



# **SERMONS**

ON

**PLAIN AND PRACTICAL SUBJECTS.**

---

---

BY ROBERT H. BISHOP.

---

---

For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them who believe.

—We preach Christ crucified—Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.—1. Cor. i. 21. 23. 24.

---

---

LEXINGTON:

PRINTED BY D. AND C. BRADFORD, AT THE OFFICE OF THE  
KENTUCKY GAZETTE, MAIN-STREET.

---

1809.

# CONTENTS.

---

## SERMON I.

THE SITUATION AND EXERCISE OF THE SAINTS WHILE IN  
THIS WORLD.

PAGE.

Zeph. iii. 12. I will also leave in the midst of thee  
an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in  
the name of the Lord - - - - - 1

## SERMON II.

PRESENT DUTY AND FUTURE HAPPINESS INSEPARABLY CON-  
NECTED.

Rev. xxii. 14. Blessed are they who do his com-  
mandments, that they may have a right to the tree of  
life, and may enter in through the gates into the  
city - - - - - 19

## SERMON III.

GODLIKE FORGIVENESS.

Luke xxiii. 34. Then said Jesus, father forgive them,  
for they know not what they do - - - - - 36

## SERMON IV.

THE COMPREHENSIVE BLESSING.

Rom. iii. 24. He who spared not his own Son, but  
delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also  
with him freely give us all things - - - - - 53

## SERMON V.

## GOSPEL HOLINESS.

- 2 Tim. ii. 19. And let every one who nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity - - - 67

## THE INFINITE EVIL OF SIN.

- A fragment - - - - - 84

## SERMON VI.

## THE DOOM OF IMPENITENT SINNERS.

- Prov. xxix. 1. He who being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shal suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy - - - - - 93

## SERMON VII.

## THE NATURE AND USE OF PUBLIC ORDINANCES.

- Ps. cxxii. 1. I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord - - - - - 112

## SERMON VIII.

## THE SIN AND DANGER OF NEGLECTING PUBLIC ORDINANCES.

- Prov. xxvii. 9. He who turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination - - - - - 128

## SERMON IX.

## FAMILY RELIGION EXPLAINED AND ENFORCED.

- Ep. vi. 4. And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord - - - - - 138

# CONTENTS.

v.

PAGE.

## SERMON X.

### PAUL AND BARNABAS.

- Acts xv. 39. And the contention between them was so sharp, that they departed asunder the one from the other - - - - - 158

## SERMON XI AND XII.

### BROTHERLY LOVE EXPLAINED AND ENFORCED.

- 1 John iii. 11. For this is the message which we have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another - - - - - 172 & 174

## SERMON XIII.

### RASH JUDGING.

- Ps. cxvi. ii. I said in my haste, all men are liars - 197

## SERMON XIV.

### FAMILY PURIFICATION, FAMILY SAFETY.

- Gen. xxxv. 1—5. And God said unto Jacob, arise, go up to Beth-el, and dwell there; and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother. Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments: and let us arise, and go up to Beth-el; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went. And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their ear-rings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem. And they journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob. - - 212

## SERMON XV.

## JACOB AND PHARAOH.

- Gen. xlvii. 7—9. And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh: and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, how old art thou? And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, the days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers, in the days of their pilgrimage - - - - - 230

## SERMON XVI.

## COMFORTABLE DYING.

- Gen. xlix. 33. And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost - - - 247

## SERMON XVII.

## THE MEANS OF GRACE SHALL ONE DAY CEASE.

- Luke xvii. 20. And he said unto his disciples, the days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it - 265

## INTRODUCTION.

---

**T**O preach Christ crucified, the salvation of lost men, is without doubt the most agreeable and the most honourable office on earth. All other offices known among men, pertain to this life only. This office is deeply interested in an endless eternity. Every mean which is any way fitted for disseminating the knowledge of the doctrines of the cross, ought consequently to be encouraged by not only all the followers of Jesus, but by all the real well wishers to the happiness of the human family.

Among the many improvements of modern times, the art of communicating our ideas to one another through the Press, holds a distinguished place. Information of every kind is thus conveyed with an ease, and to an extent unknown, and perhaps inconceivable to our fathers; and of this art, the friends of genuine religion and virtue have, ever since it was discovered, made considerable use. To co-operate with these wise and good men in this their laudable attempt, is the professed design of the present publication. It is proposed thus to preach the gospel of Christ to that very large number of christians in this country, who, from a variety of circumstances, are obliged to pass a great many Sabbaths every year, without any opportunity of enjoying public ordinances. When opportunities of hearing the gospel are few, a considerable attention ought certainly to be paid to reading. Reading becomes under these circumstances an ordinance, in the use of which we may expect a considerable blessing.

That any *new matter* is to be found in the following discourses, is not so much as pretended. On the contrary, it is

pretty confidently hoped, that the whole of the matter which they contain, is as old as the first proclamation of the gospel of peace. All the subjects discussed are of a plain and practical nature: yet in attempting to illustrate the practical part of religion, there is not knowingly any sacrifice or concealment made of the doctrines of faith. As faith without works is dead, so works which do not spring from faith are of no account. No doctrine of the Bible can be said to be of a speculative nature only; nor can there be any good and acceptable works which do not proceed from a firm belief of what we call the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel. Any attempt, consequently, to explain or enforce any christian duty, independent of what we call the doctrines of christianity, is nothing else than a subversion or corruption of the gospel of Christ.

The author would do violence to his own feelings, as well as manifest a very ungrateful disposition indeed, did he not in this place return his sincere thanks to those who have manifested their kindness to him in encouraging the present publication. There are circumstances also under which the very same action, is a far greater manifestation of kindness, than under others; and some of these circumstances, without doubt, existed on the present occasion. It is to be hoped that the most of those who were friendly to the publication, were actuated in what they did from a principle of a higher nature, than *mere personal attachment*. Should, therefore, any of these sermons be accompanied in any case with the divine blessing to the reader, those who took the trouble of subscription papers, or who were otherwise active in promoting the design, must certainly be considered as fellow workers with Jehovah, in his great work of reconciling the world to himself. *Now to him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power which worketh in us; unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.*

Lexington, (K.) April 1809.

STATION I.  
SERMON I.

---

THE SITUATION AND EXERCISE OF THE SAINTS  
WHILE IN THIS WORLD.

Zeph. iii. 12. *I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord.*

**T**HE names or characters by which the people of God are known in scripture are various; but they are all remarkably appropriate, and remarkably significant. These names or characters, however various, are all peculiar and appropriate, for there are no other individuals or class of men, to whom they can with any propriety be applied. The expressiveness or fullness of meaning of these names, is equally remarkable. They are not an empty parade of titles, such as are annexed to the names of the great men of the earth; but they are names which carry along with them much instruction, not only to the persons themselves, but also to those among whom they dwell.

The particular names which are in the text, given to the people of God, are no doubt those with which we have been long familiar. It may be, however, that we have not always considered them with that attention which we ought to have done; or if we have really

profited by this our familiarity, it cannot be disagreeable to have a little more intercourse with our old friends.

Three things respecting these people now demand our attention :

Their situation—*they are left in the midst of something.*

Their character—*they are an afflicted and poor people.*

Their exercise—*they trust in the name of the Lord.*

In considering the situation of these people, we are necessarily led to consider how the text stands connected with the rest of the chapter. It is evident that the church under the name of Jerusalem, or Israel, is in the beginning of the chapter represented as remarkably corrupted, and as having suffered for this her corruption. See ver. 1—8 Having described this corruption and punishment, the prophet under the same inspiration proceeds to foretel better days. The wicked nations who had been the instruments of chastising the church, are in the first place to be cut off. Ver. 8. *Therefore, wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey, for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger, for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.* Though wicked men and wicked nations may be the instruments of executing God's judgments upon a hypocritical people, yet they are at the same time only gratifying their innate hatred against God and godliness, and thus only filling up the measure of their iniquity. When this work for which they were raised up is accomplished, they must, therefore in their turn be chastised, and in their chastisement perish for ever. (See Is. x. 5—7. Also Jer. xxxiv. 22, compared with chap. l. 9—11, and li. 20—24.) The judgments executed upon the heathen,

shall be accompanied or followed with a remarkable reformation and increase of the church. Ver. 9, 10 and 11. Similar sentiments are expressed in language if possible, still more expressive, from the 13th ver. to the end of the chapter.

In reading all those verses, however, it is evident that the happy days described, are represented as still at a great distance. The second verse is introduced with, *Therefore, wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day.* In the subsequent verses we have again and again, *In that day, then, at that time, and behold at that time.* Expressions which all evidently refer us to a future period considerably distant from the time in which the prophecy was uttered. Is it then asked what shall be the situation of the church till the arrival of that happy period? To this question, the text as connected with the first seven verses is, I humbly conceive, the answer. Till that period the church visible shall frequently be very much corrupted in her doctrine, worship and government. Till that period she shall also be frequently severely chastised by the wicked of the world in both their individual and social capacity. And till that period, the church *invisible*, shall be preserved as a remnant and as a blessing in the midst of the church *visible*. *I will also (says the text) leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people.*

We have no doubt all frequently heard, what is meant by the church *visible* and *invisible*. By the church visible is understood every thing which is *external* in the church. All who make a public profession of adherence to the church in opposition to heathens, or avowed infidels, and also all the regulations respecting doctrine worship, government discipline, and in short every thing which constitutes the church a society distinct from the civil societies of this world. Under the church *invisible* are comprehended, all the members of the church who are in re-

ality what they profess to be, are really united to the head of the church, and have felt and are daily feeling upon their breasts the influence of his grace.

One observation more may be necessary on this part of the subject. When we speak of the church either as *visible* or *invisible*, we are by no means to be understood as restricting the term to any particular organized church, to the exclusion of all others which either call themselves, or are acknowledged by others, *to be regularly organized churches*. Whatever may be the sentiments either concealed or expressed of particular individuals, the church of Rome is I believe, the only church which in her public judicial capacity, uses the term in such a limited and restricted sense. The common doctrine on the article of all Protestant churches is, I believe, fully expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith. (See Conf. chap. xxv.)

That this situation betwixt the church *visible* and *invisible*, is acknowledged in the text, and is necessary to understand what is called the connection of the passage before us, is evident upon a very little reflection. Who is it that is particularly addressed in the text and context? Not the heathen nations, nor the openly profane. But Israel—Jerusalem—the daughter of Zion, and the daughter of Jerusalem. That is—the church visible—the church as a regularly organized society, distinct from the civil societies of this world. What is particularly said to the church in the text? Not I will *leave thee* in the midst of the nation, so and so; but I will *leave in the midst of thee* an afflicted and poor people.

The situation of the people thus held up to our view in the text, is shortly this: They are left, and left for holy and wise purposes, in the midst of a world lying in wickedness—they are also left in the midst of the *church visible*. That is, in the midst of a great many carnal and corrupt professors of religion—men

who call themselves the sons of the highest; but who have only a name to live while dead.

Having thus viewed the *situation*, it follows, that we now turn our attention to the *character of these people*. They are said to be *an afflicted and poor people*. The terms which are here used are well known to us. We all know what it is to be afflicted and poor in either body or mind. A few particulars will fully explain in what sense, and with what propriety the terms are applied to the particular people before us.

These people may be considered either with respect to the rank and influence which they hold in the world, or with respect to their numbers; or with respect to what they actually suffer, in both body and mind, from those with whom they are connected in civil and religious society; and in any or in all of these respects, they will be found to be only an afflicted and poor people. And

1. It is a fact, that the great body of the adherents to genuine religion, have never as yet, in any age or country, been what the world call great and leading characters. Look around you and see, if ever in any country, or in any state of society, the leading characters in the public affairs of the nation were any length of time what we call genuine fearers of the Lord. Have not the riches and the honours of this world, on the other hand, been generally enjoyed by the basest of men? Even of those whom in a certain sense we must call virtuous characters—that is, of those who have as politicians, been really a blessing to civil society, how few have been so much as professors of religion? And of those who in such situations have made a profession of religion, the number, it is to be feared is small indeed who have really felt its power.

The leading and fundamental articles of our holy religion are of too humiliating a cast for the great body of those who aspire at shining in the high ranks of life.

We are not, however, to suppose that the religion of Jesus is any way incompatible with eminence in the world: by no means. The principles of this religion alone ennoble the human mind, and no man can be truly great who is not truly good. But the mean, sneaking, crafty artifices—the devilish envies and jealousies—the brutal lusts and appetites, which by the universal corruption of manners, are reckoned inseparable from the high ranks of life—*these* are incompatible with the religion of Jesus. And therefore, while in the opinion of the world, a man cannot be a great or leading character who is not well versed in all these arts—no genuine fearer of the Lord will be a great and leading character. It was long ago asked, *Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? but this people who know not the law are accursed.* It is long since the apostle said, “*Ye see your calling brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of this world to confound the things which are mighty. And base things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen, yea and things which are not to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence. But, as it is written, he who glorieth let him glory in the Lord.*” The same question may still be asked—the same remarks may still be made. The religion of Jesus still haunts the solitary walks of life. The noise and the bustle which attend the pursuit and the enjoyment of the riches and the honours of this world, scare her far from hence. The great body of those who live under the influence of this religion, have been, and still are in a political sense, an afflicted and poor people—A people scarcely known in the world—They are at least great strangers in the fashionable circles.

2. When we view these people with respect to their *numbers*, they must appear in the eye of the world equally insignificant, poor and afflicted. Have the genuine fearers of the Lord ever in any age or any country borne any proportion to those of an opposite description? How was it in the days of Enoch, of Noah, and of Abraham? How was it all the days of the old Testament church? Did the land of Canaan bear any proportion to the extent of other countries? Did the ten thousands of Israel, even granting that they were at any given period generally Israelites without guile, bear any proportion to the innumerable tribes which were falling down to stocks and stones? Since the partition wall betwixt Jew and Gentile has been broken down, the pale of the visible church has indeed been greatly extended—the number of her members has indeed greatly increased. But still her boundaries are but narrow—her numbers are but few when compared with the rest of the world. Look into any of the common systems of Geography, and you will find that but a very small proportion of the kingdoms of the world carry so much as the christian name. Perhaps not above the one-tenth of the habitable globe is possessed by what we call christian powers. From this christian part, we must deduct all the countries which are under the influence of the Romish and the Greek churches, and nearly all the foreign possessions of Great Britain. Little as it is which remains, it must in the present computation be still farther reduced. There are churches which go under the name of Protestant, whose corruptions in doctrine and worship, are little less dangerous, than the errors and corruptions of holy mother. It is also to be observed, that even in those countries where the purest worship and doctrine are observed, there are great numbers who are members of no church—whose works go openly before them into judgment—and the purest churches

on earth carry in their bosom multitudes who have nothing more than a profession—have the form of godliness, but deny the power—make all these deductions, and they are deductions which are by no means unreasonable, and the number of the genuine fearers of the Lord, will be found to be only small indeed. Nothing but a handful—A poor afflicted people. Once more :

3. These people are only an afflicted and poor people, inasmuch as they daily and almost hourly suffer much in both body and mind, from those with whom they are connected in both civil and religious society. *“ In the world,”* said our Lord, *“ ye shall have tribulation. Remember the word which I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord; if they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. And again: These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues, yea the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth God service.”* The principles and the practice of genuine saints, being so diametrically opposite to the maxims and conduct of the men of the world, *a cordial agreement* betwixt these two classes of men, whether they are within or without the pale of the visible church, is, in the nature of things, impossible. *What communion hath light with darkness? or what concord hath Christ with Belial?* Something like a truce may indeed for a short time seem to be proclaimed: but even then all the springs of action are in motion. The seed of the old serpent shall, while the world stands, be always in some form or other persecuting, and hurting the woman and her seed.

But what is actually inflicted by wicked men, whether in open day or in secret, is not half what these afflicted and poor people suffer in consequence of their present connexion. *“ I beheld,”* says the Psalmist, *“ the transgressors, and was grieved because they kept not thy word.”* Sin in themselves and others

gives them a thousand times more pain and anxiety, than any thing which in opposition to sin we call *suffering*. They carry within their own bosom a body of sin and death—They are at best but poor in spirit, and are sensible to a considerable degree of their own weakness and imperfections—They have also a considerable sense of the number and the strength of the temptations to which they are exposed—They behold their adversary, the devil, going about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour—They behold a world lying in wickedness watching for their halting—They find but few among their fellow men and fellow christians who can sympathize with them and assist them in this their distress. Multitudes of those who by profession, and perhaps even some of those who by office, should assist them in withstanding temptation, only lay stumbling blocks in their way. In short, they find on almost all hands iniquity abounding and the love of many waxing cold. A general carelessness and indifference in fellow professors, and a more than ordinary profanity and boldness in avowed opposers. Amidst such a complication of troubles, who among them would not be afflicted? Their souls must weep in both secret and open places. Rivers of waters must run down their eyes, when they behold their fellow men, and their fellow professors, thus dishonouring God and ruining their own precious and immortal souls.

Having thus considered the situation, and the character of these people, let us next consider

*Their exercise*—The spirit of prophecy foretold, and history hath confirmed, that the genuine fearers of the Lord have, generally speaking, so far as this world is concerned, been *an afflicted and poor people*. The same prophecy foretold, what the same history hath confirmed, that they have also in this distressed forsaken situation, continued happy, *trusting in the name of the Lord*.

The phrase here used is no doubt one which we have again and again heard explained. A *name* is that by which any person or thing is known, as distinct from every other person or thing. *To trust in another person's name, or character or word*, is neither more nor less than to rest assured, that at the time appointed, every thing shall be fulfilled exactly as it is there expressed. My friend in Europe gives me certain information that he has bequeathed unto me a very handsome estate, and requests me to break off any connections I have formed here, and immediately go home, that I may have the full possession of what he hath bestowed. If I can rest assured that this information is certain, and can have sufficient confidence in not only the *will*, but also in the *ability* of my friend, and am at the same time persuaded that what I am thus to enjoy in Europe, is more than a compensation for all the accommodations which I leave here, and all the dangers which I am to encounter in my journey, I no longer hesitate—I leave the land of strangers, and return to the land of my fathers. This every man of common sense would call, *trusting* or *having confidence* in the assurances which my friend had given me. Now to apply this to the case in hand: *The name of the Lord* is every thing whereby he maketh himself known; but particularly under the phrase is included his written word; and especially that part of his word, which we call *the promises*—*And to trust in this name*, or these declarations, is neither more nor less, than to give Jehovah credit for what he hath said. Rest assured that in the end he will be just as good as his word—that in the end it will be to us, and to all persons concerned, just exactly as he hath declared. And for what do these poor and afflicted people trust in the name of the Lord? To this it may be answered:

1. They trust that, however small and despised, however weak and afflicted they may be, they shall

never be totally destroyed. And on the other hand—that however numerous and powerful and fierce their enemies may be, they shall never completely prevail. Nor is this their confidence without a sufficient foundation—or vain confidence. It is written, or in other words, it is one of the letters of Jehovah's name. *“ A seed shall serve him, it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come and shall declare his righteousness to a people that shall be born, and that he hath done this. One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy wonderful works. They shall bless thee: They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom and talk of thy power. To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.”* They find it farther written: *“ When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.”* In short, they find it written, that the eternity of Jehovah, and the existence of the Redeemer's seed shall be co-extensive—that when all other things shall perish and be changed, these two shall continue and be established. *Of old hast thou laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea all of them shall wax old as doth a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.”* These, and such like, recorded among the sayings of him who is faithful and true, sufficiently warrant these poor afflicted people, to rest with humble confidence—that however much they may at particular times, or in particular places be reduced in

number—however much they may be in a great variety of matters divided in sentiment—however far they may be scattered from one another—yet the seed of the faithful shall never utterly perish. There shall be always some every here and there, who shall glory in adhering to the cause of the Redeemer—who shall count it their chief honor to adhere to him and his cause in *bad* as well as in *good report*—in *adversity* as well as *prosperity*.

It may be observed, that whatever secures the continuance of the chosen seed, secures also that the enemies of this seed, however numerous, or powerful or fierce they may be, shall never completely prevail. But besides this indirect proof, the people whose exercise we are considering, have as a farther ground of their confidence, these and such like declarations. *He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness; and the counsel of the froward is carried head long. No weapon, that is formed against thee, shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn* (See also Ps. ii. 1—end.) It is almost unnecessary to observe, that these and such like declarations, concerning the preservation of a pious remnant, and the utter disappointment of ungodly men, have been as yet, in every instance, most exactly accomplished. All history, both sacred and profane, bear witness to this truth: The afflicted and poor people have trusted, and in trusting were not disappointed.

2. These afflicted and poor people give their Lord full confidence with respect to the *particular design* which he has in leaving them, and continuing them in their present situation. Whilst they act any thing in character, they can trust their good friend in the *dark* as well as in the *light*. That is, they are from the

heart well pleased with all his arrangements, though at the particular time they cannot fully explain all the circumstances connected with their situation. Nor is this their confidence, blind or mistaken confidence: they know in whom they have believed—they are perfectly satisfied with respect to the faithfulness and the ability of him to whom they have committed their all. Hear only a few of the grounds of their confidence: *Who is there among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and shall say upon his God. What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.* (See to the same purpose Is. xl. 27—and also, xlii. 16.) These and such like declarations, or in other words, these and such like letters in the name in which they trust, are a sufficient warrant for this their unlimited confidence.

Nor are these afflicted and poor people left in the present case to depend solely upon what we would call Jehovah's bare word. Though from the nature of things we can in the present state of existence know only a part, and that but a very small part of his ways; yet he must be blind indeed who does not discover in the very darkest of divine providence, much wisdom and much goodness. He has also had but very little experience in the christian life, who cannot bring to his recollection a variety of cases, in which Jehovah in behalf of himself, or his family—or in behalf of that particular church with which was connected, made light to spring up in darkness—made crooked things straight, and brought order out of confusion. Who also does not see, that Jehovah in having his church thus preserved, by means of an afflicted and poor people, pours sovereign contempt upon all of which the men

of this world are so fond? Who does not see, by this arrangement, that the church is preserved by something superior to human power or human policy? What the apostle is supposed to say particularly of gospel ministers, may in the present view of our subject, be accommodated to all genuine saints. “*We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power, may be of God, and not of us.*” These and such like things which might be mentioned, are ends worthy of the only wise God; and they are ends which are evidently accomplished by the particular arrangement which we are considering. Who then, who has any claim to an alliance with this afflicted and poor people, would refuse, after having seen these and such like specimens of the wisdom and goodness of the Lord, to give him complete confidence in cases, which form a variety of circumstances inseparable from their present imperfect state, they cannot fully comprehend? And who even among those who disown any connection with this people would, in his sober senses, call them fools or mad men for thus trusting their Lord? Reason and revelation unite in saying, that Jehovah’s ways must in a great variety of cases, be far above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts. He is consequently something worse than an infidel—he is a raving mad man who asserts that every thing in God’s word, or God’s providences, which cannot be fully comprehended or explained by mortals, is to be spurned at and rejected.

3. In the exercise of this trust or confidence, this afflicted and poor people look forward to the period in which the good cause in which they are engaged, shall completely triumph. While they act in character, they give their Lord full confidence that in due time, and in a manner every worthy of himself, he shall deliver his church at once from both corruption and oppression—that the period shall at last arrive,

when even on this earth, which has been so long the seat of every species of iniquity, godliness shall universally prevail. To shew the sure grounds upon which this article of their faith stands, nothing more is necessary than to turn up and once more read some of the verses with which the text is connected.—See ver. 9, 10 & 11—also ver. 13, to the end.—(See to the same purpose Is. chap. lx. & lxvi.) All those, brethren, are the sayings of him who is faithful and true. These are recorded in the passage immediately before us, for the particular purpose of being a ground of confidence to this afflicted and poor people. It may also be observed, that they have all already in different ages and in different parts of the world, received a partial accomplishment. This partial accomplishment shews, that the Lord is not unmindful of his promise—nor slack as some men count slackness. Who then among us can refuse to give our Lord full confidence for that which is yet to be accomplished? Or who would dare to call us fools or mad men for thus giving to the Lord the glory due to his name?

4. One observation more must be made on the exercise of these worthy people: We must remember that faith without works, is dead, being alone. Genuine faith, or in other words, genuine confidence in the name of the Lord, is *a living and an active principle*. Let us brethren, only for a moment reflect on the articles of faith just stated and shortly illustrated. These people trust in the name of the Lord—that a seed shall in every age be preserved to serve him—that the enemy shall never be able completely to destroy this seed—that he hath left them a poor and afflicted people, in the midst of a wicked world, for holy and wise purposes—that one great end of their being left in this situation is, that they may be the honoured instruments of preserving pure and undefiled religion, in the midst of an evil and adulterous generation. In short,

they firmly trust that in due time, this great end shall be fully accomplished in the knowledge of the Lord, covering the earth as the waters cover the sea. These, then, are the articles of their belief. And is it in the nature of things possible that these articles of belief should have no influence on their conduct? With these principles in their heart, do you suppose that they possibly can be careless and indifferent about the interests of religion? Will any of them dare to say in religious matters, am I my brother's keeper? Will any of them say, if our own individual salvation is secured, or if at most the salvation of our families is secured, all is well so far as we are concerned? The Lord can carry on his own work in other places, and in other families, in his own time and in his own way? No brethren, such suppositions are utterly inconsistent with having received these as articles of belief. *Action and vigorous action, and action as extensive as the sphere of our influence, is the natural and the necessary consequence of trusting in the name of the Lord in the manner just explained.* This afflicted and poor people, wherever they are, and by whatever other name they are known, is the little leaven which is in due time to leaven the whole lump—the little spark which is in due time to blaze forth and warm and invigorate all nature. To speak without any figure—these afflicted and poor people, wherever they are, and to whatever particular church they belong, are at present God's only servants and witnesses. These are the instruments which he hath appointed and in some measure qualified for making known by both doctrine and example, the exceeding riches of grace. By them the world at large is to be enlightened—by them corrupt churches are to be reformed—by them multitudes are to become acquainted with the truth as it is in Jesus—from them are to spring forth a seed numerous as the stars of heaven.

With these prospects, what one in the number would refuse to be active? Which of them shall not travail as in birth, till Christ shall be formed in the hearts of all those with whom they are connected, and over whom they have any influence? Our duty, brethren, is one thing; our success is another. He who regardeth the winds and the clouds, shall neither sow nor reap; but regardless of either clouds or wind, those who really trust in the name of the Lord, in the morning sow their seed, and in the evening they withhold not their hand, knowing not what shall prosper, whether this or that, or whether the master whom they serve, shall in his abundant mercy make both alike good.

To conclude: May we not from the whole of the subject before us, see the real cause of the preservation and increase of the church of the living God? Has this church ever risen, or owed any of its real support to any of those means, by which the empires of this world have been acquired and supported? Who in every age, and in every country, have been the genuine members, and the strength of this church? Have they been men who had at their command the wealth of the world? Have they been men remarkable for their political influence, or martial achievements? Have they been men who were at great pains to ingratiate themselves into the favour of the world at large? No, says the text—No, says every page of sacred and profane history. The genuine members of the church have in every age and in every country, been in every age in which the terms are used in the language of the world, “*An afflicted and poor people.*” In every case, the interests of genuine religion have declined in proportion as human power and human policy were allowed to have a share in managing the affairs of the church. In such circumstances the preservation and the increase of the church, can be naturally attributed

to nothing, but a continued exertion of divine power. "The Lord is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved," is the only satisfactory solution.

A word of caution on the present occasion may also be not unsuitable. Let us beware of imagining that if we are afflicted and poor in any sense of the terms, that we therefore belong to the people mentioned in the text. Nothing can be farther from the truth. The troubles which afflict the *unjust*, as well as the *just*, are many in number. The only difference is, the *just* are in due time delivered out of all their troubles; while the *unjust* have them increased. *Mere suffering* in either body or mind, and even suffering in what are called religious matters, or for what we suppose are religious and praise worthy principles, is no sure criterion to try either our religious character, or religious state. We see multitudes around us who, are great sufferers in worldly matters, as the natural and just consequence of their immoralities and imprudence. We also see some who suppose that they are great champions and even a sort of martyrs in the cause of truth, who are only suffering as the natural consequence of their peevishness and ill nature, their superstition or extravagant enthusiasm. Upon the same principles we are by no means to imagine, that every kind of trust or confidence in God, or God's word, is a trust or confidence such as is spoken of in the text. There have been multitudes in every age, and perhaps a considerable number in every church, who have trusted, and gloried in their suffering, for that for which they had no scriptural warrant—Nay trusted, that God would in direct opposition to his own word, gratify them in their indolence—peevishness—or maliciousness—or bigotry—or extravagant enthusiasm. In such men's mouths, the phrase, trusting in the Lord, is little else than solemn blasphemy.

But while the doctrine of the text proclaims terror and fearfulness to hypocrites, and sinners in Zion, it also proclaims encouragement to all the genuine fearers of the Lord. Let those whose affliction and poverty are chiefly occasioned by a deep sense of their own sin, and sins of those among whom they dwell—who are particularly grieved at the dishonour which is thereby done to their Lord and master—whose principles of faith is a living and an active principle—a principle which leads them to holiness of heart and life—a principle which makes them anxious to be blessings in the midst of the land. Let those in whose character these and similar features meet—let them be encouraged to go on. You are without doubt, in all your sorrows, under the peculiar care of heaven. The good work which is begun in your heart, and which is through your means begun in the church, and in the world at large, shall be gradually carried on till the day of Jesus Christ.

---

## SERMON II.

PRESENT DUTY AND FUTURE HAPPINESS INSEPARABLY CONNECTED.

Rev. xxii. 14. *Blessed are they who do his commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.*

**T**HE most careless observer of human nature must be convinced, that we are at present only in a mixed state. Wherever we cast our eyes we find good and evil, joy and sorrow, blended together. It is indeed true that this mixture is in some cases, considered as an advantage; but it is equally true, that an accu-

rate view of the matter, and the general opinion of mankind, unite in pronouncing it to be one of the hardships of life. It is certainly a cheering thought, that in the most distressing situation, there is always some good to balance the evil; but it is equally certain, that while there is evil to require a balance, our state is at best only a state of imperfection, and that had we the enjoyment of nothing but that which is good, our happiness would be complete. To such a state of complete happiness brethren, does the text of this call our thoughts. The text as it stands connected with the preceding and following verses, gives us an account of a period, when there shall be a final separation betwixt the precious and the vile, and when there shall be nothing to hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain.

The canon of inspiration being nearly completed, it was fit, that it should be concluded with some account of the last and eternal state of man. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and while the present state continues, this scripture shall be profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness. But there is a time coming, when all ordinances, and among these ordinances, the scripture itself shall be of no farther use. Thus it is written: "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand—*He that is unjust let him be unjust still, and he who is filthy let him be filthy still, and he that is righteous let him be righteous still, and he that is holy let him be holy still.*" There is a time coming when the wicked shall be sealed up in their iniquity. When there shall be no more offers of grace—no more means, nor opportunities of repentance. There is also a time coming when the righteous shall be made perfect in holiness—be completely conformed to the divine image. The great end of the mixture of good and evil being thus

accomplished, a great and final separation shall take place “*Behold,*” says the judge, “*I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.*”

But though the last and unchangeable state of man, thus passes in review before us, we are to remember, that we are still in the land of the living, and the place of hope. These things are indeed as certain as if we saw them with our eyes; but they are only in vision brought before us, to stir us up the more effectually to improve the present moment. Hence a question of considerable importance must naturally spring up in every reflecting mind, viz. “*How am I to conduct myself now, that I may be found among the righteous in that great day of separation?*” To this question our text returns an answer:

*Blessed are they who do his commandments, that they may, &c. &c.*

In these words, three things demand our attention:

*Our present duty.*

*Our future happiness; and*

*The connection there is betwixt doing our duty here, and entering into happiness in the other world.*

Our present duty as expressed by the phrase “*do his commandments,*” is the first thing which demands our attention. Here it must be observed, that all who know any thing of the Bible or of common language, must know, that the word *commandment* is of the same import with the words *law* and *precept*—and also, that each of these terms, is used in a considerable latitude of meaning. All who have read the scripture must have observed, “*that these terms sometimes signify the moral law, as summed up in the ten commandments—that at other times, they are used to express only some particular article of this summary—and that, at other times, they are used in a very large extent—as comprehending under them the whole of*

revelation—whether doctrines or histories—or commands, properly so called, or threatenings—or prophecies—or prayers.” It is foreign to our present purpose, to give instances of each of these different latitudes: suffice it to say, “that from the connection of the passage, and from the considerations which might be mentioned, it is evident, that the word *commandments*, in the text, is used in its greatest extent of meaning, as comprehending under it the whole system of revelation. Hence, to do God’s commandments in the sense of the text, is neither more nor less, than to make a proper use of every thing which God hath revealed.” Taking the phrase in this sense, the three following observations will sufficiently explain the duty of men in their present state of existence:

1. *To do God’s commandments*, is, in the first place, to receive every thing, which is in this Bible, as the genuine word of God. The first act of obedience to any commandment is, the acknowledging of the authority by which it is enjoined. Nature tells us that our Creator and Preserver, is our sovereign lord and proprietor. It is quite reasonable, that the Almighty Being, from whom we have received our all, should be entitled to all our services. Nature farther tells us, that in order to serve our Creator and Preserver, we must have a considerable acquaintance with his being and perfections; with the various relations in which we stand to him, and with the nature and extent of that service which will be acceptable. But nature farther tells us, that in all her extensive dominions, no such information can be found. The experience of ages hath demonstrated, that the human mind, when simply in a state of nature, is, with respect to religion, in utter *darkness*. The same experience demonstrates, that no effort of the human mind, while under the mere guidance of unassisted nature, can extricate itself from these

clouds of darkness. Men, when thus left, have uniformly *by professing themselves wise, only become fools*. Hence it follows, that the genuine language of pure unadulterated nature, whether men attend to her voice or not is, that a revelation from God to man, is, a possible thing—that it is very desirable—Nay, farther, that it is a thing which, in the present situation of the human mind, is absolutely necessary.

Nature, when allowed to speak, must say, that a revelation from God to man, is a *possible thing*: for certainly, the being who at first created, and who still preserves the universe, can at any time he pleases make known in a supernatural manner, his will or any part of his will to any of his intelligent creatures. Nature when allowed to speak, farther tells us, “that what we call a revelation, is *extremely desirable*.” for since we are to serve our Creator and Preserver, it is certainly desirable to know when and in what manner. In fine, a very small attention to the nature of things, must convince us, that in the present state of the human mind, a revelation from God to man is *absolutely necessary*: for, since nature after her most strenuous exertions, remains incapable of giving us that information, respecting sin and duty—the perfections of Deity—and the present and future state, which is essentially necessary to right worship—and at the same time we find it to be a strong and plain dictate of nature, that it is our duty to worship our Creator and Preserver—the conclusion is unavoidable—“*A supernatural communication must be made.*”

Such a communication, brethren, christians maintain, the Supreme Being hath made to men in this book which we call the Bible. Jehovah hath in this book clearly and fully made known to men, all which is necessary for the discharge of present duty. This communication was made at different periods—to different men—and in different modes. All these dif-

ferent modes were, however, in the most strict sense of the word, *supernatural*. That is, the persons who were the medium of communication, did not receive the knowledge which they communicated to their fellow men, in any of the ordinary methods, in which men receive or acquire knowledge.

The evidence upon which christians receive this communication as a genuine revelation from God, is most incontestible. To exhibit the whole of this evidence in its proper order and force, would require far more time than is allowed for an ordinary discourse : nor is such an exhibition necessary for our present purpose. A short statement of its great out lines may not however be unsuitable.

A careful perusal of the sacred volume, must convince every candid enquirer, that the penmen of that book were men of *common sense*, and men who at the time of writing it, were in the full use of all their faculties. Hence we must conclude that they were men who could not possibly have been *deceived themselves*. The same perusal of that book must convince us, that these men were men of *candor* and *honesty*. Hence we cannot suppose that they had any design to deceive others. Add to this, that the doctrines which they taught, and the lives which they led, were generally such as exposed them to the rage and hatred of those among whom they dwelt : they were particularly obnoxious to the great and the powerful ; and upon their own principles they were, if they were *deceivers* and *perjured persons* in this world, to be exposed to the severest sufferings in the next. Hence they could propose no advantage, either in this world or the world to come, *by telling a lie*, or making any attempt to impose upon their fellow men. From the character and situation of these men then, we draw a very strong presumption, that what they have delivered to us is the *genuine word of God*.

But our faith in the divine authority of the Scripture, does not solely depend on *presumptive evidence*. The purity of its doctrines—the harmony of all its parts—the exact accomplishment of all its prophecies—the miracles which have been wrought in its favour—the remarkable manner in which it has been preserved—and the efficacy which it has had in reforming the world—*these*, when considered in all their parts, and when considered as connected with one another, form a chain of argument, which forces conviction upon every unprejudiced mind, and a conviction equal to that produced by a mathematical demonstration.

It belongs, then, to all those who would do God's commandments, to be well acquainted with the evidence upon which they receive these commandments as divine. It is to be lamented, that a very large portion of professed christians, are woefully deficient in this part of their duty. Without a considerable degree of this branch of knowledge, a very large portion of obedience to God's commandments, must be little else than mere will worship, or adhering to the tradition of the fathers. On the contrary, an accurate acquaintance with the nature and extent of this evidence, makes us rational, circumspect and confident in our services. We behold the authority of the *Great God* instamped upon every article of revealed truth. We receive and hold fast every thing which is in this book, not as the word of man, but as it is in very deed the word of the *living God*.

Nor is it solely to those who call themselves *christians*, that the knowledge of this evidence is of importance. The subject is equally interesting to every individual of the human race. To be in a state of indifference in this matter, is dangerous in the last degree. Nature tells us, that the Supreme Being ought to be worshipped. Christians maintain that revelation alone

can give that information which is necessary for acceptable worship. It becomes, then, all those who have any regard to the honour of the great God, or to the honour of their immortal souls, to be convinced upon solid, rational evidence, whether these things are so.

2. To do God's commandments, is to make particular application of the various truths which are therein revealed, to our own particular situation. The Bible being a full revelation of all which is necessary to be known, for present or future happiness, the truths which are therein revealed, are adapted to the diversified situations of men. Scripture and experience unite in testifying that men in their natural state, are *ignorant and rebellious and condemned*. They farther unite in testifying, that men are, of themselves, wholly incapable to expiate that divine wrath which their offences have procured, and are daily still procuring. Revelation, and revelation alone, makes known the remedy. Here we are told, that sin can be destroyed, and the sinner saved—that God in our nature hath actually made an atonement for sin—and that by virtue of this atonement, the guilty are pardoned, the ignorant instructed, and the rebellious subdued.

Scripture and experience farther unite in testifying, that while men are in this state of existence, whether they are considered as saints or sinners, they shall daily be exposed to a variety of troubles; that while we dwell in tabernacles of clay, we shall have troubles of body and troubles of mind, troubles inflicted upon our person—upon our character—upon our connections—in short, upon all our enjoyments whether civil or religious. To suit then these diversified cases, revelation abounds with every thing which is necessary to direct and support us in trouble. Let the cause of trouble be what it will, there is something to

be found in *his book*, which if rightly applied, will not only alleviate but completely remove the distress.

Those then, who would do God's commandments, must make particular application of these different truths, to their different situations and circumstances. Considering themselves as in a state of nature, let them consider, and consider with particular application, the manner in which the scriptures describe the great wickedness of the human heart. Let them consider attentively, for instance, such passages as these: *Ps.* xiv. 1—6. *Jer.* xvii. 9. *Matt.* xv. 18 & 19, and *Rom.* iii. 9—18. In close connexion with these and similar passages, let them consider with equal carefulness, the awful threatenings which are denounced by God himself, against sin and sinners of every description. (Such as *Ps.* vii. 12 & 13. *Rom.* ii. 3—9, and *chap.* iii. 19 & 20—also *Gal.* iii. 10.) In fine, it is at once the privilege and the duty of those who consider themselves as poor condemned sinners, carefully to consider all those passages which describe the person and the offices of Immanuel. Let them make themselves acquainted with the gracious and absolutely free promises which are made to the worst of sinners. In the strength of promised grace let them endeavour to receive these promises, not only as true in themselves, but also as particularly addressed to them. In short, encouraged by such declarations, let them without any delay account it a faithful saying, and worthy of their most hearty acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to *save sinners, even the chief.* (See *Is.* i. 18—liii. 4—6—also, *lv.* 1—4. *Ez.* xxxvi. 25—27. *Rom.* iii. 21—26.) To sum up all: let all who call themselves christians, and who are in any situation of difficulty, carefully consider what that difficulty is: let them apply to their Bibles for a particular description of both the cause and the cure of their disease; and let them consider every

thing which is said about it, as addressed to them in particular: that is, as intended for their particular instruction. It is thus that men make a proper use of revelation: they consider themselves as *interested* in every thing which is there said, to be as particularly addressed to them, as if there was not another person in the world; *and in so doing, they keep God's commandments.* Once more:

3. Men do God's commandments when the knowledge which they have of divine truth is such as to make them *really holy in heart and life.* The ultimate design of the whole of revelation is to make men holy. In the words of the apostle, it is "*to teach men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and Godly in this present world.*" In vain then is all our knowledge, and all our belief, of the divine authority of the Scriptures; equally vain is all our knowledge of the suitableness of the different parts of Scripture to our diversified situation. All this is vain unless this knowledge and this belief produce purity of heart and purity of life. Wherever the truths of revelation are rightly known and believed, *a regenerating influence* is felt—the mind is created anew—receives a new and a quite different set of principles. Malice and evil speaking, guile and hypocrisy, with every other selfish, unworthy passion are laid aside. (See 1 Pet. i. 23, and li. 1—3. Also, Rom. viii. 5—9.) However much these and such malignant principles may at time *rage*, they shall never *reign*, never be the ruling principle of action in the renewed mind. (See Rom. vi. 6—23.) These evil propensities being laid aside, their place is supplied by the fruits of the spirit, which are *love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance,* and such like. Gal. iv. 22—25.

The heart being thus purified, the outward actions are a living testimony of the reality, and the greatness

of the change. Every duty of the church, the family and the closet, is not only *punctually*, but it is also conscientiously observed: observed as in the immediate presence of God: observed also, from a *supreme love* to God as the chief good. (See an excellent summary of Christian Morals. Rom. xii. 1. And also, Tit. ii. 1—end.)

Thus brethren we have held up to your view in miniature, the character of the man who from right principles observes God's commandments. May the picture soon be realized in every one of your experiences. In having it thus realized, your own interest is deeply involved. The text plainly suggests, that there is an inseparable connection established betwixt thus doing God's commandments, and the enjoyment of happiness in the other world. *Blessed, &c. &c.*

The future happiness of the righteous is in the text expressed by the phrase, "*Having a right to the tree of life, and entering in through the gates into the city.*" No person of common sense need be informed, that these are figurative expressions: of the tree of life we have an account in the second verse in this chapter; of the city here spoken of, we have a large account in the preceding chapter from the 10th verse and downwards. We stop not at the time to consider the propriety and the beauty of each of these figurative expressions: suffice it to say, "that in condescension to our weakness, the Holy Spirit hath here in a particular manner adapted his language to our present embodied state; and that when taken altogether, they hold up the idea of *the most complete happiness.*" To explain this general idea a little, we may observe:

1. That the saints in the other world, shall *be happy in themselves.* They shall then be holy as God is holy. The good work of sanctification which is here begun, shall then be completed. The divine nature which is here in its leading features marked out in their soul,

shall there appear in full perfection. The understanding shall be restored to primeval integrity. It shall be light in the Lord, quick in discerning divine things. The will shall be all obedience to the will of God. The affections shall be pure and holy in all their movements. No unhallowed passions shall ever more pollute the mind. The nature of their bodies shall also exactly correspond with the purity of their souls. Those gross humours which in this state excite the lusts of the flesh, shall in that state have no existence. They shall be sanctified in soul, in body, and in spirit.

But of such an exalted state of purity, we cannot in our present embodied state, form any adequate conception. Hence, we are forced to lay aside plain language, and again have recourse to figures. To let us understand that the saints in the other world, shall be entirely divested of all desires after sensual gratifications, it is said, "*They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light upon them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them to living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*" To let us understand that the saints, in that state, shall be perfect in holiness, "they are represented as arrayed in white robes, and robes washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb." And to let us know that they shall then have a complete victory over all sin and all temptation, they are said "*to be kings and priests, and to reign for ever; they are represented as seated upon thrones; as having crowns upon their heads, and palms in their hands.*"

2. The saints in the other world shall be happy in *their company and exercises.* There they shall be admitted into the immediate presence of *God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.* They shall no longer see these divine persons through ordinances, as through a glass darkly; but they shall see them face to face, and

talk with them as men talk with their friends. Hence it is said, “*that we shall see him as he is.*” Hence it is said, “*that in the city there is no temple, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.*” Hence also, it is said, “*that they shall see his face;*” and farther, “*that the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the light of the Lamb is the light thereof.*”

Next to the company of these divine persons, the saints shall, in the other world, be happy in the fellowship which they shall have with the holy angels, and with one another. However perfect the saints may be in a future state of existence, they shall be only creatures, and therefore stand in need of *created society*. They are represented, “*as serving God day and night*”—that is, continuing in an unwearied and uninterrupted course of divine service. But we are by no means to suppose, that their natures shall then be any more, than they are now, able to continue always in the highest grade of holy services. As a relaxation from holding direct and immediate intercourse with the great, the incomprehensible Father of Spirits, the weakness of their nature will require them frequently to hold a rational and a holy intercourse with one another and with other spirits. All this intercourse will, however, be most pure. No jarring interests—no little peevish selfish views, shall now interrupt their fellowship and disturb their peace. With one heart and one mouth, they shall at once advance the glory of their master, and promote the happiness of each other.

Correspondent to their dignified nature, shall be the exercises of this happy society—they shall then in God’s light see light clearly—the dark mysteries, and frequently in our present view of things, the contradictory dispensations of Providence, shall then be completely unravelled. They shall look back and consi-

der the way in which they were led, through the present vale of tears, and they shall see that goodness and mercy accompanied them in every step. The mysteries of redemption shall also in that state, be more fully unfolded. New and more extensive views of divine truth shall be continually springing up in the glorified mind. All these exercises shall be accompanied with the warmest, the most sublime, the most enrapturing description of praise:—“*And I beheld,*” says John, “*And I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures, and the elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, and wisdom and strength, and honour, and glory and blessing.*”

3. The saints in the other world shall be happy in the duration of their enjoyments. This duration shall be for ever and ever, without any end. In our most happy moments on earth, there is always this one thing to damp our joys: some time or other sooner or later these must end. Not so the happiness of the saints in the other world. The city to which they are admitted is made of the most lasting materials. The tree of which they eat is *the tree of life*. All their enjoyments, in short, shall endure just as long as the eternal God lives. When ages numerous as the drops of the ocean—the sand which lies along the sea shore—the piles of grass which deck the mountains—and the leaves which the winds of autumn scatter over unmeasured forests. When ages numerous as these shall have passed and again passed, and been multiplied into one another till the imagination itself is lost, the happiness of the saints in the other world shall be just as far from being ended as it was when it first commenced. *Blessed then, truly blessed* are those who do

his commandments, and thus have a right to the tree of life, and enter in through the gates into the city.

It only remains that we now

Attend to the connexion there is betwixt doing our duty here, and our entering into happiness in the other world: and a short review of what we have said above, will make the nature of this connexion betwixt *duty* and happiness, plain and easy to be understood.

We have said, that by doing God's commandments, we are to understand the making a proper use of every part of revelation; and also, that the state of happiness referred to in the text, is a state of *perfection*, and particularly a *perfection in holiness*. These two things laid together, and properly considered, and it follows:

1. That it is by doing God's commandments that the saints obtain a *title* to the happiness of the other world. Those who make a proper use of every part of revelation know, "that they are by nature children of wrath; that they are in the sight of God abominable; and that they are both unable and unwilling to effectuate their own deliverance. (See to this purpose Eph. li. 1—3. Tit. iii. 3. Also, 1 Tim. i. 12—16.) They farther know, that Jesus is in the Scriptures, and in the preaching of the gospel set forth as the *propitiation through faith in his blood*; and that it is only by having an interest in this propitiation, that men are delivered from wrath and made heirs of bliss. (See to this purpose Is. lxi. 1—3. Also, Acts iii. 19—26, and iv. 10—12, and xiii. 26. Also, Rom. iii. 24—26.) In fine, they know that it is one of the first of God's commandments, that guilty condemned creatures should believe in this propitiation—that is, receive it as their own in particular. Hence in the strength of grace received, they account it a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and the chief of sinners. As sinners then, and the chief of sinners,

they endeavour to receive *him as their own*. (See to this purpose, Ex. xx. 1 & 3. Ps. l. 7, and 2 Cor. v. 18 & 19.) Thus believing in Jesus as the great propitiation, they pass from death unto life. They are thus made the righteousness of God in their surety—are delivered from the curse of the law, Jesus having been made a curse for them. They are consequently made heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—that is, possessed of a fair and incontestible title to the heavenly inheritance. (See John iii. 18—36. Also, Rom. viii. 1—2. 2 Cor. v. 21, and Gal. iii. 13.

2. Present duty and future happiness are inseparably connected, inasmuch as it is by doing God's commandments here, that the saints become *meet for the happiness of the other world*. What communion hath light with darkness? or what concord hath Christ with Beliel? How could men take any pleasure in the holy company and the holy exercises of the saints above, with a corrupt unsanctified nature? The truths of revelation, or in other words, God's commandments, are however the great instrument of sanctification. Through the proper use of every part of revealed truth, the saints are gradually transformed into the divine image, and thus *made meet for the heavenly inheritance*. It is through the proper use of every part of revealed truth, that the saints become daily more acquainted with the evil of sin—with the beauty of holiness, and with the quickening and sanctifying influence of the holy spirit. They thus die into sin and live unto righteousness. Make daily progress in sanctification, and advance every hour a step nearer the perfection of bliss. That is, they are by every one of their advances, rendered more capable of enjoying the exercises of that place, *into which there shall in no wise enter any thing which defileth, or which worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they only who are written in the Lamb's book of life*.

To conclude : The subject which we have been considering, shews us

1. The great excellency of the Scriptures. This volume, brethren, is indeed the *book of books*. It is a light to our feet and a lamp to our path. It teaches us what we are taught no where else : how we may be happy both in this world, and the next. Is it not then lamentable that there should in general be so little regard paid to this book ? I speak now not of the conduct of professed infidels ; but of the conduct of professed christians. And, brethren, do you really think you shew that you hold this book in high estimation, when you scarcely ever look to it ? when you never carry it with you to church ? nay, when you make the Bible of your father or grand-mother serve yourselves and all your children ? Are you anxious to have your children well dressed and well educated ? in short, anxious to get them every thing, but this one thing ? Shameful indeed.

2. The subject which we have considered, shews us that it is at once our interest and our duty to be well acquainted with these scriptures ; and particularly *with the order and the connection* which is between all the truths of revelation. It is not, brethren, the knowledge of this or the other article of revelation, viewed by itself, which will make us wise and good : we must know and feel the influence of *all God's commandments*. We must see how one divine truth, naturally supports, or prepares the way for another. Let those, then, who call themselves christians, and who would be wise unto salvation, carefully study this book of books. Let them read it frequently in secret and in their families. Let them meditate frequently upon the truths therein contained. Let them compare one part of it with another, and ponder in their heart the meaning and importance of every part. In fine, let them accompany all these and similar exercises with

frequent fervent prayer. In the words which the Holy Spirit hath taught us, let each of us say, "*Open thou mine eyes, O Lord, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. May the spirit which the departing Saviour promised to his people, descend upon us and teach us all things, and bring all things to our remembrance.*"

The conclusion of the whole matter is, "*Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. Godliness is profitable to all things, having not only the promise of this life, but also of that which is to come. All is well which ends well. If you would be accounted men of wisdom, be well acquainted with God's commandments. If you would be useful and comfortable in your day and generation, be well acquainted with God's commandments. If, when you pass out of this world, you would be separated from every abomination and be brought into the full enjoyment of every thing which is good, keep God's commandments. For blessed, and blessed only are they who do his commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.*"

---

## SERMON III.

### GODLIKE FORGIVENESS.

Luke xxiii. 34. *Then said Jesus, Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

**T**HE words and the conduct of a dying friend, usually make a deep impression on the surviving relations—There is a something in death, which arrests the attention of the most careless and indifferent—The very thoughts that these are the last words of a compa-

nion and a friend, gives to them an importance and force altogether irresistible. The looks, the sighs, the turnings, the every portion of an expiring mortal, are all full of instruction. Every word which drops from his mouth is caught as an oracle, and to collect these small detached sentences, to talk them over, and to consider every little circumstance connected with them, generally forms one of the chief employments of those whose lot it is to watch over the breathless clay. Such, brethren, were the feelings, and such were the exercises of the friends who attended the crucifixion of our Lord. Death here appeared in awful solemnity. In suffering humanity, there were evidently the majesty and the dignity of a God. The friends of the sufferer attended, and eagerly picked up every expression which he uttered; with a scrupulous minuteness, they deposited in their memories every circumstance which occurred.

Among the many remarkable expressions which dropt from the mouth of this illustrious sufferer, that which we have chosen as the subject of this day's discourse, holds a distinguished place. Never was sorrow like our Lord's sorrow; and never did sufferer behave as our Lord behaved. *And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors one on his right hand, and another on his left—there they parted his garments and cast lots—there the people stood beholding and the rulers also derided him, saying, he saved others, let him save himself, if he be Christ the chosen of God.*

Thus much for the insolent wickedness of the tormentors. But how did the glorious sufferer behave? Did he render evil for evil? Did he pray for fire to come down from heaven and consume these monsters? No: far, far from it. In the midst of all these indignities, he calmly lifts up his eyes to heaven, and says

in the text, “ Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

May the spirit of Jesus infuse a similar disposition into the hearts of every one of his professed followers. While we in particular, at this time, muse upon these words---While we endeavour to look into that heart, which in a situation the most trying was melted with benevolence---let us also be anxious to catch the sacred fire, and be transformed into the same divine image.

In leading your thoughts upon this subject, we shall consider---

I. The objects of the prayer---*our Lord's crucifiers.*

II. The matter of the prayer---*forgiveness,* and

III. The argument by which the prayer is enforced---*they know not what they do.*

In considering the first part of the subject, the chief idea which is to be attended to is, the highly aggravated nature of the crime, and to exhibit this in as lively and striking a manner as possible, let us consider our Lord's crucifiers as his countrymen, as his blood relations, as the most abandoned of mankind, as professors of religion, and as high flaming professors, and as men who had enjoyed frequent opportunities of being thoroughly convinced, that in putting Jesus to death, they were not only putting to death an innocent, but an extremely useful man. And,

1. Those who put our Lord to death were *his own countrymen.* To be ill-used by those who are of a strange language and strange manners is severe enough, but to meet with ill-treatment from those who are of the same country, and who are by education and habit attached to the same customs with ourselves, is a thousand times more cutting. To be ill-used at any time by our own countrymen is painful beyond expression; but there are a variety of cases in which this treatment may be very highly aggravated. In the

crucifixion of our Lord, every circumstance which could aggravate the offence occurred. It was not enough that our Lord's countrymen should use him ill themselves; with their own hands they bound him, delivered him over to strangers. *Thine own nation, says the Roman governor, thine own nation hath delivered thee to me.* It was not enough that they should falsely accuse him of crimes which in the Jewish code required punishment. That his destruction might be complete, they charge him with being ready to head those who should attempt to throw off the Roman yoke. They stoop to the baseness and meanness of requiring him to be put to death, for that which every lover of his country must always consider as a virtue, and a virtue of the first rank. *And they began to accuse him, saying, we found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cesar, saying that he himself is Christ a king: and again, They were the more fierce, saying he stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Gallilee to this place; and once more—If, say they, thou let this man go, thou art not Cesar's friend.* In short, such was the peculiar depravity of our Lord's countrymen, that when strangers declared him innocent—when those who, from their infancy, had been glutted with blood, urged that he might go free, they, with a hellish implacable disposition, urged that he might be crucified. Their conduct in this case, needs none of the arts of the rhetorician to expose its wickedness. The plain and simple narrative of the evangelist is just enough. Only open your bibles and read—*Luke xxiii. 13—23.*

2. Some of those who had an active hand in crucifying our Lord, were *blood relations*. Of this, indeed, so far as can be recollected, we have no direct proof, but a variety of circumstances make it probable. The evangelist John tells us, that when Jesus walked in Gallilee, not daring to walk in Jewry, because the

Jews at that time sought to kill him; some of *his brethren*, under which term the scripture includes all blood relations, said in an insulting upbraiding manner, *Depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works which thou dost; if thou dost these things, shew thyself.* For neither, it is added, *did his brethren believe in him.* Such was the disposition of his brethren, at a period at no great distance from the period which we are now considering, and since Judas, one of his own domestics, had betrayed him, and betrayed him with a kiss—since Peter, the most zealous of his disciples, had been so far left to himself as to deny him, and thrice deny him—we have strong reason to suspect, that these unbelieving brethren still retained their hatred, were still watching every opportunity of venting their spleen and ridicule, and since all the males among the Jews were, at this time, in Jerusalem, we may be pretty certain that these and other wicked relations were also present, and lost no time to join with the multitude. How cutting it is to be ill-used by our own relations, let the heart of a father or mother which has been so used tell. Yet such ill-treatment our Lord endured. *His own brethren*—bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh lifted up their voice with the infuriated rabble, and cried *crucify him, crucify him.*

3. Some of our Lord's crucifiers were of the *most abandoned of mankind.* All circumstances considered, no class of men are more abandoned than those who compose the standing armies of absolute monarchs. Idleness, and debauchery, and rapine are the whole of these men's employment. In raising standing armies, those who are at the helm of affairs usually find it to be their interest to have their levies from the very refuse of society. In supporting these armies, their interest is equally concerned in having them dead to every generous feeling, and ready to perpetrate, at a

moment's notice, the most shocking actions. And by such a class of men was our Lord insulted. It is written, *And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe and sent him again to Pilate.*

Nor were the tormentors of our Lord confined to those who were hired for such purposes. The innate wickedness of the human heart brought forth into the scene of action a vast croud of volunteers. The manner in which the meek and humble Jesus was carried from one man in authority to another, and from one corner of the city to the opposite, would naturally collect in his train all the idle, dissipated wretches, with which large and populous cities abound. To these nothing could be better entertainment, than to join Herod and his soldiers in ascribing to our Lord mock honors. *And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand, and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying; "Hail king of the Jews!" And they spit upon him, and took the reed and smote him on the head. And after they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him. And again—They that passed by reviled him wagging their heads.*

Nay, brethren, such is the awful depravity of human nature, that even while men are suffering for their own crimes, they are frequently ready to join the multitude in ridiculing innocence and goodness. Such was the case at the crucifixion of our Lord. *The thieves—the thieves, also, who were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth. And again—And one of the malefactors which were hanged, railed on him, saying, "If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us."*

For innocence and goodness to be thus insulted, is in the last degree cutting. There is a spirit in a man which requires, that if he is to be ill used, let him be ill

used by those who are in some respect his equals. Let him not be trodden under foot by those whose fathers he would have disdained to have set with the dogs of his flock. Yet to such indignities our Lord submitted. Some of our Lord's crucifiers were the very dregs of the people. Men, who, in every sense of the phrase, were the off-scouring of the earth.

4. Some of our Lord's crucifiers were *professors of religion, and high flaming professors*. It is no new thing, brethren, for men to deceive both themselves and others under the mask of great zeal for the preservation of pure and undefiled religion. While Herod and his men of war were setting Jesus at nought, we find the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders, at one corner, with great gravity and seriousness, prosecuting him through all the legal forms of justice, and at the other corner, collecting and stirring up the mob against him. In ascribing unto him mock honours, we find their holy men also as active as any. Their pure and tender conscience would not allow them, at this period, to enter the judgment hall of the Roman governor, lest they should be defiled, and thus rendered unfit for eating the passover—but this same conscience gave them no disturbance in suborning witnesses, in propagating falsehoods, and in associating with drunkards and swearers. No matter what was the company with which they associated, or what were the means which they used, they still maintained a pious character. It was zeal for their God and their religion which made them thus active. Pilate indeed, it is said, knew *that for envy they had delivered him up*. But not so, said these high sounding zealots, *We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he hath made himself the son of God*. Nay, such was the consummate hypocrisy of these sanctimonious devils, that when they had, in open court, extorted that confession upon which only they could, with any pretence,

bring him in guilty of death, and for which they had sought with such avidity, they rend their clothes, and appear to be quite thunderstruck at the horrid blasphemy. *And the high priest answered and said to him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the son of God. Jesus said unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you hereafter ye shall see the son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying he hath spoken blasphemy: what further need have we of witnesses? Behold now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him, and others smote him with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophecy unto us thou Christ, who is he that smote thee.* And was Jesus thus wounded in the house of his friends? Were these men, really men of piety? Were they not rather infernal spirits in human shape? The cloak of religion was spread out to obscure, if possible, the rays of the rising sun of righteousness.

We have only to add,

5. That our Lord's crucifiers were men who had enjoyed frequent opportunities of being thoroughly convinced, that in putting Jesus to death, they were not only destroying *an innocent, but a remarkably useful man.* Though these men had never known any more of Jesus, than what they might have known of him while they were putting him to death, we would have sufficient ground for the propositions enunciated. In the short account which we have of his trial and crucifixion, we have sufficient evidence that he was both an innocent and a useful man. After the most rigid scrutiny, the civil court of the nation was once and again, forced to issue a verdict in his favour. *And Pilate when he had called together the chief*

*priests, and the rulers of the people, said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me as one that perverteth the people, and behold I having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things which ye accuse him. No nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him, and lo, nothing worthy of death is due unto him. I will therefore chastise him and release him.* His miraculous power had been exerted in healing the ear of one of those who had been active in apprehending him. While arraigned at the bar, also, every one must have been struck with the sagacity and wisdom of his answers. But the evidence of his innocence and utility was not confined to the few hours in which he was arraigned as a criminal. His actions had for years borne him witness. There was scarce an individual in Judea, who had not heard of the benevolent actions of Jesus of Nazareth. His father had sent him forth, *to preach good tidings to the meek—to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison doors to those who were bound—to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God to comfort all those that mourn.*

In these and such like actions, had the life of this accused person been spent. Among all the thousands of Judah, which at that time resorted to the capital, not one could convince him of sin. On the contrary, almost every one could bear witness to the gracious words which had frequently proceeded out of his mouth. Scarce one of them but what could tell of some brother, or sister, or acquaintance, who had felt in a remarkable manner, the efficacy of his goodness. Yet be astonished, O ye heavens, at the depravity and ingratitude of the human heart! The man who was thus innocent and useful, is condemned! And condemned too by multitudes of those who had shared of his goodness! Could apostate spirits have been guilty

of such a base wicked action! Exceed it they could not, and for the honour of human nature they never have had an opportunity of shewing us how they would have acted in such a case.

Thus much, brethren, for the objects for whom our Lord in the text prays. He prays for those who were actually putting him to death—and putting him to death under the most humiliating circumstances. The men who thus acted, were his own countrymen—were his own blood relations, &c. &c.

And for such men he prays, and prays for forgiveness to them. “*Father,*” says he, “*forgive them.*” We are utterly at a loss which most to admire—the wickedness of the men, or the compassion and merciful disposition of the Saviour. Our loss will be still greater, when we, according to the plan proposed, shall have, in the second place, considered

*The matter of the prayer.*

Forgiveness is, in general, a deliverance from guilt; and guilt is a binding over to punishment. The spirit of the text does not require us to enter into a very large discussion of this important article of our holy religion. It is our present purpose only to state, those circumstances about pardon or forgiveness, which will set forth in the most striking manner, the affection and good will of the dying Saviour. And for this purpose, it may be observed:

1. That forgiveness can only be procured by the *blood of the atonement*. It is said, that without the shedding of blood, there is no remission—that the wages of sin is death—that the soul who sinneth shall die, &c. &c. &c. To endure such a punishment is beyond the power of any mere creature. But what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, *and by a sin offering condemned sin in the flesh*. Hence it is said, that we have redemption

*through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin.* Hence it is said, that he made him to be sin, for us who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in him. Hence also, it is said, That if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins. Now, brethren, behold in this view of forgiveness, as in large characters, the unparalleled compassion of expiring Immanuel. Was there ever compassion like this compassion. *Father forgive them.* Let that blood which they are actually shedding, be the price of their pardon. Let those wounds which they are now inflicting upon my inoffensive body, be an atonement for the sin of their soul. Truly, brethren, this is not the manner of men. Infinite and divine perfections here shine forth conspicuously!

Let us bring to our remembrance

2. That forgiveness can only be applied to the guilty soul, by the Holy Spirit, *and by the spirit sent by the exalted Saviour.* We stop not at the time to enter into a full discussion of the office which the Holy Spirit has in the economy of redemption. Suffice it to say, that it is his office to apply to the soul the blessings which Father and Son have mutually procured. Of these blessings, *pardon* or forgiveness, holds a distinguished place. It is in fact, that blessing, which being once bestowed, all other blessings as naturally follow, as the streams follow the opening of the fountain. Hence it is said, “*Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us—that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, and that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*” It is necessary for us also particularly to remember, that the Spirit, as the applier of these blessings, is the immediate fruit of our Lord’s ascension and intercession. Hence our Lord says, “*It is expedient for you, that I*

*go away; for if I go not away, the comforter will not come unto you. And when he is come he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment."* Hence Jesus is said to *be exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins unto Israel.* Hence it came to pass, that being exalted at God's right hand, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He, upon the day of Pentecost, and at several subsequent meetings, shed forth these influences, by which multitudes even of his betrayers and murderers, were convinced and made partakers of a free pardon.

Behold then, brethren, in this view of forgiveness also, the unparalleled, the Godlike compassion of the dying Saviour—*Father forgive them.* May they, even these abandoned wretches, in due time feel the efficacy of this atonement which I am now making. May the same blood which is carried into the holiest of all, and makes known the atrocity of their crime, also procure for them the quickening, the regenerating influence of the spirit of pardon. Let us take into view,

3. That the natural and immediate effect of forgiveness being applied, is to make *men completely happy in both this and the other world*, the application of pardon is that which brings the soul from a state of wrath, and unchangeably fixes it in a state of favour. Blest with this pardon, the soul has ever afterwards a ready and free access to God, as its own God in covenant. It is under the influence of this pardon also, that the sanctifying graces of the spirit are communicated, whereby the soul is gradually delivered from the pollutions of iniquity, and beautified with holiness, and thus in time fitted for the full enjoyment of happiness in the land of bliss.

Once more then brethren, behold as in large characters, the unheard of compassion of an expiring

God-man. With his dying breath he blesses those who were exerting their utmost against him. He gives blessings for curses—love for hatred—honour for disgrace—life for death. *Father forgive them.* May all the blessings of the new covenant soon be bestowed upon those poor infatuated creatures. May their souls soon experience that peace and satisfaction which passeth all human understanding.

It only remains that we now attend to

*The argument* by which our Lord enforces this his petition : “ Father ” says he “ forgive them, *for they know not what they do.* ”

It is here necessary to remark, that this clause cannot be understood as intimating that the crucifiers of our Lord, sinned *through ignorance*, in the sense in which this term is usually taken. We have in a former part of the discourse, seen, that the majority of these men were men who had enjoyed frequent opportunities of being thoroughly convinced, that in putting Jesus to death, they not only destroyed an innocent, but a remarkably useful man. To what was there said we may now add, that the conviction and fate of Judas, and several other things which took place during the crucifixion, were sufficient to convince every man in the exercise of his reason, that in putting Jesus to death, they were bringing upon themselves *innocent blood*. We have therefore every reason to believe, that though there might be individuals in a different case, the great body of the people who were active in putting our Lord to death, sinned in direct opposition to their light and conviction.

In what sense then can the expression *they know not what they do*, be understood, as here applied? We answer that there are two senses in which, and in which only, it can be understood.

1. Take the expression as applies to themselves, and it intimates, that in committing this atrocious

crime—this crime against which their own conviction protested, they *were fool-hardy, and rushed as it were with their eyes open upon destruction.* While in madness, or frantic rage they exclaimed, his blood be upon us and our children, they in fact acted the part of the fool, who scatters around him fire-brands, arrows and death, and says am not I in sport? They by this daring act, set omnipotence at defiance—challenged the Almighty to do his worst—and if they were to be crushed to pieces, they would be satisfied, provided they could also accomplish the destruction of Jesus of Nazareth. Infatuated mortals! Who knoweth the power of God's anger? According to his fear so is his wrath. But says the Saviour, "Father forgive them, for *they know not what they do.*" Lord pity their folly—take them not at their word. Pardon their iniquity, for it is great. It will redound in an eminent manner, to the glory of the exceeding riches of thy grace, to grant forgiveness to such atrocious, such heaven daring sinners. But

2. Take the expression as it applies to the purpose of heaven, and it intimates "that in direct opposition to what they intended, this wicked action was the exact accomplishment of what was before determined, and that the whole would be overruled, to the glory of God and the good of men." An inspired commentator hath taught us to understand the clause in this sense; "*For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were gathered together, to do whatsoever thy hand and thy council determined before to be done.*" And to the same purpose in another passage. "*Him being delivered up by the determinate council and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.*" It is necessary however, here to bear upon our minds, that though the action itself was irrevoc-

cably fixed in the purpose of heaven, all the sinfulness of the action was wholly of the creature. Nor can the purpose of heaven be plead as any alleviation of the crimes of men, and for this plain reason; the most irrevocable purpose of heaven, has no influence whatever upon the human will. The sinners in the case before us, for instance, acted just as freely as if there had been no decree.

Now brethren, behold the force of the argument when taken in this sense. "Father" says the Saviour, "forgive them, *for they know not what they do.*" They by putting Messiah to death, intended by one stroke, to destroy for ever Messiah's kingdom. Jehovah by this very action, intends to spoil principalities and powers. It is here and at this very time, that the seed of the woman is to bruise the head of the serpent. They by this action intend completely to destroy every thing which is good. In the purpose of heaven, this very death is the destruction of sin, and the restorer of every thing which is praiseworthy. Father then forgive them, *for they know not what they do.* May the end of this death be accomplished in these very individuals, who are now embruing their hands in my blood. May I have sure triumphs of my cross, even from among those who are my betrayers and murderers.

Thus much for what is called the doctrinal part of the discourse. The apostle Peter, has taught us the practical improvement which we ought to make of the subject. "Christ" says he, "*also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps; when he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him who judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin should live unto righteousness, by whose stripes we are healed.*" Do we ask why the innocent Jesus did suffer such indignities? The apostle in this

passage gives us the answer. He was then *bearing our sins*. These indignities were a part, and but a small part of the punishment which our sins deserved. Do we ask what was the great end with respect to us, which was to be accomplished by his thus bearing our sins? The answer is here also given; It was that we might *live unto righteousness*—by these his stripes we are healed. Do we still ask how we are to manifest that we are really alive unto righteousness; really thus interested in his vicarious sufferings? An answer to this question is also given; It is by being conformed to his image; being holy as he was holy; and particularly in following his example, *who, when he was reviled reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him who judgeth righteously*. Are we then, brethren, alive unto righteousness? Let us try ourselves by this mark. Have we any thing of the spirit of our Lord, with respect to the being disposed to forgive real or supposed injuries? It is utterly impossible, in our present imperfect state, to live very long in either civil or religious society, without receiving, or imagining we receive a great deal of ill treatment from those with whom we have intercourse. But were we to recollect the character which we profess to sustain, and the manner in which our Lord and master acted in such cases, our conduct and dispositions, would, in the most of those cases, be very different from what they are. We ought also, on the present occasion, to bring to our remembrance, that we can scarcely in any instance of being what we call ill used, lay our hands upon our hearts, and say that we *are completely innocent*. Nor can we say that we are half so ill used, as he who was perfectly innocent was. How unbecoming then, of the character of both the man and the christian, is that disposition which is so prevalent among us, and which is just the opposite of the spirit of forgiveness. A-

gain—Do we feel any thing like indignation, rising up in our hearts, against the Jews and others who used our Lord so ill? And do we never consider that we have a thousand times offered to him equal, nay, greater insults? Have we not frequently profaned his Sabbath—trifled with his most solemn ordinances—and thought little of the exceeding riches of his grace? These and such like insults to our exalted Lord, and insults of a highly aggravated nature, are far worse than the indignities offered him at his crucifixion.

In fine. Let the benevolent and forgiving disposition of the Saviour, be used as an encouragement for sinners of every description, for sinners the most atrocious, to come and receive him as their own saviour. Verily it is a truth, that Jehovah hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Verily he is now saying, come now and let us reason together; though your iniquities be as scarlet, they shall be as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and the chief of sinners. All those and similar truths, are confirmed to us by the text of this day. While sinners are exerting their utmost against Jesus and his cause, he is saying “*Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.*”

## SERMON IV.

### THE COMPREHENSIVE BLESSING.

Rom. iii. 32. *He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*

**T**HE verse read, is one of the many in the Sacred Volume, which contain an inexhaustible fund of rich gospel truth. The leading ideas contained in this verse, are those which shall occupy the attention of the redeemed, through an endless eternity. According to the apostle John, who was favoured with a glimpse of the heavenly glory, *the Lamb slain, and slain for them*, is to be the burden of the song of those who are redeemed from among men.

There is perhaps no case in which the carnality and wickedness of the human heart is more evident, than when it is brought into contact with a verse of this kind. There is scarcely any wordly matter, but what will in a greater or a less degree, excite our attention. We read a piece of the common news with avidity: though we have heard of things of the same kind, and perhaps even of the very same thing times without number; though we consider ourselves and families as not in the least, or at most but very remotely interested in it; yet what ever is the common talk of the day, is eagerly sought after, is greedily devoured, and is as anxiously communicated. But when such a matter as that of the text is announced, though we openly acknowledge it to be a matter of the last importance—a matter in itself so grand, that the like never was, and can never possibly be again—a matter in which our interest both for time and eternity is deeply involved—

though all this and much more is freely acknowledged, yet so wofully corrupted and carnal is our nature, that we can allow it to be read or spoken in our hearing without being the least affected. The reader or preacher is just going to tell an old stale story—a story which for eighteen hundred years, has been repeated a thousand times every day.

Yes, brethren, all this is true. It has been repeated so often—and it shall be repeated ten thousand times as often, ages without end. It is once more repeated in your hearing, and it is repeated *for the savour of life unto life, or the savour of death unto death, to every one present.*

It is written, *He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*

It is evident that the text consists of two parts. There is first a fact stated: *God the Father spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.* There is next an inference drawn from this fact: “That since, he hath given us this much, the best gift which he had to bestow, he will without doubt *freely give us all things.*” The fact is certain—the inference is natural and just—and the strength of the argument irresistible.

In considering the *fact*, or the first general division, these four things demand our attention: The giver—the gift—the manner in which he was delivered—and the persons in whose behalf he was given. The giver is God the Father—the gift is his own Son—in the bestowing this gift, he *spared him not, but delivered him up.*—and all this was *for us.* Let us consider each of these in their order:

1. Let us consider the giver. This was God the Father—Jehovah—the Creator and Preserver of all things—He who is self-existent—who has all power, and who is infinitely happy in himself. We must

particularly, on the present occasion, consider him as of *immaculate purity*—of purer eyes than to behold iniquity—who is glorious in his holiness. We must also bring to our recollection his *inflexible justice*, and his positive threatenings against sin of every kind. We must remember that an essential part of his character is, “that he will by no means clear the guilty,” and that he hath in almost every form declared, “that the soul who sinneth shall die.” In close connexion with this we are also to remember, “that both in his nature and purpose, he is unchangeable—that his counsel shall stand, and that he shall perform all his pleasure.” We must also on this occasion bring to our remembrance, “that this is the Jehovah against whom we had sinned—the Jehovah whom we had provoked and offended in the most aggravating manner, times and ways without number. In one word, God the Father must be viewed as sustaining the dignity of heaven—as seeing to the honour of his broken law, and the satisfaction of divine justice. Thus much for the giver. Let us consider

2. *The gift.* What was it that Jehovah as sustaining this character gave? Why, it was nothing less than *his Son* and *his own Son*. *His own Son*, that is, as it expressed in parallel passages, *his only begotten Son*. One who was and is his Son in a sense peculiar to himself. Jehovah had all at his disposal in heaven and earth; every thing which men call valuable. And behold, when he would give a proof of his love to the sons of men, which of all that he had at his disposal did he bestow? Not gold or silver, or any precious ornament, or any thing which is ranked among the riches of this world; *but, a Son*. Not a son of an ordinary kind, a man or an angel, (for these are also called his sons)—but, *his own Son—his only begotten Son*—a Son of the same nature and of the same glory with himself. *For God so loved the world, that he gave his*

*only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

To describe all the inherent properties of this gift; would require eternity itself. Suffice it to say, that he was from eternity the delight of his Father. A voice from the most excellent glory once and again proclaimed, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." In another passage he is stiled the only begotten Son which is *in the bosom of the Father*. As he is the delight of God the Father, so he is in like manner, the supreme delight of holy angels and all pure spirits. The words of the church, when enraptured with his supreme excellence, may serve as a specimen of the united exultation of all who know any thing of him. "My beloved," says she, "is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. His head is as the most fine gold; his locks are bushy, and black as a raven: His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set: His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers; his lips like lillies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh: His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl; his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires: His legs are as pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold; his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars: His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."

Having thus shortly glanced at the gift, let us turn our attention

3. To the manner in which he was bestowed, God the Father in bestowing him, *spared him not, but delivered him up*. Without spending time with critical observations, let us remark that this phrase intimates:

1. That when God the Father gave his Son in the work of our redemption, he gave him *freely without any hesitation*.—He *spared him not*. We are to re-

member, that he was under no obligation to bestow upon the fallen human race any gift, far less a gift of such immense value. We are farther to bring to our recollection, that no power whatever could *force him*, in this or any other matter. He loved us and favoured us merely because he loved us—according to his own good pleasure. No backwardness was manifested in bestowing this gift; on the contrary, the greatest readiness on the part of heaven, was on every occasion conspicuous. He took the earliest opportunity of announcing his determination. Scarcely had the introduction of sin into the world rendered such a gift necessary, than it was declared; “the seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent.” By subsequent revelations—by types and figures, and by a great variety of other things, he for the space of four thousand years, gradually prepared the world for his bestowing him. And at last in the fulness of time, God sent forth his own Son, made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. Again:

2. The phrase intimates that this Son was given *fully without any reserve*. He *spared him not*. He was wholly given up. His body—his soul—his character—his divine person—and his human and divine natures in his one divine person. All, all was necessary to accomplish the great work of our salvation—to be a sacrifice for sin—all, therefore, was freely given up without any reserve or limitation whatever. Again:

3. This Son was given up *to endure the most excruciating sufferings*. He *spared him not, but delivered him up*. When he was given up, he was as it were, driven from the divine presence. He was at least deprived of the divine glory and divine honours which from eternity he had enjoyed in the bosom of his Father. He became *a man of sorrows and acquainted*

*with grief.* The particulars of his sufferings have been long familiar to our ears. He who is the ancient of days, became an infant of a span long. He who is Lord of all became so poor as not to have where to lay his head. He who is adored by angels, and is the delight of his Father, became the despised and rejected of men—despised and rejected by the very men whom he came to save. He was harrassed by devils and insulted by the rabble. All those external sufferings were, however, as nothing when compared with what was directly inflicted upon his mind. His soul was made an offering for sin—was so troubled that he knew not what to say. Being in an agony his sweat was as great drops of blood falling to the ground—In an agony he cried out, *Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me.* In one word, to give us any thing like a faint idea of what he suffered, the language even of inspiration is at a loss. He was made a *curse—made sin and died*—and died under the wrath of the Most High. Hence let us observe :

4. That in all these sufferings, God the Father had *a peculiar agency.* *He, He* spared him not, but delivered him up. *The Lord laid on him, the iniquity of us all—it pleased the Lord to bruise him—thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin.* And again: Awake, O sword against my shepherd, against the man who is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts, *smite the shepherd.* We have already observed, that God the Father in giving his Son in the case before us, is to be considered as sustaining the majesty of heaven, as seeing to the honour of his law, and the satisfaction of divine justice. He therefore, in the character of a righteous Judge, made bare his arm; gave devils and wicked men their commission; and by a positive act of divine power, inflicted upon the suffering surety all

that wrath, or punishment, which was due for the sins of those for whom he died.

There is one thing more to be considered under our first general division, viz. *The persons for whom this Son was delivered up.* He spared him not, but delivered him up *for us all*: that is, in our *room or stead*. “*Surely,*” saith the prophet, “*he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows—he was wounded for our transgressions—he was bruised for our iniquities.*” And saith the apostle: “*He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin.*” And saith another apostle: “*Who his own self bare our sin, in his own body on the tree.*”

But who are the persons in whose stead the Son was thus delivered up? To this we answer, that they were *men* and not *devils*. *For verily he took not hold of angels, but he took hold of the seed of Abraham.* It may be farther answered, that he was delivered in the stead of a select number of the sons of men, and not in the stead of all men indiscriminately. The same sovereignty which was exercised in passing by one part of the intelligent creation, and fixing upon another, was also exercised in passing by a part of the human family, and fixing upon another part. Hence he is represented as *laying down his life for his sheep, and as knowing his sheep.* John x. ii. 14—18. Hence also he is represented as having power to give eternal life *to as many as were given him by the Father, and as praying only for those who were given him.* John xvii. 2—9.

But lest this doctrine should deter any from making use of him as a Saviour, it must be carefully remembered, that no man can in this life know, whether he is one of those particular individuals for whom the Son was delivered up, any other way than by his receiving him or rejecting him as he is offered to men in the gospel. The gospel is consequently not preached to men *as elected* or *as not elected*; but to men, *as men*—

*as sinners—as condemned creatures—as dead in trespasses and sins.* He died the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God. He comes not in the gospel to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. His call is: “Unto you, O men I call, and my voice is to the sons of men. Hearken unto me ye stout hearted, and far from righteousness,” &c. &c. These and such declarations afford us a sufficient warrant to lay hold upon him as our own. We are sinners and the sons of men. We are the unjust and the stout hearted. To us then, as sustaining these characters, is Jesus as a Saviour offered in the gospel. As such then let us receive him: and in thus receiving him, we shall have life eternal; *make our calling and election sure.*

Thus much for a short illustration of the first thing in our text, viz. the matter of fact. “God the Father spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.” It follows that we now consider the inference deduced from this fact: he who did so and so—*how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* Here two things may be attended to. What are some of those *all things* which may be reasonably expected with the gift of God’s Son? and what is *the force* of the argument here used for our obtaining these all things?

With respect to the first it may be observed, that under the phrase it included nothing less than every thing which is necessary for either present peace or future happiness. To specify, or at least to illustrate at any length these all things, would be the labour of a life time, rather than the exercise of a small part of an hour. We shall therefore, just state a few of the chief of these all things; and while we state them we shall also endeavour shortly to state, how the enjoyment of these things is to believers, connected with the enjoyment of Christ, the first and leading blessing.

There is then in the first place given us with the gift of God's Son, evangelical repentance, and regenerating grace. Thus runs the divine declaration: *And I will pour upon, &c.* Zech. xii. 10. This first of new covenant blessings, in the order of time, is evidently connected with Christ, inasmuch as a *view of Christ crucified*, is here in express terms stated to be the efficient cause of evangelical mourning for sin: *They shall look upon me whom they have pierced.* We may also refresh our memories with a parallel passage: "*The God of our fathers,*" says the apostle Peter, "*raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree: Him*" &c. &c. Acts v. 31.

In close connection with this, there is given us with the chief blessing, grace to subdue our stubborn wills—those wills which are naturally enmity against God—grace to subdue them to the obedience of faith—sweetly to constrain us to receive Jehovah as our own God, and Jesus as our Saviour. It is thus written: *Hear O my people, &c.* Ps. l. 10. It is farther written: *My people shall, &c.* Ps. cx. 3. It is farther written: *I will say it is my people, and they shall say the Lord is my God..* (See to the same purpose, Ezekiel xxxvi. 25—27.) All this is inseparably connected with Christ, inasmuch as it only *in Christ*, that Jehovah appears reconciled, and consequently as an object of love to guilty men. (See 2 Cor. v. 19.)

In close connection with all of these, there is given along with this great and comprehensive blessing, a full and free pardon of all our sins, as also the acceptance of our persons as righteous in the sight of God as a judge. It is thus written: *There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.* And again: *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.*

As a natural consequence of our being thus brought into a justified state, there is in the next place given

us in the same connection, *sanctifying grace*—grace to heal all the diseases of the soul. It is thus written: *Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace.* As also: *Our old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.* (See the whole of the apostle's reasoning upon the subject. Rom. vi. 1—end.)

There is farther given us along with this unspeakable gift, as large a portion of the good things of this life, as infinite wisdom considers necessary for our welfare. It is written: *He shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given him, and his water shall be sure.* It is farther written: *The meek shall inherit the earth.* And also, *The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they who seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.* These and similar declarations concerning temporal mercies, as you will observe, are made in favour of the *righteous—the just.* (See Is. xxxiii. 13—17.)—*The meek, the seekers of the Lord:* that is, in favour of men considered *as connected with Christ.* These temporal mercies are, therefore, to be considered as included in the all things given with God's own Son.

There is farther given unto us, and given us in the same connection, security that we shall be kept unhurt in the midst of the greatest possible dangers. It is written: *But now thus saith the Lord, &c. &c.* Is. xliii. 1 & 2. (See also Ps. xci. throughout.)

As closely connected with this last, there is given us fatherly chastisement, when we deviate from the path of duty; but at the same time security given, that this chastisement shall be sanctified, that is, made to promote our real welfare. Thus runs the article of the covenant: *If his children, &c.* Ps. lxxxix. 30—33. It is farther written: *Whom the Lord loveth, &c.*

&c. Heb. xii. 6—8. And again: *We know that all things work together for good, to them who love God, to them who are the called, according to the purpose.*

There is farther given us with this great and comprehensive blessing, grace to continue for ever in a state of grace, as also to make continual progress in holiness. This indeed follows as a natural consequence of the communication of sanctifying grace stated above; but to establish our faith more firmly in this point, it may be of use to us to recollect that it is written, *This is as the waters of Noah; &c. &c.* Is. liv. 9 & 10. It is farther written: *And an high way shall be there, &c. &c.* Is. xxxv. 8—10. In fine, it is written, and written as the words of our Lord; *Because I live, ye shall live also.* And also as the saying of the apostle: *Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it till the day of Jesus Christ.*

To name no more, there is given us, and given us along with Christ, the gift of gifts—security for safety, and even triumph in the hour of dissolution—Security for our souls immediately passing into glory, and our bodies being preserved safe till the general resurrection—Security for a glorious resurrection, and a glorious acquittal in the day of the general judgment—and security given us that we shall be perfectly blest in the full enjoyment of our God and our Saviour, through an endless eternity. It is written, *He will swallow up death in victory. And also. I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plague, O grave, I will be thy destruction.* And again: *So when this corruptible shall, &c.* 1 Cor. xv. 54—57. It is farther written: *Them who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him: and so shall we be ever with the Lord.*

It only remains, that we now drop a word or two, upon the force of the apostle's reasoning in the text.

*He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him for us all, HOW shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* It has already been observed, that the force of this argument is remarkably strong. It is an argument drawn from the greater to the less. If God hath bestowed the great gift, the lesser must unavoidably follow. If God spared not a gift of such immense value, he cannot withhold any thing of inferior worth. Let us here consider

1. *The value of this gift.* It is in itself altogether inestimable. Every other thing which can be valued, may have its value; but this, in itself, exceeds in value, all other things taken together. To estimate the worth or real excellence of this gift, will occupy the attention of men and angels through an endless eternity. Let us consider

2. *How dear this gift was to God the giver.* No other object, the Holy Ghost excepted, was so intimately related to God the Father, the giver; and consequently no other object ever was, or ever can be, so near and dear unto him. This gift was God's own Son—his only begotten Son, who was from eternity in his bosom—his well beloved Son, with whom he was ever pleased. Yet this Son, who was in himself so valuable, and so precious in the sight of his Father, *He spared not, but delivered him up for us all.* Let us consider

3. *What the bestowing this gift cost the Father.* Here also we are at a loss to tell the sum: nay, eternity and all the glorified spirits shall be at a loss in this point. But this much we know, and that is enough for our present purpose, that there is no other thing which can be conceived, the giving of which, can cost God the Father so much, as the giving of his Son did. What is the creation, and bestowing of worlds upon worlds, and all that they contain, to the incarnation and sufferings of the Son of God? Just as nothing: all

these things are only the work of God's fingers: this required an *exceeding great exertion of divine power*: it required the *right arm of Omnipotence*. Once more, let us consider

4. How *fully* or *readily* this great and chief gift was bestowed. He spared him not, but delivered him up—*freely* without any *hesitation*; and *fully* without any *reserve* or *limitation*. Was his own Son his best and dearest gift bestowed in this manner, and shall he ever *hesitate* or make any *reserve* in bestowing any other thing of infinitely less value, and which can be bestowed at infinitely less expence? By no means. *He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him in this manner for us, will most certainly with him also, freely give us all things.*

An inference or two from the whole shall now close the discourse; and

1. Hence see, the only sure method of getting rich and happy. It is to receive God's unspeakable gift of his own Son, that in him and with him we may enjoy all things: *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things, (food and raiment, and other things belonging to this life, Matt. vi. 24—34) shall be added unto you.* Are there any present, whose sole enquiry is, what shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed; in short, who mind nothing but earthly things, and who never give themselves any concern about the things of the other world? The subject of this day says to you, brethren, that you are fools—you are beginning at the wrong end; you are labouring in the fire and vexing yourselves for very vanity. All these things, though obtained, are to perish in the very using, and if you have nothing else to enjoy, even what you call the enjoyment of them, shall be *vanity and vexation of spirit*. But if you would be rich and

happy, even with respect to this world, turn your attention to Christ and the blessings of his salvation.

Farther: Are there any present, who are what *we call serious*, but who come with a price in their hand to procure salvation, or any of its blessings? Who particularly are persuaded that they must, by a course of discipline or religious exercises, prepare themselves for the enjoyment of Christ? The subject of this day's discourse says to you also, that you are fools—you are beginning at the wrong end—and labouring in the fire and vexing yourselves for very vanity. No holiness—no pardon—nothing like evangelical repentance without an interest in Christ. *As sinners* then, and *as sinners in your very worst situation*, you must receive him. Jesus, as he is fully, and freely, and earnestly offered to men in the gospel, must be received in the first instance, and then, and only then, you shall enjoy all things.

2. Hence, see how unreasonable men are, when they grudge any thing which they give or endure in the cause of the gospel. What, brethren, is bodily labour, or any outward inconvenience, to which we may be exposed in our attempts to honour our Lord and Master? What is reproach of any kind? What is any small portion of our worldly goods, which we may give for the support of the gospel, or the advancement of the interests of the Mediator's kingdom in any form whatever? Nay, what is the being exposed to the most excruciating torments, or to the loss of life itself? These things are all nothing, and less than nothing when compared with the expence at which our salvation was procured. To procure this salvation, *God the Father spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all*. Hence we really manifest that we have very little sense of this unparalleled instance of God's love to us, when *we grudge* any thing which may be required of us to advance the interests of Messiah's

kingdom. Had Jehovah dealt as niggardly with us, we never would have been troubled with an opportunity of honouring him in this manner.

In fine : Hence see what will be always a prevalent argument at the throne of grace. Do we want for ourselves or others *pardon or sanctification*—or a competency of the good things of this life—the sanctified use of trouble—or any other thing belonging to this or the other life? It is certainly included in the all things which are given to us with the gift of God's own Son. With boldness then let us come to the throne of grace—let us fill our mouths with arguments and say, “*Lord since thou hast not spared thine own Son, but delivered him up for us all, certainly thou wilt also freely give with him all the other blessings of grace and glory.*”

---

## SERMON V.

### GOSPEL HOLINESS.

2. Tim. ii. 19. *And let every one who nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.*

**T**O be holy as God is holy, has been very justly considered the chief dignity of human nature. To discourage vice, and promote virtue, or in other words, to promote the true dignity of human nature, is the grand end which is aimed at, by all the labours of the divine and the moralist. As this is a subject which has occupied the attention of the learned, the wise, and the good, in all ages, the manner in which it has been discussed is very diversified. There is not a single principle in human nature—there is not a single situation or circumstance connected with human

life—there is not a single article of either natural or revealed religion—or a single truth which is within the compass of natural, or moral, or political knowledge, which has not again and again been established, explained and defended, for the sole purpose of leading men to adopt what is called a wise and virtuous conduct.

It is neither a polite nor an honest part, to speak lightly of any of these methods. The end proposed by the most of them, is in kind the same, and is in itself an end truly noble, and every way worthy of the attention of the most distinguished among the sons of men. It is also a truth, that this end, has in a greater or a less degree, been obtained by every one of these different methods. There are no divines, nor moralists, nor politicians of any note, who cannot claim in some degree or other, a share in the honor of reforming the world. However much they may have differed in their religious or political creed, they have all agreed in some of the great and fundamental articles of sound morality, and the means which in their different spheres of action they have used, have all had something in their nature, which was adapted for accomplishing the end proposed. If the most of those methods of reformation have failed in rooting out the trunk from which all vice springs, they have at least been of considerable use in lopping off the sprigs and branches. If few of them have had any influence in assimilating mankind to the divine image, so as to prepare them for the holy and the spiritual enjoyment of the other world, they have at least had a natural tendency to make men better members of civil and religious society in the present state of existence. But granting all these advantages, (and these are the chief which can be allowed to the most of the systems of reformation) it is still an eternal truth, that as there is only one salvation, so the manner in which this salvation can be obtained, *is only one.* A

complete salvation, can only consist in being completely delivered from every moral evil; and this complete deliverance can be obtained no other way than by a personal union with Immanuel, as the surety of sinners. All other methods of making men better, are only cutting off the branches, while the root is allowed to remain as fresh and vigorous as ever. They may profit us very much in this world, and as sinners in a future state shall be punished in exact proportion to the number and enormity of the crimes committed in the body, they may also in a qualified sense, profit man in the next state of existence. But still they are only alleviates, not cures. They are in short when trusted to with respect to the next world, only cleanly roads to hell. It is to the religion of Jesus, and not to natural religion, however pure and uncorrupted—It is to the efficacy of his atonement and intercession, not to any human laws and regulations, that we are to look for the perfection of human nature. It is here, and here only, that we are to expect to be made holy as God is holy.

This superior advantage of the religion of Jesus, is exhibited to very great advantage in the passage before us. In the preceding verses the Apostle informs us of some who were once professors, and likely also eminent professors, but who had erred concerning the truth, and also in their own final apostacy, overthrown the faith of some others. Lest these instances of apostacy should have an unhappy influence upon other professors, he in the verse of which the text is a part, informs us, “that with all these fallings away, *the foundation of God stood sure*; His purpose and his covenant, upon which the work of grace in the hearts of believers rests, stands as immoveable as the rock of ages.” He also adds, “*The Lord knoweth those who are his*. Jehovah Jesus knoweth every individual which was given him by the father, and for

whom he poured out his soul an offering for sin." From these first principles then, these eternal unchangeable truths in the religion of Jesus, *let every one who nameth the name of Christ*, be encouraged and excited *to depart from iniquity*. It is only by their thus departing from iniquity, that they can manifest to their own consciences, and to the world at large, that they are in reality what they profess to be.

It is evident, that by naming the name of Christ in the text, the Apostle simply expresses what we call the assuming a profession of religion. When we take upon ourselves the name of Christians, or connect ourselves with any body of men in a church capacity; we virtually acknowledge Christ to be our master, and openly profess to serve him, and serve him only. In leading your thoughts then upon this subject, we shall

I. Make a few remarks in order to explain the nature of that holiness in heart and life, which is required of us by the religion which we profess—Or in the words of the text, we shall endeavour to tell you what it is *to depart from iniquity*. And then

II. State, and shortly illustrate, those *motives*, which this, our religion, affords us to be thus holy—thus to depart from iniquity.

Upon the first general head we would observe,

1. That as a departing from iniquity and a turning to righteousness, are one and the same thing; the first step is to lay hold on Jesus as he is offered to sinners in the Gospel. It is well known, that in the Gospel there is an offer made of Jesus, as a propitiation for sin. It is equally well known, that this offer is made to men in general, and to men in the character of sinners. The call of the Gospel runs in these terms. *Unto you O men I call, and my voice is to the sons of men. Harken unto me ye stout hearted, and far from righteousness. I came not to call the right-*

*eous, but sinners, to repentance. &c. &c.* In short, it is equally a fact in the system of revelation, that it is only in consequence of receiving Jesus as thus offered, that men receive a principle of holiness, or in other words, life and power to depart from iniquity. Jesus only is *the resurrection, and the life*. While unconnected with Jesus, men *are dead in trespasses and sins; have a carnal mind which is enmity against God, which is not subject to God's law, neither indeed can be*. It is only by union to Jesus, that men are delivered from the curse of the broken law, which is the strength of sin. *For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse—For it is written, cursed is every one who continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them. But Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us*. It is Jesus only, who is at once our justifying righteousness, and our sanctification. *But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption*. Now from all these and similar facts, it follows unavoidably, “that the first commandment enjoined upon sinners, is to believe in this Saviour, for deliverance from both the guilt and the pollution of iniquity. And also that we must receive this Saviour in *the character of sinners, or not at all*.” We must receive the Lord as God, and our God, (and he is only made known to us in this character in Christ,) before we can yield the least obedience to any other of his commandments. We therefore, as God's ambassadors, do this day make an offer of Jesus in all his grace and fullness, to men in general, and to men as sinners. We repeat his own words, and say, *Come unto me all ye who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Hear, and your souls shall live, and Jehovah shall make with you an everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David*. We tell

you, that this Jesus whom we preach, saves unto the very uttermost, all who come unto God by him. That he saves sinners of every possible description. That he saves ignorant, and obstinate, and presumptuous, and chief sinners. It is Jesus as a prophet, who only can enlighten your eyes, in the knowledge of the evil of sin, and the beauty of holiness. It is Jesus as a priest, who only can remove your guilt, and intercede with God for you. It is Jesus as a king, who only can subdue your hardened heart—who only can deliver you from the tyranny of satan—who only can defend you from every evil, and direct your steps in the way in which you ought to walk.

It is by thus receiving Jesus in all his offices, that guilty, dead sinners, receive a principle of life. In the very act of thus closing with him, the hard and stony heart is not made better, but is completely taken away. The enmity to God and his holy law, which is natural to the human mind, is not modified or restrained a little, but is utterly destroyed. The whole man is renewed after the image of God. The whole nature of the man is changed. He now naturally loves holiness, because of its intrinsic worth and beauty; and hates sin, because of its innate deformity. He loves the Lord, and the Lord as his own God, with all his heart, and with all his soul and with all his mind, and with all his strength, and he loves his neighbour as he loves himself. And this principle of love, is, according to both our Lord and his Apostles, the fulfilling the whole law. We observe

2. That having received this living principle of holiness, we must in departing from iniquity, live in its daily exercise. Having received the Lord Jesus as our righteousness and sanctification, we must continue to walk in him. As a tree is known by its fruits—as a living man is distinguished from a dead man by his actions—so those who are created anew in Christ

Jesus, must manifest that they are really new men, by abounding in all those good works, in which God hath before ordained that they should walk. Now, this living principle is manifested in a great variety of ways: As for instance

In the daily and habitual meditating upon the divine word. It is by this word that all actions with respect to their morality are to be tried. It is by this criterion that they who are alive in Christ Jesus, know what is iniquity and what is not. They also naturally love and meditate upon the divine law, as the transcript of the divine nature, and as one of the chief mediums through which they hold communication with their heavenly Father. *“O how I love thy law: it is my meditation all the day: I rejoice at thy word as one who findeth great spoil. The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver. How sweet unto my taste are thy words: yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth. Through thy precepts I get understanding, therefore I hate every false way.”* Hence we may try ourselves by the delight which we habitually take in the word of God. It may be that we keep ourselves free from gross pollutions. It may be also, that we are pretty regular, and even what we call conscientious in discharging external duties. But if to meditate upon the divine word is a burden to us; nay, if it is not the joy and the rejoicing of our hearts, we are by no means departing from iniquity. We may, it is true, be living men; but this life is not at present in much exercise. Instead of making progress in holiness, we are going backward. We are, in reality, dying unto righteousness, and upon the first stage of living unto sin. But again:

This living principle is farther manifested, in freely and fully forsaking iniquity of every kind and in every form. It is not enough that we depart from what is called the grosser iniquities, such as gluttony,

and drunkenness, and uncleanness, and open profanity of divine ordinances. The law under which we are is spiritual. Like its divine author it searches the heart and tries the reins. It also forbids pride and malice, and guile, and hypocrisy and deceit. Those who have really tasted that the Lord is gracious—those who habitually, as new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby, do also lay aside all malice, and all guile, and all hypocrisy, and all evil speaking. The wisdom which cometh down from above, and of which all who are born again have a greater or less share, *is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.*

Upon the same principle it follows, that it is not enough, that those who name the name of Christ, depart only from *open sins*, or from sins which are called *little sins*, or from *unfashionable*, or from what are considered *unprofitable sins*. Every sin is a transgression of the divine law. Every sin is in direct opposition to the divine nature. Every sin has in it an infinite evil. Every sin the most minute, and the most secret, is open and bare to our God and our Judge. No sin, however fashionable, will admit of any excuse before the divine tribunal, nor before a faithful conscience. No sin, however little, can be done away, but by virtue of the blood of the atonement. No sin, however profitable, can compensate for the loss of our immortal souls. It therefore follows, that every sin, whether fashionable or unfashionable, whether great or what is called little, whether profitable or unprofitable, whether secret or open, must be forsaken by every one who is renewed in the spirit of his mind.

As this forsaking of sin must be universal, so it must also be *free*: that is, the mind must readily and

without any hesitation, exert itself in departing from iniquity. The same principle which disposes the renewed mind to love the Lord its God with all its strength, also disposes it to hate, and hate with a perfect hatred every false and wicked way. Sin, of every kind, is that abominable thing which God hates, and so far as any man is renewed after the image of God, sin of every kind will be equally an abomination to him. It is chiefly by thus freely forsaking and perfectly hating sin of every kind, that the genuine believer, is in the most of cases, distinguished from him who has only *the form of godliness*. However regular and exact the unrenewed man may be in the observance of external duties, the habitual temper of his mind is to remember the things of the flesh only. In like manner, however much carnal thoughts and wicked actions may disturb and harrass the renewed man, it is the habitual temper of his mind to remember, *only the things of the Spirit*. (See Rom. viii. 5.) Hence the daily prayer of every genuine saint is, *Search me O God and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Cleanse thou me from secret faults: keep back thy servant from presumptuous sin: let them not have dominion over me.* Once more:

The holy temper which we are considering, manifests itself in carefully shunning *all appearance of evil*, and *all temptations to sin*. The very borders of sin and duty, of virtue and vice, cannot be too narrowly watched. If in any case it is doubtful to which of these grand divisions any particular action belongs, *to forbear*, is acting the safe part. Those who have received a living principle of holiness, use as their daily prayer, "Lead us not into temptation. Keep us from those paths in which destroyers go." Hence it follows, that all practices, which though in themselves indifferent, yet generally have an immoral tendency,

are to be discouraged by all who name the name of Jesus. It is to be remembered, that whatever is **not** for profit, is more or less of hurt ; that whatever promotes not the edification of our immortal souls, is at best but vain trifling, and is in many cases, only an inlet to something in itself really immoral. It is also worthy of notice on the present occasion, that there are a great many practices, which, though they may not be of much hurt to those who are engaged in them : for instance, the people who are most conversant in these matters, may be *really better employed*, while they are attending these exercises, than they are by far the greater part of their other time ; yet they are really of such a nature, that professors, by being engaged in them, not only hurt and considerably hurt their own souls, but also cast a snare and a stumbling block before their brethren. Such practices, therefore, however harmless and inoffensive they may be in themselves, ought to be avoided. It was upon a principle similar to this, that the apostle declared, that in a certain case he would eat no flesh while the world stood.

To enumerate any of those things by name, which ought thus to be avoided, is not necessary. The general rule by which they may be discovered is plain and easy enough applied. If as followers of Jesus we would really shun all appearance of evil ; if we would neither be led nor lead into temptation, we must frequently ask ourselves, Do such and such practices really tend to edification ? Do they not, on the contrary, promote a carnal and careless disposition ? What is their influence on mankind in general ? Are they chiefly followed by those who know not God, and who scarcely make any profession of religion ? And will my following them stately or occasionally, encourage or discourage those whom I have every reason to believe are genuine saints ? These and a few such questions seriously asked, and faithfully answered, would

certainly in a great many cases, direct us how to depart from iniquity.

Thus much then for the first general division of the subject; viz. what it is to depart from iniquity. It follows that we now

II. State and shortly illustrate those motives which our holy religion affords us, thus to depart from iniquity. “*And let every one,*” says the text, “*who nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.*”

These motives are many in number: we shall endeavour to give you a short view of the chief of them. And

1. Our gospel encourages us to be active in departing from iniquity, by the consideration, that in consequence of our union to Christ as our surety and living head, *a complete victory over sin is secured.* We have already observed, that in consequence of our union to Jesus, the curse of the law, which is the strength of sin, is done away. The law as a covenant hath with respect to believers, lost all power to condemn. It can no more detain the soul, under the power of sin, than it can send it to the place of torment. *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.* And again: *Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace.* It is indeed a truth, that sin shall remain in the best of men, till they pass out of the body: it shall even remain in considerable strength. Hence it is called *a body of sin and death.* Rom. vii. But still its strength is gone—it exists—but it exists only in a crucified expiring state. *Our old man is crucified together with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.* The life communicated in regeneration shall never be extinguished. Because our head lives, we shall live also. The graces infused at that happy moment, shall gradually wax stronger and stronger: for the good work begun in us, shall be carried on till the day of

Jesus Christ. All these and similar considerations, make it evident “that God shall bruise *satan* under our feet shortly—that our king and head must reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet—that the period shall at last arrive when we shall be all holy as God is holy.” Behold then what encouragement we have to depart from iniquity, and make daily progress in holiness. The most distant prospect of success, in the most desperate cause, never fails to inspire with new vigour. In the present case, we are taught, that it is a vanquished foe with which we have to contend. A few struggles more, and we shall be more than conquerors, through him who loved us.

2. The consideration of *the vast expence at which our salvation was procured*, is another powerful motive afforded by our holy religion in behalf of genuine purity. We were not redeemed from our vain conversation, by silver or gold; but with the *precious blood of Christ*. That our souls might be saved, he who is God blessed for ever, became a curse. He who is the ancient of days, became an infant of a span long. He who is the mighty God, had his soul so troubled, that he knew not what to say. “*My God, my God*” cried he, “*why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the day time, and thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.*” It was to procure our salvation that all this was done, and all this was suffered. It was *our sin* that thus pierced his heart, and brought him to the dust of death. *He was wounded for our iniquities: The Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all.* Could then sin be pardoned on no other terms than the abasement and death of the Son of God? and shall we ever think of giving it any indulgence? Shall we ever hug in our bosom the monster, which drew out the heart blood of him who is the chief among ten thousand? That sin might be

destroyed in us, did he who is Lord of all, *not spare himself*, and shall we ever think any sacrifice too much, which this generous Saviour may require?

3. The consideration, *that our perfection in holiness was the great end proposed by all which Christ did and suffered*, is another powerful motive in all those who are called by his name, to depart from iniquity. *Jesus gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.* He was manifested in the flesh for the express purpose of *destroying the works of the devil.* *Jesus, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.* Every time then in which we indulge an evil inclination; every time that we smother the principle of grace which we have received, we make an attempt to render all which Christ did and suffered, of no avail. Is it possible that any can deliberately counteract the benevolent design of the best of beings? Devils and those who have their hearts dead to every generous principle may do so, but those who have the love of God shed abroad in their hearts never will. Again:

4. We are constrained to depart from iniquity by the consideration, that in consequence of what Christ hath done and suffered for us, we *are his property*, and therefore, all which we have or hope to have, ought to be devoted to his service. The language of every genuine believer is, "*I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine.*" By the union which is established betwixt Christ and his people, his interests and their interests are inseparable. He, and all his fulness, is made over to them by an everlasting covenant which shall never be forgotten; and they, in return, and all which they have, become his. Their souls, their bodies, their time, their talents, their worldly substance and all which they have or hope to enjoy, are devoted to his service. Yes, to all these, Jesus as their head,

has a two-fold right : a right of purchase, and a right of voluntary surrender : they were by name and surname given him by the father. John xvii. 2, 9. They were also by name and person included in the atonement which he made for sin. Hence he said, "*I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.*" And again : "*I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.*" They have all in time felt the efficacy of that atonement, in being delivered from the reigning power of sin. The prey has been taken from the mighty, and the captives of the terrible have been delivered. In being delivered from wrath, they were also made willing in the day of power. They in the moment of believing, again and again, said, *Truly O Lord, we are thy servants, thy servants thou hast loosed our bonds. Other Lords have had dominion over us, but by thy name only will we be called.* This voluntary surrender has again and again been renewed. They have again and again, and frequently in the most solemn manner possible, said, *O my soul thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord.* The experience of every day convinces them, that they cannot serve a better master : *For of him, and to him, and through him, are all things to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

Remembering then, that we are no longer our own, but that we are bought with a price—remembering also, that we have frequently said, that we are the Lord's free men, shall we ever refuse to depart from iniquity? to glorify our God with our bodies, and with our spirits which are his? No verily.

5. *The influence which a universal and cheerful departing from iniquity has upon the world at large, is another powerful gospel motive in exciting to the performance of the duty recommended in the text.* When we name the name of Christ, or in other words, when we assume the profession of religion by connecting

ourselves with any body of christians, we virtually engage to do our part in accomplishing the great end of all church associations. We by this very act declare to the world, that we shall endeavour in our different stations and relations, to recommend and enforce genuine religion to all those over whom we have any influence. Now, it is well known, that example teaches far better than precept. This is particularly the case in religious matters. Those who are strangers to the power of godliness in their own hearts, must really in the most of cases see something of the power of godliness in the lives of others, before they can be expected to be any way earnest in attending to their best concerns. It is upon this principle that our Lord says, "*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.*" It is upon the same principle, that the apostle exhorts christians, "*To be blameless and harmless, and the sons of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation.*" "AMONG WHOM," says he, "*YE SHINE AS LIGHTS, holding forth the word of life, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.*"

If then, brethren, you would really wish the profession of religion to appear amiable in the eyes of the world, be living epistles of the truth and efficacy of the religion of Jesus, manifest by every part of your conduct, that you are *sincere* in the profession which you make. Manifest that you in reality reckon the things of the Spirit to be of far greater value, than the things of the flesh; that the things of the next world are of far more importance than the things of time. Endeavour also to manifest, that you have no reason to repent of the choice which you have made; that you in reality serve a good master; that wisdom's ways are in reality ways of pleasantness, and that all her paths are peace. How much influence such a goodly, honest,

and heavenly conduct may have upon the world at large, no mortal can tell. By such conduct the mouth of calumny is in a great measure stopt. They who are of a contrary part are ashamed, and have no evil to say of you. Such conduct commands respect even from those who are very far from bearing the cause of religion any good will. It is chiefly in this situation that the church, *Looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.* While the world at large behold the purity of professors, conduct—their patience and fortitude under affliction—their piety towards God—and their justice and benevolence towards all mankind, they must be convinced that there is an energy or influence in religious principles, superior to any thing which is of mere nature's growth. It is natural for men to cultivate an intimacy with a society which they admire. The consequence is, that the prejudices which the men of the world had imbibed against the church, are gradually laid aside—they become familiar with her different members. They are by this familiarity almost imperceptibly transformed into the mould of the gospel—till at last, by sweet experience, being convinced that God is in the midst of such a society indeed, they give themselves first to the Lord, and then to the church. Ah brethren! much of the decay of religion—much of the prevalence of carelessness and infidelity is to be attributed to the untender, the inconsistent conduct of professors. Once more:

6. Genuine believers must depart from iniquity, *for in exact proportion to their distance from sin of every kind, is their meetness for the heavenly inheritance.* We must here carefully distinguish betwixt what is called *a title* to the heavenly inheritance, and *meetness for it.* We procure a title to the heavenly inheritance in justification, and the foundation upon which this title rests, is the finished righteousness of our Lord.

We procure a *meetness* for this inheritance by the gradual sanctification of our nature and life. The one, (*viz.* the title, or our justification) is the cause, the other is the effect. The one is an act, and as such is perfected in an instant; the other is a work, and is never perfected in any till death.

In order to be qualified or made meet for the enjoyment of God in heaven, we must be holy in heart and life. Without this, heaven, would in fact, be no enjoyment to us. What communion hath light with darkness, or what concord hath Christ with Belial? How could that nature which cannot endure the religious exercises of the sanctuary below, take any pleasure in serving God day and night in the sanctuary above? For my own part, I freely confess, that I am at a loss to say, whether heaven or hell would be the place of greater torment to an unholy soul. Those; however, who have already felt the influence of regenerating grace, need not be pressed with such motives. We have already seen that they have a natural desire after holiness. It is their desire above all things to be holy as God is holy. We tell you then, brethren, that in heaven, this begun holiness, shall be complete. The divine image, the leading features of which are already drawn on your soul, shall then be exhibited in perfection. The greater your distance is from iniquity at present, the nearer you are to this state of perfection. The more pure and holy you now are, the greater are your foretastes of the heavenly glory. Be exhorted then to lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset you, and run with patience the race which is set before you. While you run look to him who is at once your surety and your pattern—your living head, and your infallible guide. The corruption which at present prevents you from holding that intimate communion with him, which you so ardently desire, shall soon be destroyed. In his light, you

shall see light clearly—you are soon to be made meet for entrance *into that city into which there shall by no wise enter any thing which defileth, or which worketh an abomination, or which maketh a lie; but they only who are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

---

THE INFINITE EVIL OF SIN,

A FRAGMENT.

WHAT is sin? “Sin,” says our catechism, “is any want of conformity to, or transgression of the law of God.” We are at present to turn our attention particularly to the *great evil or demerit of sin*. False notions about the evil or malignity of sin, have been the chief source of all the errors which have been conceived and propagated concerning the doctrine of an atonement, or satisfaction for sin. It is the doctrine of our church, and what is more, it is the doctrine of the bible, “that every sin, the very least which can be conceived, has in its very nature an infinite evil, and therefore deserves an infinite punishment.” “Every sin,” says our catechism, “deserves God’s wrath and curse, both in this life and that which is to come.” “*The wages of sin*” says the bible, “*is death.*” And again, “*Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.*” This then is our doctrine—nor is it an irrational doctrine. A great variety of reasons might be adduced, which taken collectively, will sufficiently demonstrate, that there is in sin of every kind, an evil infinitely great. As

1. It may be urged, “that as sin is that which is directly opposite to the nature of God, every sin has

in its very nature something of a murder, and a murder of the worst kind. It is a feeble attempt, but an attempt as extensive as our power, to destroy the very existense of Jehovah." We acknowledge that the God whom we serve, is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. We must acknowledge, that he has in the most express terms declared, that sin of every kind shall not go unpunished. We must acknowledge that his power is almighty, that his faithfulness stands unimpeached, and that his goodness will lead him to destroy or restrain every thing which has a tendency to disturb the happiness of his creatures. But against every one of these perfections, every sin, call it as little as you please, is set in direct opposition. So far as it can reach, it is an attempt to destroy these perfections. It must therefore be an evil of whose greatness there can be no conception.

2. It may be farther urged, "that the relation which exists betwixt the sinner and the person offended, demonstrates the great evil of sin." When we sin we do not offend against an equal, nor against one who has only an imperfect right to our services—But we offend against our Creator and Preserver, the great Sovereign of the universe—Who only speaks and it is done, commands and all things stand fast. In sinning we just take God's corn, his wine, and his oil, and all the other good things of his providence and grace, and consume them in direct opposition to the revealed will of the worthy bestower. The serpent which being restored to life and vigor, by the cherishing heat of the friendly bosom, stung to the death its benefactor—Such a creature is but a feeble emblem of the infinite evil of sin.

3. It may be still farther urged, "that sin being directly contrary to the divine law, which is holy just and good, and in its nature admirably well adapted to promote the happiness of the human race, every sin

must be: a great and an *infinately great evil.*" The epithets which are justly given to this law shew that it is in every sense of the word, a constitution in its nature admirably well adapted to promote the happiness of its subjects. It is stiled *pure and clean, much to be desired and altogether righteous.* Whether we consider ourselves as sensitive, social, rational or immortal beings, this law is calculated to promote our true interest. What the Apostle says of the dispensation of grace, may with propriety be applied to every one of God's commandments. The grace of God which bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching them to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world. What the wise man on the other hand says of a particular vice, may with propriety be applied to every transgression of the divine law. Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babbling? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? They who tarry long at the wine; they who go to seek mixed wine. Not a single sin can be named which has not a natural tendency to destroy our soul, our body, our character, our substance. We have in a former observation seen, that there is something in the very nature of sin, which if it had power sufficient to its tendency, would destroy the nature or the existence of the divine being. Behold then in this observation, that its influence would, were it allowed to extend to the utmost, be equally destructive to the creature. Without all contradiction then, that must have an infinite evil in its very nature, which would lay in one mass of ruins, every thing which hath existence, whether visible or invisible, whether created or uncreated. Nor is this thought merely the effusion of a heated imagination. For we observe

4. That this, the natural tendency of sin, is suffi-

ciently confirmed by what hath actually happened. Look at the history of the world, and say what it was which transformed angels, the first born of the highest, into devils? Say what it was which defaced the divine image originally enstamped upon the human soul? What was it which drove the heavenly pair from paradise? which overwhelmed the old world? which destroyed Sodom and Gomorah, and the cities of the plain? In one word, what was it which brought the Lord of glory to the dust of death, and which hath been the cause of all the wars, and famines, and pestilences, and deaths, and woes, and sorrows, which have been known in the world? This monstrous sin, serves as an answer to all such questions. In short to express the infinite evil of this thing, the language even of inspiration is at a loss. According to a prophet, it is "*that abominable thing which God hates.*" According to an Apostle, "*it is sin which is exceeding sinful.*" When he would express its ugliness, he could not find a word more ugly or detestable than itself.

By these and such like considerations, it is probable, that we may be *rationally convinced, that sin in general is a great evil*, nay, that every particular sin, call it as little as you please, has in its very nature an *infinite evil*. It is however very doubtful whether any considerations connected with the subject, will have much influence upon any, till they are renewed in the spirit of their minds. It is at least certain, that there are a variety of considerations, which will always make sin appear of a more aggravated nature, to a renewed mind, than ever it can possibly appear to a mind in a state of nature. As

1. There is in every renewed mind, a more *exquisite moral sense*, than can ever possibly be in an unrenewed mind. A man who has little or nothing of the sense of smelling, will not be much incommoded,

though he were placed in a charnel full of corrupting carcasses. A man on the other hand who has a most exquisite sense of smelling, will feel uneasy in the presence of the least tincture of putrefaction. Similar to these is the case of the renewed and the unrenewed mind, with respect to the evil of sin. In a state of unregeneracy, the moral sense is not only deadened with respect to that which is good, but it has also a high relish for that which is evil. It calls good evil, and evil good, sweet bitter, and bitter sweet. In short it has a natural relish for those things which are an abomination to God. Now to renew the mind, is neither more nor less than to change its nature, that is, to animate it with a new and an opposite principle with respect to sin and holiness. When we are renewed in the spirit of our mind, we put on *the new man, which after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness.* Ep. iv. 24. While in a state of unregeneracy, we are under the power of sin. Sin as we have already seen, is directly opposite to the nature of God. To be renewed is to be made again after God's image, that is, an image directly the opposite of sin. Hence it naturally follows, that those things which were formerly our delight, are just in exact proportion as we are assimilated to the divine image, our abhorrence. And also, that the nearer we are assimilated to the divine image, the abhorrence must be the greater.

2. It is farther to be observed, that the nearer we are conformed to the divine image, the more we are convinced of the extent and the spirituality of the divine law, which is the only standard by which we are to try the malignity of sin. While under the power of sin, men imagine that they are rich and increased with goods, and stand in need of nothing. They are pure in their own eyes, and one chief reason of this self-deceit is their having very false notions of the extent and spirituality of the divine law. As their corrupt

imagination leads them to figure out a God altogether such a one as themselves; so they can also easily form a law which shall suit their corrupt inclinations. While in a state of unregeneracy, the apostle was, *touching the righteousness which is of the law, blameless*; that is, he made no doubt, but that a rigid adherence to an external ritual was sufficient, and perhaps more than sufficient for his personal salvation—But no sooner were his eyes opened to discover the real nature of things, than he was convinced, that these, his supposed excellencies, were but *as loss and dung*. Phil. iii. 4—9. He in another passage tells us, “*That he was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and he died.*” While unrenewed and unacquainted with the real nature of the law, he was strong and active, fully confident that he could come up to every thing which the law required; but no sooner did he discover the real nature of the law, than his heart failed him; he actually gave up the Ghost. He now discovered that the law in extent and spirituality reached far beyond what he formerly imagined; that it required a perfection of which he formerly had no conception; and consequently he discovered a world, a hell of iniquity, where nothing evil was formerly so much as suspected. There is as much venom in the nest of serpents while they are sleeping calm and unobserved, as when they are all in motion; but it is the stirring them up, and the attempting to bring them forth out of their lurking holes, which discovers the malignity of their nature, and makes them a terror and an abhorring to all around them. Again:

3. The nearer men are assimilated to the divine image, the more ardent will they be for the advancement of God’s declarative glory; and this principle will discover unto them still farther the great evil of sin. While under the power of sin, self-interest is the

leading principle of action. The chief and only question is, How shall this or the other selfish passion, or appetite, be gratified? Our own aggrandizement in this or the other thing, is the point to which all our resolutions and actions ultimately tend. Not so those who are renewed in the spirit of their mind: they have seen the value of Jehovah as a portion; it is their chief aim and their chief glory to be in possession of this portion. The language of their heart is, "*Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. May thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven.*" Not our will, but thy will be done. Not our glory, but thy glory be aggrandized. Now, in exact proportion, as men see the value of Jehovah, as a portion, the value of other enjoyments will fall in their estimation. And also, in exact proportion, as this chief, this only portion, rises in their estimation, will they see the evil of that which is derogatory to it. Or, in other words—the more enraptured we are with the excellencies of the Supreme Being—the more ardent our love is to him, the keener will be our resentment against that which in its very nature is disparaging to the divine perfections. The greater the regard is which an affectionate son has to the character of his father, the more lively will his sense of feeling be, when he beholds this character traduced and attempted to be destroyed. But in sin of every kind and in every degree, the character of our Divine Father—the character of him whose image we in part bear—the character of him to whose service our all is devoted; yes, this character which is to us so dear, is by *every sin* greatly dishonoured; every sin must consequently be great, *remarkably, infinitely great.*

A practical reflection or two shall now close the present view of the subject. And

I. Hence see the absurdity of supposing that any sin is, in itself, *a little sin*. When we compare sins with one another, we say, and say with propriety, that such a sin is of a less, or a greater aggravated nature. But when we talk of sins as they are in themselves, or as they are applied to God's nature, or God's law, a little or a less sin, is a word without meaning. No sin can be called little, which carries in its very nature, an infinite evil. Such, however, is the corruption of human nature, that a great variety of sins are, in common conversation, *called little sins*—Sins which are common, and therefore very familiar—Sins which are profitable, with respect to worldly wealth, and therefore very alluring—Sins which are supposed to suit our state of body, or line of life, and therefore agreeable—Sins which are secret, and therefore little known by our fellow men—and sins which are seldom noticed by human or ecclesiastic law. These, and such like, usually give the mass of mankind but little uneasiness. If they are guilty of any of these, they console themselves with the thought, that they are no worse than their neighbours—they are only guilty of *little offences*. Such sentiments are in the nature of things absurd, and will continue to be absurd, till we can find out *a little God* and *a little moral law*.

It may also be by no means unprofitable for us to reflect on the natural tendency of indulging ourselves in any of these things which are usually considered as *little sins*. All circumstances considered, there is perhaps no other thing which has a more direct tendency to harden the conscience. Sin of every kind becomes thus gradually familiar: we advance step by step in the way of vice, till at last we find ourselves committing without a blush, those things, the very thoughts of which would a few years ago, have made us shudder.

2. Learn also from the account of the infinite evil of sin, how much guilt is lying upon the head of the very best of men while in a natural state. If every sin, even the least is of such a magnitude, how great must be the load of sins which is upon the head of him, whose life has been nothing else, than a constant course of sin? who in thoughts, in word and in deed, has been every hour of his existence breaking God's law, and that too in almost every possible form? Verily the best of us have reason to exclaim, "*Mine iniquities are gone over my head, as an heavy burden, they are too heavy for me. If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?*" Hence see

3. That the doctrine of the infinite evil of sin, and that of free grace reigning through the righteousness of an incarnate God, are inseparably connected. If you establish the one, you also necessarily confirm the other; and if you give up the one, you virtually sap the foundation of the other. Proper views of the one doctrine, will naturally lead to proper views of the other. If, for instance, every sin has in its very nature an infinite evil, it of consequence deserves an infinite punishment; and if it deserves an infinite punishment, nothing but the obedience and the sufferings of an incarnate God, can make satisfaction for sin. On the other hand, if it is a truth, that an incarnate God actually obeyed and suffered in behalf of men, then it follows of course, that their sins must have had an infinite malignity in them.

4. In fine, may we not hence see, which of the two opposite systems, viz. that of salvation through the surety righteousness of Christ, and that of salvation without any proper vicarious satisfaction, is the most conducive to holiness? Trace the one system to its first principles, and you will find that it ultimately rests upon very liberal views respecting the nature of sin. Sin has nothing of an infinite evil in its nature;

therefore an imperfect sinful creature may make satisfaction for sin. The other system is founded on the doctrine, that every sin, has in its very nature an infinite evil, and therefore, that nothing less than the vicarious sufferings of Immanuel, could make an atonement for sin. Now, let common sense say which of these two is the best adapted to make men abhor and stand at a distance from sin. Certainly that system which represents sin as the greatest evil, and at the same time holds forth a certain and complete atonement.

---

## SERMON VI.

### THE DOOM OF IMPENITENT SINNERS.

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

**I**T is not always the duty of the preachers of the gospel, to proclaim what every one would call glad tidings. The thing is in fact, impossible. He who deals betwixt man and his Maker, must be faithful. He must in his ministrations make a discrimination of characters, and declare the whole council of God, whether those who attend shall hear, or whether they shall forbear. We indeed have it in charge to declare, "that the Lord our God is merciful, that he is multiplying to pardon, that he wills not the death of any." But we have it equally in charge to say, "The face of the Lord is against the wicked. Jehovah hath for such whet his sword, and bent his bow, and hath prepared against him the instruments of death." Our commission runs, "Say ye to the righteous it shall be well with him, for he shall eat the fruit of his doings :

say ye also to the wicked it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him.”

The text of this day runs in the style of the last part of our commission. It points in a particular manner against that class of sinners which we call gospel despisers. *He who being often reprov'd, hardeneth, &c.* This and every other declaration in the book of God, is given for our warning and profit. It says to all, “Up and flee from the wrath which is to come. Beware least that which is written in the prophets come upon you. Behold ye despisers, and wonder and perish.” In these declarations, as well as in what are called the offers of salvation, life and death, the blessing and the curse, is set before us. If the declaration has a proper influence upon us, we turn from the evil of our ways; but if it has not, we only become more hardened in our crimes, and consequently more exposed to the wrath of the Almighty. Hence it follows, that as it is the duty of those who preach the gospel, fully and without partiality to explain and enforce these threatenings, so it is equally the duty of those who hear the gospel, to attend to these explanations and enforcements; to search and try themselves, and see what are their wicked ways, and what are the dangers to which they are exposed.

The particular declaration to which our attention is at the time called, naturally presents itself to us under three general divisions:

I. Our privilege. *We have been reprov'd and often reprov'd.*

II. The manner in which we have abused our privilege. *We have hardened our necks.* And

III. The greatness and the certainty of our doom, upon the supposition, that we continue thus to abuse the riches of grace. *We shall be destroyed, and destroyed suddenly, and destroyed without remedy.* We

request your attention while we shall endeavour shortly to illustrate each of these three general divisions.

We are first to consider our privilege. We have been reprov'd and often reprov'd. To reprove a man, is in general to tell him, that he has done wrong; and also, how great and dangerous his transgression is. And is it a privilege to be thus reprov'd? Yes, verily. "*He who rebuketh a man shall afterwards find more favour, than he who flattereth with the lip. Faithful are the words of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful. As many as I love,*" saith our Lord, "*I rebuke and chasten: be zealous, therefore, and repent.*" Were we to see our friend rushing blindfolded over a precipice, we certainly would reckon it an act of kindness to warn him of his danger, and he, in return, when he got a sufficient sight of his perilous situation, would consider himself as being under considerable obligations to us for our seasonable interposition. It is thus that Jehovah is dealing with men in the gospel. He beholds them rushing headlong into the pit of destruction, and in his word read and preached, and in the various dispensations of his providence, he gives them fair warning of the greatness and the certainty of their danger.

1. Jehovah hath frequently reprov'd us by his written word, and by the dispensation of the ordinances of his grace. It is in plain and legible characters written in his word, "that we are all by nature children of wrath." "*Behold*" says the Psalmist, "*I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Who,*" cries pious Job, "*can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one. Wherefore*" says the apostle, "*as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*" The word is equally plain in declaring, that from this corruption of nature, there proceeds

*heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemy.*" And again: "Now, the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heretics, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revilings, and such like." Gal. v. 19, 20, 21. The word is equally plain in declaring, that this corruption of heart and life, is to be found in every individual without a single exception. It is not in this or the other state of society only, or among this or the other class of men only, that these and such abominations are to be found; but they are to be found in a greater or less degree in every state of society, among every class of men, and in every individual. "It is written, there is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." Rom. iii. 10—19. In short, the word is plain and express in declaring, that sin of every kind shall be punished and severely punished. *The wages of sin is death. The soul who sinneth shall die. Cursed is every one, who, continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law, to do them.* Hence it appears, that the word plainly and freely and fully

reproves us, in setting before us, the greatness and the certainty of our danger.

But this is not all. As a faithful and affectionate reprover, Jehovah not only sets before us our danger, but he also sets before us the remedy; and uses exhortations and entreaties, that we may turn from the evil of our ways, and lay hold of the hope which is set before us in the gospel. It is written, "*God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.*" As the consequence of this gift, Jehovah in the gospel, 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, O house of Israel? Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, my Father, thou art the guide of my youth? And farther: How long, ye simple-ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning? and fools hate knowledge? Turn ye at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.*" Prov. 1. 22, 23. "*How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboiim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.*" Hosea

8.

These, and such like declarations and exhortations, have been set often before us. Jehovah hath risen up early and sent his prophets. He hath given us line upon line and precept upon precept. The most of us have had godly parents, who took care at an early period of our life, to make us acquainted with the things which belong to our peace. We have also, generally, at an early period of our life, been taught to read God's word. We have all had bibles put into our hands. The opportunities which we have had of reading and

meditation, have been many. And to crown all, these declarations have been again and again set before us in the preaching of the word. They have been all repeated to us, and explained and enforced from the pulpit, times and ways without number. O then, that we were wise, that we would consider the things which belong to our peace, before they be for ever hid from our eyes.

2. Jehovah hath frequently reprov'd us by the dispensations of his providence. The doctrine of a particular overruling providence, is at once an article of both natural and revealed religion. Jehovah's eyes see, and his eye-lids try the sons of men. There is nothing which can be hidden from his sight, nor can any thing be beyond the reach of his power. He doth according to his own will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of this world. This Almighty power, and this universal care and government, are frequently used in reprov'ing, and in giving instruction to the sons of men.

Every one who is the least in the habit of attending to the dispensations of Providence, may observe, that a very little and what the world would call a trifling circumstance, frequently leads us to such parts of scripture, or to such views of divine truth, or to such company and exercises as are remarkably useful, in convincing us of our error and in preventing us from running still farther astray. A stormy morning which prevented the traveller from proceeding on his journey on the Lord's day, has been the occasion of his attending church, and there receiving a deep and a lasting conviction of the evil of sin—A clergyman, on the Sabbath morning, mislaying his note book, or forgetting his text, has been oftener than once, the occasion of his preaching from another subject, than that which he intended, but from a subject which, in the good providence of God, was adapted to the particular case

of some one of his audience—The being disappointed in a party of pleasure, has been in several cases, the mean used to lead a giddy, thoughtless creature, to some solid and useful reflections. The great and afterwards eminently pious Colonel Gardiner, was effectually convinced of the evil of sin, by taking up as it is called, accidentally, a book to amuse himself in a half hour's interval, betwixt one species of wickedness and another, which was intended, and which was still more abominable. Our God is wonderful in council, and excellent in working.

It may also have come within the observation and experience of us all, that the seeing or the hearing of another who was guilty, has been the mean of bringing our own sin to remembrance. Sin, when viewed in another, generally appears in greater deformity, than when we behold it in ourselves. We some way or other get our eyes upon a man who is living in the neglect of some known duty, or in the commission of some known sin: we muse a little upon his deplorable situation: while we muse, we hear a something saying within us, *thou art the man*. With you, even with you, there are sins against the Holy One. "*Thou, therefore, which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God.*" Rom. ii. 21—23.

It must also be observed, that Jehovah frequently reproves us by laying his hand upon our families and friends, and other connections; or upon that particular thing in which we had put the greatest dependence. Good old Jacob was just on the eve of making an idol of his son Joseph; but in kind providence this son was taken from him for a considerable time, and taken

from him under circumstances peculiarly distressing. Peter in the ardor of his zeal imagined, that though all men should forsake his master, he never would. God in wise and holy providence by allowing him shamefully to fall, convinced him that it is not in man who walketh to direct his steps. Paul, lest he should be exalted above measure by the abundance of revelation, had a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of satan sent to buffet him. Numberless other examples might be adduced from both sacred and profane history, in which God in his holy providence hath reprov'd both individuals and societies, of the folly and wickedness of an undue confidence in any thing attained. Jehovah frequently in great mercy, "Takes away from us the delight of our eyes; hedges up our way with thorns; brings us into the wilderness and allures us in the wilderness."

One thing more may be observed under this particular:

Jehovah frequently reproveth people for their abuse of his mercies, by threatening in his providence to remove from them these mercies. We scarcely ever know how to value health, till we are visited with sickness which threatens immediate death. This was the case with Hezekiah, and no doubt was one of the reasons for that particular sickness from which he was miraculously delivered. Jehovah also frequently puts us in mind of the abuse of our spiritual privileges in the same manner: "*Behold*" says the master of the vineyard, "*these three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and have found none: Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? Have patience,*" cries the vine dresser, "*spare it another year, and I will dig about it and dung it, and if it bear fruit well; but if not, then thou mayest cut it down.*" To the same purpose: "*Remember therefore*" says our Lord to the church at Ephesus, "*whence thou art fallen, and re-*

*pent and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent."*

Thus much, then, for a short illustration of our first general division. It is our privilege that we have been reprov'd and often reprov'd. Jehovah hath thus given us fair warning, and hath not allowed us to go altogether in the way of our own heart. — It follows, that we now consider the abuse which we have made of our privilege. We have been reprov'd it is true; but instead of growing better, it is to be feared, that a great many of us have become worse. We have *hardened our neck*.

Every one knows from what the expression in the text is taken. An ox who is disobedient and refractory under the yoke, is said to have *a stubborn hardened neck*. "*I have surely*" says the prophet, "*heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: thou hast chastened me, and I was chastened as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God.*" To harden our neck then, in the sense of the text, is in general to become insensible and hardened under all the means of grace, which we are enjoying. Many are the things which may be considered as symptoms of being in this situation. We shall mention a few of them, and while we mention them, let each of us look into his own heart—search and try his ways, and see how far the character is applicable to himself. And

1. A carelessness and indifference about divine ordinances, is a sad symptom. Jehovah has been long speaking to us in ordinances and providences. Those who have any way profited by these means, from the heart in some measure say, *I was glad when they said to me, let us go into the house of the Lord. I will hear what God the Lord will speak. I will rise at midnight, and call upon thee. Mine eyes did prevent the*

*night watches, that I might meditate in thy word."* But exactly the reverse is the heart language of those who are hardening their necks. To those, a chapter of the bible, is a burden—a Sabbath day is a weariness—prayer, in the closet or family, if performed at all, is performed as the sluggard turneth himself upon his bed. In short, he who is hardening his neck, reads as if he read not—prays as if he prayed not—hears as if he heard not—or, rather like the deaf adder, stoppeth his ear.

2. A carnality and wandering of heart indulged in the time of attending upon divine ordinances, is another sad symptom. When Jehovah speaks, even when he reproveth, it is for our good. The dignity of the person who addresses us, and the great importance of what he says, are considerations sufficient to demand our whole attention. Yet strange as it is, it is true, that when our attention is called to spiritual things, it is frequently wholly occupied about the things of sense. While the important affairs of eternity are laid before us, we are wholly engrossed in the affairs of time. While Jehovah in his word and providence is denouncing wrath upon every unrighteousness, we are in heart saying, that we shall have peace though we walk in the ways of our heart, and add drunkenness to the rest. While he is offering to us in the most earnest affectionate manner all the blessings of salvation, we are choosing and choosing with greediness the things which lead to destruction. While we meet together in public, and with one mouth and one ear, profess to be worshipping the one only the living and the true God, one man's heart is at his farm, and another at his merchandize. The parable of old is frequently realized: One has bought a piece of ground, and he must needs in the midst of his most solemn acts of devotion, go and see it—another has bought a yoke of oxen, and he must needs in his heart

go and prove them—and a third has married or is about to marry a wife, and therefore by all means his thoughts must run upon that object. All these and similar things, however common they may be, are sad symptoms of a man's hardening his neck under Jehovah's reproofs.

3. Having little or no desire to improve in grace and christian knowledge, is a third sad symptom. All those who have really been obedient to the call of the gospel, are growing christians. They have at least in every situation, a strong desire to grow. Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, they press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. They, as they have an opportunity, give all diligence to add to their faith fortitude, and to fortitude knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity: well knowing that if these things be in them and abound, they shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But exactly the reverse is the disposition of those who are hardening their necks: to them a very little grace and a very little christian knowledge, is in the most of cases sufficient. Like the man who has a diseased stomach, their appetite is soon satisfied. All those, therefore, who have little or no desire of knowing any more of the evil of sin—of the method of salvation—of the beauty of holiness—in short, who have nothing of what is called a hungering and thirsting after righteousness. All such give very sad evidence that they are hardening their necks—growing worse, instead of growing better under the means of grace. Once more:

4. It is a sad symptom when our hearts run more upon the means or instruments, with which Jehovah

reproves us, than upon him who gives them their commission. It is written in one of the prophets: "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: *hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it?*" Those who are wise and attend to what Jehovah says on other matters, attend also to this address: those, on the other hand, who harden their neck, turn to it a deaf ear. It is quite common with the best of us, to have our attention wholly or chiefly fixed upon the outward instrument. We say this or the other thing gives us great distress; or this or the other thing shall afford us undoubted relief. Means and instruments are indeed to be used and attended to; but they are to be attended to only as means. *Is there evil in the city, and hath the Lord done it?* It may be, that these instruments are acting wickedly. It may be also, that we by no means deserve such treatment from that particular quarter. But still there is a holy and wise Providence, who for holy and wise purposes, and in a manner unknown to us, has set all these wheels in motion. Through these as instruments, he addresses us with a very audible voice, and if we would not harden our neck still farther we must look beyond all means, to that great first cause, and that wise, that good controuling power.

Thus brethren we have made a short statement of some of the sau symptoms of a hardened or hardening neck. A variety of others might no doubt have been mentioned. For instance: habitually or occasionally rejecting religious duties, and particularly those duties, to perform which, we as members of a particular church, are under very solemn obligations—such as secret prayer or family worship. Not only indulging carnal thoughts in the time of God's worship, but also promoting carnal conversation in our intercourse with one another on the Lord's day. Spurning

at, or becoming fretful under adverse dispensations of Providence, as well as the becoming light and wanton, when God in his providence prospers us, might also have been mentioned. These, and such others, however, we pass over, and proceed to consider the third general division, which is,

The greatness and the certainty of our destruction, upon the supposition, that we continue thus to harden our necks. He who being often, &c. *shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.*

Every word here is full of emphasis. *It is destruction—sudden destruction—and destruction without remedy.*

1. He who thus hardeneth his neck, shall be destroyed. He who despised Moses' law, died without mercy, under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he 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 unto the spirit of grace? And again. If the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

Under the Old Testament dispensation, the despisers of God's commandments were frequently punished in a bodily, visible manner. By the express command of Heaven, a poor man was stoned to death, for gathering a few sticks upon the Sabbath day. Nadab and Abihu were consumed with fire from Heaven, when they presumed to perform divine service in another manner than that which was appointed. The earth opened her mouth and swallowed up in a moment, Dathan and Abiram, and all those who had joined them in resisting the established authorities. Uzza was struck with immediate death for only da-

ring to touch the ark, when the oxen which carried it upon the cart, shook it. In these and such like instances, Jehovah declared in strong terms, that sin, and particularly want of reverence to his commandments, should not go unpunished—that he would be sanctified by all those who approached unto him—and that before all the people he would be glorified. It is indeed true, that under the New Testament dispensation, the despisers of any of the divine commandments, are not in the most of cases punished in such a visible manner; but we are to remember that it is the same holy and just God who is offended—that none of his denunciations against sin or sinners, have ever been repealed, and therefore that deserved punishment is still as certain, and as severe as ever. Many are the ways in which this holy and just God can punish, and does punish the despisers of his reproof.

It frequently happens, for instance, that Jehovah in righteous judgement, punishes one sin with another. “And even” says the apostle, “as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient: being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents. Without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgement of God, (that they which commit such things are worthy of death,) not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.” And again in another passage, “and for this cause, God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they might all be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” When men have long, willfully and

deliberately despised his reproofs—have continued for years to harden their neck—God in awful though just judgement, gives them up to their own heart's lust. Ordinances in such case become blasted—The unhappy creatures are given up to the dominion of a hardened heart, a seared conscience, and all the other train of spiritual plagues. If such persons henceforth continue to make a profession of religion, they are hewn by God's prophets, and slain by the words of his mouth. Instead of being the savour of life unto life, the word read or preached, is, to them nothing but the savour of death unto death. If they now throw off their profession, they generally become soon the most profligate and abandoned of the human race. They take their full swing in their lusts, without experiencing any thing like remorse. In both cases their situation is, of all situations out of hell, the most deplorable—nay are in fact as near the state of devils, as it is possible for any on this side eternity to be. They are sealed up in their iniquity, and completely beyond the reach of conviction. Again,

Jehovah frequently punishes the despisers of his reproof, by laying his hand upon their families and other connections. In this way perhaps, he generally chastises his own people. Good old Eli, and David the sweet singer of Israel, were thus chastised. God in his holy providence, by allowing our children, and others under our care to fall into sin, brings our own sin to remembrance; we thus read our sin in our punishment. God also sometimes, in the same holy and wise providence, cuts off, or sorely afflicts those, not properly for their own sin, but as a punishment of our sin. A great number of the Israelites, for instance, fell by the pestilence, as a punishment for David's sin in numbering the people. This is indeed one of the dark parts of Jehovah's moral government. The fact, however is certain, and we may rest assured that

when in his light we shall see light clearly, we will be made to say, he hath done all things well.

It deserves farther to be noticed, that Jehovah frequently punishes the despisers of his reproof, by making them unhappy in their temporal enjoyments. It is long since it was observed, that a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. It is an easy matter with the great God, to make a man receive less pleasure on a bed of down, than on a bed of straw; to make him more unhappy in the midst of affluence, than when sinking under the oppression of poverty. We may all have had an occasion to observe, how some despisers of divine ordinances, are tormented to get what is called a Sabbath day, spent in any thing of tolerable good humour. Even in the midst of their feasts and their mirth their heart is sad. In like manner, the despising of any other ordinance, upon any other day of the week, may make us uneasy and unhappy for a considerable time, in our eating and drinking, in our out going and in coming, and in the intercourse which we have with our families and with the world.

In fine. However much the despisers of God's reproof may escape punishment in this world, those who continue to the end to harden their neck, shall not escape punishment in the world to come. The wicked shall be driven into hell, and all the nations who forget God. It is written, and written in the records of him who is faithful and true; "Tribulation, and anguish, and wrath, upon every soul of man who doth evil." And again, "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whore-mongers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death."

2. The destruction which we are considering, is to be *sudden*. Such a character as is described in the

text, shall be *suddenly destroyed*. When the hardness of their neck are saying peace and safety, then *sudden destruction* cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape.

This destruction, whether it comes upon them in this or the other world, shall come *suddenly* upon them, inasmuch as it shall come upon them *unawares, quite unexpected*. As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the destruction of such characters—They did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they married and were given in marriage, and knew not, that is never considered or thought of their dangerous situation, till the flood came and swept them all away. In like manner the despisers of Jehovah's reproof, continue to prosecute their lawful business, or their sinful pleasure—One attends to his farm, and another to his merchandize—both very good in their own place—One satisfies himself with a cold, formal attendance upon religious duties, and another goes on with a steady step in the open transgression of God's commandments—one passes his life in a state of careless insensibility, with respect to both time and eternity, another is active in the pursuit of the wealth, the honours and the pleasures of this world. All are equally secure—all are equally unconcerned about the danger of their situation—when behold, destruction, sudden destruction cometh upon them, and carries them all away.

This destruction is further *sudden destruction*, inasmuch as it finds them *quite unprepared*. The man who is in a sound sleep, or overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, is very unprepared to resist the attack of an enemy. The profligate who is in the midst of his cups, squandering away the very last mite of his patrimony, is quite unprepared to meet the demands of him who has a charge against him of ten thousand talents. Equally unprepared is the im-

penitent hardener of his neck, when Jehovah shall arise to execute upon him deserved punishment.—Who ever hardened himself against Jehovah and prospered? Shall the dry stubble contend with the devouring flame? Shall a poor mortal in his last moments, when the spark of life is just upon the eve of being extinguished—shall such a person, in such a situation, dare to contend with him who is independent, eternal, and omnipotent?

3. This destruction is *without remedy*: that is there is no possible method of being delivered from it, when once it is inflicted in its full extent.

This punishment is without remedy, inasmuch as those who expose themselves to it, have already despised and rejected the *only remedy*. Jehovah as manifested to men in the gospel, is the fountain of life and salvation. Hardening our neck, or despising Jehovah's reproof, is just a turning away from this fountain. It is only in Christ that God is reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to them their trespasses. It is only in him, that he says, *as I live I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die.* There is not another name given under heaven, among men, whereby they must be saved, but this name of Jesus. Those then who harden their necks against these and such like declarations, set themselves in direct opposition to the only possible remedy. This remedy deliberately rejected, and the measure of their iniquity is filled up—their day of grace is at an end—there cannot possibly remain for them any thing more, but a fearful looking for of judgement and fiery indignation.

But again: as such persons despise the only remedy, so their sin is of such a magnitude as richly to deserve everlasting and complete destruction. That an honourable and safe way might be opened up for Jehovah to deal with men, he spared not his Son, and

that his only Son. The offers of mercy and the reproofs which he gives us, are made through the rent heart of God blessed for ever, made a curse for us. These offers, as we have seen above, have been frequently made—these reproofs have been frequently administered. He hath risen up early and sent his prophets—He hath stretched out his hands all day long to a stubborn and rebellious generation. Against all this love and kindness, this sin of hardening the neck, this refusing to be reprov'd is directed. Verily then it deserves the very sorest punishment. Verily it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Zidon, for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for such characters. *Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, where there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.*

To conclude: Though we have thus taken a short view of the punishment which awaits the impenitent sinner, we are to remember, that we are not as yet in the place of torment. We are still in the land of the living and the place of hope—We still enjoy the external means of grace, nor are any of us visibly given up to our own heart's lust. These denunciations of divine wrath, are among the means which Jehovah as the God of grace, is using for our conviction. Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we would this day persuade men—we would say, up and flee from the wrath which is to come—Jehovah is still saying, *Come now and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.* And farther saith the Lord: *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put*

*my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.*

Let each of us endeavour from the heart to account him faithful who is thus promising. Let each of us say for himself, "Do thou, O Lord unto us as thou hast said—Take unto thee thy great power—Subdue us to the obedience of faith—Form us for thyself, and then we shall shew forth thy praise."

---

## SERMON VII.

### THE NATURE AND USE OF PUBLIC ORDINANCES.

Ps. cxxii. 1. *I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord.*

**T**HERE are few things in which the genuine features of a christian, are more visible, than in his great love to public ordinances. Only to repeat the passages of scripture which corroborate this truth, would fill a whole discourse: "Lord," says the Psalmist, "I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth." Ps. xxvi. 8. And again: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple." Ps. xxvii. 4. "How amiable" cries he in a third place, "are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." Ps. lxxxiv. 1 & 2. And again: "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." Verse 10. And

in the text, *I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord.*

With these and such like expressions, the experience of every genuine saint coincides. Public ordinances are things, in which his soul when grace is in any measure of exercise, greatly delighteth. He longeth for their approach more than he doth for his ordinary food. It may therefore be not an unprofitable exercise, to make these public institutions, the subject of a discourse—to consider their nature and use, and the manner in which we may attend upon them with profit.

What public ordinances are, no body who has been brought up among christians, need be told. Under the term are included all those exercises of reading and singing, and praying and preaching, in which we are engaged every time that we meet in public. Those exercises may indeed be performed at any time in which men can make it convenient to assemble together; but Jehovah Jesus, as the king and head of the church, hath in a particular manner set apart one day in seven, for the sole purpose of meeting with his people in those exercises, whether they are performed in public or in private. This appointment was at an early period; even at the very commencement of time: for the Lord God, having in the space of six days, created this world and all its inhabitants; it is said, that on the seventh day he had made an end of his work which he had made, “And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.” This positive appointment we have every reason to believe was rigidly observed during the patriarchal age; for we find Moses, immediately when Israel had got into the wilderness, speaking of the Sabbath as a thing with which they were well acquainted. Speaking of the manna, the history says: “And it came to pass,

that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, this is that which the Lord hath said. Tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord: bake that which ye will bake to-day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you, to be kept until the morning. And they laid up till the morning, as Moses bade: and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein. And Moses said, eat that to day; for to-day is a Sabbath unto the Lord: to-day ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, in it there shall be none." Exodus xvi. 22—26.

Thus it appears, that however much Israel were corrupted by the intercourse which for a generation or two they had had with the Egyptians, they still retained a knowledge of the end for which the Sabbath was appointed. Lest, however, this knowledge should have been lost in the multitude of other appointments, this appointment was, among other moral precepts, solemnly pronounced from Mount Sinai—was written with the finger of God upon one of the two tables of the law—and thus declared to be part of that moral code, which is binding upon all men, and in all situations. The words by which this second edition of the appointment was made, are well known, and are these: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man servant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days, the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hal-

lowed it." However little these words are thought of in the present day, by professed christians and others, they are the words of the great God—they are part of that unalterable law by which we are all to be tried—These words are also well explained in our shorter Catechism. It is asked, *How is the Sabbath to be sanctified?* It is answered, *The Sabbath is to be sanctified by a holy resting all that day, even from such worldly employments and recreations, as are lawful on other days, and spending the whole time in the public and private exercises of God's worship, except so much as is to be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy.* It is farther asked, *What is forbidden in the fourth commandment?* It is answered, *The fourth commandment forbiddeth the omission, or careless performance of the duties required; and the profaning the day by idleness, or doing that which is in itself sinful, or by unnecessary thoughts, words, or works, about our worldly employments or recreations.*

Thus much, then, for a short account of that time which is in a peculiar manner set apart for the purposes of public worship; and from this appointment we may learn much concerning the nature and the use of public ordinances. The Sabbath was appointed *as a rest*, and *a holy rest*; and in the appointment received a peculiar blessing. In observing this rest, or in their sanctifying the Sabbath, men were to lay aside their worldly concerns, and in both public and private devote their attention to the more important concerns of the soul. This being a day in which all worldly employments are, or at least ought to be laid aside, it is thus peculiarly well adapted for the religious public meetings of the saints. They thus have an opportunity of meeting together to glorify their God, and to strengthen and encourage one another in their religious profession, and nothing from without to disturb them. The advancement of God's declarative glory, and the

promoting of the good of men, appear then to be the chief uses for which public ordinances are appointed: We shall endeavour to give a short illustration of these separately. And

I. With respect to God's glory. God's glory, or in other words, the manifestation of the glory of his perfections, is the great end of all his works. This one day in seven, or at least that portion of it which is devoted to public worship, gives a peculiar opportunity of beholding this glory, and also of exhibiting this glory to others.

When we meet together for the purposes of public worship, we by our very assembling in an open public manner, declare our dependence upon him. The place of public ordinances is so to speak Jehovah's levee. We here assemble to pay our respects to the great Sovereign of the universe. To him in whom we live, and move, and have our being, and whose offspring we all are. This idea is beautifully illustrated in the c. Psalm: "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness; come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves: we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good, his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations."

It is possible that in private we may have suitable notions of Jehovah as the origin of all which is good; but it is only by our meeting together in public, that we can declare unto the world that we have these notions. We in the very act of our assembling to worship Jehovah, declare, "That all other Gods, which blinded nations fear, are only dumb idols; but that Jehovah is the one only, the living and the true God." We also by this very act publicly declare, "That it

is our desire to be ready on all occasions to give unto Jehovah the glory which is due to his name—that however much others may have lost the knowledge of the true God—or that however much others may refuse to give unto him the homage which is due to him as their Creator and Preserver—yet, as for us and ours, we are resolved to serve him.” Again :

There is something in the very nature of those religious exercises in which we are engaged, when we meet together for the purposes of public worship, which has a considerable tendency to manifest to ourselves and others the glory of the divine perfections. While we address Jehovah in prayer, for instance, we in so many words declare unto the world, that he is great and good. We in this exercise necessarily bring to our remembrance his *self-existence and independence* : for all prayer is nothing else, than needy dependent creatures, acknowledging their weakness and unworthiness, and asking rich and liberal supplies from him who has all at his disposal. We farther, in this exercise, necessarily bring to remembrance, his *immaculate purity* ; for all prayer of a right kind is guilty polluted creatures seeking from offended majesty, (though also in Christ reconciled) pardon and sanctification. We in this exercise bring to our remembrance his *omniscience and omnipresence* ; for in all right prayer we consider ourselves as speaking to him who *is invisible* ; to him who though he is in one sense in heaven, and we upon earth, yet he is in another sense every where present, or else he could not be an object of worship. In fine, while employed in this exercise, we in express words acknowledge Jehovah’s sovereign right to all our services ; for in all night prayer we say, *Truly O Lord we are thy servants, thy servants thou hast loosed our bonds. Not unto us O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory. Doubtless thou art our Father though Abraham be ig-*

*norant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not, thou O Lord art our Father, our Redeemer, thy name is from everlasting.*

Praise is another exercise in which we are engaged when we meet together for the purposes of public worship; and this also is an exercise in its nature remarkably well adapted for making ourselves and others acquainted with God's glory. We in this exercise take particular notice of the glory of the divine goodness. We in so many words mention with pleasure his loving kindness—we enumerate the many instances of his undeserved favour—and we call upon ourselves and others to be suitably affected with a sense of his favours. With one heart and with one mouth we say, “ Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things: so that thy youth is renewed like eagles.”

In fine: reading the scriptures and preaching are other exercises of public worship, which in their very nature, are admirably well adapted for the manifestation of the glory of God. In these exercises our understanding is principally addressed. We are in these exercises called upon to contemplate what Jehovah is in himself, and what he is in his creatures—We behold his glory manifested in the works of creation, providence and redemption—We hear of him as the creator of the ends of the earth, who fainteth not, neither is weary—who in the beginning spoke and it was done—who commanded and all things stood fast. We hear also of him as the governor of the nation: “ It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out

the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in : that bringeth the princes to nothing : he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity.” Is. xl. 22—23. We contemplate him in all his works as glorious in holiness, as fearful in praises, as doing wonders. We behold his perfections in a particular manner displayed in the work of redemption. It is here that mercy and truth are met together—that righteousness and peace have kissed each other. In short, redemption is Jehovah’s great work in which his arm is made bare, and his glory displayed in as far as we know the highest possible manner.

All these and similar subjects, are, or ought to be the subjects of our meditation, when we read or hear the word of God in public. These exercises are therefore, noble exercises for shewing forth, or declaring God’s glory. He thus makes all his glory to pass before us ; and while we thus behold as in a glass, the glory of God, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord. This remark, however, suggests to us another chief use of public ordinances, viz.

II. The promoting of our own good. The advancement of God’s declarative glory, and the promoting of our own good, are intimately connected. Public ordinances are in a particular manner appointed for the good of the human race.

It is in these public institutions, for instance, that we are instructed in every thing which is necessary to be known for present or future happiness. The word of God as revealed in the scriptures, and as explained and enforced in the preaching of the gospel, is the great mean of opening men’s eyes, and turning them from darkness to light, and the power of satan unto God, that they may receive the forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. God maketh the reading, *but especially the preaching*

*of the* word, an effectual mean of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness, and comfort, through faith unto salvation. Though no ordinances of divine appointment ought to be despised—though private and secret duties ought in their proper seasons to be carefully observed, yet God as the God of ordinances hath all along put particular honour upon public ordinances. In secret or private an individual or two may be convinced, may be edified and comforted; but it is in public that *multitudes* are added to the church. It is here that men flock to the Saviour, as doves to their windows. It is here, as we have already seen, that Jehovah appears in all his glory, and by his manifest splendor, his divine power and majesty, allures and attracts the most stupid and careless.

Besides the peculiar blessing which Jehovah hath in sovereignty annexed to public ordinances, there is something in their very nature which is remarkably well adapted for promoting the happiness of mankind. By the cessation from bodily labour, which is necessary for a regular and stated attendance on public ordinances, *our bodies* as well as our souls are refreshed. A Sabbath day is consequently a public common blessing in which even the inferior animals have a share. Hence in the commandment which enjoins the observance of the Sabbath, the *cattle* and the stranger, and all that is within our gates, are required to rest. These appointed seasons afford also far better opportunities for serious meditation than could possibly be enjoyed were we always engaged in the bustle of the world. When we go into the house of the Lord, we say, (or at least ought to say) to all our wordly concerns, stand here while I go yonder and worship. Our souls while properly exercised on such occasions soar aloft above all low and groveling pursuits. Our whole attention is directed to this one

thing, “*To see the king in his beauty; to hear what God the Lord will speak.*” Entering into the spirit of such exercises, we feel ourselves risen together with Christ: our affections are in heaven *where our Lord* and our head are: we seek those things which are above, and not the things which are below.

It must also be evident, that the very being met together in a large assembly, all employed in such heavenly exercises, has a remarkable tendency to elevate our spirits, and build us up in holiness through faith unto salvation. We thus have evident demonstration that we are not left alone in the earth. We find that multitudes, and these too of our friends and acquaintance, are also engaged in the same cause, are with us seeking for Zion with their faces thither. This single thought has a remarkable tendency to fortify our minds against the troubles to which on account of our attachment to the truth, we may be exposed. We thus find ourselves to be a troop, and though we should be occasionally foiled, we remember, that the loss of a battle is not the loss of the war; but that under the great Captain of our salvation, our forces may be again collected and become more than conquerors. We are in this thought, also supported, with the cheering consolation, that all the gifts and graces and attainments of our fellow worshippers, may by a free and friendly communication, become ours; or at least, that they shall all be employed by the great head of the church, for the mutual good of the whole. We thus find ourselves to be all engaged in one common cause: hence the gifts and graces which are bestowed upon individuals, must be considered as belonging to the common stock, bestowed upon them for the good of the whole community. With such views of matters we are encouraged to hold on our way rejoicing—to be followers of those, who through faith and patience, are now inheriting the promises—to cherish and strengthen in

ourselves and others, every good and useful talent—to go from strength to strength—hand in hand, till at last we appear before the Lord in Zion.

Nor is the benefit of public ordinances confined to those who are already genuine saints. In these institutions, the good of the most abandoned, is also, in a particular manner consulted. By christians regularly and statedly assembling together for the purposes of public worship, the religion of Jesus appears before the world with something which they call majesty and dignity. We endeavour to put public honour upon our Lord and his cause, by regularly and decently attending upon public ordinances; and wherever public ordinances are attended in a regular, a calm, orderly manner, there is a something to be seen which has a natural tendency to inspire the minds of the most careless with sentiments of awe and reverence. They are thus naturally led to think that there is a reality in religion. They behold their friends and acquaintances—those who are in all worldly matters honest and industrious, and open and cheerful, laying aside at stated times their worldly matters, to devote their attention to other concerns. They behold them attending to these other concerns with great seriousness and gravity, and by both their words and actions manifesting that they consider these matters as matters of the last importance. A mind must be very careless indeed, not to be led to some serious thoughts by such a view of matters. “Certainly” says the careless mind, “religion is at least in these, otherwise wise and prudent men’s opinion, a matter of the last importance —a matter in which they consider their welfare to be deeply involved. If it is so to them, it must also be so to me. As a man—a creature of the same order—having the same feelings, and standing in the same relation to the Creator and Judge of all, I cannot possibly have any interest separate from

“ theirs—nor can they possibly have any interest separate from mine—I will at least go and see and think about these things.”

A careless sinner being by these or similar reflections brought into the assemblies of the saints, there is not a single exercise in which we can be engaged, which has not a natural tendency to lead him to thoughts still more serious and still more beneficial. It is in these public exercises that sin is displayed in all its deformity—It is here that holiness is exhibited in all her native charms—It is here that we are made acquainted with our Creator and the various relations in which we stand to him. In these ordinances we are told what we are by nature, and what we ought to be by grace. In them we are made to understand what is our duty in this world, and what we may expect to be our portion in the world to come. Nor are public ordinances of use to give information only : as appointments of heaven they are endowed with a superior energy. With the word read and preached, the regenerating and quickening influences of the spirit, are communicated. With this influence the word is quick and powerful—the hardened sinner is convinced of sin—the understanding is enlightened in the knowledge of the sufficiency and suitableness of the Saviour—the will is made obedient—constrained and enabled to receive Jesus the Saviour, as he is offered to men in the gospel. Thus from being an out cast and a son of the world, the man becomes an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ.

There is only one thing more respecting the nature and use of public ordinances, to which we shall call your attention at this time. Public ordinances on earth are a very lively representation of the general assembly of the first born in heaven. When we meet together for the purposes of public worship, particularly on the Lord's day, we profess to have left the world and the

things of the world behind us, and to be wholly engaged in holy spiritual services. This, brethren, is certainly an attempt to hold communion with those pure and happy spirits above, who serve their God and their Redeemer day and night without ceasing. While we wait upon God in the church below, the assembly is made up of individuals from different families of very different tempers and dispositions; and in that great assembly which is before the throne, there are those who are redeemed to God out of all people and kindreds, and tongues and nations. In fine: while we wait upon God in his public ordinances below, different voices and different hearts are all united in ONE; and this is just a representation in miniature of what shall be the exercises of the redeemed to all eternity. We shall there and then with one heart, though with ten thousand tongues sing, “*Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory and blessing.*”

If this, then, is a short sketch of the nature and the use of public ordinances, we need not wonder at the saints’ great delight in attending upon these institutions. Verily it is good for them thus to draw near to God—Well may they say, “*Lord we have loved the habitation of thy house and the place where thy honour dwells.*” Well may they say, “*I was glad when it was said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord: a day spent in thy courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a door keeper in the house of my God, than dwell in tents of wickedness.*” It is in these public institutions that they openly avow their attachment to Jehovah. It is there that they behold in a peculiar manner his glory—It is there that they are transformed to the same divine image—It is there that they behold multitudes of fellow sinners drawn with cords of love—It is there that they are strengthened and encouraged to hold on in the good ways of the Lord—In short, it

is there that they get a lively foretaste of the eternal weight of glory which awaits them in the other world—when they shall see their God and Saviour as he is, and be made holy as he is holy.

It only remains that we now close the discourse with a few directions about the manner in which we ought to attend upon public ordinances so as to profit. These it is hoped, after what has been said, need not be many. Were we suitably impressed with a sense of the divine appointment and great use of public ordinances, we could scarcely fail to attend upon them so as to profit.

It is almost unnecessary to say, “that in order to profit by public ordinances, our attendance upon them ought to be as *frequent* and as *regular* as possible. It is by frequently eating and regularly eating, that the body, in all ordinary cases, is preserved in life and vigour, and betwixt the body and the mind, in this respect, there is a very striking resemblance” It is equally unnecessary to tell you, “that your attendance on public ordinances ought to be *conscientious*. It must be a matter of *conscience*, not a matter of custom or mere complacency. We must in this instance in a particular manner do our duty as to God, and not as to man.” A very little reflection must also convince every one, “that in order to profit by public ordinances, we must make their nature and use the subject of our *daily meditation*. Even when engaged in the busy world, we ought to be looking forward, and longing for the stated times of public worship.” Let us here remember, that one great end of the appointment of these institutions, is to moderate our affections to earthly objects, and gradually fit us for the inheritance of the saints in light. A very little reflection must also convince us, that if we would profit by our attendance upon public ordinances, our attendance upon them ought to be accompanied with *frequent and daily*



*prayer.* Let us remember, that Paul may plant and Apollos may water, but that it is God only who giveth the increase; that it is the divine blessing alone that can render these, as well as the other means of grace, effectual for our salvation. Let us then pray frequently and daily, “That the times of the refreshing may come from his presence—that he would abundantly bless Zion’s provision, and satisfy her poor with bread—that he would put the treasure into the earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be evidently of God, and not of man—In short, that he would direct those who minister to us in holy things, to such subjects and to such views of divine truth, as he in his good pleasure will abundantly bless for our good, and the good of our fellow worshippers—that men may thus be blessed in the Redeemer, and all nations call him blessed.”

In fine: Every one’s own good sense and experience must tell him, that in order to profit by public ordinances, frequent self examination is indispensably necessary. Let us then, frequently, especially in the evening of every Lord’s day, set apart some time to examine and prove our own selves. Let us consider whether we are growing, or on the decay: whether the word preached really profits us: whether we receive the word in a good and honest heart; or whether it is, with respect to us, cast among stones and thorns. In short, whether the word of God is found of us, and we are eating it, and it is proving the joy and the rejoicing of our heart; or whether we are among the carnal, hardened despisers of God’s word, to whom the word, however frequently and however purely preached, is only the savour of death unto death.

Thus, brethren, we have in plainness and simplicity, briefly suggested a few directions about attending upon public ordinances so as to profit: to enlarge upon them is unnecessary. Wherever there is the

least disposition to hear the word of God, so as to profit, a single hint is enough; and wherever this disposition is wanting, though you should bray such a fool in a mortar with a pestle among wheat, yet will not his folly depart from him. The greater part of us have long had opportunities of attending upon public ordinances. It may be that these opportunities have not been so frequent as we could have wished; but it is also more than probable, that in many cases we have ourselves to blame, and blame considerably for being in what is called a destitute situation. Means must be used for the attainment of regular and stated public ordinances, as well as for the attainment of any other blessing. And were all professed christians just as careful to procure the public means of grace for themselves and families, as they are to procure good farms and other worldly accommodations, there would not be so many silent Sabbaths in the woods of America. It must also be here observed, that we have all, the very best of us, enjoyed a great many more opportunities of attending upon public ordinances, than we have rightly improved. How careless and formal is our attendance generally! How seldom are we in the spirit in the Lord's day! How do we frequently account the Sabbath and the public exercises of the sanctuary a weariness! In reviewing our improvement how much occasion have we to say, Our leanness, our leanness! These things, brethren, are matters of lamentation, and ought to be matters of lamentation to us. *Let thy hand, O Lord, be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself. So shall we not go back from thee: quicken us and we will call upon thy name. Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, cause thy face to shine and we shall be saved.*

## SERMON VIII.

### THE SIN AND DANGER OF NEGLECTING PUBLIC ORDINANCES.

Prov. xxviii. 9. *He who turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination.*

**T**O be an acceptable preacher, is without doubt, a very desirable thing. Unless we in our ministrations *please*, to a certain degree, we shall never *edify*. A preacher, consequently, who has any thing of common prudence, or christian zeal, will be cautious in touching upon any subject which he knows will run the risk of giving general offence. Next to the approbation of his God and his own conscience, he will value the good opinion of those whom he addresses. This good opinion may, however, be purchased and enjoyed at too high a price—at no less a price than the ruin of immortal souls—the eternal destruction of both himself and multitudes of those whom he addresses. We have no doubt all heard of a people in old times who were a rebellious people, lying children, children which would not hear the word of the Lord, who said to the seers see not, and the prophets prophecy not unto us right things, *speaking unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits*. But I would fondly hope that I am not this day condemned to address such a people; a people who would even for a moment wish me to procure their good opinion, however desirable, at such an immense price. In the preceding discourse, we have endeavoured to consider the nature and use of public ordinances. In the present I would turn your attention to the sin and danger of neglecting these divine institutions. This is a subject which,

from a variety of circumstances, may be very unacceptable to a very large number of those who call themselves christians; but it is part of the whole council of God. It is a subject which he hath charged me, as one of his servants, to preach; and while I preach he hath also charged you to hear. It is written, as we have just read, out of the book of God, "*He who turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination.*" This, brethren, is part of the law of God. I did not make it, or perhaps I would have made it a little more agreeable to the corrupt inclinations of mankind—I only as in duty bound propose to explain it.

As this discourse must be disagreeable to all those for whom it is intended, it shall be as short as possible. Those who are in the habit of turning away their ear from hearing the law, must have a short sermon at first. When the thing becomes a little more agreeable, we may lengthen the discourse, without appearing to lengthen the time. The sin under consideration is, *turning away the ear from hearing the law*—The danger is, that the prayer of such persons *shall be an abomination*. Let the most careless and unconcerned among us, as they value the welfare of their immortal souls, attend only for a few minutes till we suggest a thought or two upon each of these. And

1. Who are those who turn away their ear from hearing the law? To this we answer:

1. That those certainly do so, who seldom or never attend upon the means of grace. God hath in his infinite wisdom and goodness appointed the public preaching of the word, as one of the means and one of the chief means for making guilty men acquainted with the only method of salvation. But such is the depravity of the human heart, that multitudes of these guilty, needy persons, will not so much as wait upon God in these means. Multitudes live openly without

either God or godliness—Glory in profaning Sabbaths and despising divine ordinances. Such certainly, without any controversy, turn away their ear from hearing the law ; but as men of this character, can scarcely be supposed to be within the sound of our voice, let it be observed,

2. That those also turn away their ear from hearing the law, who are very *irregular* and *uncertain* in their attendance on public ordinances. There are considerable numbers, and those too who are considered by some as very good christians, who make their appearance pretty frequently in the public assemblies of the saints ; but then they are seen there only when they have no other employment. They imagine that they can serve God acceptably with that which costs them nought. When the day is good—or when they know not how they could get the Sabbath spent—or when they have any particular friend to see who is generally at meeting—then to be sure they make their appearance in God's courts. But an excuse which they would blush to hold up to their fellow mortal for not meeting him at a considerable distance on some little worldly business, is sufficient to keep them from waiting upon the great God in his own house, only a few miles off, and upon a matter of the last importance for both time and eternity. With such persons religion is by no means the one thing needful. It is a something which is very convenient and agreeable when it is to be found just at hand and without any trouble ; but when it cannot be thus obtained, it is a thing, without which, they can live very well. These people, it is true, are very far from being what we call avowed infidels, but they habitually live under the influence of infidel principles, and at the winding up of the matter, if mercy prevent not, the difference betwixt them and infidels will not be very great.

3. Those certainly turn away their ear from hearing the law, who, though they are pretty regular in attend-

ing upon public ordinances, are very careless in attending upon them as *a divine institution*. It is to be feared that there are multitudes among us, who attend public ordinances, and attend them pretty regularly, and yet, scarcely ever consider them as any thing more, than *an ordinance of man*. They go to hear such and such a man preach—They go to give their support to such a particular party, or to such a particular set of principles—They go out of a decent respect to the custom of the neighbourhood, or example of their fathers, or other godly friends. These things, it is true, are all very good in their own place; but it is equally evident, that where these and such considerations are the only or the chief motives of men's attending on public ordinances, they are very far from hearing God's law. They hear the word, not as it is the word of God; but as it is the word of man. They go to hear, not what God the Lord will speak; but what this or the other mortal will say. Hence it follows, that their whole attention, while they are in the house of God, is to the external part of religion only. A regard to the divine authority instamped upon every part of divine truth and divine worship, makes no impressions on their hearts.

I must add

4. That those certainly turn away their ear from hearing the law, who never put themselves *to any trouble or expence in supporting public ordinances*. It must be evident to every man of common sense, that in the present state of human nature, public ordinances could not exist even upon the most economical plan without a regular and a certain portion of the good things of this life. To have public ordinances any way comfortably administered, a comfortable place of worship must be procured and kept in repair. I blush not, also to assert, that as the head of the church hath appointed a distinct order of men to attend to the dis-

dispensation of these ordinances, *to preach the word, and to be instant in season, and out of season*, it is a plain and simple dictate of common sense and common reason, though revelation had said nothing about it, that these men ought to live and be supported by those for whose spiritual good they labour.\* In short, it must be evident to every careful observer of divine and human affairs, that there must be in the nature of things a variety of what are called incidental expences, which must be discharged by some person or persons, or a regular dispensation of public ordinances would, without a miracle, cease.

Now, brethren, only for half a moment consider what is the natural language of the conduct of those, who never put themselves to any trouble about these matters. Why, it is just in short, this: “that God may support his ordinances as he sees best—or if others continue to support public ordinances, good and well; but if otherwise, no matter what is the consequence. Not a cent’s value of their property, or at least but a very small part of it, and that very irregular and uncertain, shall ever with their consent go to the support of the gospel.” And what, brethren, would be the consequence were all professed christians following the same conduct? Why as we have said above, the dispensation of public ordinances would in a very short time cease—the church visible would be annihilated.

A great deal more might be said upon this subject; but as the subject is no doubt disagreeable to a great many of the hearers, as well as to the speaker, and as it was proposed to give only a short sermon, I shall request your attention to only one observation more:—Dr. Franklin has some where said, “that what is necessary to maintain one vice, would bring up two

\* See Postscript.

children." I would apply the remark to the case in hand, and say, "that were all professed christians (I speak not of avowed infidels, let them do as they please) to give to the support of the gospel only the one half of what they directly and indirectly give to luxury and vice, we would likely have through the whole of the United States, double the number of churches that we now have, and those not hevels and standing empty one half of the year; but decent commodious buildings, and filled with the praises of the Most High every first day of the week.

Thus much for a short view of the sin under consideration—*turning away the ear from hearing the law.* It only remains that we now consider *the curse or punishment.* He who turneth away his ear from hearing the law, *even his prayer is (or shall be) an abomination.*

Here it is evidently supposed, what it is likely we all know to be sometimes the case, "that persons who are in the habit of neglecting public ordinances may, notwithstanding, sometimes attend to their private or secret devotions. They turn away their ear from hearing the law, but they do not altogether neglect religious worship. At particular times they are supposed to have some dispositions to address the throne of grace *in prayer*; but it must be carefully observed, that this prayer, let it be either regular or irregular, frequent or seldom, shall not be accepted—*it is an abomination.*

Two classes of men, may here, I think, be attended to:

1. There are men who are not very regular in attending upon public ordinances, who perhaps make conscience of attending pretty regularly to secret and family duties. It may be that they pray regularly or at least frequently in their families, but they never or very seldom attend public ordinances, or they turn

away their ear from hearing the law in some of the senses formerly mentioned. Yet even these private and secret duties shall not be accepted. While they in heart or in practice despise public ordinances, their prayers and other religious performances in the closet and family, *shall be an abomination*. This may appear harsh doctrine to some, but the reason of it is plain. Genuine religion is a uniform thing. Whoever is savingly taught of God, hath *a respect to all God's commandments*. Private and secret duties are very good in their own place, and when attended to in their own time; but public ordinances are equally a divine institution—And when we continue to neglect these public ordinances when we have an opportunity of attending upon them, we have no reason to expect a blessing upon those which we may think fit to use in their place. Are we wiser than our Maker? Have we more authority than the God of ordinances? Is it reasonable to suppose that one divine ordinance was ever intended to jostle out another? “Ye have said also, behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it saith the Lord of hosts: and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the Lord. But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great king, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen. Mal. i. 13 & 14.

2. The other class of men, to whom the curse mentioned in the text is applicable, are those whom we generally call the *openly profane*. These live without God or any thing like godliness while in prosperity; but in particular distressing situations, in the prospect of death for instance, they become serious and attempt to pray. We have all also, likely seen instances of this case—We have also all certain feel-

ings in our nature, which dispose us to hope the best of our poor deluded fellow creatures, who thus, though it is at the very last hour, give some symptoms of repentance. But we ought never to make *our feelings* a rule of either faith or practice, in direct opposition to express and positive declarations of scripture. Every reason which can be urged for the curse being inflicted in the former case, will apply with a double force to the present one. Sovereign grace may indeed make some exceptions from the general rule; but of these exceptions we in the present state of existence can, in the most of cases, have but very little information. One of the thieves who were crucified with our Lord, was saved, to teach sinners, that while they are out of the place of torment, they ought not to despair. But there was *only one of the two* saved to teach sinners, that they ought not to presume too much. It is dangerous indeed to put off a matter of such importance as the salvation of our immortal souls till the very last. Is the guilt which we have already contracted not enough to provoke God for ever to deny us his grace? Are we sure that we shall have any warning of our soul being required at our hands? Are we certain that we shall then be in the use of our reason, or have any thing like the use of our reason? May we not never know that we are arrested by the king of terrors, till we find ourselves in the place where there is nothing but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth?—

“ 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: when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you: then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me:

for they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of my counsel; they despised all my reproof: therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.”

P. S. THE doctrine of ministers having a right to support from those among whom they labour, is some how or other remarkably unpopular among all denominations of christians in this country. I think I have been also frequently told that the Baptists, or some individuals among them, have been considerably instrumental in running down the doctrine. I am disposed to think this is a gross misrepresentation, occasioned wholly by the mistaken zeal of a few of that body. In a pamphlet entitled, “A treatise of Church Government, &c. done by appointment of the Philadelphia Baptist Association,” re-printed in Lexington, 1805, and adopted by a committee of the Kentucky Association of 1805, I find these words:—

“Pastors of churches have a divine right to their support, if the church is able to give it without being oppressed, or so far as they are able, than which nothing is more manifest in the New Testament. “For the workman is worthy of his meat.” Matt. x. 10. Luke x. 7. “If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?” 1 Cor. ix. 11. “Do ye not know, that they who minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple? and they who wait at the altar, are partakers with the altar? Even so has the Lord ordained, that they who preach the gospel, should live of the gospel.” 1 Cor. ix. 13, 14. “Let him that is taught in the word, communicate unto him that teacheth in all

good things." Gal. vi. 6. See 1. Tim. v. 17, 18.

" These passages of holy writ are so unequivocal and express, that no one can evade their force.

" Mr. Hooker well observes, that " they, who will not pay their ministers, would not pay any one his due; could they refuse with the same temporal impurity." Every one knows, that those, who will not do justice, farther than the law compels them, are destitute of an honest principle.

" Nothing but ignorance of his duty, or covetousness and want of principle, or both, can induce to neglect or refuse paying; and a covetous brother should be expelled the church, and kept no company with. 1 Cor. v. 11.

" When a people neglect their duty in regard to the support of their minister, they are not only wilful neglecters of the divine law, but must otherwise be great losers, both as they forfeit a right to the divine blessing, as also because their minister will be less capable of, and prevented from, serving them to the same advantage. Gal. vi. 6, 7. 2 Cor. ix. 6—8.

" This support of the minister should not be done in the way of charity, or alms, but as a matter of right; and, if the people are able, it ought to exceed his bare necessity, that he may be able to be exemplary in acts of hospitality. 1 Tim. iii. 2."

I have only to add, that were there *a willing mind* in the great majority of those who call themselves christians, and who frequently lament very bitterly at the want of a regular and stated dispensation of public ordinances, a great many of the difficulties about the *expence* would not exist. When we consider any thing as *the one thing needful*, means to procure it are not usually long wanting. We all in this country find *even cash* to supply the demands of our lusts; but multitudes among us who call themselves christians,

and who live in ease and affluence, cannot find a cent or at most only a dollar or two in the year, for the support of the gospel.

---



---

## SERMON IX.

### FAMILY RELIGION EXPLAINED AND ENFORCED.

*Eph. vi. 4. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*

*Ps. ci. 2. I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.*  
*Gen. xviii. 19. For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him; and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.*

**T**HERE is no connection on earth more important, than the connection which subsists betwixt the different members of a family. Whether this connection is viewed in a religious or civil respect, it is important. Families are the small societies of which all other societies are composed. If we are easy and happy in our families, we can in the most of cases set the storms of life at defiance. However much we may be tormented in our intercourse with the world, we are sure of one calm resting place, and that at home in the bosom of our family. But, if on the contrary, we are uneasy and unhappy in our family connection, no ease nor prosperity in our intercourse with the world, will enable us to pass our life even tolerably. A man who is unhappy in his family, is like a man who carries about with him a guilty, accusing conscience. He has a something which gnaws at his very vitals, and even in the midst of his laughter, his heart is sad. In short, I have often thought, that if there is any one thing on earth which bears any resemblance to the so-

ciety of the place of torment, it is a family where the different members are continually biting and devouring one another.

It must, consequently, be of importance to all the members of a family to know, how they may be, and continue happy in their connection with one another. There is no doubt but that many expedients have been proposed and tried on this subject; but it is humbly conceived, that of all these expedients, none are so efficacious as a diligent and conscientious observance of *family religion*. If heads of families particularly, would wish themselves and those under their charge, to be happy even in this world, let them obey the injunction of the apostle, and *bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*—let them imitate the example of the King of Israel and the Father of the faithful, *in walking before their houses, with a perfect heart; and in commanding their children and their household after them, to keep the way of the Lord, and to do justice and judgment*. In thus maintaining family religion, the great secret of maintaining family happiness without doubt consists. It cannot therefore be disagreeable to pursue the subject a little farther:—  
Let us

I. In a few particulars state, and shortly illustrate, in what family religion consists; and then

II. Attend to the motives which ought to influence heads of families particularly to maintain within their respective charges, family religion; or in the words of the text, *Bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord: walk before their house with a perfect heart: and command their children and household after them, to keep the way of the Lord, and to do justice and judgment*.

In illustrating the first of these general divisions, we shall request your attention while we shall make a few observations on *performing family worship*—in

*communicating family instruction—and in maintaining family government.* And

1. Family religion consists in regularly and conscientiously performing family worship. Without worship, there can be no religion any where. Hence it follows, that family religion cannot exist, where there is no family worship. We certainly all know what are the constituent parts of family worship. It consists in praise, in the reading a portion of God's word, and in prayer. We also all know that the professors of christianity generally consider it as their duty to perform this service every evening and morning. This is indeed a duty in itself so reasonable, and when performed, so profitable, that those who call themselves christians, and yet live in the neglect of it, must, unless they are uncommonly hardened, blush every time they think of their conduct. Family worship is a duty which even the light of nature enforces. The heads of families are the natural guardians of those who are under their roof—they are in a particular manner the guardians of their own offspring. Family mercies, great and numerous, are every day needed, and every day bestowed. Family sins are also every day committed. It is therefore, a reasonable service, that the head of the family; as the mouth of the whole, should every evening and morning return thanks and implore mercy for all that is past, and commit the whole to the divine protection of the time to come.

There is also something in the very nature of family worship, which is exceedingly well adapted for making a good impression upon all the members. By having worship regularly and decently performed, a sense of the divine goodness and of our obligations to serve him, are preserved. All the members of the family are at least, once a day, in a grave, serious mood. They thus also learn to sing praises—they gradually become acquainted with the word of God, and are taught by

example how to pray. The consequence of the whole is—they are thus directed and encouraged to worship God in secret—to pray and taste for themselves the sweetness of religion.

It may be farther observed, that Jehovah hath in mercy annexed to the performance of family worship, a peculiar blessing. Hence the Psalmist prays, *Pour out thy anger upon the heathen, and upon the families which call not upon thy name.* Hence the prophet predicts “that in the last day the Lord will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be his people.”

We ask then, how are christian families to be distinguished from heathen families, and escape the divine wrath, unless it is by regularly calling upon God in a family capacity? How are christian families to manifest to themselves and to the world, that Jehovah is their God, and that they are in reality his people, unless it is by regularly worshiping this their God in a family capacity? When Jehovah turns a sinner from the evil of his ways and enrolls him among the number of his people, he makes him a praying person—he makes him regular and conscientious in performing divine worship. In like manner when Jehovah names his name upon any family, he there sets up an altar—he there erects a church. In the dwelling of the righteous is the voice of rejoicing and salvation. They in their family capacity, acknowledge their God with every rising and setting sun.

Every reflecting man's experience must convince him, that these things are so. Look around you, brethren, and say if you can find a single family where family worship is neglected, and much of any thing like religion found in any thing else among them. Say also, if there is not a *visible blessing* resting upon those families, in which family worship is regularly performed, which is not known in those families which call themselves christians, and yet live in the neglect of this

duty. Order and regularity, and gravity, are generally enstamped upon all the proceedings of the one, while confusion, and hurry, and bustle, and levity, and something like dissipation, are as generally the distinguishing characteristics of all which belongs to the other. It is a very common excuse among those families in which worship is neglected, that they have seldom or never any time for the performance of this duty—all is so much hurry and confusion every evening and morning. This very excuse is a proof of the evils which accompany the neglect of this duty. Whence is it that there is so little time, and so much hurry and confusion? Have these families any more to do in this world, than those families in which worship is daily and regularly performed? or do they generally accomplish their worldly business in a better manner, or at more seasonable hours? Ah no! The very reverse is generally the case. Such families may read their sin in their punishment. Were the heads of such families to discharge their duty to their God, and those committed to their care, by having all the family at a certain hour, every evening and morning; gathered together to attend upon worship, order and regularity, even in their worldly business, would soon be restored. Every member of the family would then know his place; and every thing belonging to the family would be generally done in its proper season. It is when we acknowledge the Lord in all our ways, that we have any reason to expect that he will direct our steps. This holds good in family affairs as well as in personal affairs. It is the divine blessing alone which makes rich and adds no sorrow; but we have no reason to expect that this blessing rests either upon individuals, or upon families, where it is never so much as asked, or asked in a careless, irregular manner.

If then, brethren, we would really bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord—

if we would walk before our houses with a perfect heart—if we would command our children and our household to keep the way of the Lord—if we would have our families distinguished from those of heathens —if we would really know Jehovah as the God of our families—and have his blessing resting upon us and our enjoyments, we must make conscience of having family worship performed every evening and morning. There is no doubt, but that a variety of objections and difficulties will be in our way if we have hitherto much neglected our duty, but if there is a willing mind and any thing of a faithful conscience, all these will soon disappear.

2. Family religion consists in regularly and seasonably communicating *family instruction*. There are a great many circumstances which demonstrate that instruction may be communicated in a family to very great advantage. The greater part of the members of a family are generally young—their minds are consequently tender and susceptible of impressions of every kind. In all well regulated families, they are also, all united under one head, a parent or parents whom they love, and to whose commands they are ever ready to yield an implicit obedience. They are moreover, in a great measure free from care, and strong and vigorous in both body and mind. These and similar advantages in favour of instruction, being communicated, are seldom or ever found in any other situation.

The obligations under which christian parents are to communicate religious instruction to their children, we are afterwards to consider. It may be necessary, however, here to observe, that it is quite natural for the young and tender mind to be imbibing something. If it is not receiving good impressions, it must be receiving bad impressions. It requires little reasoning to shew which of these ought to be received. It becomes, then, those parents in whose heart is the fear

of the Lord, to lay hold upon this favourable opportunity and endeavour to make their offspring early acquainted with the Lord God of their fathers.

What particular instructions every christian parent ought to communicate to his family, none who are hearing me this day, I hope, need be told. The rising members of a family ought to be made early acquainted with their lost state by nature—how that they are by nature children of wrath. While their sin and misery are demonstrated to them, they ought also to be made acquainted with the method of recovery through our Lord Jesus Christ. They ought to be made acquainted with the person and the offices of the Redeemer—with what he hath done and suffered in behalf of men—and how that himself and all the blessings of his purchase are made over in the gospel to men in the character of men and of sinners. Young people ought also to be made early acquainted with the various duties which, as men and as christians, they owe to their God, to society, and themselves. In fine, they ought early to be made familiar with that book by which every moral action is to be tried, and upon whose authority every religious doctrine is to be received and held. It is seriously to be lamented, that great numbers of professed, and we hope real christians, in this part of the world, are remarkably deficient in this part of their duty. In a family of six or eight, or ten children, you will find frequently only one or two Bibles. Family worship is perhaps pretty frequently performed; but the head of the family is at little pains to be any way regular in his reading; and unless it be while this exercise is performed, a Bible is seldom handled. Hence it happens, that numbers grow up, even in families which we call christians, know little more of the contents of the Bible, than if they were the children of avowed infidels. Whereas, were every head of a family at the pains and expence

to procure a Bible to every one of his children, as soon as they could either read themselves, or follow another reading—were he to cause every one to have his Bible in his hand during family worship, and carry it also along with him to the house of God—were only this much done, the religious and particularly the Bible knowledge of our youth, would be very different from what it is. Pardon brethren, this digression—If I touch upon what may hurt some of your feelings, I have no other object in view, but the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom in the salvation of you and your offspring.

The particular manner in which religious instruction may be communicated in a family, must in a great measure be left to the prudence and experience of the head. Communicating instruction by question and answer has been long in use, and has received the approbation of the wise and the good in almost every age. To the honour of modern times, catechisms to assist pious heads of families in this exercise, are now to be found every where. In the most of these catechisms there is a very clear and comprehensive view given of the leading doctrines and duties of Revelation.

It becomes, then, all heads of families who really wish to have their families well informed, to make it their business to see, that those committed to their care, thoroughly digest some one or other of these forms of sound words. Let them exert their authority, and cause all their own children at least, to commit to memory a certain portion of some one of these catechisms once a week; and while this portion is repeated to them, take an opportunity to point out the order and the beautiful connection of the whole. Paying attention to reading the Bible and a few other good books has also been generally acknowledged to be a very profitable method of communicating family instruction. Let the young members of a family be directed to

make a practice of reading a certain portion of the Bible every day. Let it also be attended to, that in their reading, they read it regularly through from one end to the other. Let them be required to give an account of what they read, particularly of the historical parts. As they have an opportunity, let them also be directed to read other books of a serious, evangelical cast; and which, discuss in a plain and familiar method some doctrine or duty. In fine, let all christian heads of families make conscience of taking all their children, who are capable of attending to any thing of instruction at all, regularly and stately with them to the house of God. There is no saying how soon God may bless his own ordinances to a particular individual. It is good any way, to be in the way of our duty.

The particular occasions that are most suitable for communicating instruction in the family, must also in a great measure be left to the experience and prudence of the head. The winter evenings, and other hours in which a great deal of business is not usually carried on, have by many pious and Godly parents been devoted to such exercises. It must be evident to every pious mind, that it is far better the young members of a family be at such hours thus employed, than to be occupied in folly and madness—things which if they be not really sinful, are at best trifling and unprofitable. Sabbath days, and particularly those Sabbath days in which no public ordinances are enjoyed, are also golden opportunities for communicating family instruction. It is at least certain, that if family instruction is not communicated on that day, we have little reason to expect that much of it will be communicated at any other time.—There is no doubt but that it was with this particular view that the divine Law-giver gives heads of families a particular charge to sanctify the Sabbath.

*-In it thou shalt not do any work, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man servant, nor thy maid servant.*

Instead then of allowing our children and servants on that day to stroll about the fields, and stand and gaze at doors and windows, let us while we are not attending upon public worship, exert our authority and keep them together, and together under our eye. Let us open our mouths also, and as God shall enable us, instill into the young and tender minds suitable instruction concerning the things which belong to their peace, before they shall be for ever hid from their eyes. There is also a great deal of propriety in having family worship doubled on the Sabbath. A variety in our religious exercises is thus enjoyed; and God is glorified, and men edified in our uniting at stated intervals in prayer and praise.

3. Family religion consists in steadily maintaining family government. Without this it will be in the nature of things impossible to perform any other family duty.

A man is by nature the master of all who are under his roof. He is in a particular manner the master—the absolute lord of his children. It is to him, as their father, they, under God, owe their all. It is therefore reasonable, that while they are under age, they be wholly under his command. The opposite doctrine is fraught with absurdities, and has a natural tendency to dissolve all societies whether civil or religious.

This authority ought in a particular manner to be exercised *in commanding our household, and our children, that they may keep the way of the Lord.* In exercising this authority, the Psalmist in the Psalm of which one of our texts is a part, declares, “*He who worketh deceit, shall not tarry within my house. He who telleth lies, shall not tarry in my sight.*” This authority ought to be exercised by all christian heads of families, in making all who are under their roof, re-

gularly attend the worship and the instruction of the family. It ought also to be exercised in making them avoid all unnecessary intercourse and connexion with those who are immoral and profane, and in making them regularly attend upon the worship of God in the sanctuary.

It is in vain to say, that in exercising their authority in this manner, *parents force the consciences of their children*. No instruction of any kind can be communicated with any degree of success, unless those who are to communicate it, be invested with a considerable degree of authority over those who are to receive it. It is also a solid first principle, that unless instruction be communicated to the human race when they are young, they will never be very remarkable for the extent, or the accuracy of their knowledge. What a wise and civilized state of society would we have, was it held as a first principle that none of our species should be taught any thing of reading or writing or arithmetic, or of any of the arts of life, till they arrived at maturity—that is, to a state when they could judge for themselves of the real utility of each of those branches !

\* \* \* \* \*

\* \* \* \* \*

\* \* \* \* \*

It may also be observed, that the laws of all nations, whether civilized or barbarous, have considered the parent as the most natural and affectionate guardian of his children, while in what is called *non age*—and in that period they are in fact supposed to have no property, nor any power to dispose of either themselves or what may be called their own. Now the same reasoning, and the same principles upon which all laws respecting minors and guardians are made, will apply with equal force to the subject in hand. Parents are certainly the natural guardians of the spiritual, as well as the temporal interests of their chil-

dren. They are under as much obligation, and consequently must have as much authority to guard against every thing which would hurt their souls, as against every thing which would hurt their bodies. And in commanding them to attend upon family worship, and family instruction, and public ordinances, they do no more than exercise their right, and fulfil their obligation. As in supporting the natural life of their children, parents set before them the same food, and direct them to follow the same or similar occupations, by which they themselves have been supported; so in nourishing their spiritual life, they lead them to the same truths & the same ordinances by which they themselves have been refreshed and edified. As in providing for the natural life of his children, every wise parent will command them to shun all intercourse with the idle and the dissipated; so in providing for their spiritual life, he will equally exercise his authority in commanding them to refrain from having any intercourse with those who would corrupt them in their principles or morals. In both cases he does no more than his duty; and he would really be a fool and a madman, an enemy to his son and human society, did he otherwise. With a father's affection he is in both cases, in the strength of grace, endeavouring to preserve those in soul and body who are committed to his care; and were he to do otherwise, he would be unfaithful to that God who has graciously given him that charge.

One remark more must be attended to before we leave this part of the subject. To render all those means which we have mentioned efficacious, they must be accompanied with frequent and fervent prayer. God only can change the hearts of our children and servants. He only can give them an easy teachable disposition. He only can direct us to use those means which he will bless. Let heads of families then be

anxious that Jehovah would, in the first place, really bestow upon themselves a perfect heart ; and in the next place that he would direct them to walk with a perfect heart before their house. Let them in a particular manner frequently devote their offspring to the service of the Lord. Let them beseech him to accept of their gift, and take them and their's under his peculiar protection—give them a name and place in his house better than that of sons and daughters.

Having thus shortly explained the duty of maintaining family religion—it follows that we now

II. State the motives which ought to excite christian heads of families—*thus to bring up their children in the nurture and administration of the Lord—thus to walk before their house with a perfect heart, &c. &c.* And

1. Christian heads of families are by the very profession which they make under positive obligations thus to walk—thus to raise up a seed to serve the Redeemer. When we take upon ourselves the name of christian, and in a particular manner when we connect ourselves with any particular church, we virtually declare, that we shall do all in our power to promote the interest of Messiah's kingdom. We declare that we are the Lord's free men, and that whatever others do, as for us and ours, we will serve the Lord. It must also on the present occasion be particularly remembered, that the greater part of us who have children, have in the holy ordinance of baptism, solemnly devoted them to the Lord. We have had his name named upon them ; we have by a solemn oath in the presence of God, angels and men said “ that we would bring them up in the nurture and administration of the Lord ; that we would embrace every opportunity to instil into their minds sound religious principles, that they may be to our Lord and Redeemer a name and a praise in the earth when we ourselves are

no more." Let us then frequently think upon these our obligations—obligations voluntarily entered into—and say if we really can refrain from walking before our houses, with a perfect heart, or hesitate a moment to command our children and our household that they may serve the Lord? Have we not opened our mouths unto the Lord, and joined ourselves and our seed to the Lord in an everlasting covenant, which shall never be forgotten—and shall we think of drawing back? Shall we by our carelessness and indifference bring up these children to the devil, whom we professed to devote wholly to the Lord?

2. The offers and promises which Jehovah as our new covenant God hath made to believing parents and their offspring, ought to have a strong influence in stirring us up to the practice of the duty which we are considering. With a particular reference to the present subject, it is written in the volume of inspiration: "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." And again: "As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; my spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and forever." Is. lix. 21. And farther: "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Acts ii. 39.

In these and similar declarations Jehovah hath made a grant of himself and all his fullness to us. This grant he hath also in mercy extended to our seed. He hath also secured that in every generation the redeemer shall have some to serve him. Now what greater possible encouragement can we expect?

Have we not Jehovah's own grant as our warrant to lay hold of him, not only as our own God, but also as the God of our seed? And since Jehovah hath made over himself and all that he hath to us and ours, shall we not in return, devote ourselves and our seed to his service? or having received him as our God and the God of our seed, shall we not embrace every opportunity of making our seed acquainted with their portion, and fitting them for the service of our Lord and master?

Besides these declarations which are made to children, in conjunction with their parents, there are others particularly encouraging addressed particularly to children. It is written, "I love them that love me, and they who seek me early shall find me. Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God. My son give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways."— Shall parents who have the least spark of natural affection, be so cruel, as not frequently to lay these encouraging declarations before their children? Since Jehovah Jesus is so particularly fond of children, of the young and the tender heart, shall parents who call themselves his people, refuse to use every mean which is in their power, to gain and allure their hearts? No, verily, cries every genuine christian—we will travail as in birth, till the Redeemer is formed in every heart, committed to our care—we will lose no opportunity of making them early and intimately acquainted with him who is the beloved of our own souls, and the chief among ten thousand.

3. Christian heads of families on the present occasion, ought to consider how much the church in the next generation, depends upon the faithful discharge of family duties. It is by no means an extravagant assertion, to say, "that under God, the very existence

of the church, in the next generation, in a great measure depends on maintaining family religion."

Families are, in fact, the nurseries from which both church and state are to be supplied with proper members. A few years and those who are now active in supporting the gospel, shall not be known in the land of the living. The very appearance of our children says, "give place to us; in a short time we are to stand in your stead." *One generation goeth away, and another cometh: your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live for ever?* It is but a few years, since the oldest among us, were only children—under tutors and governors—and we who now occupy the place of teachers and governors, must in like manner, in a few years, give way to those who are now scarcely known to exist. Let us pause for a little, and consider how our place is to be supplied—Is it to be filled with wise men or with fools?—Have we frequently said, that we will give no sleep to our eyes, nor slumber to our eye-lids, till we find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob? Have we again and again made every exertion in our power that the gospel might be planted in our land? Has Jehovah in any instances crowned our labours with success? Let us remember that all which we have done or may be doing, is nothing, or worse than nothing, unless particular attention is paid to the rising generation. To them it will belong to perfect or completely destroy all that we have begun. These, if they are wise, are to inherit the fruit of all our labours. These, if they are fools, are to banish, and perhaps banish for a course of many generations, all that light and religious knowledge and privileges, which we have been labouring to procure.

We have in a former part of the discourse, made free to state some of the peculiar advantages which heads of families have in communicating instruction. We

now make equally free to say, that in a country like this, where public ordinances are not very regularly enjoyed, these advantages peculiar to heads of families, ought to be doubly improved. Upon you, brethren, in many cases, the whole state of religion, with respect to the next generation, depends. As you sow, those whose lot it is to watch over the interests of the church, a few years hence shall reap. If the seed is good and cast with a skilful hand into a well prepared soil, the harvest shall no doubt be uncommonly rich and abundant; but, if the opposite is in any measure the case, thorns and cockle shall as certainly be found in the place of the genuine wheat.

One observation more may be attended to under this particular. It has been frequently observed, that where there is no closet religion, the word preached is not profiting. If public ordinances do not send professors of religion to their closets, and to their own hearts, however much they may be pleased, they are not edified—they are only hewn by God's prophets and slain by the words of his mouth. It may with equal propriety be observed, "that where there is no family religion, all other religion is a mere sham." It is in the closet and the family, that all living christians are prepared for the profitable hearing of the word. It is there also that they reduce to practice and taste the sweetness of what they receive in public. It may therefore be laid down as a general rule, without exception, "that if family religion is generally neglected in a church, however pure and orderly that church may be in her external form, and in her public doctrine, *Ichabod* is written upon her. The glory is departed, and without an uncommon exertion of divine grace, the next generation shall not be a *society of christians*; but a society of heathens, perhaps of devils in human shape.

Once more :

4. Much of the comfort of parents in their old age, and on their death bed, depends upon the manner in which they discharge the duty which we have been considering. Parents must soon be depending for many things upon their own children. When grey hairs cover the head, children are generally much of a comfort or much of a sorrow. "A wise son maketh a glad father. A foolish son" on the other hand, "is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bore him." It is unnecessary to ask, whether we wish our children to be our comfort, or our sorrow, in our declining years. It is as unnecessary to ask, how, in the most of cases, they become the one or the other. We all know that the glutton and the drunkard, the careless and the profane, bring down the grey hairs of their parents with sorrow to the grave. We also know, that the sober and the pious, are the stay and the life of those parents who have no other comfort. We have all perhaps, seen instances, in which the son has risen up against the father, and the daughter against the mother, and while they were even stretched upon their death bed, have cursed them to their face. I hope also, that we have all seen other instances, in which children in this last and trying hour, have poured the consolation of the Holy Ghost into the bosoms of their parents—have commended their departing spirits into the hands of their common Father and their common God. We certainly also all know the cause of this remarkable difference: The one father by his carelessness and immorality, brought up his children to the devil, and even in this life received the first fruits of his rewards, received a small specimen of the upbraidings which he was to endure through an endless eternity—the other father by a diligent performance of family duties, brought up his children to the Lord the Redeemer, and also experienced in this life, that both he and they served a good master.

If then, brethren, you would really fulfil these obligations, under which, as christians, you are; if you would make use of those gracious offers, and grants and declarations which our new covenant God hath made to you and your seed; if you would really have genuine religion preserved pure and entire when you are no more; or if you would have any comfort and satisfaction in your children in the last and the trying hours of your life, be exhorted and encouraged *to bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*—be excited *to walk before your house with a perfect heart*—and be active and persevering *in commanding your household, and your children after you, that they may keep the way of the Lord.*

A short address to the younger members of families, shall now close the discourse :

You have now, my young friends, heard something of the duty of those under whose care you now are. You must remember that all social duties are reciprocal. If it is the duty of your parents and guardians to pray with you and for you, to instruct you, and to command you that you may keep the way of the Lord, *it is your duty to be obedient. Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is the first commandment with promise.* Be punctual in attending upon family prayers and family instruction—be exemplary also in shunning all unnecessary connexion with the wicked, and in regularly attending upon public ordinances. Every motive which can be urged to stir up your fathers to bring you up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, may be urged with equal force to excite you to lend an obedient ear to your fathers' instruction.

Beware of ever reckoning the spiritual privileges which you enjoy, any hardship. On the contrary, frequently consider the great blessing which you enjoy, in having your lot cast in a land of light, and valley

of vision, and in being members of families where there is care taken to make you acquainted with the things which belong to your peace.

Be anxious to know for yourselves the Lord God of your fathers. No privileges however valuable, no means however proper, will do us any good, without personal application. We must read, and hear, and pray, and think, and believe for ourselves, if ever we are to be saved. We repeat to you a few of the declarations of our Lord and Master, and with these we leave you:—“ He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed. He that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it. Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man. O ye simple, understand wisdom; and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart. I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me. Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God. If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself; but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.”

# SERMON X.

## PAUL AND BARNABAS.

Acts xv. 39. *And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder, the one from the other.*

**I**T is one of the peculiar excellencies of the penmen of the Bible, that they in every case candidly relate their own faults and failings, and also the faults and failings of their most intimate friends. It is also worthy of our notice, that all the characters which are drawn in the Bible, one only excepted, *are human characters.* Human nature is uniformly represented just as we now find it; not as is fabled to have existed in the golden age; or as the most historians would have us believe it existed in their favourite heroes and heroines. The characters which are introduced to our view in the Bible, are uniformly represented as being liable to the same weaknesses and follies to which men in every age have been exposed. Now two things are secured to us by this sympathy and candour of the sacred writers. Their writings thus carry with them a very strong internal mark that they are no fiction, but an authentic, genuine relation of matters of fact. These writings are thus also independent of all inspiration, admirably well adapted for instructing mankind. In the historical part of the Bible we have a plain and faithful delineation of human nature, just as it is; not as it ought to be in either saint or sinner. Every man therefore who reads the Bible, must while the world stands, behold in these narrations, himself and his friends.

In the text and context we have an account of perhaps the first real schism, or separation which took

place among the disciples of Jesus. The account is natural, and if suitably attended to, highly edifying. It is recorded with great simplicity, and recorded for our instruction.

In directing your attention to the subject, we shall endeavour to arrange our thoughts under two general divisions. We shall

I. Make some general remarks upon the persons and circumstances connected with this contention; and then

II. Deduce some practical inferences from the whole.

Under the first general division it may be observed,

1. That this contention and separation took place betwixt *two good men*: yes, good men in every sense of the word. The contention was betwixt Paul and Barnabas. Concerning the character of Barnabas we have this account: “Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch; who when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. **FOR HE WAS A GOOD MAN, AND FULL OF THE HOLY GHOST, AND OF FAITH.**” Concerning Paul being entitled to the character of a *good man*, among the many passages which may be adduced, take only these words: “But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.”

Good men—full of the Holy Ghost and of faults—separated from their mothers’ womb—called by his grace—the Son revealed in them, that they might preach him among the heathens: yes, these are the traits in their character as drawn by the spirit of inspi-

ration. Yet these men, in the text, came to a sharp quarrel, and a quarrel which ended in a final separation.

2. This contention and separation took place betwixt two men who had hitherto been very intimate, and extensively useful in promoting the cause of their Master. Of the beginning of their intimacy and mutual labours, we have an account in the same paragraph which has already been referred to for the character of Barnabas. Barnabas being sent forth by the church at Jerusalem, to visit the Gentile converts, departed and went to Tarsus to seek Saul. Having found him, they both came to Antioch and continued a whole year labouring with heart and hand, and much success. It was under these men's ministry, and at this time and place, that the disciples of Jesus received the name by which they have been since generally known. *The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.*

Having been, by the divine blessing, of singular use to the church at Antioch, and also in a particular case, of singular use to the church at Jerusalem, (See chap. xi. 27—30, and chap. xii. 24, 25) they were by a special call from heaven, sent forth in a more extensive and hazardous rout. “Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrenne, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.” An account of their labours and sufferings during this mission, would in any other language, but in that of the Holy Ghost, fill several volumes. There is a simplicity and conciseness in sacred history, which baffles description. The concluding part of xiv. chap. may serve as a specimen of these labours.

“ And when they had preached the gospel to that city, (Derbe) and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and to Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. And when they had ordained them<sup>t</sup> elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed. And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia; and thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. And there they abode long time with the disciples.”

It must also be observed, that in fulfilling this mission, they were exposed to trials or sufferings of almost every kind. Of this you may take these verses as a specimen: “ But when the Jews saw the multitudes they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.—But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas; and expelled them out of their coasts.—But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil-affected against their brethren. Long time, therefore, abode they, speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands. But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles. And when there was an assault made, both

of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews, with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them. And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people; and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing him to be dead."

Nor was it solely from those who were without that these good men in fulfilling their ministry, had their troubles. They were also at times much distressed in keeping the peace of the church within. Of this we have a specimen in these words: "And certain men, which came down from Judea, taught the brethren, and said, except ye be circumcised, after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When, therefore, Paul and Barnabas had no small dissention and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question." This particular matter being referred to what we would call a general council or synod, was amicably settled. It must, however, on the present occasion, be carefully observed, that in settling this very threatening dispute, Paul and Barnabas were singularly useful. We have just seen that they were the authorized commissioners from the church at Antioch, to this famous council; and in the minute which the Holy Ghost hath given us of its proceedings, we find these words: "Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them." Their names are also mentioned with singular honour in the decree which was passed on this occasion: "It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you, with our beloved Barnabas and Paul; men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Behold, then, in this short sketch, how intimate and how extensively useful these two men were. How many places did they visit! What dangers did they encounter! With what abundant success were their labours crowned! How united were they hitherto in every part of their exertions! Yet, these two men, thus intimate, who had hitherto appeared to have only one heart and one hand—these men who had shared together and shared without a grudge so many dangers—these men who had been such an extensive blessing to the church and to the world at large—these two men, who had only a few days ago, been honoured by the united voice of the highest ecclesiastic court—yes, these two men now came to a sharp quarrel, and a quarrel which ended in a final separation. *And the contention was so sharp BETWEEN THEM, that they departed asunder the one from the other.*

3. The ground of the quarrel was not any fundamental article of faith; but merely the particular manner in which the great object of their ministry was to be accomplished. The whole quarrel was about the propriety or impropriety of taking John, whose surname was Mark, along with them in a projected visit of the churches. “And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who had departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.” Both were heartily

convinced in the necessity and propriety, of visiting at this time, the churches which they had planted. To both, this visit would, without doubt, appear extremely agreeable. There does not appear to have been any dispute about the order in which these churches were at this time to be visited. Nor had they any dispute about the particular services, which they were to perform to the churches in this visit. In all those things they were agreed. The only difference was about a fellow-labourer, whom Barnabas proposed, and whom Paul did not very cordially approve.

It is doubtful whether it would be much for edification to make any attempt to discover whether Paul or Barnabas was in the right at this time, or whether both were not in some measure to blame. It is worthy of notice, however, that this dispute happened, when they were, comparatively speaking, easy and prosperous, and were full in the prospect of making an agreeable and not likely a very dangerous visit. They now proposed to go and visit *their friends*, and places with which they were already well acquainted. A sense of common danger and common distress frequently keeps men united, when ease and honours cherish pride and contentions. Mark, it seems, had deserted them when they were braving dangers in planting the church; Paul, therefore, thought it not very good to take him along with them to share of the pleasure which was to be enjoyed in the fruits. It has also been observed on the passage, that Barnabas appears to have been rather *rash and self-willed* on the occasion. It is said, that Barnabas was *determined to take, &c. determined* previous to his having consulted his fellow-labourer Paul. The order in which the sacred historian has related the matter, leaves it also probable, “that Barnabas was *the first who separated.*” Barnabas took Mark and sailed unto Cyprus, and then Paul being left alone,

chose Silas, and departed. In short, it is left upon record, that Paul and his new companion, in departing, were recommended by the brethren to the grace of God. Something like the same ceremony was used at this time with respect to Paul and Silas, which was used when Paul and Barnabas were sent forth on their former mission ; but with respect to Barnabas and Mark, no such notice is taken. This at least intimates, that their departure at this time, was not altogether with the approbation of the church. Be that as it may, this is the last we hear of good Barnabas. There is no doubt but that he continued to be an active and useful apostle of our Lord ; but of his labours from this time back, the sacred historians have given no account. \* \* \* \*

\* \* \* \* \* Thus then these intimate friends, these zealous and active, and extensively useful servants of our Lord, were parted. So far as we know they never again met, nor had any intercourse with one another, till they met in glory. \*

\* \* \* \* \* It is impossible to reflect upon all the circumstances attending this separation, without feeling a considerable degree of melancholy. We are taught, however, to believe, that however sinfully or imprudently it was occasioned on the part of man, it was wisely ordered, so far as heaven was concerned. Though the servants quarrelled and separated, the master continued to carry on his great work ; and even over-ruled this melancholy event for promoting the greater good of the whole. It may be farther observed, that contention and separation, such as we have been considering, is no uncommon thing in the christian church. It has been realized in every age, and in every country from the days of the apostles to the present hour. This, as we have alrea-

ly observed, is amongst the first, if not the very first schism which took place among the disciples of Jesus : but it would require volumes to give any thing like a tolerable account of all which have taken place since. A very little acquaintance with church history may, however, convince us, that the remarks which have been made upon the particular case before us, will apply, with very little variation, to a very large number of those subsequent church quarrels. Consider attentively, and you will find, that perhaps by far the greater part of them have been betwixt men who were really good men—between men who had been very intimate and active in promoting the cause of their Lord—betwixt men who, even after they had quarrelled and separated, continued to be zealous and active, and extensively useful. In fine, it will be found, “ that a great many of these quarrels have been not properly speaking about the particular thing which was to be done, or avoided ; but *about the particular manner in which it was to be done or avoided.*” These things in the passage before us, and in almost every page of church history, are stated as facts.—These things we must also believe take place in consequence of the wise and the good arrangements of Providence. They, in fact, form a part of Messiah’s plan in enlarging and supporting his church. Let us now, then, see how this comes to be the case ; or in other words—let us now deduce some practical inferences from the review which we have taken of the nature and the causes of the particular quarrel before us. And

1. These things are so ordered to teach us, “ that perfection is not attainable in this life.” Never was this truth taught in such a convincing manner as in the contentions of some of our Lord’s most able and most faithful servants. Who would have thought it, had it not been recorded as a matter of fact, that the

men who had undauntedly braved every danger; who had successfully withstood ignorance and superstition; who had set at defiance the united powers of earth and hell; who would have thought that these men had not at all times the complete command of their own temper? Who would have thought that it was ever possible for these men to give way, even for a moment, to those passions and little mean arts which would disgrace the very offscouring of the earth? Yet all these, and a thousand such, are confirmed by instances innumerable; and all unite in confirming beyond the possibility of contradiction, “that perfection is not attainable in this life.” Hence

2. By this wise arrangement, genuine saints are, in every age, kept from giving to a creature, or to any set of creatures, that reverence and confidence which are due only to the Creator. We know how natural it is for the saints to be very strongly attached to their spiritual guides. If we love him who beget, we will also love them who are begotten: and if we love both, we cannot fail to give a considerable share of our love to those who are the happy instruments of bringing ourselves and multitudes of others into a state of grace. “I bear you record,” says the apostle to Galatians, “I bear you record, that if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes and have given them to me.” All this is natural, and is to a certain degree a duty, and praise worthy. But such is the present state of human nature, that every thing, however good in itself, is liable to be abused. It is hard, indeed, to keep the mind any length of time in its proper balance. While grace or natural affection leads us to admire the servants of the Lord, we are or even we are aware performing the same part to them which the priests of Jupiter endeavoured to perform to Paul and Barnabas. . “The Gods” cried the people “are come down to us in the likeness of

men," and immediately the priest made his appearance before the city, with oxen and garlands, *and would have done sacrifice*. But, however much the head of the church may love his faithful servants, he will not give the glory of his worship to them, nor his praise to graven images. It is consequently necessary that occurrences should occasionally be taking place to convince themselves and their fellow servants, that they are *only men*. And perhaps there is nothing in which this important truth is more strikingly taught, than in their quarrels and separations. Verily it is there that the most eminent of God's servants appear to be only men of like passions with the rest of mankind. Liable to the same infirmities and weaknesses, liable to the same peevishness of temper and inconsistency of conduct, to which the human race are in general exposed. Hence

3. We are taught, "that it is not by the wisdom or ingenuity of men, that the religion of Jesus is preserved in the world." In every case, but the case of the church, it is true, "a house divided against itself, cannot stand." Reflect only for a half hour on the hot contentions which have in every age and in every country been carried on by those who were entrusted with the care of the interests of religion, and say, if in any other case where any thing like such fierceness existed, the system about which the parties were contending, ever very long existed. Yet, amidst all the weakness and madness, and even wickedness which have been manifested in managing the religion of Jesus, this religion is preserved pure, and preserved as a blessing to this very day. Amidst all this folly and mismanagement, it has been invigorated and increased. This can be nothing else than the finger of God. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." "If ever," said a celebrated infidel to

a time serving clergyman, “if ever there was a miracle in this world, it is now exhibited in the christian religion being preserved, when it is committed to the care of such creatures as you.”\* Hence

4. These contentions and divisions, which are in one view, truly matters of deep grief; yet in another point of view they are remarkably well adapted for preserving and propagating the religion of Jesus in its simplicity and purity. So far as these events are the work of man and the devil, they are really evil and sinful; but so far as they are overruled and restrained by the head of the church, they are real blessings. The devil is, in fact, taken in his own craftiness. It was truly a happy circumstance, that the apostles and first christians quarrelled and was divided into parties so soon. The great and leading facts upon which the christian religion is founded, received by this single circumstance indisputable confirmation. We all know that whenever a set of impostors quarrel and separate, and set themselves in opposition to one another, the cheat is at an end. Did any thing like this happen among the bitter contentions which arose among the personal followers of our Lord? Can the most inveterate infidel that is, affirm that ever one of the first christians charged their fellows with any design of imposing upon the world? By no means. Whether Paul and

\* NOTE.—The infidel was the celebrated lord Bolingbroke. The remark was occasioned by the clergyman calling upon him and finding him reading Calvin's Institutes. “You have just found me” said his lordship, “reading the Institutions of John Calvin: he handles the doctrines of grace in a very masterly manner.” “*Doctrines of grace!*” cried the clergyman—“*the doctrines of grace* have set all the world in an uproar.” “It may be so,” said his lordship coolly; “but yet the doctrines of grace are certainly the doctrines of the Bible; and if I believed the Bible, I certainly would believe with John Calvin. And let me tell you, that if ever there was a miracle in the world,” &c. &c. &c.

Barnabas, and the other apostles and disciples of our Lord, agreed or differed; whether they travelled in company or parted with a determination never more to assist one another, they continued telling the same plain and simple story concerning the birth, and life, and death, and resurrection and ascension of Jesus of Nazareth. These things must therefore *be facts*, if ever there were such things as facts in the world.

It is also well known to those who have the least acquaintance with church history, that in the first ages of christianity and before the invention of printing, the different sects into which the adherents of Revelation were divided, and the jealousies and animosities which they exercised towards each other, were by an overruling Providence, remarkably useful in preserving all the different parts of Revelation in their purity. It is easy to see that when there was no other way of preserving writings but in manuscript, copies of the same work could never be very numerous but at a vast expence, and could always were they to continue in the possession of only one set of men, be easily corrupted or destroyed; but as the adherents to Revelation were soon divided into a great many different sects, a corruption of any part of Revelation, though there were only a few copies, was in the nature of things impossible. However much they differed about the explanation of these writings, they all agreed that they were of divine original and were the only infallible rule of faith and manners. Hence every sect was careful to secure to itself one copy at least; and as every sect was watched with a jealous eye by all the rest, no sect, nor any man, could even make an attempt to corrupt a single sentence, no not even a letter of Revelation, without being detected and exposed.

One remark more may be made under this particular:

This jealousy and animosity which divided the followers of Jesus into different parties, was from the beginning and still is used as a spur to activity and diligence in the common cause of their Lord. A spirit of rivalry is thus excited, and however wicked the thing may be in itself, a wise and a holy God can use it for the advancement of his own glory in promoting the good of men. "Some indeed" says the apostle, "preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will. The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds; but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the spirit through Jesus Christ." Stolen seed when cast into the ground by a wicked, ill-designing hand, may, by the blessing of heaven, produce an abundant crop, and preserve from perishing many useful families. In like manner, the precious truths of the gospel when published, may be the happy mean of saving many souls from destruction, though the poor unhappy publisher is only gratifying his own pride and resentment, and shall finally go down to the pit. All this, however, shall be no excuse either in behalf of the person, or in behalf of those who may encourage him, provided they know any thing of the wickedness of his motives.

To conclude: A short view of all which has been said, will teach us, "that as we ought to revere the wise providence of God which hath in every age overruled for the greater good, the lamentable contentions and divisions which have in every age troubled the christian church, so in like manner we ought to respect and think highly of by far the greater part of those whose names are handed down to us as the chiefs of

these controversies. Villains and wicked men have no doubt at different times been leading men in the church as well as in other societies; but comparatively speaking these have been only few in number. By far the greatest part of theological disputants have been honest and virtuous characters—men, who, according to the information which they enjoyed, were contending for what they thought was truth. Darkness and doubts, and mistakes, appear to be inseparable from the human mind in its present state of existence. The best of us see only in part, and prophecy in part. It is in the other world only that all doubts and difficulties are to be removed. If in contending for what they thought was the truth, any of God's most faithful servants have been left to betray the weakness and even the wickedness of their hearts, and have thus brought a temporary disgrace upon the good cause in which they were engaged—they have also by these very things been the occasion of confirming our faith in some of the most important articles of our holy religion—they have thus also been mutual checks and mutual spurs upon each other. And all circumstances considered, the religion of Jesus has thus manifested to both friends and foes, its superiority and heavenly origin. *Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are thy ways thou King of Saints.* But these are only a part of his ways: the day is fast approaching when we shall see the whole plan completed. Then indeed shall the watchmen on Zion's walls *lift up the voice—with the voice together shall they sing, for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion.*

## SERMON XI.

### BROTHERLY LOVE EXPLAINED AND ENFORCED.

1 John iii. 11. *For this is the message which we have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.*

**T**HESE are the words of the apostle who was emphatically styled the *disciple whom Jesus loved*. And many were the honours which were conferred upon this favourite disciple. Of the divine glories which were displayed on Mount Tabor, and of the inexpressible sorrows which were experienced in Gethsemane, the apostle John with Peter and James, was a confidential witness. There were also some signal honours which were conferred upon him as an individual. This was the disciple who leaned upon the breast of our Lord when he was eating his last supper; and to whom he pointed out the one who should betray him. To this disciple our Lord, in his last moments, committed the care of his disconsolate mother. To him also it was reserved to finish the canon of Revelation. In short, in him alone were united the character of evangelist, and prophet, and bosom friend of our Lord, and in each of these he shines forth with something more than ordinary splendour.

These external honours were, however, as nothing when compared with the change which his Divine Master wrought upon the frame and temper of his mind. It is said by the wise man "*He who is slow to anger, is better than the mighty, and he who ruleth his spirit, than he who taketh a city.*" In the apostle John, this excellency was also found, and found not as the fruit of an affectionate, natural disposition, but as

the genuine production of supernatural grace. Hence the first transactions in which we find him engaged, manifest a very different spirit from that which he breathes forth in his gospels and epistles, written in the latter part of his life.

The first incident which brings John forth into particular notice, discovers that at that time, a selfish, intolerant spirit, had a considerable sway in his mind. "*Master*" said John, "*we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us, and we forbade him because he followed not us.*" That this manifested a spirit by no means encouraged by his Master, is evident from the answer then given: "*Jesus said, forbid him not, for there is no man who can do a miracle in my name who can lightly speak evil of me; for he who is not against us, is on our part.*" The next time in which John is particularly brought into view, manifests a disposition still more selfish, worldly and ambitious. In company with his mother and his brother James, he came unto Jesus, and through the mother, the two brothers requested that they might sit, the one on his right hand, and the other on his left in his kingdom. To this application they received what at that time must have been a very humbling answer: they were informed, that they had wholly mistaken the nature of our Lord's kingdom; that instead of nourishing pride and worldly ambition, its great design was to stain the pride of all worldly glory, and that he who would be accounted great among his servants and followers, must become the servant of all, even as the son of man came not to minister unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many. Once more, John makes his appearance in the early part of his history, manifesting a disposition of mind very different from that which is predominant in all the sayings and actions of the latter part of his life. In our Lord's last journey to Jerusalem, as he passed through a village

of the Samaritans, the inhabitants betrayed their national hatred to the Jews, by refusing to Jesus and his disciples, the common refreshment due to the weary traveller. Stung at the indignity offered to their Lord by these Samaritans, against whom as *out-casts* and *heretics*, they probably gloried in indulging the most violent resentment, the sons of Zebedee said, “*Lord wilt thou, that we should command fire from heaven to consume them as Elias did?*” To this they received an answer, no less mortifying than the last. Ignorance was the parent of this which they, no doubt, called pious zeal. “*Ye know not*” said our Lord, “*what manner of spirit ye are of: the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.*” These and such like reproofs appear to have had their suitable influence. By the grace of God the lion was changed into the lamb. The same person who at his first appearance was thus selfish, ambitious, intolerant and full of blind zeal, is, when he is farther advanced, remarkable for his eminence in all the opposite graces. Whether he speaks or writes, he breathes nothing but the meekness and gentleness of his Master. The love of God manifested to men through Christ Jesus, and the influence which this love ought to have in making men love God and love one another, form his only topic of discourse. The words which we have just read in your hearing, and which we propose as the ground of the present discourse, may be considered as a specimen and summary of the whole. “*This*” says he “*is the message which ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren: he that loveth not his brother abideth in*

death. Whosoever hateth his brother, is a murderer : and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.”

It must be evident to every one the least acquainted with the scriptures, that the doctrine taught in these verses, is not a doctrine peculiar to the beloved disciple. Passages explaining and enforcing the same doctrine, might be adduced in abundance. Instead then of confining ourselves to any particular view in which brotherly love may be supposed to be exhibited in the text, we shall, in the sequel of the discourse, endeavour as briefly as possible to give you a connected view of the whole subject. In doing so we shall

I. In a few remarks attempt to explain the nature of the christian grace, and christian duty of brotherly love ; and then

II. Attend to the motives or excitements which we have to cherish in ourselves and others, this heavenly disposition.

In order to understand the nature of christian brotherly love, it may be observed,

1. That it is something different from what is commonly called *benevolence or universal good will*. The whole moral law is summed up in love to God, and love to man : “ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments” said our Lord, “ hang all the law and the prophets.” Upon this principle we are to consider all the human race as our brethren—bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. Hence the whole human race, without any distinction, are even when they are in a state of hostility to us, entitled to all the good offices which their distressed situation may require, or which we may have it in our power to bestow. As

examples of the manner in which this principle of universal benevolence is to be exercised, you may turn up and read, “If thou meet thine enemy’s ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him; thou shalt surely help with him.” Ex. iii. 4—5. “Thou shalt not see thy brother’s ox or his sheep go astray, and hide thyself from them; thou shalt in any case bring them again unto thy brother. And if thy brother be not nigh unto thee, or if thou know him not; then thou shalt bring it unto thine own house, and it shall be with thee until thy brother seek after it, and thou shalt restore it to him again. In like manner thou shalt do with his ass, and so shalt thou do with his raiment; and with all lost things of thy brothers, which he hath lost, and thou hast found, shalt thou do likewise; thou mayest not hide thyself.” Deut. xxii. 1—3. “And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, what is written in the law? how readest thou? And he, answering, said, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, and who is my neighbour? And Jesus, answering, said, a certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came

where he was: and, when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow, when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, take care of him: and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, he that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, go, and do thou likewise." Luke x. 25—37. Amiable, indeed, is this generous principle, wherever it is exercised to any great extent. It is pleasing and agreeable to the happy person in whose breast it operates, and extensively useful to the world at large. But still it is not what we call christian brotherly love. The brotherly love of which the apostle John speaks so much, is of a higher nature, and proposes to itself more noble objects. In exercising the principle of benevolence as explained and enforced in the passages just quoted, it is evident that we consider its objects as nothing more than our fellow men, children of the same Creating Power, and having the same feelings of pleasure and pain with ourselves; but in exercising the principle of christian brotherly love, we consider its object not merely as fellow men, but also and chiefly as fellow saints, partakers of the same divine nature, and heirs with us of the same heavenly inheritance. In exercising the principle of general benevolence, it is also evident that we look no farther than the present life—the chief, if not the only object, is to make our fellow men happy in their sheep and oxen, in their civil connexions, and in general in every thing belonging to their temporal concerns; but in exercising the heavenly and sublime principle of brotherly love, we not only endeavour to promote the

temporal, but the spiritual and eternal welfare of our fellow men. In short, what we call benevolence, is wholly a natural principle, and may be exercised to a considerable extent by men who are strangers to genuine grace—the principle of brotherly love of which the apostle speaks, is wholly a supernatural principle, and is found no where but in one who is born again. “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.”

It may be necessary to observe,

2. That christian brotherly love extends its influence to all who give any evidence that they belong to Jesus. Whatever occasion there may be for the human race in the present order of things, to be divided into different tribes and nations, and live under different forms of government, and even at times actually to enter into a state of hostility with one another, there is no occasion which will justify them in shutting up their bowels of compassion towards one another, and refuse to perform the common offices of humanity. Jehovah hath made of one blood all the nations who dwell upon the face of the earth—he hath formed every individual of the human race with the same sense of feeling—and hath evidently placed us in our present state for our mutual comfort and happiness. No heart can muse upon these and such like considerations, without extending the arms of benevolence to all our brethren of mankind. The African and Asiatic—the Indian and Tartar—nay, the very enemy actually in arms, is lost in the all captivating phrase—*fellow humanity*. The application of these remarks to the case in hand is easy. Regenerating grace never destroys, it only purifies and elevates the original principles of our nature. Christian brotherly love, is in fact, nothing else than the sanctification of our benevolent affections. If this principle works so powerfully when only a na-

tural principle, and directed towards men, only as men, how powerfully must it work when purified, and elevated and strengthened by the spirit of regeneration, and directed towards those whom we have good reason to believe are also born of God, and gradually preparing for the inheritance of the saints in light? Verily, whatever occasion there may be in our present imperfect state for christians continuing in separate church communion, no occurrence whatever can justify them in withholding from one another their brotherly love.

To prevent mistakes, however, we must observe—

3. That it is quite reasonable, and in fact in the nature of things unavoidable, that this our brotherly love be exerted in different degrees of strength to different objects. We may all be convinced by our own experience, that however strong our benevolent affections may be to mankind in general, we feel ourselves still more closely attached to those of our own nation—to those who live under the same form of government, and use the same language and manners with ourselves. To our fathers and mothers, and brothers and sisters, we are still more strongly attached; and the intimate relation of husband or wife, or children, draws from our heart an affection still more tender. This gradation in natural affection is quite reasonable, and in fact, unavoidable. Now upon the principle stated in the last particular, a similar gradation must take place in the exercise of christian brotherly love. While grace is in exercise, we will love all of whatever denomination whom we have reason to believe are fellow saints; but our love to them will be always in exact proportion to the degree on which we can discover in them the image of our common Master. A sincere Roman Catholic who, according to the information which he has received, reveres and trusts in Jesus of Nazareth, as a divine person, will insensibly call forth a stronger degree of our affection, than the blaspheming Arian.

As Protestants, we abhor and detest the abominations of the Romish system ; but as christians we must love and respect every thing which is good, even in that corrupted church. As Presbyterians, we detest the Romish rites and ceremonies of the Episcopal church ; but as christians, we must love and respect the many eminent examples of God-like virtue, which have been exhibited by numbers both of the clergy and laity of that communion. As adhering to a particular sect of Presbyterians, we no doubt must in both our understanding and conscience, declare against whatever the information which we have received, leads us to consider as corrupt in the doctrine, worship or government, of other particular bodies, who call themselves by that name. But while we are thus led to testify against what we consider to be a corruption of the faith, the heavenly principle of brotherly love will never while in exercise, allow us *to unchurch or unsaint* all those with whom we cannot walk together in church communion. It will, on the contrary, lead us from the heart to say, “ Grace, mercy and peace, be upon all those who give any evidence that they love the Lord Jesus, though in many things they walk not with us ; and so far as they appear to us to manifest this their love, we will from the heart wish them God speed.”

It is worthy of notice on the present subject, “ that however much the genuine disciples of Jesus may be divided by national distinctions, or by adhering to different forms of church government, or different modes of worship, there are some great and leading principles in which when they have an opportunity of speaking their mind, they all agree. Genuine saints, by whatever other name they are called, have only one sentiment—on the evil of sin—on the wretchedness of their natural situation—on the utter impossibility of being saved any other way than through Jesus the Mediator—on the infinite excellency and suitableness of the

person and offices of Immanuel—and on the fullness, the freedom, and the suitableness of the whole plan of salvation as revealed in the scriptures. Their practice is found also, as uniform as their faith. They all agree in their different stations and relations—in their individual and social capacity, according to the knowledge which they have received, and the opportunities which are offered to them to *maintain good works*. The grace of God which bringeth salvation, hath appeared to men of all ranks and denominations, religious as well as civil, and hath taught and is teaching them, some in a greater and others in a less degree, to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. It is utterly impossible, in the present state of things, that we should all have the same views of divine truth, or all arrive at the same perfection in performing the practical part of christianity. It is also quite reasonable (we would be fools or hypocrites if we did otherwise) for us to consider our own form of church government, and our own mode of worship, as coming nearest to the scripture pattern. But these things however much they may warrant a separation in church fellowship, will never warrant a *withholding our brotherly love*—We must still say, grace, mercy and peace, be upon all those who in any form or in any degree manifest their love to the Lord Jesus Christ—We must still from the heart wish them God speed, in all their pious attempts to spread abroad the savour of his name.

It may be farther observed on this part of the subject, “that not only the adhering to different forms of government and different modes of worship, but also, the using different phrases to express what is allowed to be the same truth, may in certain circumstances warrant a separation in church fellowship, though it can never warrant the restraining the exercise of brotherly love.” An example shall illustrate what is meant by this remark.

I freely confess that in the present state of society, I could not hold church fellowship with a man who had any scruples about using the phrase, "*the imputed righteousness of Christ*;" yet I have been informed, and I believe upon very good authority, that the late eminently pious and extensively useful Dr. DODDRIDGE, from an accommodating principle, never would use that phrase. I am perfectly satisfied that in his book on the rise and progress of religion in the soul, he has expressed the very thing which is generally meant by that phrase. But I am equally convinced, and convinced from the example of Dr. Doddridge himself, that this is not sufficient for maintaining what I am led to believe is the purity of the faith. I must therefore refuse to walk in church fellowship with a man who is so accommodating as Dr. Doddridge was, to a system of faith, so very opposite to that which my present information leads me to consider as the true system. But though I cannot walk in church fellowship with such a man as Dr. Doddridge, I believe no man who has the least spark of genuine grace, can read his writings and read his life, without irresistibly giving him a very large share of his *brotherly love*. This heavenly principle, in contemplating such a character, tears asunder the forms of government and modes of worship, and different phrases, which the present state of society, and the present imperfection of the human mind, have rendered in fact indispensable, and bursts forth into the happy period when we shall no longer see our Master as through a glass darkly; but when we shall see him, and his truths, as they are—face to face—and be able to communicate our ideas to one another without the possibility of a mistake. Till this happy period arrives in the exercise of brotherly love, let each of us whereunto we have attained, hold fast; and if in any thing we are otherwise minded, God shall in due time reveal even this to us.

## SERMON XII.

### BROTHERLY LOVE EXPLAINED AND ENFORCED.

1 John iii. 11. *For this is the message which we have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.*

“BY this” said our Lord, “shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” A criterion which is of such universal application, ought to be carefully considered by all who name the name of Jesus. We have in the former discourse, made some general remarks upon the nature of this heavenly principle. It is now proposed to attend to some of the cases in which it is chiefly to be exercised. Here we shall do little more than turn up and read a variety of passages which may be considered as parallel to the paragraph of which the text is a part. Scripture is uniformly the best interpreter of scripture, and never is any doctrine or duty better explained and enforced than in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth. It may also be here necessary to remark, that as all regularly organized societies are considered as moral persons, the duty which we are attempting to illustrate, is to be considered as equally binding upon christians in their collective or social, as in their individual capacity: that is, the same heavenly principle which ought to temper our minds in our intercourse with one another as individuals, and as members of the same church, ought to temper our minds in our intercourse with other churches, or with christians who belong to another communion. And

1. We ought to manifest our love to the brethren, in bearing with them, and in yielding to them in things

which are in themselves doubtful or indifferent. For the illustration of this remark, you may turn up and read, Rom. xiv. *throughout*—also, xv. 1 & 2. A parallel passage you will find, 1 Cor. viii. *throughout*. A very little reflection will enable us to discover what occasioned these chapters, and also what particular use we ought to make of the doctrine therein stated. In the first age of christianity, many truly pious souls were at a loss to know, whether the Mosaic institutions, respecting meats and drinks, and observing particular days, were abolished by the introduction of the New Testament dispensation. The apostle, in the passages just read, declares that though they were abolished, yet out of regard to those who had any scruple about the matter, the observance or the not observance of them was to be no term of either christian or ministerial communion. This is plainly his doctrine, and also what occasioned it. The use which christians in every age ought to make of the doctrine is equally plain. It is not every difference in opinion about matters of either faith or practice, which will warrant a separation of church fellowship. We who are strong must on many occasions exercise our brotherly love, and bear with those who are weak; and in like manner, those of us who are weak, demand as our unalienable right, that those who are strong, should in many doubtful and indifferent things, bear with us. Again:

2. This principle of brotherly love, shews itself in being very cautious in receiving any reports which have a manifest tendency to hurt the moral character of a fellow professor or of a sister church. It is chiefly in this point of view, that charity or brotherly love is represented. xiii. 1 Cor. “Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up. Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” A parallel passage you will find in the description

which is given of a righteous man, Ps. xv. “Such a person backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doth evil to his neighbour ; or taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.” A whispering, backbiting disposition is the very opposite of the principle which we are considering. While this malignant disposition leads those who are under its influence, to hunt out for those things which may hurt the moral character of an individual, or of a community—and to *rejoice* in any thing of the kind which may be found—*rejoice* as if it had found great spoil—*rejoice in iniquity*—the heavenly principle leads those who are under its influence to shun the company of the tale bearer—to refuse to take up an ill report against a fellow professor, though it should be laid down to them—it farther leads them to be always ready to put the most favourable construction upon every thing which is doubtful about a man’s moral character ; or at least to suspend their judgment till they have had an opportunity of hearing both sides of the question ; and in one word, never to condemn a fellow professor, or a sister church, but upon the fullest evidence of guilt. Again

3. Genuine brotherly love is manifested in being extremely cautious in divulging the real faults of our fellow professors, or of our sister churches. This is very expressly taught us by the manner in which our Lord appoints the form of what we now call a church process. Read it as it stands, Math. xviii. 15—17. “Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone : if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church ; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.” In this passage it is

supposed ~~unlawful~~ real trespass is committed,—a something which is really an object of church censure, and which, if persisted in, will be sufficient to deprive the person of the privileges of the church. Yet, observe the charitable manner in which this offending brother is to be dealt with. His trespass, whatever it is, is never to be made any more public, than is absolutely necessary for his conviction. Again

4. Genuine brotherly love is manifested in forgiving, and passing by, what are properly personal offences. Our Lord has, in this article, given us express statute law. Read Luke xvii. 3 and 4. “Take heed to yourselves : if thy brother trespass against thee ; rebuke him ; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent ; thou shalt forgive him.” Read also Math. xviii. 21, 22. “Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him ? till seven times ? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times ; but until seventy times seven.” Very opposite to what is here commanded, is the conduct of those who take every opportunity of sanctifying their own personal quarrels with the holy name, of contending earnestly for the faith, and thus sow the seeds of strife and contention betwixt individuals, and betwixt churches, which generations shall not be able to root out. Once more,

5. Christian brotherly love is manifested in suitably reproofing or testifying against a fellow professor, or a sister church, for that which is evidently a transgression of God’s law. It is upon this principle that it is said “Thou shalt *not hate* thy brother in thy heart ; thou shalt in any wise *rebuke* thy neighbour, and not *suffer sin* upon him.” And farther : “*Thou shalt not avenge, or bear any grudge* against the children of thy people, but thou shalt *love thy neighbour*

as thyself, I am the Lord." It is upon the same principle, that our Lord says to one of the Asiatic churches, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous, therefore, and repent." The wise man also frequently recognizes this principle, "*Open rebuke is better than secret love. He who rebuketh a man, shall afterwards find more favour than he who flattereth with the lip.*" And again: "*Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.*" The holy Psalmist also cheerfully receives this as a sound and a comfortable principle: "*Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head.*"

It may be observed, that with respect to the application of this doctrine, there are, in the present day, two very opposite extremes, both equally hurtful to the cherishing of genuine brotherly love. With some men, and even in some churches, the reproofing of an offending brother, or the testifying against the corruption of any particular community, is in profession, almost entirely discarded. A kind of bastard charity protests against every thing which is called *harsh or hurtful to men's feelings*. On the other hand, there are, perhaps, men to be found in almost every church, who are continually in the habit of railing against the faults or failings of their fellow professors, whether in their own, or in another communion. In this, their railing, they imagine, that no language can be too harsh, or no representation too far from the truth. And this, their ignorant and furious zeal, they sanctify with the holy name of contending earnestly for the faith—or charitably reproofing an offending brother. Now, both of these are extremes, and both equally hostile to genuine christian love. The former resembles the man whose tenderness of heart will not allow him to destroy the venomous insects which

are stinging to the death himself and his wife and children. The conduct of the latter is, in fact, nothing different from the conduct of those who, by fire and faggot, chastened the bodies of heretics, that their spirits might be saved in the day of the Lord. A middle path, therefore, betwixt these two extremes, must be followed by all those who would manifest their brotherly love, by reprovng their brethren for their faults.

Thus much for the principal cases in which brotherly love ought to be exercised. It follows that we now consider some of the motives or excitements to the practice of this Godlike principle. And

1. We ought by all means to cherish and strengthen this heavenly principle in ourselves and others, because this principle forms a very leading trait in the character of all those who are really born again. Our Lord has in express terms told us, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Many are the marks by which we may be rationally convinced, that this change has been really wrought upon us; but perhaps there is none more easily discovered, or when discovered more decisive, than the operation of this principle. The apostle John in the passage before us, and in other passages of his epistles, brings all that is called religion to this test: "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.—We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren: he that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." And again, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment

have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also." The apostle James reasons in the same manner: "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore, lay apart all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls." And also, "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion, and undefiled, before God and the Father, is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." The apostle Peter teaches the same doctrine: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren; see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." And again: "Wherefore, laying aside all malice, and guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious."

To add any comment on these passages, is unnecessary: they are plain and express. Let us then in our retired moments read them and other parallel passages carefully over—and while we read them, let us carefully examine how far the spirit and the temper of our mind harmonizes with that spirit and temper which is there expressly stated as a decisive mark of our having passed from death unto life.

2. A regard to our own individual happiness and comfort, ought to have a considerable influence in stirring us up to cherish and strengthen in ourselves and others, the heavenly principle which we have been considering. In no other case, perhaps, is the remark of the wise man more fully verified—that wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and that all her paths are peace. Let us attend only for a moment to those principles or passions which are the opposite of christian brotherly love. They are in some of the passages just read, called *envy*, and *malice*, and *bitterness*, and *guile*, and *hypocrisy*. They are said, in another passage, to be *earthly*, *sensual*, and *devilish*. A heart which is under the influence of these passions, is said to have a tongue, which is *a fire, a world of iniquity*, which *defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature*, and IS, not shall be at a future period; but IS, *now actually is, set on fire of hell*. In fine, this member set in motion, by these passions, is said *to be an unruly evil, full of deadly passion: therewith bless we God the Father, and therewith* (frequently with the very same breath) *curse we man who is made after the image of God.* \* \* \* \*

\* \* \* \* Let us pause for a moment on the unhappy situation of that man's mind, in whom these passions reign— \* \* \* \* Verily he is his own tormentor—he has a hell upon earth. While we thus pause, let us also reflect on the many different times in which we ourselves, the very best of us, have in a greater or a less degree, indulged some or all of these malignant passions; and from the pain and anxiety, and disgrace which we, on these occasions experienced, let us be excited to resolve, that through grace we shall henceforth be no longer the slaves of such tormenting masters; but that we shall cherish and strengthen in both ourselves and others, meekness and gentleness, and brotherly kindness, and all the

other traits of the humane and benevolent affections. Once more :

3. A regard to our own usefulness in the world, and to the happiness of society at large, ought to have a powerful influence in stirring us up to the exercise of christian brotherly love. Every person who is not at the moment under the influence of the most wicked passions of the human heart, must acknowledge, “ that to be *useful* to our fellow men in the different stations and relations in which Providence hath fixed us, is by far the greatest subordinate end of our creation. It may indeed, in a certain sense, be said to be *the chief end* of our existence in our present state, as it is chiefly in promoting the happiness of our fellow men, that we have it in our power in this stage of our existence, to advance the declarative glory of our Maker. But a very little reflection is sufficient to convince us, that without a very large share of the heavenly principle of brotherly love, it is impossible to be very useful either to ourselves or others. Blind and impassionate zeal, however much it may blaze, and even be directed to the support of that which is in itself good, never has been as yet, and never shall be of much service in advancing the real interests of either civil or religious society. It is written, *The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.* The divine blessing will never be bestowed upon that which is in fact nothing but the explosion of the bottomless pit. These, brethren, are by no means the sentiments of my own imagination. You may turn up and read one other passage of the sacred volume, and you will find that the apostle enforces the same heavenly disposition from the same consideration, viz. that of being useful to the world in our different stations and relations. Read James v. 7—11. “ Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath

long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the Judge standeth before the door. Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." The husbandman, while he acts in character, frets not at the inclemency of the season or the barrenness of the soil. He continues with calmness and regularity to discharge his particular duty. His patience is in due time rewarded with the early and the latter rain, and with an abundant crop. The prophets, and our Lord himself also, opposed meekness and gentleness to the contradiction of sinners. These likewise in due time reaped, or shall reap the full fruits of their labour. But an opposite disposition or conduct would have spoiled the whole. Nay, Jehovah himself, in accomplishing the great work of reconciling the world to himself, is *pitiful and of tender mercy*. What, brethren, would be the situation of the most benevolent among us, did Jehovah deal with us as we frequently deal with our fellow men? Cast them out of our favour, and do them all the injury which we can do, at the slightest supposed offence. Not a single soul would ever be saved. The human race would not be in existence one day longer; or if they did exist, it would be in consummate misery. *I am Jehovah: I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.*

To add any more motives or excitements, is unnecessary. The heart which is not moved by those which we have advanced, would not be moved though one rose from the dead. All that now remains, is to

suggest a few means which ought to be used, in order to beget and strengthen in ourselves and others, the principle which we have been considering.

It must be here carefully observed, that this, with every other principle of the new nature, is a supernatural principle. A divine and supernatural power must be exerted in creating us anew to this as well as to every other good principle and good work. But while this is kept in view, it must also be carefully remembered, that in creating and strengthening this principle and all other gracious principles, the Holy Spirit as the spirit of regeneration, works through the use of means. These means are generally in our own power—these means it is our duty to use, and in using them we have reason to expect that the promised blessing shall be graciously bestowed. The means which may be used for this purpose, are such as

1. The presenting of rational motives or excitements to the mind. Motives such as these which we have just stated and shortly illustrated. We have said that the being possessed of brotherly love is an infallible mark of our being in a state of grace, and consequently that the want of it is a sad symptom of being still strangers to every thing which is good. We have also said, that the having this heavenly principle in exercise, has a weighty influence in promoting our own personal comfort, and that the want of it can scarcely fail to give us the most excruciating anxiety in almost every situation. In fine, we have said, that the exercise of this heavenly principle is indispensable in order to be any way useful in our different stations and relations; and that it was chiefly in the exercise of this principle, that the prophets and apostles, and our Lord, were successful in accomplishing the great end of their ministry. These and such like motives it is our duty carefully to consider, and while we muse, the heavenly

fire may burn and melt the soul into all suitable love and tenderness.

2. To beget and cherish in ourselves and others this heavenly principle, it would certainly be a profitable exercise did we endeavour to turn our thoughts a little more than what it is to be feared we generally do, to the good and commendable qualities which are to be found in our fellow professors or sister churches. It may be those whom we are disposed to hate and exclude from the bonds of brotherly love, are offenders against both God and the church; but have they nothing which is good and commendable in them? Are they all incarnate devils? reprobates for whom there is no more mercy? It is sincerely hoped, that there is none among us, who will in words maintain any such positions. Why then should we in conduct act as if we believed that these things were true? May we not testify sufficiently against all that is amiss in the conduct or the profession of our fellow professors and sister churches, and yet give them full credit for every thing which is commendable and hopeful in their situation? Certainly we may. And were we in the habit of thus praising as well as blaming, our reproofs when they were any thing like well grounded, would generally be better attended to. The persons reprov'd would thus have evidence that we really loved them. But farther: it would be really well for us and those with whom we are connected in civil and religious society, did we when we were thinking and talking of *the real faults* of our fellow men, bestow a little attention to our *own faults*. Are we the only perfect individuals or the only perfect church on earth? If we are clearer of gross pollutions, have we been exposed to the same temptations? If we are purer in our worship and doctrine, are there not blemishes of some other kind to be found in us, even in us? "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but

considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

In fine: With the use of all these or other means, there must be united frequent and fervent prayer; and in these prayers we ought particularly to plead those full and free promises on which Jehovah hath graciously promised to bestow upon us, and upon our fellow christians, this heavenly principle. Hear only a few of these divine declarations: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.—The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice-den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.—The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen. This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise."

## SERMON XIII.

### RASH JUDGING.

Ps. cxvi. 11. *I said in my haste all men are liars.*

**W**HEN and by whom, the Psalm of which the text is a part, was composed, are matters which commentators have not exactly ascertained. It is however generally agreed, that the author was David, and the scope or general design of it cannot be misunderstood. It is evidently a song of thanksgiving. It is pretty evident also, that it was composed when the psalmist was considerably advanced in life—when he had been tried with many severe trials, and was happily delivered out of them all.

In the words to which we would particularly direct our attention at the time, two distinct heads present themselves :

I. The psalmist's *error* or *failing*. There was a time when he said, *all men are liars*.

II. *What occasioned* this error or failing. It was when he was in *his haste* that he thus thought and thus spoke.

With respect to the first of these it may be observed, that there are at least three periods in the history of David's life, in which it is extremely probable, that he both thought and expressed himself in this manner. A short review of each of these periods will sufficiently explain what is meant by the phrase, "*all men are liars.*"

The first of these periods is that which intervened betwixt David's being anointed, and his being actually invested with the sovereign power. You can read

at your leisure 'his part of his history as you find it recorded in the last sixteen chapters of 1st Samuel. In this period you will find a great variety of occurrences, which, to human appearance, were sufficient to justify the assertion, "*all men are liars.*" No confidence whatever is to be placed in either friends or foes—either in those who are accounted pious, or in those who are called the openly profane.

Who was it, for instance, who first raised his expectations to a throne? It was no less a person than Samuel, the prophet of the Lord. The length of time, however, which intervened betwixt the promise and the enjoyment, and the great variety of adverse dispensations with which he was tried during that period, were such, as no doubt, frequently made him suspect, that even Samuel—the pious, faithful Samuel, was in his dotage when with great solemnity he anointed him.

How was he received when he first made his appearance at the court of Saul? In a manner as flattering as can be conceived to a young and unexperienced mind: "And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armour-bearer. And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, let David, I pray thee, stand before me: for he hath found favour in my sight. And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him."

How were the prospects which such a reception presented to a warm and unsuspecting mind realized? Let every sentence of the rest of the history tell, particularly these words: "And it came to pass, on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house; and David played with his hand, as at other times; and there was a javelin in Saul's hand. And Saul cast

the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it. And David avoided out of his presence twice. And Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him, and was departed from Saul." And again: "And the evil spirit from the Lord was upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his javelin in his hand: and David played with his hand. And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin: but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, and he smote the javelin into the wall: and David fled and escaped that night. Saul also sent messengers unto David's house to watch him, and to slay him in the morning: and Michal, David's wife, told him, saying, if thou save not thy life to-night, to-morrow thou shalt be slain."

It would require a whole discourse by itself only to mention the instances of deceit and treachery with which he was tried during this period of his life. When he made his first appearance in the army, his own brother abused him: "And Eliab, his eldest brother, heard when he spake unto the men: and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and said, why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the haughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle." The rudeness, not to say wickedness of this treatment, is highly aggravated when we bring to our recollection what was David's real business in the army at this time, and the manner in which he discharged it. What his business was, we are told in these words: "And Jesse said unto David his son, take now for thy brethren an ephah of this parched corn, and these ten loaves, and run to the camp to thy brethren: and carry these ten cheeses unto the captain of their thousand, and look how thy brethren fare, and take their pledge." Of the manner in which he discharged this

business, we have this account : “ And David rose up early in the morning, and left the sheep with a keeper, and took, and went, as Jesse commanded him : and he came to the trench as the host was going forth to the fight, and shouted for the battle. And David left his carriage in the hand of the keeper of the carriage, and ran into the army, and came and saluted his brethren.” When he put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and thereby took away the reproach from Israel, he had been again, and again told “ that the man who performed the deed, was to be enriched by the king with great riches—that he was to receive the king’s daughter in marriage, and have his father’s house free in Israel. Were these, or any thing like these ever performed ? They were like other promises of kings and great men—only words of course. Instead of being rewarded according to promise, it is said, “ *that Saul eyed David, that is, became jealous and envious of him, from that day and forward.*”

Nor was it solely from the head of the government that he received such treatment. When a prince hearkeneth to lies, all his servants are wicked. From the Ziphites, and particularly from the inhabitants of Keilah—From Nabal and Doeg, and from a great many others, no doubt, whose names are not recorded, he received no better usage. In every one of these instances, his peaceable disposition was rewarded with the most bloody and murderous actions—for his exertions to promote the welfare of his friends and country, he received black calumny and fierce persecution—and in return for his honesty and sincerity, he had nothing but deceit and the grossest falsehood. In such scenes, so frequent, and so long continued, it was no wonder, that he should, at different times, say “ *all men are liars.*” Deceit and falsehood and ingratitude, are the leading materials of which the mass of mankind are composed.

2. Absalom's rebellion is another period in the history of David's life, in which he had a very extensive experience of the deceit and falsehood of mankind. Here we must bring to our recollection the signal interposition of Providence, by which the difficulties of the former period had been removed. At the appointed time, Samuel was manifested by the event, to be a true prophet. Saul and the greater part of his family being dead, the greater part of the nation were turned to David. The opposition which, for a few years was made under Abner, was, comparatively speaking, only weak. The house of David became stronger and stronger, while that of Saul became weaker and weaker. At last all opposition failed, and David was unanimously proclaimed king of Judah and Israel. The prosperity of the kingdom after his establishment in the government, must also here be taken into view. Under the wise, and what is more, the pious government of David, the nation arrived at a pitch of glory and importance hitherto unknown. As a specimen of the prowess of the nation, take only these words: "And David gat him a name when he returned from smiting of the Syrians in the valley of Salt, being eighteen thousand men. And he put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom put he garrisons: and all they of Edom became David's servants. And the Lord preserved David whithersoever he went." Also, "David, therefore, did as God commanded him: and they smote the host of the Philistines from Gibeon even to Gazer. And the fame of David went out into all lands; and the Lord brought the fear of him upon all nations." This, then, was something like the state of affairs, at the breaking out of Absalom's rebellion. The government, to all human appearance, well established at home, and respected and dreaded abroad.

But behold what a sudden change ! Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel. It is said that Absalom having previously made other considerable arrangements, “ sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, as soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron. And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, that were called ; and they went in their simplicity, and they knew not any thing. And Absalom sent for Ahithophel, the Gilonite, David’s counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices : and the conspiracy was strong ; for the people increased continually with Absalom. And there came a messenger to David, saying, the hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom. And David said unto all his servants that were with him at Jerusalem, arise, and let us flee ; for we shall not else escape from Absalom : make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword.” If we read a little farther we will find, that at this crisis, among all the thousands of Judah and Israel, there were only six hundred, and these some of them foreigners, in whom David put any confidence. We will find him accompanied with these few, leaving his house and his family—leaving the city, which in the days of his prosperity, he had fortified and called *the city of David*—~~and~~, what is more, leaving the ark of his God, the symbol of the divine presence—leaving all behind him, and going forth, not knowing where he went. If it is possible to bring into view any more affecting circumstances, let us hear in what manner he went forth : “ David, now an old man, went up the ascent of mount Olives, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered ; and he went bare-foot : and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up.” Verily,

under all these trying circumstances, there was a something which to human appearance at least, justified him in saying, *all men are liars*. “ My son, who  
“ came forth out of my bowels, and one of my favourite sons, hath risen up against me and seeketh my  
“ life. My chief counsellor whose advice was formerly unto me as that of an angel of the Lord, is  
“ forward and active in promoting the hellish design.  
“ My people whom I have governed and provided for, as a father, are almost to a man engaged in supporting the unnatural usurper. Verily it is vanity of vanities, all is vanity. There is no truth, no sincerity, nor principle of honesty in the human race: all are liars in every sense of the word.”

One period more in the worthy old man's life, demands our attention on the present occasion; and a period with which he nearly closed his life. It was the conspiracy of Adonijah, the son of Haggith, and the brother of Absalom. Here again we must bring into view how Providence had interposed in quelling the former rebellion. We must also bring into our recollection that Solomon had, by the word of the Lord, through the mouth of Nathan the prophet, been declared David's successor. Taking all these circumstances connected with these two things together; and it will seem strange indeed that the pretensions of Adonijah should have received any support. But so it was, when the old man, in the course of nature, was going the way of all the earth, “ Adonijah, the son of Haggith, exalted himself, saying, I will be king: and he prepared him chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. And his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, why hast thou done so? and he was a very goodly man; and his mother bare him after Absalom.” Nay, this usurper, as in the former case, not only drew after him a considerable number of the unthinking rabble, but he was also supported

by some of David's old veterans—by some who had been steady and faithful to him in all his former trials. It is added, “And he conferred with Joab, the son of Zeruah, and with Abiathar the priest; and they, following Adonijah, helped him.” Young and vigorous, supported by the chief priest and the chief captain, what might he not expect? It is farther to be observed, that he had the advantages of a handsome person, and was of *noble royal blood*. He was by both father and mother descended of kings. To oppose these pretensions, there was nothing to human appearance, but an old worn out man, the sceptre already tottering in his hands, and a weak inexperienced woman. Is it unreasonable then to suppose, that mere human nature would on the part of David, on the present occasion, fail? With these new circumstances before him, and bringing into his recollection the former fickleness and inconstancy of the people, he without doubt was under strong temptations to express himself as in the text, “*all men are liars.*” My first experience of the world, upwards of forty years ago, convinced me that there was no truth, no sincerity, no honesty in the great mass of mankind. Every day's experience from that day to this, hath given me new proofs of the truth of this observation. Neither priests, nor officers in the army, nor sons, are any longer to be trusted. The world instead of growing better, is rapidly growing more deceitful and ungrateful. In short, as has been said on a former occasion, deceit and falsehood, and ingratitude, appear to be the chief, the leading principles of which human nature in its present state is composed.

Thus much, then, for a short illustration of our first general division, viz. the error or failing of the Psalmist. He had said, and probably more than once or twice said, “*all men are liars.*” We have taken a short view of three remarkable periods in his life, in

which he was certainly under strong temptations to express himself in this manner. We have suggested a great variety of circumstances which occurred in each of those periods to strengthen these temptations. If, however, you will only at your leisure be at the trouble to look into the history of his life, you will find that the subject is not half exhausted. Besides the particulars suggested, you will find in the same history and to the same purpose, Joab's treatment of Abner and Amasa—Baunah and Rechab's treatment of their master Ish Bosheth—Ziba's false suggestions respecting his young master Mephi-Bosheth, Shemi, and Sheba's conspiracy—also Amnon's treatment of his sister Tamar, and again Absalom's treatment of his brother Amnon. In all these cases David was deeply interested, and of them all, deceit and treachery, and that of the blackest kind, were the leading features. Verily, then it was no wonder that David should on these and such like occasions, give way to the infirmity of the flesh, and say, "*all men are liars—there is no truth, nor sincerity, nor honesty, to be found in any one of the human family.*"

But rational as these inferences appeared to be, a little reflection convinced him that they were *rash* and *to a considerable degree, unfounded*. Reflecting upon them, in the text he said, "that it was when he was *in his haste*," not when he was calm and deliberate, that he thus expressed himself. "I said, but it was in my haste, all men are liars." Three things, I think, are intimated as having contributed their share in leading the Psalmist thus to judge rashly, and no doubt in some cases *unjustly*, of the sincerity or honesty of those with whom he was connected in civil or religious society.

1. When he says, that he had said, *all men are liars*, and had said so in *his haste*, it intimates, that in his intercourse with his fellow men, he had not made

proper allowances for *the weakness and infirmities of human nature*. He had met with a great deal of deceit and falsehood, and injustice it is true; but in the hurry of the moment he had aggravated the supposed injury far beyond what a deliberate and calm consideration of the matter would justify. He did not recollect that the present state is, at best, but an imperfect state—that an absolutely pure society is not to be found on earth—that the tares are to grow with the wheat till the end of time. He farther did not recollect, that even in those whom we call good men, there are a great many imperfections—that they have passions and prejudices, and little interests, which in a variety of cases, render them extremely liable to be imposed upon by one or two wicked and crafty leaders. In short, he did not recollect, that even in cases where all the individuals concerned, are really honest, sincere, and desirous of doing that which is right, such is the present state of human nature, there must be on many important questions, a diversity of opinion: The best and the most intelligent of the human race, in our present state, see only in part. In complex important questions, there are also a great variety of lights in which the same matter may be viewed. One man views it in one light, and another in another. Hence what is called diversity of opinion, though it is in reality only different ways of viewing the same subject. In this state of the matter, let only a little misunderstanding or misrepresentation, or a little of any of the base passions of the human heart be brought into action, and you have a quarrel warm and high enough even among friends, and among men who are at the *bottom sincere and honest*.

2. The haste of which the Psalmist takes notice in the text, intimates, “that in his intercourse with the world, he had frequently given to the wicked and ill-designing part of the community, a great deal of *more*

*influence than what they really had.* Among his acquaintances, and friends and confidants, he had found it is true, wicked and deceitful men—men whom, after he had made all the allowances that could be made, and whom after he had considered with all the calmness and deliberation of which he was capable, he must still style *liars* in every sense of the word. All this must be granted: yet calm reflection convinced him, that he had, in the hurry of the moment, *increased* the number of men of this character, and also *magnified their influence* far beyond what a true state of the matter would allow. In the case of Nabal, for instance, how did he in the hurry of the moment devote to destruction, not only himself, but all the males in his family, little knowing that among the young men who belonged to this family, he had at least one steady and faithful friend? (See 1 Sam. xxv. 14—16.) Still less considering that in putting his determination into execution, the amiable, the prudent, the pious, the highly accomplished Abigail, would in all probability, have also perished. In the case of Absalom also, how was he deceived! In the hurry of the moment he imagined all had forsaken him. The issue, however, declared that at the very worst period, he had a large number of steady, zealous friends; and that a great majority of those, who for a few days followed the usurper, followed him in the simplicity of their hearts. No sooner was the whole scheme disclosed, than the hearts of all Israel and Judah, were as the hearts of one man, to bring back their king. “And all the people were at strife throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, the king saved us out of the hand of our enemies, and he delivered us out of the hand of the Philistines, and now he is fled out of the land for Absalom. And Absalom, whom we anointed, is dead in battle: now, therefore, why speak ye not a word of bringing the king back? And king David sent to Zadok and to

Abiathar the priests, saying, speak unto the elders of Judah, saying, why are ye the last to bring the king back to his house, seeing the speech of all Israel is come to the king, even to his house? Ye are my brethren, ye are my bones and my flesh: wherefore, then, are ye the last to bring back the king? And say ye to Amasa, art thou not of my bone, and of my flesh? God do so to me, and more also, if thou be not captain of the host before me continually in the room of Joab. And he bowed the heart of all the men of Judah, even as the heart of one man: so that they sent this word unto the king, return thou, and all thy servants. So the king returned, and came to Jordan. And Judah came to Gilgal to go to meet the king, to conduct the king over Jordan."

3. The *haste* here mentioned, includes under it an arraignment of the dispensations of God's providence. He who believes, shall not make haste: consequently he who makes haste, does not believe. Rash and harsh judging of the sincerity and honesty of our fellow men, is intimately connected with rash and harsh judging of the dispensations of Providence. Did David, when he said, "all men are liars," really believe, that all men, and all their actions, are under the government of a wise and a good God? I believe he did not. It was in the nature of things impossible. When he expressed himself thus concerning his fellow men, he in pretty direct terms said, God *was unjust* in allowing such men to exist, or at least in connecting him with such men. Who is the proper judge of a man's sincerity or honesty? No other certainly than the man's own conscience and his Maker. Others may, from outward appearances, form conjectures and probabilities; but a moral certainty is, almost in every case, with respect to them, an impossibility. He then, who takes it upon him to judge, to any great extent of the dispositions of men's hearts, usurps the prerogative of

his Maker—the prerogative of him, who is emphatically styled, the *searcher of hearts*. And he who in a rash, confused, indiscriminate manner, goes to charge a large body of those with whom he is connected, of falsehood and dishonesty, as the Psalmist in the hurry of the moment did, certainly challenges the righteousness of heaven's government to a considerable degree. In the cool hour of reflection, then, the Psalmist could not fail to see the matter in this light. "How" would he say, as he said in a similar case, "how  
 " have I been rude and ignorant, and as a beast be-  
 " fore Jehovah. I have usurped the prerogative of  
 " heaven in judging of that for which I am by no  
 " means competent. And having rashly and unjustly  
 " charged the great body of my fellow men with de-  
 " ceit and falsehood, I proceeded with a higher de-  
 " gree of arrogance to charge the justice, the wisdom,  
 " and the goodness of God's moral government. The  
 " language of my heart was, the Supreme Being is un-  
 " just in allowing such men to exist—he is particu-  
 " larly unjust in allowing them to have rank and influ-  
 " ence in the world. Had I the power in my hand, I  
 " would in a moment sweep them from the face of the  
 " earth, and replenish the world with a new and a bet-  
 " ter race."

Let us now close the exercise with an inference or two. And

1. Hence see one reason why the Holy Ghost hath given us a very large portion of the sacred volume in the form of history. In these histories we see ourselves. In these histories, we see also, the dispensations of God's providence. These histories also illustrate and enforce the doctrinal part of the sacred canon. The religion of the Bible is a practical religion. A large portion of the Bible is consequently an exhibition of the actions of real life. And here, as well as in the doctrinal and prophetic parts, we behold the finger of

God. Bible characters are every where drawn to the life. Human nature, whether it appears in the saint or the sinner, is uniformly represented just as it is. . Nothing concealed—nothing exaggerated.

2. Did David, one of the wisest and the best of men, in his intercourse with the world, often judge rashly and harshly of the honesty and sincerity of those with whom he was connected in civil and religious society? Then let us not think it strange, that our actions and intentions should frequently be misrepresented and evil spoken of, by a great majority of those with whom we are connected. Hence, learn also, to think charitably of the actions and intentions of others. If David was often mistaken in this matter, may not we also be frequently mistaken? We must also remember, that while we are in this world, we must lay our account frequently to have our good evil spoken of. And when such a man as David, through the frailties and infirmities of the flesh, often suspected the actions and intentions of some of the best of his friends, what can we expect of by far the greater part of those with whom we are connected in both public and private life, who have not half the experience, nor wisdom, nor piety of David? In all our intercourse with one another, there is need for a great deal of mutual forbearance. Let us judge of nothing, but particularly of no man before the time. He who judgeth, so as not to be mistaken is God: and we know that the Judge of all the earth shall do right. When we suppose that we suffer from the rash judging of others, let us take it patiently. There is a time coming when all dark things, even the dark things in the mazes of the human heart, shall be fully explained.

3. Did David fully and freely, upon conviction, acknowledge his error in judging rashly and unjustly of his fellow men? Behold in this an evidence of the power of God, and an example for our imitation. It

was by the power of God, that he was thus enabled to see his error, and also, when he saw it, to acknowledge it. "I love the Lord," says he, "because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful. The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living. I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted. I said in my haste, all men are liars. What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?"—It is evident from the manner in which the text stands thus connected with both the preceding and following verses, that the Psalmist's judging rashly of his fellow men, was one of his sore troubles—that for this, as well as for the other troubles, he made supplication—that in this, as well as in the others, he was heard and delivered—and that for this, as well as for his other deliverances, he resolved to express his gratitude. There is a divine power exerted over the moral as well as over the natural world. The Lord, in both, creates light and creates darkness. He rides on the whirlwind—he rules in the raging of the sea. He has also the passions and the prejudices of the human mind, whether in a state of nature or a state of grace, under his controul.

To err in judgment and err in conduct, is the common lot of humanity in its present sinful and imperfect state. But to see error and to make a full and free

confession of having thought and acted wrong, is peculiar to the people of God. Jesus, as the head of all the people of God, is exalted as a Prince and a Saviour, *to give repentance and remission of sins.* This gift or grace, shall sooner or later be communicated to every one of his members; and being communicated they shall glorify God in making confession. With the Psalmist, in the passage before us, they will say, “ I said in my haste, all men are liars. What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people.”

---

## SERMON XIV.

### FAMILY PURIFICATION, FAMILY SAFETY.

Gen. xxxv. 1—5. *And God said unto Jacob, arise, go to Beth-el, and dwell there; and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother. Then Jacob said unto his household, and all that were with him, put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean; and change your garments: and let us arise, and go up to Beth-el; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went. And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem. And they journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.*

**T**HE people of God have a singular character and a singular lot. Born from above, and consequently partakers of a divine nature, their principles and conduct are very different from those of all other men. While

they remain in this world, they have necessarily a good deal of intercourse with all that are in the world, but so far as they act in character, they are never mixed with them. They continue a separate, distinct people. Near relations, men with whom they are connected in civil society, may sometimes, for a short period, entangle them with their corrupt maxims; but the heavenly principle with which they are endowed must shew itself—a watchful Providence so arranges and overrules circumstances, that they must act as strangers and pilgrims.

Never were these remarks more fully illustrated, than in the history of the patriarch Jacob. Where shall we expect to find a similarity of disposition and conduct, if it is not found in those who are produced at the same birth, raised in the same family, and who enjoyed the same example and admonition? Yet in Jacob and Esau, where all these circumstances united, these were not found. Jacob and Esau, two twin brothers, were as opposite in their disposition and conduct, as it is possible for any two men to be. If we ask for the reason, a prophet gives us the answer: *Jacob* (saith the Lord) *have I loved, and Esau have I hated.* From the womb, Jacob was marked out as a son of promise, and a son of God. Esau was in sovereignty left to be a son of this world. As the effects of new covenant love, Jacob was early blest with a new nature—with dispositions suitable to an heir of bliss. In awful sovereignty Esau was left to the full sway of his corrupt passions—to have all his views and all his exertions confined to the things of this life. Hence when these two were hanging at the same breast, eating at the same table, and carefully watched and cherished by the same parents, they shewed themselves to be two distinct people. The dispositions by which they were distinguished in infancy, continued and strengthened during childhood and youth. When

they had arrived at full age, the different principles of their nature were formed into habits. Each stepped forth into the active scenes of life, and exhibited to the world his peculiar character.

The same principles which kept Jacob from following the conduct of his brother Esau, preserved him from being too familiar with the men of the world in every situation of his life. When he was forced to leave his father's house, and take up his residence in a foreign land—when he was surrounded with men who either knew not, or had grossly corrupted the knowledge of the true God, he still held fast his integrity. His religious principles were rooted in his heart—they in fact formed his very nature. It was therefore in vain to think of turning him with the tide of opinion.

The part of the patriarch's history which we have now read, and to which our attention is at the time to be directed, gives us an account of a period in which his faith and stedfastness were peculiarly tried. Jacob was now well advanced in years. In the goodness of God he had been blest with a numerous family; and to preserve these from being infected with the wicked customs of the world around them, required no little care. In the beginning of the preceding chapter we are informed that Dinah, Jacob's daughter, *went out to see the daughters of the land*. Being young and sprightly she attracted the attention of one of the princes of the country. Simple and unsuspecting, she was induced to yield to his desires at the loss of her innocence. The report of what had happened soon reached the ears of godly Jacob. Like a wise and prudent man, he did not allow his passions to burst forth as a torrent. He prudently covered shame. His sons, however, pursued an opposite conduct. High spirited, and in the prime of life, they resolved to revenge with interest the dishonour which had been done to their family. With this disposition, they answered

the proposal for an accommodation which the young prince sent them, with deceit. They basely prostituted the most solemn rite in their religion, to accomplish their wicked purpose. The poor Shechemites, in the simplicity of their hearts, were ensnared. The enraged brothers came upon them in their defenceless state, and completed the tragedy with massacre and robbery. Good old Jacob had all along been as ignorant of the plot, as the poor unhappy persons who had been devoted to destruction. The execution of it filled him with horror. The action was not only wicked, but imprudent in the last degree. It resembled a mad man running into his neighbour's house and thrusting a fire-brand into a cask of gun powder, in order that all who belonged to the house might be destroyed. The family or tribe, which they had in their passion destroyed, had numerous and powerful connections all around. Their own family were but few in number, and entirely destitute of connections. Immediate, and in fact, just destruction seemed to be their inevitable lot. All these things struck at once upon the mind of the good old man. These are his words: "And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, ye have troubled me, to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites, and the Perrizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house." While every thing was thus in perplexity, that kind Providence which had hitherto preserved him, so arranged circumstances as to affect his deliverance. However wickedly the family of the patriarch had acted, there was a blessing in it, and it must be preserved. Though they had allowed themselves first to be too familiar with the men of the world, and then too rash in imitating them in their guile and resentment, they were still God's peculiar people. He still acknowledged

them as such, and would have them a separate distinct body. “ And God said unto Jacob, arise, go up to Beth-el, and dwell there; and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother.”

It was one of the distinguishing privileges of primitive times, for the saints to have frequent immediate intercourse with God. There was then no written word—the various religious institutions were then only in their infancy—it was therefore fit and necessary that God should preserve the remembrance of his name by supernatural revelation. It was in this manner that God gradually unfolded unto the church the mystery of salvation—it was in this manner that he communicated suitable directions on every emergency. The situation of the patriarch’s family, at the time referred to in the verse before us, was such as to require one of these express revelations. What their situation required was not withheld. Jehovah has ever been known as a present help in time of need. *God* at this time appeared, and *spake unto Jacob*. Whether this communication was made in a vision, or dream of the night, or by an express voice from heaven, we are not told. Certain it is, that Jacob was so familiar with communications of this kind, that he knew he was not deceived, but that he actually heard the Divine voice.

The command given was, that he should leave the place where he then was, and remove to Beth-el. *Arise, go up to Beth-el, and dwell there*. It was inconsistent with the plan of the patriarchal church, that it should continue long in one place. The members of this church were strangers and pilgrims in the earth. They wandered about from city to city, and from land to land. They were thus a lively representation of the real state of the saints, with respect to the things of this world, in every age. They must ever remember that this is not the place of their rest. They must be

seeking for a city which hath foundations, and whose maker and builder is God. Jacob had already lived too long in one place. His children had become too familiar with the heathen, and had been leaning of their way. He must therefore be moving.

The command was farther: that when he arrived at Beth-el, he was *there to build an altar unto God*. An altar was a small pile of stones or earth, upon which slain beasts were burnt in sacrifice. The erection of altars was about as early as the sin of man. Their origin was evidently divine, and their use and end were remarkably well adapted to the then situation of the world. The apostle in his epistle to the Hebrews, has very largely discussed the meaning and the use of this important part of old testament worship. The design of the whole was to lead men to Christ, as the great propitiation for sin. In the slaying of the beast, and in the pouring out of the blood, there was a lively representation of the awful demerit of sin—that the wages of sin was death, and that without the shedding of blood there was no remission. In the flesh being consumed by fire from heaven, there was a lively representation of the exquisite sufferings which sin deserved. And in the whole of these things being executed upon another object than the person who had sinned, there was a lively representation of Christ being substituted in the room of the guilty. Thus the whole doctrine of the atonement was preached to the old testament saints, and preached too in a language which they easily understood.

Along with the command which is here given, there is a circumstance mentioned, which could not fail to make the obeying of the command a very agreeable duty. He was there to make an altar to that God *who had appeared unto him when he fled from the face of Esau, his brother*. This single circumstance brings along with it a vast croud of motives and encourage-

ment. **This** was not the first time that Jacob had been in distress, nor was it the first time that Jehovah had appeared as his deliverer. Behold him forced to flee from his father's house in order to escape the rage of a brother breathing slaughter. Behold him set adrift into the wide world with only a staff in his hand. When night darkens the sky he takes the stones of the field for his pillow, and the canopy of heaven for his covering. Yet, in this situation, an Almighty friend was nigh at hand. The Preserver and Governor of heaven and earth took him under his peculiar protection. In this situation, "Jacob dreamed, and, behold, a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed. And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth; and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee, and in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land: for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." From that period till the period of his history which we are now considering, a long time had elapsed—upwards of twenty years; but the assurance of divine protection, then given, he had found in every situation made good. Now, it was the same God who had appeared to him in that former period of distress, who appeared to him in the present day of distress: and that his faith might be farther established in the covenant which was then established to him, he is now commanded to go back again to the very spot, and take a fresh hold of the same God and of the same covenant. A heart

less disposed to obedience than that of Jacob's, could not resist the force of this encouragement. The worthy man plucks up his spirits, and begins to prepare himself and his family for the performance.

“ Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments : and let us arise, and go up to Beth-el ; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.”

Though we have no express information on the subject, yet there is considerable evidence that Jacob had not for some short time past been very exact in discharging all the duties of the head of a family. The best of men have their failings. Jacob appears to have been naturally of an easy, gentle disposition. This disposition had led him to be rather too indulgent to those committed to his care. Hence his daughter was allowed to skip about, and mix with light and wanton company, which proved her destruction. Hence also, his sons were allowed to step out of their place and deal with Hamor and Shechem about the marriage of Dinah. They thus usurped the place of their father, and when once men are acting out of their place, it is hard to say where and in what mischief they shall end. This usurpation only gave them an opportunity of perpetrating as deceitful and as cruel an action as is upon record in the history of man. Jacob, however, in these two verses, resumes his authority in his own house, and once more acts like a man and a christian. He issues forth orders *to his household, and all that were with him, to put away the strange Gods which were with them, and to change their garments and be clean.*

This order was directed *to his household, and to all who were with him* : that is, to his whole family—to all who were committed to his care—to his children

and his children's children—and to all his servants born in his house, or bought with his money. In Jacob's hands there were at this time lodged all the powers of both civil and ecclesiastic government. He was the prophet, the priest, and the king of all who were any way connected with his family.

They were commanded in the first place, *to put away the strange Gods which were among them.* And how came there to be strange Gods in Jacob's family? We know that Jacob had married into a family, in which, though there was a good deal of the knowledge of the true God, yet there was also a good deal of idolatry. We know also that Rachel, Jacob's beloved wife, when she left her father's house stole away his gods. What was patronized by the favourite in the family, would be readily imitated by the hand-maids and the rising offspring. Jacob, as we have already observed, was naturally rather of too easy a disposition, and appears for some time past to have lost a little of his authority in his own house. Add to all these considerations, that the family had for some time past been living on rather too familiar a footing with their heathen neighbours, and you will easily see how that Jacob in purging his household, met with strange gods. Behold, brethren, how the best of men are ready to be overtaken in a fault. Behold, also, how soon and how easily corruption of the worship of God gets into society. Who would have thought that such a godly man as Jacob, would have given any opportunity for the introduction of strange gods into the society of which he was the head?

They are in the next place commanded *to be clean, and change their garments.* This part of the command is one of the many proofs, which we have of the ease, with which figurative language was understood in early days. Old Jacob was, on the occasion before us, too serious ever to think of giving his fa-

mily any directions *about washing themselves and changing their clothes*, in the same sense, in which these phrases are used in modern days. When a man is giving directions to his family in a matter of life and death, his attention is occupied by some other thing than the mere modes of dress. In the direction then, here given, they had a spiritual lesson. They were actually to lay aside their old clothes, and put on new ones; but this action was an action of a similar nature with their slaying a beast—raising an altar, and burning upon this altar, the beast slain. It was intended, without doubt, as a lively representation of the nature and necessity of the purification of the heart. You will observe, that they were not commanded to go up to Beth-el, and there wash themselves, and put on their clean clothes; but they were to clean themselves and put on clean clothes upon the very spot where they were. They were to lay aside the filth of their bodies, at the very time, and in the very place in which they were; to put away their strange gods. Under these circumstances, the meaning of the command could not be misunderstood. With their idols they were to lay aside all their heathenish practices.

Like a wise and prudent man, who would not abuse his authority, Jacob in giving this command, gives also his reasons. He shews them that this was necessary for their mutual safety and happiness. “Let us arise,” says he, “and go up to Beth-el; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.” We have every reason to believe, that Jacob had frequently told his family of the signal manifestation of the Divine favour which he had enjoyed at Beth-el. He speaks of it here as a thing with which they were well acquainted. As Jehovah, in giving the command to Jacob, had mentioned this manifestation, so Jacob, in repeating the command to his

family, refreshes their memories with the same pleasant story. Stories of this kind, if they are told in a proper manner, cannot be too often repeated. In mentioning this former kindness of Jehovah on the present occasion, Jacob, in a very powerful, persuasive manner, recommends God unto his family as an object worthy of their confidence. In going to worship the God who had formerly answered him in the day of his distress, and upon the very spot where this answer had been given, there was an express declaration of his firm belief, that this God was an unchangeable God. He hereby intimated to his family, that he was fully persuaded that this God would be as kind to him in the present day of distress, as he had been in the former. The natural application of the whole then was, that as the family were now called upon to put away all their strange gods and heathenish practices, so they had the best possible encouragement to receive, and worship and trust in the God of their fathers.

However stubborn and disobedient Jacob's family had been on former occasions, they were now dutifully submissive. The eminent danger into which their folly and madness had brought them, made them lend a willing ear to the father's instruction. "And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their ear-rings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem."

Reformation is beautiful wherever it appears; but in no situation is it more comely, than when a young and rising family, at the request of their aged parent, lay aside those ornaments and gaities which are inconsistent with a life of godliness. Many parents in the present day complain loudly of the giddiness and thoughtlessness of youth. It is more than probable that the parents are more to blame than the children. Let parents only do their duty, and children will gene-

rally be found sober and obedient. To lay aside the follies of the world, when the vigor of life is so exhausted as to render us incapable of deriving any pleasure from them, is nothing praise-worthy. Yet, this it is to be feared, is all the virtue of a great many among us who are in the habit of complaining loudly of the dissipation of youth. On the other hand, freely to part with these follies and gaities at a period when our animal spirits are in full flow, is virtue indeed. This is a virtue which nothing else than a complete change of nature can produce. Whether the reformation which took place in Jacob's family at this time, was a virtue of this kind, or only a forced compliance with imperious necessity, we cannot tell. We shall hope the best of the most of them. They now for once, and for any thing which we know to the contrary, they now for ever *parted with all the strange gods which were among them.*

It is also added, that they gave along with their strange gods *all their ear-rings which were in their ears.* It is true that in scripture, ear-rings are frequently mentioned, as being put to a very bad use, and particularly as being evidence of a proud and haughty disposition. (See Ex. xxxii. 2—4, and Is. iii. 18—23.) But it is equally true, that they are also mentioned as being honourably used, and the use of them even approved by Jehovah himself. (See Gen. xxiv. 21—27. Ex. xxxv. 21 & 22, and Ezekiel xvi. 8—14.) Ear-rings and strange gods consequently cannot stand upon the same footing, though pretty intimately connected in the passage before us. Strange gods are things which are *sinful in themselves*, and can never in any case be used without sin. Ear-rings, like a great many of the necessaries and other ornaments of life, become sinful or unbecoming, *only in certain cases and under certain circumstances.*

What then were those circumstances which rendered ear-rings either sinful or unbecoming in the present case? To this it may be answered, that Jacob's family were evidently in a situation of deep distress. Jehovah was evidently calling them to *weeping* and to *mourning*, and to *baldness* and to *girding with sackcloth*: the indulging of themselves in the use of ear-rings and the other appendages of gay life, would consequently have been not only unsuitable, but sinful to a considerable degree. It would have been the evidence of a hardened insensible heart. (See Is. xxii. 12—14.) It may be farther observed, that in all probability these ear-rings had formed one principal part of their ornaments, when they went out and mixed with their idolatrous neighbours. They were without all doubt a considerable part of those ornaments which contributed a large share in making their sister Dinah an object of brutal lust. All the family would consequently, naturally give up to destruction such fatal ornaments. In fine, the ear-rings at this time given up, might be some of those articles which they had received either honestly or dishonestly from their heathen neighbours, along with some of their strange gods. In this case they would be naturally devoted to destruction as appendages of idolatrous worship.

I cannot leave these ear-rings without observing, that their being given up is no inconsiderable evidence *of the genuine repentance of Jacob's family*. Their father asked only their strange gods. They it seems, freely, and of their own accord, gave up their ear-rings also. They thus manifested that they were ashamed and confounded in remembering the sins of their youth. Ornaments are among the last things young people are disposed to part with.

Jacob having received all those things which had been a snare to his family, *he hid them under the oak which was by Schechem*. He concealed them so as

that they should never more be found. They were now cast to the moles and to the bats. Buried among earth or rubbish so that in a very short time they would be utterly unfit for being used as a temptation.

The way of duty is the only way of safety. For the family being thus purified and thus obedient to the divine command, they were allowed to pass on unmolested. “And they journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.”

The most ungovernable passions of the human heart are under the controul of Jehovah. He restrains or overrules the wrath of man as he pleaseth. Two or three of the hot brained in Jacob's family had been guilty of a flagrant breach of the public peace. They had massacred and robbed a few families, who were honourable, and intimate among all the tribes who inhabited the land. Justice and humanity, and friendship, all united in calling upon every individual in these war-like tribes, to execute punishment upon the transgressors. The family of Jacob was a small despised handful!—without a single foot of land for a possession, or a single tribe to stand in its defence. Yet behold how the strong arm of power was restrained, and the chosen few preserved, not for their own sakes, but for the sakes of those who were to spring from them. *The terror of God was upon the cities round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.* A supernatural influence damped the proud spirit of the daring warrior. In this case the remark of the Psalmist was fully verified: “*When they were but a few men in number, yea, a very few, and strangers in the land, he suffered no man to do them wrong: yea he reproveth kings for their sakes, saying, touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.*” Behold, brethren, how safe they are who are under the new covenant protection of Jehovah!

We shall only request your attention for a few minutes longer, while we shall state and shortly illustrate an instruction or two suggested by that part of the patriarch's history, which we have been considering :  
And

1. These verses teach us, that we ought carefully to attend to those seasons in which God in a particular manner calls us to any act of devotion. It is a truth that we ought always to be diligent in business, and fervent in spirit, serving the Lord ; but there are some seasons in which God in a particular manner calls us to his service. Jacob we see was ready to hear and obey the command when it was said to him, *Arise, go up to Beth-el, and make there an altar to God.* The canon of scripture being now completed, we are not to expect any such express calls from heaven ; but this, instead of making us careless, should make us so much the more attentive. There are morning and evening devotions to which we are called by every rising and setting sun. There is the weekly return of the christian Sabbath. There are occasions on which we are called by Providence, to solemn fasting or thanksgiving, or to the partaking of the seals of the covenant. To all these different calls we ought to hearken. We must consider them as the call of God, and cheerfully observe the particular ordinance which the occasion requires, without grudging our labour, or time, or any other expence.

2. These verses teach us, that when we are called to any act of devotion, we ought to be careful to have ourselves and those committed to our care, sufficiently prepared. This we see was also the conduct of the worthy Jacob. No sooner was the call given, than he set himself to prepare himself and his family, for the ordinance before them. Our God is holy, and is at men's peril, if they approach him in an unhallowed manner. Different religious duties require different

preparation. In every act of devotion, however, we ought to approach unto him with a pure heart and with clean hands. We ought to have our consciences purified by the blood of the atonement—our hearts free from all approved guile.

Heads of families and others who have the charge of children and servants, ought to be equally careful, that those their charge, be also fully prepared. We justly reprobate that head of a family, who is not careful that his children be fed and clothed, and taught how they may provide for themselves in temporal affairs, when sent abroad into the world. The man is tenfold more a reprobate wretch, who is not equally careful, that they may have food to their souls and be put into a situation in which they may withstand the attacks of the destroyer. That this worthy end be accomplished, heads of families ought to imitate the conduct of godly Jacob. Let them maintain their authority in their own house. However wise and prudent sons and daughters may be, they are only sons and daughters. A father and a mother are, by both reason and revelation, their superiors, to whose authority and teaching they are in duty bound to submit. The authority of the head of the family being established and preserved, it is his duty in the next place to see that all in his household have suitable instruction. For this purpose he ought to be punctual in causing them to attend to the various religious exercises of the family. He ought to communicate to them occasionally, and in such a manner as they can understand, information respecting the divine institution, and the ends of the various ordinances of our holy religion. He ought to watch over them when they are necessarily exposed to the temptation of the world. He ought to carry them along with him to the house of God, and exert his authority in causing them to cease from the instruction which causeth to err, by

keeping them at a distance from pernicious company, and keeping out of their hands, books which have a natural tendency to corrupt either their principles or morals.

It is by these and such like exercises, that a seed is raised up to serve the Redeemer. It is by these, that churches and church members are multiplied and strengthened. In short, it is only by the discharging of these and such like family duties, that christian heads of families will have much comfort in their offspring in this world, or be able to look them in the face with confidence when on a death bed, or when all the family is again collected before the Judge of all the earth.

Lastly: These verses teach us, that signal manifestations of God's kindness to ourselves and families, ought to be carefully remembered. "We write our mercies" said a pious man "on the sand, and our judgments on cross dispensation of Providence on the rock." So did not worthy Jacob. The signal manifestation which he enjoyed at Beth-el was never forgotten. It was talked of in his family as a thing well known. We have every reason to believe that the signal deliverance mentioned in the verses, which we have been considering, was carefully remembered. Let those who call themselves the children of God, observe a like conduct. There is scarcely any of us who have not at different times narrowly escaped the jaws of death. We have all it's hoped, been also at different times mercifully preserved from falling before some great temptation. We have at other times been greatly reprov'd for our folly, and recovered from continuing in the practice of wickedness. We have also, no doubt, at different times seen God's hand pretty visible in placing us in different stations—in casting our lot in different places, and blessing us with such and such connections in domestic, in civil, and in religious

society. These and such like merciful interpositions of Divine Providence, ought to be carefully remembered. An opposite conduct shews a most hardened, ungrateful, atheistical disposition.

In order that we may be suitably affected with the greatness of the mercy bestowed in such and such dispensations, let us carefully bring to our recollection all the circumstances connected with each of them. Let us consider how unworthy we are of the smallest of God's favours; and how unhappy we would have been, had not that particular mercy been bestowed at that particular time.

The conclusion of the whole is—Let us be followers of those who through faith and patience, are now inheriting the promises. Wherein any of these have done amiss, let us take heed lest we also fall; and wherein, through grace, they have been enabled to do well, let us in the strength of the same grace, endeavour to imitate their virtues.

## SERMON XV.

### JACOB AND PHARAOH.

Gen. xlvii. 7—10. *And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh: and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, how old art thou? And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, the days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers, in the days of their pilgrimage. And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh.*

**T**HE shortness and uncertainty of human life, is a favourite theme with divines and moralists. It is in fact scarcely possible either to speak or hear of this subject, without being in a certain degree, serious. However diversified our situation in life may be, all come to the same end at last. The dust returns to the dust as it was, and the spirit to God, who gave it. To have been prosperous, or what the world call unfortunate—to have occupied a high or a low station—to have lived the greater part of our life in one place, or to have wandered frequently across the world, all come to the same thing in the end. We all arrive in the same house—the house appointed for all living.

The passage which we have just now read, presents a worthy character very near the end of his journey. He had now actually made his last move in this lower world, and appears to have been fully sensible of his approaching dissolution. He was what we call a plain unpolished rustic, and he is, in the case before us, introduced to a king; but even in this situation he behaves with a majesty and dignity which commands attention.

The particular part of the sacred history before us, is well known. The whole passage, from the beginning of the chapter to the tenth verse, is an account of Joseph introducing his brethren and his father into the presence of Pharaoh. In this account we are at a loss which most to admire, the respect which he had to his sovereign, or the affection which he shewed to his friends. He was prime minister of Egypt—had been uncommonly prosperous in his administration—had almost all at his disposal, and had received positive orders to send for his father and brethren—and it was in consequence of this order that they had arrived in Egypt; yet, as a faithful servant, he would not allow them to settle in any particular spot till he came and told Pharaoh. Again: Joseph was now a *great man*—his brethren were, comparatively speaking, mean and contemptible—the occupation which they followed was particularly so to the Egyptians—some of these brethren, if not all of them, had formerly used him remarkably ill; yet he is not ashamed nor any way backward to acknowledge his relation to them. *He took some of his brethren, even five men, and presented them to Pharaoh.*

The account which we have of this interview is both natural and instructive. Being introduced, Pharaoh said unto them, “*What is your occupation?*” In asking this question, Pharaoh preached the same doctrine which the apostle Paul afterwards preached—*If any man does not work, he shall not eat.* He takes it for granted that they had a lawful calling; for if they would not work, neither should they eat of his bread in that time of scarcity. He also, in asking this question, discharged the duty of a good magistrate, by manifesting a desire that all his subjects should be sufficiently employed—that none of them should wander about as vagrants and be a burden to the community.

The answer which they gave to this question is equally natural and instructive. They honestly told what their occupation was, though they knew that it was but a low employment, and an employment peculiarly obnoxious to the Egyptians. “*Thy servants*” said they, *are shepherds, both we and also our fathers.*” Honesty is in every case the best policy. So far from being offended at this plain and blunt answer, the monarch declares his readiness to give them all the assistance in his power; and also, that if there were any of them fit for taking a charge, they should be advanced. There are places of power and trust, of honor and profit, even among herdsmen. Nor is any occupation dishonourable, which is necessary for the welfare of society. “*And Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, saying, thy father and thy brethren have come unto thee: the land of Egypt is before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell: and if thou knowest any men of activity among them, then make them rulers over my cattle.*”

His brethren being removed, Joseph in the next place introduces his worthy old father: “*And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh: and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.*”

The worthy old patriarch is now for the first time, that we know of, introduced into a court. Let us observe his conduct and profit by it. He behaves with a dignity and independence of mind, that even in the presence of kings, commands respect. Being introduced, *Jacob blessed Pharaoh.* Two things are here intimated worthy of our notice: His piety and his gratitude.

*He blessed Pharaoh.* The action was expressive of his piety. He thus manifested that he was not ashamed of either his God or his religion. With the authority of a patriarch and a prophet, he solemnly

asked the blessing of heaven to rest upon the head of the monarch. He thus spake God's words before kings. He thus reminded the monarch that however much he was elevated with respect to his fellow men, he was with respect to the God of heaven and earth, like all other men, a poor, dependent creature—Reminded him, that it was not wealth, nor power, nor rank, that conferred happiness, but the blessing of Jehovah.

While the old man thus expressed his piety to God, his gratitude to man was equally conspicuous—*He blessed Pharaoh.* Pharaoh was the instrument, under God, of preserving him and his family, and many others, in the present great dearth. He had particularly honoured his beloved son Joseph. The good old man's heart was consequently just at the bursting with gratitude at the sight of his benefactor. He prays that the best of blessings might rest upon him and his—that his throne might be established in righteousness—that he might be long spared as the father of his people, and a real blessing to neighbouring nations—that he might be easy and comfortable in himself, and happy and prosperous in his public administrations.

Let us learn from this verse,

1. That civil government is a divine institution, to which it is our duty, both as men and christians, conscientiously to submit. It is here recorded, to the honour of Joseph, that he brought in his father and set him before Pharaoh: that is, presented him, according to the established forms of the court—presented him as a dutiful subject, ready to yield all lawful obedience to the supreme magistrate, and to all the civil institutions of the country. It is absolutely necessary for the good of the human race, that there should be in every nation, a regular established civil government. And he who, without very strong reasons, would op-

pose, or not submit to this government, offends equally against reason and revelation. Without a permanent civil government, there would be nothing like the peaceable enjoyment of our lives and property. All that we call our own, would be every moment at the mercy of the ruffian who had the strongest arm. With good reason then, did the apostle say, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers; for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation: for rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For, for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render, therefore, to all their dues: tribute, to whom tribute is due; custom, to whom custom; fear, to whom fear; honour, to whom honour."

It is very true, that there are cases, in which both reason and revelation require, that the established powers be resisted and even overturned; *but strangers*, those who have lately come into the country, ought certainly to be among the last to make any such resistance.

2. Learn again from the verse before us, that there is a something in religion which leads to propriety of conduct, and commands reverence and respect in every situation. Jacob is here, in reality, a stranger in a strange land. He was also, comparatively speaking,

*a poor man.* His son, by whom he was introduced into court, was indeed at the time, the second ruler in the kingdom; but it was well known to the king and to all the court, that he was brought into the country a slave, and was only a few years ago the turnkey of a prison. Jacob himself, an old frail man, and a numerous family, had just arrived in the character of *dependants*. Want of bread to themselves, and pasture to their flocks, laid them under the necessity of applying for relief to the king of Egypt. Under these circumstances who would have thought that the old man would have had much confidence in the presence of the king? Yet it is impossible to read the verse before us, without being struck at the noble independence of his mind. No mean, abject flattery drops from his mouth—no idolatrous falling down in the presence of a fellow mortal. With calmness and heavenly authority, he lifted up his hands *and blessed majesty itself.*

Honesty is again, the best policy. An honest, virtuous mind, will generally command the respect even of kings. Though Jacob in blessing Pharaoh, in one sense assumed the superiority, (for without all doubt the less is blessed of the greater,) yet, the manner in which it was done, made him take it in good part. He had already in the usefulness of Joseph, known something of the value of the blessing of the God of Jacob. He therefore graciously received the venerable old man, and entered into a free and familiar conversation with him. “And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, how old art thou?”

The king here puts a quite different question to the father, from that which he put to the sons. The sons were strong, healthy fellows, in the prime of life. He consequently makes his conversation with them turn upon business and action. “What” says he, to them, “is your occupation?” But when the father is intro-

duced, he beholds a venerable old man—a man who, to all appearance, had served his day and generation—a man from whom it would have been cruel, in the last degree, to have expected work. He therefore makes the conversation turn upon his age: *How old art thou?*”

Let us learn from this circumstance, that every thing is beautiful in its season. There is a time and season which nature and nature's God hath marked out for work—Let us be busy and improve this season. There is also a time and season which is marked out for honorable rest—Let us when it arrives, freely take the benefit of it. Let the young, and those who are in the prime of life, from this circumstance, also see their duty to the old. The old are entered into a state of honourable rest. It is consequently the duty of those who are young and active, to endeavour to make their old age as comfortable as possible.

But it must be farther observed, that however humane and polite the Egyptian monarch on this occasion shewed himself, the question which he asked shewed that his heart was careless and indifferent about genuine religion. Jacob, when he was introduced into his presence, in the true spirit of a man of God, in a solemn act of devotion, *blessed Pharaoh*—that is he began to talk of heavenly things. Pharaoh had no doubt before this heard of the God of Jacob. A noble opportunity now offered, an opportunity which even kings seldom enjoy, of learning from the patriarch's own mouth, the peculiar happiness of those who were blessed of this God: yet his carnal and frivolous mind has no relish for such subjects—he shoves them all to the back ground by a comparatively speaking, trifling, though very common question: *Jacob how old art thou?* Behold, in this instance, an evidence of the depravity of the human heart. It anxiously enquires after every thing, but *the one thing needful*. The grey

hairs and the wrinkled forehead of the patriarch, made the monarch eager to know the number of his years; but the fervour of his devotion excited in him no curiosity to know from him any thing of his God. How naturally and how easily do men check heavenly conversation? How many Sabbath days, and other precious opportunities of profiting by religious conversation, have been lost to us all by such common and trifling questions as the one before us? How old art thou? How old is this or the other of your relations or acquaintances? What is your opinion respecting the weather, &c. &c. &c. These and such like unimportant questions, frequently form the basis of our discourse, when we should be exhorting and admonishing one another respecting the things which belong to our everlasting peace.

In short, it must be here observed, that however common the question in the text may be, and however frivolously it may frequently be asked, yet it is a question in itself, when properly considered, full of instruction. *How old art thou?* The question supposes that you are advancing in years—that a considerable portion of your time is gone, never to return. It consequently to a serious, reflecting mind, must suggest the propriety of reviewing our past life. How old art thou?—Old enough for any good I have done—old enough for any improvement which I have made—old enough, nay, too old for any real preparations which I have made for the end of life. Reflections thus serious and important were excited in the mind of Jacob, when the question was put to him in the case before us. Hear his own answer: “And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, the days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers, in the days of their pilgrimage.”

Jacob here gives a very uncommon answer to a common question. How old art thou? said the king to Jacob. "*The days of the years of my pilgrimage,*" said Jacob to the king, "*are an hundred and thirty years,*" &c.

In this answer, the first thing which demands our attention, is the term which he uses to express his life. He styles it a pilgrimage or wandering about. He looked upon himself as a stranger in this world. This earth was only his inn, not his house, not the place of his rest. To this the apostle, without doubt, refers, when he says of the patriarchs in general, "*they confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims.*" He reckoned himself not only a stranger in Egypt, where he had never been before, but he had been a stranger, a pilgrim, a wanderer, all his life through. Read only his life, and you will see the truth of his observation. He was only a young man when he was forced to leave his father's house to escape the rage of a brother. With his uncle Laban he had indeed remained twenty years—but during all that time he only sojourned, was not settled. *Jacob fled unto Syria, and there served for a wife, and for a wife kept sheep.* The rest of his life is little else than a removing from place to place. From Pandan-Aram he came to Succoth, in the land of Canaan, and from Succoth to Beth-el, and from Beth-el to Hebron, and now in his old age, he had taken a long journey to Egypt. In all these movements he was in every sense of the word a stranger and pilgrim—acquired no landed property, and formed little or no connection with the people among whom he sojourned.

Let us learn from this part of the old man's answer,

1. That we need not think it strange, though in our journey through life we be frequently tossed about from one place to another. The worthy old patri-

archs, the peculiar favourites of heaven, were, while they were in this world, no better used. There is in fact nothing in this world to which we can trust as permanent. Worldly comforts of every kind soon lose their relish. They are soon also either taken from us, or we must move from them. This world is not the place of our rest. We are at best but sojourners, strangers and pilgrims:

2. Let us learn to imitate these worthy men, in the exercise of the graces of the holy Spirit. They were not ashamed of their situation. *They confessed* that they were strangers and pilgrims. They were also wise enough not to look to the world for that which it could never afford. They knew that the world and the things of the world were at best uncertain and unsatisfactory. They therefore looked above all that the world call great and good. They looked for a city which hath foundations, and whose builder and maker is God. Though they had no country which they could call their own in this world, they were not without a country. They had an interest in a better country, that is, an heavenly. Though they dwelt in tents, and were continually moving from place to place, they looked forward with joy and confidence to *a city*, and a city which was permanent, having foundations: In short, their God, their relations, their city, their country, their permanent possessions of every kind, were all in heaven—in another and a better world. They therefore habitually and patiently put up with their wandering state in this world, in the full assurance, that they were afterwards to find an eternal rest to their souls. Let us, brethren, go and do likewise.

Before we proceed any farther, let us drop a word of lamentation over those who have no certain, nor safe abode in this world or the next. Take the world all and all, and it gives very near the same treatment

to all its inhabitants. It is but an uncertain and unsatisfactory portion even to those who enjoy it in the most abundance. And it profits no man in the day, when his soul shall be required from his hand. *For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul—or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* Woe, woe then be to those who have this world for their only portion! who know of nothing better or more satisfactory than that which is daily passing away—daily perishing!

Let us, however, proceed in attending to the answer of the venerable patriarch.

It is to be observed in the next place, that in reckoning his age, he does not reckon by years or months—but by *days—the days of my pilgrimage, &c.* The same term is used in different other passages of scripture. “*So teach us*” says the Psalmist “*to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom;*” and again: *Lord make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days.* When human life is thus styled *a day*—it intimates,\*

That it is at best but *short*; a day soon comes to an end; a winter day is scarcely begun till it is ended. It intimates also, that human life is, at best, but *uncertain*. In the most of cases, particularly with the idle and dissipated, or even we are aware, the sun goes down, and the day is at an end. This use of the term farther intimates, that the present period is the only period for work, and the making preparation for the night. *Let me finish,* says Job, *as an hireling my day. I must work while it is to day,* saith our Lord, *the night cometh when no man can work.* In fine, this use of the term intimates, that every particle of the present life is precious—all, the most minute parts of it must be taken into the account. He who wantonly throws away his days, will wantonly squander away years. *Take care of the days, and the*

years will be very well employed. We cannot stop the sun in his course and lengthen out the natural day to any length we please, much less can we prevent time from passing on, and bringing us or ever we are aware, to the border of eternity. If we do not secure a comfortable lodging and the other necessaries and comforts of life, while the sun is above the horizon, we will stand but a poor chance to enjoy any of these when the blackness and the storms of night have overtaken us. In like manner if we trifle away our day of grace now, it is a thousand to one, but that in the end we will be forced to take up our abode in the blackness and darkness of the infernal pit.

Let us next attend to the character which the old man gives of the days of the years of his pilgrimage. They were *few and evil*. *Few and evil have been the days of the years of my pilgrimage.*

These days are said by him to be *few*—few when compared with eternity—the eternity of Jehovah. *One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*—*Few* when compared with the lives of the patriarchs who lived before the flood—*Few* with respect to what had been done in them; but particularly *few*, because they were *past*, never more to be recalled. One year of 365 days, is a long period, when we consider it as *before us*—to be enjoyed; but it dwindles into almost nothing when it is viewed as *past*. At the beginning of a year, or at the beginning of a life, what mighty schemes, and what great works do we propose? what happiness do we promise ourselves? But at the end of the year, or at the end of the life, all these mighty and important things have dwindled into almost nothing.

Let us learn from this part of the old man's answer—

That it is not in the nature of things for any man to be satisfied with long life merely by itself. The days

of the years of Jacob's pilgrimage were 130 years—fully three lives, according to the average of the life of man in this age and in this part of the world—47,450 days in all—yet the old man in accounting them styles them *few*. They had passed away as a shadow—as a dream of the night—as a tale that had been told. Of satisfaction in them, considered by themselves, he had enjoyed none. All had been vanity. It is not, therefore, in mere length of days, that we are to look for happiness. Men who have enjoyed the greatest number of years, have, at the end of their life, been just as unsatisfied as they were when they began their career.

But this is not all: the days of the years of this man's pilgrimage were not only few in number, but they had also *been evil*. This is true of human life in general. *Man that is born of woman, is of few days and full of sorrow.* It had been particularly true of the patriarch Jacob. He was one of the peculiar favourites of heaven, yet, like our Lord and Master, he was a man of sorrows. It was truly an evil day indeed, which drove him from his father's house, and from the tender embraces of an affectionate mother, from a mother whom it does not appear he ever again saw—It was an evil day indeed, when he was made to attend as a slave night and day, summer and winter, and for the space of twenty years, the flocks of his avaricious and hard hearted uncle—It was truly an evil day, when he was pursued behind as a thief by his uncle, and watched in the front by a powerful and apparently implacable brother. But these are only a small part of his sorrows—all these were only outward, and what we call *cleanly troubles*. Who can tell the anguish of the good old man's heart, when his only daughter by her light and imprudent conduct, and one or two of his sons had by their furious and ungovernable tempers, nearly occasioned the destruction and eternal disgrace of himself and all the rest of the family? Who can tell

the anguish of his heart when it was told him, that his own son, his eldest son, the beginning of his strength, had defiled the honour of his bed? In short, who can tell the anguish which he felt on account of the almost constant quarrels of his wives and children? “*I shall go down to the grave mourning for my son.*” Me have ye bereaved of my children. *Joseph is not; Simeon is not; and ye will take Benjamin also: all these things are against me.*” Verily the good old man had occasion to say, not only that his days were few—were vanity—but also that they were *evil—full of vexation of spirit.* Without doubt the man was only a pilgrim—far from home when he was thus used.

From this part of the old man’s answer, let us learn not to think it strange, though in this life we be exposed to a great variety of sorrows. This has been the lot of the best of men from the beginning. It was the lot of our Lord himself: “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, in as much as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings: that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.” Learn

2. That no man knoweth either love or hatred from all that is before him. One event happeneth to all. As is the wise man, so in the most of cases is also the fool. The present, is at best, only a mixed imperfect state. Learn

3. Additional reasons why we should be anxious to secure a better portion than this world can afford. Verily, they are fools indeed, who desire to live for ever in a world so full of sorrow.

4. In short, let us learn hence, how to enjoy our evil days as blessings in disguise. Happy indeed shall we be if the evils of this life are all the evils which we shall endure. Cursed and miserable indeed, if they are only *the beginning of sorrow.* “And ye have forgot-

ten the exhortation, which speaketh unto you as unto children. My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him : for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons : for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence : shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure ; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now, no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous : nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”

Only one thing more is to be attended to in the old man's answer. It is the comparison which he states betwixt his life, and the lives of his fathers. His life was considerably shorter than their lives had been. “ *I have not*” says he, “ *attained to the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.*” He had not enjoyed so many days as they had enjoyed—nor had they been so pleasant—old age had come sooner upon him than it had come upon any of them. He was now an old man bowed down with years, yet he had not arrived at half of the years of some of his ancestors.

Behold in this part of the answer what havock sin has made in the world. It has not only brought death into the world, but it has also embittered, and at different times greatly shortened human life. Before the flood, the age of man was from 500, to 700, and 900 years. Immediately after the flood, it was from 400 to 600 years. In the days of the three patriarchs, it

was from 130 to 180 years; and in a few generations after, it was reduced to its present standing—to three-score, or four-score, as its utmost verge. To every one of these stages or shortenings, the serious reflections of the Psalmist are applicable: “Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, return, ye children of men. For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth. For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance. For all our days are passed away in thy wrath; we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are three score years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be four score years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow: for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.”

Thus much for the conversation betwixt the Patriarch and the king. Let us now attend to the closing of the interview: “And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh.”

The old man retired from the presence of the monarch with the same dignity he had approached. His heart was not any way corrupted by the notice which had been taken of him. The same piety and the same gratitude still warmed his heart. Pharaoh, as has been observed, does not appear to have given much encouragement to religious discourses; but the good old man was not going to be ashamed of his profession on that account. He had been introduced to the presence of majesty as a fearer of the God of heaven and earth, and he was resolved to retire bearing the same character. The notice which had been taken of him had

no influence in corrupting his heart. Being to retire, he again blessed Pharaoh—again in the presence of Pharaoh and all his court, declared himself a worshipper of Jehovah—again made a public declaration, that this Jehovah alone could bless men—again declared that kings, even the greatest of them, had as much need of this blessing as any other men—and again expressed his fervent desire, that, that blessing might be bestowed upon the head of Pharaoh, who had been the instrument of doing so much good to him and his family, and to a large portion of the human race.

It is impossible also, to read this verse, without being struck with the modesty and becoming respect of the old man. Jacob blessed Pharaoh, *and went out from before Pharaoh.* Was he a talkative, self-important, intruding, intriguing character? The very reverse. We are here to bring to our recollection, “that he was, to all appearance, what we call *graciously received*—his son was at the time prime minister—Pharaoh had just before been shewn five more of his sons, and had of his own accord talked of promoting them—he was also himself a man, who, though he had had his troubles, yet he had been generally respected in the world, and had acquired a large stock of experience—he, without doubt, by this time, knew right well *how to deal with men.* Enjoying these, and such like advantages and recommendations, no other person with *a less share of grace,* would have retired so soon from the presence of the monarch—he would at least have staid till he had received some more benefits for himself and family. An interview with the king is not a thing which is to be got every day. With a great many, who consider themselves as particularly fortunate, it takes place only once or twice in a life—yet these considerations had no influence on the mind of the worthy old patriarch. He blessed Pharaoh, *and*

*went out from before Pharaoh.* He now had been tried by both prosperity and adversity, and in both cases had shewed himself to be the same man—a stranger and a pilgrim in the earth—one who was equally indifferent to the smiles and the frowns of this world. His mind was just as much set upon a better country, that is, an heavenly, when he was admitted into the presence of the greatest monarch in the earth, and when his son was the second man to this monarch, as when he was fixing his tent upon the sides of the mountain, and watching the flocks of his uncle Laban. An easy, steady, and what is more, a heavenly temper of mind, characterized him in every situation. Happy old man!—Worthy pattern to be followed!—Let us go and do likewise.

---

## SERMON XVI.

### COMFORTABLE DYING.

*Gen. xlix. 33. And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.*

**T**HE latter end of great men, and especially of good men, is always supposed to contain something remarkable. Having observed the distinguished part which they acted in busy life, we are anxious to follow them to the last verge of life, and see them step out of time into eternity. Hence, no man's life, however illustrious, or however well written, is considered as complete, unless the biographer can give us some account of his death.

It may also be observed, that it is chiefly by the last struggle, that a man's real religious character is known.

It is an easy matter to deceive ourselves, and deceive our friends, when we are full of flesh and blood, and when we have the prospect of riding out the storms of human life for a considerable number of years. But bring the king of terrors full in our face, and we are tried of what spirit we are. Here deceit and hypocrisy have arrived at their last stage—they can carry us no farther—we must appear in our true character. Generally speaking (there are some exceptions from all general rules) generally speaking, it is then that we discover the reality and the strength of those things in which we had confidence. If our hopes have been well founded, they generally in this situation, *rise*. The happy person, standing betwixt two worlds, has an extensive prospect of both. He sees the King in his beauty, and the land which is very far off. On the other hand, if our hopes of eternal salvation have all along been false, the refuges of lies in which we trusted, are generally at this trying period, swept away. However much we may have flattered ourselves in former periods, we now hear our doom—we now see our end—and it is nothing but blackness and darkness, and weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

The text to which we propose directing our attention at the time, presents to our view one of the happy persons. One whose hopes and comforts *increased*, the nearer he approached that country from whose bourn no traveller ere returned to tell what's doing on the other side. Good old Jacob is here represented as closing his life here below—And sweet and comfortable is the death of those who die in the Lord.

*And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.*

In considering these words, three things demand our attention :

I. The work which good old Jacob had just finished.

II. The manner in which he breathed his last; and

III. The consequence of all—*he was gathered unto his people.*

Let us first turn our attention to the work which good old Jacob had just finished—and it was his last work on earth. *He had just made an end of commanding his sons.* Here our attention is necessarily directed to what is recorded in the preceding part of the history.

In the beginning of this chapter we are informed, that Jacob, sensible of his approaching dissolution, called all his sons together that they might receive his last blessing, and receive his last commands: “And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days. Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father.” Invested with patriarchal authority, he issues the command, that all who had sprung from him should make their appearance before him. “Let them all” says he, “be sent for from their several employments, and see their father die, and hear his dying words.” Such a meeting was to be *extremely comfortable* to the good old man. At different times in his pilgrimage, he had cried out, “Me, have ye bereaved of my children.” But behold how in the end things had turned out a great deal better than had been expected. Though he dies in a strange land, he has the happiness of seeing all his children and grand children about his bed side. He found himself consequently as much at home, as ever he could expect to be in this world. This meeting was also to be of great use to those who were to attend. They had frequently heard from his lips, and seen from his actions, how they were *to live.* They are now called together, to

learn from the same person, how they were *to die*. A sick bed, but especially the death bed of an ancient patriarch, is a place where much solid and useful instruction may be received.

*Gather yourselves together, and hearken to Israel, your father.* Let not only my sons, but my grandsons also, make their appearance. Let them all hearken, for it is their father who is to speak, and to speak to them for the last time. It is their father *Israel—Israel*, the man who had seen God, and had prevailed with God, and who was just going to God. Let him before he departs, prevail also with you, and point out to you the way to God.

It has also been observed, “that the repetition of the phrase, *gather yourselves together*, besides expressing the great earnestness and fervour of the holy man, expresses both a precept and a prophecy.”

*A precept*—“Gather yourselves together.” I am just going to leave you—and leave you in a strange land in the midst of heathens—exposed to innumerable temptations. But I charge you with my dying breath, *keep together*—mix not with the heathen around you, nor learn of their ways. Remember that you are brethren, not only by a natural tie; but also, brethren as the sons of Jacob and Israel—as the only called visible church. You are separated from the nations of the world, to be unto Jehovah a peculiar people. Keep then together in this character, and continue to be active servants of the one only, the living and the true God.

*A prophecy*—“Gather yourselves together ye sons of Jacob.” Jehovah hath graciously made known that you are to be *one and indivisible*. He hath chosen you as his peculiar people—the people among whom the knowledge of the true God is to be preserved for a long tract of ages. In obedience to his command, and encouraged by his promise, I have again and again

devoted you to his service. I have taken hold of him not only as my own God, but also as the God of my seed. Remember, therefore, that as the seed of Jacob, you are God's covenanted people—a people, who, are under very solemn obligations, and who have very peculiar encouragements to be wholly and only the Lord's. You are the seed who are to serve him when your old father shall have finished his earthly course.

The congregation being assembled, the worthy old man begins to give them his commands and leave them his blessing. The general design of his discourse is intimated to them in the notice which he gives to assemble: “Gather yourselves together,” says he, *that I may tell you what shall befall you in the last days.* Under the spirit of inspiration, I am not only to tell you what may concern your individual persons; but I am chiefly to tell you the lot of your posterity as constituting different parts of God's visible church.” He then proceeds to address every one of his sons by name, and in the order of his birth.

It is quite foreign to our present purpose to follow the good old man through every one of these particulars. Nor could it be accomplished in one discourse. A few general but plain and practical remarks upon this part of the old man's exercise stated and shortly illustrated, is all that is intended. And

1. It is worthy of notice, that, through the whole of the discourse, the old man discovers that he was well acquainted with the particular character and particular temper of every one of his sons; and in this his last address to them, he suited himself to their diversified characters and dispositions. “All these are the twelve tribes of Israel: and this is it that their father spake unto them, and blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them.” As a father who knew that he must one day give an account of his charge, he had from their infancy to the present mo-

ment, narrowly watched over both the public and private life of every one of his children. He knew to a considerable degree both their virtues and their vices—their excellencies and their failings. This accurate knowledge he now, as he no doubt frequently had done before, reduces to practice. He flatters none of them—nor does he use any of them with undue severity. He is not like some parents who see nothing but excellencies in their children—nor is he like some others who can see nothing but defects and disobedience in their offspring. With candour and fatherly affection he blames or praises—reproves or encourages as every particular character deserved. Observe

2. That what is said to each, he now says in the presence of all the rest. They were particularly addressed, and addressed as individuals; but they were also publicly addressed. There is no doubt but that the old man had frequently on former occasions dealt with each of them in private; but this was now the last time that he was to address them. It was therefore necessary that it should be done in as solemn, impressive manner as possible. A reproof or advice directed to another person in our presence, and in nearly the same situation with ourselves, has frequently more impression upon us than if it were directly addressed to ourselves. Besides, as all heard what was said to each, they were thus made mutual helps and mutual checks to each other. “Brother, did not my father and your father tell you, or us, so and so, in his last and most solemn address?”—Such a sentence would at all future periods have a great deal of force. Observe

3. That though some of his sons are reprov'd, and what in modern days we would call severely reprov'd, none of them *are cursed or rejected*; but all *are blessed and acknowledged as his sons*. He is said to have blessed every one according to his blessing. Though

Reuben, and Simeon, and Levi, are put under marks of their father's displeasure, they are not laid under a curse and rejected as Esau was on a former occasion. They were all acknowledged as the sons of Jacob and Israel. Though Simeon and Levi were to be divided and scattered, they were to be divided and scattered in *Israel*—that is, within the pale of the visible church, not among the heathen nations. Let us learn from this view of the subject, that whatever rebukes of God's providence, or God's word we may be under, yet while we have an interest in God's covenant, a place and a name among his people, and any good hopes of a share in the heavenly Canaan, we must account ourselves *truly blessed*.

4. The fervent manner in which the good old man recommends his God to them, not only as his own God, but also as having been the God of his fathers, cannot escape our notice. “And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which led me all my life long unto this day. The angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.—I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord!—But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob, (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel;) even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts and of the womb: the blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors, unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills; they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separated from his brethren.”—It is a

great mercy indeed to have God as our own God—It is still a greater mercy to have it to say, that he was the God of our father. And the consideration that this God was the God of our father and grand father, and great grand father, ought to have a powerful influence in executing and encouraging us to claim him as our own God in particular. It is sweet indeed to think that the God of heaven and earth hath thus taken possession of our family from generation to generation. This is true nobility. This is nothing less than to be of the blood royal of heaven.

The very manner in which this God is mentioned in the passages just cited, is naturally well adapted to recommend this God to his sons and grand sons, as *the best God—the best master—the best portion*. This is the God *before whom my father Abraham and Isaac did walk*—the God who protected them amidst all the dangers to which they were exposed. This is *the God who fed me all my life long to this day*. I have often been in straits for the necessaries and comforts of life for myself and family; but this God has always in due time, and in the best manner, provided whatever was necessary. He is the God—*the angel who redeemed me from all evil*. A great deal of hardships I have indeed known in my time, but this I can say, and shall say it with my last breath, that this God, this angel of the new covenant hath all along graciously delivered me from the *evil* of these hardships. Under his management these hardships have been blessings in disguise. He is the God, or the Jehovah *for whose salvation I have waited, and now do wait when all earthly comforts fail*. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever. In short, this is the God *who only can bless men*. His blessing alone maketh rich and addeth no sorrow. The conclusion of the whole then is—Let

this God be your God as he has been the God of your fathers, and you shall be blessed indeed.

Once more :

5. The particular charge which he gives concerning the manner in which his dead body was to be disposed of, must not pass unnoticed. It is said, "And the time drew nigh when Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, if now I have found grace in thy sight, put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt: but I will lie with my fathers, and thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying-place. And he said, I will do as thou hast said. And he said, swear unto me. And he swore unto him. And Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head." It is farther said, as being the very last words which he uttered, "And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite; in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite, for a possession of a burying-place. (There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah.) The purchase of the field, and of the cave that is therein, was from the children of Heth."

In reading these verses is it asked, why was Jacob so anxious that his body should be buried in that particular spot? Was it for his own sake, or for the sake of his posterity and the church, that he was earnest and pressing in this matter? The answer is—It was doubtless not for his own sake, but for the sake of the church. Joseph's charge respecting his bones will explain the spirit and the force of the charge which Jacob gives concerning his bones. "And Joseph said

unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land, unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Jacob took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence." The plain matter is, this particular charge in both these cases is to be considered as an instance of *strong unshaken faith*. Both the father and the son thus made a public and solemn declaration of their firm faith, that at the appointed time God would perform the promise made to Abraham, in giving unto his seed the land of Canaan for a possession. By this particular charge the sons of Israel were reminded, that whatever might be their situation in the land of Egypt, they were to remember that it was not their home—the country where they were to abide for ever. If they were in prosperity, having their brother Joseph, the second ruler in the land, they were to remember that they were only strangers and pilgrims. This was not the place of their rest—God had provided for them a better country and a better rest. If they were in adversity, reduced to bondmen and bondwomen, they were to remember for their comfort, that this could be only so for a time. The promise was still sure to all the seed, the time was fast approaching when they were to be kings and priests to their God in the land flowing with milk and honey. "By faith, Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff. By faith, Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones."

Thus much for a short view of the first thing presented to our view in the text, viz. the work which Jacob had just finished. With his last breath he commanded and blessed his sons. It follows that we now

II. Attend to the manner in which the holy man breathes his last. It is said that when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, *he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost.* Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. Let me see the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.

In the former chapter we are told, that when the good old man heard of his son Joseph coming to see him, *he strengthened himself and sat upon the bed.* He had in the present case also, it seems, strengthened himself and sat up; but having finished his work, having done all that he wished to do on earth, he addressed himself to his dying work—*He gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost.* This phrase

I. Evidently represents the old man as fully satisfied with the things of this world. Having ended commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and in so doing, declared that he was done with all earthly concerns. In passing through life he had had his own share about worldly concerns; but now these were all over—they no more harrassed or any way employed his mind. As a pious and an affectionate parent, he had in particular frequently felt a great deal of anxiety for the worldly comfort of his children and grand children. He had lately been tried with seven years of sore famine, at the beginning of which, he had seen himself put to considerable pinch. He no doubt, also, till the present moment, had considerable strength of natural affection towards those of his family whom he was to leave behind him—*strangers in a strange land*—strangers in a land in which they were to be reduced to slavery, and otherwise sorely afflicted. (See Gen. xv. 13.) But all these difficulties, and every difficulty of the kind were now got over. He was already completely dead to the world, and the things of the

world. To the God who had fed *himself* all his life long—to the angel who had redeemed himself from all evil—he had committed the care of his sons and grandsons, and having thus committed them he was at ease. While he was in the world with them, it was his duty to provide and care for them; but now when he was to be called out of the world, the relation betwixt him and them was dissolved. All duty and all cares were consequently at an end. *Leave your fatherless children on me: I will preserve them alive, and let your wisdom trust in me.* Such a word is just enough to afford a believing mind complete satisfaction and good hope through grace.

2. The expression here used, evidently represents old Jacob, as breathing his last, with a great deal of calmness and ease with respect to both body and mind. With great composure and serenity, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yields up the ghost. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace—peace and ease in both body and mind. Holy Stephen, though he expired under a shower of stones, is said to *have fallen asleep*. Jacob in the case before us, dies equally calm and easy. No horror of conscience—no awful foreboding of wrath unutterable, either disturbs the soul or convulse and disfigure the body. All is gentle, all is calm and composed. The grim king of terrors is to him a messenger of peace. Instead of being a dissolution, it is only a gentle moving from one house to another—a moving from the earthly house of this tabernacle, to the house not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens—a moving from the land of Egypt and the house of bondage, to the heavenly Canaan—the eternal rest provided for the people of God. This leads us however to observe,

3. That besides ease and calmness, the phrase here used intimates a great deal of cheerfulness, and holy

boldness. He gathered up his feet into the bed, *and yielded up the ghost.* “Thou fool,” said God to the rich wordling, “*thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee*”—*required of thee*—intimating how unwilling the poor wretch would resign his life. The death of all wicked men is, in this respect, alike.

How shocking must thy summons be, O death!  
 To him that is at ease in his possessions!  
 Who, counting on long years of pleasure here,  
 Is quite unfurnish'd for that world to come!  
 In that dread moment, how the frantic soul  
 Raves round the wall of her clay tenement,  
 Runs to each avenue and shrieks for help,  
 But shrieks in vain! How *wistfully* she looks  
 On all she's leaving, now *no* longer her's!  
 A little longer, yet a *little* longer,  
 O might she stay to wash away her stains,  
 And fit her for her passage! Mournful sight!  
 Her very eyes weep blood; and ev'ry groan  
 She heaves is big with horror.

Exactly the opposite of this backwardness and horror, is expressed by the phrase before us, and by every other phrase which is used to express the death of the saint. *Old Jacob yielded up the ghost*—freely and cheerfully, with the greatest possible resolution breathed his last. The soul, as it were, sprung forth and met the king of terrors half way. And no wonder he already heard the welcome sound, “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” His heart was already beating unison with those who were singing the song of Moses the lamb. In both heart and spirit he was singing, “O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Come stingless death, have o'er. Lo! here's my pass,  
 In blood character'd by his hand, who was,  
 And is, and shall be. Jordan cut thy stream,  
 Make channels dry; I bear my Father's name  
 Stamp'd on my brow. I'm ravish'd with my crown  
 I shine so bright; down with all glory down,  
 That world can give. I see the pearly port!  
 The golden street! the blessed souls resort!  
 The tree of life. Floods gushing from the throne,  
 Call me to joys. Begone, short woes begone.  
 I liv'd to die; but now I die to live!  
 I enjoy more than er'e I did believe.  
 The promise, me into possession sends;  
 Faith in fruition, hope in having ends.

It only remains that we now drop a word or two  
 on the happy consequence of all. Old Jacob having  
 done so and so, it is said—that *he was gathered to his  
 people.*

Here it may be observed, as on the former, that this  
 is a phrase peculiar to the people of God. *The wicked  
 is driven away in his iniquity, but the righteous hath  
 hope in his death.* Of a wicked man, when he dies,  
 it is said, that he is taken away from his people. But,  
 behold, the opposite is the case with the godly—*he is  
 then gathered to his people.*

It is almost unnecessary to enter into any enquiry  
 about the particular meaning of the phrase. It is evi-  
 dent at first sight, that it must mean something more,  
 than his merely going the way of all the earth; or,  
 that his body was laid among the dust of his fathers.  
*He yielded up the ghost,* and immediately it is added,  
*he was gathered to his people.* From this considera-  
 tion, we are almost unavoidably led to consider the  
 phrase as referring chiefly to his soul.

1. *He was gathered to his people*—that is, he imme-  
 diately entered the region of bliss. “Go” said the  
 risen Saviour, “go tell my disciples that I ascended  
 to my father and your father, to my God and your  
 God.” All the people of God are very closely con-

nected with their living head and with one another. The same God is their God—the same Saviour is their Saviour. They are all equally interested in that covenant which is ordered in all things, and sure—they have all an equal title to the heavenly inheritance, and they are all in due time equally fitted for the enjoyment of their God and of one another in the world of spirits. Hence it follows, that however far they may be separated from one another on earth—though they should be extended from the days of Adam to the sound of the last trumpet—though some should have their lot cast on one side of the globe, and others on the most distant point—yet *they are all one*—they in fact form only *one compact united family*. And when they individually pass out of this world, they are gathered together. God, then says *to to the north give up, and to the south keep not back; bring my sons from afar, and my daughters from the ends of the earth.*

2. The phrase here used, intimates, “ that the society enjoyed by the righteous in the other world, is *an unmixed society*. Saints, at their death, are gathered to their people—to kindred spirits, and to kindred spirits only. In this world every thing is mixed. This world, is at best, a world lying in wickedness—a very imperfect state of society. The best of God’s people, while here, carry in their own hearts a body of sin and death, a great mixture of corruption; and the state of the world, and of the church, with which they are connected, is similar. Not so in the other world, and in the church above—There shall in no wise enter into our Father’s house above, any thing which worketh an abomination, or which defileth, or which maketh a lie—the society enjoyed there shall be pure and unmixed, as God himself is pure and holy.

3. The phrase here used certainly gives pretty strong intimation, “ that the state into which the godly pass at death, *is an eternal unchangeable state.*” Thus is

that which sweetens all. The expression—"he was gathered unto his people," is evidently taken from the gathering of the fruits after harvest. They are gathered at that season, as having arrived at maturity—as being fit for keeping, that is as past the danger of corruption—and as never more to be exposed to the inclemency of the weather. Just so is the gathering in of the people of God. They come to their grave whether they die old or young, in a good old age—as a shock of corn cometh in its season. Their souls are made perfect in holiness, and they immediately pass into an eternal state of glory and happiness. "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.—They shall hunger no more; neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.—For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all the tears from their eyes." "Write" then "*blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours and their works do follow them.*"

To conclude: Let us all, whether old or young, whether strong or weak, in our retirements, muse over the passage which we have endeavoured to consider, and while we are musing *learn to die*. Few of the human race have an opportunity of dying exactly in the same circumstances in which old Jacob died. The greater part of our race is cut off in the prime of life, and few even of those who die in what is called a good old age, have the happiness of seeing their children and grand children around their bed. But we must all die some day or other; and die we when or where, or under whatever circumstances, there is no safe or comfortable dying unless we have Jacob's

God as our God, and Jacob's faith, and other heavenly graces in some measure of lively existence. Let us remember that this God is now fully and freely offered to us in the gospel; he is this moment saying to every one present, "Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God." Let each of us in return, say "Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief."

Again. Let Christian parents from the passage before us see what is their duty to their children, and to the world, and the church, in the prospect of death. It is certainly to give a testimony to the truth of God's word, and to the pleasantness of genuine religion. The spirit of prophesy being now ceased, as the canon of inspiration is now complete, no parent however pious, or however intimate he is with heaven, can tell, as godly Jacob did, what shall be the particular lot of his descendants with respect to this world; but every parent who knows any thing of the ways of God upon his own soul, can tell *from the written word*, what shall be the final lot of all his descendants, in the last of all days, according as they may improve or misimprove the means of grace which they may enjoy. Every parent also, who has faithfully discharged his duty as the head of a family, must have a pretty accurate acquaintance with the characters and dispositions of all his children—and this knowledge ought in his last moments to be put to use, in the same manner in which we find godly Jacob used it. It is certainly also commendable, that young people be brought to the bed sides of aged dying saints. An opposite conduct we all know is the common practice of avowed infidels and the openly profane. And they have good reason for so doing. What will not bear

an examination, sound policy suggests ought to be concealed. Not so at the death beds of the saints. Though we are not to expect any thing like the spirit of inspiration, yet it is a certain fact, that generally speaking, those who have lived in a state of intimacy with heaven, have a double portion of the divine presence, about the time they are breathing their last—and the testimony which they are thus enabled to give to God's goodness and faithfulness, may have a very deep and a very happy impression on those who see or hear them. **Again**

Let those among us who are young and entering into life, particularly remember, that godly men when they die, *are gathered to their people*. And what is the natural inference from this fact? Why it is certainly this, that if we would wish to be happy, we must be connected *with godly people on earth*. Never let us choose for our companions and intimates here, those with whom we would be ashamed to be seen on our death bed, or at the judgement seat, or with whom we would not wish to spend an eternity. A great many people may do to live with, with whom it would be very uncomfortable to die.

In fine—Let those who have had, or who still may enjoy godly parents, see from the passage before us, what a blessing we have enjoyed. *Thou art my God, and I will praise thee—thou art my father's God, and I will prepare thee an habitation. O Lord, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid*. We reckon him a fool and a madman who wantonly and carelessly throws away his father's earthly estate; but he is a far greater fool and madman, who wantonly throws away his *father's God*—a father's or a mother's prayers—a father's or a mother's exhortations and example, are a treasure of no small value. And if in the other world there is any one class of gospel despisers punished more severely than another, it

must be that class which has set at nought their prayers, and admonitions and examples. "Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law. For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. He taught me also, and said unto me, let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments and live. Get wisdom, get understanding; forget it not: neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. Wisdom is the principal thing: therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace; a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee. Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many."

---



---

## SERMON XVII.

THE MEANS OF GRACE SHALL ONE DAY CEASE.

*December 1808.*

Luke xvii. 22. *And he said unto his disciples, the days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the son of man, and ye shall not see it.*

**T**HE present life is nothing else than a life of changes. One day passes and another succeeds. The infant soon becomes a boy—the boy soon becomes a man—the man is soon oppressed with years and sinks into the dust. A few months ago all was in the glory

of vegetation; and the sun continued above the horizon till the strength of the labourer was exhausted. Now, the forests and the fields are bare—scarcely a vestige of vegetation is to be found, and by the time the labourer gets to his work, the day is well nigh gone.

By all these appearances and changes, the God of nature, and what is more, the God of grace, addresses us. We are part of this changing system. We have already almost insensibly undergone a great variety of changes, and these are nothing more than the earnest of changes still more important. Those of us who are in the prime of life, easily recollect the day when we were only children—the scenes which were familiar to us in the days of our youth, are still familiar in our minds. Frequently we open our eyes and look around us for those who were our companions in those agreeable days—but we look in vain. The greater part of them are already in the eternal world, and the few who are yet alive, are scattered into almost every part of the habitable globe. We are surprised to find that we have been thirty or forty years in existence, and yet when we set ourselves to bring to remembrance all the little changes in which we have been interested, the period which at the commencement of our reflections appeared only as yesterday, appears before we are done, as an age.

All these changes, as we have said, are intended for our instruction. As rational and immortal creatures, it becomes us not only to look back on that which is past, but also to look forward to that which is to come. Time past never returns; but an awful and never ending eternity is before us. To this unchangeable state we are all hastening, and to this will all the changes of life finally lead us. And when we have entered into this last and unchangeable state, reflection on our changes here will be sweet or bitter just in proportion.

as through grace we are enabled to improve our present opportunities.

That we may be stirred up suitably to improve our present opportunities of grace and salvation, it would be well for us frequently to bring to our recollection, that our enjoyment of them is at best but *short and uncertain*. These opportunities are things which belong to this life; they are therefore subject to the same changes to which all the things of this life are subject. They pass away, and after they are passed away, never return. "*The days*" saith our Lord, in the text, "*will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and (or but) ye shall not see it.*"

In leading your thoughts to this subject at the time, we shall

I. Make a few remarks on our supposed privileges. We are in the text supposed to enjoy days of the Son of Man.

II. Consider the import of the expression—*That the days will come, when we shall desire to see one of these days, and shall not see it.* The day being short, and the weather being severe, we shall not detain you long. It is likely also, that we may drop no observation but what you have all frequently heard made before. But we are waiting upon God in the use of the means of grace, and as this is among the last opportunities of the kind which we shall enjoy for this year, it may be that it is among the last we shall ever enjoy. Perhaps God, in whose hand is our life and death, is saying to some of us in a manner and with an emphasis never said before "*The day will come when ye shall desire to see one such a day of the Son of man—Short and cold, and common place observation as it is, but ye shall not see it.*"

By days of the Son of man, are evidently meant, *gospel days*—or days in which the offers of the gospel are enjoyed by guilty men. The Son of man came to

seek and to save that which is lost. God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. The means by which the Son of man seeks and saves lost men, are all the means of grace, viz. the reading and the preaching of the word—prayer public, and private, and secret—and the giving and the receiving of the seals of the covenant. We consequently enjoy days of the Son of man when we have an opportunity of waiting on God in the use of these means. More particularly,

1. Days of youth, may be said to be days of the Son of Man. Many are the distinguishing privileges of the young and tender mind. In youth, the mind is generally free from all worldly embarrassing cares. It has little occasion to have much anxiety about what it shall eat, or what it shall drink, or wherewithal it shall be clothed. The mind is also, during that period, remarkably susceptible of impressions, and the impressions which are then made are generally lasting. But above all, this is the period of life, to which the most encouraging declarations of the gospel are made. *I love them who love me, and they who seek me early SHALL FIND ME. Suffer the little children to come to me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God.* Hear then, and attend, young people of every description:—You now enjoy days of the Son of man—invaluable gospel offers—peculiar encouragements to embrace these offers—and opportunities to make improvement which will soon be out of your reach.

2. Days of health may be said to be days of the Son of man. Are you, brethren, in full vigour of body and in perfect soundness of mind? Do you scarcely know what it is to have an aching head or a sick heart? In being in this situation you enjoy days of the Son of man. You are certainly now in a capacity of attending to the things which belong to your peace, which would be taken away by a very small change in your

bodily constitution. For a moment turn your attention to sick beds and death beds. While the body is upon the rack, the mind is not usually much composed. Let us therefore be exhorted to work while it is called to-day; the night is fast approaching when no man can work. Sick beds and death beds bring enough of cares and anxieties along with them, even when the most important concerns of the soul have been previously secured.

3. The time of the strivings of God's spirit may be said to be days of the Son of man. Do you, brethren, ever feel any *remorse of conscience*, when you neglect to read God's word, or pray to him, or to attend upon public ordinances? Do you ever feel any thing within you which accuses you of negligence, of carnality, of hypocrisy in maintaining your religious profession? By these convictions, brethren, God is now striving with you. By these it is evident that if you shall in the end go down to the pit, you shall not go altogether unwarned.

But farther: Have you not frequently, in the ardour of devotion, made holy resolutions, henceforth to be more diligent and conscientious in living a life of faith? Does not your conscience tell you, that these resolutions are frequently forgotten about as soon as they are made? And is not your mind on that account filled with shame and confusion? By this it is evident that you are not as yet wholly given up of God—you are not as yet, *past feeling*. God, therefore, is still striving with you, however careless and hardened you may be.

In fine: Does not God frequently, in the course of his providence, very evidently keep you from falling into sin? Does he not at times make this or the other part of his word useful to you for conviction—or reproof—or direction? Does he not frequently warn and instruct you through parents—through preachers—through godly neighbours. Through all these

means he is still striving with you—through these he is saying, Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die! Hear and your souls shall live. And in these calls and invitations you enjoy days of the Son of man.

Thus much, then, for a short view of the privileges which, as gospel hearers, we are enjoying. We are enjoying *days of the Son of man*. To impress our minds with a sense of the value of these privileges, we may consider

1. That they are privileges which fallen angels, the nobler part of the creation, never enjoyed. Angels, the first born of heaven, sinned as well as men; but for them no Saviour was ever provided—to them no word of reconciliation was ever sent. *Verily he laid not hold of angels.* Let us consider

2. That multitudes, even of our fellow men, never enjoyed any such days. All are sinners—all are under the curse of the broken covenant of works. *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* But all, have not, as yet, heard of the method of recovery. Multitudes of our fellow men, and fellow sinners, have, in all ages, lived and died in the religion of darkness and shadow of death. Why this arrangement is made we cannot exactly tell. Two things, however, concerning it are self-evident; and these two are sufficient for our present purpose: the Judge of all the earth must do right; and, those who enjoy days of the Son of man, and yet despise them, shall be more severely punished than those who never enjoyed them. “Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre

and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee.”

Let us consider

3. That multitudes who once enjoyed such days, now enjoy them not. Where now are the multitudes who attended our Lord's personal ministrations? Where are the millions who attended the sermons of the apostles and first preachers of the gospel? Where are the greater part of our fathers and grandfathers? Nay, where are a goodly number of those who only four or five years ago, regularly worshipped with us every Sabbath? They are all gone into the eternal world—their day of grace is ended. Whether they are in a state of will or woe, they are eternally fixed.

It must also be observed, that the observation before us applies to *places* as well as *persons*. The highly favoured land of Judea, is now the abode of darkness and delusion. Not an accent of the joyful sound is now heard from those mountains, from the sides of which, an incarnate God preached to enraptured thousands. The once famous seven churches of Asia, are now in ruins—the candlestick has been long, with respect to them, removed out of its place. Rome and Italy, where Paul and Peter preached, have for ages been the seat of the beast. Many of the pulpits of Great-Britain and Ireland, which one hundred, or sixty, or fifty years ago, were filled with able and faithful divines, are now either empty or occupied by careless, erroneous, time-serving creatures. The Protestant church at Geneva, founded by the holy and rigid disciplinarian John Calvin, is now a congregation of dissolute unthinking mortals. Protestants of that

place still meet regularly in the church on Sabbath and other days—they have still prayers and sermons, and the holy communion; but according to late accounts, they have scarcely even with them so much as *the form of godliness*. A traveller, of veracity, who was present when they were assembled, declares, “that the audience made so much noise by talking and laughing, and such like, that he could scarcely hear a sentence from the pulpit; and that even when they were seated at the communion table, very little more decency was observed.”\* Verily it is a truth, that the human heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Nothing but the continued exertion of divine power, can preserve pure and undefiled religion.

It only remains, that we consider

The impact of the day's coming when we shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and shall not see it. The expression intimates

1. That however valuable the privilege is of seeing days of the Son of man, it is a privilege which is not always to be enjoyed. Others, as we have just seen, once enjoyed glorious days of the son of man, but do

\* Dr. Seiler of Erlange's German Literary Journal, for 1785, as quoted by Dr. Erskine of Edinburgh, in his Sketches of Modern Church History. Dr. Erskine's remark upon the fact stated above, is in these words: “So far as the translator knows, many of the clergy of Geneva, are men of distinguished abilities, amiable characters, excellent writers on the Deistical controversy and moral subjects; and though perhaps allied to some of the pretended German reformers in their Socinian and Arian tenets, yet no way tinctured with their scepticism and contempt of the Bible. Yet what a contrast betwixt Meiner's character of the people, and that given them by Bishop Burnet in his travels, letter from Zurich, 1685! May not this be owing to their opposing, or at least omitting in their sermons, those peculiar truths of the gospel, by faith in which the heart is purified”?

do not now enjoy them. We are to remember, that as it hath happened to others, so it may and shall happen to us. The means of grace are only enjoyed in the present state of existence. Human life is at best but short and uncertain, and when we pass out of this life, we pass into an unchangeable state—no more means of grace—no more calls or opportunities of repentance. We are also to remember, that the days of the Son of man may cease, with respect to us, even before our natural life ceases. A very small change in our temporal affairs, or in the temporal affairs of a few with whom we are connected in religious society, may take the public means of grace from us, or us away from them. In fine: we must remember, that even though the external means should be continued with us, the divine blessing may be withheld—Jehovah may cease to strive with us by these means—He may say, such and such a person is joined to his idols—let him alone—conscience let him alone—godly neighbours let him alone—give him no trouble—allow him to go on in the way of his own heart—let him be hewn by my prophets and slain by the words of my mouth. But woe! woe! be to that man or that woman from whom God thus departs.

2. The phrase before us intimates, that the persons who have thus lost the enjoyment of the days of the Son of man, *shall occasionally be filled with bitter anxiety and remorse.* The days will come when ye shall DESIRE to see ONE OF the days of the Son of man—only ONE—but ye shall not see it. The favour thus anxiously desired shall not be granted. What is said of ungodly Esau, is applicable to the present view of the subject. “*Ye know how that afterward when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.*” To the same purpose are those other words of the apostle: *If we sin wilfully after we*

*have received the knowledge of the truth, (or the means of knowing) there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.*

Ye careless unconcerned creatures, whether young or old, who now think little of Sabbath days and other opportunities of waiting on God in the means of grace, think on these divine declarations. There is a time coming when despised gospel offers, neglected opportunities and profaned Sabbaths, will appear precious indeed. The worth of a thing is frequently never known till its want is felt. So it happens with a very large number of gospel hearers, in their enjoyment of days of the Son of man. Oh! that you were now wise—that you understood this—that you would consider your latter end.

The practical improvement which we ought to make of the subject, is plain and easy to be understood.

Let us prize our present privileges. We now enjoy precious days of the Son of man. Large and free gospel offers. Jehovah is now rising early and sending his prophets. God is now exhibited to us as in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to them their trespasses. He is now saying, 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. Hearken unto me ye stout hearted that are far from righteousness: I bring near my righteousness.

Let us consider how grossly we have on many occasions abused our privileges. How many Sabbaths have we all enjoyed! How many sermons have we all heard! How many calls and invitations have we rejected. With some of us Jehovah hath been grieved more than forty years. How often have we preferred

Come near your maker

the indulging of a base lust, to communion with God in his own ordinances!

In fine: As we have done iniquity, let us resolve through grace to do so no more. Behold now is the accepted time! behold now is the day of salvation! To-day if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts. Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man will open the door, I will come in and sup with him and he with me. In return let each of us say: Behold O God, thy needy, hardened creatures. Circumcise our hearts to love thee. Pour out upon us the spirit of grace and supplication. Put thy fear into our hearts, and cause us to walk in thy commandments and do them. Enlarge thou our hearts, and then we will run in the ways of thy commandments.

---

## CONCLUSION.

**A**ND now my reader, whether you are man or woman, young or old, poor or rich, I am at this time done with you. Whether the preceding sermons are well or ill executed, they are ended; and in their ending you are reminded of the end of all things, and particularly of the ending of the means of grace. •

I am only a young man and a young preacher; yet a considerable number of those who were my companions at school and college, and who entered upon public life about the time I did, are already in the dust. All the preceding discourses (one only excepted) were prepared and delivered in the course of these three years last past; yet a good many of those who heard them from the pulpit, were gone to give their account before there were any proposal of preaching them again from the press. Nay, one or two friends who, about a year ago, were active in encouraging the pub-

lication, were in the eternal unchangeable world before it could be ascertained that they were to be printed. Behold we all stand on the brink of the grave. As dying men we preach to dying men. Some sermon will be the *last* which we will preach, or hear, or read. *The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart. Hear, O my people, and I will speak, O Israel, and I will testify against you, I am God even thy God.* Happy shall we be if these or similar divine declarations be the means of renewing us in the spirit of our minds. Miserable, thrice miserable shall we be, if after having spoken and heard, and read these again and again, we become only more careless and hardened.