men are not all alike. Some have more abilities and greater opportunities than others, and so may or can do more than others, if they please, and thus come nearer to a state of perfection; and unless they do so, they fall short of those who have less power, and yet improve it better, by doing all they can.

Thus the poor widow in the Gospel, who threw but two mites into the treasury, is esteemed by our Saviour to have cast in more than they which had cast in a great deal, because "they had cast in of their abundance; she of her penury had cast in all she had,"†. So he who doth all he can, to be perfect as his heavenly Father is perfect, comes nearer to perfection than they who perhaps may do much more, but not so much as they can or ought to do.

And, lastly, They whose hearts are thus fixed to do all they can by the aid of the

* 2 Pet. 1.—5, 6.

† Mark, 12.—v. 43.

aid of the Holy Spirit, are doubtless in a state of evangelical perfection, or such a state which God for Christ's sake is pleased to accept. And they need not fear but they shall obtain "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

I therefore do not see how this can be better explained than by the similitude of a race, which the Apostle himself here uses.

They who run in a race look not behind them, but before; not how far they have gone, but how far they have still to go.

And so here, how great a progress soever we have made in the way to bliss, we must not regard, but look before us, and still go on. We must not mind how much better we may be than others, but how much better others are than we; not how much good we have done, but how much we have still to do. We must not only reject all trust or confidence in the duties which we have hitherto performed, or in the virtues we have already attained, but, as the Apostle speaks, we must forget them all, taking no more notice of them, than as if we had never done or gained any thing by them. He that thinks he has gone far enough already in the race that Christ hath set before him, hath but too just cause to suspect that he hath not yet made any one true step in it, but hath it all still to run;

and how far soever a man has run, unless he continue his course to the end, he can never have the prize: for the promise is only to him "that overcometh and keepeth the works of God unto the end."* We must exert the utmost of our strength to grow better, and do more good, every day, as long as we live. We must never permit ourselves to grow cold or lukewarm in our holy religion, as too many do, who serve God with such carelessness and indifference as if it were no great matter whether they served him or not. But we must be "always fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."† Whatever spiritual zeal we have already, we must still be laboring after more with all our might and strength, as long as it shall please the Almighty to continue us here; "Always abounding in the work of the Lord, as knowing that our labor shall not be in vain in the Lord."‡ And though a Christian cannot be so perfect as he could wish, he must strive to be as perfect as he can in this life. He must not rest satisfied with any low degree of faith, humility, justice, charity, or other virtues; but his heart must always be aspiring after the highest pitch his mortal nature is capable of. He must read and hear God's holy Word, and learn how to accomplish

* Rev. 2.—v. 26. † Rom. 12.—v. 11. ‡ 1 Cor. 15.—v. 58.

the will of God. He must pray most sincerely, not only in private but also in public, particularly as often as the Sabbath-day returns. He must be temperate in all things, and so keep his body as that it may be a fit temple for the Holy Ghost to reside in. He must keep his mind above this world, and have his conversation in heaven, from whence cometh every good and perfect gift. He must neglect no opportunities of receiving the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, to strengthen and refresh his soul with the body and blood of Christ his Saviour. He must often examine himself, to know the true state of his soul, what sin wants subduing, what grace wants strengthening in him; how far he hath already gone, and how far he hath still to go on to perfection. He should continually exercise his faith in his blessed Redeemer, that he may be able to say, with the Apostle, "I can do all things, through Christ that strengthens me."* He must never shrink at any trial or affliction that is laid upon him; but look upon it as sent from God to make him better, and improve it all he can for that purpose. In short, he must press through all the difficulties he meets with in his way, and run with patience the race that is set before him.

* Phil. 4.—v. 13.

Thus, blessed are they who press towards the mark. They certainly shall have the prize. They shall live under the protection of Almighty God, and have the light of his countenance shining continually upon them. They shall have all things work together for their good in this world; and hereafter be made equal to the holy angels, in purity and perfection. They shall live with their ever blessed Redeemer, and behold the glory which the Father hath given him. Their bodies shall be fashioned like to his glorious body, and they shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

This is the prize which the Son of God hath purchased for us, and which is offered to all who will press towards the mark for it, and to every one of us here present. Let us therefore resolve to run, and never rest, till we have obtained it. Let silly mortals, if they please, spend their time in following after clouds and shadows; we have a prize before us that is infinitely worth more than all this world, even the crown of eternal life. Let us never rest till we have obtained it; and for that purpose let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. In short, let us all strive who should come the nearest to

perfection, and so to the mark for the prize of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus.

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make us all perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be all honor and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON V.

CHRIST'S ASCENSION.

JOHN, Chap. 14.—Verses 2, 3.

In my Father's house are many mansions: If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

THESE words, being uttered by Christ himself, afford so much matter of solid and substantial joy to his disciples, that, did we but rightly understand, firmly believe, and duly consider them as we ought, we should never suffer our spirits to sink under any burden that is laid upon us in our journey towards heaven; should bear it not only with patience, but with cheerfulness and alacrity of

mind, so as to esteem it a blessing rather than a cross and trouble to us. For which purpose, therefore, I shall explain them to you in the same order wherein our blessed Lord was pleased to declare them; and then shew you how a firm belief and due consideration of them will conduce to that end, even to the keeping our hearts from being troubled.

And, first, Our Lord saith, "In my Father's house," that is, in heaven, which in Holy Writ is usually called by such names as signify some certain place where people usually dwell together. Sometimes it is called a kingdom; as where our Saviour saith, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."* and "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."† Sometimes it is called a country, as in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "But now they desire a better country, that is an heavenly."‡ Sometimes a city; as in the same place, where it is said, "He hath prepared for them a city;" and in another place, "For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come."§ Sometimes it is called the habitation or house of God; as where Moses enjoins the people to say, in their prayers, "Look down from thy holy

* Luke, 12.—v. 32.

† Matt. 6.—v. 33.

‡ Heb. 11.—v. 16.

§ Heb. 13.—v. 13.

habitation, from heaven."* And so in my text, our Saviour calls it "his Father's house;" which is the same, in effect, with the house or habitation of God.

But why is heaven here called the house of God? Many reasons may be alleged for it; some of which I will explain, so that we may understand something of the purity and excellency of that blessed place, at least so much as to make us desire to gain admittance there.

It is here called the house of God, because it is of his making or building; as St. Paul observes, "For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."† And in the Epistle to the Hebrews, Abraham's hopes of heaven are expressed by "his looking for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."‡ In the Old Testament, we often read, that "the Lord made the heavens;" and in Nehemiah, the Levites, praying to God, say, "Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host:"§ where, by heaven, he means the sky or firmament; by the heaven of heavens, that high

* Deut. 26.—v. 15.

† 2 Cor. 5.—v. 1.

‡ Heb. 11.—v. 10.

§ Nehem. 9.—v. 6.

and holy place where the blessed spirits behold the face of God, which as far excels the other heaven as that doth the earth. It was his wisdom that contrived, and it was his power that raised this stately and most glorious fabric out of nothing. He only spake the word, and immediately the foundation was laid. And therefore David saith, "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth."*

And as it was God alone who made, it is he only who upholds, maintains, and preserves this house continually, suffering no decay in any part of it; and where "there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie."†

O blessed place! Who then can but long to be there, where we shall be thus perfectly free from all manner of sin, and consequently from all suffering too. "Where God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain."‡ This, therefore, may truly be called his house.

Especially if we consider, that it is the place where he himself is pleased in a more

* Psalm 33.—v. 6. † Rev. 21.—v. 27. ‡ Rev. 21.—v. 4.

especial manner to reside ; as he saith, " Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool."* And David, addressing himself to God, saith, " Unto thee I lift up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens."† Our blessed Saviour, in the Gospel, calls him " Our Father, which is in heaven ;" and commands us to direct our prayers to Him, as residing there : not that he is not every where else too ; but because it is there that he is pleased, in a more particular manner, to manifest himself, to unveil his perfections, and to shine forth in all his glory ; insomuch that this place hath no need of the sun, neither the moon, to shine in it ; " for the glory of God lightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."‡ And indeed this it is which gives the highest perfection to the happiness of those who live there, that they always see God face to face. But we cannot offer any thing towards the description of that place, " which eye hath not seen, or ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive it." It is sufficient, for our present purpose, that God himself dwells there ; as our blessed Saviour truly calls it " his Father's house ;" in which, saith he, " there are many mansions."

* Isaiah, 66.—v. 1. † Psalm 123.—v. 1. ‡ Rev. 21.—v. 23.

But what doth our Saviour mean, "In my Father's house are many mansions?"

His meaning is this; that heaven is a large and capacious place, the fit receptacle of pious souls and the spirits of just men made perfect. The Apostles were very much grieved to hear that their Master was to leave them, although it was in order to his going to heaven, as not well knowing whether they could follow him thither; but our Lord bids them be of good cheer, assuring them that his Father's house, to which he was going, had "many mansions," abundance of room, even for all that should believe in him.

Daniel, in a short vision he had of the place, saw "thousands of thousands there, ministering unto God, and ten thousand times ten thousand standing before him."* And St. John, in a like vision, saith, "I beheld, and heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand."† And as for the children of men whom Christ had purchased with his blood, to live with him in that holy place, the same St. John, in another vision, saw "an hundred and forty-four thousand, of all the tribes of the children of Israel." And after "this," he saith, "I be-

* Dan. 7.—v. 10. † Rev. 5.—v. 11.

held, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds, and people and tongues, stood before the Lord, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands."* From whence we may observe, that when our Saviour calls his flock a "little flock," and saith, "there are but few that find the way to life," he is to be understood, comparatively, that his flock is but little in comparison of the multitudes that follow after sin, the world, and the devil; and that there are but few who find the way to life, in comparison of the many who miss of it, which, notwithstanding, considered in themselves, are certainly very many; as our Lord here intimates, by saying, that "in my Father's house are many mansions;" where there were great multitudes, not only of angels, but likewise of saints residing in St. John's time, and many have been going to them ever since, still are, and ever will be, to the end of the world.

And why may not you and I be of the number of them as well as others? If we are not, we must even blame ourselves. Surely there is room enough; for Christ himself hath told us, "there are many mansions in his Father's house," on purpose to excite and

* Rev. 7.—v. 9.

encourage us to look after it : and if we do but set ourselves in good earnest, and apply ourselves to him for it, we cannot possibly fail of coming thither, for he hath assured us that "He is gone before to prepare a place for us." "If it were not so," says he, "I would have told you:" that is, if there had not been room enough for you, as well as for me and others, in my Father's house, I would have told you so, that your expectations might not be frustrated; for I would not impose upon you, nor flatter you with vain hopes of living with me in the other world, if there was no ground for you to expect it : but you have every reason to expect it, seeing that I myself assure you, "there are many mansions in my Father's house;" and that I am now going thither on purpose to prepare a place for you.

From whence we may observe how careful our blessed Saviour was to conceal nothing from us that might conduce either to our salvation or comfort. "If it was not so," saith he, "I would have told you:" and he certainly would have told us many other things which he hath not, if it had been necessary for us to have known them. There are many questions raised in divinity, which have perplexed the minds of the most learned, and have caused great animosities in the church, but they are generally such things

which our blessed Master never thought proper to determine, and which he would have done, if either our future happiness or our present comfort were any way concerned in the knowledge of them; therefore, that you may not trouble yourselves with any impertinent controversies about our holy religion, which serve only to distract men's minds, and divert them from what is substantial and necessary, whatever Christ hath taught you, either by his own mouth or by his Apostles, that you must believe, if you expect to be saved by him: and as for other matters, let men dispute if they please; do you rest satisfied in your own minds, that if it had been necessary for you to have known them, Christ would have told you, as he assures his Apostles, "If it was not so, I would have told you."

And then he adds, "I go to prepare a place for you." He repeats it again, "And if I go and prepare a place for you;" to shew that he would have us take great notice of, and carry this always in our minds; that it is by him only we can get to heaven; that it is he, and he alone, who prepares a place for us in his Father's house; and that it behoves us very much rightly to understand his full meaning in these words.

For which purpose, therefore, we must consider, that our blessed Saviour having done

and suffered all that was necessary for our redemption and salvation upon earth, was then taken up to heaven, where he hath been ever since, and ever will be, sitting at the right hand of God: that is, he is exalted above all creatures in the world, and invested with absolute power and dominion over them. St. Peter informs us, saying, "Christ is gone to heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject to him."* And to the same purpose, St. Paul informs us, "That God, having raised Christ from the dead, set him at his own right hand, in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but likewise in that to come."† That God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."‡ The meaning of which is, that Christ Jesus was no sooner gone to heaven, than he was immediately advanced above all creatures. That the very angels and archangels must own him for their Lord, and do him homage. That

* 1 Pet. 3.—v. 22. † Eph. 1.—v. 20. ‡ Phil. 2.—v. 9, 10.

power is committed unto him both in heaven and in earth, so that he can do whatsoever he pleaseth in the world. That no creature can resist his will, nor oppose his authority, when he sees good to exercise it. That all places are at his disposal, both in the Church triumphant in heaven, and in that which is militant here on earth. That he reigns above, as King of kings, and Lord of Lords; yea, as the Ruler and Governor of the whole creation. That not only angels and men, but the very devils themselves, are subject to him, and can do nothing without his command or permission. In short, that he is an absolute Monarch; that we and all things are wholly at his command. He may do with us what he will; there is no withstanding him, no appeal from him; for he is the Supreme Judge both of quick and dead, of men and angels. They are all equally subject to him, and shall be all equally judged by him: "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father."*

But what is all this to us? Are we concerned any more than other creatures in Christ's exaltation at the right hand of God? Certainly very much. For having taken our

* John, 5.—7, 22, 23.

nature upon him, whatsoever he did it was upon our account. He was born for us, as the prophet saith, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given."* "He suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps."† He bare our griefs, and carried our sorrows. "He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed."‡ "He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."§ "He is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."|| "And as he was delivered for our offences, he was raised again for our justification."¶ And so he went to heaven, on purpose "to appear in the presence of God for us."** And therefore St. Paul having said that Christ is exalted far above all principality and power, he adds, "That God put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the Church, which is his body."††

This plainly shews, that Christ's advancement to so high a degree of glory and power in heaven is of mighty advantage to us upon earth.

* Isa. 9.—v. 6. † 1 Pet. 2.—v. 21. ‡ Isa. 53.—v. 4, 5.

§ 2 Cor. 5.—v. 21. || 1 Cor. 1.—v. 30. ¶ Rom. 4.—v. 25.

** Heb. 9.—v. 24. †† Eph. 1.—v. 22.

But you will say, perhaps, What doth he there for us? More, doubtless, than we are able to comprehend. But that we may understand it as fully as we are able in this life, he is represented as being our Advocate with the Father. St. John so calls him, saying, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world."*

Hence it is that he is called a "Mediator between God and Man;"† one who makes up all differences between us, reconciling God to us, and us to God. For the same reason, he is said to make intercession for us; to intercede with his Father that he would not be angry with us, nor punish us for our sins, but that he would accept his sufferings as a full recompence and satisfaction for all the wrongs and injuries we have done him. This he doth so effectually, that St. Paul challenges the whole world to shew any reason why they who believe in Christ, and obey his Gospel, should be condemned: "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 interces-

* 1 John, 2.—v. 1, 2.

† 1 Tim. 2.—v. 5.

sion for us.”* Thus he who suffered for our sins upon earth, is now making intercession for us in heaven. Thus he applies the merits of his death to us, and endues us with grace and power to forsake our sins. He intercedes with his Father on our behalf, and prays him to bestow upon us all other blessings.

And surely our Redeemer never prays in vain, but whatsoever he asketh of the Father is always granted. When he was upon earth, he could say, “I know that thou hearest me always.”† How much more, if it were possible, now he is in heaven, and hath actually merited all the good things he can desire for us.

“I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth.”‡ This was the greatest thing he could pray for; and he was no sooner in heaven, but the Spirit of God was given them in the most miraculous manner; by which we see, that he prayed, according to his promise, and that his prayer was heard. This is the true meaning of Christ’s mediation or intercession for us; for we must not suppose that he makes any solemn prayers to his Father as we do, or at least as we ought to do. Whatsoever he would have, he only wills it to be so, and

* Rom. 8.—v. 33, 34. † John, 11.—v. 42. ‡ John, 14.—v. 16.

it is immediately done; which is the greatest comfort in the world to all who believe in him, and the greatest encouragement for us to do so. And as we have no reason to mistrust his good-will towards us, "who so loved us as to give himself for us," so have we as little to doubt his power, but may, with the Apostle, conclude, "that he is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him."*

Thus may we easily understand how truly our Lord here says, "I go to prepare a place for you;" seeing that when he went from hence he was carried directly into heaven, and had all power immediately conferred upon him; and seeing that he there exercises that power continually for us, in order to his bringing us to himself. That from thence, also, he might supply us with whatsoever is necessary to our following him thither. For which purpose, therefore, Christ being now at the right hand of God in heaven, and his divine nature always being present with us upon earth, he often puts us in mind of the evil of sin, and the dismal effects it will produce, if we continue therein. He stirs up our hatred, and strengthens our resolutions against it; he assists our endeavors to forsake and avoid it. By the gracious influences of

* Heb. 7.—v. 25.

his Holy Spirit, he enflames our minds with the love of God, and with sincere desires to serve and please him. He prevents our falling into temptations, or gives us power to withstand and overcome them. He sanctifies all occurrences to us, so as to make them work together for our good. He exercises our faith, fear, and trust on God; our patience, humility, meekness, and self-denial. He affords us the means of grace, and co-operates with our earnest desires. When we read or hear the Word of God, he opens the eyes of our understandings, and our hearts, to receive it. When at our devotions, he assists us in the performance of them, that God may be well pleased with them. When we are at the holy Sacrament, he stands by us, and feeds us with the spiritual food of his blessed body and blood. When we are in difficulties, and know not which way to turn, he directs us to that which shall be most for our advantage. When poverty, or distress, or troubles of any kind fall upon us, he either takes them off, or else gives us strength to bear, and grace to make a right use of them. When, by any surprise or indisposition of body, our minds are disordered, he composes and brings us into a right frame again. When we are doing any good work he assists us, and intercedes with his Father to accept it when it is done. In short, he leads and directs us

through the whole course of our lives, till he hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Thus he who doth all this might well say, "I go to prepare a place for you." And then he adds, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself."

But what doth our Lord mean by his coming again, and receiving us to himself?

His meaning is this; that although he was to leave this world, and go to heaven, there to continue, preparing a place for us; yet, at the last day, when the number of his elect shall be accomplished, he will come hither again, and then will receive us altogether, both soul and body: that so the same persons who believed in him, and served him upon earth, may live with him for evermore in heaven. That his words may be fulfilled, saying, "I will come again, and receive you to myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." This, he knew, would revive and rejoice his disciples, that they should live with him hereafter, and therefore he often puts them in mind of it. "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be."* In another place, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me

* John, 12.—v. 26.

on my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father on his throne.”*

And that we may be sure so to do, he prays to the Father, saying, “ Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me, where I am, that they may behold my glory.”† And what can we desire more? or rather, what could our Lord himself have desired for us more than this, that we may live with him? For if we live with him, we shall live with the best friend we have in the whole world, and whom we love above all things in it: with him “ who loved us, and gave himself for us;” who took our sins upon himself; who bore all the pain that was due to us; who was derided, scoffed at, buffeted, scourged, crowned with thorns, arraigned, condemned, and crucified: with him who hath made us kings and priests to God and the Father: with him who gives us all things necessary for life and godliness, and enables us to make a right use of them: with him who is now interceding and preparing a place for us, on purpose that we may live with him in heaven; where he will fashion our vile bodies, that they may be like his glorious body, and make our souls perfect as his own; where he will advance us to the highest degrees of honor we are capable of, and fill us with all true com-

* Rev. 3.—v. 21.

† John, 17.—v. 24.

fort and joy. In a word, where we shall live with him, our dearest Lord and ever-blessed Saviour, not only for a time, but for ever; as his Apostle hath taught us, saying, that "we who shall be alive and remain at the last day shall meet the Lord in the air, and so shall be ever with the Lord:"* and then he adds, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

And well may he add these words, for certainly this is the greatest comfort a true Christian can possess, even that this consideration should keep our hearts from being troubled at any thing we meet with here below. For if we firmly believe and duly consider these words of our blessed Saviour, and what we have now heard of them, how can we suffer our hearts to be troubled, when we are assured of eternal mansions of glory! What if it be difficult to arrive at that place? We have an Almighty Harbinger gone before to prepare it for us? What if we have never so many enemies, yea if all the men upon earth should conspire to ruin us? What need we be troubled, when we have a sure friend in heaven, who can abate their pride, assuage their malice, confound their devices, and make them to do us good, even against their wills. What if we have no friend

* 1 Thess. 4.—v. 17. ---

to regard us in this world, what need we be troubled, when we have an infinitely wise, powerful, and good, and merciful Saviour above, continually taking care of us, and providing all things necessary for us; one who can aid and assist us in all conditions, and upon all occasions whatsoever. If we are in want, he can supply us; if in danger, he can deliver us; if in pain, he can ease us; if in disgrace, he can bring us to honor; if sorrowful, he can comfort us; if weak, he can strengthen us; if sick, he can heal us; and if dying, he can receive us to himself. Can, did I say? Yea, he will, too, if we do but obey and trust in him as we ought to do.

Let us, therefore, no longer trouble or concern ourselves about any thing, but how to serve our great Lord and Master Jesus Christ, by doing all such good works as he hath set us, and putting our whole trust and confidence in him, both for God's assistance, and for his acceptance of them when they are done.

Let us but constantly do this, and then we may rest assured that he will guide, assist, and bless us through the whole course of our lives; and at length bring us to that blessed place which he hath prepared for us in his Father's house, that we may always live with him who liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Holy Ghost, world without end.

SERMON VI.

WHIT-SUNDAY SERMON.

ACTS, Chap. 2.—Verses 1, 2.

*And when the day of Pentecost was fully come,
they were all with one accord in one place:
and suddenly there came a sound from heaven,
as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all
the house where they were sitting.*

AS in the creation of the world from nothing,
so also in the redemption of mankind from
sin, all the three persons in the Godhead, the
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, jointly con-
curred, every one contributing towards it
according to their several ways of working;
for man by his fall being both guilty and
defiled with sin, God the Father sent his Son
to expiate his guilt; the Father and the Son
send the Spirit to restore him to purity and

holiness again ; for which ends the Son came down to die, and the Spirit to live within him. And though there was no visible appearance of either of them till many years after the beginning of the world ; yet the power and efficacy of their undertaking commenced from the first promise which was made to man, immediately after his fall.* For from that time Christ was looked upon as slain for the sins of men ; and the Holy Ghost moved upon their hearts to turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God : by which means the Patriarchs of old, and many that lived long before Christ came into the world, had their sins pardoned, their persons accepted, and their hearts purified, and consequently are now in heaven.

But when the fulness of time prescribed by the Father was come, the second person came down from heaven, and having clothed himself with flesh, conversed several years in our own nature with men on earth ; but all the time he was here, the Spirit came not. Therefore, our Saviour, to comfort his disciples, promised them several times before he died, that when he was gone he would send them another comforter or advocate in his room, “ even the Spirit of God himself.”† Neither did he promise it only before his

* Gen. 3.—v. 15.

† John, 14.—v. 16.

passion, but also after his resurrection.* And therefore he bids them wait at Jerusalem for it,† that so the Spirit might find them where he left them; and that, being endowed with power from above, they might there begin to proclaim the Gospel, where Christ had sealed it with his own blood. Thus the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled: “Out of Sion shall go forth the law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”‡

But, to make these words as useful as I can, I shall endeavor to explain them, by shewing,
1st, What this day of Pentecost was.

2d, Why the Holy Ghost came down as upon this day.

Our Saviour, before his ascension, having made the promise of sending to them the Holy Spirit, it was not many days before it was exactly fulfilled: for he was crucified at at the Passover, and rose again the third day, the day from whence the Jews began to reckon their fifty days to the feast of Pentecost. After he was risen he continued forty days upon earth, before he ascended up to heaven.§ And as the Israelites, after they had eaten the first Paschal Lamb, were forty years in the wilderness before they arrived at the land of Canaan; so our Saviour, the true

* Luke, 24.—v. 49.

† Acts, 1.—v. 4.

‡ Isaiah, 2.—v. 3.

§ Acts, 1.—v. 3.

Passover, after he was slain and raised again, continued forty days in the wilderness of this world, before he went to heaven, the true land of Canaan. It was immediately before his ascension that he made this promise, and there were but ten days between the making and the fulfilling it; consequently there were fifty days from his resurrection to the Pentecost, when the Spirit came down, according to the words of my text.

2dly, Why did the Holy Ghost make choice of this day wherein to manifest himself to the world? One reason may be, because the law was given on Mount Sinai fifty days after the Paschal Lamb, or the first Passover, was slain. Thus Christ, the true Passover, was slain, to enable us to keep that law which was then given on Mount Sinai, and to write it on the tables of our hearts, which was then written only on tables of stone.

Another reason may be, because then there was to be a greater concourse of people, which might be both witnesses of, and converted by, his coming at that time; for all the Jews from all parts were then obliged by their law to present themselves before the Lord in the temple at Jerusalem: and that many did so at that time is plain, from what follows in the 2d chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

This, therefore, seemed to be the fittest time for the Spirit to come down so visibly amongst them, that some of all parts of the world might be eye-witnesses of it, and not only be themselves convinced by so great a miracle of the truth of the Gospel confirmed by it, but also carry the news thereof to their several countries all over the world; by which means they, who had seen Christ crucified at the Passover, might see the Spirit come down at the day of Pentecost. What cause have we then to reverence and celebrate this day with all possible solemnity and devotion, seeing this whole work of our salvation was accomplished on it? For on this day the Holy Ghost came down from heaven to sanctify our nature: so that as the Father had sanctified the seventh day of the week to be kept holy from the beginning of the world to that time, so both the Son and Spirit have sanctified the first day of the week to be kept holy from that time to the end of the world. No wonder, therefore, that Christians in all ages have been so strict in keeping this day holy: the greatest wonder is, that we should dare profess ourselves Christians, and yet profane it.

Having thus seen the time and the persons to whom he made his appearance upon earth, we are now to consider the manner and

effects of it. And we are to observe that the Holy Ghost was sent by the Son, not only as he proceeds from him as well as the Father, but also upon the account of his death, whereby, having redeemed us from sin, he had a right and power to send his Spirit to make us holy. For as the ancient emperors or kings, after they had conquered their stubborn enemies, were wont to ride in triumph over them, and to scatter gifts amongst their subjects; so here the blessed Jesus had a sharp contest with the two great and potent enemies of mankind, sin and death. These he contended with upon the cross, and at his resurrection obtained a most triumphant victory; after which he distributed his gifts amongst his new-bought subjects upon earth; and, as the Psalmist and Apostle observe, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men: * and as there never was so great a victory as this, so never did a conquerer give such gifts as our Saviour gave. Other princes used to adorn their triumphs by scattering gold and silver to their people: but the blessed Jesus here sends down his spirit to distribute all his gifts and graces amongst his beloved subjects upon earth.

* Psalm 68.—v. 18.

The manner of his doing this is here described by St. Luke, who hath left it upon record for our comfort and admonition.

And first, "there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty rushing wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting." There was a sound to strike terror into them; and a sound as of a mighty wind, to shew what he would do in them, even to turn all things upside down as he doth wherever he comes. If he does but come into the heart, how does he bear down all before it? What changes and alterations doth it make! Well might it be compared to a mighty rushing wind, for nothing was able to stand before it. The highest mountains, even the proudest spirits, were humbled by it; the rocks were rent, and the hardest and stoutest hearts soon trembled and shook before it. Idolatry and superstition, which had taken such deep root in the hearts of men, were plucked up, and thrown down by it. The strongest and stateliest fabrics in the world, the temples, were not able to withstand it. All their feigned gods or deities fell down before and gave way to a crucified Jesus. Their oracles were soon struck dumb, so soon as the Spirit began to speak, and to enable the Apostles to preach the Gospel: so fitly was the Spirit ushered into the world, with a sound as of a

mighty rushing wind, seeing that neither the strongest fortresses that Satan had erected in the world, nor the very gates of hell, were able to stand up against it.

There appeared to them cloven tongues. The Spirit first presented himself to the ears, and then to the eyes of the disciples. They first hear a sound which gives them warning of the approaching wonder, and then they see the sight, such a one as was never before, nor never shall be again; for there appeared to them cloven tongues, divided into as many parts as there were languages in the world, signifying that the Apostles should be able to speak plainly whatsoever language was spoken upon the face of the earth: neither were they cloven tongues only, but like as of fire, to shew how quick, how piercing, and how forcible their words should be; that they should not only speak to the ears, but to the very hearts of men; their words, like fire, insinuating themselves into every corner of their hearts that heard them, burning up the briars and thorns, consuming all the lusts and corruptions they should meet withal, and so cleanse, so purify, and refine their souls, that they should be fit habitations for God himself to dwell in.

Having thus explained the manner of the Holy Ghost's coming down upon the disci-

ples, we are next to consider the effects that shewed themselves immediately and afterwards.

The dispersed Jews, coming from these remote parts and meeting at Jerusalem, find there a company of illiterate men, who knew by nature no more than their mother tongue, speaking the several languages of every one from what place soever he came, so that on a sudden they were enabled to discourse with any of them in their own native language. "How hear we," say they, "every man in our own tongue wherein we were born? Parthians and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya, about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and Proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God."

St. Peter had no sooner spoken a few words to them, but they were presently pricked in their hearts, and cried out "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"* insomuch, that on that one day there were no less than three thousand souls converted, and added to the Church. O glorious effect of the

* Acts 2.—v. 37.

coming of the Holy Ghost! Happy were they who came from the remotest parts of the world to perform their devotions in the Temple of Jerusalem! They were witnesses of the greatest miracle and partakers of the greatest blessing that was ever bestowed upon mankind.

But besides these immediate effects which the coming of the Spirit had upon the spot, and at the very time and place of his appearance, there are many others which you and I should be both mindful of and thankful for. I shall only mention such as our Redeemer promised should be, and the event testified, that they really were the effects of his coming. By the virtue and assistance of the Spirit thus come upon them, the Apostles and Disciples were enabled to write the Gospels, and to transmit to posterity whatsoever was needful to be known of what our Saviour did or said, when he was upon earth; for it is certain that none of the Gospels were written till some time after our Saviour's ascension. But you will say, how could the Evangelists remember the several passages of our Saviour's life, so as to deliver them so exactly to us? especially the long sermon he made upon the Mount, and before his passion, so as to repeat it word for word some years after, as it is most certain St. John did in his Gospel? Doubtless it was only by the Spirit of God

calling to their minds whatsoever our Saviour expressly promised before his death.* And therefore, how much cause have we to celebrate this day with joy and thankfulness to the eternal God for what was done upon it, inasmuch as we are to ascribe unto the mercy and miracle of this day that we have any infallible records of what our Saviour did or said; that we have any Gospels which we may confide in, and that all those excellent and divine discourses and expressions which our Saviour uttered are not buried in oblivion. So that do we certainly know that there was such a person once as Christ upon earth? Do we know how he was born and bred up? Do we know what he did and suffered? Do we know how he died and rose again? Do we know those divine truths he taught, those excellent laws he prescribed? Do we know how he ascended up to heaven, and afterwards sent down his Spirit unto earth? All this we must ascribe to the Holy Ghost, who, had he not come down to teach us the way to heaven, we had still continued in the land of darkness and in the shadow of death, in infidelity and idolatry; and therefore, we cannot but bless God for the mercies of this day, without which we had never known what Christianity had been.

Thus have I endeavored to give you some small light into the manner and effects of the

* John, 14.—v. 26.

first visible appearance that the Apostles, after our Saviour's ascension, had of the Holy Ghost descending upon them. Whether it has made a due impression upon your minds and affections, I must leave to God and your own consciences. This I am assured of, that if you have duly considered what has been said, you will find work enough to employ all the powers of your souls. For suppose, that instead of hearing, we should see this very sight again represented before our eyes; and now that we are met upon the day of Pentecost, I hope with one accord, and in one place, suppose, that while I am speaking, there should suddenly come a sound, as of a rushing mighty wind, and fill the place where we now are; and that there should appear unto us cloven tongues, like as of fire, and sit upon each of us, so that we should all be filled with the Holy Ghost, and begin to speak with other tongues, and discourse in any language that is spoken upon the face of the earth; should we not be struck with amazement and consternation? Surely then the same effect that the sight would, the hearing of this miracle ought to have upon us; so that we should stand, as it were, in amaze and astonishment, that the great God himself, who inhabits eternity, should thus come down to dwell with sinful men, with dust and ashes.

"Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him; or the son of man, that thou shouldest visit him?"

But though the disciples then present were the only persons who saw this blessed sight, yet we may partake of the benefits of it as well as they. For in that our blessed Lord then sent down his Spirit upon his disciples in so visible a manner, he assures us that his Spirit shall never be wanting to such as are his true disciples; and if we are his true disciples indeed, we shall have the same Spirit, and be endued with as great power as they were, even to work miracles, though not upon others, yet upon ourselves. I do not say that we shall be able to give eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame; health to the sick, or life to the dying, with a word speaking, as the Apostles. Yet we, that were born spiritually blind, shall have our eyes so opened, as to see all things that belong to our eternal state. We, that before could not go one step in the ways of God without stumbling, shall be able to walk in all the commandments of God blameless. We, who before were dis-tempered in our whole man, shall have all the faculties of our souls and members of our bodies restored to a sound frame and constitution. Yea, we who before were dead in trespasses and sins, shall be quickened

unto newness of life; which doubtless are mighty miracles, and such as none but the Spirit of God himself can do.

But it is not only the Spirit of God that instructs us in the faith, and enables us to give our unfeigned assent to those truths which he has revealed. Is it he alone that gives us wisdom and knowledge, and teaches us to distinguish between true and false; to look beyond the veil of our flesh, to see through the clouds of mortality, and to discover those glorious truths which are an entertainment to angels themselves. And as it is truly observed of our bodies, that they subsist only by the providence of God; and when he withholds his almighty power, they tumble into their native dust; so it may be as truly affirmed of the virtues of our souls, that they subsist only by his grace, and that when he withdraws his sanctifying power, they presently degenerate and turn to corruption. It is only by his quickening Spirit that they live, and when he takes away his vital influences, they die.

But though the Holy Ghost is continually resident in the soul of a good man, and acts constantly and uniformly upon him, yet there are some certain times and seasons in which his gracious operations are more immediately visible and efficacious: As, for instance,

When we lift up our souls to God in prayer, this blessed Spirit first enlightens our understandings, and gives us a true knowledge of the value of those graces which we are praying for, and then enables us to pray for them with such ardency and affection, as produces those very graces in our hearts, and gives us the actual possession of our desires.

Another means whereby the Holy Ghost conveys his gifts more plentifully into us, is by the preaching of God's holy Word, which he has purposely ordained in his Church, that it might minister grace unto the hearers; that it might furnish us with all materials necessary for a religious life; and that neither doctrine, nor reproof, nor correction, nor instruction, might be wanting to edify and perfect the man of God. In our prayers we make our address to God, and humbly beg for grace; but in the sermon God addresses himself to man, and makes an offer of his grace to us. He invites and solicits us to eternal happiness; and if we refuse to hear his voice, it is not for want of importunity on his part, or of opportunity on ours: if we neglect to improve under those blessings and advantages, it is certainly our own fault, and will be our greatest condemnation.

Here it is that the Holy Spirit sows the seeds of virtue in our hearts; and then, by in-

fusing a kindly warmth, cherishes and brings them to maturity. By the most persuasive arguments, and the most endearing motives, he softens our souls; and then, with the gentleness of a lamb, and the affection of a dove, he tempers our minds, and makes them tractable and obedient to his holy will. . . . Whatever hardness is grown upon our hearts by obstinacy and impenitence, he does but touch the rock, and the waters flow. Whatever corruption lies festering within, and preying upon our vitals, his word is sharper than a two-edged sword, reaches to the quick, and lays it open. In short, so powerful and efficacious is the Word of God, that whosoever has ears to hear must hear it, and whosoever hears it cannot help being affected by it.

If, therefore, you would understand the true state of your souls, and know upon what terms of favor you stand with the Almighty; if you would discover what improvement you have made in virtue, and what ground you have gained upon your sins; what conquests you have gained upon your flesh, and what strength you have added to your spirit; how far you have weaned your affections from this world, and what advances you have made towards heaven; you must diligently examine into the reformation of your lives, which is the only test of your religion, and which

alone can give you ample satisfaction in these momentous particulars. You must take care that you quench not the Spirit, nor drive him from you by your evil deeds; but improve every motion of his will, and embrace every tender of his mercy. For if once the Spirit moves upon the face of our souls, he will soon dispel all clouds and mist, and rectify our crooked wills; inform our erring judgments, and reform our sinful lives; he will awaken our sleepy consciences, and regulate our inordinate passions; he will sanctify our seeming griefs, and refine our real joys; he will soften our hard hearts, and humble our proud spirits; weaken our strong sins, and strengthen our weak graces. In short, he will make us as much averse from sin, and inclined to holiness, as we have heretofore been averse from holiness, and inclined to sin. And so, being holy by the Spirit in all manner of conversation here, we need not fear but we shall be happy, through Jesus Christ, in all manner of perfection hereafter.

SERMON VII.

GOD'S OMNIPRESENCE THE BEST GUARD AGAINST
SIN.

PSALM 16.—Verse 8.

*I have set the Lord always before me : because
he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.*

AS we are all conceived and born, so naturally we all live in sin ; our whole lives being nothing else, in a manner, but one continued sin against him, in whom we live ; against Almighty God, who made us on purpose that we might glorify, serve, and worship him, by observing those wise and good laws which he hath prescribed to us. Whereas we cannot but be conscious to ourselves, that we have either totally neglected, or else transgressed, and so far come short of all his laws, that we have not punctually observed any one of them

since we came into the world, to this day; but have followed the devices and desires of our own sinful hearts, and been hurried about by our corrupt passions, which carry us headlong, and directly contrary to the rules which God hath set us; so that we are always doing what we ought not, or not doing what we ought to do. For instead of serving and glorifying our great Creator, we live in open rebellion against him, and reproach and dishonor his sacred name; which is so offensive and displeasing to his divine Majesty, that it is no wonder he orders it in his providence, that we meet with so many troubles. For if he should punish us according to our deserts, he might justly strip us of all the mercies we enjoy, and inflict his judgments upon us. He may justly divest us of our wealth, and reduce us to the extremity of want and poverty. He may justly deprive us of our health, and cause us to lie languishing upon a sick bed all our days. He may justly take all our friends and relations, from us, or make them enemies and scourges to us. He may justly blast our credit and reputation in the world, and make us the scorn and derision of all that are about us. Yea, he may justly condemn us immediately to everlasting shame and torment, and not suffer us to breathe any longer, or tread upon his earth; but command us to that place of torment

where "the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." If he should lay any, or all of these punishments upon us, we must still acknowledge him to be "just in all his ways, and righteous in all his judgments." For we have sinned against him, and therefore lie at his mercy. He may do what he pleases, and if he should execute his severity upon us, it is no more than what our iniquities have deserved from him.

Now this being our present state and condition by nature, it cannot but be worth all our pains to think what to do, and to consider whether there may not be some way found out, whereby we may, at least in some measure, keep ourselves from those sins which we have hitherto been so apt to fall into, and so prevent those many and great judgments which God hath threatened, and may justly inflict upon us. That the thing is possible we know; because others have done it before us: and that we are as capable of doing it as they were, we know likewise, because we have the same power and means to do it as they had. The only question is, what course they took for the effecting it, and consequently what course we must take, if we desire to do it effectually. For this end, our best way will be to consult such, of whom we are fully assured, that they really did it: ~~amongst whom we cannot but acknowledge~~

David to have been one of the most eminent, as being able to say, by the spirit of truth, "I was also upright before God, and I kept myself from mine iniquity;"* and therefore he saith, "I will not be afraid of ten thousands of the people that have set themselves against me round about;"† "yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil."‡ But how did David thus keep himself from sin, so as to fear no evil? To understand which we need go no farther than my text: "I have set the Lord always before me: because he is on my right hand, I shall not be moved." That is, although by nature I am very apt to be moved from my duty into sin, and into all the troubles which attend it, yet I keep myself from it, by "setting the Lord always before me; for so long as he is at my right hand, I am sure not to be moved."

This being the great means that David used, and found so effectual in this case, I shall endeavor to explain it more particularly for our comfort; and shall consider,

First, What it is properly to "set the Lord always before us."

Secondly, How much it conduces to our continuing steadfast, both in our duty to God, and in his love and favor towards us, so as

* Psalm 18.—v. 23. † Psalm 3.—v. 6. ‡ Psalm 23.—v. 4.

not to be moved either to do or suffer any real evil in the world.

First, I need not tell you, whom we are here to understand by the Lord, even the Lord of hosts, the most mighty and eternal God, who made all things by the power of his word; who ordereth all things in the world, according to the pleasure of his own will; who is not only infinitely wise, great, and just, merciful and good; but infinite wisdom, and power, mercy and goodness, and perfection in itself.

This is the Lord, that Almighty God, whom David did, and we ought always to set before us. We are said to set the Lord before us, when we actually believe, and are fully persuaded, that he is with us. When we exercise that faith, which, as the Apostle says, "is the evidence of things not seen;" and so possesses us with a firm confidence, and as great a certainty, that God is present with us, as that any thing we see is so, although we cannot perceive him by our senses. Holy Job says, "Lo, he goeth by me, and I see him not; he passeth on also, and I perceive him not."* And the reason is, because our senses cannot perceive any thing but their own respective objects. And hence it is, that no sensible object can be perceived by any

* Job, 9.—v. 11.

other than its own proper sense: we can no more see a sound, or hear a colour, than as if there was no such thing in nature.

But God, being a most pure spirit, and having no body, is not a proper object for any of our bodily senses. Is there no way, then, whereby it is possible to perceive him? Yes, surely, we may and ought to perceive him by that spiritual sense, which he hath implanted in us, suitable to his own nature; even by a firm and stedfast belief in him, whereby we are as fully persuaded that he is, as that we are; and that he is wherever we are, as that we ourselves are there. "Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool,"* "Can any one hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him," saith the Lord. "Do not I fill heaven and earth," saith the Lord. And David, by the spirit, saith, "Thou hast set me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; or if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there: if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost part of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."†

* Isaiah, 66.—v. 1. † Psalm, 139.—v. 6, 10.

And seeing God is always thus present with us, and in us, we are thereby assured that he must needs be intimately acquainted with every thing we do, with every thing we speak, and every thing we desire or abhor. As David says, "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are but vanity."* "O Lord! thou hast searched me and known me; thou knowest my down sitting and mine up rising; thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compassed my path and my lying down; thou art acquainted with all my ways: for there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo! O Lord, thou knowest it altogether."†

And, as there is no man, nor any thing in man, so neither is there any creature, that is not manifest in his sight: "For all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him, with whom we have to do."‡ He continually looks upon every thing that is, whether it be good or evil. He sees every angel and glorified saint in heaven; every evil and cursed spirit in the regions of misery. And among other things he sees every one of us here present, and knows every thing we ever thought or did since we were born, to this moment; and at this moment looks into every one of our hearts, sees what we are

* Psalm 94.—v. 11. † Psalm 139.—v. 1, 4. ‡ Heb. 4.—v. 13.

thinking, and how we are affected with what we hear concerning him.

How well then may we exclaim with David :
 “ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me ;
 it is high, I cannot attain unto it.”* And
 with St. Paul ; “ O, the depth of the riches,
 both of the wisdom and knowledge of God !
 how unsearchable are his judgments, and his
 ways past finding out !” †

From hence it appears, what ground we
 have to believe that God is always present
 with us, so as perfectly to know every action
 and circumstance of our whole lives ; and so
 long as we actually think upon and really
 believe this, so long may we be truly said
 “ to set the Lord before us.” And that it
 may have its full effect, towards keeping us
 from being moved, we must observe, that by
 Jehovah, the Lord, we are here to understand,
 as the divine nature in general ; so each divine
 person subsisting in it ; the Father, Son, and
 Holy Ghost. And, in order to our setting
 the Lord before us, we must believe that all
 and every one of these divine persons is
 always present with us.

We are to believe that God the Father is
 always present with us ; even as he is the
 God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

* Psalm 139.—v. 6.

† Rom. 11.—v. 33.

and in him our God and Father, as Christ himself hath assured us: "I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God;"* and therefore commands us, wherever we are, to address ourselves to him as such, saying, "Our Father, which art in heaven."†

And as we believe God to be our Father, so likewise God the Son to be always with us, even the eternal Son of God, who was pleased to become the son of man, by assuming our nature in his divine person. Therefore we read, that when he was in his mortal body upon earth, he was at the same time in heaven;‡ that he was every where.§ He knew the very thoughts of the Scribes and Pharisees.|| He saw Nathaniel under the fig-tree, and knew his heart so well, as to say "He was an Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile."¶ He knew that the woman of Samaria, who talked with him, had had five husbands, although she said "she had never a one."** He knew that Lazarus was dead, before any one had told him so.†† He knew which of his disciples intended to betray him.‡‡ Yea, St. Peter appealed to his omniscience, whether he did not love him,

* John, 20.—v. 17. † Matt. 6.—v. 9. ‡ John, 3.—v. 13.

§ Matt. 18.—v. 20. || Matt. 9.—v. 4. ¶ John, 1.—v. 47.

** John, 4.—v. 17. †† John, 11.—v. 14. ‡‡ John, 13.—v. 11.

saying, "Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee."* And as Christ was thus in all places, and knew all things, whilst his human nature was upon earth; so when he ascended into heaven, he promised that he would still continue with his church, saying, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world."† And this I look upon as our great preservative and security from evil and danger, that he who so loved, as to give himself for us, never leaves nor forsakes us, but is always nearer to us than any danger can be. By this means we are sure of a true and almighty friend at hand, "Who in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, is able to succour them that are tempted."‡

The same may be said likewise concerning the third person, in the most sacred Trinity, the Holy Ghost, who, proceeding from the Father and the Son, and being of the same substance, must needs be where they are. And to those who believe in Christ, he is in a peculiar manner with them, according to Christ's promise, saying, "I will pray the Father and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth."§ From whence it

* John, 21.—v. 17.

† Matt. 28.—v. 20.

‡ Heb. 2.—v. 18.

§ John, 14.—v. 16.

appears that the Spirit of God makes his constant abode in us; yea, he dwells with us, so as to consecrate our bodies into temples. "What, know ye not," says the Apostle, "that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?"* And if the Spirit of God inhabits or dwells in us, surely he is always ready to enlighten our minds, to inform our judgments, to direct our thoughts, to awaken our consciences, to regulate our passions, to purify and comfort our hearts, and to sanctify us wholly in soul, and body, and spirit.

These things duly considered, we may easily observe the full sense and meaning of the words, "I have set the Lord always before me." That God the Father is always present with us, to preserve, maintain, and provide for us. That God the Son is always with us, to defend, govern, assist, and strengthen us. That God the Holy Ghost is always present with us, to sanctify, direct, and comfort us.

And all this because we set God always before us, and so have him always at our right hand. Which is the next thing I proposed to shew you.

He who sets God always before his eyes, so as to be thinking of him who is the only

* 1 Cor. 6.—v. 19.

good, how can he so much as think of any thing that is evil? Alas! the thoughts of God, as always present with him, fill his soul with such a sense of his greatness and glory, that he cannot but dread the thoughts of doing any thing offensive or displeasing to him, and can never be moved to do it by any temptation whatsoever. For whenever he is tempted to any sin, he still considers that God sees him, and says within himself, as Joseph did, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"* And therefore, whenever you commit any sinful act, you may conclude that you did not think of God at that time, nor believe him to be present with you. The Psalmist observes, "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes."† That is, every sin a man commits, is a plain demonstration to me, that he doth not set God before his eyes; for if he did, he could not but fear him, so as not to dare break his laws, and so incense his wrath and indignation against himself; but would rather abhor himself that he ever offended God, and resolve to do so no more. "I have heard of thee," saith Job, "by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust

* Gen. 39.—v. 9.

† Psalm 36.—v. 1.

and ashes.”* Where we may observe what a mighty force the sight of God had upon him, it struck him as it were down, he was not able to stand under it, but fell into an utter abhorrence of himself before him. And it was this that kept him from oppressing the poor by withholding his alms from them. “If I have seen,” says he, “any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering; if his loins have not blessed me, and if he was not warmed with the fleece of my sheep; if I have lift up my hand against the fatherless, when I saw my help in the gate; then let mine arm fall from my shoulder blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone. For destruction from God was a terror to me, and by reason of his highness I could not endure.”† He saw, it seems, the majesty of God, which struck such a terror into him, that he could not endure himself, nor the thoughts of doing any thing that might offend him. So it is doubtless with all who set God always before them: his presence cannot but strike that awe into them, that they will not dare to break his laws, and so provoke and affront him to his face.

For how can they blaspheme or profane the sacred name of God, who believe he hears every word they speak against him, and will

* Job, 42.—v. 5.

† Job, 31.—v. 19.

certainly one time or other be revenged upon them for it? How can they be high and proud in their own conceit, who believe themselves to be in the presence of the Most High God, who is not only infinitely above them, but hath said, that "he resists the proud, and gives grace only to the humble?" How can they indulge themselves in lust or luxury, in drunkenness or debauchery, who believe that God sees them, and will ere long call them to an account for it? How can they oppress the poor, or wrong their neighbour, by lying, stealing, cheating, or the like, who believe that the eye of God is upon them, and his hand ready to strike them for it? How can they play the hypocrite and dissemble with God, or retain any revenge, malice, envy, or hatred against their neighbour, who believe that God sees their hearts, and knows how they stand affected both towards himself and towards all men? In a word, how can they allow themselves in any wickedness whatsoever, who set God always before them, and believe that the Judge of the whole world takes particular notice of them? A constant belief of this would soon make them weary of their sins, and turn their inclinations into utter abhorrence and detestation of them.

Hence we may see one great reason why virtue is so rare and vice so common; why

there are so few pious, so many wicked persons; because most men live as without God in the world, never thinking of him, at least, not so as to believe him to be always with them. "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God; God is not in all our thoughts."* And in another place, "O God, the proud are risen against me, and the assemblies of violent men have sought after my soul; and have not set thee before them."† This is the reason why they are so wicked, so proud, and violent, because they never think of God, nor set him before them. Whereas he that sets God always before him, as he dare not omit any duty which God requires, so he dare not perform it in a careless indifferent manner; which, if you would always remember and think of while you are performing any duty to God, you would be so far from running it over in a superficial manner, that you would think your whole souls too little to be employed in it.

While you are at your private devotions, where none sees you but God, if you would set yourselves solemnly, as in his presence, and duly consider that he hears every word you speak to him, and observes every motion both of your soul and body before him, how

* Psalm 10.—v. 4.

† Psalm 86.—v. 14.

grave, how serious, how devout would you be! How careful to say nothing to him, but what becomes you to speak, and him to hear! How impartial would you be in examining yourselves! How heavenly in your meditations! How earnest in your petitions! How free from distractions! How cordial and sincere in the whole performance!

While you are praying or praising God in public, where he hath promised to be present with you in a more peculiar manner, did you really believe that he is so, and accordingly set him all the while before you, how humbly would you prostrate yourselves before him! with what reverence and godly fear would you serve and worship him! Your thoughts would be so composed, your minds so raised, and your souls so enlarged towards him, that you would think yourselves in heaven, joining with the glorified saints in adoring and magnifying the Almighty Creator of the world. "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."* While you hear God's holy Word read or expounded to you, did you really believe that he is there present, and speaks to you particularly, and acquaints you with his divine will and pleasure, what

* Psalm 84.—v. 10.

he would have you to believe and do, that you may continue in his love and favor; how attentive would you be, and ready to catch at every expression! You would then "receive it, not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually worketh in them who thus believe;"* and none else.

When you are invited to our Lord's table, did you really believe Christ himself will meet you there, and apply all the merits of his death and passion to you, for the pardon of your sins, how readily would you accept so gracious an invitation; with what care and diligence would you prepare yourselves for it. And while you were there, did you really believe that you were then in the immediate presence of Christ himself, your all-sufficient, Almighty Redeemer, with what reverence and humility would you carry yourselves before him! How would you wonder to see the Son of God himself, through his minister, offering you the bread and water of life! The Sacrament would then be more frequented, and you would esteem it the greatest happiness of your lives that you have so many opportunities of being made partakers of it.

Thus the setting God always before us is itself one of the best means we can ever use,

* 1 Thess. 2.—v. 13.

both to procure and preserve in us a true sense of his divine perfections, and consequently every grace and virtue which flows from it.

So long as men do not think of God, nor believe him to be near them, it is no wonder if they do not fear him, nor regard whether he is pleased or displeased with them. But for a man to be fully persuaded that the Almighty Creator and Governor of all things is present, and yet to stand in no awe of him, is impossible; as he intimates by his Prophet: "Fear ye not me, saith the Lord? Will ye not tremble at my presence?"* Can a guilty prisoner see his judge, and not fear him? Can a known rebel behold his prince frowning upon him, and not fear him? How much less can sinful mortals look upon the King and Judge of the whole world, as present with them, and not tremble before him? It cannot be. The thoughts of our being always under his eye would be enough to destroy us, unless we had some grounds to hope for favor and mercy at his hands. And, blessed be his great name, we have. He declares, "That his mercy is on them that fear him, from generation to generation."† That "he taketh pleasure in them that fear him; in those that hope for his mercy."‡ And, as the wise man

* Jer. 5.—v. 22. † Luke, 1.—v. 50. ‡ Psalm 147.—v. 11.

observes, "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence."*

This David found by experience. "Because," saith he, "God is on my right hand, and I shall not be moved." And this has been the constant experience of good men in all ages; of all who set God before them, and so have him always on their side. And if God be for them, who can be against them? If he be with them, what evil can come near them? What need they fear, who have Omnipotence itself always ready to preserve them wherever they are. This is the argument he makes use of to encourage his people: "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God. For I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee; I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."† "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through rivers, they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."‡ Thus he was with Noah, in the ark; with Joseph, in prison; with Israel, in the midst of the sea; with Job, upon the dung-hill; with David, upon the mountains; with the three children, in the fiery furnace; with Daniel, in the lions' den; with Jeremiah, in

* Prov. 14.—v. 26. † Isa. 41.—v. 10. ‡ Isa. 43.—v. 2.

the dungeon ; with Jonah, in the whale's belly ; and with the Apostles, in the common prison. And being always present, how wonderfully did he preserve them ; altering oftentimes the very course of nature, rather than any thing should hurt them who set him always before them.

And if we set him before us as they did, he will be with us as he was with them, and then how securely may we walk through all the changes and chances of this mortal life ; when we really believe that Almighty God, and Jesus Christ, our most gracious and most merciful Protector, is always present with us ; by his wisdom to direct us, by his mercy to pardon us, by his grace to assist us, by his spirit to conduct us, and by his power to defend us from all evil, or to turn it into good. What need we trouble ourselves as to what may or what may not happen upon earth, when we know that our Heavenly Father always stands by us, and orders every thing to our advantage ? What need we be discouraged at the remains of sin within us, seeing the holy Spirit of God is always with us, and his grace is always sufficient for us ? What need we fear either shame, pain, or trouble, want, weakness, sickness, or death, or any other evil, who have glory and joy, all-sufficiency and strength, health and life, and goodness, even the blessed God himself ever with us. Let us

but always set him before us, and we may say, with David, "the Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom then shall I be afraid? God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in the time of trouble; therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters roar and are troubled; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof: the Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge: in God have I put my trust, I will not be afraid what man can do unto me. I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved."*

Who then would not set the Lord always before him? And who may not do it if he will? seeing no more is required to it, but constantly to believe what we cannot deny, even that he is always with us! For which purpose let us not suffer ourselves to be led any longer by our senses, but let us live by faith, trusting continually upon God, as present with us, looking upon us, and observing every occurrence and passage of our life. Whatever our employments or stations may be, whether poor or rich, in adversity or

* Psalm 27.—v. 1. Psalm 46.—v. 1. Psalm 56.—v. 11.

prosperity, let us still remember that God superintends the whole. Whatever company we are in, let us still remember that God is in it, and takes notice of every thing we think or speak. Whithersoever we go, let us still remember that God goes along with us; when we sit down, that he stands by us; and when we rise up, that he helps us. Whensoever any troubles or afflictions befall us, let us remember that God is present to support us under them, to make us better by them; and when he sees good, to deliver us from them. Whatever danger we are in, let us still remember that no danger can be so near us as God is, who is always at hand to defend us from it, and to bless it to us. In short, whatever our condition be in this life, let us still remember and believe, that the all-wise God and our most merciful Father knows it to be good for us, and is always with us to make it so.

Could we thus accustom ourselves to call God to mind upon all occasions, and actually believe that he is then present with us, as he really is, we should soon learn the divine art of setting him always before us; and then how circumspectly should we walk? How comfortably should we live? How stedfast and immoveable should we be in the midst of all the storms and tempests we meet with here below? We should live, indeed, nearest

heaven, and want nothing to complete our happiness, but to do that which we endeavor, perfectly: for to have God always in our eye, so as clearly to behold his glory and goodness, is the happiness of heaven; where, our faith being turned into vision, we shall see God face to face, and be perfectly happy in him. And so far as we set God always before us upon earth, so much we partake of the joys of heaven, and are so far happy, according to our weak capacity in this world, and in the ready way to be fully, perfectly, eternally happy in the next, through his merits and mediation for us, who is always with us, even Jesus Christ, our ever blessed Lord and Saviour. To whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory, world without end.

SERMON VIII.

HOLINESS THE CONSPICUOUS TEST OF BELIEVERS.

ST. MATTHEW, Chap. 5.—Verse 16.

*Let your light so shine before men, that they
may see your good works, and glorify your
Father which is in heaven.*

WHEN Christ came into the world, he found mankind, Jews and Gentiles, strangely corrupted in their principles and practices. And, although his great design was to offer up himself as a propitiatory sacrifice for their sins, yet it was necessary also that he should instil into them better principles, and acquaint them more clearly with the nature of true religion; without the practice of which, they would not be fitted nor qualified to partake of that happiness which he designed

to purchase for them with his own blood. Hence, therefore, although his death would have been as meritorious for us as soon as he was born as it was afterwards, yet he thought good to live about thirty years, as it were unknown in the world; and before he would die for us, he continued above three years conversing with all who had the happiness to enjoy his presence. Which time he spent in working all sorts of real miracles for the confirmation of his doctrine, and instructing mankind more perfectly than they had been before, in the principles of religion and morality; how to serve God, and to love one another. For this purpose he chose out several persons to be daily conversant with him; who, having his doctrine and discipline frequently inculcated into them, might fully understand what he would have mankind believe and do; and might faithfully transmit the same to posterity, that all mankind should afterwards know how to come to heaven. To these persons, in a more particular manner, and to all in general who would come unto him, he revealed and explained the whole mystery of godliness; assuring them continually, that the strictest sect of their religion, even the Pharisees themselves, however specious and plausible they seemed to others, yet came very short of that which he required. "For," says he,

"except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in nowise enter into the kingdom of heaven."* Therefore he would not have them think, that because he came to die for their sins, he came also to destroy the law and the prophets. For, saith he, **"I came not to destroy, but to fulfil."** He came not to revoke the moral law, but to establish and enforce it with stronger arguments, and with greater obligations to obedience, than ever had been before. And he would have all men know, that they who would be his disciples, so as to be saved by him, must outvie and excel others, whether Jews or Gentiles, in all manner of righteousness both to God and men. And thus it is he speaks in my text: **"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."**

I shall therefore now endeavor to explain these words, that you may all know the true meaning of your Saviour in them; and, for the future, I hope, order your lives and conversations accordingly.

1st. **"Let your light so shine:"** for the understanding of which we must look to the 14th verse, where our Saviour saith to his disciples, **"Ye are the light of the world;"**

* Matt. 5.—v. 20.

and, speaking of himself, he saith, "I am the light of the world."* And St. John saith of him, "This is the true light which lighteneth every man that cometh into the world."† So that Christ and true Christians are equally termed "the lights of the world." Christ is the sun, they the beams that are sent from him: he is the fountain, they are the streams that flow from the fountain of light. Before the sun of righteousness arose, "with healing in his wings," a spiritual darkness was spread over the face of the whole earth; but so soon as he appeared, he presently shone upon the disciples, first enlightening them with true knowledge and understanding of the mysteries of salvation. Hence it is that Christ, the true light, calls his disciples also "the light of the world:" whereby he declared to them how they should behave themselves towards the rest of mankind. For nothing, we know, is more pure, nothing more acceptable, nothing more advantageous, nothing more apparent, than light. According to which qualities of light, our Saviour would have his disciples behave themselves: forasmuch as they being sent to open the eyes of others, the eyes of the world would be upon them. "A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid: neither do men light a candle, and put it under a

* John 8.—v. 12. † John, 1.—v. 9.

bushel; but on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house." By which expression he acquaints them, now that he had endowed them with knowledge and grace as with light, they must not think to lie hid; but be as a city upon a hill, apparent to all that pass by; and as a candle, which, being lighted, is not put under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that all may see it, and receive light from it.

"Let your light so shine before men," that is, the truth of that grace and faith which you have now received, and wherewith you are enlightened. Let it not be obscured with the works of darkness, nor eclipsed by the interposition of earthly affections; but let it be so clear, so manifest, so conspicuous, and apparent in your lives and conversations unto all men, "that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

From which words it is manifest, that all the glory of good works is to be ascribed only unto God, not to the men who do them; whereas, if they did them by their own strength, the glory would redound to them, and not to God.

These words being explained, it is easy to discover the true meaning of them, which in general amounts to this: That they who embrace the Christian religion, and profess

themselves to be Christ's disciples, should be eminent in good works, so as to excel the professors of all other religions; that every one who sees and duly weighs a Christian life and conversation, might be thereby convinced of the excellency of his religion above all others; or that all such as are converted to the Christian faith should be, as the Apostle says, "blameless and harmless as the sons of God; without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, amongst whom they should shine as lights in the world."*

And the first thing wherein Christians ought to excel, is sincerity: where, by sincerity, I mean that act or rather habit of the mind, by which we do good works; not out of any ends or sinister designs, but out of pure obedience to the commands of God. As for example, you give alms to the poor; you feed the hungry, and clothe the naked. And it is a good work if you do it out of obedience to God: otherwise you do no more than the ravens did that fed Elijah. For their feeding the prophet was certainly as good a work, as to the matter of it, as your feeding the poor can be; therefore you will allow, there is more required of us, as rational creatures, in order to our doing good works, than what the fowls of the air can do; and that we,

* Phil. 2.—v. 15.

being endued with reason, are capable of reflecting upon God himself, in doing what he commands; and we are bound to do so, otherwise we cannot be said to obey his commands. Now this obedience to the commands of God being so absolutely necessary to the very essence and constitution of good works; hence we plainly see the great difference between moral virtues and Christian graces: the one aims no higher than to do the thing which is good; the other no lower than to do it, because it is good.

And besides, it is a groundless and ridiculous thing to imagine, that poor finite creatures should merit any thing by what they do, from Almighty God, from whom they receive whatever they have or are, and the very power too by which they do it. So that whatever good works we do, we are more beholden to God than he to us for our doing them; it being only by him we are enabled to do them. If we would live and act as Christians indeed, we must not have any such low and pitiful designs as these are, in our observing the commands of God; neither must we content ourselves only with doing the thing that is commanded; but we should do it from a principle of true obedience to him that made and governs us and the whole world. By which means, we shall not only excel the professors of all other religions, but the greatest

part of them too, who profess themselves to be Christians.

Whoever thus observes what God commands, merely because he commands it, cannot but observe them all; there being the same reason for all the commandments as there is for one. "Then shall I not be ashamed," says David, "when I have respect to all thy commandments;" even as "Zacharias and Elizabeth are said to be righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless."* "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."† Therefore, as ye desire to obey the commands of God, ye must not take some part, and let the rest alone, but observe all or none. Thus some of the heathen were eminent for justice, others for charity, some for contempt of the world, others for humility; but we read of none who were eminent for all virtues, or who so much as endeavored to be so. In this, therefore, Christians ought to excel them, by being holy in all manner of conversation.

Having thus discovered how our light should so shine before men, that others may see our good works; or wherein we, who profess to believe in Christ, should excel

* Luke, 1. — v. 6. † James, 2. — v. 10.

persons of all other persuasions; we are now to consider, what reasons there are for it? Why Christians should be the best of men? A question necessary to be resolved in these days, in which Christians themselves generally live as if they had no reason to be so good, much less better than others; or as if Christ so died for their sins, that they might still live in them. How famous have many heathens been in their generations, for their justice and equity, their temperance and sobriety, their gratitude and liberality, their freedom from luxury and passion, in their contempt of the world, and contentedness with their condition; and for their love and honor of virtue, wherever they saw it! Far beyond the generality of those who profess themselves to be Christians in these days; which surely is a shame to our religion, and a reproach to the Gospel of Christ; giving too much occasion to the enemies of Christianity to blaspheme, and to think they might learn as much from the heathen oracles as from the Gospel itself; seeing that those who have the Gospel read, and hear it continually preached among them, are for the most part as much debased in their principles and practices as those who never heard of it. Considering, moreover, that for this God may justly take his Gospel from us, and give it to some nation that will improve it better than we

have done; and which we have every reason to expect, unless we make a better use of it hereafter than we have heretofore. Which, that you and I may for the future do, I shall now endeavor to shew what extraordinary advantages we have by the Gospel for the reforming our lives and conversations; and what invincible reasons there are why we who enjoy the Gospel should be better than all other persons who have it not, so as to exceed them in true virtue and godliness.

1st. We have clearer discoveries of God's will and our duty by the Gospel than ever were before. The moral law, as it was first written upon the tables of man's heart, was so defaced by the fall of our first parents, that by the light of reason we can scarce read any one command aright. And although the same law was afterwards transcribed into two tables of stone, that all might have it before their eyes, yet there also it was not so legible as it is in the Gospel; which is plain, from the misconstructions the Jews had put upon it before our Saviour's time. But he now hath given us such clear interpretations of it, that he who runs may read it. And our Saviour frequently compares his Gospel to light; because by it we plainly see the things which belong to our everlasting peace, and understand our whole duty both to God and man; God having been pleased to come down in

his own person, and explain it to us; so that now we can have no excuse for indulging ourselves in any one sin whatever. Christ saith, "If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin."* And he elsewhere saith, "This is the condemnation; that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."† As if he had said, although sin always deserves death, yet now mankind deserve much more to be condemned to it; if, notwithstanding the light of the Gospel is risen upon them, they shall still continue in the works of darkness, and so sin against the light itself. This is the reason, also, he pronounces that dreadful woe against the inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida, saying, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin; woe unto thee, Bethsaida: for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which have been done in thee, they had long ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you."‡

And what can you and I expect, but that the same woe should be denounced against us, if, notwithstanding that more than common light of the Gospel which hath shined

* John, 15.—v. 22. † John, 3.—v. 19. ‡ Luke, 10.—v. 13, 14.

among us, we do not turn to God, and serve him with a perfect heart, and a willing mind? Certainly, if we do not, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, at the day of judgment, than for us. Therefore we had need look around us. For now that God hath so clearly discovered his will and pleasure concerning our behaviour to himself and others, he expects that we faithfully perform it; otherwise the Gospel itself, the greatest of all mercies, will one day rise up in judgment against us; and unless our lives are better than others in time, our condition will be worse than theirs to all eternity.

In the next place, we have by the Gospel the promises of greater assistance, such as never had been before. Indeed, the great end of the Gospel, and of our Saviour's coming into the world, was to save us from our sins, from the guilt and strength of them. The first he did, by making satisfaction for us, by dying in our stead, and suffering that in our nature which otherwise we must have suffered in our own persons. The other he hath done, by procuring such assistances for us, whereby we may be enabled sincerely to perform whatever is required of us. And that this was one great end of Christ's incarnation and passion, is plain; as the Apostle tells us, that "he was sent on purpose to bless us, by

turning every one of us from our iniquities.* Holiness being indispensably required to qualify us for the enjoyment of real and eternal happiness; therefore, notwithstanding the pardon of our sins, we should be altogether incapable of the joys of heaven, unless our hearts be renewed, and our souls inclined to the living God: which can only be done by the assistance of the Holy Ghost. Our Saviour tells us that "Except a man be born again, of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."† And it is only by Christ our Saviour we can partake of the graces and influences of the Holy Spirit. "Not by the works of the law which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour."‡ Hence the Spirit was not given so visibly until Christ was ascended. But before his ascension, he told his disciples "that he would send the promise of his Father upon them;"§ which was plainly nothing but the Holy Ghost, who was promised, and now fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Therefore, whoever would believe in Christ

* Acts, 3.—v. 26.

† John, 3.—v. 5.

‡ Tit. 3.—v. 5.

§ Luke, 24.—v. 49.

aright, must depend upon him not only for pardon, but likewise for the assistance of his grace and Spirit, to mortify his lusts, and make him holy. And certainly the promises of the Gospel are so full and clear to this purpose, that it is nothing but the extreme neglect of ourselves, and the height of obstinacy, that can keep us from partaking them. For if you are truly sensible of your sins, desire to be cleansed from them, and sincerely endeavor to do what you can of yourselves; believing in Christ, or trusting in him, to enable you to do what you yourselves cannot; I say, if you do this, you cannot fail of receiving such supplies of grace, whereby your strong sins shall not only be subdued, but your dark mind so enlightened, your erroneous judgments so informed, your perverse will so rectified, your inordinate affections so regulated, your hearts so softened, your spirits so humbled, your consciences so awakened, and your souls so renewed and sanctified, as to be truly holy in all manner of conversation. For God never yet did, nor ever will fail any man who sincerely endeavored to do what he could to serve him, and trusted in him for his assistance in doing what otherwise he could not.

Especially, seeing in the last place, that we in the Gospel have the greatest assurances of acceptance before God.

We know and are assured, that if we do but sincerely endeavor to the utmost of our power to adjust our actions unto the law of God, although at the best they come very short of it, yet in and through Jesus Christ, both our persons and performances shall be accepted. For this is most clearly held forth to us in the whole economy of the Gospel, and confirmed by so many and such real miracles, that there is no place left for doubting or unbelief. And this consideration, I think, should have such power and efficacy, as to force us into steadfast resolutions, by the assistance of God's grace and Spirit, to leave no stone unturned, to neglect no grace, and omit no duty that is required of us; knowing that God, in Christ, will be well pleased with it, and with us for doing it; which should make us think scorn to be outdone by those to whom the Gospel is not so clearly revealed, and resolve for the future to surpass and exceed them all in good and pious works. And that which adds weight and force to all is, that we have so great an assurance in the Gospel, not only of our present acceptance, but future happiness, if we practise what the Gospel requires of us. The heathen, by the light of nature, could discern very little of a future life; and therefore were forced to resolve all the rewards of virtue into virtue itself. The Mahometans speak much of the world to come, under the

name of Paradise; but place all the happiness which is there to be expected in sensual pleasures and delights; thereby making no real happiness at all, as being no greater than what brute beasts may partake of, as well as they. The Jews, indeed, had some intimations of an eternal happiness as the consequence of true holiness in this life; but it was represented to them for the most part in such obscure types, and intermingled with so many temporal promises, that they generally had but very dark and doubtful apprehensions of it; insomuch that many of them (the Sadducees) utterly denied both the existence of spirits, and the resurrection of the dead; and consequently, the existence of the soul too in the other world, and the resurrection of the body to eternal life.

But now, blessed be God, by the Gospel, as the Apostle saith, "Our Saviour Jesus Christ hath brought life and immortality to light;"* that is, he hath now given us such clear and infallible assurances of an eternal life and happiness attending those who repent and believe his Gospel, that none can believe and yet deny that which is so plainly asserted in it.

And if we seriously consider the nature and excellency of that happiness which the Gos-

* 2 Tim. 1.—v. 10.

pel assures us, God will graciously bestow upon them that love and obey him; we must needs acknowledge it to be the highest encouragement imaginable to all manner of virtue and good works. For certainly that happiness which the Gospel proposes to them who obey it, is the highest that is possible for a creature to be made capable of: so great, that I am altogether as unable to express, as I am desirous we may enjoy it; consisting of nothing less than the clear vision and perfect fruition of the infinite God himself, the chiefest good. The consideration of which, I think, should make us throw away the thoughts of all things else, and only trouble ourselves how to gain the kingdom of heaven; and consequently how to walk in the narrow path which leads unto it: never thinking we can do enough for that, which is not only infinitely more than we can desire or deserve, but infinitely greater too than we are able to express or conceive.

It is an astonishing mercy, that the Most High God should ever accept, by any means, of what we poor mortals do; but that he should recompense our transient, weak, and faint performances, with nothing less than a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. This is such an inducement and encouragement to universal obedience, that we may justly suspect ourselves to be distracted in

our minds, as well as corrupt in our affections, unless it prevail upon us to devote ourselves wholly unto the service of the living God, and to the obedience of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, our Saviour. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord."*

Thus have I shewn you what reasons we, who profess ourselves to be Christians, have to be eminent in good works, so as to excel all of other religions in true piety and virtue: in that we have clearer discoveries of God's will and our own duty, a more perfect example and pattern how to do it; promises of greater assistance from God; and stronger assurances, not only of acceptance of what we do in this life, but likewise of an eternal recompense of reward in the life to come. And need I now use any more arguments to persuade you to endeavor at least to be conspicuous in all true grace and virtue? Will it not be superfluous, after so many reasons as have been produced for it? Therefore, I hope you will not content yourselves with the bare profession of that excellent and only true religion; nor yet with the practice of some few particular duties required in it; *1 Cor. 15. 58.

but that you will now use the utmost of your power to be such as it commands you, far exceeding men of other persuasions. And O that this may be the happy issue of my discourse, and of your coming to this house of God at this time! Even that from this day forward, you would all strive and contend about nothing else, but who should live the most like Christians, who should most excel others in universal obedience, both to the law and Gospel: that all present might, for the future, shine as so many lights in the world. And let me tell you, this would be the way to shame both Jews and Infidels into the embracement of the Christian religion. This will be the way to convince all who dissent from us of their errors, when they shall see that you are sound in the faith, outstripping and excelling them in your lives and conversation. All the arguments in the world will not prevail so much upon them as this one. And therefore, my brethren, if you have any love either for your blessed religion, or your immortal souls, halt no longer between two opinions. "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." And if ye are Christians, manifest yourselves to be so by your eminence in good works, excelling all others in your love to God, in your obedience to his precepts, in your fear of his threatenings, in your trust and reliance upon his promises, in your faith

in his Son, in your loyalty to your king, in your patience under every distress and affliction, in your contempt of the world, in your faithfulness to your friends, in your love to your enemies, in your constancy in praying, in your seriousness in hearing God's holy Word, in your frequenting the Sacrament, in your justice in all your dealings, in your charity to the poor, in your lowliness and humility in your own eyes, and in all other Christian graces and moral virtues whatsoever. For this is the will of Christ, and what he expects and commands you all, saying, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

many that will be condemned. But this can-
not possibly be imputed to any defect in his
power, who is almighty to save; not yet to
any want of will and readiness in him who
~~has for all.~~ ~~He would save all men to be~~
saved, and to come to the knowledge of the

SERMON IX.

Where then can the fault lie? It can be no-
~~where but in men themselves. They will not~~
and then it is no wonder if they shall not be
saved. Though Christ had procured salva-
tion, yet he does not force it upon men. It

REGENERATION THROUGH CHRIST.

2 CORINTHIANS, Chap. 5.—Verse 17.

*Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new
creature; old things are past away, behold
all things are become new.*

ALTHOUGH it is certain, from God's own
Word, that Jesus Christ came into the world
to save sinners; that he gave himself a ran-
som for all, that he tasted death for every
man, and that "he is a propitiation for the
sins of the whole world;" yet it is certain,
also, that there are many sinners in the world
who shall not be saved by him. Yea, we
have just cause to fear that but few will be
saved. Few, not in themselves absolutely
considered; but few in comparison of the

many that will be condemned. But this cannot possibly be imputed to any defect in his power, who is almighty to save; nor yet to any want of will and readiness in him who died for all. "~~He would have all men to be~~ saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

Where then can the fault lie? It can be nowhere but in men themselves. ~~They will not,~~ and then it is no wonder if they shall not be saved. Though Christ hath procured salvation, yet he doth not force it upon men. It cost him dear to purchase it, even his own most precious blood; and therefore he is pleased freely to offer and declare it to them in his Gospel, if they will accept it: but if they refuse and slight it, choosing and preferring the things of this world, they can blame nobody but themselves, when they shall see their mistake and folly.

And yet this is the case of most men. What Christ Jesus himself once said to the Jews, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life;"* the same may be said to the greatest part of mankind; of them also who profess to believe in him, and to hope for life and salvation from him. They will not come unto him for it. Some are so self-willed that

* John. 5.—v. 40.

they will not go out of themselves, nor be beholden to him for their salvation. Others wilfully shut their eyes, and will not see the way that leads to him. And of those who have their eyes opened, that they cannot but see it, whether they will or no, yet many will not walk in it: they have their trades to mind, or their land to till; they have their families to provide for, and bodies to look after. These things they are sensible of, as being present with them. As for their future state, that is remote and out of sight, therefore they never trouble their heads about it, so long as they can find any thing else to do, which is commonly so long as they live. If they ever chance to think of it, as sometimes perhaps they may, they immediately imagine themselves to be real Christians. They were baptized long ago, and never renounced their baptism. They still continue members of Christ, believing that he is the Saviour of the world, and that he hath done so much to save them, that he hath left them little or nothing to do. As for Jews, and Turks, and heathens, they pity their condition, as being without the pale of the Church, and so without hopes of salvation. But as for their parts, they are Christians, and are resolved to live and die such, and never to profess any other religion but that which Christ hath

settled in the world; and therefore doubt not, whatsoever becomes of others, they shall be saved.

This is the language, or, at least, these are the thoughts of most of those who profess to believe in Christ: they profess to do so, and that is all; but concern themselves no more about Christ, than the Turks do about Mahomet, or the Jews about Moses. They look upon him as the founder of their religion, and do not question but that he hath taught them the right way to heaven; therefore, without taking any more care about it, they hope to go thither when they die. This is the reason why, of so many who profess to believe in Christ, there are so few who are saved by him: whereas, if they really did believe as he hath taught them in the Gospel, they could not but be saved. But then they would find the Christian religion quite another thing than what they imagined it to be. It would make such a mighty change and alteration in them, that they would be another kind of creatures than what others are, or they themselves ever were before. If a man be not created anew, whatsoever he hath, or hath not, he is no true Christian. He doth not truly believe in Christ; if he did, he would be a new creature. And therefore St. Paul saith, "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ

Jesus ;” * from whence we may conclude that they are said to be in Christ, who are not only in his Church but in his person. They are really vested and interested in his atonement for the pardon of their sins, and in his righteousness, whereby they are justified or accounted righteous before God : otherwise they could not but be condemned. To this purpose, the same Apostle, having recounted his own privileges and righteousness which he had in the law, saith “ But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ : yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord ; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ :” † where we may observe, that he reckons his being in Christ no common or ordinary thing, but the greatest blessing.

There are many places in the holy Scriptures, whereby this notion of our being in Christ might be confirmed. “ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no

* Rom. 8.—v. 1.

† Phil. 3.—v. 7, 8.

more can ye, except ye abide in me: I am the vine, ye are the branches.* From whence it appears, that we are said to be in Christ, as a branch is in the vine.

But you will say, perhaps, the branch is naturally in the vine, so as to spring out of it, but we are not so in Christ, and therefore the analogy doth not hold good; but the Apostle clears this difficulty, by shewing that we are in Christ, as a branch is grafted into a tree, though not naturally propagated with it. "And if some," saith he, "of the branches be broken off, thou, being a wild olive-tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive-tree."† Now as we take a shoot of one tree and graft it into the stock of another, by which incision it soon becomes of the same body with that into which it is grafted, even as if it had naturally sprouted from it, and partakes, as the Apostle speaks, of the root and fatness of the stock, as much as the natural branches do; so here, by nature, we are all of the old stock, the wild olive, Adam. God, the husbandman, as our Lord calls him in this very case, cuts us off from the old stock, and grafts us into Christ, the true vine; by which means we are, as it were, incorporated into him, and so partake of what

* John, 15.—v. 4.

† Rom. 11.—v. 17.

is in him, as much as if we had proceeded from him as we did from the first man, and in some sense more; forasmuch as we are joined to Adam only by nature, but to Christ by the Holy Spirit himself: "For," as the Apostle saith, "he that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit."* This must needs be the highest kind of union that can be imagined. He who is thus in Christ, as the Apostle here speaks, is a new creature.

But a new creature!—how can that be? As Nicodemus said, "How can a man be born when he is old?" Can a thing that is once created, be created again? No, surely; not as to the substance or essence of it, that cannot be created again; but the form and qualities of it may be so changed, that it may be quite another thing than what it was at first created, and therefore may properly be called a new creature. As the body of a man, at first, was not properly created or produced out of nothing, but was made of the dust of the ground; yet, being formed by God out of that dust, and inspired with the breath of life, is properly called God's creature; so, although a man's soul and body are not raised again out of nothing; yet, if he be raised out of a state of sin, and inspired with the Holy Spirit of God, he may be as

* 1 Cor. 6.—v. 17.

truly said to be a new creature; this being so great a change, that he is altogether another man than what he was before. "He is now transformed by the renewing of his mind."* Yea, as the Apostle saith in my text, "Old things are past away; behold all things are become new." Though he be the same person he was before, yet he doth not understand, or judge, or think, or act, as he did before. He hath now a new sense of things, a new judgment, new desires, new hopes, new fears, new joys, and so he leads a new life. "He hath put off the old man, with his deeds; and hath put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him."† But to make this still clearer to our minds, let us take a short view of a man in both his states; in his unregenerate and in his regenerate state; as he was born at first, and as he is born again. By this we shall easily discern what a change is wrought in him, and how properly he may therefore be called a new creature.

And, first, As for the old man, the man that is still such as he was born: as he was born, so he lives, in sin. His mind and conscience is defiled, and all the powers of his soul disordered. He was born blind, and so he lives, always in the dark, having no light

* Rom. 12.—v. 2.

† Col. 3.—v. 9.

at all, except perhaps a little glimmering that may sometimes come through his senses. He may talk or discourse, but he sees no more of God, or any spiritual object, than if there was no such thing in being. He is wholly under the power of his senses and passions. He is affected with nothing but what moveth them one way or other. Hence he is often entirely given up to the most brutal vices, as gluttony, drunkenness, whoredom, or the like. Or if he happen to be any way free from them, by reason of the temper of his body, or by the outward circumstances of his life, yet these other sins, which the Apostle reckons also as parts of the old man, "anger, malice, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, and the like," to these, or some of them, have absolute dominion over him. He looks no further than this world; and therefore his mind is bent altogether upon the pleasures, or the honors, or the riches, which he fancies in it; and he doth all he can to obtain them, not regarding how. At lying and cheating, oppressing and slandering, or extorting from others, or forswearing himself, he seldom stops; neither would he ever stop at theft, robbery, forgery, or murder itself, but only for fear of the law, which might take hold of him: or, if he avoid any of the other sins, it is only lest he should lose his credit, and with it his hopes

of gain in the world. He avoids no sin purely out of conscience, much less for fear of God's displeasure. "God is not in all his thoughts."* He may sometimes speak of God, and often doth; but frequently to blaspheme and profane his holy name. He never had the true fear of God before his eyes, not even when he comes into his immediate presence. As for the church, if he happens to live in a place where his neighbours go thither on the sabbath-day, it would be very ill if he did not do so too. He had much rather follow his worldly business, but the laws of the land will not suffer him to do so openly. The same opinion he hath too of the Lord's Supper. It is wonderful if he ever received the holy Sacrament in his life, unless it was to qualify himself for some office, or to keep himself out of the reach of the law. For such purposes he may think it convenient to receive it, but he cannot find any time to prepare himself for it; and so it signifies no more to him than his ordinary food. This is the unregenerate man. Thus he lives as without God in the world, and so he will do all his life, unless he be renewed and born again. But now let us suppose him to be so renewed and born again of God's Holy Spirit, Psalm 101

that he is become a new man : What a wonderful alteration is wrought in him ! He is now in all respects another kind of creature than what he was before. His mind is purified. His conscience is purged from dead works. All his faculties are reduced to their proper order. " He is turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." His eyes are opened, so that he can look at those things which are not seen. He sets God always before him, and beholds his wisdom, his power, his goodness, his mercy, and all his glory shining continually around him. He is always fixed, trusting on the Lord. He lives now by faith, and not by sense. Therefore all sensible objects seem to him what they are in themselves; as little and low, yea, as nothing, in comparison of those great and spiritual objects with which he is always conversing.

Hence it is that he doth not only avoid the more gross and notorious, but all manner of sin, to the utmost of his power. Not only out of any by-respects, but because it is sin, or a transgression of God's law, and an offence to him whom he loves above all things in the world. To him, therefore, open and secret sins are all alike; they are equally the objects of his hatred and abhorrence. He dare no more cheat his neighbour in his shop than he dare to rob upon the highway. He

will murder as soon as wrong him in his name, body, or estate; that is, he will do neither, though he were sure to gain all the world by it: for all this world is nothing to him. His hopes and expectations are fixed above. His treasure is there, and his heart is there also. Though he hath the good things of this world, yet he doth not mind them any further than so to employ them as to give a good account thereof another day. His main business is to live always in the true faith and fear of God; under his care and protection. For this purpose he is constant at his devotions, and is as careful when in his closet, as if all the world saw him; knowing that he who made all things ever beholds him. Besides his private, he is glad of any opportunity of performing his public devotions. He never fears losing any thing by serving God. He doth not make journies, as is very customary among us, or do any thing inconsistent with the business of the Lord's day. When he prays, he prostrates himself before Almighty God, with all the reverence and godly fear he can possibly express both in mind and body, lifting up his heart to him that dwelleth in the heavens.

In short, he endeavors all he can "to walk in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." If he chance to fall, he rises

again immediately, and walks more circumspectly for the future: for these purposes also he receives the mystical body and blood of his blessed Redeemer as often as he can. Thus his faith in him is confirmed, and he derives so much grace and virtue from him that "he can do all things through Christ, who strengthens him." This is the life, the new life he constantly leads, and therefore he may well be termed, as he is in my text, "a new creature."

The terms being thus explained, what it is "to be in Christ," and what it is to be "a new creature;" we will now consider the truth of this assertion—if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.

At first sight it may seem to contradict the common observation, that Christians are generally as bad as other men; and that all manner of sin and wickedness reign as much in Christendom as it does in any heathen country. And it must be confessed, to our shame and sorrow, that the observation is not more commonly made than it is generally true. Because the greatest part of those who are called Christians, are as far from being new and holy creatures, as they who never yet heard of Christ. The truth is, and it is a sad truth, men usually embrace and profess the Christian religion, no otherwise than Turks or infidels do the religions of their re-

spective countries, because it is the religion of their land, because it was transmitted to them from their ancestors, and because it is now settled among them, and professed by those with whom they daily converse. It is no wonder, therefore, that they are but like other men, when they profess their religion merely by chance, without looking any farther into, or considering the mighty advantages it affords them, to become the best and happiest of creatures.

But observe what the Apostle says, "They are not all Israel, that are of Israel."* For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.†

Now from this great doctrine, thus briefly explained, among many other things which are very remarkable, we may observe, first, that no man can be a new creature, "except he be in Christ." Men may praise the light of nature and the power of natural religion as much as they please. They may exclaim against vice and extol virtue as much as it deserves. They may do something that looks

* Rom. 9.—v. 6.

† Rom. 2.—v. 28.

well by the principles of moral philosophy ; but they may as soon produce any thing out of nothing, as turn a man from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God by it. That can be done only by the almighty power of God ; and he never exerts that power but only in him by whom he created all things ; and therefore, unless a man be in him, even in Christ Jesus, he may be confident he is not a new creature.

Again, we may observe, that as he who is not in Christ, is not a new creature, so, on the other hand, he, who is not a new creature, is not in Christ. Men may pretend what they will, and make what show they can of Christ's religion. They may be baptized into his name, and continue members of his Church. They may profess to believe in him, as their only Saviour, to serve and honor him as their Lord and Master. They may undertake to argue and dispute for him, to vindicate and defend him against his enemies. They may read and hear his word. They may admire his divine sayings. They may reverence his ministers and approach his table. And yet, after all, unless they become new creatures, they have nothing to do with him. They do not truly believe, and so have no part and interest in him. For as they are not in him, so have they no ground to expect any thing

from him. And this is a thing I heartily wish you would all take notice of, and remember as long as you live. For they who are born and bred where the Gospel is planted, and Christ is often spoken of as the only Saviour of the world, are apt to expect great things from him: and, indeed, they cannot expect more, nor so much, as he can do for them. But then, ye must consider, that unless ye be made new creatures by him, so as to walk constantly in newness of life, ye are no way concerned in any thing that he hath done and suffered for mankind. For you are not engrafted into him, the true vine, nor made sound members of that body whereof he is the head. If ye were, ye could not but be influenced by him; you would live continually in the fear of God; you would love and honor him above all things in the world; you would serve and glorify him with your whole souls and bodies: and unless you be thus renewed in the spirit of your minds, so as sincerely to endeavor all you can to please God, whatever pretences you make to Christ, as your Lord and Saviour, ye may be sure he will never save you, nor bring you to heaven: he hath told you so with his own mouth, and therefore ye may believe him: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom

of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven,"*

Again, this suggests to us another thing to be observed from these words: what a miserable condition they are in, who are not converted and made new creatures! "For such," as the Apostle speaks, "are without Christ, being aliens from the common wealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."† And how wretched must they be who are in such a condition as this! They are without Christ! No more concerned in him, than if he had never come into the world. They are aliens to the common wealth of Israel, foreigners to the true Church of God; they are strangers to the covenant of promise, having no interest in the promises that God made to mankind in the new covenant. They are without God in the world, without his grace and favor, without his particular care and protection, and all this because they are not in Christ, in whom alone the Church is founded; in whom alone the new covenant is established; in whom alone all the mercy we can ever hope for is promised; and in whom alone God ever was, or ever will be gracious and merciful to any man.

* Matt. 7.—v. 21. † 1 Eph. 2.—v. 12.

Consider this, all ye who are still in your sins, who have not put off the old man, who do not believe in Christ, so as to be made new creatures by him. Consider this, I say, and ask yourselves, whether your condition be not as bad as bad can be. I do not deny but that ye may live at present in ease and plenty. Your shops or barns may be full of all manner of store; your estates may be great; your credit good; your bodies in good health, and your hearts merry; and so, perhaps, ye may continue for some time. But what is all this, when in the mean while the Almighty Creator and Governor of the world is angry and displeased with you? Though he gives you these seeming blessings, they are only a curse and a snare to you; for he hath pronounced all accursed, who are not in Christ, and become new creatures. "The ploughing of the wicked is sin; and his very sacrifice is an abomination to the Lord."* Ye know not how soon, but certainly it cannot be long, that you will find by sad experience "what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God." This is the true state of their case who live and die in sin, as they were born. God grant that none here present may find it so by their own experience; but I am certain there is no way

possible to avoid it, but only by Christ Jesus our Saviour; nor by him, except we believe in him, so as to be made new creatures. Consider this, before it is too late; then you would need no other argument to persuade you to put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupted according to the deceitful lusts; and to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*

But, to excite you the more to this, I beg you to consider also, on the other hand, how happy they are who are in Christ; who are taken out of the first, and are made true members of the second Adam: who in him are created unto good works, and so made new creatures. These are as happy as the others are miserable. They have all the graces of God's Holy Spirit, to make them like himself, holy in all manner of conversation. In Christ they have wisdom to direct them in all their ways, and power to protect them against all their enemies. In him Almighty God is well pleased with them, and becomes their friend, their indulgent Father. In him they have all the blessings that he hath purchased for them with his own blood; that is, all they can ever want or desire to make them completely blessed;

* Eph. 4—v. 22.

and therefore, if there are any such among you at this time, as I hope there are, give me leave, in few words, to congratulate your happy state, both in this world, and in the next.

What your condition is as to the things of this world, I know not; but this I know, that whatsoever it is, it is the best, the happiest you can be in. Yea, God himself knows it; otherwise he would never have brought you into it: for he hath that regard for his own children, that he suffers nothing to befall them that can do them hurt, nothing but what shall one way or other do them good. If the good things of this life be advantageous for you, you shall have them. If not, ye shall not possess them; for this only reason, because it is better for you to be without them. So that you may rest fully satisfied, in your minds, that "all things work together for good to them that love God." You are blessed in all you have, for it all comes from the special love and favor of God to you. Ye are blessed in all ye do, for it is acceptable to God, through him in whom ye are. You are blessed wheresoever you are, for God is always present with you, to guide, assist, and comfort you. You are blessed in your coming in, and in your going out; while ye live, and when ye die. Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord; yea, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labors, and their works

follow them."* You will then rest from your labors, from every thing that is troublesome or uneasy to you; and all the good works you now do in Christ, in him shall be then rewarded "with an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."† There you will live with him, in whom you now are, and behold the glory which the Father hath given him. There in him your souls shall become "the spirits of just men made perfect." There in him your bodies shall be "fashioned like unto his glorious body;" and you shall see God face to face, and not for a time only, but to all eternity.

If these things are so, as certainly they are, who would not be in Christ? Who would not become a new creature? And blessed be God, which of us may not, if he will? Christ died for all, and therefore is ready to receive all that come unto him. He hath said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."‡ Let us therefore take him at his word; let us go unto him, and close with him upon the terms he hath proposed in his holy Gospel: and for that purpose let us constantly walk in all those ways that lead towards him. Let us watch and pray, read and hear his holy Word, and meditate thereon, and receive his mystical body and blood;

* Rev. 14.—v. 13. † 1 Pet. 1.—v. 4. ‡ John, 6.—v. 37.

“So that we may dwell in Christ and Christ in us; may be one with Christ and Christ with us.”

But all the while let us still believe, and trust on him, to create in us a clean heart, and to renew a right spirit within us: to crucify our old man, and to make us new creatures; creatures after his own image: and to keep us always firm and stedfast in his true faith and fear. That we may both live and die in him, our ever blessed Redeemer, the eternal, the only begotten Son of God. To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honor and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON X

TRUST IN GOD.

PSALM 9.—Verse 10.

They that know thy name will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast never failed them that seek thee.

AS all men desire to live happily in the world, there are none but may do so if they will, notwithstanding the crosses and troubles they meet with in it: for our happiness doth not depend on any thing without us, but is seated in our own breasts, where no one can deprive us of it, unless by our own consent. If all is right there, and we continue steadfast, nothing that falls out will be able to discompose us. Though storms and tempests should arise and beat upon us, still shall we be

serene and calm within, and as happy as we can expect in this mortal and imperfect state.

But to this happy temper of mind few attain in this life, nor any without great care and application. It is not to be had from any thing upon earth, but, if acquired, it must be from heaven. Our own experience informs us, that our souls are of such a nature, that nothing which God hath made can satisfy or terminate our desires; but how much soever we have, we still desire more; and that we can never rest satisfied till we come to an infinite good, even the great God himself. Therefore, if our souls are once fixed on him, they there rest, as in their proper centre, though all things around us are in perpetual motion.

This our reason, assisted by divine revelation, may easily direct us to; as I doubt not but some here present have found by their own experience. However, it being a subject wherein we are all so nearly concerned, they who are so wise as to attend to their own real interest, will take all occasions to exercise their thoughts upon it. And as it will be very reasonable and our duty to do so now, I have chosen these words of the royal Prophet, who, speaking of God's supreme authority over the world and of the righteous judgment which he executeth in it, turns his

discourse and applies himself immediately to him, saying, "And they that know thy name, will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast never failed them that seek thee."

In which we may observe, first, the qualifications requisite to the fixing our minds upon God, even the knowledge of his name: secondly, the necessary tendency of such a qualification: "They that know thy name, will put their trust in thee;" and lastly, the reason of it: "For thou, Lord, hast never failed them that seek thee." For the truth of all which, he appeals to God, in order to confirm us in the belief of it.

And, first, it is here supposed, that although it is easy to talk of trusting in God, there are but few that do so: none but they who know his name. But to understand who they are, we must consider what is here meant by his name, and what by knowing it; neither of which questions can be truly resolved any other way than from the holy Scriptures, as appears but too plainly from all those who never had the holy Scriptures made known to them. Though they had some general notions and traditions among them about that invisible being whom we call God, yet they were so weak and confused, that they could not be properly said to know any thing at all of him, neither what he is, nor what he doth in the world. But now we are fully

assured, how the knowledge of God came into the world. It was first sent, and then brought into it by his Son; who therefore saith, "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father, but the Son; and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."* And no man hath seen God at any time. "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."† He hath declared or revealed him all along, from the beginning of the world, by his Spirit, in the Prophets.‡ Who therefore spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Thus "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God,"§ and there it is that he hath revealed himself, and whatsoever is necessary for us to know concerning his holy name. When Moses desired to know the name of the Lord, he said, "I am that I am; and thus shalt thou say unto the Children of Israel, I am hath sent me unto you."|| And this is that great name whereby it hath pleased Almighty God, the Creator of the world, to make himself known to mankind. That he therefore exists in and of himself, and gives existence to all and every thing. That he was, and is, and is to come, as St. John interprets his great name in re-

* Matt. 11.—v. 27. † John, 1.—v. 18. ‡ 1 Pet. 1.—v. 21.
§ 2 Tim. 3.—v. 16. || Exod. 3.—v. 14.

spect to us.* That he is to everlasting the same, without any variableness or shadow of change. That all perfections are in him; such as wisdom, power and goodness. That "the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, these three are One;"† that is, as he elsewhere saith, one Jehovah, one essence or substance; or, as Moses calls him, one Lord.‡ "That it is in him we live, and move, and have our being."§ That whatsoever lives, lives in him; whatsoever moves, moves in him; and whatsoever is, subsists in him. That he is therefore every where, knows every thing, and doth whatsoever he will, both in heaven and in earth. That as he thus made the world only by speaking or expressing his will that it should be, so he continues to preserve and govern all and every thing in it. That not so much as a sparrow can fall to the ground without him; but the very hairs of our heads, and all the minutest things that are, as they are in him, so they are numbered and ordered by him. That he is therefore the Lord of Sabaoth, the being of beings, the cause of all causes; that he reigneth over the whole world, and doth whatsoever he pleaseth "in heaven, and in earth, and in all deep places."||

* Rev. 1.—v. 4. † 1 John, 5.—v. 7. ‡ Deut. 6.—v. 4.

§ Acts, 17.—v. 28. || Psalm 135.—v. 6.

But we must not think that all who barely know what he hath thus said of himself, are in the number of those who are here said to know his name; for a man may know all this to be true, and have high speculations of God, and speak of him with great propriety, and yet not have a right knowledge of him. A true knowledge of God sinks down into the heart, and overspreads it with a lively sense of his divine majesty, glory, and goodness; and which none can possess, but they whose hearts are cleansed from all impure and corrupt affections. Thus saith our Saviour, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."* But of others, the words of the Prophet are verified: "By hearing they shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing they shall see, and shall not perceive; because their hearts are waxed gross,"† and are not capable of being affected with what they hear and know: whereas they whose hearts are pure and holy, and in some measure, according to their capacities, made like unto him, understand what is said of God. They feel his power, and taste his goodness. They are inclined to serve, honor, and obey him in all his commands.

"They who know his name will put their trust in him;" that is, they will not fear any

* Matt. 5.—v. 8. † Isaiah, 6.—v. 9.

creature in the world, nor any thing that may happen in it: but their hearts are always fixed, trusting in the Lord, as the Governor and Disposer of all things; firmly believing that he will preserve them from evil, and do that which is really best for them. "In God have I put my trust," saith David, "I will not fear what man can do unto me."* And "a good man," saith he, "shall not be afraid of evil tidings. His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord."†

Moreover, they who know his name, according to the revelations that he hath given us, know, that "he so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."‡ That in the fulness of time, this his only Son was for that purpose born of a woman, and so was made flesh, or took upon him the form or nature of man, by the same inconceivable power whereby he had made the world. That being thus made man, he as such died for the sins and offences of mankind, "so as to be a propitiation for the sins of the whole world;"§ and therefore for all from the beginning to the end of it. That as "he was delivered for our offences, he was raised again for our justification;"|| and

* Psalm 56.—v. 11. † Psalm 112.—v. 7. ‡ John, 3.—v. 16.

§ John, 2.—v. 2.

|| Rom. 4.—v. 25.

for that purpose went up to heaven, where he hath been ever since, and is now continually appearing in the presence of God, as our Mediator and Advocate, making intercession for all who ever did or shall believe in him. And therefore, for his sake and merits, it hath pleased God to promise his grace and favor to all mankind, in all ages, with all sorts of blessings needful to make them eternally happy.

Thus his infinite wisdom, power, and goodness were manifested in his creation of the world, and in his creatures observing the laws which he hath prescribed to them. But his grace and truth appear only in his redemption of man by Jesus Christ.

There is still another reason why they who know the name of the Lord will put their trust in him. "For thou, Lord," saith the Psalmist, "never failest them that seek thee." And if he never failed them that seek him, we may be confident he never will: "For he is Jehovah, the Lord, that changeth not."* And this has been found true, by the constant experience of all that ever sought him.

But, for our understanding this, it will be necessary to consider what is here meant by seeking the Lord.

* Mal. 3.—v. 6.

And we may observe, that when it pleased the eternal God to make the world, and, among other creatures, mankind upon earth, he intended that himself alone, and his own perfections, should be the object of man's felicity. But when we, by our unhappy fall, had lost this our interest in him, he, through the mediation of his only begotten Son, was graciously pleased to restore us to a capacity of regaining it, and to put us into such a way that none can fail of obtaining it, if it be not their own fault; which they who know his name being fully assured of upon his own word, and having their eyes opened to see where their true interest is, and how they may recover it, cannot but earnestly desire to be reinstated in him, the chiefest good, that they may have him again to be their Lord and their God: that so they may have his immediate care and protection, his love and favor, and the light of his countenance shining upon them; and thus, with holy David, they may exclaim, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee."*

Now this holy desire being thus kindled, as it always is, in the hearts of those who know God, it excites and encourages them to

* Psalm 73.—v. 24.

do all they can to recover their interest in him; that they may have his wisdom to direct them, his power to defend them; his grace and holy Spirit, to sanctify and govern both their souls and bodies in the ways of his laws, and in the works of his commandments. And this, in the language of Scripture, is called seeking the Lord. Seeking his face.* Seeking him with all their hearts, and with all their souls;† and with their whole desire, and diligently. This it is to seek the Lord, when our hearts are set upon him, our desires and hopes placed in him, so as to use every possible means to reconcile ourselves to him, so as to obtain whatever we ask of him, or what he thinks fit to bestow upon us. But they who thus seek the Lord God omnipotent, so as to find him gracious and merciful to them, must first leave their sins, and turn to him. For the Prophet saith, “Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found; call ye upon him, while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”‡ “And thus saith the Lord of hosts, turn ye unto me, and I will turn unto you.”§

* Hos. 5.—v. 15.

† Deut. 4.—v. 29.

‡ Isaiah, 55.—v. 6.

§ Zech. 1.—v. 3.

And for this purpose, we must search into our hearts, and look back upon our lives, and consider wherein we have transgressed his righteous laws; and resolve, by his assistance, to do so no more, that iniquity may not be our ruin. We must avoid whatsoever is offensive to his divine majesty, or dishonorable to his glorious name; for this only reason, because it is so. We must abstain from all appearance of evil, as well as from that which plainly appears to be so, for fear of incurring his displeasure. "We must work the work of him that sent us, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless."* "We must love him with all our hearts; and whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we must do all to the glory of God; and all this in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by him."†

For after all, "he only is the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the Father, but by him."‡ "But he is able to save to the utmost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."§

Thus they who seek the Lord, find him always at hand: ready to assist, protect, and

* Luke 1.—v. 6.

† Col. 3.—v. 17.

‡ John, 14.—v. 6.

§ Heb. 7.—v. 25.

supply them with whatever is needful, when they apply to him by prayer and supplication; which, in the language of Scripture, is expressed by "seeking the Lord." Thus "Daniel set his face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplication."* "And when Moses had set it up, every one which sought the Lord went out into the tabernacle, of the congregation, which was without the camp."†

We have no such way now, but we have one which is in all respects as good, and in some better; for he doth not manifest his presence now in any one particular place only, as he did then, but in all places: where any that know his name meet together, we may be confident of it. Thus the blessed Jesus saith, "I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing which they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."‡ Where we may observe, that this promise is made only to public congregations, or assemblies of his people met together in his name, and to such only as agree together before hand what to ask of him; and therefore not to those where the people know not

* Dan. 9.—v. 3. † Exod. 33.—v. 7. ‡ Matt. 8.—v. 19.

what the minister will ask, nor perhaps himself, until he hath asked it. But to such as this, where we all knew before and agreed that such and such things should be prayed for, we have his own word for it, that what we have thus agreed to ask shall be granted us: and so we have also, that he is here in the midst of us; for if he be where two or three, so small a number, much more where so many are gathered together in his name; and therefore we may and ought to be certain that he is now in the midst of us, as that we ourselves are here, and that we may seek him by prayer and supplication in this place as effectually as his ancient people did before the mercy seat. "Let us, therefore," as the Apostle speaks, "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."*

But that we may be sure to find the favor we seek of God, there are three things to be particularly observed:

First, That we ask it in the name of his Son Jesus Christ: for we have no ground to expect any thing from him but what he hath promised to us, and according as he hath promised it; and he hath no where promised to grant us our petitions but only in the

* Heb. 4.—v. 16.

name of Christ. For he saith, "If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it."* "And verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you."† "For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."‡ In all our prayers, therefore, that we make to the Almighty Creator and Governor of the world, we must look up to Jesus, the only Mediator between him and us, desiring nothing but in his name, for his sake, and upon the account of his death, whereby he hath purchased all manner of blessings and favors for us.

In the next place we must not expect that God should give us what we ask, immediately from himself, or by altering the course of nature, but in the use of such ordinary means as he hath appointed. Thus, if we pray for his divine grace, that it may be always sufficient for us, we must exercise ourselves continually in those which we call the means of grace. If we want and desire the necessities of this life from him, we must follow some particular calling or employment, which, by his blessing, may procure them for us. If we are in any great difficulty or trouble, and pray to be delivered from it, we must do what we lawfully can to deliver ourselves.

* John, 14.—v. 14. † John, 16.—v. 23. ‡ Acts, 4.—v. 12.

Thus, if we ask any thing sincerely, earnestly, and incessantly of God, in the name of Christ, and use such means as are agreeable to his revealed will, we need not, or rather ought not to doubt, but that he will give it us at such time, and so far, as he sees it to be good for us.

And, lastly, We must trust in God for the answer of all our petitions. Though we must use the means, we must use them only as such, not depending at all upon them, but only upon him, who alone can make them effectual; but then we must “trust on him with all our hearts:”* and when we have directed our prayers to God, we must look up, as David did, expecting the blessing we prayed for, according to his promise.† For our blessed Lord makes this a necessary condition in all our prayers, saying, “All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.”‡ “And I say unto you, what things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.”§ And thus we are to conclude, that if we expect our prayers should be heard, we must always pray in faith, “nothing wavering or doubting;”|| but firmly believing that God, according to his Word, will give us

* Prov. 3.—v. 5. † Psalm 5—v. 3. ‡ Matt. 21.—v. 22.

§ Mark, 11.—v. 24.

|| James, 1.—v. 6.

what we ask in his name, if it be really good for us.

Thus blessed are all they who know his name; they constantly put their trust in him, and as surely find that he never fails them who thus seek him. He never fails to give them the blessings they seek him for, yea, and more than they can desire. "I sought the Lord," saith David, "and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fear."* "We have sought the Lord our God," said king Asa; "we have sought him, and he hath given us rest on every side."† The same may be said of all who ever sought him aright. They have always found him true and faithful to his word; gracious and liberal to them, beyond either their desires or deserts; always making all things work together for their good who love and trust in him.

Now, from what has been said, we may first observe, how necessary it is for all men to be fully instructed in the knowledge of the true God, the Maker of the world, and the Saviour of mankind: for it is their ignorance of him that makes them slight his promises, as well as transgress his laws. Did we all but know God according as he hath manifested himself unto us, as we should never dare to offend him, so should we put our

* Psalm 34.—v. 4.

† 2 Chron. 14.—v. 7.

whole trust and confidence in him, so as to fear nothing so much as offending him.

From hence we may also learn how much it concerns us to beware of those "who bring in damnable heresies; denying the Lord that bought them." To such men all I have now said will seem insipid and groundless. These can never know God aright; and then it is no wonder they neither love, fear, nor serve him; neither worship, believe, and trust in him, as they ought; but, after all their fair pretences, live as without God in the world. But although they will not seek him, it will not be long before they shall find that there is a God that judgeth the world.

Let me exhort you, then, my brethren, that you take all occasions of seeking the Lord, and of doing it so as he hath prescribed in his holy Word. You will then experience the truth of what you have now heard, even that he never fails them who seek him. Then how happy should we live, even in the midst of this troublesome and naughty world. Whilst others are tossed to and fro, as in a tempestuous ocean, our hearts will be always fixed, trusting in the Lord. When his judgments are in the world we need not fear: for the Lord of Hosts is with us, and the God of Jacob will be our refuge. For he that governs the world, hath promised to take care of them that seek him. And therefore, what-

ever happens, they may rest fully satisfied in their minds that no real evil shall befall them; nothing but shall in some way or other do them good. And although they cannot see it here, "for now we look through a glass, darkly;" yet shall they behold it hereafter. When the Lord shall unveil himself, and lay open his wonderful works before them, then shall they see how, by the power of his word, all things concurred to the setting forth his glory, in the promises he hath made. Then shall we clearly see what infinite cause we have to admire and praise his infinite love and goodness, truth and mercy, to us, in Jesus Christ, that Lamb of God, which was once slain to take away the sins of the world; and by virtue of the blood he then shed, is now and always making atonement and intercession for all that come unto God by him. Then shall we join with angels, and all the company of heaven, in setting forth the praises of the Most High God; and as St. John heard them, "Saying, Blessing and Honor, and Glory and Power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever." Amen.

SERMON XI.

NOT HEARERS BUT DOERS JUSTIFIED.

EPISTLE OF JAMES, 1.—Verse 22.

*But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers
only, deceiving your own selves.*

AS it was by his Word that God at first created all things out of nothing, so it is by his Word that he now createth us again, in Jesus Christ, unto good works. Or, as St. James here expresses it, “He of his own will begets us, with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his own creatures;” * that we should be new creatures, after his own heart, such as he designed us to be.

* James, 1.—v. 18.

A necessary caution at all times, especially in these days, when many place a great part, if not the whole of their religion, in hearing; as if they served God only by hearing how to serve him, or did any good, only by hearing how to do so. And yet this is the case of too many among us, who never think they can hear too much, or do too little; which is certainly one of the greatest cheats the devil ever put upon mankind, or, rather, that men ever put upon themselves; for this is plainly "deceiving their own selves," as the Apostle here assures us.

But, that we may understand his meaning aright, we shall first consider what he here means by the Word; what by doing, and what by hearing it; and how it comes to pass that there are many hearers, who are not doers of it; and it then will follow, that all such "deceive their own selves."

By the Word, we are to understand that which the Apostles preached, and which is now contained and delivered to us in the books of the Old and New Testament, wherein it hath pleased the Most High God to speak his mind, to make known himself and his will to us; what he would have us to believe; what he would have us do, and what not to do; which is called "The Word," by way of eminence, as infinitely exceeding all other

words that ever were spoken by men or angels. For this is the Word of Almighty God himself, "who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the Fathers by the Prophets; and hath, in these last days, spoken to us by his Son."* It was God himself that spake, and who spake on purpose that we might know his mind, and act accordingly. Therefore it is not more frequently than properly called his Word. And whenever we hear any part of it repeated to us, we are to look upon it as his Word, and accordingly receive it; "not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God."† Still supposing the Almighty Creator of the world as speaking to us his creatures, and telling us what he would have us do. By doing of the Word, we are to understand the framing both of our minds and manners according as the Word directs: and as we must do what the Word bids, and leave undone what it forbids; so must we fear the threatenings it denounces, trust in the promises it makes, and believe the truths it reveals to us, and all for the Word's sake, because we have the Word of God for them. So that we must order our very thoughts and affections, as well as our words and outward actions,

* Heb. 1.—v. 1, 2. † 1. Thess. 2.—v. 13.

according to the rules which he sets before us, otherwise we cannot be properly said to be "doers of the Word."

For example, the Word saith, "Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."* Now they who, hearing this, immediately fix their hearts and affections upon God, above all things besides; they are "doers of the Word." The Word saith, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them."† Now they who, upon hearing this, accordingly always do as they would be done by, "are doers of the Word." The Word saith, "That all who know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, shall be punished with everlasting destruction."‡ Now they who, out of an holy fear of this threatening Word, strive all they can to know God, and to obey the Gospel, are "doers of the Word." The Word saith, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."§ Wherefore they, who, in humble confidence of this Word, can boldly say with the Apostle, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me," are "doers of the Word." The Word saith, "I and the Father are one."|| Now they who,

* Matt. 22.—v. 37. † Matt. 7.—v. 12. ‡ 2 Thess. 1.—v. 8.

§ Heb. 13.—v. 5.

|| John, 10.—v. 30.

firmly assenting to the truth of this proposition, upon the word of him who spake it, do really believe the Father and the Son to be one Being, one God, they are "doers of the Word." And so all, who, hearing any part of God's Word read or declared to them, believe and live according to what they hear, are "doers of the Word, and not hearers only;" for we are not to suppose that hearing sermons only, is hearing the Word: for there may be many things in them contrary to, or at least besides the Word; so that you can never be sure that, when you hear a sermon, as it is called, you hear the very Word of God, any farther than you have firm ground to believe that he who preacheth it both rightly understands and faithfully declares the mind of God, as it is contained and revealed in his written Word, which we call the holy Scriptures: "which, being given by inspiration of God,"* is therefore properly his Word, and nothing else can be truly called so, but as it agrees exactly with it.

But when you hear any part of the holy Scripture read, you are sure that you hear the Word of God; and when it is read in the House of God, by one of his own ministers, commissioned and sent by him to read it, you then hear God's Word from God himself. It

* 2 Tim. 3.—v. 16.

is he that speaks to you by his minister; and unless you frame both your faith and lives according to what you so hear, you "are not doers of the Word, but hearers only, deceiving your own selves."

But are there then any such among us; men who hear God's Word, and will not do it? The case indeed is too plain to be doubted of. Blessed be God, his Word is publicly read and explained every sabbath-day; so that all may hear it if they will, and there are none but do so sometimes. And if all who are hearers were likewise doers of the Word, what a glorious kingdom, and what a special people should we then be! We should excel all the nations upon earth. But, alas! the Word is more commonly heard than practised. Of the many who go where it is read or preached, there are but few who lay it to heart, or practise it in their lives; it makes no more impression upon the greatest part of those who hear, than as if it were only an insignificant sound in the air. And, "shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid?"* Shall Almighty God himself speak, and men not regard it? Shall he call, and we not obey his voice? But how comes it to pass that any who are hearers are not likewise doers of the Word?

* Amos, 3.—v. 6.

Several reasons may be assigned; and the first is, of those who hear the Word, some do not understand it, though it be delivered in their own language, and in the plainest terms that can be invented; yet, notwithstanding, they are so blind and ignorant, they know no more of it than as if it were spoken in an unknown tongue. "Thus" as the blessed Jesus observes, "is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, by hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them."* Thus they wilfully shut their eyes against the Word, lest they should be converted by it; and therefore the Word hath no power or effect upon them. For, as in the parable of the sower, the Word to them is as "seed by the way side, which the fowls of the air pick up and devour:" that is, as our Saviour explains it, "When any one heareth the Word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh that wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart; this is he

* Matt. 13.—v. 14.

which receiveth seed by the way side."* This is the case of too many among us; and a sad one indeed it is: for such people are incapable of receiving any benefit by the Word they hear. They may hear as long as they live, they can never do what they hear: for they do not know what it is, and all because they will not. They can take a great deal of pains to understand their calling, and how to manage their worldly affairs; but they will not take care to understand the Word of God, not so much as the common principles of religion. They were not instructed in them when they were young, and think scorn to be so now, but choose rather to go blindfold to destruction, than to have their eyes opened. Such may be hearers of the Word, as much as they please, it is impossible they should be doers of it. God grant, this may not be the woeful case of any here present.

Again, Of those who do understand the Word they hear, there are but few who mind it, or take any more notice of it, than as if they did not, or could not understand it. Though their bodies are where the Word is read or preached, their minds are not there, but running about to the ends of the world; upon their houses or shops, their land or money, and their creditors or debtors, their friends or their

* Matt. 13.—v. 19.

enemies; any thing but what they should be thinking of. This the Prophet long ago observed, saying, "They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy Words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness."* This is the reason why they are not doers as well as hearers of the Word; because, while they are hearing it, their hearts are going after their covetousness, after their worldly affairs or business; and being full of other things, there is no room for the Word to enter in and work upon them.

I fear there are many here present who know this to be true of themselves. I judge no man, but appeal to every one's conscience, since you came hither, how many places have your hearts been in? While you have been hearing God's Word repeated and explained to you, have not many worldly or vain thoughts been crowding in together with the Word, enough to stifle it? Nay, have they not stifled it altogether in many of you? Have not others of you been wholly taken up with various thoughts all the while? Are not many so still; thinking at this moment upon something besides the Word you hear, and not at all of that, so as to lay it to heart. How

* Ezek. 33.—v. 31.

then can you expect any good from it? Your hearts are shut against the Word: and unless God be pleased to open them, as he did Lydia's, so that you may attend to the things that are spoken,* all that is said is but as water spilt upon the ground, which you can never gather up, or make any use of.

But, although a man both understand and likewise observe the Word he hears, yet unless he believe it he can never do it: for the Word doth not work by any virtue in itself, but by the special grace and power of God going along with it, and setting it home upon the hearts of those who hear it. And therefore, unless a man believes what he hears to be the Word of God, and accordingly receives it as such, so as to be fully persuaded of the truth and certainty of it, it can have no effect upon him; for God never exerts his power, nor manifests his grace in a special manner, but to those who believe in him and in his holy Word. To them he always doth it, as we learn from the Apostle, saying, "For this cause thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the Word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."† And that is one

* Acts, 16.—v. 14. † 1 Thess. 2.—v. 13.

great reason why many who hear the Word are not doers of it, even because whatsoever they may pretend, they do not really believe it; or, as the Apostle words it, "The Word preached doth not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that hear it."* From whence we may likewise observe, that faith is so necessary an ingredient to the making the Word we hear work effectually upon us, that unless it be mixed with our hearing, we can receive no benefit or profit at all by it, or at least not so much as to excite and enable us to do what we hear. Hence also the Apostle uses this as an undeniable argument to prove the people had not obeyed the Gospel, because they had not believed it: "But they have not all obeyed the Gospel; for Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?"† I heartily wish that we had not as much cause as the Prophet had to say, "Lord, who hath believed our report?" But I fear this also is the case of too many among us, who can be content to hear the Word, and will not deny but that "it is holy, just, and true;" and, after all, do not believe it. If they did, it would make their hearts ache, when they hear it reproving them for their sins, and forewarning them of the judgment to come: it

* Heb. 4.—v. 2.

† Rom. 10.—v. 16.

would inflame them with the true love of God, and with earnest desires to serve and honor him above all things in the world. It would put them upon constant endeavors to avoid whatsoever God forbids, and do what he commands, lest they fall under his displeasure, and so be lost and undone forever; whereas we see, by daily experience, that men can sit and hear the Word of God with a great deal of seeming attention, and yet take no more care of doing any thing it requires, than as if they were no way concerned in it, which plainly shews, that notwithstanding their profession of the Christian faith, they are not fully persuaded of the truth and certainty of it: and then it is no wonder that they are not "doers of the Word, but hearers only, deceiving their own selves." To which we may add, in the last place, that of those who in some measure believe what they hear, presently forget it, and therefore can never practise it. This reason the Apostle here suggests to us; for, in the words following my text, he compares him that is only a hearer, and not a doer of the Word, to "a man having seen his face in a glass, and straightway going away, and forgetting what manner of man he was." And then he adds, "But whose looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continues therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of

the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."*

There are many forgetful hearers among us, who hear much, but forget all they hear; and the reason they pretend for it is, because their memories are so weak that they cannot retain it. But this is a groundless pretence: they can remember other things well enough. Servants can remember what their masters bid them do, and masters can remember all they have to do in their temporal affairs: why, then, cannot they remember what Almighty God requires of them; "the things that belong to their everlasting peace?" If men would set themselves in good earnest to mind what they hear, they would easily remember all that is necessary for them to do: though they do not remember the very words, they would keep the duty itself always in their minds, so as to put it into practice; and the reason why they do it not, is not because of the weakness of their memories but the hardness of their hearts: as our Lord intimates in the parable of the sower, saying, "He that receiveth seed among thorns, is he that heareth the Word; and the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the Word, and he becometh unfruitful."† Thus it is that men so commonly forget all they

* James, I.—v. 25. † Matt. 13.—22.

Hear, because the things of this world crowd so fast into their heads, that they stifle and choak the Word; so they remember no more of it than as if they had never heard it. It is upon some or other of these accounts that there are so many hearers and so few doers of the Word among us. It is either because, although they hear the Word, they do not understand it; or although they understand, they do not mind it; or although they mind, yet they do not believe it; or else, although they believe, yet they do not remember it, and therefore do not practise it. Whatsoever it is that we read or preach, or any way publish and declare out of God's Word, though many seem mighty attentive in hearkening to it, yet when they have done so they think they have done enough, and concern themselves no farther about it, but go away very well satisfied that they have done their duty. They have been to hear, as if that was all that is required of them. But this is certainly a deception men put upon themselves, to the ruin and destruction of their immortal souls. This I know they will scarcely believe, because it is so great a reflection upon them; but whatsoever they may think, I am sure it is true; for it is attested by God himself, saying, "Be ye doers of the Word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." But I shall mention two ways in which men

deceive themselves: first, in that they think they do good, when really they do no good, but hurt: secondly, in that they think they get good by such hearing, when they are so far from being better, that they are really the worse for it. And, first, they who are not doers of the Word, but hearers only, deceive their own selves, in that they think, by merely hearing the Word of God, they do that which is good and acceptable to him, and for the honor of his name. Unless they thought so, they would never hear at all, but live altogether as without God in the world, as many now do; and to our shame be it spoken. But they who only hear, are but little better: not but that it is good and necessary for all men to hear the Word of God, that so they may know his will, without which they can never do it, this being the means ordained of God for that purpose; but then it is only the means, not the end. Doing is the end of hearing; and they who only hear, hear to no end or purpose at all, but cheat themselves of their time, and deceive themselves with the conceit of doing something that is well pleasing unto God: "but be not deceived; God will not be mocked." Though you may deceive yourselves, God you cannot deceive. Every time you hear, he takes particular notice how ye hear, and what ye hear, and whether you act accordingly, or no; and if

you do, he is graciously pleased to accept of it in Christ, and to bless it to you. But if you do it not, your hearing will not be reckoned among your good, but your bad works: it will add both to the number and to the weight of your sins, as you will find at the last day. And whatever you may think at present, you will then clearly see how much ye deceived yourselves in thinking ye did well in hearing the Word of God without doing it. For how can it possibly avail you to hear what ye must do to be saved, unless ye do it? Is a man ever the better for hearing of a good bargain or purchase, unless he makes it? Is a man ever the nearer his journey's end for knowing the way thither, unless he walks in it? How then can you imagine that the hearing of the Word of God should do you any good, unless you do it? It is impossible. The Word tells you, "Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." To the same purpose our blessed Saviour, the author of all blessings, says, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."* Not happy are ye if ye know them, but "if ye do them."

But that is not all: for they who are hearers only and not doers of the Word, are so far from being better, that they are much

* John, 13.—v. 17.

worse for hearing it. And this is a high aggravation of their crime; in that they heard, and knew the will of God, but would not do it. This is to sin against knowledge, to rebel against the light. Such are wilful, obstinate, presumptuous, the worst sort of sinners in the world; and will, accordingly, have the worst sort of punishments inflicted upon them. For he cannot lie, who hath said, "Every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them not, shall be likened to a foolish man which built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."* Again, "The servant which knew his Lord's will," and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, "shall be beaten with many stripes: But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes."† If there be one place of greater punishment and misery hereafter than another, it shall be for those who hear and know the will of God, and yet obstinately refuse to obey it. And though they will not believe it now, they shall find, to their sorrow, the saying of St. Peter to be true; that "it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known

* Matt. 7.—v. 26.

† Luke, 12.—v. 47.

it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them:"* so grossly do men deceive themselves, who are hearers only and not doers of the Word. And yet how common is this among us? Men generally love to be deceived; and rather than not be deceived at all, they will deceive themselves; and that too in things of the greatest importance, such as concern their everlasting state, as appears in many instances, but in none more plainly than in this, that they satisfy themselves with the bare hearing how to get to heaven, and so deceive themselves with the groundless conceit, as if they could get there without ever doing any thing in order to it: whereas from what we have now seen, they will but sink lower into the pit of destruction and misery.

And now, I pray and beseech you all, as ye tender your own eternal welfare, that you would not put this cheat any longer upon yourselves: "But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only." Whatsoever truth you hear revealed in the Word, be sure to receive it with a firm and stedfast faith; whatsoever sin ye hear reprov'd, be sure to forsake and avoid it; whatsoever duty ye hear commanded by Almighty God, be sure to live in the constant performance of it; that so ye may grow

* 2 Peter, 2.—v. 21.

wiser and better by every chapter ye hear read, and by every sermon that is preached to you out of God's holy Word. For which purpose I beg and advise you to carry home with you these few plain directions:

Whensoever you go into the house of God, there, among other things, to hear his most holy Word, consider whose word you go to hear; not the word of a mortal man, not the word of an angel, but the Word of your Almighty Creator and most merciful Redeemer, the supreme Lawgiver and Judge of the whole world; that Word by which he will judge you at the last day; and therefore humbly beseech him, as David did, "to open your eyes, that you may behold the wondrous things of his law;"* and likewise to open your hearts also, that ye may receive the truth in the love of it. But when you hear of any plain truth that God is pleased to reveal to you, of any sin that he forbids you, of any duty that he requires of you, of any punishment that he threatens, or of any blessings that he promises to his people; be sure to mind it, and set it home upon your hearts and consciences; applying it every one to himself, as much as if it was spoken particularly to him, and to nobody else, and resolving with himself to act accordingly. Do

* Psalm 119.—v. 18.

not look upon any thing as meant only of other people, as some are apt to do; but every one should look upon every thing as directed immediately to himself; for without such a particular application of what ye hear to yourselves, ye can never be truly touched or affected with it, so as to receive any real benefit or comfort from it. When you have thus, by a quick and lively faith, received the Word into your hearts, be sure to keep it there. Do not suffer any vain thoughts, idle discourse, or worldly business, to drive it out again; but still continue to exercise your faith upon it; and that, by the grace of God co-operating with his Word, will certainly put you upon doing of the Work.

Wherefore, in short, as ever ye desire never to hear the Word of God in vain, whenever ye go to hear it, carefully observe the Apostle's directions, in the words before my text, "Lay apart all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save your souls:" receive it so by faith, that it may be engrafted in your hearts, and so bring forth fruit unto salvation. For which purpose, always carry what you have now heard in your minds: "Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves;" that the Word you have now heard may, by the blessing of God, be the means of your

doing whatsoever else ye shall hereafter hear ;
 by which means, this one sermon will make all
 others profitable to you, and effectual to the
saving of your souls. And so our preaching
 will never be in vain, nor your hearing in
 vain. For, being both hearers and doers of
 the Word, you will go "from strength to
strength, and every day grow more and more
 in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord
 and Saviour Jesus Christ ;" to whom be glory
 for ever and ever. Amen.

But one thing I must say to you, and that is, that you
 must not be content with hearing the Word, but
 you must also be diligent to do it.

FROM your presence here, and especially
 from your coming to worship Almighty God,
 and to pray to him in the name of Christ, as
 well as to hear his Word, I want you to believe
 that you are all Christians, and that you are
 not only once saved, but that you are
 made his disciples, and that you are to be so ;
 looking up to him as your only Saviour, and
 both in interest and in love, and in faith
 taught, and to him as your only Saviour,
 And this is the way to salvation.

SERMON XII.

ONE THING NEEDFUL.

LUKE, 10.—Verse 42.

*But one thing is needful: and Mary has chosen
that good part that shall not be taken away
from her.*

FROM your presence here, and especially from your coming to worship Almighty God, and to pray to him in the name of Christ, as well as to hear his Word, I cannot but believe that you are all Christians; that you were not only once baptized into Christ, and made his disciples, but that you still continue to be so; looking upon him as your Lord and only Saviour, and upon yourselves as bound, both in interest and duty, to believe what he hath taught, and to do what he hath commanded. And certainly you have infinite

cause to rejoice and give thanks to God, that you are brought into a state of salvation, capable of being made glorified saints in heaven, equal to the holy angels in purity and happiness.

Neither can any of you fail, but such only as are wanting to themselves in seeking after it. And because this is too often the case of many who profess Christianity, give me leave therefore to deal plainly and faithfully with you, as becomes a minister of Christ, and to advise you in his name to take care of yourselves, and to mind your eternal good and welfare better than you have hitherto done.)

It is true we cannot expect to be so happy as to prevail with all to do it, most people's hearts being so wholly set upon the present, that they have little regard to their future state, or to any thing that can be said concerning it. However we must do our duty, and leave the issue to God, who hath the hearts of all men in his hands, and yours particularly, who are now before him. And it is worth while to say all I can, though but one of you may be persuaded, and with God's blessing, to mind the one thing necessary for the future above all other things.

For this purpose I have chosen the words just now read to you, in order to explain the saying of our blessed Saviour, spoken upon this remarkable occasion.

As Christ went about doing God, he came to a village near Jerusalem, called Bethany, where a brother and two sisters lived together. The brother's name was Lazarus, the sisters Martha and Mary, who were all so truly pious and virtuous, that our Lord had a particular kindness for them. For it is written, "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus."* How happy should we think ourselves? How happy should we be, if the same could be written or said of us, that Jesus loves us. Let us then be such as they were, and we need not doubt but that Christ will love us as he did them.

Our Lord being come to the village where these faithful and beloved disciples dwelt, Martha invited and received him into her house. And being extremely pleased that she had so divine a guest, as well she might, she was very busy in providing a suitable entertainment for him; while her sister Mary, in the mean time, sat at Jesus feet, and heard his Word. He was, it seems, no sooner come into their house, but he feasted them with better food than they could prepare for him; for he entertained them with heavenly food, the bread of life; taking, as he did, all occasions of discoursing to them that were about him of the things that belonged to their everlasting peace.

* John, 11.—v. 5.

While our Saviour was thus speaking, Mary, in an humble and devout posture, sat at his feet, wholly intent upon what he said, catching at every word that came from him, and laying it up in her heart, for her spiritual edification and comfort.

But Martha having more business upon that extraordinary occasion than she could well turn her hand to, wondered that our Lord should take no more care of her, but suffer her sister to sit there, and leave her to serve alone; and therefore desired him to bid her come and help her. "But Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art troubled about many things. But one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her."

He knew that Martha had now a great deal of care and trouble upon her, and that it was all for his sake to entertain and serve him; yet nevertheless he lets her know, that he preferred Mary's taking care of her own soul, before her taking care of his body: and therefore that Mary should not leave hearing him to help her. No; though it was to prepare an entertainment for himself. Such a mighty value doth he set upon the souls of mankind, which he came to save!

According to his usual custom of taking all opportunities of saying or doing something

that might be of general use and benefit to mankind, from Martha's being careful and troubled about many things, he takes occasion to put her and all of us in mind of the one thing needful. And that we may know what that one thing is, he points at it, by saying, that "Mary had chosen that good part;" and to encourage us to follow her example, in choosing the same, he adds, "that it shall not be taken away from her."

But, says he, "there is need of one thing," generally needful for all men, in all respects, and at all times. There are several things which are needful upon some particular occasions. Thus meat, drink, and clothing; of which our Lord saith to his disciples, "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."* But these things are needful only for the body, and that too in this life only.

But in my text, he speaks of that which is absolutely needful to make men truly, perfectly, and eternally happy; that which all men naturally desire and seek for.

Our desires are in a manner infinite, so as to rest no where but in an infinite good. Whereas the things of this world are all but finite, and can never terminate our desires. Therefore the things of this world cannot

* Matt. 6.—v. 32

make us happy; but we may be so without them, as well as with them, even in this life, much more so in the next, when they shall no longer exist.

It is not only the wise man's observation, but the common experience of all mankind, "That riches profit not in the day of wrath."* "What profit then hath a man of all his labors which he taketh under the sun?"† For they are all, as the same wise man observes, "vanity and vexation of spirit." They are vanity, and cannot make us happy; they are vexation of spirit, and therefore serve only to make us miserable.

But let us hear what a greater than Solomon hath said, even Christ himself: "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"‡ Where we see how he who came on purpose to save souls takes it for granted, that although a man could get all this world, he may, notwithstanding, lose his own soul; and what then will all he has gained profit him? Will he give it in exchange for his own soul? He certainly would if he could. But, alas! when his soul is once gone, all he had is no longer his, but other people are possessed of it. And if it was still his own, he could not give it

* Prov. 11.—v. 4. † Eccles. 1.—v. 3. ‡ Matt. 16.—v. 26.

in exchange for his soul: "For it cost more to redeem his soul, so that he must leave that alone for ever," and be eternally tormented in the other world, notwithstanding all he had gained in this. And therefore nothing surely, in this world, no not the whole world, can be the one thing needful spoken of in my text.

But why did our blessed Saviour put that question, and leave it upon record? It was doubtless to teach us, that the chief thing a man is to care of, is his soul, that it may not be lost. For if all things in the world can no way profit him if he lose his soul; the saving of it must needs be preferred before all other things. Not only before riches, honours, and pleasures, but before all things which men are apt to concern themselves about, to the neglect and hazard of their souls! Such among others are the controversies and disputes about the circumstances of religion, which many are so eager about, that they let go the substance, upon which the salvation of their souls depends. This men were apt to fall into, even in the great Apostle's days, who forewarned Titus of it, saying, "But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law, for they are unprofitable and vain."*

* Tit. 3.—v. 9.

The same advice I must give you. You all know what strivings and contentions there have been and are, and what mischiefs they do among us. If people believed in God, and worshipped and served him according to the doctrine and directions of our Church, they would be undoubtedly saved. But this is a device of Satan, therefore are they filled with vain and unprofitable questions about indifferent things, which serve only to distract their minds, and divert them from the substantial parts of religion, which are necessary to the salvation of their souls. As you value your salvation, therefore, avoid all unnecessary disputes and controversies, and follow the one thing needful. Remember there are no outward circumstances in the Christian religion which a man can have so fair a plea to trouble himself about, as Martha had for her providing an entertainment for Christ; and yet he tells her, "that she did more than she needed: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful." And that she might know what that one thing is, he directs her to it, saying, "And Mary hath chosen the good part." Mary was troubled and careful about nothing but the salvation of her soul. While her sister was otherwise employed, she sat at her Saviour's feet, heard and received the word of salvation from him, that she might

be sanctified or made holy. Wherefore our Saviour saith, "She hath chosen the good part, the one thing needful." He hereby gives us to understand, that the one thing needful is true piety or holiness, which is so absolutely necessary to salvation, that no man ever was or can be saved without it; whereas they who attain to true holiness, cannot but be saved. For godliness, or holiness, as the Apostle tells us "is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."* It is of that mighty profit and advantage to mankind, that it hath not only the necessities of this life, but eternal happiness and salvation in the next, promised to it by "him who cannot lie." Who hath said, that "the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal;"† and that, when the wicked shall be cast into eternal misery, then the righteous shall shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their father.‡

The righteous, that is, "they who are created in Christ Jesus unto good works." They whose hearts are wholly inclined to God, and set to obey his commandments. "They who deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." They who are sanctified by the

* 1 Tim. 4.—v. 8. † Matt. 25.—v. 46. ‡ Matt. 13.—v. 42.

Holy Spirit, and so are made holy, "as he who hath called them is holy, in all manner of conversation." They shall "receive the crown of righteousness;"—"an inheritance uncorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them, where they shall see the Lord face to face, and be satisfied with the pleasures of his right hand for evermore." None but the righteous shall be so happy, "For without holiness no man shall see the Lord,"* nor indeed can, if he might, for he that is not pure and holy, is not capable of seeing him who is purity and holiness itself; and therefore, such a one, though he might, yet he is not "to be partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light;"† for it is the inheritance of the saints, and of them only.

From hence we may see, what is "the one thing needful," even that which the Apostle calls "the power of godliness,"‡ whereby a man is able to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to exercise himself always: "to have a conscience void of offence, both towards God and men;" whereby his soul is so firmly fixed upon God, that he is in a right disposition to love and fear, to serve, honor, and obey him sincerely upon earth, and to behold and enjoy him perfectly in

* Heb. 12.—v. 14. † Col. 1.—v. 12. ‡ 2 Tim. 3.—v. 5.

heaven. Unless a man be thus holy, he can never be happy. This must needs be the "one thing needful," which all men must labor for above all things upon earth, as they desire to be saved.

But then the great question is, how we may obtain this one thing needful? How we, who are all by nature corrupt and sinful, may, notwithstanding, become thus pure and holy? That the thing is possible we cannot doubt, seeing it hath been actually done. We read of many whom God, in his holy Word, was pleased to call righteous and holy; and we may be confident they were such in his esteem, otherwise he would never have given them that character. And in all ages since, there have been many, though not in comparison of the rest of mankind, yet absolutely considered in themselves. And I doubt not but there are some at this time upon earth, and would be many more, if people would take the right course for it. But that the generality of mankind will not do; most will not labor at all, and of those who do, many seek it where it is not to be had. Our Saviour hath taught us, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able;"* even because they do not seek it

* Luke, 13.—v. 24.

aright. They seek it by their light, by their own strength, by their own merit, or in some such way, which God hath not appointed; and then it can be no wonder if they mistake it: for how is it possible to have it in any other way than that which God hath made and prescribed for our attainment of it; which, in general, is by his Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ; for "he is the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by him."* "Neither is there salvation in any other."† We are said "to be sanctified in Christ Jesus;"‡ and to be created in him unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them.§ So that we can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth us.|| "But without him we can do nothing."¶ For it is to our faith in him, that all things relating to our eternal salvation are ascribed in his holy Gospel, particularly our being sanctified or made pure and holy; for by faith our hearts are purified;** and we are sanctified by faith that is in Christ Jesus.†† Therefore the first thing required towards our obtaining the one thing needful, is to believe in Christ, and to trust on him to give it us; without which, what-

* John, 14.—v. 6. † Acts, 4.—v. 12. ‡ 1 Cor. 1.—v. 2.

§ Eph. 2.—v. 10. || Phil. 4.—v. 13. ¶ John, 15.—v. 5.

** Acts, 15.—v. 9. †† Acts, 26.—v. 18.

ever we do, will avail us nothing. Whereas if we live with a stedfast faith and trust upon God our Saviour, he will most certainly fulfil the promises which he hath made, and accordingly bestow his Holy Spirit upon us, in the use of the means which he hath ordained in his Church for that end. Our care should be, to exercise ourselves constantly and sincerely in those means that we may obtain grace and salvation from him.

I say constantly and sincerely; for unless we do so, we can never labor as we ought for it, nor receive "the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls:" which therefore, that we may, we must follow the example in my text, of whom Christ gives this testimony, "that she had chosen that good part." So must we; we must choose it as she did, the one thing needful, and before all things upon earth besides. We must "first seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness;"* and so we certainly shall, if we believe it to be the "one thing needful;" for then all other things will seem to us, as they are, needless and impertinent, in the comparison. We then should no longer trifle with our religion, but adhere to it with willingness and in good earnest, and rather part with all we possess in this world, than forego

that which we believe to be better than all things in it.

Suffer me, therefore, to exhort you, in the first place, to apply yourselves to Almighty God, who is the author and giver of every good and perfect gift, and who hath passed his word, that he will give his Holy Spirit, the fountain and principle of true holiness, "to them that ask him."* And you must ask it of him, not only now and then, but constantly. You must "pray always and not faint."† You must "pray without ceasing;"‡ and that, too, not in a trifling and customary way, as is too commonly the case, but earnestly, importunately, as for your life; for your eternal life depends upon it. And that you may be sure to have your petition granted, you must ask it in the name of Jesus, the only Mediator between God and man; who hath promised, "that if ye ask any thing in his name, he will do it;"§ which promise you must attend to and believe; depending upon it in all your prayers, that ye may always "pray in faith, nothing wavering or doubting;"§ otherwise ye will but pray in vain: for if you do not take his Word, you can have no ground to expect he should fulfil it in you.

* Luke, 11.—v. 13.

† 1 Thess. 5.—v. 17.

‡ John, 14.—v. 13.

§ James, 1.—v. 6.

If ye thus address yourselves every day to your Father in secret, "your Father which seeth in secret will reward you openly."* Then ye will be always ready and prepared to meet him in his own house, and there sit, as Mary did, at the feet of Jesus, and hear his Word.

But you will say, How can that be? Christ was then upon earth, in the very place where Mary was, therefore she might well sit at his feet, and hear what he said; but he hath now left the earth, and is gone up into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of the Father, where we cannot so much as behold him, much less come near him, if we would. How then can we sit at his feet, or hear what he saith? To which I answer, it is true our Saviour is now in heaven, and it is well for us that he is so. For he is there interceding for those who believe on him, that they may have all things that will conduce to their salvation. And that they may be sure of having the "one thing needful," though he is in heaven, yet is he with them upon earth too, whenever they meet together in his name to seek it. This we cannot doubt of, having his own word for it, saying, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."† And if he is in the midst of you, as he most certainly is

* Matt. 6.—v. 6.

† Matt. 18.—v. 20.

at this and all other times, whenever ye meet together in his name, you may well sit at his feet, and hear his Word, as Mary did : for, though you cannot see him with your bodily eyes, yet may you see him by faith, " which is the evidence of things not seen ; " whereby you may and ought to be as certain as Mary was, that he is in the very place where you now are ; and as plainly hear his Word, though not as spoken by himself, yet as repeated after him by those whom he sends to do it, and to whom he saith, " He that heareth you, heareth me ; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me."* When we consider this, does it not excite astonishment that many people can behave themselves at church, as is too often to be observed, with no more reverence and devotion than they do at home, with no more concern upon them, than as if nobody was among them, or saw them, but their fellow-creatures.

But I beg of you to consider, Do you not believe what Christ said to be true ?

Now, suppose you saw him, the eternal Son of God, your Lord, your Saviour, your Judge ; suppose you saw him at this time standing in the midst of you, with all spiritual blessings in his hand, ready to distribute them to all that have a mind to them. If you thus saw

* Luke, 10.—v. 16.

him, would you not fall down and worship? would not your eyes be fastened upon him, and your ears listen to what he saith? Would you not beseech him, upon your knees, to have mercy upon you, to bless you, and to give you the rewards of his right hand? And yet this is your case at this time, and at all times when ye meet together in his name. If you truly believe the Gospel, you cannot but see your Saviour with the eye of faith in the midst of you, as plainly as Mary did, when she sat at his feet. And then how gravely, how reverently would you behave yourselves before him, all the time you are in his house, and especially when you approach his holy table, where you see him coming to you, and offering you his most blessed body and blood to preserve your souls and bodies to everlasting life. You would then observe him who is in the midst of you, and strive all you can to perform what he hath set you, so as to please him, and receive his blessing. Which therefore that ye may, let me exhort you always, that whenever you go to the house of God, to consider whither you are going, and whom you are to meet there.

When ye come into his presence, fall down before him, and humbly beseech him to assist you. And then, in confidence of his assistance, offer up your prayers and praises unto God, not only with your lips, but from the

bottom of your hearts, receiving the Word you hear "not as the Word of man, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which worketh effectually in them who believe." Feeding also upon the blessed body and blood of our Saviour, with such a quick and lively faith, "that his grace may be always sufficient for you, and his strength made perfect in your weakness." And thus must ye use the means of grace, always lifting up your hearts to Christ, your Saviour, trusting on him for God's acceptance of what you have done, and for his blessing upon it.

And then ye can never come to church, but ye will return home wiser and better. "And so grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord," every day more and more, till ye arrive at that degree of righteousness and true holiness which is the "one thing needful" to make you happy for ever.

This is that good part which Mary chose, and which our Saviour said should not be taken away from her; and this is the greatest encouragement to do as she and many others have done before us. There are many glorified saints at this time in heaven, which once were sinful mortals upon earth, as we now are. But when they were here, they labored so as to obtain the "one thing needful," to make them eternally happy. They were

cleansed and sanctified, and justified, and reconciled to God, and made his faithful servants and children by adoption and grace, and are now shining forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father. And why then should not we, as well as they? We have the same Gospel to direct us, the same Spirit to assist us, the same Mediator to intercede for us, and the same means to obtain "the one thing needful." Let us but resolve to labor for it as they did, "by pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God, in Jesus Christ," and we cannot miss of it.

This I must now advise and beseech you all, in the name of Christ, to do. For which purpose I beg you to consider, "that one thing is needful." There are none, I suppose, here present, but who have some business to transact in the world. Many that, like Martha, "are careful and troubled about many things."

But wherefore is all your care and trouble, if they be such only as you have no real need of, and not that one which alone can do you real good? Is not this to labor in vain? Is it not to toil, and to no purpose? Or rather, is it not to very ill purpose, even to make yourselves miserable both here and hereafter? Yet this is the case of most men; "of all who labor for the meat that perisheth, and not for that which endureth to everlasting

life;" who apply their minds only to the affairs of this life, and not to the study of true piety, to be and to do good in their generation.

Remember the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, how he said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."* Whereby he hath assured you, upon his Word, that if ye seek the "one thing needful," before all things else, ye shall have both that, and whatsoever else ye have any real need of.

Who then that are wise, and mind their own good, would not do so? And, after all, how few that will? But let others do what they please, and take what follows. God grant that we may be all in the number of those few who make it their chief care and study to get the "one thing needful," that the rest of our life hereafter may be pure and holy, so that at the last we may come to his eternal joy, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

* Matt. 6.—v. 33.

SERMON XIII.

FAITH THE PRINCIPLE OF INWARD PURITY.

Acts, 15.—Verse 9.

*And put no difference between us and them;
purifying their hearts by faith.*

HE that turns his eyes inward, may easily see all things disordered there; his understanding, will, passions, memory, and conscience, all depraved and disabled from executing their respective offices as they ought. And if he hath any regard to his own good, he cannot but be very solicitous to know how his mind may be freed from these disorders which make him so unfit for the work he came into the world about; or how the faculties of his soul may be restored to their primitive temper, so as to move and act at least in some measure according as they were first designed to do.

But the great question is, How this may be done? Our modern, as well as ancient philosophers, direct us to the right use of our reason for it; and it cannot be denied but that, if our reason was still perfect, and we could always use it aright, the business might be soon effected. But it is evident, from the constant experience of all mankind, that our understanding or reason is corrupted and debased, and therefore wants rectifying as much as any other faculty of the soul. Indeed, our natural reason serves us to very little purpose, but only in the common affairs of life, and often fails us in those also. But as to the great Work for which we came into the world, wherein our souls are principally concerned, even the serving Almighty God, reason is perfectly at a loss; as appears too plainly from the practice of those who have nothing to govern themselves by, but what we call reason.

But what course then must we take, to heal the distempers of our souls, that we may use our reason and all our faculties aright, in the things that belong to our everlasting peace? If we consult the oracles of God, those especially which are recorded in the New Testament, we may there clearly perceive the way which God hath prescribed for it. For seeing how all the powers wherewith he endued our souls are weakened and corrupted by the fall

of our first parents, out of his infinite love and compassion to us, he hath been graciously pleased to constitute and appoint not any one, but a mixed act of several of them, to be the means of restoring them to their primitive purity, even that which we call faith or believing. It is to this, and to this only, under God, that all things relating to our future state are ascribed in the holy Scriptures; not only our pardon, justification, and reconciliation to Almighty God, but likewise the enlightening our reason or understanding, the regulating our wills, the subduing our passions, and the reducing our souls into a right and sound temper. This in holy Scripture is attributed wholly to our faith, as the great means whereby it may be effected, and without which it can never be so, whatever other means may be used for it.

But in order to make this more fully understood, I shall endeavor to do so from the words I have now read, being part of that divine speech which St. Peter made in the Apostolical Council, met together to decide the controversy then raised in the Church concerning the imposition of Jewish rites upon such Gentiles as were or should be converted to Christianity. Among other things, St. Peter here puts the other Apostles and Elders in mind, how God was pleased to make choice of him, by whose mouth the Gentiles should

hear the Word of the Gospel, and believe and that God, who knows the hearts, bare them witness that they did accordingly believe, upon his preaching the Word to them, in that he gave them the Holy Ghost, even as he had before given it to the Apostles themselves. And then he adds, "And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." As if he had said, God dealt with them just as he had dealt with us, and so made no distinction between us and them; as appears plainly from his "purifying their hearts by faith as he did ours."

Now what I would observe from hence, is, that it is by faith God purifieth the hearts of men. God is the efficient cause; but faith is the instrument or means by which he doth it.

It will be necessary to consider, What is here meant by purifying the heart;

What by faith;

How faith is the means of purifying the heart;

And how God effects it by that means.

And, first, By the heart we are to understand the inward or spiritual part of man, his mind, or soul, with all its faculties or powers of acting upon objects within its reach. And so it denotes his reason or understanding, whereby he knows, thinks, and judges of things; his will, with all its several motions,

which we call passions or affections; his memory, whereby he retains in his mind what he hath seen, heard, or read, and can recollect or call to mind; and his conscience also, whereby he accuseth or excuseth himself for any thing he hath spoken or done. All these are the several acts of one and the same soul, or, as it is here called, "the heart;" which at first was made pure and spotless, acting in all respects exactly according to the will of him that made it; and therefore doing every thing so as to be able to reflect upon it with pleasure and delight. Thus God made man upright, in his own likeness, breathing into him a most pure and perfect soul, every way agreeable to his own divine will and nature.

But now the case is quite altered; for the heart of man is now perverted or "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Who can know it?"*. Its powers are shaken, its motions irregular and disorderly; nothing doth its office rightly; both the mind and conscience is defiled.† Many have little or no understanding, but are like the brutes that perish; and they that have any, it is little better than imagination or conjecture. Nay, "we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves"‡ that is right and good. For our thoughts are so wandering,

* Jer. 17.—v. 9. † Tit. 1.—v. 15. ‡ 2 Cor. 3.—v. 5.

that we can rarely fix them upon any thing; and we think wrong even about the most common and obvious things before us. But as for those that are above us, and out of sight, we seldom think of them at all; and if we offer to raise our thoughts towards them, they immediately scatter and divide. Our thoughts so often deceive us, that we can never trust them. Hence it is so many fall into error. All men are naturally subject to, and well pleased with it; for their minds are corrupted, and error is more agreeable to them than truth. Hence also it comes to pass, that men are generally averse to every thing that is truly good, and inclined to evil. Neither is this the case only of some, but of all men, by nature. They are all gone aside; "there is none that doeth good, no not one;"* so grievously is the heart of man corrupted and defiled; nothing but erroneous opinions and vicious habits, folly and vanity.

By this we may see what is here meant by purifying the heart; for the heart may then be properly said to be purified when it is freed from these noisome diseases and distempers wherewith it is thus defiled. When it can clearly apprehend and discern between truth and falsehood, right and wrong, good and evil. When it can think aright of God,

* Psalm 14—v. 3.

and of all things necessary to our eternal happiness. When it can receive the truth in the love of it. When it can delight in that which is good, and prefer it before sin and wickedness. When it can bring out of its treasure all good things, new and old, and use them when it hath occasion for them. When it can pass a right judgment upon its own actions, acquitting or condemning them as they really deserve. In short, the heart is then purified, when it is reduced in some measure to its first disposition, and set again to keep God's commandments, and to "do all such good works as he hath prepared for men to walk in."

But how can a corrupt heart be thus purified? The Apostle here tells us, it is done by faith, that is, by believing, or being fully persuaded of the truth and certainty of what God hath revealed to us in the holy Scriptures, concerning himself, his Son, his will, and all such things as are necessary for men to know, in order to their serving him aright here, and to their being happy for ever. For we not being able of ourselves to think or conceive aright of these things, Almighty God, in great compassion to our infirmity, hath been graciously pleased to give us them in writing, under his own hand, and in such words that we may easily understand them.

Now, if we believe or assent to any thing

which God hath thus said, taking his Word for it, this rectifies all our mistakes, and gives us a right notion of the thing, which otherwise we could never have had! As, for example, we know not of ourselves what to think of God, and can never do it as we ought; but now that God hath told us what he is, and what he hath done, upon our believing his Word, we are able to think of him as himself would have us. By this means we can conceive and think of God as existing in and of himself, and giving existence to all things. That he is every where, knows all things, and can do whatsoever he will. That he is infinitely wise, and great, and just, and good. "That he is Jehovah, the Lord God, gracious and merciful, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." "That he made all things by his Word," upholdeth all things by his power, and ordereth all things according to his own pleasure. "That it is in him we live, and move, and have our being." That it is from him we receive whatsoever we have or are. That the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are all this one Jehovah, the Lord. For he having been pleased to assert these things of himself, in his holy Word, upon our believing his Word, our hearts are freed from all gross and false conceits of him.

So likewise of God the Son, as he is our Saviour and Redeemer. Though he was made

known and promised to our first parents, yet all the footsteps of it are now worn out of the hearts of men; so that no man naturally knows any more of him than if he had never heard of him. And they who hear of him again, without faith, are no way the better for it. Their hearts are so corrupt, that all which is said of him seems, in their conceits, to be altogether impossible. When St. Paul was speaking of Christ and his resurrection, the great Athenian philosophers looked upon all he said to be mere babbling.* So it is at this day. All men have not faith; and they who have not, whatsoever their parts or learning may be, they can see no more of the mystery of godliness than a blind man can see the sun. To them the Gospel is hid, and the preaching of Christ crucified no better than foolishness, as it seemed to the Greeks of old.†

But now faith dispels these mists, and clears our apprehensions of those divine truths that are revealed in the Gospel. For, if we believe them to be, as they really are, revealed and attested by God himself, they come with that power and authority, that, how much soever they may seem above us, we cannot but look upon them as certain as any thing that lies before us. So that by

* Acts, 17.—v. 18. — † 1 Cor. 1.—v. 23.

faith, as it is the evidence of things not seen, it seems most plain and evident to us, that Jesus Christ is the eternal and only begotten Son of God, one with the Father: That he in the fulness of time was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of a pure virgin, and so became man. That as such he died upon the cross, for the sins of mankind, so as to be "a propitiation for the sins of the whole world." That he rose again the third day, and soon after went up to heaven. That he there sat at the right hand of God, angels, authorities, and powers being made subject to him. That he hath been there ever since, and is now appearing in the presence of God for all who believe, and interceding with him "that they may not perish, but have everlasting life." "That he is therefore able to save to the utmost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." And that "there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."*

These, and such like fundamental articles of the Christian faith being asserted in the Gospel, they who believe have their hearts possessed with so clear a light, and so strong a sense of them, that they are thereby purified from all false conceptions about their salva-

* Acts, 4.—v. 12.

tion. Their hearts are fixed, trusting only in God their Saviour for all things necessary to their attaining it.

Almighty God, in his holy Word, hath not only discovered to us such truths as are necessary to the rectifying our mistakes, and informing our judgments concerning himself, but hath also revealed his will to us, what he would have us do, that we may serve and glorify him in the world, and at last attain everlasting life, through Christ, our Saviour. It is true he was pleased at first to write his law upon the fleshly tables of our hearts; but it is so defaced, that no man, by the light of nature, can read it there. Therefore he was graciously pleased to write it over again, upon two tables of stone. And, that we may understand his meaning, he hath explained it, by his Prophets in the Old, and by his Son and his Apostles in the New Testament. And if we believe what is there written, we shall strive all we can to do it. And so mightily doth faith operate upon the hearts of men, whensoever it comes upon them with its full strength, that it turns all things upside down; it casts out all proud conceits, all inordinate desires, all unruly passions, every thing that corrupts and defiles the heart, and so purifies or restores it to a holy temper again.

But that it may do this great work the more effectually, God in his holy Word hath

also threatened so great punishments against those who break his laws, and promised so many blessings to those who keep them, that if firmly believed, must needs overpower the corrupt inclinations of our hearts, subdue our vicious habits, and keep us “stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, as knowing, or being fully assured that our labor shall not be in vain in the Lord.” Our Lord saith, “He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.”* “And if ye abide in me, and my words in you;”† in which he tells us, that if his Words be fixed in our hearts, so that we live with a constant belief of what he hath said, we shall bring forth not only some, but much fruit; we shall do all that is required of us.

To make this as plain and practical as I can, we may observe, that whatsoever was spoken by the Prophets, was also the Word of Christ, by whose Spirit they spoke, and ought to be carefully observed by us. And in the Gospel, we have many divine sentences uttered by him, which we ought to regard and look upon as an oracle of God. His ancient people the Jews, when they had any occasion to consult him, he was pleased to give them his answers from between the cherubim over the

* John, 15.—v. 5.

† John. 15.—v. 7.

mercy-seat in the tabernacle. But now, as we have no opportunity, so we have no need of consulting him in such a way: for, in his holy Gospel, we have so many of his divine sentences recorded, that they are every way sufficient to satisfy all our doubts, in reference to what we ought to do that we may be saved.

And if we diligently observe what he there saith, we shall be infallibly directed, and most powerfully excited and strengthened in every thing we do, so as to abhor all manner of evil, and delight only in that which is good.

Suppose that our hearts are distracted with the cares of this life, so that we know not how to get such things as are needful for our present support; let us but consult our oracle, and observe his answer, which is this: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."* Now, if we really believe this answer of God our Saviour, and observe the course he hath prescribed for it, by making it our chief care and study to serve God, so as to obtain his kingdom and righteousness, our hearts will then be at ease; for we have his own Word, the greatest security in the world, that we shall not only obtain what we thus seek, but all things else that are needful

* Matt. 6.—v. 33.

for us. And what need we then be any further anxious and solicitous about them.

Suppose that we are apprehensive of some great danger from our fellow-creatures, so as to fear they may ruin us, or take away our lives. What saith the answer of God? "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul. But rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."*

If we receive this answer with that faith which it deserves, our hearts will no longer be disturbed with the fear of what men can do unto us, but filled with the pure and holy fear of him who alone is able to make us happy or miserable for ever. Suppose we, being ignorant of it, should have a mind to know where to meet our Saviour, that we may receive his blessing. If we search the Scriptures, we shall there find him saying, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."† If we all believed this divine sentence, what flocking would there be to our churches? How constantly should we meet there at the hours of prayer? and how reverently should we behave ourselves in his company?

In like manner, Are our hearts puffed up

* Matt. 10.—v. 28.

† Matt. 18.—v. 20.

with vain and groundless hopes, that we shall get to heaven only by calling our Saviour Lord, and professing his religion, whether we practise it or no? Let us hear what our Lord saith to this: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven."* If we hear what our Lord himself here saith, with faith or a full persuasion of the truth of it, such vain hopes would immediately vanish, and we should set ourselves in good earnest to do the will of God, as we hope to go to heaven.

Are our minds infected with proud conceits of ourselves, and with an ill opinion of other people, so as to applaud our own, but judge and condemn other men's spiritual state and actions? Hear what the oracle of God saith: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: And with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."† This, firmly believed, would soon bring down our high conceits, and make us judge ourselves, rather than other men. Are our hearts hardened in sin, so as not to repent and turn to God? Let us consult the oracle, and hear what God himself saith: "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."‡ If we should

* Matt. 7.—v. 21. † Matt. 7.—v. 1, 2. ‡ Luke, 13.—v. 3, 5.

hear a voice from heaven, uttering these words, though by the mouth only of an angel, how should we be startled at it? Would not our ears tingle, our hearts tremble, and our knees smite one against another, as Belshazzar's did, at his seeing the handwriting upon the wall? How much more, if we really believed this to be the voice of God himself, uttered with his own mouth, as it really was? This would certainly break our stony hearts in pieces, melt them down into tears of sincere repentance, and turn them immediately from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that we may not perish everlastingly.

Are our hearts, on the other side, heavy laden with the burden of our sins, so as to be ready to sink down in despair? What doth our Lord say in this case? "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."* "And him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."† What could he say, what can we desire more than this, to support our drooping spirits? If we do but take him at his word, and accordingly apply ourselves by faith to him that said it, this will keep our hearts fixed, always trusting in the Lord. So far from despairing or doubting of his mercy, that

* Matt. 11.—v. 28.

† John, 6.—v. 37.

we shall be always praising and rejoicing in his Holy Name.

Are our hearts so much corrupted with sin and wickedness, that it is often breaking out at our lips by cursing, or swearing, or lying, or any such filthy words? They will soon be cleansed, if we do but consider these words of our Saviour: "I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof at the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."* For he that duly believes and considers this, as spoken by the Judge of the whole world, can never "let any corrupt communication proceed out of his mouth, but that which is to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."†

Are our hearts doubtful about the other world, and therefore indifferent how we live in this? Let us but consult our great oracle, and we shall be fully satisfied in it. For he, speaking of ungodly and wicked men, saith, "These shall go into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."‡ Who can believe this, and yet remain doubtful how all sorts of men shall live hereafter, or careless how he himself lives here? No! a firm and constant belief of this would "purge

* Matt. 12.—v. 36, 37. † Eph. 4.—v. 29. ‡ Matt. 25.—v. 46.

our consciences from dead works, to serve the living God." It would turn the scale of our affections, and make us loathe and abhor sin as much as ever we loved it. It would put us upon constant and sincere endeavors to live so, in all respects, that we may not be found at the last day among those which shall be condemned to everlasting punishment, but in the number of those blessed souls that shall inherit eternal life.

Thus I might run through all the oracles of God, and shew, that a firm and constant belief of them is the most sovereign remedy for all the distempers of our hearts, and the best means that can be used, whereby to purify and make them holy. But then we must observe withal, that this is only the means. It is God that is the principal agent. It is he that purifies our hearts by faith; not only because faith itself is his gift,* so that whatsoever is done by it must be ultimately ascribed unto him; but likewise, because faith itself could never do the work, unless he co-operated with it by his Holy Spirit, which he therefore always gives to those that believe; as our Lord himself hath assured us, saying, "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture saith, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. For this he spake" as

* Eph. 2.—v. 8. John 7.—v. 38.

his Evangelist observes, "of the Spirit which they that believe on him should receive;"* which we see verified in many places in the holy Scripture; particularly in the words before my text. For the heathen, which the Apostle here speaks of, no sooner believed upon his preaching the Word to them, but while he was yet speaking, the Holy Ghost fell upon them.† Yea, the Apostle here observes, "that God who knows the hearts of all men, bare them witness that they did believe, by giving them the Holy Ghost."‡ And then adds, in my text, "That God put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." From whence it appears, that he purified their hearts by faith, as it was accompanied, influenced, and strengthened by his Holy Spirit, which he gave them upon their believing. And this is the course that God always did, and still doth take, for the accomplishing this great work. Faith is the most proper means that can be used for the purifying the hearts of men. But seeing faith cannot do it effectually of itself, as it is a man's own act; therefore God is pleased to come in with it by his Holy Spirit, exciting, quickening, directing, and confirming it, so as by it to cleanse the heart from all sin, and reduce it to such a temper

* John, 7.—v. 38, 39. † Acts, 10.—v. 44. ‡ Acts, 15.—v. 8.

as he through the merits of his Son is graciously pleased to look upon as pure and holy. And therefore he is said to purify their hearts by faith.

Now, from the words thus explained, we may observe, first, That there is but little faith in the world; but few that truly believe. I say truly, for I know there are many who profess to know the holy Scriptures, so as to own them in general to be the Word of God, and given by his inspiration. At least they do not deny, nor perhaps doubt it. But in the mean while they do not truly and actually believe, so as to be fully persuaded in their hearts of the truth and certainty of every thing therein written: for, if they did, their hearts, as we have now seen, would most certainly be purified. But most men's lives give us too much ground to fear, that their hearts are not right with God; and consequently that they do not believe aright. That our Lord had but too much reason to say, "When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"* I fear, if he should come now, he would find but little.

And whereas there hath been a great dispute whether we are first justified, and then sanctified; or sanctified first, and then justified: from what we have now heard, we may

* Luke, 18.—v. 8.

easily perceive that there is no ground for any such dispute, for that we are sanctified and justified both together, at the same time, and by the same faith. By the same faith whereby we are accounted righteous before God, through the merits of his Son; by the same, we are made sincerely righteous in ourselves, through the power of his Holy Spirit. From hence we may likewise observe, how necessary it is for all men to believe, and how happy they are that do so. Forasmuch as all unbelievers are in a state of sin, and liable every moment to be condemned to everlasting punishment; whereas they who believe have not only their sins pardoned, but their hearts are also purified, and so are rightly disposed and qualified for the vision and fruition of the chiefest good. According to that divine sentence of our blessed Saviour, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."*

Hence, lastly, we may see how much it concerns us all, not only to profess, but really to believe the Gospel; and for that end, to take all opportunities of hearing God's Word read and expounded, as the ordinary way whereby faith cometh.† To pray to God without ceasing, that he would both help our unbelief, and strengthen our faith; and often

* Matt. 5.—v. 8.

† Rom. 10.—v. 17.

to receive the holy Sacrament ordained for that purpose. For it is by the constant exercise of ourselves, not in any one or more, but in all these means, that faith is both begun, continued, and strengthened in us, so as to be able, by the assistance of God's Holy Spirit, to cleanse the thoughts of our hearts, and make them pure and holy. Let us, therefore, now resolve, by the grace of God, to do so, that we may live with a constant sense of God upon our minds: that our faith may grow stronger and stronger every day: that by it our minds may be enlightened, our sins subdued, and our hearts purified to that degree that we may now shine as lights in the world, and be every way meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; and so may, at last, "receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls," through him in whom we believe, the eternal God, our Saviour: To whom, with the Father and Holy Ghost, be all glory, for ever. Amen.

SERMON XIV.

THE CHAIN OF EVANGELICAL GRACES.

2 St. PETER, Chap. 1.—Verses 5, 6.

And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity.

SIMON Peter, a servant and an Apostle of Jesus Christ, writing this Epistle to those “who had obtained like precious faith” with him and the rest of the Apostles “in the righteousness of our God and Saviour,” as he expressly calls Jesus Christ; begins it much in the same manner as St. Paul does his Epistles, with this solemn benediction and prayer, “Grace and peace be multiplied unto

you, through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ our Lord." And that they might better understand the meaning and reason of this salutation, he adds immediately, "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue;" whereby he puts them in mind, that Almighty God hath given us the grace and peace which he had wished them, and all things necessary to make us holy and happy, through the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, "who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light, by the glory and power that shineth forth in the Gospel." And lest they should wonder how this could be, he further adds, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." As if he had said, God hath given us the great things before mentioned in Christ, because he hath given us the promise of them. In Christ he hath promised us such illuminations and assistances of his Holy Spirit, that if we do but believe and trust as we ought in them, we may thereby be instructed and enabled to mortify all worldly and carnal affections, and purify our corrupt nature to that degree,

that we may be made partakers of the divine nature, in the image and likeness of God, "Holy, as he who hath called us is holy." and

The way being thus opened, the Apostle brings in the words of my text, saying, "And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue." St. Paul having discoursed of the promises which God hath made us in the new covenant, draws this conclusion from them, "having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."* So here St. Peter acquaints those who believed in Christ, that God in him hath given them such promises, that if they were not wanting to themselves, in the use and application of them, they might be partakers of the divine nature; he therefore advises them "to give all diligence; to add to their faith virtue;" and so on, till they were accordingly sanctified, or made holy, in all manner of conversation. This being the greatest encouragement that could be given them to do so, and that which would make them inexcusable, unless they did it.

Now, as St. Peter wrote this to those who believed in Christ, I am to repeat the same, and to explain it to such as profess, and I

*2 Cor. 7.—v. 1.

hope really do so; for, I suppose, all here present are baptized into Christ, and so made members of his body; therefore to you these words belong; you are all in the number of those who are here required "to add to your faith virtue."

However, it may not be improper to remind you how to exercise your faith, that you may attain the end of it, even the salvation of your souls. You say you believe in Christ, and I suppose you do so; but what do you believe in Christ for? For the pardon of your sins? Ye do well: ye may and ought to believe in him for that: for he being the propitiation for your sins, in him they may be all pardoned, though none can be without him. But your sins can never be pardoned, unless you first repent of them, and therefore you must believe in Christ to give you repentance and forgiveness of sins.* As God hath promised, in Christ Jesus, to give you a new heart, and to renew a right spirit within you, that you may walk in his ways, and keep his statutes; you must first believe in him, for the performance of such promises, in the use of the means which he hath ordained for that purpose; such as praying, reading, and hearing his holy Word. These things, which are in your own power, you must con-

* Acts, 5.—v. 31.

stantly exercise yourselves in; you must never neglect your private devotions, nor any opportunities you can obtain of performing them in public. And you must perform them all in the name of Christ, believing and trusting on him to co-operate with them, that they may be effectual to the turning you from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God, and to a true and sincere repentance for all your sins. And as you would have a right faith, whatever God hath said in his holy Word, you must not doubt in the least, but be fully persuaded in your minds, that it is as infallibly true and certain, as you are or can be of any thing you see, hear, or understand: and more so too, forasmuch as you have the Word of God for that, which is infinitely more than you have for any thing you perceive only by your senses or reason. It is the firmest ground that you can ever have to believe any thing at all. And so far as you know it to be revealed by him, you must take his word, without concerning yourselves any more about it. It is sufficient that he who cannot lie hath said it; which, therefore, you are bound to do, in the highest manner it is possible for you to believe any thing in the world.

Thus you must believe that God in the beginning created the heaven and the earth, as certainly as if you had seen him do so. That

he is wheresoever you are, as certainly as that you yourselves are there. That Jesus Christ is of the same substance, or one with the Father, as certainly as that he is his Son. That he was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary, as certainly as that he was born at all. That he died for your sins, as certainly as that ever you committed them. Thus, you must believe that you must one day stand before his tribunal, as certainly as if you were now before it. That you must then give him an account of your whole lives, as certainly as that you are now alive. And that he is now in heaven, making intercession for you, as certainly as you believe that you yourselves are upon the earth.

Thus, you ought to believe whatever you find to be revealed in the Scriptures, as certainly as you see it there recorded, without making any doubt or question of it, particularly the great promises which God hath made in Jesus Christ, to cleanse and purify your hearts by his Holy Spirit. You must believe that he will perform them to you, so that by him you may be enabled to attain and exercise all such graces as are necessary to fit you for his service upon earth, and to live with him in heaven.

Such a faith as this is, can never be alone, but will always have a train of other graces

and virtues attending it. Thus Almighty God, in whom ye believe, doth here expressly require you, by his Apostle, "to add to your faith virtue." This word is commonly used for morality, and all such dispositions and qualities as are required to make a virtuous and good man. Virtue is here used for courage, resolution, and zeal for the service and honor of God, which naturally follows upon a firm and stedfast faith. For he that believes in Almighty God, the Governor of the World, and in Jesus Christ, the Saviour of mankind, must needs cleave to him with full purpose of heart, and resolve stedfastly with himself, to serve and glorify him, whatever may come of it, so that he may continue in his love and favor.

What noble exploits did the saints of old perform? what hazards did they run? what difficulties did they overcome by faith? With what undaunted courage did St. Paul go through all the troubles he met with, and defy the bonds and afflictions which he knew beforehand would befall him in doing his duty? "None of these things" saith he, "move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy."† And elsewhere he saith, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith

* Heb. 11. † Acts, 20.—v. 24.

to be content. I can do all things, through Christ which strengtheneth me."* And accordingly, he advises all that believe to "be strong in the Lord, in the power of his might."† This is that true magnanimity and fortitude, that Christian virtue, which you are here commanded to add unto your faith. As you believe in the Almighty Disposer of all things, you must not be afraid of any thing that can happen to you in your serving him. Whatever impediments you meet with in the way to heaven, you must not regard them, but still go on, "pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ." This is to be virtuous indeed; to acquit yourselves like men, like Christians, who hope to be with Christ in heaven, when nothing upon earth can hinder your progress thither.

But as you add to your faith virtue, so must you add to virtue knowledge, that you may know how to use your virtue aright, and not misapply and abuse it to ill purposes, as the ignorant, though well-meaning, are apt to do. St. Paul testified of the Jews, that "they had a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge."‡ Their zeal of God was in itself good and commendable, but it not being according to knowledge, what mischief did

* Phil. 4.—v. 12. † Eph. 6.—v. 10. ‡ Rom. 10.—v. 2.

they do with it? They killed the Lord of glory, and afterwards his disciples, thinking they did God service;* and all for want of knowing his will, and their duty to him.

There are many such among us at this day, who being led, not by the light of God's Word, but by that which they pretend to be within them, are fallen from the faith of Christ into such errors and heresies as overturn the foundation of the Christian religion; and yet they are so conceited of themselves, so resolute and obstinate in the antichristian way they are got into, that they will do and suffer any thing rather than go one step out of it.

This cannot properly be called virtue, but rather pride and obstinacy; one of the devil's devices, to hold those fast whom he hath got into his possession. But, however, this shews how necessary it is to add "knowledge to your virtue;" that as you are zealously affected, so you may always be so in a good cause, in such only as will bear the test at the last day.

For which purpose, you must search the Scriptures, or hear them read and explained by such ministers as are sent by God to do so. To which end I know nothing will conduce more than your constant attendance at the

* John, 16.—v. 2.

prayers of the church, where you have God's Word solemnly read and delivered to you in his name and by his authority. And the prayers also, and the collects, are so wisely contrived, that by them you may be instructed in all things necessary for you to believe and to do, as well as obtain the grace and assistance of God's Holy Spirit: and thus you may add to virtue knowledge; such knowledge as will make you "wise unto salvation," and direct your virtue, and keep it within the bounds which God hath set.

But then you must add to your knowledge temperance, without which you can never make a right use of your knowledge, nor perform that to which it directs you. For though knowledge be the act only of the soul, yet while the soul is united to the body, unless the body is kept in temperance, the soul cannot keep its thoughts in order, nor make any good use of the knowledge it hath acquired. Therefore our great Lord and Master commands you "to take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares;"* whereby he forewarns you that intemperance and excess make all men, even the most knowing, at all

* Luke, 21.—v. 34.

times incapable of attending to the concerns of the other world, or doing any thing as they ought, in order to it. His Apostle also puts you in mind of the same thing, where, speaking of our Christian race, he saith, "Every one that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible."* Now they who strive to get a crown only of fading leaves or flowers, are temperate in all things; how much more should they be so, who strive for the crown of immortal glory? And therefore "the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, teacheth you, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, you first live soberly, then righteously and godly in this present world."† Because, unless you do so, you can never become godly, and consequently cannot be admitted into the kingdom of heaven.

And to temperance you must add patience. And therefore our blessed Saviour, who knew our frame better than we ourselves do, when he had told his disciples what troubles they should meet with in the world, said, "In your patience possess ye your souls:"‡ implying that if they were impatient under any thing that happened, they could not keep their souls in a right temper and disposition for the service he expected

* 1 Cor. 9.—v. 25. † Tit. 2.—v. 12. ‡ Luke, 21.—v. 19.

from them. Neither did this concern those only to whom it was spoken, but *all* who believe in him, and *you* among the rest. For the grace of Christ is sufficient for all who believe in him, if they will but apply and use it as they ought, to restrain the most unruly passions, and keep them within their bounds, as it behoves you all to do, if ever you desire to eschew evil, and do good in the world: "For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."* When a man is impatient or angry, he may do much evil, but can do nothing well pleasing to God. And therefore we had all need set a strict watch over ourselves, that we may never be surprised into passion; but, whatever falls out, we must pause a while, and give ourselves time to recollect our thoughts, and consider whence they come, whither they tend, and how much good may be designed; that so you may learn, by degrees, this divine art "of adding to your temperance patience," or "And to patience, godliness;" which proceeds only from a due sense of God, and of that infinite wisdom and goodness which he manifests in the government of the world, and all things in it. And where that is, there must needs be godliness or the fear of God, expressing itself in doing all one can to serve

* James, i.—v, 20.

worship, and please him. And which must be your chief care and study, as long as you live in the world, this being the end of your living in it. You must not spend your time, as thousands do, in merely working only for the things of this life; "but whether ye eat, or drink, whatsoever ye do, ye must do all to the glory of God."* You must strive all you can to promote his honor and shew forth his praise, in whatever situation of life he hath placed you, and according to the ability he hath given you. And, for that purpose, you must never omit your private devotions morning and evening, nor neglect his public worship when you can have an opportunity to perform it. You must "delight in the law of the Lord."† You should take all occasions you can of celebrating the memory of the death he suffered for you in your own nature, by receiving the Sacrament of his last Supper with an hearty repentance for all your sins, and stedfast faith in him for the pardon of them. Whenever you approach, or make your addresses to him, you must carry yourselves before him with that reverence and godly fear whereby you may testify and discover your acknowledgment of his supreme authority; and so may be truly said to adore and worship him. You must use these, and

* 1 Cor. 10.—v. 31.

† Psalm 1.—v. 2.

all the means of grace, heartily and sincerely, trusting in God your Saviour to make them effectual to you, that ye may obtain grace by them to do whatsoever he requires of you. And accordingly, you must love the Lord your God with all your hearts; you must fear nothing so much as his displeasure; you must desire his love and favor above all things in the world; you must firmly believe in all the great truths he hath revealed to you; you must live with a constant dependence upon the promises he hath made; you must rejoice in his holy name above all things; you must praise and bless him for all the blessings you have received of him. In short, you must walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, to the utmost of your power, blameless; and yet not expect to merit any thing by it, but trust only in the merits of your Saviour, to make what you do acceptable in his sight. And this is to be truly godly.

And to this godliness you must ~~as~~ add brotherly kindness." For brotherly kindness is nothing less than that love and kindness which one brother hath for another. But if ye be godly, ye are regenerate or born of God, and made his children; and therefore must needs love those who have the same father, and are of the same family with yourselves, and so are really your brethren. The Apostle observes, "He that loveth him that

begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him."* And unless you do so, unless you love the children of God, you may be confident you are not of that happy number, but are still in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. Therefore, if ye would manifest yourselves to be godly, you must love those who are so: you must do good to all, "but especially to them who are of the household of faith:"† you must have a peculiar kindness for them above all men; for that reason, because they are your brethern in Christ Jesus.

And to this, your brotherly kindness, you must add charity. Though your love should be expressed in a more especial manner to your brethren, yet it is not to be confined to them, but must extend itself to all your neighbors, to all mankind; being all made in the image of God, as ye love the Almighty for his own sake, so must ye love them for his sake also: you must not bear any envy, hatred, or malice, against any man living; nor even think of revenging any wrong you may have received: "But you must love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them which hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you,"‡

* 1 John, 5.—v. 1.

† Gal. 6.—v. 10.

‡ Matt. 5.—v. 44.

This is that which Christ requires of all his disciples, and makes the distinguishing character between them and all other people, that most excellent gift of charity, "which is the bond of perfectness,"* that binds all men together, and "which fulfils the whole law." Thus must you be entire, wanting nothing, but furnished in every good work, and which you cannot be, "unless you add to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity."

Thus have we briefly considered the whole chain of heavenly graces, which you are enjoined to put together with the utmost of your care and diligence. And surely this requires all the diligence you can possibly use, inasmuch as it is a matter of the greatest importance ye have in this world; it is the one thing necessary. How diligent and industrious soever you may be in your calling, and how much soever the world may smile upon you, you will not be one tittle the better for it in the end, unless you gain the kingdom of heaven; and that you can never do, unless you are first possessed of these heavenly virtues, to qualify and prepare you for it. And if you think it an easy matter to gain the kingdom of God, then have you but too much cause to suspect that you have

* Col. 3.—v. 14.

never desired or set about gaining it in good earnest.

This is the reason the Apostle offers why you should give all diligence to do what he advises: "For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."* They will purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God; rectify the temper of your souls and bodies, so that ye shall be no longer barren or unfruitful, but bring forth the fruits of righteousness which God requires of those whom he calls to the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Whereas, without these things, ye are but as so many dry and withered trees, that bear no fruit, but are only cumberers of the ground.

Be careful then that this be not your case; as it most certainly will, unless ye practise those plain and necessary truths ye have now heard. For, as the Apostle here argues, "He that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins;"† that is, he is so blind that he can see nothing but what is just before him, the things of this present world: as for the world to come, and the things that belong to it, they are afar off,

* 2 Pet. 1.—v. 8.

† 2 Pet. 1.—v. 9.

and quite out of his sight. And although he was once purged from his sins by the blood of Christ in the sacrament of baptism, he hath now forgotten it. He hath forgotten that he was ever made a Christian, and therefore lives as if he were not one. And so do the greatest part of those who are called Christians, even all, who do not add to their faith, virtue; and to virtue all the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, which Christ hath promised to those who truly believe in him.

And this is not a thing to be left undone at pleasure, without prejudice or injury; but to be done immediately and without delay, for both your present and eternal welfare depends upon it. And, blessed be God, you may all do it if ye will; if ye will but set yourselves seriously and diligently, as ye are here commanded, about it, and constantly use the means which God hath ordained, trusting in him to assist and bless you in it; for this grace is sufficient for all, and for you as well as any others. Thousands have found it so by experience; and so may you as well as they, if ye will but follow their steps, and make use of it, as they did.

And how happy would you then be? You may perhaps think yourselves happy enough already. If ye have large estates, great trade, and can add house to house, and field to

field, you please yourselves with your present condition, without troubling yourselves to add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge such other things as respect your immortal state. But I beseech you, my brethren, consider that you are not always to live as ye now do; for you must not always live upon the earth. This is not the only world you were made for. The time will come when you must die, as certainly as you now are alive, and then whose must those things be? Whereas, by giving all diligence to add one grace to another, so as to become every day more and more virtuous, wise, temperate, patient, godly, and loving to the brethren, and charitable to all men; by these means you will grow rich in faith and good works; you will live always under the favor and protection of the Almighty; you will have his blessing continually upon you, while you live; and when ye die, you will be advanced to the crown of immortal glory, and live in perfect peace and happiness for ever. And all through him in whom ye believe, the eternal Son of God; to whom be glory, for ever. Amen.

concerning Christ not only a sign as of the
Messiah's coming, but that he should come
into the world to fulfil the prophecies
erected, where we may observe that the

~~the prophecies were fulfilled in Christ and~~

messenger was sent to prepare the way before
him: with which the prophet concludes his own

SERMON XX.

~~the Messiah, the prophet concludes his own~~
~~and all the prophecies were fulfilled in Christ~~

of the Most High Lord. Behold, I will send

REPENTANCE AND FAITH TWO GREAT BRANCHES

OF THE EVANGELICAL COVENANT.

Now the prophecies concluding with so

St. MARK, Chap. I.—Verse 15.

Christ, the Son of Righteousness, and the

Repent ye, and believe the Gospel.

these prophecies were particularly revealed

from that time were in general expectation

THE serpent had not sooner deceived the

woman, but it was immediately foretold,

"That the seed of the woman should bruise

the serpent's head;" and so the second Adam

was promised as soon as the first had fallen.

But seeing the salvation of mankind de-

pendent upon their believing in the promise

of his coming, God was pleased, in all ages,

to raise up Prophets to put them in mind of

it, till the time drew near, and then the pro-

phesies ceased; Malachi being acknowledged

by the Jews to have been the last; he sealing

up all the prophecies that had gone before,

concerning Christ, not only assures us of the Messiah's coming, but that he should come into the second temple, which was then newly erected;* where we may observe, that the Messiah was then suddenly to come, and a messenger was sent to prepare the way before him; with which messenger or forerunner of the Messiah, the Prophet concludes his own and all the prophecies, saying, in the name of the Most High God, "Behold, I will send you Elijah, the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord."†

Now the prophecies concluding with so clear and full a prediction of the coming of Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, and the Saviour of the world, the Jews, to whom these prophecies were particularly revealed, from that time were in general expectation of him. And about the expiration of four hundred years there appeared a certain mean and abject person among them, called John the Baptist, who went about preaching the baptism of repentance, for the remission of sins, and baptizing all such as came to him. The substance of what he preached, was, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."‡ By the kingdom of heaven we are to understand, the Gospel, or the economy of the New Testament, which is called a

* Mal. 3.—v. 1. † Mal. 4.—v. 5, 6. ‡ Matt. 3.—v. 2.

kingdom, because it was to be ordered after the manner of a new-erected kingdom, wherein Christ was to be king, and all believers his subjects. It is called the kingdom of heaven, because it was originally established in, and to be governed after an heavenly and spiritual manner. It requires heavenly duties and promises heavenly rewards; and though it is begun in this, it is perfected and consummated in the world to come. This kingdom Daniel spake of.* St. John saith it was now at hand, because the Messiah, the founder and head of it, was suddenly to be revealed; and therefore he calls upon all to repent: "Repent," saith he, "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." But why did John make repentance the only subject of his preaching? The reason was, because he was sent before, to prepare the way of the Lord, according to the prophecies of Isaiah† and Malachi, ‡ and the prediction of the angel.§ But there was no way for him to prepare mankind for the reception of the Messiah, but by exhorting and calling upon them to repent of their former superstitious and wicked lives. For, unless they were convinced of their errors, they would never embrace the truth; and unless they were convinced of their sins, they

* Daniel, 7.—v. 13.

† Isa. 40.—v. 3.

‡ Mal. 3.—v. 1.

§ Luke, 1.—v. 16.

would never go to Christ for pardon. And, therefore, saith he, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Making the approach of the Messiah the reason why they should repent: because by him, if they do, they may be pardoned; but without repentance, they could have no part or portion in his kingdom.

John the Baptist having thus prepared the way, at length Jesus of Nazareth comes with others to be baptized of him, whom John supposed at first sight to be the Christ; as appears from his saying to him, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?"*. But he was afterwards fully assured of it, when he saw "the Spirit of God descending from heaven like a dove, and abiding upon him."† Jesus, therefore, being thus baptized by John, and known by him to be the Christ, after forty days fasting in the wilderness, begins to preach the Gospel. And the first thing he acquainted the world withal, was, that the kingdom which John had told them of was now come. "The time," saith he, "is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand;" that is, the time which was so long ago foretold by the prophets, and hath been so long looked for by you, is now fulfilled, and the kingdom which you expect is at hand.

* Matt. 3.—v. 14.

† John, 1.—v. 31.

I am come to lay the foundation of it, and settle it in the world. And having told them this, he acquaints them that there are two duties, which now they must perform. The one, the same which John before had taught; even to repent: the other, that of which they never before had heard; even to believe the Gospel.

This being the first command our blessed Saviour laid upon mankind after he had taken upon him the office of Mediator, we, who expect happiness and salvation, cannot surely look upon it but as a matter of more than ordinary importance to understand the full meaning of these words; especially considering, that if we take them in their full extent, as he doubtless intended, they comprehend whatever he requires of us, in order to our partaking of the kingdom of God. So that, if we do but "repent and believe the Gospel," as he commands us, we need not fear but in and through him we shall be invested with as great glory and happiness as our natures are capable of. I shall therefore endeavor, by his assistance, to explain them to you, and what it is which our Saviour would have us do, when he saith, "Repent, and believe the Gospel."

Our Saviour expresses the repentance of the prodigal son by coming to himself; * im-

* Luke, 15.—v. 17.

plying, that before he had been beside himself, not in his right mind; but now he came to himself, and to the use of his sense and reason, so as to be of another and better mind than he was before. Thus, by the Prophet, God calls upon the people, saying, "Turn ye even to me, saith the Lord, with all your hearts, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning."* "Thus Job abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes."† The King of Nineveh, with all his people, upon the preaching of Jonah, fasted, and put on sackcloth, and sat in ashes.‡ But all these external actions are only the effects of true repentance, not of the nature of it; for a man may do these things, and yet not repent; and a man may repent, and yet do none of them. And though they are certainly acceptable to God, when joined with repentance; yet without it they cannot but be odious and abominable to him, as proceeding only from hypocrisy and deceit.

It is necessary that our minds be possessed with a due sense of our manifold sins and miscarriages since we came into the world, as also of the guilt we have contracted by them, so as to look every man upon himself as the greatest sinner in the world, being fully convinced of the evil of his own ways.

* Joel, 2.—v. 12. † Job, 42.—v. 6. ‡ Jonah, 3.—v. 6.

Neither is it enough that you acknowledge yourselves to be sinners in general; but, in order to your repentance, it is necessary that you be sensible of those particular crimes which you know yourselves to be guilty of. As David was, when he said, "I acknowledge my iniquity, and my sin is ever before me. Against thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight."* Neither is it sufficient that you are sensible of some particular sins, but it must be of all; whether sins of omission, or sins of commission; whether sins of ignorance, or sins of wilfulness; whether open or secret sins; whether sins against the law, or against the Gospel. And surely there are none of you but must needs be sensible that you have often offended in some, if not in most or all these ways, against the Most High God, whereby you have incurred his displeasure, and deserved the severest of his wrath against you. And this is the first step to true repentance. This should lead you to a godly sorrow and hearty contrition for those sins which you are thus conscious to yourselves you have committed. Not such a sorrow as you have for the loss of friends and relations, or for troubles and vexations in the world; but from different motives and principles, because by them you have offended

* Psalm, 51.—v. 3.

so glorious a God, displeased so gracious a Father, broken so righteous a law, abused the mercies of God, and so are liable to his wrath and indignation for ever. Thus the penitent prodigal went unto his Father, and said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."* Thus nothing should come so near our hearts, or should lie so heavy upon our minds, nothing should be so vexatious to us, as to consider what bowels of mercy we have spurned, what a great and glorious, what a good and gracious God we have affronted: how ungrateful we have been to him, in whom "we live, and move, and have our being." This is sorrow for sin; which must not be measured by the outward expressions of it, as by tears or weeping; but you must consult your judgments and inclinations in this case. And if you find, upon mature deliberation, you had rather for the future suffer the greatest affliction, than willingly commit the least sin; whether your grief for your former sins be accompanied with such sensible passions or no, you may conclude it to be sincere: for if you are not really troubled for your former sins, you would not be fearful of sinning for the future. And this is the next thing re-

* Luke, 15.—v. 21.

quired of us, even that as we are convinced of, and humbled for our sins, so must we be stedfastly resolved against them, and to the utmost of our power and knowledge leave and forsake them. And let me tell you, although sorrow for past sins be absolutely necessary to true repentance, yet it is not repentance itself, as the Apostle plainly shews: "Godly sorrow worketh repentance not to be repented of." Neither can that repentance, which needs not to be repented of, be any thing less than an hearty detestation of, and a stedfast resolution against sin; a sincere conversion from whatever we know is contrary to the laws of God. And whatever comes short of this, how specious and plausible soever it may appear, it is but a mock repentance; that is, it is no repentance at all. But seeing it is so dangerous to mistake in a matter of such consequence as this is, and yet nothing is more common, I shall endeavor fully and plainly to shew, that the repentance which our blessed Saviour here enjoins, consists in nothing less than a sincere forsaking of all known sin to the utmost of our power: for though it be impossible for a man to repent of his sins, if he is not first convinced of and humbled for them, yet it is possible and is very common for men to be both convinced of and humbled for their sins, and yet not truly repent. Pharaoh

could say, "I have sinned."* Balaam could say, "I have sinned."† Saul could say, "I have sinned."‡ Yea, Judas, when he had betrayed his Master could say, "I have sinned."§ Which confessions certainly proceeded from an inward conviction, in their own consciences, that they were guilty of those sins which they were confessing, and yet were far from true repentance.

Thus also we read how, when Elijah the prophet had convinced Ahab of his sins, and told him the judgments which would be laid upon him for them, he humbled himself so, "that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly."|| Yet it doth not follow that he truly repented; being rather troubled at the judgments God had threatened against him, than for the sins he had committed against God; and so far the greatest hypocrites in the world may go, and yet remain hypocrites still. And if this was all the repentance that God requires of us, the way would not be so narrow, nor the gate so straight that leads to life, as our Saviour himself says it is. But do not mistake yourselves; repentance is another kind of thing. It consists not in the correcting the body, but the

* Exod. 9.—v. 27. † Num. 22.—v. 34. ‡ 1 Sam. 15.—v. 24.
§ Matt. 27.—v. 4. || 1 Kings, 21.—v. 27.

mind. It is the changing of our minds from evil to good, from sin to holiness, from the world to God. Thus Christ describes it, and thus you and I must practise it, if ever we desire to come to heaven. You must not content yourselves with being grieved a little now and then; but if ye would repent in good earnest, you must cut off your right hand, pluck out your right eye, and cast them from you: that is, you must hate your beloved sins, and be as much averse from, as heretofore you had been inclined to them. For it is in this the very nature of true repentance consists; even that your minds and hearts be taken off from sin and fixed upon God.

Therefore let me advise you to beware of cheating yourselves in a matter of such moment as this is, so as to fancy you have repented, when in truth you have not. For however reformed you may be in your lives, unless your hearts are reformed too, I should be a false prophet, were I to tell you that you have repented at all. Your chief care must be to get your affections renewed and changed, and then the reformation of your lives will follow in course. Do but clean the fountain, and the streams will soon run clear. But never think that you have repented of any sin, merely because you do not commit it now, as heretofore you used to do;

but rather consider which way your hearts are still inclined, or whether you find them so changed from sin, that you hate it now as much as ever you loved it; that you abhor it now as much as ever you did desire it; and that you are as really grieved for it now, as before you took pleasure in it. And until you find such a change in your minds, let no alteration whatsoever in your lives lead you into a groundless persuasion that you have repented; for I assure you you have not. And then, in the next place, as a man may leave off some of his sins, and yet not repent of them; so, on the other hand, a man may have repented; of his sins, and yet sometimes fall into them. For repentance being seated in the mind, although it may be so changed, that its general bent and inclination is towards God; yet that change not being absolutely perfect in this life, there is no man, how penitent soever he is, but may sometimes fall, either by surprize and inadvertency, or else by being overpowered with the violence of some prevailing temptation; as may be observed in most, if not all the Saints that are recorded in holy Scripture; especially in David and Peter: the first did not only commit most horrible and atrocious crimes, but did it too with choice and deliberation; and the latter, St. Peter, was so overcome with fear of our Saviour's being apprehended, that

he not only denied him, but did it with oaths and curses ; which was so dreadful a sin that he, knowing his love to Christ, thought it before impossible he should fall into it, as appears from his asserting, " Though all should be offended because of Christ, yet he would never be offended ; yea, saith he, though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee."* And, certainly, it is no wonder: for our repentance being imperfect, whilst we are here below, though many commit sin so as never to repent of it, yet there is no one can so repent of sin as never to commit it. Many have all sin and no grace; but there is none hath all grace and no sin. Many have no spirit to war against the flesh; but there are none but have flesh to war against the spirit. And although in a *true penitent* the spirit for the most part hath the better, yet it is no wonder if the flesh, assisted by the devil, by some device or other, doth sometimes overcome.

But it is to be observed, that although he whose mind is so changed, that he may properly be said to have repented, may, notwithstanding, relapse sometimes into his former sins; yet it is usually with that reluctance and unwillingness, if I may so call it, that impenitent persons are altogether strangers

* Matt. 26.—v. 33.

to. And although it cannot be denied, but a truly pious man may have some sin, which may be said to reign within him, because of the power it may have over him; yet surely it doth not reign as a king, but as a tyrant, an usurper, having no rest or peace, but is always molested and disturbed, or at least resisted and opposed; so that its commands are never observed, without either fraud or violence being used. For no man can be said to have repented truly, but he whose mind, heart, and affections are turned from his sins to God: and therefore, although such a one may sometimes stumble in his walk to heaven, he will nevertheless soon get up again, and proceed with more care and circumspection. For whatever infirmities or miscarriages a sincere penitent may be guilty of, none can deserve that glorious title but he whose mind is so changed from what it was, that he truly hates the evil which once he loved, and loves the good which once he hated and despised. Therefore, as such a one would not willingly commit any known sin, so neither would he willingly omit any known duty. He will not only forsake whatsoever is offensive to God, but will perform whatever he knows to be pleasing to him; being now as much averse from sin, and inclined to God, as he was ever before averse from God and inclined to sin. Thus the Prophet shews exactly how

an wicked man should repent; "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord."* And the Prophet Joel saith, "Rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God."† So that repentance contains under it all the duties of the moral law; and whatever it enjoins, either to God or man, our Saviour commands us to observe in this one word, "repentance."

Having thus explained the true nature and meaning of the duty here enjoined, we may consider the reason why our Saviour puts repentance before faith, commanding us first "to repent and then to believe the Gospel." To which I answer, in few words, thus: Our blessed Saviour had now taken upon him the office of Mediator between God and man, and consequently to be a propitiation for their sins, by making satisfaction to God's justice; by which means mankind is, in and through him, become capable of having their sins pardoned and their persons accepted before God. This was that great mystery, which, upon his first entering upon his office, he was to make known to us. But repentance being always required as necessary to our obtaining this mercy promised in the Gospel, hence it was

* Isaiah, 55.—v. 7.

† Joel, 2.—v. 13.

necessary our Saviour should first press this upon us, without which we cannot partake of the benefits and privileges which he hath purchased, and revealed to us in the Gospel.

“Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon.”* And, again, “Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin.”†

But Repentance, therefore, being so indispensably required, Christ, when he came to purchase and seal our pardon with his own blood, thought it necessary to acquaint us beforehand upon what terms we are to expect it. Hence he sent John the Baptist before him to preach, and say “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” And when he appeared publicly in the world, the first thing he calls upon us to do, is to “repent” and then to “believe” that in and through him we shall be pardoned.

These things being duly considered, I hope I need use no other arguments to persuade you all to repent. For I suppose there are none of you here present, but must needs be conscious to yourselves of the manifold and great transgressions you have committed

* Isaiah, 55.—v. 7.

† Ezekiel, 18.—v. 30.

against the Most High and Mighty God, the only Creator and Governor of the world: by which means you have incensed his wrath against you, and are every moment liable to the dismal consequences and effects of it: yea, by reason of your sins, you are all obliged to undergo nothing less than eternal misery. And therefore one would think you should be all so apprehensive of the danger you are in on account of your sins, as to desire nothing in the world so much as to have them pardoned, and your obligations to punishments cancelled and taken off. And let me tell you, for your comfort, that however great and many your former sins have been, yet in and through Christ they may all be pardoned. But let me also tell you, that how small soever and few your sins may seem to be, yet none of them shall be ever pardoned, unless you sincerely repent. Christ's arms are ready to receive you, if you do repent; but if you do not, whatever he hath done and suffered for mankind will be of no service to you. Therefore, as you desire that he who made you would have mercy upon you, you must surely perform what he that redeemed you requires, even to repent.

But if such considerations as these will not excite and stir you up, consider, in the last place, how many obligations the eternal God hath laid upon you, to repent; having

joined your duty and interest so together that as there is nothing that can be more advantageous to you than repentance, so there is nothing that you are or can be more strictly obliged to perform. All the promises he hath made you, all the threatenings he hath denounced against you, all the mercies he hath committed to you, all the judgments he hath laid upon you, all the truths he hath revealed to you, and all the commands he hath enjoined you, these all jointly and severally call upon you and oblige you to repent: so that in all these, as the Apostle tells you, "The goodness of God leadeth you to repentance."* For what should make him so earnest with you to repent, as the Scriptures every where shew, but his own infinite goodness and mercy to you? Doth he need your repentance? Or will he receive any additions of glory from your services? No. Be it known to you, he is infinitely happy in himself, without any thing that you can do. His glory is not eclipsed by your misery, nor advanced by your happiness. He loses nothing by your rebellions against, nor gains any thing by the services you can do and perform to him. It is all one as to him and his felicity, whether you repent or no; and therefore he might justly suffer you to go on in

* Rom. 2.—v. 4.

your sins, without ever reminding you of them, or calling you from them. But, however, as he is your Maker, he had rather exalt his mercy in saving, than his justice in condemning you; and therefore he saith, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"* How is it possible for one man to use more pathetic expressions to another, than here the eternal God uses to you? and all to shew you how earnestly he desires your repentance, that you may be happy. For this end it is, that he sometimes terrifies with his judgments, that he might affright you from your sins; and sometimes allures you, with his mercies into the embracement of holiness. For this reason it is that he hath annexed so many dreadful threatenings against the breakers of his law, and so many gracious promises to them who keep it. For this reason it is that he hath given you his Word to instruct you, his ordinances to direct you, and his sacraments to confirm you in your repentance. For this reason it is that he still continues you now in existence, that you might devote your lives to him in whom you

* Ezekiel, 33.—v. 11.

have your being. In a word, for this end it is he sent his Son to die for you, his Spirit to live within you, and me at this time to call upon you to repent and live. And if, after all this, you still continue in your sins and refuse to turn unto the Lord your God, your blood be upon your own heads, for your destruction is from yourselves.

But if by any means I may be so happy as to be an instrument in God's hand to persuade you all to perform what is here set forth, let me desire you for a moment to consider who it is who here commands you to repent; even no other person but he who came to earth on purpose to shew you the way to heaven; yea, and laid down his own life to redeem yours. Neither hath he only commanded you to repent, but hath told you, in plain terms, that "unless you do repent you must all likewise perish."*

In his name, therefore, permit me to exhort and advise you. I know you all desire to be happy, and I hope you all expect to be so only by Jesus Christ. Now you have this day heard what this very person requires of you, in order to your salvation; even to repent. He hath told you you can never expect to be saved without you do so; and, therefore, as you value the salvation of your

* Luke, 13.—v. 3.

immortal souls, let me advise and beseech you, in his name, to break off your former sins by repentance and conversion unto God. And think not to say within yourselves, that God is infinitely merciful, and Christ's merits all-sufficient; for though they are so, you will never be the better for it, unless you repent and be converted.. And, therefore, be careful of yourselves: put not off this work any longer, as heretofore you have done; give no rest to your eyes, nor slumber to your eye-lids, until you are truly humbled for, and stedfastly resolved against your sins, however pleasing or profitable they hitherto have been to you; so as for the future, by the assistance of God's grace and Spirit, to walk in all the commandments of God blameless, to the utmost of your power; and to exercise yourselves to have always a conscience void of offence, both to God and man. Do this, and then you will have but one step to heaven; and that is, to "believe the Gospel."

Now to God, the Father, God, the Son, and God, the Holy Ghost, be all honor and glory. Amen.

THE END.

