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AZEL BACKUS.D.D.

*Late President of Hamilton College.*

# SERMONS

ON

## IMPORTANT SUBJECTS,

BY THE LATE

REV. AZEL BACKUS, S. T. D.

FIRST PRESIDENT OF HAMILTON COLLEGE.

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TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

A SKETCH OF

**THE LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.**

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UTICA:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY WILLIAM WILLIAMS,

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.....  
1824.

*Northern District of New-York, to wit:*

[L. S.] **BE IT REMEMBERED**, That on the fifteenth day of April, in the forty-eighth year of the independence of the United States of America, A. D. 1824, **WILLIAM WILLIAMS**, of the said District, has deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as proprietor, in the words following, to wit:

“Sermons on important subjects, by the late Rev. **AZEL BACKUS**, S. T. D. first President of Hamilton College. To which is prefixed a sketch of the life of the author.”

In conformity to the act of the Congress of the United States, entitled, “An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned;” and also, to the act entitled “An act supplementary to an act entitled ‘An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned,’ and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving and etching historical and other prints.”

**RICHARD R. LANSING**, *Clerk of the  
Northern District of New-York.*

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**NOTE.**

THIS brief notice of the life of Dr. BACKUS, was prepared soon after his death. The volume to which it is prefixed, was delayed by various causes. The writer has not had time to review it, and has now only added one or two notes. This will explain an apparent contradiction in the periods spoken of. It is committed to the friends of Dr. B. with the sincere wish that the honor of preserving his memory had been assigned to some one possessing more leisure and ability. It could not have been given to any one who cherishes it with more respect and affection.

*March, 1824.*

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SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF  
**REV. AZEL BACKUS, S. T. D.**

FIRST PRESIDENT OF HAMILTON COLLEGE.

THE attempt to perpetuate the remembrance of great and good men, is one of the most delightful efforts of the mind. The feeblest sketch of one rendered dear to science by splendid talents,—to friendship by the finest qualities of character, and to religion by exalted piety, is gratifying to the tenderest recollections of memory, and the sweetest emotions of affection. The anguish which we feel at the grave of a “much loved friend,” is soothed and alleviated, while the tearful eye traces the inscription which the hand of friendship has written on the sepulchre.

To cherish departed worth is one of the noblest privileges of the living. The voice of justice, though often lost in the noise and competition of life, is distinctly heard when it is uttered in the praise of those who have descended to the regions of death. Distance softens defects, while it improves whatever is bold, original and sublime; and we remember the excellences of departed worth, while we forget the blemishes that are attached to living character.

Time is just; and amid all the prejudices of mankind there is a prevailing desire to cherish and to honour the memory of departed genius and virtue.

Few men have enjoyed warmer friendships than Dr. BACKUS. His character was formed on the best model of ingenuous frankness and noble feeling. Yet his best friends have found, that the event which they can never cease to deplore, was necessary to teach them, the full

value of his distinguished worth. The deep and universal grief, that was caused by his death, is perhaps the best eulogium that merit can receive, or affection offer.

“*Illium fuit!*”

The *man* whom to know, was to love—the *preacher* whom to *bear*, was to admire,—the *Christian* whom to see, was to venerate, has gone; and has left a blank in the circle in which he moved, that nothing can supply. A star has set, never to rise in the hemisphere which it brightened; and nothing is left but its track of glory, which will fade only in the conflagration of the world.

He, who now attempts to sketch his history, while he shrinks from the responsibility which he assumes to literature and religion, has no claim to so high an honour, except that which is founded on his ardent affection for a kind instructor and a faithful friend.

The Rev. AZEL BACKUS was born in the town of Franklin, near the city of Norwich, Connecticut, on the 13th of October, A. D. 1765. His father died while his only child was in infancy, and left him to the care of his mother, who still survives one of the most dutiful and affectionate sons that ever rewarded parental solicitude with filial tenderness.

The death of the father was a great loss to his young son, and probably tended to strengthen, if not to create, some of his early opinions, which were hostile to morals and religion. He wanted those restraints which no hand but a father's can impose with benefit: his ardent spirit required that firm government, which a wise parent often tempers with indulgence, and always with love. His early years were marked with great licentiousness of opinion, and though he never was dissipated, he was destitute of all those principles and restraints which are the surest guards of integrity and virtue. He often contemplated this portion of his life with deep regret, and almost shud-

dered when he remembered the dangers he had encountered. But in the wildest moments of his youth, those traits of character were visible, which, afterwards, consecrated by divine grace, expanded into such distinguished excellence. The same warm affections which adorned his mature character, though then dissipated, still existed; and his subsequent life has shown, that their source was as abundant, as its character was rare. His companions were rude, ignorant and dissolute. To oppose religion was almost the first effort of his mind, and to hate the children of God the first emotion of his heart. At this time the spirit of vulgar infidelity had reached almost every village, and it was thought a proof of smartness and superiority, to abuse and traduce the gospel of the Son of God. Dr. BACKUS had too much talent, even then, not to be distinguished, and too much ardour not to be first in whatever he undertook.

His mind was deeply poisoned with infidel principles, and he often spoke of himself as a “wonder of grace”—“a brand plucked from the burning.”

While engaged with his studies preparatory to his admission into College, he began to have intimate intercourse with his venerable uncle, the late Rev. Dr. CHARLES BACKUS, of Somers; a very judicious friend, who soon won the affections and confidence of his nephew. The influence which he acquired, he faithfully employed to promote the spiritual and eternal welfare of his young kinsman. He persuaded him to examine the evidences of the genuineness and authenticity of the Gospel. He met all his objections with patience and tenderness, as well as with ability, and disarmed him by kindness, as well as by truth. His exertions to save him from the ruin which threatened him, were successful. His mind became deeply impressed by the truths which were explained by his venerable relative: The Infidel was arrested in his course—and the pre-

sumptuous confidence, of indifference and unbelief, was exchanged for doubt and dread. He began not only to suspect the soundness of his principles, but to tremble at his danger. The arrow was fastened in his heart—the light of conviction shone from above, and the persecutor and blasphemer fell to the earth, exclaiming in agony, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”

For some time his distress was dreadful. He saw that he was a lost and ruined creature, “without hope and without God in the world.” He felt himself to be utterly depraved; impotent though sinful, and dependent though a rebel. In the gloom of despair a ray appeared—it directed him to Jesus the friend of sinners. Guided by the Spirit, he bowed in humble submission to the sovereignty of the God he had denied, fleeing for refuge to the blood of the Lamb, and finding his hope and salvation in the “Lord his righteousness.” His peace in believing was like the calm that succeeds the storm: his hope strengthened; his evidence increased with the progress of his sanctification. Religion improved his understanding, while it softened and subdued his heart. He was sometimes troubled with doubts respecting his personal interest in the Saviour, but never with regard to the necessity and efficacy of His blood, and the divinity and perfection of his person and his gospel. He always entertained a deep and practical sense of own his unworthiness, and amid all the varieties of his life, he was, in its best acceptance, an humble and penitent Christian.

After having pursued his preparatory studies with faithfulness and success, he was regularly admitted a member of Yale College. At this early age he read the Latin and Greek classics with uncommon accuracy, and with great pleasure to himself. Although he commenced his collegiate course at a period when classical literature was becoming unfashionable, and even scholars began to fear, that

too much attention had been devoted to the study of the languages, he persevered in reading them; prompted more by his own good taste, than encouraged by the opinions of the instructors of the day.

It is a subject of congratulation among the friends of the true interests of science and literature, that the efforts to banish the Latin and Greek classicks from our Universities, have been succeeded by wise and judicious exertions, to make them the subjects of more minute and extensive study.

An intimate knowledge of the classicks, is the key to whatever is venerable in history, delightful in science, or profound in learning. Neither the poet, nor the orator, nor the divine, can be eminent without them. No other information can compensate for their loss. And although there are many distinguished men in all the professions, who have not enjoyed the knowledge of them, even this fact does not weaken the truth of our position.

It proves, indeed, that their eminence is highly creditable to the vigour of their minds, and to their unwearied diligence. What is now creditable in their attainments, would have been more so, if they had enjoyed a higher privilege of education, the loss of which they must always feel, and often deplore.

When in college, Dr. BACKUS read Homer, Horace, and Virgil, with so much accuracy, and retained in his translations, so much of the spirit of these fathers of poetry, that many gentlemen attended the examination of his class, for the pleasure of witnessing his singular attainments.

His thirst after knowledge was insatiable, and often led him to a dessultory mode of reading which better instruction would have prevented. His learning thro' life, though diversified and extensive, resembled an Encyclopedia, rather than a well selected library, upon the various subjects of literature and science.

He had a genuine taste for Belles-Lettres, and had he pursued the study of them with vigour, he would have been one of the most accomplished writers that our country has produced. His imagination was sportive, and uncommonly chaste; producing the sweetest combinations that tenderness ever forms, and exhibiting some of the boldest specimens of intellectual vigour and beauty, that genius ever displays.

He stood in the first rank in his class, and received his degree with a reputation seldom attained at his age. Those who predicted his future eminence were not disappointed, and though opinions formed of young men in college, are often premature and unsound, *he* justified the favourable impressions entertained of his youth, and gratified the fondest wishes of his friends.

The termination of his collegiate course was an interesting era in his life. His patrimony had been exhausted in obtaining his education, and he had already been indebted to the benevolence of friends for some portion of his support. With few friends, and no pecuniary resources, he experienced all those forlorn and uncomfortable feelings, which successfully intrude themselves at this period of a student's life, and which neither its buoyancy nor its hopes can effectually resist.

He had not yet selected his profession: He shrunk, under a sense of his unworthiness, from the ministry; he felt himself shut out from this occupation, because he thought that his natural cheerfulness would not yield to the gravity and the discipline which the station required. He knew himself too well, to suppose that he could assume manners which his feelings did not dictate; and he was too unpractised and too frank to attempt it. He had no taste for other professions; and while balancing between his fears and his desires,—while attempting to discriminate between duty and inclination, his mind became

wrought up almost to frenzy, and he suddenly resolved to abandon all literary pursuits, and to enter the army. While he was actually preparing to accomplish his purpose, and the very night before he was to sail for a southern fort, where he intended to serve, his uncle arrived at New-Haven. He was a kind of guardian angel, and more than once had been the cause of saving his kinsman from ruin. The night was spent by the uncle and nephew upon the common, and the result of this providential interview was, an entire change of purpose in the latter, and a resolution to commence the study of Divinity, and to devote his life to the work of the ministry.

Dr. CHARLES BACKUS was not only a learned divine and a faithful minister, but an accomplished gentleman, and a judicious, sincere, and valuable friend. His name is held in "blest remembrance" in Connecticut, and he has been deservedly ranked among the most distinguished of its excellent clergy.

He was very happy in the influence he had obtained over his nephew. Wise, affectionate, and courteous, perhaps no other man could so well have guided the ardour, restrained the impetuosity, and directed for usefulness and honour the talents of his nephew. He exercised the authority of a parent with all its gentleness, and mingled with the tenderness of a friend the sanctity of an apostle. President BACKUS never spake of him but with the greatest veneration and affection. He cherished his memory with filial gratitude, and acknowledged with deep emotion, the obligation which he owed to his kindness and judicious advice.

One of his first occupations after he left college, was to take the charge of the grammar school in Wethersfield. The inhabitants of this town had paid great attention to education, and had been much distinguished for

maintaining schools of great reputation. He was associated with his accomplished friend and classmate, J. H. LOTHROP, Esq. and in the division of the school which now took place, the care of the young gentlemen devolved on Dr. BACKUS. It is no disparagement to the excellent schools of the present day, to observe, that none of them excel, if any of them equal those that were under the instruction of these gentlemen. The very superior talents of Dr. BACKUS, as an instructor, were here developed, and he pursued his business, with the wisdom, vigour, and success, that distinguished him to the close of life. While in this town, he laid the foundation of many valuable friendships, which he ever cherished with affection. Here he married his wife, and commenced the participation of that domestic happiness, which was perfect and uninterrupted as man ever enjoys.

He began to preach in A. D. 1789, and was licensed by the TOLLAND ASSOCIATION, of which his uncle was a distinguished member.

Soon after his licensure, he was invited to preach to a congregation in the town of Bethlem, (Conn.) where a vacancy had recently occurred by the death of the venerable Dr. Bellamy. The unanimous call, which he afterwards received, to take the charge of this church, was a compliment to the discernment of its members, and to the worth and talents of Dr. BACKUS. A young man encounters many difficulties and discouragements, who succeeds such a minister as Dr. Bellamy—who had been settled almost half a century, and whose talents had commanded the respect, and whose virtues had secured the affections of his people. His manners were venerable and commanding. Habit had made him necessary to his people. He was approached with reverence, and his opinions possessed an influence almost irresistible. His talents were of a popular cast. He was a rapid vehe-

ment, and eloquent speaker. His compositions have much of the "careless vigour" of genius, and his eloquence was that of one, who, feeling the "essential glory of truth," was indifferent about its ornaments.

Dr. BACKUS, by a course of prudent exertion, prayerful application, and faithful attention to his duty, soon won the affections of his people, and fully supplied the place of his predecessor. He succeeded to his reputation and influence, as well as his station, and maintained his place to the close of his ministry. His talents and character could not fail to command respect. Amid all the violence of party feeling—all the conflicting interests of opinion, he retained to the last, and almost without an exception, the friendship and esteem of his flock.

He was a faithful and exemplary *Pastor*. The glory of his Master in the salvation of sinners, in the edification and steadfastness of saints, was the object nearest his heart, and to which he devoted the whole vigour of his powerful mind. It is not known that there was any general revival of religion in Bethlem during his ministry; but there were many witnesses of the presence and blessing of the Holy Spirit—many monuments of divine grace—many proofs of his fidelity. That congregation enjoyed several seasons of refreshings from the presence of the Lord, and many were added to the visible kingdom of the Redeemer.

The intercourse between Dr. BACKUS and the people of his charge, was candid and affectionate. He was always a welcome guest; he seldom left a family without doing them good, and never without bestowing his counsel and blessing.

Although his visits were not frequent, yet he was very attentive to the sick and dying, and those who required particular notice. He has seldom been excelled as a guide to the inquiring soul, an instructor to the awakened,

and a comforter to the sorrowful. His own experience, made him solicitous to relieve, and earnest to teach; and it caused him to diffuse such tenderness in his manners towards the broken-hearted, as to win their confidence, and secure their respect. A minister who has not felt the pangs of conviction and the joys of pardon, is a "Physician of no value." However amiable, or learned in other respects, he is here a "*blind teacher.*" Dr. BACKUS was a "son of consolation," a "wise steward;" but he knew how to combine the softest affection with the plainest faithfulness. His manner at other times almost approached bluntness. He was sometimes *severe* when he reprov'd vice, and often sarcastic when he attacked folly; but whether he wept or censured—whether folly was covered with blushes at his ridicule, or vice trembled beneath the lash of his satire, his single object was to improve and reclaim; and it is believed that he never felt himself obliged to inflict pain, when he was not himself the greatest sufferer. His ardent feelings sometimes kindled into anger, but it was always a spark that was quenched in the tear of tenderness and love.

The very fact, that he preserved with such uninterrupted constancy the affections of his people, is in itself a volume of praise. He was as far from being a sycophant, as can be imagined. He neither trembled before the applause of popular favour, nor did he bend before the fury of popular indignation: he was too honest to love the one, or fear the other, and he defied both. His confidence was in the God of Elisha, and though surrounded, he was unmoved. Whether he was beset with spies, or stood accused at the bar of his country, he was the same dauntless christian, and he would have become a martyr, before he would have yielded a truth to the favor, or a duty to the power of man. His independence of spirit was never subdued, though it was often assailed.

with her address to a public assembly  
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As a *Preacher*, he was sound, original, and uncommonly attractive and entertaining. His manner was often fascinating. He seemed to accomplish every object of eloquence, without exercising any rule of the art; and it is as impossible to criticise, as to imitate him. His manner was his own, natural and affectionate; his heart flowed from his lips like water; his matter and his manner both shewed that he felt what he uttered; and he forgot himself, in the solemnity of his subject, and in his solicitude for his audience. The genuine pathos of his manner can never be forgotten by those who witnessed it, while they will scarcely hope to see it revived.

As to the sermons now presented to the public, we have little to say. They were never written with the remotest view to publication. From the very active life of Dr. BACKUS, from the varied and extensive duties that devolved upon him, it was a thing of course, to compose his sermons in haste. He ministered to a plain congregation of sensible farmers, in an obscure village.

It was not an object of study to produce refined and polished composition; he rather sought great plainness of speech. Yet, it is believed, that these sermons will be found rich in instruction, and highly beneficial in their influence. If, however, they should disappoint the expectation which his distinguished character has excited, that the severity of criticism may be softened, let it be remembered, that he was very modest in his own opinion of his sermons; and I am sure he never would have had sufficient confidence in them, to offer them to the world. His friends have judged with more wisdom upon this point than he would have done, and the public is indebted to their discernment for sending them to the press.

It is not believed that any effort from Dr. BACKUS'S *pen* would do justice to the *living preacher*. His eloquence was that of excitement and feeling, and it often happened that

*the powers that then were, the first time he was present in his school, he commenced at once to preach.*

his written notes served but as hints, when in the act of preaching. It will not be difficult to believe, that a man constituted like Dr. BACKUS, with the warmest affections and sensibilities, would make some of his happiest efforts, in the animation of debate, and in the ardour of address. His powers of reasoning were of a high order, and he employed them with great skill; but he shone in earnest addresses, which were prompted by a sense of duty, and a love of the happiness of his fellow men.

Here he forgot *himself*: he remembered nothing but that he was a "dying man," honoured as an ambassador of God; and he spake under the full conviction, that he was addressing "dying men." He was solemn and earnest, because he felt the imperishable and inexpressible value of the soul. He was animated, for he had tasted that the Lord is gracious, and was himself a "brand plucked from the burning." He was interesting and eloquent, for his exquisite feelings were united to real genius, to prudent zeal, and to entire devotion to his Master's work. His printed sermons, more than those of almost any other man, will suffer in the loss of that pathos of manner, and that tone of feeling, which animated every sentiment and expression in their delivery. They will want that seducing sweetness, that characterized the living teacher, and that melting tenderness, that animated his benevolent soul.

But how shall we speak of him as a *Man*? He was a true friend. His noble feelings were above the little "envies and jealousies," that so often destroy confidence and affection. His heart, full of tenderness and sensibility, was one upon which his friends reposed with confidence and love. It was sound to its core. Those who knew him, courted his society, and enjoyed it without weariness. Every where original, he was guileless as a child. His knowledge of human nature was practical and profound—yet he seemed to be untouched by the

corruption which he saw, and untainted by the diseases to which he ministered. He measured depravity without touching it, and though he took the length of its mountain shadow, it never hid him from the sun. He was an excellent judge of character, but his discernment was mingled with great candour, liberality and kindness. He never hesitated to retrace his errors. If from any circumstances he had done injustice to the rights and feelings of others, he was not only open to conviction, but he repaired his fault with a generous frankness, as honorable to *himself* as it was grateful to the *injured*. Ardent feelings often bring their possessor into collisions. This is the misfortune of some of our best characteristics. When they are united to principle, they carry their own antidote, and improve the character they threatened to destroy.

Dr. BACKUS was a man of great wit and humour. His mind sometimes formed very happy and brilliant associations. He saw clearly, and marked strongly. He noticed little things, and recalled them with ease. There was a great variety of imagery that decorated and illustrated all his thoughts and all his expressions.

We have frequently spoken of his great *sensibility*. It was very remarkable in every thing connected with him. His feelings were powerful, and easily excited; in the delivery of his sermons, they almost impeded his progress. At the communion table, when speaking of the love of Christ to sinful men, he has been so much overcome, as to be obliged to sit down and cover his face. The want of power to restrain his tears, often produced much mortification to himself, especially when he was preaching to a congregation who did not know him. He once stopped in the midst of a very interesting sermon, which he was delivering in Albany, to apologize for his emotion. After speaking of his "weakness," he begged the audience "*not to think any better of him for weeping, for*" said he, "*there is no religion in it.*"

His feelings were ardent, and sometimes impetuous; but for the most part they were well disciplined. He did every thing with all his heart. He loved his God, his country, and his friends, with a fervour that could not be mistaken. His whole life furnishes proof of this assertion. He remembered his native town with romantic attachment. In a letter before me, to his friend and kinsman, John F. Watson, Esq. whom he loved and esteemed, and to whom he wrote many familiar and excellent letters, he says:—  
 “My brother —— is settled at ——, and I hope he will do well. The vellum of pedigree will not feed children in New-England. Many who have ‘*coats of arms*,’ through idleness and dissipation have no *arms* to their *coats*.”

“My mother, I intend to visit soon, and hear the tales of ‘other times,’ and to call at the house and farm once my father’s and mine, but now in other hands, as I exchanged it for an education in Yale College. I will see the hillock that covers the ashes of my father, and experience ‘the pleasures and the pains of memory.’ I have often spent half a day alone, in all the luxury of thought, at this *cidevant* home in Franklin. Here stood the venerable trees under which I sported;—yonder bubbles the spring at which I drank, and there blooms the orchards in which I gambolled in all the glee of childhood. Yonder forest-topped hill is the place, where our negro told me, fairies, witches and wizards resided. No remnant of the Druids could to me be more venerable. South is the mountain, beyond which my mother told me was the West Indies, where my father, and uncle John Fanning were gone. A Mussulman goes not with more reverence to Mecca, or a Catholic to Loretto, than I visit Franklin.”

Perhaps Dr. BACKUS has left nothing that is more descriptive of his peculiarities, than his letters to his friends. They are portraits, that none who knew him can mistake, but still they are portraits which none but friends should be suffered to see. They were written in moments of

relaxation, and though full of genius and wit, they are designed for the confidence of love, and a stranger ought not to behold them. There are many characteristic anecdotes of Dr. BACKUS, which shew the peculiarities of his mind, but we do not choose to preserve them in this place. If his friends regret our determination, we have only to state as our apology, the conviction, that the memory of great and good men, ought to be preserved on a more durable monument, than the fading and perishing records of repartee and wit. Most of the happiest sayings of such men had better be forgotten; for they usually lessen our respect, in proportion to the amusement which they afford.

If we judge of Dr. BACKUS, by the number and respectability of his personal friends, we shall be obliged to draw conclusions highly honorable to him. He never lost a friend; he was in habits of intimacy with the greatest and best men in Connecticut. The late venerable Gov. Wolcott was his early and constant friend. By him he was appointed to preach the Annual Election Sermon in 1798. He was one of the youngest men that ever enjoyed this distinguished honor, and he acquitted himself, in a manner that would have done credit to the oldest divine that ever performed that service. The sermon preached on this occasion, in point of ingenuity and ability, ranks with the very best ever published in this country. It is the most finished piece of composition we have ever seen from his pen. It was twice re-published in Europe. He also preached and published the funeral sermon of Gov. Wolcott, in 1799, and mingled his tears with those of the whole state, upon the sepulchre of one of its wisest and best magistrates.

Dr. BACKUS was much beloved by his brethren, and enjoyed the confidence of the churches to a very extensive degree. His whole life proved how wisely this confidence was placed. He was often called in councils, and his wise, judicious advice was frequently followed,

with the most beneficial results; his talents in this respect were exerted with unwearied diligence. He took a deep interest in the ecclesiastical affairs of Connecticut, and entered with zeal into all the measures which were adopted to promote the true interests of morality and religion. To perfect the discipline of the church, improve the morals of the community, and extend the blessings of the gospel, were objects that employed his constant attention, and commanded his most vigorous exertions. He was frequently an active and influential member of the General Association. In 1803 he reported an address to the churches, which was adopted at New-London. His associates on the committee, in preparing this address, were the late Mr. Hooker, then of Goshen, and Dr. Porter, then of Washington, now professor in the Theological Seminary at Andover.

Dr. BACKUS was a member of the Moral Society, and was one of the most zealous founders of the Connecticut Bible Society. He was elected Vice-President at its organization, and continued in office until he left the state.

At the session of the General Association in June 1803, he was chosen moderator. This meeting was uncommonly interesting. The session was opened with a masterly sermon, and followed by two others of uncommon merit, by the delegates of the General Assembly. The religious intelligence which was then obtained from every part of the state, was of the most animating character. There was an unusual solemnity upon the hearts of christians, and it was resolved to meet in the church, at six o'clock in the morning, for the purpose of prayer and praise. On one of these occasions, when the house was thronged, after singing an animating hymn, Dr BACKUS led in prayer. No one present will ever forget that meeting, or that prayer. The whole scene had taken the deepest hold upon his feelings, and roused the whole fervour of his soul. There were many circumstances that united

to heighten the interest which he felt. The church was erected on the spot, where formerly stood a *fort* that had been captured by the Indians. Afterwards a *church* had been built, in which Gov. Saltonstall had ministered, previous to his election as Chief Magistrate of the state. That *church* was afterwards burned, during the revolutionary war, by Benedict Arnold. The pilgrim sufferers, the fathers of the church and state, seemed to pass before him, praying, teaching and bleeding. Here their supplications had ascended; here their tears had flowed; and here their blood had been spilled. Their lives had been sacrificed upon the spot where he stood in peace, and their groans had been heard, where now the morning incense was rising. Upon such a mind, bright with intelligence—upon such a heart, melting with tenderness, the facts which the place recalled, made impressions of the deepest interest. The contrast of the past with the present, had its full effect; he seemed to be inspired. Never was there a finer specimen of the eloquence of feeling and of tears. His emotion was controlled no farther than to permit him to proceed. The whole assembly was moved, and there was scarce an eye that did not flow with his. It is impossible to convey an adequate idea of the scene; those who were present, will seldom think of it without emotion, and all who remember it, will confess, that the exhibition of his talents and feelings, on that occasion, was proof of genius and power, that are seldom equalled, and never exceeded.

During this year he received the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity.

Dr. BACKUS was a warm friend to all the religious and political institutions of Connecticut. The longer he lived, the more he admired the wisdom and piety of the venerable settlers of his native state. The institutions of Connecticut were formed on the purest model of virtue. The government combined great simplicity with vigour, and

great liberality with true devotion to public happiness. No people ever enjoyed more liberty, with such complete security, or more of true felicity, with less of ostentation and parade.

To make men better, wiser, and happier, for time and eternity, was the benevolent object, which induced the pilgrims to turn the wilderness into a fruitful field. Our fathers left a legacy to their children, whose worth no skill can compute; and their prayers were fervent, that their posterity might never be taught their value by their loss. The men who established the schools, the courts and the churches of Connecticut, were patriots of that stamp, who preferred public morals and felicity, to their own aggrandizement; and their wisdom, whose memorial is written on some of the most interesting institutions that are to be found in the world, was combined with benevolence of the purest character. Dr. BACKUS loved his native state with true ardour, and would never wound the bosom upon which he had rested with safety. He was convinced that the government of Connecticut secured the entire freedom and independence of its subjects. The habits of the people were formed by the best public instruction, beautifully illustrated, in the lives and examples of their teachers, and were reared on the *broad basis of holy principle and patriotism*. Connecticut was the land of Christians and patriots. Her plains were tilled by hardy *freemen*. Her temples of worship, with her schools, every where rose to view, and her rocks echoed the songs of peace.

That he should have felt much, and acted zealously, to defend and perpetuate her blessings, was to be expected from a mind as enlightened and benevolent as his.

He came into life in one of the most interesting periods of the history of the world. Civil liberty had been steadily progressing in Europe; subjects had been better informed of their rights; and new vigour had been given to the desire which instinctively seeks emancipation. Indeed,

“knowledge,” which Burke says, “establishes liberty where it is, creates it where it is not,” was more generally diffused than at any former period. Our fathers had fled from religious and political tyranny, to enjoy virtuous \*liberty and the rights of conscience in the New World. They were honest and wise men; and they secured their objects, in a way that must forever entitle them to the admiration of the world. Their coolness, liberality and firmness, were wonderful; and the sneers with which their memory has sometimes been treated, is a proof only of the ignorance and folly of their calumniators. Dr. BACKUS was educated in the revolution, which produced some of the best men that history preserves, and which placed the United States upon the catalogue of nations. Young as he then was, he contemplated the grand object which inspired his countrymen, and he risked his life, in defending the liberty and establishing the independence of his country: and he performed severe garrison duty at a time of her threatened invasion.

During his whole life, he was deeply interested in the public happiness, and perhaps all the enemies he ever had, were made by that circumstance.

At this day, when the fervour of party passions have so much subsided, and almost all their animosities have disappeared, it is believed that it will not be considered im-

\* It is admitted that our Puritan ancestors were less concerned to gain civil liberty, than to enjoy religious freedom. Perhaps they would have never resisted the dominion of the Government, cruel and unjust as it was, if it had not been connected with the most odious attempts to controul conscience. The Puritans who fled from England to settle this new world, were principally impelled to make their sacrifices, from an enlightened view of their duty. They might have suffered in silence, if they had not been constrained to resist the usurpations of the Hierarchy, from a holy fear of God. New-England is the only spot on the face of the earth, that was settled by those whose great motive was, to enjoy religious privileges; and this too, without any expectation of gain, and with the certain loss of almost every worldly good. The children of the Puritans may challenge their calumniators, to produce from the history of man, a parallel to the firmness and magnanimity of their fathers. The simple story of their intrepidity, their perseverance, and their fortitude is admirable, unexampled, and sublime.

proper, to dwell for a moment on that part of Dr. BACKUS' character which was so prominent. Faithfulness to his memory requires, that it should be defended from an aspersion, which, in its broad and unqualified statement, is equally injurious and untrue. During his residence in Connecticut, there was an intimate relation between the general policy of the state, and the morals, learning, piety, and happiness of the community. There was little in office to excite a spirit of covetousness, or inflame a passion for power. The very honour attached to public stations, was derived wholly from the integrity of the people. The sun never shone upon a community, where the truth was more manifest, than when the people are corrupt, "the post of honour is a private station."

From the nature of things it was impossible to separate the church from the state, without destroying both, unless the whole government should be reorganized.

The object of the government was to promote the interest of religion and learning. Some of the earliest, the most liberal, the most important founders of the New-England colonies, were clergymen. In its infancy there were very few men of liberal education, that did not minister at the altar. The government absolutely required their aid, and it was rendered not because these good men sought for power and distinction, but because their services were indispensable. Of the Puritans of New-England, it may be said with truth, as it was of the children of Israel, "Thou leddest forth thy flock as a shepherd, by the hands of Moses and Aaron."

The influence of the clergy in this state of things was very great, and it was of the highest importance. It was exerted solely for the glory of the Lord, and the salvation of man. It was as pure, as wise, and as disinterested an influence, as was ever employed.

Good men may differ in opinion about the propriety of giving the clergy *any* influence upon political subjects; but

it could not be avoided in Connecticut, at that time. The fact is, that the settlement of New-England was effected by clergymen. They gave up their country, their estates, their friends, and submitted to the greatest privations and sufferings to plant the seeds of learning and religion, whose abundant harvest their favoured posterity have reaped. In all the institutions of that country, the labours, wisdom and self-denial of the clergy are every where prominent. They were the friends and supporters of the very institutions that are now the glory of New-England. They established and fostered the colleges,\* schools and churches.

\*We have no intention to exaggerate the merits of the parochial clergy of New-England. We believe they were among the most useful, patriotic, and pious men, that God ever raised up to bless mankind. If diligent study, honourable acquisitions, unwearied labour, and exemplary self-denial,—if wise, vigorous, and successful efforts, to establish the liberties, promote the learning, and secure the salvation of men, be worthy of the highest admiration and gratitude, then we need fear nothing while we speak of them, but our want of ability to do them justice. No one who is acquainted with the true history of Connecticut, is surprised at the extensive influence which the clergy formerly possessed. That history enrols clergymen among her best CIVILIANS, her wisest JUDGES, and her greatest GOVERNORS.

The Rev. Mr. Saltonstall was elected Governor, while zealously discharging the duties of a parochial minister. He went from the pulpit to the chair of state; and held his seat, with honour to himself, and with great usefulness to his constituents, for almost twenty years.

The former Governor Trumbull, with whose honoured name, and precious memory, are associated the whole history of the toils and sufferings, the courage and success of the Revolution, was a preacher of the "Gospel of the grace of God." He began, soon after he had finished his education at Harvard College, to discharge the duties of a minister. He was one of the most important individuals,—one of the most firm and efficient magistrates,—one of the very wisest counsellors, that was in this country during the struggle for its independence. His abilities and wisdom have not been celebrated by our historians, with the grateful and honourable regard, which they so justly deserve. Under his administration,—during the darkest period of the war,—Connecticut was always *on her post*; first in battle, and last to leave the field. She expended more blood and treasure in proportion to her extent than any state in the confederacy. The clergy, inspired by his example, devoted themselves, in every dutiful way, to advance the cause of their country. They built their altars in the camp, the fort, and the field; and the shout of battle was mingled with the voice of prayer. Governor Trumbull, supported by the example and supplications of the clergy,—followed by a people devoted to the service of justice and liberty, never relaxed his firmness—never shrunk nor

They were the early and constant friends of the Revolution. Had the clergy of New-England opposed the efforts for independence, we had still been colonists of Great Britain, and this bright jewel had continued to sparkle in the crown of royalty. While the altar of the sanctuary was wet with their tears, the altar of their country's liberty was cemented with their blood. Many of them not only defended the rights of man in the pulpit, but exerted themselves for their honour in the field of war. It was not to be expected that such a man as Dr. BACKUS, who loved his country with the affection of a child, should not have entered with zeal, into all these subjects that were connected with the purity of its principles, and the

wavered; but with wisdom that saw at a glance, the true point of policy and duty, he was able to unite, encourage and lead forward, a people, "whose first breath was the inspiration of liberty," and whose latest they resolved to devote to its service. He, and his brethren in the ministry; by their public instruction, their example, their property, and their prayers, did every thing that men could do, to animate and guide the people, to that towering height, where they planted the banner of freedom,—when they established the purest principles; and at the same *time* and on the same *spot*, they erected a monument to themselves, which records their eulogy, and will never be obliterated while truth endures—

"Those suns are set!  
Oh rise, some other such."

*Note.* Governor Trumbull was elected A. D. 1769, and he resigned in A. D. 1784. Before 1769, and while he was deputy Governor, he was Chief Judge of the Superior Court. Dr. Stiles, President of Yale College, in his election sermon, in 1783, while addressing his Excellency, has the following passages which may interest the reader.

"Endowed with a singular strength of mental powers, with a vivid and clear perception, with a penetrating and comprehensive judgment, embellished with the acquisition of *academical, theological, and political* erudition, your excellency became qualified for a very singular variety of usefulness in life. Instituted in the SCIENCES, the Hebrew LITERATURE, and THEOLOGY, you was not only prepared for the SANCTUARY, but being "*expert in all questions touching the law of your God*, you became qualified to judge, how we, the ministers of the gospel, under your government, *ought to behave ourselves in the house of God*," while it has pleased God to call you up to other service in civil life. Thus the great MELCHIZEDEC was "*PRIEST of the most high God, and KING of SALEM*." So Moses though of the *tribe of LEVI*, and "*learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians*," was called of God to be King of Jeshurum.

stability of its freedom. Now in the calm of party feelings, it is believed that men will not think less of him for the firm and decided manner in which he uniformly acted.

Upon this subject an unjust and important mistake had been cherished, not only by those who will not think, but by reflecting and wise men.

The influence of the clergy in Connecticut, resulted from the very nature of things. In all new communities it is a thing of course, to find various duties discharged by the same individual. Nothing but the progress of society will correct this evil. In a new country we find one man engaged in several branches of manufacture. In a more perfect state of the arts, several individuals will have distinct occupations in the forming of a pin. It is only in an

“An early entrance into civil improvement, and fifty years service of our country, with an uncommon activity and despatch of business, had familiarized the whole *rota* of duty, in every office and department, antecedent and preparatory to the GREAT GLORY of your Excellency's life—the last eight years' administration, at the head of this commonwealth; an administration which has rendered you “PATER PATRIA,” the Father of your Country, and our “*dulce decus atque tutamen.*”

*Dr. Stiles' Election Sermon, May, A. D. 1783.*

Gov. Trumbull died, Aug. 17, A. D. 1785.

The attention which the planters of the New-England colonies, and their immediate successors paid to the interests of learning, is one of the most remarkable and honorable portions of their history. Perhaps nothing has had a greater influence upon the character and prosperity of that portion of our country, and indirectly upon every other, than the wise, disinterested and persevering attention which our Fathers gave to this subject. Let it not be forgotten that so far as human agency was concerned, the three principal Colleges in New-England owe their origin to the labors and benefactions of clergymen. They not only projected them, but did much from their own property to endow them. We need not enter into particulars: those who are acquainted with the history of HARVARD, YALE, and DARTMOUTH, require no illustration of our position. In such a community, at such a period, and under such circumstances, is it a subject of wonder, that the Ministers of the Lord Jesus should have possessed great influence upon all questions relating to the welfare of the commonwealth? Do not their memories deserve to be cherished with respect? Their self-denial, their services in the cause of letters may be forgotten; their names may perish, or be treated with scorn; but the blessings flowing from their exertions, will exist, as long as their posterity remain in the earth.

advanced state of science and civilization, that we find that profection, which results from undivided attention to the *parts* that form the *complete whole*.

The evil of one profession interfering with another, corrects itself in this progress. In such a country as ours distinguished by intelligence, and inhabited by freemen, there is no danger from the influence of the clergy. They will be confined to their own proper sphere, by the very course of things. Able statesmen will occupy the places which they once held by necessity, and their political influence will every where decline in proportion to the general improvement. At last, they will have no influence beyond that which their merits deserve, and this will be destroyed only, when the community ceases to be composed of intelligent and honourable men.

In estimating our fathers, these considerations ought to have their influence. What was patriotic and wise in Dr. BACKUS, would be dangerous and foolish in his successors. And for this overwhelming reason, that circumstances have entirely changed.

Dr. BACKUS did not escape severe censure for his activity upon this subject. He once suffered by a long, vexatious suit, on account of a sermon which he preached to his people on a day of thanksgiving. Information was lodged against him, and a civil prosecution was commenced. He was rudely taken from his dwelling, and conducted to Hartford, in a manner that would have been unkind to a felon. He was indicted and arraigned, but suffered to return, upon enormous securities, which were promptly given by his friends. After several months of perplexing delay, the cause was finally dismissed without trial. It, however, exhausted almost the whole of his little property. It is no more than what is due to him and to truth, to state, that the information lodged against him was *false*. There is nothing in the sermon complained of, either to jus-

tify the charge, or apologize in the least, for the trouble, expense, or distress he endured.

One of the principal objects which engaged the attention of Dr. BACKUS, was, instructing youth in studies preparatory to their entering college. He commenced the arduous labour of teaching, immediately after he left New-Haven. He opened a select school in Bethlem soon after his ordination, and continued it with increasing reputation and uninterrupted success, until he left the state. He possessed several prominent qualifications for the discharge of this duty. He was an excellent scholar, and he taught the principles of things in a manner so clear, that boys could understand him, and profit by his instructions.

Perhaps no school, so extensive, ever retained so many family features. Most of his students boarded in his house, ate at his table, and knelt at his altar, and were treated as his children. He was always attentive to the health, happiness, and improvement of his pupils; he often mingled in their recreations, and encouraged them in all athletic and manly exercises. He did all in his power, both by precept and example, to give them vigorous constitutions, as well as able instructions. His school was extensively known, and parents from the remotest states, placed their children under his care. That he gave great satisfaction, is evident from the celebrity of his institution. He was obliged to refuse many applications for admission. He resolved not to have more pupils than he could personally instruct, yet he was sometimes under the necessity of employing an usher. This, however, was not his plan. He wished, and for the most part accomplished his desire, to have, himself, the entire instruction of his pupils.

One of the best evidences of his excellence as an instructor, may be found in the uniform and cordial affection of his pupils. It was impossible to know, and to dis-

like Dr. BACKUS. He made you love him. There was a magic about him in this respect, which put hatred and resentment at defiance. It would now be difficult to find, amid all the variety of characters that composed his Bethlem school, a single individual, who does not cherish his memory with filial affection. His feeling, noble heart, was above the little disingenuous finesse which so often disgusts young men. He loved his pupils, and he made it evident that he sought their happiness. He never treated them with severity because he was their master; when he rebuked them, it was because he was their friend. He was watchful of their morals, and was anxious for their salvation. He usually devoted an hour on Sunday evening, in explaining the Westminster Catechism, or a portion of Scripture previously selected for that purpose. The impressions made by these familiar lectures, can never be forgotten—they were highly beneficial.

On other occasions, he assembled his pupils to talk with them upon subjects connected with life and the world, and then discussed those interesting subjects which related to their future respectability and happiness, as members of the commonwealth. I have seen him more moved on those occasions than on any other. His whole heart was engaged; he sowed his seed with an unsparing hand, and watered it with his tears.

Dr. BACKUS did not aim at display; but whatever was sound, sensible, and wise, in important principles, he enforced with glowing fervour and eloquence.

In occupations like those we have mentioned, the favoured and peculiar parts of his character were conspicuous. The tenderness of his heart, and the resources of his mind, were displayed to great advantage. These were his summer seasons, when every thing was calm, fragrant and fruitful. No description can do justice to the benevolence and integrity of his character. We ac-

knowledge that he was impetuous,—that he felt so powerfully, as to be exposed to strong biases, and sometimes to prejudices: but there was a purity in his principles—something so palpable in his honesty—so uniform and obvious, that those who value these qualities, could not avoid giving him their confidence. Many good men might have viewed the same subject with different impressions: but no man who knew him, could have suspected him of want of integrity or sincerity. His sensibility was not always under perfect discipline, and his feelings, in cases, of strong excitement, were not always chastized by his better judgment; but they were the excesses of a pure and guileless heart. No one ever blamed him so much as he blamed himself; and his faults were more painful to himself, than injurious to others. His constitutional ardour was the subject of continual watchfulness and prayer, and for the most part, was under the command of gracious affections, and holy fear. The mantle of charity, with which the failings of such men should be covered, is "*wove without seam.*" He who looks upon them with the eye of love, will find them connected with great efforts for their suppression—fervent prayer for their forgiveness, and sincere seeking that they may be overcome. Where constitutional feeling is so powerful, it is rather a subject of wonder that its faults are so *few*, than that they are so many.

"What's *done* we partly may compute,  
But know not what's resisted."

In the year 1811, he was elected President of Hamilton College. He was eminently qualified to take that station of interest and responsibility. This appointment filled him with solicitude, and he was slow and reluctant in accepting this distinguished honour. He had many strong ties to be broken, before he could leave a place, where his warmest affections had been long fixed. He had lived long

enough to value the blessings he enjoyed, and he felt that his location was peculiarly favorable to his happiness. He was tenderly attached to Connecticut, to his people, and to his brethren in the ministry.

After many tears and prayers, he accepted this appointment. Perhaps no minister ever removed from that state, more regretted. He was dismissed by the South Association of Litchfield, and the resolutions they passed at their meeting, afford strong testimony to the high estimation in which he was held.

From the moment he was informed of his appointment, until he was established in his office, he experienced great and various emotions. The separation from his people was extremely painful. The very soil of Connecticut was dear to him; his friends and brethren were united to his heart, by ties that wound round the very source of life, and were supported by affections as constant as its pulses. The sense of duty, and the desire to do good, were stronger than all. He counted all things loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. He soon commenced the duties of his new station with vigour, and found his situation eligible and delightful. He was associated with able instructors. Professor NORTON was at the head of the classical department. He was educated at Yale College, and received its honours in September, 1804, and was afterwards one of its Tutors. He was a fine scholar, and a most excellent and amiable man. He died in the midst of life, and the fairest prospects of great and continued usefulness, in the early part of 1819.

HAMILTON COLLEGE, which bears this name in honour of one of the most distinguished scholars of our country, is situated in the town of Paris, near the village of Clinton, in the flourishing and respectable county of Oneida. This interesting institution, which was the object of the hopes, and the subject of the prayers of the friends of learning and

piety, was established under the most favourable auspices. It had all the advantage of the patronage of an enterprising and enlightened people, and it shared the munificent bounty of the state. Its location was in the midst of an intelligent and liberal community, and it was reasonable to anticipate its future prosperity and usefulness.

Public expectation was much excited; and when the choice was made, and Dr. BACKUS was elected to preside over this infant institution, to establish its discipline, and give it reputation, it was not only satisfactory but gratifying to its most ardent and judicious friends.

How ably he discharged the duties of this station—how much he was respected—how deeply lamented, we well know. How much that institution is indebted to his self-denial, his talents and exertions, can hardly be sufficiently appreciated. He gave confidence to the hope, and stability to the patronage of the public. Every day increased its usefulness and reputation. No institution of the kind ever acquired so much character and importance in so short a time. His popularity as a preacher, his character as a scholar, and his wisdom and kindness in the government of youth, all conspired to win the confidence they deserved, and to satisfy the anticipations they created.

In the midst of his career of honour and usefulness, he was summoned to the grave. In December, 1817, he took the typhus fever from one of the Tutors, whom he had attended with the kindest solicitude. His disease, from the commencement, was violent; it soon became dangerous, and left him with scarce an interval of reason to the last. One of his brethren called upon him, and at his request, prayed with him; but before he had finished his supplications, his reason fled, and never returned.—Still his mind, in its wildest aberrations, was clinging to religion, and his favorite employment of preaching. A day or two before his death, (though he noticed nothing

around him,) he probably fancied himself in the pulpit; for he actually went through the usual exercises of public worship, praying audibly, with considerable connection; afterwards named a text, divided his subject, and thus apparently completed his purpose. How strongly his mind fastened on his duty, is evinced by the fact, that neither the pangs of disease, the phrenzy of fever, nor the struggle of death could call his thoughts from devotion to God, and labour for his fellow men.

In ordinary circumstances, the death-bed of such a man would have afforded much to interest and instruct his survivors. His Master arrested his instruction, and finished his example when death began his work. Had they been necessary they would not have been wanting.

We must look to his life for the evidence of his piety. Those who knew him have no doubt but that he has entered into "the joy of his Lord." Though religion often sheds its brightest evidence, and its sweetest comforts in the hour of death, it sometimes happens that the darkness of the valley, closes at once around the expiring saint, nor permits a ray of the glory into which he enters, to reflect back upon the world. In the one case, the timid are encouraged, in the other, the necessity of being "also ready," is powerfully enforced. Some linger, to instruct as from the threshold of eternity; and some sink into it without notice, to warn us to "watch unto prayer." Divine wisdom is conspicuous in both. "Precious in his eyes is the death of his saints."

He expired on the 9th of December, 1817, in the fifty-third year of his age. His funeral was attended by multitudes, who felt the loss that religion had sustained, in the bright example of one of its disciples, and learning, in the able instructions of one of its best friends. Dr. NOR-  
TON, of Clinton, preached the sermon, which, to the great regret of the public, has not been printed.

The Corporation of Hamilton College bore their testimony to his worth, and expressed their deep regret at his loss. They treated his family with liberal generosity.— They erected a handsome monument to his memory, which bears the following inscription, at once the proof of their taste, and a just tribute to his memory.

## FRONT.

H. S. E.

## AZEL BACKUS, S. T. D.

Vir pietate insignis, omni doctrina  
excultus, Evangelii minister  
fervidus et præclarus. Collegii  
Hamiltonensis fuit Præses;  
semper diligentissimus, et  
alumnis carissimus. In eo, summa  
in homines benevolentia, miseri-  
cordia, incorrupta fides,  
nudaque veritas. Conjux  
superstes dolet; filii et filia  
gemunt, et omnes, quibus  
vivens ille fuit notus,  
lugent et plorant.

## BACK.

Memoriæ Præsidis dilectissimi  
et venerandi, Curatores  
Collegii Hamiltonensis hoc  
Monumentum posuerunt.  
Ecclesiæ apud Bethlem,  
Conn. Pastor,  
annos xxii  
Coll. Ham. Præses  
iv.  
De vita decessit  
die Dec. duodetricessimæ,  
Anno Domini MDCCCXVI,  
Æt. LII.

Dr. BACKUS was a robust, athletic man; though corpulent, he was active and vigorous; he had a fine, sensible countenance, which is well shown in the annexed engraving. He was a most affectionate man in domestic life. His aged mother found a home in his family for many years, and received all the comfort that filial love could offer. As a parent, he was kind, indulgent, and always intimate with his children. He lost several before he came to this state. Four sons and a daughter survived him,—his honor and his crown. His second son, Mr. ALBERT BACKUS, has lately died in France. He left the country in the autumn of 1818, in the hope of improving his health; but he expired soon after he reached the shore. Of this lovely youth, we cannot speak without emotion. He died while in the bloom of life. He was the child of 'bright and early promise.' He was all a fond parent could ask; and his premature death, recalls with painful power the loss of his father. Though his grave is made in the land of strangers, we trust his spirit is united to the "saints in light."

The calamity of Dr. BACKUS' death was followed by the departure of the venerable Dr. STRONG, of Hartford, and the learned and excellent President DWIGHT, of Yale College. These three gentlemen were intimate friends, and died within a few weeks of each other. They were the ornaments of their profession, and important friends to every thing valuable to religion and science. Dr. Strong had lived to a good old age, and though deeply lamented, was still viewed as one of the fathers, who had been spared, to render all that life could give to the church.

Dr. Dwight had lived long; still the friends of piety and learning fondly hoped that his sun would continue to shed its brightness and blessings, and linger in its western skies. Such a man could never leave the world without exciting the deepest and most extensive distress. The

world has very few such men to lose! In private life, his character was as pure, lovely and unexceptionable as any ever sustained by man. His system of Divinity, already published, is the proof of his integrity, zeal and learning. As the first officer in the institution which can never cease to regret him, he did much good, that will benefit thousands who never knew him, and will be remembered when the President is forgotten. But the Preacher is immortal! His *Sermons* will be remembered, while the church endures. They will transmit his name with honor to the latest age. The christian temper, the christian zeal, the heavenly spirit which they display, afford assurance to the hope, that their author enjoys glory, honour and immortality at the source of truth, whose streams he explored,—at the fountain of holiness, to which he so constantly aspired.

Dr. BACKUS was in the prime and vigour of manhood. Years of effort and usefulness seemed to lay before him. In the ordinary course of nature, he might still live, to devote his acquirements, his experience and wisdom, to the cause of literature, and to the developement of truth. But God is independent of man, and will accomplish his purposes, though the “godly cease, and the faithful fail from among the children of men.”

In the death of such men society suffers;—distinguished for learning, patriotism and piety,—science, and the commonwealth and religion, are bereaved. May their pupils and spiritual children, their friends and admirers, imitate their example, as they bless their memory, and rejoice in their fame. While we follow them to heaven with our blessings, who that knew them will not utter the cry of the prophet—“MY FATHER, MY FATHER!—THE CHARIOTS OF ISRAEL, AND THE HORSEMEN THEREOF.”

which  
 inscription / p. 35 / which is correct &  
 death in Dec? 1816 which is correct &  
 makes the statement on p. 36 correct

# SERMON I.



II CORINTHIANS, X. CHAP. 4 VER.

*For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds.*



The Apostle Paul, and the other primitive christians, encountered many perils in their attempts to propagate the religion of Jesus Christ. The work in which they were engaged is called a *warfare*; and the means which they used for the advancement and defence of the gospel are stiled *weapons*. They did not assault the enemies of the cross with the arms of an earthly conqueror; nor did they give the least countenance to the attempts which have at any time been made, to compel discipleship by the sword. The Apostles disclaimed *carnal* or coercive means in the accomplishment of their designs; and besought men by the *meekness* and *gentleness* of Christ, to become obedient to the faith, which they preached. The measures they adopted to propagate their religion, were inadequate to the effects produced; and the success which attended their exertions cannot be accounted for, without granting that their

A

cause was approved by heaven, and was enabled to triumph in the world, by the power of divine grace. The means, which the Apostles employed, were *mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds*. The spirit of God rendered the appointed means efficacious, in converting sinners to Christ, in opposition to the malice, subtilty, and power of earth and hell.

The first propagation of christianity, taken and viewed in all its circumstances, has been justly considered as an argument of no small weight, in support of its divine original. To this subject your attention is now respectfully solicited.

To give the present argument its greatest force, we must confine ourselves to the early periods of the christian institution; when it existed in its purest form, and when it had no aid from the ruling powers of the world, but had to encounter bloody persecutions from their hands.

The genuineness and authenticity of the New Testament, are as well established as any facts in the history of mankind. It appears, that Jesus Christ had a number of followers, during the short period of his public ministry; and that after his death, his followers became numerous within a few years, not only in Judea, but in lesser Asia, Greece, Rome and other places.

It is not contended, that the mere success of any religion will prove its divinity; for this argument can be claimed by the followers of Mahomet, and the worshippers of idols. The successful attempts in propagating any religion, prove its divine original, only, when they contradict the maxims of human wisdom, and do not derive their energy from worldly power.

In discussing the subject before us, we are to consider the general state of the world, when christianity was first promulgated, together with the instruments and means, which were employed in its propagation.

At the time, when the Son of God made his appearance in the flesh, the Jews were in high expectation of a temporal prince, in the person of the Messiah; who would deliver them from the Roman yoke, and raise their nation to the summit of earthly glory. There was nothing in Jesus of Nazareth, which agreed with their worldly views, or flattered their ambition. He did not interfere with the claims of Cæsar; nor did he encourage the Jews, with even the smallest degree of hope, that they would realize the objects, on which their hearts were placed. The religion of that people generally consisted in a mere repetition of rites and ceremonies. The Jewish Scribes had long been in the habit of explaining away the spirit of the law, and of endeavouring to bring it down to meet the wishes of the thoughtless and the proud. They taught for doctrines the commandments of men, and set a much higher value on human traditions, than on the authority of Jehovah. From the popularity of the corrupt teachers of the Jews, at the time when the Messiah appeared, it is easy to determine the religious state of that people. The Scribes and the Pharisees, were the men who sat in Moses' seat, and guided the faith of the nation. Our Lord compared them to "whitened sepulchres, which indeed appear outwardly beautiful, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness." Next to the seat of the Pharisees, that of the Sadducees was the most numerous among the Jews, when Jesus was born. The Sadducees denied a future state of rewards and punishments, and the existence of angel or spirit. Real piety had become very rare among that people, who had so long enjoyed peculiar privileges from the hand of God; and vice and immorality had risen to an awful height, at the time when the holy Saviour became incarnate, and dwelt among men. His pure doctrines were offensive to the several sects among the Jews: and excited the scrutiny and provoked the opposition of them all.

When we advert to the state of the Gentiles, in the days of Christ and his Apostles, we find nothing to encourage the hope, that the gospel would find with them a welcome reception. Among the lower classes, the grossest idolatry reigned. The heathens worshipped their numerous deities with rites, which either bore in them marks of stupid folly, or gratified the loose or malignant passions of the human heart.

The learned among the Pagans were more numerous at the remarkable era before us, than they had been in any former period; and carried their improvements in the arts and sciences, to a much greater extent than their predecessors. With whatever contempt the philosophers looked upon the reigning superstition, they did not in general presume to disturb it; but by their own example, gave countenance to the religion, which was employed as a political engine, in the places where they lived. Even a Socrates, whose mind soared above all his cotemporaries, and probably above all the philosophers of pagan antiquity, in moral researches, sacrificed to Esculapius, after he had drank the poisonous bowl; to which punishment he was doomed for exposing the errors of polytheism. The heathen philosophers represented the deity in a light wholly unworthy of the supreme intelligent mind. In the age under consideration, they were as gross in their theology, and as sceptical in their belief, as in any former period. Many of them denied any state of existence beyond the present life; and encouraged sensual indulgencies as composing the highest happiness of man. Their language was, "*Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die.*" Those who admitted a future state, represented it in a light, which is inconsistent with man's intelligent moral nature, and the rectoral holiness of the Supreme Ruler and Judge. Their scheme of moral virtue reprobated humility and encouraged pride, and permitted man to take away his own life, when he judged his afflictions too heavy to be endured.

On a slight survey of the knowledge of the most enlightened of the heathens, it is manifest that the world *by wisdom knew not God*. The preaching of a crucified Savior was foolishness unto the learned Greeks, as well as a stumbling-block to the Jews.

I proceed to consider the instruments, that were first employed, in accomplishing the arduous work of converting mankind to the religion of Jesus Christ.

The followers of the Holy Saviour, while he abode on the earth, were chiefly composed of persons, who were obscure in their birth and rank, and destitute both of riches and learning. The men, whom Christ chose as members of his particular family, and to preach the gospel, were all of them native Jews, of low condition, and unacquainted with human science. Soon after the ascension, on the day of pentecost, they were miraculously endowed with the gift of tongues, which qualified them to preach the gospel, in the language of each nation, to which they were sent.

The Apostles were hated by their own countrymen, for departing from the common faith, and for embracing the religion of Jesus of Nazareth. To the Gentiles, they were obnoxious on account of their descent, and for inculcating doctrines, which aimed at the overthrow of the worship, which every where prevailed among idolaters. That the Gentiles would hold the Jews in contempt, can be determined from the exclusive claim, which the latter asserted, of the knowledge of the only living and true God, and the acceptable manner of approaching him. Sacred and profane history place the truth of this conclusion beyond all doubt. The Apostles were treated with scorn, by the learned and the unlearned, among the heathen, when they first preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection. Their doctrines seemed to them as idle tales, and were more odious than their lineage and descent; and

there was nothing, according to human calculation, which promised success to their undertaking.

Not long after the ascension, Saul of Tarsus, afterwards known by the name of Paul, was converted to christianity, and was the most successful instrument of its propagation, that has ever appeared. He was well acquainted with both Jewish and Grecian learning. But it is to be observed, that a large number had become the disciples of Jesus Christ, before his conversion; and consequently, no objection can be derived, from his superior human accomplishments, against the general fact of the first propagation of christianity, by men of little or no education. Saul was a remarkable instance of the power of divine grace. While he was executing his commission, given him, at his particular desire, by the Jewish high priest, empowering him to cut off all, who confessed Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah, his heart was changed; and he became a preacher of the faith which he once destroyed. This remarkable change in him was not the fruit of study, nor was it derived from any of his literary attainments: it originated in an astonishing display of divine sovereign mercy. He speaks of his embracing the religion he preached, in the following terms, in the first chapter of his epistle to the church in Galatia. "*But I certify to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me, is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*" Evangelical truth was as unacceptable from his mouth, as from the mouths of the other Apostles, and he used no other means, than they had before employed, for the advancement of the common cause. He did not go, even to the learned Greeks, with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto them the testimony of God. He determined not to know any thing among them, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. His speech and his preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power.

It is not denied that St. Paul's abilities and learning, previous to his conversion, qualified him, above the other Apostles, to comba tsubtle adversaries, both Jewish and Pagan; but his talents had never been devoted to the defence of the gospel, had not divine grace touched his heart. From the case before us, we are taught neither to condemn human science, as useless to christian teachers, nor to consider it, as the only qualification necessary to fit them for their work.

Having adverted to the general state of the world, when christianity was first promulgated, and to the instruments which were employed in its propagation, let us, in the next place, consider the means which the Apostles used for the conversion of those to whom they were sent.

When the Apostles preached to the Jews, they appealed to the scriptures of the Old Testament for proof, that he, whom their rulers had lately put to death as an imposture, at Jerusalem, was the promised Messiah. They stood forth as witnesses of his resurrection, and called upon their hearers to believe in him, who had been declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. In addressing Gentiles, who were ignorant of the true God, they urged proofs of his being and attributes from the natural world; pressed upon them their obligations to glorify the Lord of heaven and earth; reproved them for their idolatry; and called upon them to seek the favor of him whose offspring they were, and from whose bounty their daily wants had been supplied. These preachers set before their Pagan audiences the necessity of repentance, and the door of hope opened to our fallen race; and urged obedience to the gospel, by arguments drawn from the character and mission of the Son of God, and from the solemnities of the future judgment, when the incarnate Saviour will call the dead from their graves, and render eternal retribution to the just and the unjust.

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The Apostles wherever they went, announced their religion, as the only one, which God approves. They declared that there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved, but that of Jesus of Nazareth. In their manner of proceeding, they encountered the prejudices of the whole world.

The idolatrous nations abounded with their local deities; but they did not deny, that the gods to whom others paid homage, were worthy of the same homage with their own. Hence there was no insuperable difficulty, to prevent the communion of the various classes of idolaters with each other. The Romans succeeded with great ease, in reconciling all the nations which they conquered, except the Jews, to their way of worship. They gave the names of their deities to those of the countries which submitted to their arms. No cause of dissension could remain between the victors and the vanquished, relative to religion, since both agreed, that their theology was essentially the same. The Romans, indeed, would not suffer any change to be made in the established religion of the empire; but they were willing to grant the honours of the Pantheon, to the deities that the conquered nations adored, and gave all their subjects full liberty to erect temples, for the worship of their favourite gods.

The Christian religion forbids its disciples to give the least countenance to the worship of idolaters. 2, Cor. 14. 17. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God: as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them: and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore, come out from among

them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you."

In the attempt to propagate the obnoxious religion of Jesus Christ, his first ministers addressed themselves to the understandings, the consciences, and the hearts of mankind. The Apostles did not, like impostors, conceal their faith, but preached the doctrines of the gospel without disguise. They exhibited the evidences of the truth and divine original of christianity, and invited to a free examination of its nature, and of the arguments they offered in its defence. They dwelt on the motives which urge a compliance with its duties, derived from the spirit it breathes, the supernatural authority with which it is clothed, the peace it affords to the mind, its benign influence on social life, and the happiness it promises to the obedient beyond the grave. They called upon men to break off from their sins by unfeigned repentance, and to expect forgiveness, only through Jesus Christ, who died that sinners might live. The gospel promises salvation, to none but the pure in heart. Those who retain the opposite character, through the present state of existence, are doomed to everlasting destruction. Apostolic preaching forbids the indulgence of unrighteousness, and in particular, that species of it, which renders men turbulent in society, or restless under the restraints laid on their passions by human laws.

Those who were immediately commissioned by Jesus Christ, to spread his religion among mankind, did not solicit the aid of the mighty of the earth, to give either influence or reputation to their cause. They neither sought the riches, nor wanted the honors of the world. They were not without faults, but in fulfilling their commission, they displayed a character which malice may asperse, yet will never destroy. We can never enough admire their contentment with poverty, their meekness, under reproachful and cruel treatment, their patience under trials, and their fortitude

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in the face of danger. They did not count their lives dear unto themselves, so that they might finish their course with joy. Their zeal was fervent, but it was directed by knowledge. There are no marks in their behavior of a disordered imagination, or an enthusiastic frenzy. They presented no worldly inducements to allure any to embrace their faith. Their converts were initiated in the school of affliction, as soon as they were brought into the family of Christ. They were exposed to the loss of estates, and their reputations, and to meet death in its most dreadful forms. The Apostle Paul declares, concerning himself and all his brethren, "*If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.*" Primitive christians early met with persecution from the malicious influence of the Jews, and not a few were called to seal their faith with their blood. Vast numbers suffered death from the hands of Pagans, before the close of the first century. Heathen Rome continued to persecute the christians at intervals, until the beginning of the fourth century. But in opposition to all the ruling powers of the day, they continued to multiply in most parts of the known world, until christianity become the established religion of the Roman empire, three hundred years from the birth of Christ.

From the brief survey which has been taken, of the general state of the world, when christianity was first promulgated, together with the instruments and means which were employed in its propagation, let us enquire whether a parallel instance occurs in the history of mankind. In pursuing this inquiry, we need look no further than the propagation of Paganism and Mahometanism. The religion of the Old Testament, in its fundamental principles, is the same with the New Testament. If the Jews, in Christ's time, had hearkened to the spirit of Moses and the prophets, they would have embraced Jesus of Naza-

reth, as the promised Messiah. Hence he appealed to the Jewish scriptures, in support of his mission, as his Apostles did after his death. John 5. 39. "Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." All the religions which have ever been in the world, have been summarily named in this discourse, unless the philosophical religion of modern infidels be an exception; but as yet it has assumed no settled form. Deism remains still the religion of individuals, rather than of collective bodies. If the patrons of infidelity will bring forward, in a formal manner, the methods they take to make disciples, it is presumed the friends of divine revelation will not be unwilling, formally to compare, the manner which Deists employ to propagate their religion, if it may so be called, with the manner adopted by the primitive ministers of the gospel. For the prevalence of Paganism it is very easy to account. When we contemplate man as having fallen into a state of moral depravity, according to the opinion which has, in all ages, been generally adopted, we shall find that Paganism, in some form or other, is congenial to the feelings of the human mind. St. Paul begins his epistle to the Romans, by showing how all men are propense to it. Among the earlier impressions which the human mind receives, dependence on some power superior to itself, seems to be one. Whether this proceed from tradition, handed down from the Bible, or from some other cause, it is not material now to enquire: it is presumed that the general fact will not be denied. In forming deities, it is natural to suppose that men would attribute to them appetites and passions like their own; and that they would institute rituals, or modes of worship, corresponding with the characters of their gods, as we find they have done. They have found tutelar deities on the earth, and in the sky, and have honored them by their prayers and oblations. When Pagans have extended their

prospects to another world, they have fancied the happy to be in a state, where their corporeal appetites are gratified with the same kind of objects they are in the present life. They have not had the least conception of the intellectual, pure enjoyments, which Christianity promises to the faithful beyond the grave. For a heaven of this kind, the unholy in no part of the creation have any relish. Nor have they any love to the character or worship of the one living and true God, and therefore cannot be prompted by any thing within themselves, to wish for the prevalence of the Christian religion. We always find in Pagan communities, large enough to assume any regular form, their religion incorporated with their polity, and enjoying the patronage of wealth and power. We can therefore easily account for its growth, without looking any further than the ruling passions of the human heart. All these are against the religion of the gospel; and when it was first proclaimed among the nations, all classes and ranks of men, from the highest down to the lowest, treated it with scorn, and sought its overthrow.

Gross, or cruel, as any of the heathen rights are, they have not been offensive to the multitude trained up in the belief of them. The taste for the marvellous, inseparable from human nature, has been gratified; and the attachment to the reigning superstition, has been worthy of a better cause. We have no fact better attested, than the strong attachment of idolaters to their religion. What temporal inducement could influence any of the citizens of Ephesus, to break off from the popular religion, and receive from a poor despised man, a religion, which neither flattered the pride of the heart, nor encouraged the pompous parade, which composed the worship celebrated in Diana's temple.

To complete the proposed comparison between the manner in which the gospel was propagated, and those means

by which other religions have prevailed, let us briefly consider, how Mahomet brought several nations to embrace his creed.

Mahomet was born at Mecca, in Arabia, in the latter part of the 6th century. He descended from the most honorable tribe, and family, in that country. He was graceful in his person, engaging in his manners, commanding in his elocution, and was endowed with a rare genius both for discernment and enterprize. He was born poor, but became rich by marriage. He was employed in commerce in early life, and repaired the defects of his education, by travelling into Egypt, Palestine and other countries. Wherever he went, he was busily employed in scrutinizing the characters and opinions of men. The weakness of the Roman provinces, at the time of his travels, and the internal divisions which convulsed the kingdom of Persia, presented an encouraging prospect to a man who felt himself born to command. As an engine to accomplish the purposes of his ambition, he invented a new religion, calculated to allure and ensnare degenerate Jews, lukewarm temporizing Christians, and his semipagan countrymen, the Ishmaelites. To the Jews, the Christians, and his idolatrous kindred, he asserted that his religion was fundamentally the same with theirs. In the Koran, he acknowledges the divine mission both of Moses, and of Jesus Christ, and represents himself as a prophet, raised up to recal the attention of mankind, to the faith which they had forsaken, and to carry them to a higher pitch of piety and virtue, than former prophets had done. In drawing up his creed, he borrowed some things from the Bible, and framed a paradise for his followers in the eternal world, which in many things corresponds with the Elysian fields of the Pagans: and super-added such gross sensual gratifications for his followers, as are highly pleasing to the voluptuous passions of men.

Small scraps of the Koran, were gradually dealt out, during a period of more than twenty years, and in its progressive revelations, promised the highest seat in Paradise, to those who fought with the sword for the religion of the Prophet.

After spending fifteen years in a lonely cave, in Mount Hara, in digesting his plan, he began the work of proselyting in a private way: first attaching to his creed his family connections, and afterwards some of the most influential inhabitants of Mecca. It is declared by an able historian, that three years were silently employed by Mahomet, in the conversion of fourteen proselytes, and that for ten years, his religion advanced with a slow and painful progress, within the walls of his own city. He then appeared as a public preacher, and proclaimed his mission to the world. While he used art and persuasion his success was small. Not long after his flight to Medina, he appeared at the head of an army, and impiously assumed to himself a divine commission to enforce his faith on men by the sword. For war, there is an eager aptitude in the vicious and depraved. It was easy to enkindle the native ferocity of the Arabs into a flame, and to lead them forth to battle, under a leader who promised them an ample reward in the spoils of the conquered, and the highest enjoyments of a paradise where animal appetites are feasted, and where unbridled lusts in their fullest extent are gratified. He was successful. He went on from victory, to victory, until he bore down all opposition. By such means, his faith was in a short time spread over Arabia, Syria, Egypt, and Persia. A domination, which, to this day, holds in bondage no small part of the human race.

How unlike was Mahomet to the founder of our holy religion, in life, in design, and in the manner of propagating his faith. Jesus Christ had nothing of earthly parentage to recommend him to the world. He was re-

proached with being the carpenter's son. He was born poor, and remained poor to his death. It does not appear, that he received any education, above those found in the lower grades of life. As he was teaching in the temple, the Jews marvelled, saying, how knoweth this man letters, having never learned? At the age of thirty years he emerged from obscurity, and commenced a public preacher. As soon as he began to preach, he plainly communicated the leading traits of his doctrine before all characters: and inculcated, that no one could be his true disciple, without being fixed in the purpose of literally relinquishing his all, for the sake of his kingdom, when its interest should require such abandonment. "His religion has not a single charm in the eyes of the sensualist, the proud, or the ambitious. Christianity requires purity of heart and morals. The life of its Author was without a spot. Jesus Christ not only appealed to the testimony of the ancient Jewish prophets, but wrought many public incontestible miracles in support of his mission. He did not select his first followers from among the wise, the rich, or the mighty of the earth; but from among the illiterate, the poor, and the despised. The Jews with all readiness would have put themselves under his government, had he opened to them a prospect of deliverance from their subjection to the Roman yoke. But he was so far from taking advantage of their high hopes of an earthly monarch, in the person of the Messiah, to appear for their redemption at that time, that through all his life, he wholly disdained the remotest design of this nature. He retired to a solitary mountain to avoid notice, when he perceived that the multitude who had witnessed one of his miracles, were about to come and take him by force, to make him a king.—How different this conduct from that of Mahomet, who raised himself to greatness by gratifying the common thirst for empire, and by giving energy to the passions of a lawless race, who have always lived on the spoils of mankind.

Christ forbade calling down fire from heaven upon the Samaritans, when they refused him hospitality, and rebuked the ignorant zeal which some of his disciples expressed on that occasion, saying, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of, for the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives but to save them."

When he was apprehended the night before his crucifixion, he gave a reprimand to Peter for cutting off the ear of the high priest's servant. He miraculously healed the wound, and said to the rash disciple who inflicted it, "*put up thy sword into the sheath; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.*" The Apostles represented the religion of Jesus Christ in the same light, and disclaimed the use of carnal weapons to spread and support it. In two years they did more than Mahomet with all his auxiliaries and corrupt arts of persuasion did in twelve. When the Arabian impostor fled from Mecca, he had not as many followers as the Lord Jesus had disciples made by the preaching of Peter on the day of pentecost. The early, and extensive spread of Christianity, is, indeed, a solitary instance in the history of mankind. When it was first published, every thing in the state, both of the Jews and the Gentiles, forbade its success. It had to encounter violent opposition from the superstitious prejudices, the learning, and the power of the whole world. It bears no affinity to the religions, which are the offspring of superstition or philosophy, and refuses the least communion with them. The instruments and the means, which were employed in its propagation, according to human conjecture, were the most unlikely to prevail. Though miracles were wrought in the infancy of the Christian institution for its support, yet these had no internal efficacy to convert a single person. Unbelief is not to be overcome by any degree of external light. The reigning passions of the depraved human heart are wholly opposed to

the gospel as it reveals a holy religion; and these passions have, in various ways, been exerted for its overthrow, from the beginning to this day. Since Christianity disdains calling to its aid either fraudulent or coercive measures, and since such were not employed, while it was professed in its purest form, we cannot account for its progress or continuance in the world, without granting that it is the only real religion. Its success compels the conclusion, that it did not prevail by human wisdom, or might, but by the spirit of the Lord. If it had not been under the special guardianship of heaven, if it had not been loved by infinite purity, it would not have triumphed, by such simple means, over the bigotry of the Jews, the idolatry of the Gentiles, the scorn of the philosophers, the fury of the multitude, and the power of the great. Christians acknowledge and lament that not a few attempts have been made to enlarge the bounds of the church, by measures as repugnant to the divine law, as they are to the dictates of humanity. Heresies have risen up according to divine prediction; and misguided zealots, under the garb of Christianity, have made successful efforts to draw away disciples after them. But the means they have used, bear no affinity to those, which were employed by the Apostles, nor does the success of the former deserve any comparison with that of the latter. No Christian need be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, its fruits and moral tendencies are so far superior to all the inventions of man, that no devout and honest heart can withhold the confession, *This is the Lord's doing!* It is marvellous in our eyes!

Leaving it to the minds and consciences of my audience, to draw the many inferences, which this discussion suggests, my Christian brethren will suffer a word of exhortation. Brethren; let us frequently return thanks to the God of all grace, for the unspeakable blessings and comforts of the gospel. It is, indeed, the *truth*. Let us

return daily thanks for the continuance of the Redeemer's kingdom on earth, and trust in the promise, "*that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*" Let us, in all our exertions, to extend the knowledge of the gospel among mankind, place it before them in its *purity*, and show that we are more anxious, to make real Christians, than sectarians. Be it our holy ambition, to preach, to pray and live better than others. Let us be abundant in prayer to him, who hath the residue of the spirit, that he would render the means of his appointment, which are, or may be used, effectual for the opening of the eyes of the nations, that sit in darknes, and the shadow of death. However impotent means may be, in themselves, they become *mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds—casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.* To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

## SERMON II.



II SAMUEL, CHAP. XXIV. VER. 14.

*And David said unto God : I am in a great strait. Let us fall now into the hand of the Lord ; for his mercies are great : and let me not fall into the hand of man.*



The chapter, from which the text is taken, begins thus : “ And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel ; and he moved David against them to say : Go number Israel and Judah ; ” i. e. the Lord permitted Satan to tempt and prevail against David, that in chastising him, he might punish the people over whom he ruled. David’s thought and purpose of numbering the people, sprang from his remaining pride and depravity. Those were excited by Satan’s suggestion. And the Lord withdrew every internal and external restraint ; and left him to follow his own counsels. The sins of pride and ambition had before been secretly indulged ; and the Lord would have restrained them, had he not seen it best to permit them to break forth, both for the people’s punishment, and David’s deeper humiliation. When the king’s word prevailed over the advice of friends, the people were numbered, and the good man came to himself ; and his heart smote him, because he was sensible that he had displeased the Lord ; and he earnestly sought forgiveness.

Though the Lord intended to forgive the sin of his offending servant, as to his personal concern; yet, as it was a public offence, he would correct it in a public manner, by destroying his subjects before his eyes. This would be extremely distressing to him; both because of his affection for them, and because they suffered in consequence of his pride and ambition. The prophet of the Lord was sent to offer three things for David's choice: seven years famine; or that he and his people should fly three months before their enemies; or three day's pestilence. In this distressing dilemma, David preferred a calamity, which came immediately from God; whose mercies he knew were very great, to those in which men were concerned, who would have triumphed in the miseries of Israel, and thus have been hardened in their idolatry. He seems also to have chosen the pestilence, in preference to the famine, not only, because the land had already been visited with one famine of three years continuance, from which, perhaps, it was scarcely recovered, and because he and his family would be as much exposed to the pestilence, as the poorest Israelite, but especially that he might continue for a shorter time, under the divine rebuke, however severe it might be.

From the words, I shall attempt to shew,

- I. What is implied in falling into the hand of man.
- II. What it is to fall into the hand of the Lord.
- III. Shew, why falling into the hand of the Lord, is preferable to falling into the hand of man.

I. We would observe, that falling into the hand of man, cannot mean that we ever cease to be in the hand of God. For he does not, and cannot, give up the preservation and government of the world into other hands than his own. And no creature can ever scourge us beyond what God permits. God saith of the Assyrians, Isaiah 10. "Oh Assyrian! the rod of mine anger; and the staff in his hand, is mine indignation. Shall the axe boast itself against him,

that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up; or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood!" But by falling into the hand of man, meant God's making use of man to scourge or punish man: as the Egyptians were made a rod to scourge or punish Israel, and the Assyrians, in after time, to chastise them for their degeneracy and idolatry. One man falls into the hand of another, when he is defrauded, defamed, and oppressed by another; or when a people become corrupted, demoralized, and unjust, restraints are removed, and they fall into broils and tumults, and their malice breaks forth in war and bloodshed. They are let loose on one another; and the human heart, in all its malignity, is acted out, from man to man, from party to party, and from nation to nation, and state to state.

II. We said, to fall into the hands of God, in the sense of the text, when God punishes not immediately by the hands of men, as in withdrawing his spirit, giving up a person or people to hardness of heart, or blindness of mind, or in sending storms, earthquakes, famines and pestilences; But—

III. Which is our most important branch of the discourse, I would briefly shew, why falling into the hand of God is preferable to falling into the hand of men. It seems, that David chose to fall into the hand of God; and he gives the reason: "for his mercies are great." His character is widely different from that of man by nature, which an inspired apostle declares to be "implacable and unmerciful."

Men, allowing them to be comparatively innocent, are not so competent judges of the nature or demerit of our conduct, as that God, who is infinite in wisdom and understanding: i. e. they do not use that aright which they have. They are incompetent and partial judges: but God

is holy and impartial. Men are arbitrary, and observe no rule: but God invariably adheres to his law in all his decisions. And if men profess to regard a rule, it may be a rule of their own, and not founded in eternal rectitude. Men are often without compassion: but God is full of it: therefore he is ever ready to pardon. It is also a very alarming consideration, that the most high very rarely gives up a people or an individual into the hands of man, until they become very abandoned: as was the case with the ancient Canaanites, and the degenerate Jews, that were carried into captivity to Babylon. These considerations evince king David's wisdom in preferring to fall into the hand of the Lord, rather than into the hand of man.

### IMPROVEMENT.

1. We cannot but remark, on the stupidity of mankind as to their own depravity. With the history of the world for nearly six thousand years, they do not as yet generally believe, that the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Nor will they generally believe the strong, positive declarations of the holy scriptures on this subject. When Hazael was told by the prophet Elisha, what cruelties he should commit in Jewry, when he obtained the power, he, at that time, felt no inclination to such brutal ferocity and cruelty; and wondered that the prophet should suppose him capable of tearing and devouring, like some fierce and greedy dog.

When men are not exposed to temptation, they are little aware of the desperate wickedness of their own hearts: and they feel themselves insulted, when we think them capable of enormities, to which, at present, they feel no inducement. But when the magnetic attraction of great imaginary advantages approaches the carnal mind, the latent depravity begins to move, and the most ferocious beasts and reptiles are but feeble emblems of human cruelty. Even those

who are estimated inoffensive, when native malignity is awakened, will become guilty of far greater rapacity, treachery, or cruelty than the fell monsters of the forest. If left to ourselves, my hearers, any of us are capable of the worst crimes perpetrated by the vilest pests and scourges of the world. This should remind us not to be high-minded, but to fear; and to trust only in the Lord to preserve us from the deceitfulness of our own hearts. 'Tis strange, 'tis passing strange, then, that the mass of men should least dread the most dreadful of all human evils,—being left to ourselves, and to destroy each other. When, in the days of the Judges in Israel, God would represent their deplorable state, these are the outlines of the picture: there was no coercive authority, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes. One of the most dreadful scourges mankind can experience is, to be left to themselves without restraint. When this is the case, they are strangely blinded. Every man is against his fellow: Each reeks his malice and vengeance on his neighbors; and yet sees nothing of God in his providence, but is as blind as Rehoboam, was when the ten tribes rebelled against his oppressive measures. See 1 Kings 12. 15. "The king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the Lord."

Oh! stupid mortals! what are we! the crown has fallen from our head. Wo to us! for we have sinned!

II. What irreverent and contemptible ideas have the body of mankind of the great God! They are afraid to trust themselves in his hands. Witness their hatred of the doctrines of the divine sovereignty, decrees and predestination. They are afraid that he will be partial; when he has declared that he is no respecter of persons, but that of every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him. They complain that he is not merciful; although he never punishes unjustly or unwisely; never punishes contrary to law, and never lays aside

the character of the God of love. Take from the Most High the right to do as he will with his own, and he would cease to be on the throne. But when we manifest an unwillingness to trust ourselves in his hand, we practically say, that it is unsafe that he should govern; unsafe that he should make a law: and unsafe that the disposal of favors should be with him.

Oh! sinner! be ashamed! It is much better to be in the hand of God, than in the hand of man, nay, even in our own hand, and at our own disposal. Hear what he says, Mal. 3. 6: "For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore, ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Jehovah being immutable in his nature, and purposes, will destroy no sinner, until his immutable justice, holiness, and truth require it. In the whole universe, confidence cannot be placed in safer hands than these.

III. The subject may shew us, how much we are indebted to divine providence for preservation. Should God's nurturing hand be stayed, how soon would nature wither and die! how soon would these frail bodies moulder to dust! how soon would sweeping sickness, pinching famine, or desolating war make us a barren wilderness! If God should remove the ordinary restraints of his providence from sinful creatures, how soon would they destroy each other, and make our land a field of blood! David begged he might not fall into the hand of man. God grant it may never be our lot. The present crisis is too important, and appearances are too menacing, to take counsel of our weak fears, and adopt any half-way measures. When the standard of discord is displayed, (which God forbid) men of desperate principles and fortune will resort to it. The pillars of government will shake; the edifice totter to its centre; the foot of a child may overthrow it, and the hands of a giant cannot rebuild it. If these retreats of civil and religious freedom are ravaged, what but the to-

tal destruction of civil society must ensue? We shall be crushed by a government *by men*, and not by laws; and by a government by the worst of men, such as are actuated by the strongest passions of the heart; having nothing to lose, and hoping from the general confusion to reap a copious harvest. Hitherto the Lord hath helped us. In the way of duty, let us not distrust his holy providence. Be grateful for past mercies, and hope for his continued favors.

4. Would we not fall into the hand of man; Let us imitate the examples of good men on divine record. When their territories were invaded and threatened to be laid waste; when their rights and privileges were in peril; they first betook themselves to repentance and prayer; and then to all lawful means of self-defence. In the battle with the kings, recorded Gen. xiv., we find an example in Abraham, the father of the faithful, worthy of imitation. He armed himself and his domestics to rescue his kinsman and friend, Lot. A generous man cannot be contented with mere personal safety, while others are in danger; nor with his own prosperity, while others are in distress. Trusting in God, and the goodness of his cause, he marched with three hundred and eighteen servants, and the allies, his neighbors could furnish, to attack four confederate kings. He knew that his numbers would not prevail: but believed the battle was the Lord's. While depending on the divine blessing and succor, he knew he must use the means in his power. He therefore divided his troops skilfully, that he might attack his enemy at different points at the same time: and he chose the night season to commence his attack, that the smallness of his numbers might not be discovered. God requires a man to use all the faculties he has given him: and only in the conscientious use of them, can he expect the divine blessing. When this is done, the event may safely be left in

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the hands of God. Here is a war undertaken by Abram, on motives the most honorable and conscientious. It was to repel aggression, and rescue the innocent from the heaviest sufferings and the worst of slavery : not for the purpose of plunder and the extension of territories. Therefore he takes no spoil ; and returns peaceably to his own possessions. How happy would all the world be, if the rulers of men were actuated by the same spirit !

After the wrestling of Jacob with the Angel of the covenant, we see in him much dependence on God, accompanied with a spirit of deep humility and gratitude. God's grace alone, can change the heart of man. And it is by that grace alone, that we get a sense of our obligations. This lays us in the dust : and the more we receive, the lower we shall lie.

When Jacob met his enraged brother Esau, he made the best disposition, he could, of his small force, and left the event with the God of Bethel. When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him. When Jacob got reconciled to God, God reconciled his brother to him. The hearts of all men are in the hands of God, and he turns them howsoever he will. When we have poured out our souls before the Lord in fervent prayer, we are prepared to meet dangers and difficulties with confidence and comfort ; and shall soon experience the mercy and faithfulness of God. God can either bind the hands, or awe the spirits of our enemies. He can excite natural affection, or plant supernatural grace, in their hearts. A forgiving and accommodating spirit is the best spirit, with which we can meet an opponent.

When we manifest to the consciences of those that hate us, that we are satisfied with the portion earned by our labor, and neither envy nor covet their abundance ; that we count it more blessed to give than to receive ; and that

we want nothing more than to live in peace and amity ; we fight with a sword that usually conquers. The sword of the Lord and the sword of Gideon, will save us from falling into the hand of man. In this world, the wicked are often left under the power of their own delusions, and the fury of their mad passions, to avenge the cause of God upon each other. And the period is approaching, when we may expect, that the persecuting foes of christianity will destroy one another ; while the host of Israel shall look on, and have nothing to do but to blow the trumpet of the gospel, and read the meaning of such singular events in the light of prophecy.

What then have the people of God to fear, but unbelief and sin ? And what have they to do, but to believe his word, to trust his power and promise, to obey his orders, to wait his time, and help one another, as occasions are afforded and circumstances require ? Their victory is sure, and will soon be complete, over their most numerous and powerful enemies.

What strong inducements, then, my hearers, have we, from our very fearful apprehensions of the times in which we live, to embrace the religion of Christ Jesus, with all our heart and soul. This will afford us a more impregnable fortress, than can be formed, by the united wisdom of all the engineers of the warring world. But cursed be the man, who trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm. It is now a critical hour with us. A few months more will throw us into the hand of man, unless a gracious God interpose to do away the prejudices, and hush the ill-directed passions of this nation. Happy will it be if we take timely alarm : and thrice happy if repentance becomes general, and religion revives. Let our united cries ascend to heaven, that salvation may be our walls and our bulwarks. Amen.

## SERMON III.

LUKE, CHAP. IV, VERSES 28, 29.

*And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill, whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.*

These words narrate the violent treatment, which Jesus Christ received at Nazareth, the place where he resided, after his return from Egypt, until he entered on his public ministry. A recital of the context, will lead us to see the cause, why the men of this city treated him in this furious manner. Read from verse 16, to the text. The men of Nazareth were offended with Christ's charging them with unbelief; but more especially, for his representing the Most High God as having a just and sovereign right to pass them by, and to single out other objects towards whom he might exercise mercy, according to his will. He had declared, that God had the same right to leave them in their unbelief and to show mercy to others, as he had to single out the widow of Sarepta, that she might have the privilege of Elias or Elijah for her guest, in distinction from many other widows in the land: or to

employ Elisha to cure Naaman, the Syrian, of his leprosy, in distinction from the numerous lepers, who abode at that time in the land of Israel.

The doctrine of distinguishing mercy, or bestowing a favor on one, which is not bestowed on another, has never been relished by mankind. It wounds their pride. And, although, it does not always, lead to the same violence that Jesus met with at Nazareth, it always highly displeases the unsanctified heart. It is common to all sinners, to feel that they have some claim on God for favor, and to charge him with a faulty partiality, if he do more for others than he does for them.

In discussing the subject, which arises from the text, taken in its connection, it is proposed :

I. To establish the doctrine of God's sovereignty.

II. To point out some of the ways, in which man's opposition to the doctrine of God's sovereignty is expressed.

III. Shew the unreasonableness and danger of this opposition.

I. Let us attend to the evidence, which supports God's sovereignty, as reasonable and scriptural. It is to be observed, that, in all our discourses concerning God, we are to remember, that he is love ; and that none of his conduct is inconsistent with this character, either in time or eternity. If we give way to the malignity of our own hearts, or the colourings of a vain imagination, we may dress up any doctrine in a frightful hue ; and, under such misrepresentations, we may seem to ourselves, to have just cause for rejecting it. But, such conduct is neither rational nor clear from blame. If Jeroboam thought that the calves, which he set up at Bethel and Dan, were real deities, he was not free from guilt, in refusing to adore Jehovah as the only living and true God. Blinding as idolatry and wickedness are, neither the one nor the other would ever have been practiced, if men chose to retain God in

their knowledge. If men did not hate the light, they would not refuse to come to it ; nor would they put darkness in its place.

Perhaps no doctrine has been more misrepresented among those, who profess to believe the bible, than that of the divine sovereignty. It has been represented, as giving to God, the character of a stern malicious tyrant, who neither regards righteousness nor mercy, but is determined to fulfil his own designs, because his omnipotence carries him above the reach or control of his creatures. This is not the God, whom the bible describes, or whom christians adore. The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. He is infinitely wise in heart, as well as mighty in strength. He is gracious and merciful in pardoning the penitent ; but will, by no means, suffer the finally impenitent to go unpunished. The perfections of the divine mind, are all exercised in harmony ; and are pointed to the same great end,—the glory of his great name, and the highest happiness of his holy kingdom. When we speak of God's sovereignty, we mean by it, that his government is planned and conducted according to his holy and good pleasure ; and that the reasons, which influence him, are not taken from any other being ; but from the knowledge, wisdom, and other perfections of his own mind. Nebuchadnezzar, was made to feel the truth of this doctrine of divine sovereignty, when, after he was turned out to herd with the beasts of the field, on his return from that state, he speaks as is recorded in the 4th Daniel : And at the end of the days, I Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me ; and I blessed the Most High ; and I praised and honored him that lived forever ; whose dominion is an everlasting dominion ; and his kingdom is from generation to generation ; and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing ; and he doth according

to his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what dost thou? The Psalmist felt, that the sovereignty of God was exercised according to righteousness and goodness, when he addressed himself to the infinite Majesty, in the following words, recorded in the 76th Psalm. 'Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven: the earth feared, and was still, when God arose to judgment to save all the meek of the earth.

It belongeth to Jehovah to rule according to his pleasure, since he is the creator of the world, and is the governor of all things. He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending. That God, in a holy and just manner, does as he will with his own, is displayed in his giving birth to creatures; in his providence, which extends to them; and in the work of redemption. For who can, or has, instructed the Almighty; or who can, or has been, his counsellor. It was through self-moving, sovereign mercy, that Jesus Christ was given for a covenant of the people, for a light of the gentiles, to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house. To the same sovereign mercy, we must attribute the selection of some from others, to be trained up for eternal life. Math. xi. 25, 26. At that time, Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O! Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight. Rom. ix. 15, 16, also contains the same asserted doctrine. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy. So then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. Having thus, briefly attempted to shew you, that the doctrine of the divine sovereignty is a scripture doctrine, I proceed,—

II. To point out some of the ways, in which, men's hatred and opposition of the doctrine is expressed.

In the case of the men of Nazareth, in the text, we see the enmity of the human heart, exhibited in a way of violence against the Son of God, when he was delivering a doctrine so mortifying to human pride. Amiable as Christ was, in the view of his fellow-citizens in private life, he had no sooner appeared publicly, on the side of a doctrine, which levelled pride with the dust, than he became so obnoxious as, to be in peril of losing his life.

There is a way of opposition to this doctrine, which is familiar to every one, who has seen any thing of his heart : that is, quarrelling and murmuring against the ways of divine providence, when they proceed in a train which is crossing to the love of ease, self, and earthly prosperity. God, in a sovereign way, seems to have appointed that some should be rich, and others poor : that some should rule, and others be ruled. Now, whenever we are envious, or angry, at the rising reputation, or growing wealth of our neighbor, we are enemies to him who declares, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong ; and that neither are riches to men of understanding, nor wisdom to the exalted among men. Human affairs, may seem to us to resemble a lottery : But though the lot is cast into the lap, the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord. Both reason and revelation require contentment with our lot in the world. But, how hard a lesson this is to practice, every one knows, who knows himself. When the apostle Paul affirms, that he had learned, in whatsoever state he was, therewith to be content, he evidenced high attainment in piety ; and that he had imbibed much of the spirit of his divine master ; of whom Isaiah writes, (53.) He was oppressed, and he was afflicted ; yet, he opened not his mouth. He is brought forth as a lamb to the slaughter, and, as a sheep before her shearer is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

Again; whenever we attribute our desirable difference from others to ourselves, we are enemies to the sovereign dominion of Jehovah. Gifts and blessings are distributed according to his pleasure: he giveth not account to any, of his matters. It is, then, arrogant in man, to assume to himself, the peculiar prerogative of the Most High. 1. Cor. 4. 7. For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou, that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it? All boasting or glorying, before God, is in opposition to the humble spirit of the gospel; which ascribes every excellency to the divine mind, and requires him, who glories, to glory only in the Lord. In the day of his power on the earth, the lofty looks of man are humbled, and the haughtiness of man is bowed down; and the Lord alone is exalted. The Pharisees, when Christ was on earth, trusted in themselves, that they were righteous; and supposed that it was owing to something in themselves, that they were not as openly loose as other men were. Their religious pride rendered them bitter enemies to the Saviour, who inculcated, that divine, sovereign mercy was the cause of the salvation of any of the human race. Let any but once suppose, that the Lord passes others by, and delights in them, because their own exertions first inclined the Deity to grant them spiritual blessings, and they stand on the same general ground with the Pharisees and all the enemies of the cross, from the beginning of the world to this day. Every false religion, of whatever name, in its foundation, exalts the creature, and prompts him to assume that glory to himself, which is due only to God.

There is a certain kind of dominion attributed to God, which is falsely called by the name of the divine sovereignty by some; which corresponds with the feelings of the unsanctified heart. And that is; representing the

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Deity, as either bound by the goodness of his nature, or the atonement which Christ hath made, to save each individual of the human race. As there is nothing distinguishing in this kind of dominion, which can eventually *affect* the highest individual happiness of every member of the family of Adam, it is not strange, that there is nothing in the doctrine, which can disgust the pride of the heart.

Mankind, in their depraved state, have sought out many inventions : the ultimate end of all which inventions is, to destroy dependence on the Deity, and to seat themselves on the throne. In a word, they would govern and direct God by their ideas of reason and the fitness of things. If Jesus Christ, in his sermon at Nazareth, had complimented his fellow-citizens, with having a claim on him to do the mighty works among them, which he had done at Capernaum, they would have been so far from offering an insult to him, that they would have listened to him with joy, and boasted in having such a man educated in their city. I proceed—

III. To point out the unreasonableness and danger of opposing the sovereignty of God. Several particulars may be introduced in this place.

1. It is unreasonable and dangerous to oppose the sovereignty of God, because he only is the proper being to rule the creation : he only is qualified, by his wisdom and power, to govern : and he only has goodness equal to his ability. I grant that sovereignty, in any other hands, but that of infinite goodness, would be dreadful. But, in his hands, it is safe. Nay, it is a matter of unutterable joy to all holy beings, that God claims to do as he will with his own. All things which he doth, are now necessarily done well. And we are certain, from his nature, that he would not have suffered evil to exist, were it not to be overruled for good, with respect to his kingdom at large. He is the rock ; his work is perfect ; for all his ways are

judgment; a God of truth and without iniquity; just and right is he. The wrath of man shall praise him: the remainder of wrath shall he restrain. The Lord alone can bring all parts of the wide extended creation, to answer purposes worthy of infinite wisdom and rectitude. None can inform him what is best to be done, or suffered to happen. For who hath known the mind of the Lord; or who hath been his counsellor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again?

2. Opposing the sovereignty of God, carries in it bold and daring impiety. Shall a worm of the dust set up to dictate to the sovereign of the world? shall a creature of yesterday presume to impeach the eternal infinite mind? Oh! man, who art thou, that replest against God! Shall the thing formed, say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor? We should be struck with the arrogance and base conduct of a child, who should undertake, on all occasions, to tell his parents what they might and what they might not, do: who, according to Isaiah 45, should say unto his father, what begettest thou? or to the woman, what hast thou brought forth? But this would fall far short, of what the wicked are daily practicing toward him, who is the father of all mankind. The language of the proud heart is in opposition to the government of God, and is expostulating with it in some way or other. In view of this, let the ungodly tremble and be confounded, and never more rebel against him, in whose hand they are, and in whose hands they will remain forever.

3. Those who contend with the sovereignty of God, shut the only door of hope, which is opened to fallen man. If God had not, from reasons taken from the wisdom, holiness, and goodness of his own nature, contrived the plan of gospel salvation, there had been no hope for any of the

fallen race ; but we had all been forever involved in the same state of despair with the apostate angels. Like them, we had been reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day. When we descend from the forming of the plan, to its being revealed in the offers of pardon and eternal life in the gospel, we might despair of its being rendered effectual for the salvation of one sinner, if God should leave him to the exertions of his own strength. For experience teaches, that a Paul may plant and an Apollos water in vain, if God do not give the increase. If it be once granted, that there is nothing holy in man antecedent to regeneration, it must follow, that no sinner will come unto Christ, that he may have life, if divine grace do not touch his heart, and influence his affections.

The impenitent feel pained, when they see that hell has no covering but from divine forbearance ; and they will make many exertions to avoid falling into it. But they will not become holy from any external motive, that is set before them. If any given degree of terror would reconcile men to God, the impenitent would not long remain unreconciled in hell, nor would the infernal malice of the devils long continue. God's word, however, warrants us in the conclusion, that the inhabitants of hell, will continue their enmity to God forever, gnaw their tongues and blaspheme, and, of course, that means, of themselves, will not change and save sinners. Sinners, in this world, are never made willing until the moment, in which God bows them by his spirit. All the Lord's people feel fully convinced of the truth of this. When they bow to the sceptre of the Son of God, they believe that they never should have fled from the wrath to come, and have laid hold on the hope set before them in the gospel, if divine, sovereign grace had not destroyed their enmity to God. The redeemed ever have, and ever will, adopt the language in Ephesians 2: We

were, by nature, children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ. It is added in the same chapter : For by grace are ye saved, through faith : and that not of yourselves ; it is the gift of God. Not of works ; lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Having attempted, in brief, to establish the doctrine of God's sovereignty ; to point out some of the ways, in which opposition to this doctrine is expressed ; and the unreasonableness and danger of opposing it ; let us now turn the thoughts suggested, to practical use.

1. We see that the state of impenitent sinners is very alarming. They are contending with him, who is their creator ; with him, who is the former of their bodies and the father of their spirits. The voice of Jehovah to his enemies, we have in Isaiah 45. Wo unto him, who striveth with his maker ! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioned it, What makest thou for thy work ? he hath no hands. The ungodly cannot stand in judgment ; since they are contending with him, who sits on the judgment seat, and who will doom the impenitent to everlasting misery. My hearers, dare any of you maintain a controversy with omnipotence, who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell ? Is it not reasonable that Jehovah should reign, both from his attributes, and from his right to the creatures of his hand ? Who is competent, but the Most High, to rule through the universe ? He will never cease to be the governor : he will never give his glory, nor his praise, to another. Are you invested with either wisdom or authority, to prescribe to the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth ? Can you give him good and profitable advice ?

When he riseth up in his wrath, what can you answer to palliate your rebellion? The thought is shocking, that a worm of the dust should dare say unto God "What dost thou?"

In contending with the sovereignty of God, you are laboring to destroy the only ground of hope, and to shut the only door of mercy. You are provoking God to give you up to hardness of heart and blindness of mind; and to work out your own destruction. Pray reflect on the guilt and danger of your way. Drop the controversy with God; and hearken to the gospel, which proclaims the acceptable year of the Lord. He is seated on a throne of grace, a throne of glorious grace, and to the praise of its glory, you may be forever saved.

2. The present subject furnishes encouraging prospects to Zion. The same God, who opened the ears of Abraham, to hear his voice in idolatrous Ur of the Chaldees, can open the ears of sinners now. He who raised up and kept alive a chosen seed, from the days of Abraham to the coming of Christ, hath the same power in his hand. His hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear. Christ is as able to make sinners obedient now, as when he influenced the fishermen at the sea of Galilee to forsake their nets, and their worldly all and follow him. The Holy Spirit, who caused three thousand gladly to hear the word on the day of Pentecost, can now gather in a harvest of souls into the kingdom of God. He, who arrested Saul on the road to Damascus, can cause the scales to fall from other blind eyes, and make them friends to the faith to which they were once enemies. He who could raise up followers at Rome, at Corinth, at Ephesus, and at other places, can now multiply converts to righteousness. Christ will have a seed to serve him, to the end of the world. He will ride forth conquering and to conquer, in his own time.

While unbelievers quarrel, and find fault with God, in his kingdoms of providence and grace; let believers trust in the Lord, and confide in his faithful word. Live, obey, suffer, and die with this ascription in your hearts and mouths: "Thine, Oh Lord! is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. AMEN.

## SERMON IV.



MARK, X. CHAP. 15 VER.

*Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.*



A right conception of the religion of Christ Jesus, is absolutely necessary, in order to obtain its blessings and promises. While the men of this world are trying to give currency to the sentiment, that it is of little consequence what a man's speculations are, with respect to christianity, the founder hath told us in the text, that unless we receive the kingdom of God as a little child, we shall never enter into it.

The occasion of the words of the text, was as follows. While Jesus was teaching the people on the farther side of Jordan, the Pharisees and others surrounded him, for the purpose of entangling him in his talk. Others, viewing him as a great prophet, brought unto him little children, that he might touch them. His disciples, probably supposing that so great a press to present children, was troublesome to their master, rebuked the multitude, for thronging him. The conduct of the disciples, contrary to their expectations, was displeasing to their master: who,

after reproaching their officiousness, was pleased to say; Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. . Verily, I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein; i. e. he who does not conceive of, and believe in, the religion I teach, as impressing on its subjects, much of the peculiarities of little children, is not, and cannot be, savingly acquainted with the gospel.

I would observe, however, that I conceive that there is nothing in this passage that militates against the doctrine of original sin. The text is not a contradiction of that part of God's word, which declares, that we were conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity; and that we go astray, as soon as we are born, speaking lies: or that the heart of man is only evil from his youth or birth. We must not understand the comparison literally, any more than we would in many other instances where Christ has compared the kingdom of Heaven to the things of this world. Though the kingdom of heaven, in some respects, is like a grain of mustard seed, a piece of leaven, and a man casting seed in a field; we cannot liken it, in all respects, without the grossest conceptions; neither can the kingdom of God be conceived of as a child, without impiety and blasphemy. The breasts of little children often swell with anger; and by expressive actions, they betray tempers that disqualify them for a completely happy and holy society. Of course, we must not suppose, that the divine Jesus meant, in the text, to assert the sinless perfection of children, or that they were fit for the kingdom of heaven without a mediator: but, that little children have many natural properties, which strongly resemble those who are born again, or the children of the kingdom. That this was Christ's meaning, is evident from other passages. See, 1 Peter, 2. 1, 2. Wherefore, laying aside all

malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speaking, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. The apostle does not here mean to assert, that all little children are without all guile, and malice, and all evil propensities. But he speaks of them comparatively. Thus 1 Cor. 14. 20. Brethren, be not children in understanding; howbeit, in malice be ye children. Christians are exhorted not to be like children in mind, pleased with rattles, and straws, frivolous, and trifling, but, in the passion of revenge, they are exhorted to be like them; i. e. soon to overlook and forgive. Permit me to remark on some of the leading peculiarities of children aimed at in the text; and to turn it to religious improvement.

The child is dependant. It draws its sustenance from its mother, without inquiring into the mysterious manner in which it is supported. It goes to its parents in danger and difficulty; asks their advice, and puts implicit confidence in its parents' directions. It loves its parents more than all other beings. It has none of the doubts of infidelity. Its attachments are without dissimulation; and so are its antipathies. It indulges little or no malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, or evil-speaking. It is bashful, modest, and unobtruding: simple in its habits and manners. It is fond of home, and afraid of strangers. Not easily tempted to believe that what its parents tell it, is false, it puts an unshaken trust in what they direct and promise. And unless the ties of nature are distorted or broken, it will maintain its attachment and love to its dying day. With these peculiarities, well might Jesus say—of such is the kingdom of God: and that those who did not conceive of religion as having these properties, should never know its sweets, or enjoy its blessings.

Christians, like children, feel dependant. They say:—  
Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name

thy kingdom come. They are interested in the honor and character of their father. They will not patiently hear his name and character traduced. They enjoy and adore, rather than question and find fault. As far as their heavenly Father is pleased to give reason for his conduct, they are thankful, and cheerfully acquiesce in what he sees fit to hide from them. Thus saith the Lord—is enough to guide them when they have nothing else. They are too reverential and filial to say:—What dost thou? and why dost thou thus? In all their straits and difficulties, they go to their Father in heaven for advice. The directions and pointings of his providence, are law with them. The Lord's will is their's. They know no separate interest from that of his great family. God is in all their thoughts; and they love him with all their soul, strength, and might. When in want, they love to go to his fulness; as the babe to the breast, and the child to the store of its mother. Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, is able to separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus their Lord.

Like children, christians put implicit faith in what their Father hath said, as just altogether, and right. They indulge no infidel thoughts; perfect love casteth out, not only fear, but all suspicion. It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good, is the sentiment of their hearts. Like children, they have no dissimulation: they never borrow a character that does not belong to them. In simplicity and godly sincerity, and not by fleshly wisdom, they have their conversation in the world. And as their attachments are undisguised, so are their antipathies. They will have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; but rather reprove them. They will separate from, and bear testimony against a wicked world; and when sinners

entice, they will not consent. They cannot do this or that great wickedness, and sin against God. Do not I hate those that hate thee? saith David. Yea, I hate them with a perfect hatred: not with a malicious, but holy and religious hatred. And they will express this, though the world brand them as bigoted and contracted.

The children of this world, often, for interested purposes, conceal their feelings towards those whom they know to be notoriously wicked: the righteous will not daub with untempered mortar. They hate the work of them that turn aside. They will not suffer the froward in heart; and he that worketh deceit, is not suffered to dwell in their house. They love God too much to be liberal to sinners. And his law is too much their delight, to wish it abated in its strictness and penalties, to gratify the desires of such as love their lusts.

Christians, like children, have no malice, when they live up to their character. Should they fall out with a brother about an earthly trifle, rancor is soon suppressed; and mutual forgiveness makes them love the more: anger only rests in the bosom of fools. To forgive, they esteem a privilege rather than a duty: and the cunning of the serpent, is wisely tempered with the harmlessness of the dove. Real Christianity has no crafty, long fetches and diplomatic skill. It is ingenuous and open; has few or no secrets; and loves light rather than darkness, contrary to the men of this world. It does not shrink at the thought of having its conduct unmasked; for it has already passed under a stricter scrutiny than can be made by human eyes. Charity thinketh no evil; and fears none but that which comes from an offended God. She walketh surely, because she walketh uprightly, and while the wiley wisdom of this world, makes a thousand shifts and turns to make unrighteous conduct appear righteous, and shows her deformity in her bluster to hide it, one simple, naked chris-

tian virtue outweighs it all. As the unaffected smile of the infant, at its mother's breast, exceeds the forced grin of the determined villain: so truth exceeds falsehood, and unaffected and real piety, the artificial christian. All the paint and affected airs of Jezebel, are despised, when compared with the charming proportions and soft tints of unconscious beauty. Children make awkward work at hypocrisy; and so do real christians. It is a work out of their element; and they always bungle, as did the apostle Peter.

Children envy not: Neither doth charity. When their daily wants are supplied, they do not anxiously crave more. They have no inordinate love for riches or honors. A day at a time, they ask—Give us this day our daily bread. When a man has this temper there is no place in his heart for envy. Religion pities the rich and the great. She descants on the difficulty with which they must gain the kingdom of heaven. She preaches till they go away grieved: but she never envies them. While hypocrisy rails at, and covets honors and property, religion learns in whatever state she is, therewith to be content; and in the low vale of obscurity, she sings—What things were gain to me, I count as loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.

And as she does not envy, she will not speak evil; for envy is the parent of slander. Religion does not lead a man to jostle with his neighbor on the road for human applause, or those riches which moth and rust doth corrupt. And as the cause for defaming is taken away, the effect will cease.

Children are modest, bashful, and unobtruding. Christians always wish to take the lowest, and most obscure seat. They are always such as the master will bid come up higher, when he comes to see the guests. It is not the affected coyness, and artificial shame-facedness, of a train-

ed deceiver: it is the untutored effusion of the heart, which the father of lies cannot imitate. And while the thorough hypocrite is flounced with a train of experiences and comforts, the real child of God is wrapped in the swaddling clothes of humility; and may find no room in the great inn, which is filled with noisy, external Christians.

Again:—Children love home; and are pained when they are kept from it but for a short season. Christians long to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on the earth I desire besides thee. Though to the world they may appear contented, and as cheerful as others; the thoughts of home abide with them, sleeping and waking. All news from home is interesting. A letter, or even a token, from their Father, is better than volumes of philosophy: it is more precious than a library of human science.

And I hope you will indulge me once more in using the similitude.—Children are afraid, and cautious of strangers. Christians obey not every spirit: they try the spirits. They do not run when one says—Lo! here, and another, Lo! there is Christ. Children are with difficulty brought to draw nourishment from a bosom to which they are not used. Christ says; My sheep hear my voice and follow me; and a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers. They cannot be tempted to disbelieve the goodness of him who has nourished and brought them up as children: and earth and hell combined, cannot prejudice them against the family in which they are born. To the last, they will maintain an unshaken confidence and trust, in the promises of the Father they love and adore.

My Christian brethren! the truths brought into view by the text, may well humble us in the dust. By profession, many of us are the children of God. And it is peculiarly proper, that, on every occasion, we should feel our igh

and holy vocation. Have we received the kingdom of God as a little child? As christians, do these peculiarities of little children belong to us? It is not meet to take the children's meat and cast it to dogs. If our religion does not savour of what has been described, it is not of God. Christians feel dependent. They thankfully take the morsel that is given them, and eat it without murmuring. They go to God as one ready and willing to help. They love frequently to converse with their Father in heaven. They put implicit confidence in his promises. Malice, guile, envy, and hypocrisy, are far from them. They easily forgive injuries. They are smiling and cheerful; whilst those who are greater in age and worldly cares, are fretful and impatient. While others are obliged to express their love by protestations; and have to use a thousand arts to persuade us that they love God; theirs is without dissimulation, and speaks louder in actions, than in words and professions. A child wants no strong arguments to prove to the world that he loves his parents: neither do real christians, to prove that they love God. As they love God, they long for his presence above all things; are impatient for home, and cannot be comforted by strangers.

Of such is the kingdom of heaven. And it is folly to expect the happiness of that glorious state, without the requisite character. How dwelleth the love of God in such as neither feel nor acknowledge their total dependence, and have more favorite objects in their hearts, than divine things! Children do not live by forced love. It is spontaneous and unsolicited. It cannot be bought or sold. It is ready at all times to appeal, with Peter, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.

# SERMON V.



1 KINGS, XVIII. CHAP. 15 VER.

*I fear the Lord from my youth.*



These are the words of Obadiah, a godly man in the house of king Ahab. From his situation and office he appears to have been a person of some distinction; for he is called the governor of Ahab's house. His history is short; and that which we ought most to admire in it, and with which only we have concern, is the piety that marked his character.

It is said that he feared the Lord greatly; and gave evidence of it in a season of extreme danger. When Jezebel sought out the prophets of the Lord, to have them all murdered, he took an hundred of them and hid them by fifty in a cave and fed them with bread and water. And as his religion was superior in degree; so it was early in its commencement: for, says he, in his address to Elijah: I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth.

It is not a matter of indifference whether the rising generation be infidel and immoral; or influenced by conscience, and governed by scripture. Their parents, their fellow citizens, and themselves, are deeply interested in

the course they take, and the character they assume. To be pious in early years is more a privilege than a duty. To convince the young of this, and make them feel its importance, I shall take three views of the subject.

I. Youth is the most favorable season in which to commence a religious course.

II. Shew the beneficial influence of early piety over your future life, And—

III. Examine, in this awful concern, the consequences of indecision in religion till a sick and dying bed, or old age arrives.

I presume most of the young present, are ready to acknowledge the importance of religion: and that if any of you were asked whether you had resolved never to pursue it, but in the neglect of it to live and die, you would be shocked at the question. Since, then, you speculatively believe godliness to be the one thing needful, and determine one day on a religious life, I would, in the

First place, propose youth as the most favorable season in which to commence it. It is a period which presents the fewest obstacles. Far be it, however, from my design, to hold forth religion, real religion, as an easy thing to acquire at any period of life. I believe the doctrine of human depravity in its greatest extent. I know the images the sacred writers employ to describe the arduous nature of the spiritual life. I hear our Savior saying: Strive to enter in at the straight gate; for many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able. But if there be difficulties, these difficulties will increase with our years; and the season of youth will be found to contain the fewest obstacles; whether we consider your external circumstances, your natural powers or your moral habits. Now you are most free from those troubles which will embitter; from those cares which will perplex; from those schemes which will engross; from those engagements which will hin-

der you, in more advanced life. Now the body possesses health and strength; the memory is receptive and tenacious; the fancy glows; the mind is lively and vigorous. Now the understanding is more docile. It is not crowded with notions. It has not by continued attention to one class of objects, received a direction, from which it is unable to turn, to contemplate any thing else without violence. All the avenues to the inner man are not blocked up. To cure a dead man, and to teach and change the habits of an old one, are tasks equally hopeless. Now the soul is capable of deeper and more abiding impressions. The affections are more easily touched and moved. We are more accessible to the influence of joy and sorrow, hope and fear. We engage in an enterprise with more expectation, ardor and zeal.

Evil dispositions also grow with time, and are confirmed by exercise. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the Leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil. If a man wishes to eradicate, is his task likely to become easier, by suffering the shrub to grow year after year, till it becomes a tree, and is so deep-rooted as to defy even a storm? A disorder has seized the body: common sense says, take it in time: send immediately for aid. By continuance it becomes inveterate and baffles the skill and the force of medicine. Who is the person intended by all these representations of folly! You, oh young man! who by your delays are increasing a hundred fold all the obstacles of a religious life.

Again; The days of youth are altogether the most honorable period in which to begin a course of godliness. Under the Mosaic dispensation, the first was to be chosen of God: the first-born of man; the first-born of beasts; the first fruits of the field. It was an honor becoming the God they worshipped to serve him first. This duty you, and you alone, who are young, can spiritualize and fulfil,

by giving him who deserves all your lives, the first born of your days, and the first fruits of your reason and your affections. And never will you have such an opportunity to prove the goodness of your motives as you now possess. Now, says God, I know thou fearest me.

But look at an old man. What does he offer? His riches? but he can use them no more. His pleasures? but he can enjoy them no longer. His honor? but it has withered on his brow. His authority? but it has dropped from his feeble hand. He leaves his sins; but it is because they will no longer bear him company. He flies from the world; but it is because he is burnt out. He enters the sanctuary; but it is only to take hold of the horns of the altar: It is a refuge, not a place of devotion, he seeks. And need we wonder if we should hear a voice from the most excellent glory:—Ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick. Should I accept this at your hands, saith the Lord of hosts! Cursed be the deceiver who hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing.

But you, who consecrate to God your youth, do not profanely tell him to suspend his claims until the rest are served; till you have satisfied the world and the flesh, his degrading rivals. You do not send him forth to gather among stubble, the gleanings of life, after the enemy has secured the harvest. You are not like those, who if they reach Immanuel's land, are forced thither by shipwreck. You sailed thither by intention. When you weighed anchor you thought of it; it was the desired haven. You do not yield to God because every other solicitor is gone: but adore him while you are adored by others; and, guarding your passions and senses, you press through a thousand allurements, saying; Whom have I in heaven but thee; and there is none on the earth that I desire besides thee.

Religion is always an ornament to old age: but it looks more exquisitely attractive when worn by youth. In the old, it decorates wrinkles and ruins: but in youth it aids every accomplishment; gives a lustre to every excellence; and a charm to every grace.

Further; In no age like youth, can we so profitably, and advantageously begin religion. Only admit that wisdom's ways are pleasant and that all her paths are peace; that godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come; and the sooner it is embraced, the longer will the privilege be enjoyed. Every hour is an hour of loss, to a careless and thoughtless youth. Can you be happy too soon? Is it desirable to feed another day on husks, while enough food is prepared for you, and placed within your reach? If there are innumerable evils inseparable from sin; if the way of transgressors is hard; if there is no peace to the wicked; and these are true sayings of God; then the earlier the deliverance the greater the privileges.

II. As proposed, consider the beneficial influence of early piety over your future life. Youth is the spring of life. And by this will be determined the glory of summer, the abundance of autumn, and the provision of winter. It is the morning of life; and if the sun of righteousness do not dispel the moral mists and fogs before noon, the whole day generally remains overspread and gloomy. It is the seed time: and what a man soweth that shall he also reap.

Every thing of importance is affected by religion in this period of life. Piety in youth will have a good influence over your bodies. It will preserve them from disease and deformity. Sin variously tends to injure the health; and often, by intemperance the constitution is so impaired, that late religion is unable to restore what early religion would have prevented. The science of knowing a man's

moral character by his features, is not altogether fanciful. The disagreeableness of many faces which you see, is more the effect of evil passions brooding within while the features were forming and maturing, than of any natural defect. After these marks of Cain are established, religion comes too late to wipe them out; and thus is obliged, however lovely in itself, to wear, through life, a face corroded with envy, malignant with revenge, scowling with suspicion and distrust, or haughty with scorn and contempt.

Early piety will also have a good influence over your secular concerns. It produces a fair character. It procures the esteem and confidence of good men. It promotes diligence, frugality and charity. It attracts the blessing of heaven which maketh rich and addeth no sorrow with it. "For they that honor me I will honor." "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

Early piety will have a good influence to preserve you from all those dangers to which you are exposed in a season of life most perilous. Conceive of a youth entering a world like this, destitute of the presiding care of religion: his passions high; his prudence weak, impatient, rash, confident; without experience;—a thousand avenues of seduction opening around him, and a tempting voice singing at the entrance of each; pleased with appearances and embracing them for realities; joined by evil company; ensnared by erroneous principles and publications;—the hazard, my young friends, exceeds all the alarm I can give. And you may flatter yourselves that your own good sense and moral feelings will secure you; but he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool. The power of temptation, the force of example, the influence of circumstances in new and untried situations, are inconceivable. They baffle the clearest conviction and the firmest resolu-

tion; and often render us an astonishment to ourselves. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Follow him and thou shalt walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble."

Early piety will also have a beneficial effect in forming your connections and establishing your plans for life. For you will ask counsel of the Lord, and arrange all your schemes under the superintendence of scripture, which contains his unerring view of things. The voice of truth will address you: "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; and a companion of fools shall be destroyed." As soon as the grand purpose of a man is fixed, he has something always to regulate him, and can turn every stream into this swelling channel. An early dedication also renders a religious life more easy and pleasant. A repetition of acts produces habits; and habits formed, yield delight to such exercises as formed them. What was irksome at first, becomes, by custom, agreeable; and we even refuse to change. And this is peculiarly the case here; for religion will bear examination. It improves on intimacy. Fresh excellences are perpetually discovered. Fresh succours are daily afforded. And every new victory inspires new hope and produces new energy.

Man is born to trouble; which you cannot reasonably expect to escape. And religion will be of unspeakable advantage in all the calamities of life. Whatever affords us pleasure, has power to give us pain. Possessions are precarious. Friends die. When his gourds wither, what becomes of the wretch who has no other shade! But to the upright there ariseth light in darkness.

Though Divine grace does not ensure the righteous an

exemption from calamity, it turns the curse into a blessing. It enters the house of mourning, and soothes the troubled mind. It prepares us for all; sustains in all; sanctifies by all; and delivers us from all. And how sweet are its consolations in old age, when the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, in which you will say we have no pleasure in them! Then hoary hairs are a crown of glory, for they are found in the way of righteousness. With humble confidence you can address the throne of grace. "Oh God! thou hast taught me from my youth; and hitherto I have declared thy wondrous works: Now also, when I am old and grey-headed, Oh God! forsake me not." And what saith the answer of God? "Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoary hairs will I carry you. I have made and I will bear; even I will carry and deliver you." You can look back with pleasure on some instances of usefulness. You can review, with satisfaction, some peculiar places of devotion, some times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. You can look forward and see the God who has guided you with his counsel, ready to receive you to glory. "My salvation is nearer than when I believed. The night is far spent; the day is at hand. I know my Redeemer liveth. I am now ready to be offered. The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."

But if all these advantages do not allure you to immediate attention to religion, and you resolve to suspend your concern to a future day, I pray you to examine the awful consequences of indecision in this great affair till old age arrive and a dying bed.

If your repentance is late in life, how can you be assured of the truth of it? Principles are to be ascertained by their operations and effects. How can you know that

your concern is any thing but fear awakened, or tears extorted by the approach of death and judgment? Men may change their work but not their master. We have seen persons on sick beds giving all the evidence we could desire of a genuine repentance, whose health and whose wickedness returned together. How will you decide whether your repentance is superior to this?

But this is on the supposition that you will obtain salvation hereafter in life, though you are resolved to live neglectful of God now. But who has told you that you shall live to repent? Have you made a covenant with death! Are you secure from the jeopardy of diseases and disasters? You expect the master in the evening: who assures you that he will not come in the morning? Say! ye young and healthy! did ye never hear of one dying at your age and in your circumstances? Experience tells us that sixteen is as mortal as fourscore; and the scripture that man also knoweth not his time. "As the fishes are taken in an evil net, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time; when it falleth suddenly upon them."

Or who hath assured you that you shall have grace to repent? Can you command the Holy Ghost? Behold the aged sinner! His strength is labor and sorrow. The infirmities of the body weigh down the soul. The senses are impaired. He is more than half dead before he begins to think of living. He has walked by threatenings so often that they have ceased to terrify him. The present Bible has done nothing: and no new one is to be expected. He has not been led to repentance by Moses and the prophets: neither would he be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

You are waiting for grace: you say God is gracious. True. But such views of it as encourage presumption and countenance sin are unquestionably erroneous. He is gracious: but his grace lives in communion with his

holiness and wisdom. He is gracious: but the very notion supposes the exercise of it to be free, and that he may dispense it as he pleases. Though nothing can deserve grace, many things may provoke it. And what reason have you to suppose, that after you can serve sin no longer, he will, in an extraordinary way, extend the grace you have so long despised, and save you from a ruin the consequence of your own choice? Has he not told you, that his Spirit shall not always strive with man? Is his mercy to have no limits, and his patience no end?

Were it common for God to call sinners at the eleventh hour, would it not have a most unfavorable effect, and encourage a hope which all the Bible is calculated to destroy? God designs to be honored by his people in this world. He saves them that they may serve him. He converts them, not to die, but to live. And therefore we find very few becoming religious in advanced years. Irreligious youth is commonly followed with wickedness in manhood, and indifference in old age.

Oh! methinks I could be heard to-day, if the old did not promise themselves weeks, the middle-aged months, and the young, years to come. It is not absolute denial of gospel obedience that destroys so many souls; but tampering delay. Of all the thousands who drop into perdition, there are many who intended to work out their own salvation. But before this passion was fully indulged, or that scheme was accomplished, the person was awaked by a midnight cry, sprang up to find his lamp, the Bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut. Eternal God! why wilt thou not so teach us to number our days as that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.

Oh parents! who are regardless of the souls of your children, you are more cruel than Herod. He slew the

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children of others: you slay your own. He destroyed the body, but you the soul.

I once more beseech youth to hear me. Suspend awhile the influence of your passions, and endeavor to feel the force of the motives which have been adduced. Deliberate; or rather decide; for there can be no hesitation. Now is the accepted time. The language of the Redeemer is—to-day. And will you say with Pharaoh—to-morrow! Every delay will leave you more remote from the God you have to seek. Every delay will place more barriers between you and heaven. Every delay will increase your crimes, your passions, your aversions. Every delay will diminish the efficacy of the means, the period of patience, the time of your probation. While you hesitate, you die! While you promise yourselves years, perhaps you have not days. Perhaps the shuttle has passed the loom that wove your winding sheet. Perhaps in yonder shop lies rolled up, and ready to be severed off, the piece of cloth destined to be your shroud. Perhaps the feet of them that have buried thy neighbor are at the door to carry thee out.

# SERMON VI.



I CORINTHIANS, III. CHAP. 9 VER.

*Ye are God's husbandry: ye are God's building.*



In the context the Apostle reproves the Corinthians for envying, strife and divisions. Those evils arose from an abuse of their privileges in having ministers sent to them of different gifts.

One said "I am of Paul," and another "I am of Apollos." On this circumstance he expostulates as follows; "who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man. I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor: For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry: ye are God's building." The language of the text is figurative. The figures are borrowed from agriculture and architecture or building, and applied to Christians or members of the Church of Christ.

We shall consider the church under each of these figures, introduced in the passage chosen for our present considerations. To begin with the first,

The apostle saith to the members of the Church at Corinth, Ye are God's husbandry. Let it be observed that the cultivation of the vine constituted a great portion of the agriculture of the Eastern world, and to this day the planting and pruning of vineyards employ a great number of the inhabitants of Asia Minor, as the Peloponesus or Morea of Greece, where Corinth stood. On this account there are so many allusions to the culture of the grape in the writings of both the testaments.

1st. The members of the Church of Christ are considered as God's husbandry, in that they are separated from the world. This is done visibly by them professing the truths of God's word, and standing up in defiance of them before the world. Hence the Church is called the pillar and ground of truth. Land that is tilled, is enclosed and distinguished from that which lies in a common and uncultivated state. Isaiah alludes to this in the fifth chapter of his prophesy. "Now will I sing to my well beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well beloved hath a vineyard, in a very fruitful hill, and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine." In like manner the Church is a sacred enclosure, designed to be taken into a state for religious improvement.

2dly. Husbandry will not succeed without labour and attention. These are necessary for the growth of fruits, plants and grain. The Apostle saith, we are labourers together with God; and believers are required to work out their own salvation.

3dly. The labours of the husbandman will not succeed if God withholds the rain, dew, and sunshine, and does not keep off frosts, blasting, mildew, and insects.

So, if God shed not down the rain, and dew, of divine influences on the Church, it will become like a parched heath. If he afford it not the sunshine of his gracious Spirit and presence, it will become cold, barren and formal: and if he shield not his professing children from the injuries they may receive from a depraved, tempting and ensnaring world, they will wither, and bear no fruit unto perfection.

4thly. In husbandry, especially in the culture of the vine, much pruning is necessary. So, all that grow and increase in the Church of God are pruned; their worldly hopes are demolished; their useless and dead branches are cropped off, and this is done most frequently by the scenes of trouble through which they have to pass on their way to eternal life; see John xv. 1. 2. "I am the true vine, and my Father is the Husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."

5thly. The labours of the husbandman are designed to mature and ripen the fruits of the earth: so in God's husbandry, the design is to ripen the characters of men. Believers are growing ripe for heaven; James v. 7. "Be patient therefore brethren unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruits of the earth, and hath long patience for it: until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient: stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

6thly. The concluding scene of husbandry, is, gathering in the fruits of the earth; so in God's husbandry there is a harvest, and we are told that the angels are to be reapers. There is to be a gathering in of all, whom God approves, and a casting out of all that offend him. The wheat and the tares are to be separated. The wheat, is to be gathered into the Lord's garner, and the tares and the chaff are to be burned with unquenchable fire.

Let us now attend to the other figure. "Ye are God's building."

The first thing in a building is, to lay a good foundation, or all the labour is vain. There is but one foundation for the Church which God hath instituted; "other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Verse 11th of the context.

2dly. In a building, the materials are selected, the timber is hewed, and squared, and predestined to its use; or the brick is made and burned, or the stone is taken from the quarry, and hewed, and squared, and the number is determined. So in God's building the timber is all selected by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God; and it is so framed, in infinite wisdom, that like Solomon's temple it will all come together in joints with perfect accuracy. So that there will be neither hammer, axe, nor any tool of iron heard in the house which is building.

3dly. A building rises from its foundation towards its finishing. So with respect to the Church; it rises from the foundation, Jesus Christ. Ephesians ii. 20, "And are built on the foundations of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone: In whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord."

4thly. A building consists of various parts, between which there must be a just symmetry, and proportion, both for strength and beauty; so in the many parts in the building of God. There are the patriarchal and Christian dispensations; there is the Old Testament and the New; the prophets and the apostles.

All these have their use; they all tend to the unity, strength and beauty of the whole. Hence, saith the apostle, in 2 Ephesians 22, "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

This brief consideration of the figures in the text may lead us to several useful reflections, as

1st. The Church, in the present world, is in an imperfect state; else it could not be represented by agriculture, or architecture. All the husbandman's enclosures are not productive of profit to the owner; there are useless weeds, briars, thorns and thistles; tares will mingle with the wheat, and chess and cockle with the barley. So it must always be with God's enclosure, the Church. Christ says the kingdom of Heaven is like a net cast into the sea, which gathereth of every kind, good and bad. Even in Christ's selection of twelve, there was a Judas, and after all the care of the Apostles in admitting to their communion, we soon find by the epistles, that they were complaining of envies, strifes, seditions, heresies and false brethren. God designed that the militant Church should always be formed of such materials; to humble human pride, exclude boasting, and to shew that sinners will eventually be saved by the wisdom, power, and grace of God.

2dly. No one ought to refrain from joining the visible Church because he sees imperfections in its members, or imperfections in himself. The inquiry of the candidate for admission, is not whether he thinks himself perfect; but whether he is willing to be placed under divine cultivation, to have the fallow ground of the human heart broken up, with the plough and harrow; the sprouting lusts and vile affections to be bruised from the stump and stock of nature; whether he is willing to be separated from the world for God's use only. Or if husbandry is vine-dressing, he is willing to be pruned like the vine, to have his dead or too redundant branches cut off, and have all the shoots of his affections trained by the divine vine-dresser.

The tendrils, or clasps, of plants, are given only to such as have weak stalks, or cannot raise up and support themselves; so we may say of Christianity, as Milton did of

Eve, "her hair in wanton ringlets waived, as the vine curls her tendrils," which implied subjection like the vine grape. The Christian cannot stand in his own strength, but reaches his tendrils to the supporter; if his tendrils clasp other objects than the vine dresser wishes, his fruit will be blighted, and never come to perfection. The very figure of the vine used in scripture preaches humility and a sense of dependance, to Christians. One great means of culture in God's husbandry is brotherly reproof and correction. And it ought to be a question with us all, this day, have I done my duty to my christian brethren, and in this sense am I prepared to commune? Is the fallow ground of the natural heart broken up; does it lie soft and mellow by repentance to receive the seed of truth; are the sprouts of vile affections beaten off?

Can you spare useless or redundant branches, when it is the will of God? Are your tendrils dedicated to Christ, rather than to your own righteousness, or any other object. If you feel an aversion to the discipline of the church, and rejoice at its low estate, it is a bad sign that all apparent fruit is defective at the core. Fruitful branches, from the true vine, love pruning; the sharp knife of affliction is to them a token of the faithfulness of him that careth for them. When the psalmist complains of the enemies of religion, "The ploughers ploughed upon my back; they made long their furrows;" yet, he adds, "they have not prevailed; the Lord is righteous." "They are the sword, the hand is thine." Do we suitably notice the hand of God in all our concerns and troubles? In a word, do our hearts exhibit the temper figured by the dependant vine?

The same ideas are enforced by our being God's building. The Church is an enclosure where the timber is shaped for the house made without hands, eternal in the heavens. Timber, while it is hewing, and stone, while it is dressing, may look very unseemly and improper for the

use to which the master-builder has destined it. An unfinished house, on the way to its completion, is not cleanly; or when it is prepared to the turning of the key, it must have its imperfections, nay, its rubbish and its filth. In entering a church, we do not enter a finished and perfect house, but one which is in the act of building.

3dly. The subject condemns slothful professing Christians; "Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." Some may say, perhaps, within themselves, if we can but get into the church, all will be well with us. But how shall we make this compare with the figures in the text. Say, farmers, if your fields were as unproductive in the fruits of the earth, as your hearts are in the graces of the Christian, what would you do? If your children and hired people were as idle in your employment, as you are in the vineyard of God, what would you say? Were you building a house, would you be satisfied with workmen acting towards you and your interests just as you conduct under solemn vows in the church of God? Are you anxious that the work should go forward, and that materials should be fitted to enlarge and adorn it? Or are you eye-servants, who look only for the wages without any regard to your duty? In haying and harvest, and the ingathering of the fruits of the earth, you watch the clouds, rise early, work hard and late; have you the same eagerness in things of religion? Say, brethren, you have only to be honest with God and your own consciences, and you must be ashamed and confounded before him this day. Has Christ done so much for you, and are you disposed to do so little for him?

Cannot you spare more of your time, talents, or substance? Cannot you make more exertions for one, who has laid down his life to save you from the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched? Hear your professed master, "I am the true vine, and my Father is

the husbandman. Every branch in me, that beareth not fruit, he taketh away. Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine: no more can ye, except ye abide in me. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered, and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." You have been taught too much sound divinity to believe that there is inconsistency between human activity and dependence. You know better than you practice what it is to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, and yet knowing that it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do.

4thly. The subject teaches us the importance of praying for the Holy Spirit. If God withholdeth rain, dew, and the genial influence of the sun, and does not keep off the frost, blasting and mildew;—if he does not stay the storm, and restrain his hosts of insects, the husbandman labors in vain. So a church and people, will be barren without the influence of the Holy Spirit. In a season of drought, how full of complaints is the farmer—how anxious for rain! or when rain is sent in judgment, how does he long for the returning sun! How does he dread untimely frosts, and watch whether his crops are blasting or wasting by insects! Now this language is so plain, that the little children of every country village can understand it. Brethren, have you the same watchfulness, the same anxiety for divine influence in this church and among this people? Do you pray for it as earnestly as you long for rain in a drought, or the warming influence of the sun, when your crops are shrivelling with cold, or perishing from excessive moisture? Remember Christ's discourse of the vine. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, *ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*"

With this promise, can you be so remiss? It is not in the power of a Paul, nor an Apollos to revive religion.

Zion must travail in prayer before children will be brought forth. It is, under God, for you, communicants, to say what shall become of your children, and this people. Ye are God's husbandry, and if there is not a cluster of grapes to be seen, he will soon pull away the hedge and let in the wild beasts to devour.

In the name of God, and by the love of Christ, brethren, I charge you to pray for the outpouring of the Spirit.

5thly. The figures of the text confirm the doctrines of the divine decrees and predestination. A wise husbandman always plans his work, and preconceives his future operations; he selects all his means, and appoints all the instruments he will use to accomplish his ends.

The skilful architect has the plan of the building in his mind, before he strikes a stroke at the frame. And shall we entertain ideas of the great God, which would derogate from the character of a common farmer and mechanic? It is sinful to think of God as such an one as ourselves. But how much more impious is it to think of him as being beneath us in his plan, his thought, or his foresight?

6thly. The subject suggests a way by which we may determine whether our afflictions do us any good. If sanctified they will lead us to bring forth more fruit. The more ploughing and harrowing, the better will be the crop. The more pruning the more vintage, says the vine-dresser.

The more the hammer and chisel are used on the stone, the better it becomes for its place in the building. The marble receives its final polish, only by long repeated strokes. Timber is smoothed by scoring and hewing, and by cutting deep when it is knotty and crooked.

Brethren, you have only to ask what is the use and improvement which you have made of your afflictions, and you can know whether you grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Finally,

let Christians take good heed that they build on the true gospel foundation: the Rock is Christ; all else is sand.

If on this rock we build hay, wood, and stubble, self-righteousness, and hypocritical graces, lip-religion and not heart-religion, our work will be burnt up; but if our work be gold, silver and precious stones, godly sorrow, faith that works by love, and true humility, it will abide. We must not think we are serving God, merely because *men* cannot greatly reproach us with injustice. God is the discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, and is not deceived by the outward appearance. Those are not the best Christians who so estimate *themselves*, or whom others so estimate. Four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal stood much higher in the estimation of ungodly Israel than Elijah did. The demoralized Jews thought that they saw much more religion in their Scribes and Pharisees, than they did in Jesus of Nazareth. Take heed then how you build, and what you build on your Christian profession.

Feeling our dependence, let us pray that the church on earth, and that the church in this place, may be purged, grow, and bear fruit. That our own souls and the souls of our children and neighbours, may be like a well watered garden, and like a fruitful field, which the Lord hath blessed. And that, as polished stones, we may be prepared to fill our place in the holy temple of the Lord.

## SERMON VII.



PSALM 36. VER. 2.

*For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful.*



In the words now read, we have a full portrait of a wicked man. In the first verse of this psalm, he is described as destitute of the fear of God: and in the text, as one who flattereth himself in his own eyes. This course he is strongly inclined to pursue. And if sovereign mercy does not discover to him his delusion, and lead him to embrace the truth, he will pursue his path until, to his dreadful amazement, he shall be made to feel the penal effects of his folly.

The words selected naturally lead us to consider the nature and evil tendency of self-flattery. Flattery is an immediate address to the pride and vanity of the heart. Whether it be practiced by one person towards another, or whether a man flatter himself, its essence is false praise, and its object is to raise false hopes. In all cases, it is built upon unwarrantable, and impious presumption, or up-

on falsehood. In opening and illustrating the nature of self-flattery, let the following particulars be considered.

I. The wicked flatter themselves with respect to God. God is an eternal and infinite spirit, and possessed of all possible perfection, both natural and moral. He must, therefore, be present every where in the same instant of time; and must possess a perfect knowledge of every thing which is present, past, and future, with respect to creatures. There is not a word on their tongues, or a thought in their hearts, but the Lord knoweth it altogether. The darkness hideth not from him; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to him. But the wicked say, in their practice, if not in words, "How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?" Lot's wife practically denied the divine omniscience, as well as other divine perfections, when she looked back on Sodom from which she was commanded to flee, and was charged by Jehovah not to cast an eye behind her until her arrival at Zoar, the place of safety. She flattered herself that she should escape the divine notice if she only glanced her eyes at her beloved Sodom in her flight. The ancients of the house of Israel, who practiced Idolatry in the dark, said: "The Lord seeth us not. He hath forsaken the earth."

Let every hearer commune with his own heart, and put such questions as the following to his conscience. "Is it natural for me to think of myself as in the presence of God? Do I feel as much concerned lest he should see iniquity in me, as I do lest some person on the earth, whom I respect and love, should see something in me which he will disapprove? Does the impression, "Thou God seest me" take fast hold of my mind: or is it a transient thought which has little or no influence, and is soon gone? Do I feel myself to be a solitary creature when retired from human converse? or do I feel that God is present, whose soci-

ety is greater, and of more worth, than millions of worms of the dust?" By faithfully trying ourselves, we shall be convinced, that we have a strong propensity to flatter ourselves with respect to the omniscience of God.

How false also are the wicked in the forms of their dedications to God! They flatter themselves, either that they have gracious sincerity, or that mere lip-service will be accepted. When the Israelites in the wilderness were smitten for their sins, they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their Redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues.

II. The wicked flatter themselves with respect to the law of God. This law consists of two parts: the preceptive and the penal. The preceptive teaches us our duty to God and our neighbour. The penal holds up the evils which await the disobedient. The law of God is holy, just, and good. It consults the divine glory and the highest happiness of God's moral kingdom. Were this law annihilated, or its commands and threatenings softened down to the feelings of the corrupt heart, a blessed universe could no longer continue; nor would rational existence be desirable. But the wicked dislike God's holy law, and strive to force themselves from its obligations. They seek to accomplish their designs in many ways. Some try to persuade themselves that Christ endured the penal effects of sin in such a manner, as to remove all guilt from mankind, and to prevent the possibility of the infliction of punishment upon any individual of the human race. Others conceive of sin as having very little guilt attached to it; and therefore suppose, that eternal death is more than the transgressor deserves. They flatter themselves as the serpent did Eve: "Ye shall not surely die." Many entertain such notions of the divine goodness as to reduce it to a level with childish pity. And therefore flatter themselves,

that God will not be strict to mark their iniquities against them. As they see nothing very criminal in their own conduct, they attempt to persuade themselves that they are not very offensive to the eyes of infinite purity. They encourage their vain hope, with the thought, that God is altogether such an one as themselves.

Again; the wicked may be very severe in censuring others for faults which are far less than their own. They can easily discern the mote in their neighbor's eye; while they discern not the beam that is in their own eye. While they hear vice and sin reprov'd, they can make application to others; and yet wholly neglect to take reproof to themselves. A covetous man, for instance, will rejoice to hear a vice lashed which is practiced by others without once thinking that covetousness is his own favorite sin. A man who is given to fraud and oppression may be abundant in condemning those sins in others; while he does not so much as suspect that he pays no regard to justice and mercy, *when* his selfishness urges him to trample others under foot. Even a notorious drunkard has been known to condemn drunkenness in others, while he gives himself up to this brutal practice without reserve.

The few instances which have been named may serve to illustrate the deceitfulness and the blindness of the self-flatterer, with respect to the divine law.

III. The wicked flatter themselves with respect to the terms of salvation offered in the gospel. No human being can be saved except on the footing of gospel grace. The terms are, on the part of the sinner, repentance towards God and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ.

The wicked fly to various subterfuges to excuse themselves from a present compliance with gospel duty, and to quiet their consciences in sin. A few of these vain pleas will here be noticed.

Some suppose that they are so virtuously inclined by

nature, that they need but a small change to render them christians indeed. They flatter themselves with the belief that they have so many good desires, have formed so many good resolutions, and have done so many good deeds, that they are not far from the kingdom of God. Saith one of this class: "Shall such a man as I, after having lived so pure a life, miss of Heaven!" Saith another of the same class: "If sometimes I break the Sabbath, and generally live without prayer, is it not well known that I am an honest, upright man, and that I am kind to the poor and the afflicted? Do not I stand a fair chance for future happiness when I am so much better than those who are called Christians!"

Another plea as vain as the last, is brought forward by the man who is high in his religious professions, and forward in proclaiming his experiences; while he is a proverb for worldliness, and is so hard in his dealings as to be thought hardly honest.

Others suppose the terms of gospel salvation are brought down so low, that their hearts, without any special change may comply at any time. They consider the way to Heaven so easy, and so congenial to their hearts, as to render all anxious inquiry unnecessary; and thus lull themselves to sleep in their impenitence.

Some plead for their neglect of gospel salvation the imperfection of its professed friends. Say they: "We have heard much about the great change which regeneration makes in men; but we see little or nothing of it among them who are called the best christians. We cannot therefore suppose that there is much importance in religion. Show us a perfect man; and we will believe and obey the gospel. As we see no such men, we stand as fair for happiness as any of our neighbors, or any of the human race; and therefore we need not be anxiously concerned for our souls."

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Others plead that the gospel terms of salvation are so high and difficult, that they cannot comply with them; and that therefore they must be excused from very great guilt if they do all that they can consistently with their remaining in a state of nature. These persons suppose, that when they read, that sinners cannot come to Christ, something very different is meant from those passages of scripture in which it is affirmed, that sinners will not come to Christ that they may have life. They flatter themselves that since their inability is too great to be overcome by rational arguments, that they ought not to take blame to themselves for an obstinate continuance in sin.

IV. The wicked are guilty of self-flattery in looking out for better circumstances, and a more convenient season, for making their peace with God. The impenitent will often persuade themselves, that if they lived in a different place, and enjoyed better means, they should repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ without delay. Perhaps they have heard of a religious revival in some distant place; and are ready to say: "If we were there, we should enter into the kingdom of God. But the people where we live are so cold, and the preacher, though sound in the faith, so lifeless, that we cannot endure the singularity of being engaged in religion." The wicked flatter themselves with a more convenient time, as well as place, than they now enjoy for securing the great salvation. Thus, for instance, the young plead for a delay until the ardor of youth is abated and they become settled in life. The middle aged plead in excuse for their neglect, their worldly cares and hurries; and promise themselves a more convenient season in their declining years. The poor urge in excuse for *their* neglect, their perplexing cares to secure the necessaries of life for themselves and families. And the rich and the honorable plead that they have so much business, and that they have so much attention to

pay to their fellow-men, as to render it impracticable for them to attend to their eternal concerns.

Having thus briefly considered and illustrated the nature of self-flattery, I proceed—

Secondly, as proposed, to consider the evil of this sin.

Self-flattery being immediately addressed to the pride and vanity of the heart, must draw after it a train of evil consequences. Whoever flattereth himself in his own eyes, is characterized in the following manner in the 3d and 4th verses of the context. “The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit; He hath left off to be wise and do good. He deviseth mischief upon his bed, and setteth himself in a way that is not good. He abhorreth not evil.” To point out more particularly the evil of self-flattery, let the following things be considered.

I. The self-flatterer becomes more hardened in sin. When the wicked lose sight of the divine omniscience, they are prepared to say, with Pharaoh: “Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?” and to throw off all restraint. Such characters pay no respect to the divine justice or purity; and commit iniquity with greediness. They trample under foot the law of God; and bid defiance to his threatenings. They call evil good, and good evil; and put light for darkness, and darkness for light, until they have persuaded themselves that they have nothing to fear on account of their sins. They have so many excuses to make for even the most infamous of their actions, that they felicitate themselves as being very innocent and virtuous creatures. Self-flatterers either treat the gospel as a cunningly devised fable, or pervert it to the gratification of their corrupt inclinations. Full of cavils against every evangelical doctrine, they are unstably seeking evasions to quiet their own consciences in sin, and to strengthen their presumptuous hope: and by thus flattering themselves in their own eyes, they become more

and more deaf to the divine threatenings, warnings, and invitations, and hasten to fill up the measure of their sins.

II. The self-flatterer is involved in awful blindness of mind; and is exposed to be led away by the flatteries of others. As all flattery is built upon falsehood, the continued practice of it tends to render men blind both to truth and duty. Let one practice flattery towards himself for a long time, and thick darkness will spread over his mind with respect to the knowledge of God and self-knowledge. How rarely will he even think that there is a God to whom he is accountable for all his actions, who will reward the righteous and punish the wicked with eternal retributions.

How blind is the self-flatterer to the necessity, nature, and glory of the gospel. Being a stranger to the spirituality and extent of the divine law, and to the depravity of his own heart, he sees no need of the mediation, discerns no necessity of an atonement, nor does he behold the beauty of the divine Immanuel. Such persons, benighted in their minds, are in firm alliance with the God of this world; and are in the high road of perdition. 2. Cor. iv. 3. 4. "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not; lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

The man who practices flattery towards himself, like the spoiled child, is liable to be seduced by the flattering lips of all around him. Lifted up with pride; wiser than the wisest in his own foolish conceit; he feels secure, and thinks no danger nigh. He is fitted to fall in with temptation and to be corrupted by flatteries. The seduction of a young man void of understanding, by the flattering lips of an artful lewd woman, is strikingly descriptive of the sinner. We have it in the 7th Proverbs—"He goeth after her strait-

way, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks, till a dart strikes through his liver: as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life." Artful deceivers, of every description, abound in the practice of flattery towards those whom they wish to draw after them. "False teachers," saith the apostle, "by good words and fair speeches, deceive the hearts of the simple." They who are puffed up with pride and self-conceit, are peculiarly liable to be led astray by those who lie in wait to deceive. Such also are in danger of falling in with every dangerous heresy which is offered for their acceptance. He who has long deluded himself, is highly exposed to take the infection of the delusions of the day, and to be given up by God to work out his own destruction. 2. Thess. 2. 11, 12: "And for this cause, God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a *lie*, that they might be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

III. The wicked who continue to flatter themselves, will be destroyed forever. They will be made to feel, to their awful confusion, that the Lord abhors their sinful character. Psalm 12. 3: "The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips and the tongue that speaketh proud things." And Psalm 50: "These things hast thou done and I kept silence. Thou thoughtest I was altogether such an one as thyself. But I will reprove thee and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God; lest I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver."

Those who flatter themselves in their own eyes will be filled with horror when they enter the eternal world and stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Then the discovery of divine truth which they had so long despised and attempted to keep out of sight, will flash conviction upon their consciences, and fill them with unspeakable pain.

If any are conscious that they have been, and now are, thus working out their own ruin, let them consider their urgent danger. For if the Judge appear against them, who then shall rescue them from his mighty indignation! He now warns that he may not punish. Let us then thankfully embrace his gospel and praise him for his mercy. And endeavoring to glorify him in word and deed, wait for his complete and eternal salvation.

## SERMON VIII.



PSALM 36. VER. 2.

*For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful.*



A wicked man not only disguises his crimes, or intentions, from others; but, through the excess of self-love, he becomes his own flatterer, calls his vices by soft names, or mistakes them for virtues, and deems his conduct justifiable, perhaps meritorious, when, in fact, it is a hateful compound of impiety, injustice and malevolence, and will very soon be proved to be so. Thus Saul, who was probably meant as the wicked man in this psalm, through self-flattery, was not aware of the malignity of his conduct, till he became odious in the open view of all mankind.

In the morning's discourse, I endeavoured to point out the evil tendency of self-flattery as it respects God, his holy law, the terms of salvation offered in the gospel; and the folly of looking out for better circumstances, and a more convenient season, to embrace religion. The tendency of self-flattery, we found, was to harden us in sin, to involve us in blindness of mind, and to expose us to the flatteries of others; and thus finally pave the way to our

everlasting ruin. Let us now turn these thoughts to practical use.

1. In the light of the foregoing subject, we may see how the wicked go astray, as soon as they are born, speaking lies. Infants have not the command of speech, and therefore cannot utter lies with their tongues. But they have a sinful nature, which inclines them to contradict divine truth, and is opposed to God's holy character. Sin, in its own nature, is a practical falsehood; as it is enmity against the God of truth, and sets up an interest in opposition to his holy kingdom. There is much practical atheism in all the wicked, from the first dawn of their moral existence; or we should not so invariably find them, when left to themselves, casting contempt upon the divine character, law, and grace. God is not in all their thoughts; and when the divine government is obtruded upon their minds, they strive to forget it as soon as possible. They say, in their practice, that God does not deserve their love, and that his law ought not to command their unconditional obedience. The impenitent practically declare, that there is no worth, or beauty in Jesus Christ; and that his grace may be trampled under foot with impunity. Thoughtless and secure sinners manifest, by their conduct, that they do not estimate their souls, as of so much worth as their bodies; and that the concerns of time are of far greater importance than those of eternity. Thus we may see how all the wicked, however regular they may be in their external conduct, are disposed to go astray from the paths of righteousness and truth, and to flee to a refuge of lies.

If we are not strangers to our own hearts, my Brethren, we must know that we are naturally alienated from the life of God, and wholly inclined to lend a listening ear to the flattering lips of others, and to flatter ourselves in our own eyes. Hence it appears, that we are enemies to truth, and

friends to falsehood. Happy, thrice happy, for us, if we are, through grace, inclined to hear the voice of the Son of God; who came into the world to bear witness to the truth. All his friends, amidst their numerous imperfections, are striving against the deceitfulness of sin, and for that glorious liberty which constitutes the real freedom of man.

2. We see why the wicked are represented as *fools*, in the holy scriptures. They say in their hearts, There is no God. Or if they admit the divine existence in words, they deny the divine perfections in their practice. Though in God they live, and move, and have their being, they seek for happiness from themselves, or from some other creature. The God who created them is able to destroy them in a moment; yet they disobey his laws, and are daily provoking him to wrath. They strive to hide their own characters from their view; and are flattering themselves with vain hopes. While many indulge the most shameful vices, they excuse themselves from guilt, and compliment themselves as being among the most deserving and virtuous of mankind.

The wicked despise the Saviour, who proclaims glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will to men. They treat with scorn, the glorious Redeemer who came from heaven to earth to save our sinful race. They refuse to pay homage to him who is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person, and whom all the heavenly host adore and praise.

With what madness and folly are those chargeable, who indulge a hope of future happiness, while they remain enemies to a holy God, a holy Saviour, and the enjoyments of a holy heaven! What blindness covers the minds of those, who believe that they need little change of character to prepare them for communion with God here, and the enjoyment of him hereafter! The unsanctified

proclaim their folly, by urging such pleas for their neglect of the love of God as they would be ashamed to urge for their neglect of loving a deserving character among their fellow-men. Who, but a fool, would plead the wickedness of those around him, or the wickedness of his own heart, as an excuse for living in sin! Who, but a fool, would urge his own folly as an excuse for neglecting to walk in the path of wisdom! Who, but a fool, would set up creatures in the place of God, and make this world his portion and home! Do we not all condemn Nebuchadnezzar for forming an image out of his gold and silver, and setting it up to be worshipped as a God? But every graceless professor, and every impenitent sinner, is guilty of the same folly, in kind, with the Babylonian monarch. We all condemn the conduct of the Jews, in making a calf at the foot of Mount Sinai; yet of many it may be truly said, as of the Jews before their captivity, "Thy calf, O Samaria! hath cast thee off." Yet many who practically say to gold, Thou art my god, and to mammon, Thou art my confidence, flatter themselves that they are wise and good men, with whom their Maker cannot be greatly displeased.

Unrenewed men are also guilty of great folly, in seeking for supreme happiness from worldly enjoyments; when it is so manifest, from divine declarations and the experience of almost six thousand years, that they never did, nor ever can, make one soul truly happy. They are certainly fools, who seek to make this world their abiding place: since man's days on earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding. Remember the parable of our Lord, Luke 12. which represents a certain worldly man as saying to his soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." This child of prosperity and selfishness, in this speech of his, revealed the thoughts of many hearts. All who have come to church to-day, intend to live longer, get worldly

good, and be more happy,—let such mark the conclusion of the parable: “But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee. Then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God.”

The more attentively and impartially we survey the conduct of those who live without hope, and without God in the world, the more reason shall we find for astonishment. They shamefully debase the noble powers and faculties of the mind with which they are endowed: and, under the greatest external light, are pursuing a course directly contrary to their own best good, and which will inevitably terminate in their shame and everlasting contempt. With what justice and propriety, then, are the graceless and unholy styled fools, in the oracles of God! Hear the voice of heavenly wisdom addressed to them in **Prov. 8. 4, 5:** “Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men; O ye simple, understand wisdom: and ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart.”

To conclude: Let the wicked be warned no longer to flatter themselves in their own eyes; and let them be entreated to embrace the truth and be saved. And, that you may not mistake me, in applying the subject;—I conscientiously believe, it is applicable to every man, woman, and child, that hears me. It is as applicable to those, who for years have professed to follow Christ, as to others.

O ye self-flatterers, of every description—Pause! and reflect on your sin and folly. Neither your understandings, nor consciences, justify self-flattery. Be entreated not to countenance it in your practice. Awake from your careless stupidity! and no longer say, by your actions, There is no God. View yourselves as being always surrounded by his presence; and realize that he is constantly acquainted with your conduct, with all your words, and with all

the thoughts of your hearts. Remember that he is a righteous and holy God; and that he must be served in spirit and in truth. He marks your empty seats in his house: and his eye, in anger, regards the house and heart where there is no prayer. To God you are accountable for all your conduct; and must soon stand before him as your Judge, and meet his smiles, or his frowns forever. Carry within you, wherever you go, a deep, solemn, and impressive sense of his omniscience, purity, and hatred of all sin. Compare your hearts and lives with God's holy law, and be humbled in the dust for your numerous transgressions.

Some may tell you, that the law is abated in strictness by the death of Christ; and that all are placed where Adam was before he fell; and that we are all, by nature, in a salvable state: meaning, thereby, that God will now take half of the heart for the whole, and half obedience for what the ten commandments require. But be not deceived: Christ came not to destroy the law, or abate it; he came to fulfil. Instead of imagining him to bring down the law to your corrupt feelings, rather labour, through Christ strengthening you, after a complete conformity to all its requirements.

Some, by self-deception, substituting their wishes for scripture and argument, say—'God cannot, and will not, send any creature where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.' Let him that replieth against God, answer his own express declarations. But complain not thou of the penalty which God has annexed to unrepented sin. Rather acknowledge yourself guilty, and justly deserving all he has threatened to inflict. Instead of fixing your attention wholly upon the sins of others, the sins of ministers and professors of religion, let your eyes be open to discover your own sins. Consider how vain is every attempt of the sinner to make his own feelings the measure of his guilt, and to cover his iniquity with honourable names. If

you are to be the final judges what your iniquities deserve, the law of God would be overthrown, and the universe would be disorganized. After all that men-pleasers say to quiet the ungodly, in their wicked ways, God is judge himself; and by his opinion of right and wrong, practices and principles, you must stand or fall forever. Many ungodly and hard speeches are made against the God-exalting, and soul-humbling doctrines of the Bible. Murmur not against this plan of gospel grace. Let God be true, if it proves every man a liar. You must deny yourselves, or be disowned by Jesus Christ, the judge of the quick and the dead. Flatter not yourselves with an opinion of your good deeds, resolutions, and desires; while you remain the enemies of God's justice, and despisers of the grace of the gospel. Indulge not the hope of obtaining heaven, without earnestly striving to enter in at the strait gate, and be anxious and concerned lest you should be found among the reprobates.

Many affect to despise what is called experimental religion: and, substituting water baptism for regeneration, and a form of godliness for the power, they bid their followers trust in valid ordination, rather than in Christ. While some are pleased with this easy way to heaven, God's word informs us, that, the true way is strait and narrow. You must consent to take up your cross and follow the Son of God daily, or you will not receive the crown of eternal life. Can you be so foolish as to suppose, that you can obtain future happiness easier than those who have gone before you? and that, while you refuse to walk in the path in which the saints of every age, have travelled to heaven? Be not so blind as to imagine, that, by the external practice of some moral duties, you can atone for the neglect of others, or that by a flaming zeal, and a high profession of religion, you can be approved of God, while you regard neither *justice*, *mercy*, nor

*truth*, in your intercourse with mankind. If you would be Christians indeed, you must have respect to all God's commandments. Your obedience must be from the heart; and you must persevere in it to the end of your days. You must be the subjects of an essential change of character, or you cannot see the kingdom of God.

Again: Seek not to quiet your consciences in sin, by the imperfections of those who are ministers or professors of religion: as though another man's sin was your justifying righteousness. It is declared in the holy scripture, Ecc. 7. 20, "There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not." Were you to behold one of Adam's race in the present life, who had arrived at sinless perfection, you would discover a fact which would overthrow the truth of the Bible. Will you cavil at the scriptures and their doctrine, because God in his providence does not contradict them?

What are you seeking *for*, my friends, whose only religion is that of finding fault with those who make pretensions? I say, what are you seeking *for*, by your murmurings? Must Christians be perfect here, contrary to what God has declared? Or will you refuse to obey gospel grace, if its plan be not changed? Pray reflect a moment on the part you are acting; and consider with whom you are maintaining a controversy. You may vainly imagine that you are contending with man; but you are really contending with God. Tremble at the thought! Can you prevail in this controversy? or avoid the woe that is denounced against him who striveth with his Maker?

All the friends of Christ lament their own imperfections, and detest the conduct of those hypocrites, who make a religious profession a cloak for their wickedness. How absurd and foolish, then, is the conduct of those who deny all truth, because it has its counterfeits, and because the visible disciples of Christ are not perfect until they enter into heaven!

But suppose, my friends, a perfect man were to appear on the earth; would you judge impartially of his character, and be disposed to imitate his example? Let us appeal to a well known fact. A perfect man, in the person of Jesus Christ, once appeared in this world; and what reception did he meet with from its ungodly inhabitants? They charged him with being a wine-bibber, and a friend of publicans and sinners. They charged him with being a seditious enemy of the government of Cæsar; with being in alliance with Beelzebub, the prince of devils; and with being a blasphemer. They refused to believe on him, because he was so bad a character that it would be disgraceful for a Scribe or Pharisee to become his disciple. And this was said, amidst all the light which shone from his life, his doctrines, his miracles. And they persecuted him unto death. Nay, they insultingly said, when he hung upon the cross, "He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him."

Here we see the treatment which a perfect man met with from the wicked. Were he again to appear in the world, would you, who are now cavilling, because you see no perfect men on the earth, cheerfully embrace the holy Saviour? Would you forsake all and follow him? O, be not deceived! You would, with your present temper, be far more pained by his example, than you are by the imperfect example of his nominal disciples. And your hatred of religion would rise to a tenfold greater height, than it has at any past period of your lives. Be assured, that your excuse for the neglect of gospel grace, because you see no perfect man among those who are styled Christians, is a plea suggested by your evil hearts, and strengthened by all the arts of Satan, who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning.

Finally: Seek not to justify yourselves by the wicked-

ness of your hearts, for this is attempting to justify one sin by another; and if persisted in, will be fatal in its consequences. Will you dare to urge this plea at the bar of God? Be warned, be counselled, and be entreated, to drop your controversy with the Most High; to be reconciled to his holy government; and to flee to the all-atoning blood of Jesus Christ for pardon and acceptance. Flatter not yourselves, that you should cheerfully embrace the truth, if you saw all around you pressing into the kingdom of God. For, like the unbelieving Scribes of old, or like Judas in the family of Christ, you might still reject the counsel of God against yourselves. Desirable as company is, in travelling the road to heaven, each traveller must have a work of grace carried on in his own heart, as much as if there was no other person in the way of life. Dream not of a more convenient season than the present, in which you may secure the divine favour. This life is short, and will soon end. The present day, or hour may be your last. If you continue to flatter yourselves, you will become the more hardened in sin; your blindness of mind will increase; and you will be in imminent danger of being plunged into the depths of wickedness and delusion. Awful will be the doom of those whose eyes remain closed against the truth until their spirits are ushered into the eternal world. Then the Lord shall consume them with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy them with the brightness of his appearing.

Penitently implore the mercy of the God of truth and grace. Become followers of God, as dear children. Faithfully bear witness to the truth, as did the divine Saviour, both in life and death; and you will receive a crown of righteousness with all those who love the kingdom and appearing of Jesus Christ: to whom be glory both now and forever.

## SERMON IX.



I PETER, II. CHAP. 25 VER.

*For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned  
unto the shepherd and bishop of your souls.*



Sheep are very feeble animals: and when they wander from their fold, they are greatly exposed to want and danger. They are the most liable of any tame animals never to find their way back to the place of safety which they had left. By sheep going astray, is meant, in the text, sinners of mankind, in their natural or unrenewed state. The prophet Isaiah uses the phrase in the same sense: chap. 53. 6. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every man to his own way." By the return of the sheep, in the text, is meant, the recovery of sinners from their lost state to the favor of God. They return to him by Jesus Christ; who is here styled the shepherd and bishop, or overseer of souls. He is the good shepherd, who hath laid down his life for the sheep. He brings them home into his fold and family: and, with all the tenderness and courage of a shepherd, and with all the vigilance and care of an overseer, or bishop, guides and protects them, to the end of their days.

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In the text, the apostle reminds believers, what had been their character and state, before they were made subjects of God's special grace; and what is their character and state, by their return to the shepherd and bishop of their souls. In gathering instruction from the passage before us, it is proposed to follow the method of the inspired writer, in considering what man is by nature, and by grace; and to allude to the figurative language which he adopts.

I. To consider the character and state of man by nature: he has gone astray like a lost sheep.

1. The wicked go astray from God, like wandering sheep, as they do not like to retain him in their knowledge. Sheep have been seen to forsake a good fold, and pastures covered over with excellent feed, and to wander into barren fields and deserts. So sinners wander from the gracious protection of the Great Shepherd, and from the provisions of the gospel, and choose to remain where there is no safety, and where there is no food proper for the nourishment of the immortal soul. Thus, in the days of the prophet Jeremiah, the Israelites became like lost sheep. They went from mountain to hill, and they forgot their resting place. Wicked rulers, and false teachers had turned them aside from the right worship of God at Jerusalem, to sacrifice on mountains and high places. Thus they were exposed, as lost sheep, to be devoured by their enemies, who were like wolves and lions; and they had not thought of returning to their resting place; i. e. to God and his worship.

Look upon the heathen nations, and behold them "changing the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." But, passing by those who are involved in the darkness of paganism, what a melancholy spectacle is exhibited by those who

live under the light of divine revelation! What absurd errors do many of them adopt as their creed! and what impiety and unrighteousness appear in their notions! Among some, who are sound in their faith and decent in their manners, we find awful stupidity prevailing with respect to their souls. They are very far from crying after divine knowledge, and lifting up their voice for understanding, seeking her as silver and searching for her as for hid treasures. They prize any other kind of knowledge much above that wisdom which carries in it the fear of the Lord, and influences to holy obedience. The wicked seek for rest where it is not to be found. They seek for it in amusements or sensual pleasures; and promise themselves unspeakable happiness in the indulgence of their appetites and passions. In this pursuit, disappointment is sure to follow. Eccl. 2. 12. "I said in my heart, go to now, I will prove thee with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure. And behold this also is vanity. I said of laughter, it is mad; and of folly, what doth it?" How little enjoyment is found in the circles of the gay and the dissipated, let those tell who have long mingled with such company. Are they not compelled to confess, in some moment of reflection, the truth of Solomon's words, Prov. 14. 13, "even in laughter, the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness."

When men go astray from God, they seek to find rest in the riches, as well as the pleasures, of the world. They strive to accumulate wealth, in every way which falls within their reach. Their plans occupy their thoughts, at home and abroad, by day and by night. The world, like fire, is a good servant, but a bad master. Those who acquire the greatest portion of earthly goods, and set their hearts upon them, make themselves great slaves, and enjoy no true quiet. They are much farther from rest than the laboring poor, who are able to lay up

little or nothing for the morrow. Eccl. 5. 12. "The sleep of the laboring man is sweet, whether he get little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep."

To creatures who have wandered from God, worldly honor often proves extremely ensnaring. To obtain this, they will apply, if temptations present, with all the meanness of sycophants, to secure the object of their wishes. If the path of promotion happens to be within the direction of the people at large, a cunning, unprincipled man, in order to bring himself into office, will practice on the ignorance of one, and the credulity of another; he will address the prejudices of a third, the private interest of a fourth, and will flatter the vices of a fifth. If he carry his point, he will be full of fears, lest he should be ejected by another's practising his own arts against him; and thus will find no quiet. But suppose one to seek a good name by laudable means, and to be raised to a post of high dignity and trust, by the unsolicited voice of his fellow men. He will soon learn, by experience, that the cares of his station have imposed a burthen upon him which is unknown to the man who contentedly remains in the private walks of life. What a just picture of the men of the world is drawn by the inspired pen of the Psalmist. Psalm 52. 9. "Surely men of low degree are vanity; and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity."

Those who, like sheep, go astray from God, may go from pole to pole, and traverse all sides of the globe; but they will seek for rest in vain. The happiness which they fondly hope to obtain, will elude their grasp, and be at a greater remove than ever from their embrace. If they experience as indulgent a providence as the wise man, they will finally be constrained to sigh over earthly bliss as he he did;—"vanity of vanities, all is vanity and vexation of spirit."

2. When sheep go astray, they go further and further from the fold and shepherd; grow more and more unacquainted and inattentive to his voice; or are continually missing the path which would lead them back. When they have been for a long time in a wandering state, they contract a habit of wildness which is very unfriendly to their return to their former regular and quiet state. So sinners, the longer they remain impenitent, go further and further from God; grow more and more unacquainted with, and inattentive to, his calls; and of all paths commonly take the worst.

The apostle says in the text, "Ye were as sheep going astray. They are represented, not merely as sheep who had *gone* astray, but as those who were actually now *going* astray, until divine grace arrested them. They never stopped in their flight until they were found and brought back by the bishop of souls. They continued to proceed from bad to worse, until they were reclaimed. We never stand still in our moral course. We are, as to the general outline of our lives, constantly progressing either toward heaven or hell. It is in vain to seek for a middle course, which leads to neither of these places. No such course can be found. We must either be for Christ, or against him. We must belong either to the kingdom of light, or to the kingdom of darkness. The unsanctified may be the subjects of many changes, with respect to moral and religious things. They may go from one denomination of christians to another. They may walk awhile with all the religious partizans who are near them. They may change from error to truth in doctrine. They may reform from their vices, and lead lives which are externally pure. They may have as much zeal as Jehu, while, with an idolatrous heart, he was, by the divine command, cutting off the house of Ahab; for the practice of the sin which he loved. And they may dis-

cover a warmth in their words which equals the profession of the martyrs in their dying moments. But after all these changes, and other similar ones which might be named, they are still like lost sheep going astray from God.

The impenitent disobey the divine law, and reject the gospel of Jesus Christ. They withhold their affections from the God who created them, upholds them in being, and daily loads them with his benefits. They place their hearts supremely on earthly things; and make their own glory the ultimate end of their actions. They refuse to perform the service enjoined in the Cth Psalm, and in many other places: "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." Though the great and merciful Shepherd is calling them, by his word and providences, to come to him, they turn a deaf ear. They will not hearken to his voice, sounding in his discourses, in his miracles, in his holy example, in his agony, and on the cross. Though he was delivered for the offences of sinners, and was raised again for their justification, and is now interceding at the Father's right hand, they will not repair to the grace which proclaims pardon to the guilty, and offers a crown of life to those who are straying from the fold. The merciful and great Shepherd came to seek and to save that which was lost, but the wicked have little or no sense of the loss and ruin in which they are involved; and will not embrace the all-sufficient and glorious Savior.

The enemies of Christ hated him when he was on earth, because he testified concerning their deeds, that they were evil. So the unbelievers of the present day are no better pleased with his testimony, than were their brethren of old. The impenitent are loth to see their

characters in their true light, and with the humble publican to smite on their breasts, saying, God be merciful to us sinners. They often feel a sensible indignation within them in hearing the denunciations of the divine wrath against unbelievers; and either flatter themselves that the preacher has mistaken the meaning of his text, or that the whole gospel is, at least, as likely to be false as true.

In the eyes of such persons, Christ hath no form nor comeliness. They will not flee to him, as their shepherd, to protect them from the storm of impending wrath, and to be their overseer and guide through life and in death.

3. Wandering sheep are in a very defenceless and dangerous state. They are in danger from wolves and other beasts of prey. Just so impenitent sinners have no defence within themselves, or from any created arm; and are in great danger of everlasting ruin. They are in Satan's kingdom, who was a murderer from the beginning, and who, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. His artful and malicious designs are the more dangerous, by reason of the great and total depravity of the children of men. By this, they are strongly inclined to listen to the suggestions of their proud, unbelieving, and treacherous hearts: and hence are prepared to be led captive by Satan at his will.

Besides, they are placed in a world where all the inhabitants of their race are naturally inclined to evil; and only a few hitherto, in comparison with the whole, have been recovered from the guilt and the dominion of sin. To adopt the words of the poet;

Broad is the road that leads to death,  
And thousands walk together there:  
But wisdom shows a narrow path,  
With here and there a traveller.

It is natural to go with the multitude; and it is painful to the corrupt heart to travel in the narrow path with the

despised few. This view of the case serves to heighten our ideas of the dangerous state of men, while, like lost sheep, they are going astray from God.

While sinners are wandering from God, they are liable to fall in with those false shepherds, who will promise them peace and safety in their present course. Such guides have been seen in every age, since there was a church on the earth. And they have been instrumental in leading many blind mortals to hell. The apostle declares, 2 Cor. 9, "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." Therefore, it is nothing strange, that his ministers have always been very active in their master's work, and have been very successful. As they have fellowship with the course of the ungodly world, and flatter the proud and the self righteous, we need not wonder that they have been listened to by the multitude.

In whatever light we impartially survey the state of sinners, while they resemble sheep going astray, their dangers are found to be many and great. They are constantly under the curse of God's holy law, which they have transgressed. They are increasing their guilt. They are the sport of every kind of temptation which falls in their way from earth and from hell. And they are on the brink of endless ruin. From this can they be snatched by the grace of the gospel alone. This would lead me to consider the recovery of the saved from their sin and guilt, and their restoration to the divine favor. This, however, I shall for the present postpone.

Enough has been said, to show us the great guilt and folly of impenitent sinners. They forsake the author of their existence, and the author and fountain of all good; and pursue after lying vanities. By this pursuit, they become very criminal in the sight of God; and, at the same time, forsake their own mercy. They do not go astray from innocent motives. They wander from God; and

they love to wander. It is pleasing to the taste of their corrupt hearts to choose their own way, and to keep out of sight the path in which God commands them to walk. Instead of lying down in the green pastures which the Shepherd of souls hath provided, they stray into the barren wastes of a howling wilderness. They seek for food and rest where neither can be found: and are daily piercing themselves through with many sorrows. They lead a restless, painful, roving life, in their most quiet seasons; and often endure the tortures of disappointed hopes.

And this is not all. Impenitent sinners hold on their course, while in an enemy's land; and are surrounded with dangers on all sides which threaten the loss of their souls. Neither the remonstrances of the monitor within them, nor the warning of God's word and providence, stop them in their mad-career. They continue to go astray, as their constant employment; regardless of the commands, counsels, warnings, and invitations, of the good Shepherd, who is calling them to return and to be wise unto salvation. Fools make a mock at sin; and fear not destruction from any of the snares which Satan is spreading for their feet. They consult their treacherous hearts, and the common practice of the ungodly world; and make them their oracles in their passage through this momentary state. Thus, they are led captive by Satan at his will. And if sovereign grace do not interpose, they will soon be tormented in hell with him and his angels.

O, ye who are now going astray from the great Shepherd! hearken to him who followeth you out into the wilderness, with expostulations and entreaties to return. Be convinced of your sin and folly; and spend the small remnant of time which may be allowed you, in obeying him who will lead you to the fold of safety, and will be your friend and protector in life and in death, and your everlasting portion beyond the grave. Follow him and you will

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never repent your choice. The longer you follow him, the more you will be satisfied with your course, and the more glorious will his grace appear. Follow on to know the Lord: and when the chief Shepherd shall appear the second time, to gather at his right hand, all the members of his flock, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

Realize the great and solemn day when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him. Then shall he sit on the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. Then he shall set the sheep, or the righteous, on his right hand; but the goats, or the wicked, on his left. Those on his right hand shall be publicly owned by the Judge, and graciously rewarded with eternal life: but the wicked, on his left hand, will be doomed to endless woe. He will say unto them, "Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

O, my thoughtless hearers! whose heart can endure, and whose hand can be strong, in the day of God's anger at sin! Be all attention to the voice of the divine Shepherd. If you persist in refusing his calls, you may, by and by, find 'no place for repentance, though you seek it carefully with tears.'

# SERMON X.



1 PETER, 2 CHAP. 25 VER.

*For ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned  
unto the shepherd and bishop of your souls.*



My object in the morning, was to exhibit before you, the character and state of man, by nature and by grace, by alluding to the figurative language adopted in the text.

We found, that man, by his apostacy, has gone astray as a lost sheep: as he does not like to retain God in his knowledge; is continually missing, or avoiding the path that would lead him back to his Maker; and as, by his sins, he is in a very dangerous and defenceless state.

Sheep are the most exposed of all animals in the brute creation. Men compare with them, not in innocence and harmlessness, but in their stupidity, weakness, and need of governmental care and restraint; in their thoughtlessness of future consequences; their readiness to leap enclosures and wander away; their inability to defend or recover themselves; and their need to be saved, led, and nourished by Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd.

The second general head of discourse was postponed: viz. the recovery of the saved from their sin and guilt, and

their restoration to the divine favour: "*but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls.*"

This recovery would never take place, if the great and merciful Redeemer did not interpose, and by his Spirit bring back the wandering sheep to the fold, and put them in possession of the good which they had despised and rejected.

1. Believers are brought into a state of reconciliation with God; and have therefore some true knowledge of him. Now they see, to their sorrow, their guilt and folly in forsaking the Shepherd and Bishop of souls. His character appears to them to be excellent and glorious; and they desire to have him for their guide and protector forever. That being who commanded the light to shine out of darkness at the creation, hath shined in their hearts, to give the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. They approve of the divine law, both in its preceptive and penal parts; and sincerely repent of their sins. They are reconciled to the plan of sovereign grace revealed in the gospel; and rest their hope entirely upon this, for pardon and acceptance with an offended God. They prize divine knowledge above silver and gold, and above all the things of which this world can boast. And are daily looking to the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift, for wisdom to direct them, and for strength to support them, to the close of their days. They strive to banish from their minds unworthy thoughts of God, and to repel all the fiery darts of the wicked. They become holy in heart and holy in life; and though but partially sanctified at the present time, they have a fixed purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord, and to conform to his revealed will. 1. John 5. 3: "For this is the love of God; that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous."

When the wandering sheep are returned to the Shep-

herd and Bishop of souls, they do not seek for rest in worldly pursuits and enjoyments; but in the inexhaustible fountain of good. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul! for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee:" saith the Psalmist. Happy is that soul which can sincerely utter such language! The pleasures, gains, and honors of this world, will not be made the supreme objects of rest, by the man who is brought into the fold of Christ. With the sweet singer he will say, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters: he restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, for his own name's sake." When a pious man cannot find within himself any evidence that his heart is in harmony with that of the Psalmist, but finds darkness within on account of his backslidings, he will not rest until he again can find breathings of heart after God, and can taste some degree of sweetness in his gracious covenant.

2. When sheep are turned about, and are travelling towards the fold, they continue to approach nearer and nearer to it, until the Shepherd brings them home. So believers, the first moment they are savingly apprehended by the Shepherd and Bishop of souls, set out for heaven; and they are drawing nearer and nearer to it, unto the end of their days. This remark will hold, not only with respect to the flight of time, but also with respect to moral fitness, or fitness of temper for holy enjoyment and employment.

We know that believers sometimes awfully backside. But still it is true of them, when we mark any considerable period of time, that they, on the whole, increase in holiness. Prov. 4. 18: "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." True Christians grow in the knowledge of God and of themselves. They increase in their affection to Christ,

to his followers, and to all mankind. They become more and more watchful and devout, and more and more attentive to the various duties which they owe to God, to themselves, and to others. Flights of passion may cease. Raptures may be fewer in number, and less in degree: but solid piety will grow and increase in them. They will become more and more weaned from the world, and more and more ripe for heaven. They will better understand how to distinguish between the wheat and the chaff, in themselves and others. And their love will abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; according to the prayer of the Apostle for the brethren at Phillippi.

It being established, in the gospel plan, that all who are justified shall be glorified; and that no one of Christ's true sheep, or who ever heard his voice, shall perish; it must follow, that persevering grace is promised to believers. And, therefore, we are authorised to affirm, that they will hold on their way, and wax stronger and stronger. They will, indeed, exceedingly lessen their confidence in their own strength, or in that of any other creature: but they will be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

"Christ is the good Shepherd, and knoweth his sheep, and is known of his." John 10. 14. They hearken to him when speaking in his word, in his providence, or by his Spirit. They aim to follow his example in all things in which it can be imitated by men. They are often deeply humbled that they do not keep their eye more closely fixed on his holy walk, and on the matchless display of love which he made in his obedience, sufferings, and death. They labour to fix their meditations on the person and work of the Son of God. And view themselves as bound to live unto him who died and rose again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living. They feel that they are wholly lost, as to any plan of deliverance of their own: and look to Christ to redeem them from sin and hell.

How excellent does Christ appear to every one who is a traveller towards heaven, on account of the honor which he put upon God's law, his testimony against sin, and the glory which he reflected upon all the moral perfections of God! The more this subject is canvassed, the more wonderful it appears, and a conviction increases, that redeeming love is a theme which cannot be exhausted.

The sheep who are following Christ love that holy character in him which they once hated. They feel it to be just, that all the curses which are written in the book of the law should fall upon them: and that their deliverance is not on account of any worth or exertion in themselves, but that it takes its rise in the mere sovereign mercy of God. Hence, they are taught not to glory in the flesh; but to glory in the Lord alone. They feel indignation at the conduct of those who make a mock of Christianity; and at the same time exercise pity and compassion towards such as are in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity. Having counted the cost of discipleship, they are determined, by divine assistance, to follow Christ through contempt, reproach, and losses to the day of their death.

3. As sheep are safe when under the care of an able and faithful shepherd; so believers are secure under the care and protection of the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls. When David kept his father's sheep, there came a lion and a bear and took a lamb out of the flock. David rescued the lamb; and slew both the lion and the bear. But Christ is an abler shepherd than even David, with all his miraculous assistance, both in the slaughter of strong and terrible beasts of prey, and in the slaughter of Goliath the Philistine champion. The great Captain of the believer's salvation is possessed of infinite knowledge and power: and, as Mediator, all power is delegated to him, in heaven and in earth.

The promise and the oath of God are pledged for the protection and happiness of those who have God for a refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before them in the gospel.

The sheep of Christ are, in the present world, surrounded with perils. While sinners, in the word of God, are represented by the bad properties of sheep, saints are represented by their good and commendable qualities; such as cleanliness, patience, harmlessness, usefulness and helplessness when exposed to danger. But their almighty Shepherd will preserve them from final harm. Satan, their great enemy is under the control of Christ. The Saviour will bruise his head, and confound the designs of the serpent and all his adherents. He may permit the grand adversary to tempt them in various ways. But he will cause them to come off more than conquerors, in the close of their conflicts. Believers, though like sheep in the midst of wolves, will not be devoured. They hearken to the voice of their almighty Shepherd, and are kept in safety. They distinguish between the voice of Christ and the voice of strangers. These last they will not follow. They receive the true doctrines of the gospel; and will not embrace any which are essentially different from these. Though they may be ensnared for a short season by seducers, they will eventually abide by the doctrine which is according to godliness. In the beautiful language of King Solomon, they will seek, and find, where Christ maketh his flock to rest at noon; and will go their way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed beside the shepherds' tents. Convinced of the deceitfulness of sin in themselves, and in others, they watch and pray against its dominion.

Christ's sheep are attacked while in the wilderness by wolves in sheep's clothing; or by men who are friends to him in appearance, but are, in fact, enemies to him and

his flock. By closely following the great Shepherd, his sheep will learn to distinguish impostors from true guides. Our Saviour hath declared that they are to be known by their fruits. They may profess great humility, warm zeal, and an ardent love for souls; but to a critical and wise observer, they will, after a while, manifest a temper very opposite to the gospel; and give evidence that they are seeking their own glory, instead of the glory of Christ and the welfare of his disciples.

The Apostle Paul delineates the character of seducers who cloak their corrupt purposes under the garb of Christianity, in his farewell address to the elders of the church of Ephesus. Acts 20. 29, 30: "For I know this, that, after my departing, shall grievous wolves enter among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them." Wolves in sheep's clothing will, sooner or later, make it manifest that their aim is not to promote Christian peace and union; but to scatter and divide the flock; to make to themselves a name; and to promote the interest of the sect or party which they seek to head. Heresies have arisen continually, ever since there has been a church on earth. But her King and Shepherd hath, in every age, raised up instruments to defend her cause and to reform her corruptions. These witnesses have prophesied in sackcloth in many periods; but they have been enabled, by divine grace, to keep their garments undefiled; and their labours and sufferings have been made instrumental in keeping alive the truth in this ungodly world.

From experience, and the history of the church, we cannot doubt the truth of the promise made by the Redeemer in Matth. 16. "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The great Shepherd extends his care to each member of

his flock; and is peculiarly tender of the young and feeble. Hence Isaiah prophecies concerning him, in chap. 40. 11: "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and shall carry them in his bosom; and shall gently lead those that are with young." He hath provided food and nourishment for the weakest, as well as for the strongest of the flock. He doth not lay so heavy burdens on the former, as upon the latter; nor subject them to such fiery trials. The members who entered *lately* into the fold, have usually more comfort, in proportion to their growth, than those who have been *long* in it. For awhile their Shepherd taketh the lambs, or young converts, in his arm, carrieth them on until they have gained a considerable degree of knowledge, before they are called to make vigourous defence against devouring wolves, and the great adversary who seeketh to destroy them.

Again: Christ, the good Shepherd, goeth before his sheep; and is their leader, when they are most violently assaulted by their enemies. However great and pressing their dangers are, the followers of Christ have his gracious presence to support, encourage, and animate them. He, by his own example, when on earth, hath shown them how to meet poverty, shame, temptations, sorrow, sufferings, and death. He hath travelled the path through these things before them; and hath laid down his life for the sheep. He is the good Shepherd; and knoweth his sheep; and is known of them. He calleth them all by name; or hath the name of each on his heart and mind forever. He hath other sheep, which are not now actually in his fold. Some of these are not yet gathered in; but shall be in the appointed time. There are sheep which are not yet born: they exist only in the divine purpose, at present. But whether the sheep are now in existence, or are to be born, their Shepherd knoweth them.

each one by name. When he seeth the wolf coming, he will not, like the hireling, leave them and flee: but he will remain with them, and be their guardian and defence at all times. He will give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish; neither shall any man pluck them out of his hand.

Finally: The sheep of Christ will not be forsaken by him in the hour of death. He will be present with them when the aid of all earthly friends will be found to be vain. He will guide them safely through their conflict with the last enemy, and conduct them to the heavenly mansions. The Psalmist, in the 23d Psalm, after declaring the Lord to be his Shepherd, and after enumerating several of the happy fruits of his choice, adds in ver. 4: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." What a blessed privilege is it, to have Christ, an almighty friend, to walk with us, and to support us, when passing through the painful hour, at the approach of which, human nature shudders! Ten thousand worlds cannot procure such a friend. He came to destroy the sting of death, in all who are devoted to him. He came that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. Provision is made for them to rise higher in happiness and glory, than was made under the covenant, whose blessings they forfeited and lost by the apostacy.

From the foregoing discourses, we may infer,

1. The wonderful grace of God in the salvation of sinners. The scheme of gospel grace was planned in the councils of the triune God, before time was. Immediately after the fall of man, Christ, the second person in the Trinity, entered on the work assigned him in the covenant of redemption; and, by his Spirit, hath raised up a seed to serve him from age to age. He was, in the divine pur-

pose, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. In the fulness of time, he became incarnate, obeyed, suffered, and died. He went down to the grave. He arose. He ascended; and publicly entered on his work of intercession. He sent down the Holy Spirit to confer a larger portion of his miraculous and sanctifying influence on men than in former ages. Salvation through a crucified Saviour is now proclaimed among the Gentiles, as well as the Jews. The nature and glory of the kingdom of grace are now laid open with great clearness. All things are made ready: and the invitations to the gospel feast are become abundant and pressing. But after all that has been done for sinners, they refuse to come to Christ for life. They would all perish, if the Holy Ghost were not sent into their hearts, to subdue and sanctify them. The lost sheep would continue to go astray, were they not returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls, by his power and grace. From the great Shepherd, the saved receive an ear to hear, eyes to see, and an heart to understand. He conducts them in safety through all the temptations and dangers of life; he supports them in death; and he brings them to the world of everlasting peace and joy. They will praise God for free grace to all eternity. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

In view of the whole, let the followers of Christ live under a constant and lively impression of the riches of redeeming love. Did he die for sinners? Let not this wonderful display of benevolence be ever forgotten. If the Shepherd laid down his life for the sheep, live not unto yourselves, but unto him who came to save you from sin and eternal death. Sheep of the true fold, fear not! It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. You are on the mind and heart of the Shepherd.

He calleth you all by name. He leadeth you out into rich pastures; and he goeth before you at all times. He will not forsake you in trouble, like friends of this world; but he will preserve, guide and protect you, in life and death. He hath travelled through the dark valley before you; and knoweth how to support his followers whilst they are in the midst of the gloomy hour. Soon will all your temptations and sufferings be at an end; and you will be with Christ, and behold his glory, shining with a brightness which would dazzle and confound the sight of this body, and which cannot be viewed, even by the eye of faith.

Sinners, how can you go away from the house of God this evening, neglecting and rejecting this grace! Ye that think ye know the great Shepherd, and have heard his voice, why such cold hearts! Look to him who called you when straying; and imitate his affection and tenderness to the members of his flock. Let your eyes be fixed upon him in your daily walk. Pour out your hearts to him in fervent prayer; and cast all your burdens upon him. Testify your love to him, by universal and persevering obedience to the laws of his kingdom, and by patient suffering to the end of your days. With the apostolic benediction I close:—"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead, our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep; through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."

# SERMON XI.



GENESIS 18 CHAP. 19 VER.

*For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, and do justice and judgment.*



This is God's testimony of Abraham's fidelity as a parent. He knew, and approved of his integrity, piety and zeal; and that he would continue to instruct his family, to set them a good example, and to pray for them, and to use his authority in restraining them from evil, and promoting justice and godliness among them.

My hearers, God graciously notices our attention to family religion. And when we use our authority and ability in governing and instructing our households, it is not only an acceptable service, and conducive to the diffusion and continuance of piety in the world, but also the means of entailing spiritual advantages on our posterity: whilst the neglect of it is often visited by sore judgments upon them, as in the case of Lot, Eli, and Jehoshaphat. No man lives unto himself. He who understands the way of God, should carefully instruct his household in that way. And he who is the father of a family, should

pray to God to teach him, that he may teach his household. His ignorance of God and salvation can be no excuse for his neglecting his family. It is a duty indispensable, to teach those providentially committed to our care. And if they perish through our neglect, God will judge us for it in the great day. It is not meant, that it is in the power of parents to restrain their children from wickedness altogether, or to change their hearts. But then they are to use every endeavour for this purpose; or the blood of their family, who perish through their neglect, will be required at their hands. For the neglects of Eli's house, should not be purged with sacrifice nor offering forever. Let us then attend closely to these remarks; the general meaning of which, is too plain to be misunderstood. And may all heads of families hear with a resolution,—  
“As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”  
And,

1. It is the duty of parents to use their utmost endeavours to restrain their children from wickedness. The law of nature points out the subordination of children to their parents: and revealed religion confirms the obligation. Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. This subordination proves that there are relative duties from parents to children. These duties may, in general, be summed up, in doing all that lies in their power to promote their best good; especially their religious good.

The examples of good men, like Abraham, and the great influence of education on future life, strengthen our general argument. “Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old he will not depart from it;”—was a remark made by the wisest of mere men, made wiser by inspiration. And the experience of every age will justify it. One principal thing, in a pious education, is, to caution and warn against wickedness; to frown upon it; to labour to correct it in a child, and to

remove it. It must, indeed, be acknowledged, that Adam's family was not without a murdering Cain; nor Noah's without an undutiful and unnatural Ham; nor Abraham's without a mocking and tiger-like Ishmael; nor Isaac's without a proud and hard-hearted Esau; and that many other pious men of whose good family government we can have little doubt, have had very wicked children. Yet this by no means destroys the encouragement to educate piously.

Though the labours of parents cannot convert their children, yet this consideration can be no more of an objection against their endeavouring to bring their children to God, than the insufficiency of a gospel minister to convert his hearers, is against his planting and watering from time to time. The duty is ours: the event is God's. And even admitting that their labours were wholly ineffectual, the command of God is enough to engage them in the arduous work. We may be certain that religion meets with our encouragement at home no further than we endeavour to restrain from wickedness. If our families, both root and branches, are made up of sons of Belial, it is in vain to talk of giving any encouragement to seriousness, whatever we may profess.

The first thing to be remembered, as we would discountenance and restrain from wickedness, is, what we and our families are by nature. We are, by nature, children of wrath, and by practice, children of disobedience; and our propensity is exceeding great to depart from God, and to roll sin, as a sweet morsel, under our tongue. Unless we bear this in mind, we should be as much at a loss to apply remedies for the removal of our moral diseases, as a physician would be to apply remedies to one in perfect health of body. It is of the first importance that, by line upon line, and precept upon precept, we instil it into the minds of our children that they, as well

as all others of the human race, are sinners. We should tell them what sin is: a want of conformity to the law, or a transgression of it. We ought not to dwell in generals; but to come down to a level with a child's understanding, both in explaining sin and its dreadful consequences.

It is in vain for any to plead ignorance or incapacity, as an excuse, who have the Bible in their hands: and may perhaps have the further help of books of practical piety. When the heart is full of thought and concern, words flow with ease; and the most persuasive eloquence in the world is the undissembled feelings of the heart, venting themselves in their own order. Do you feel at a loss what to say to your children, when you see them in some dangerous place, where their lives are exposed, and when a word from you may be a means of putting them on their guard, and exciting them to flee from danger? And can you be at an entire loss how to give them any warning relative to the danger their precious souls are in of eternal ruin? That must be a true maxim, that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. And if we are strangers to every method of persuading men, and especially those of our own household, it seems very probable that we ourselves never knew the terrors of the Lord.

It concerns us, as heads of families, to open to our respective charges, what a woful state the whole human race have involved themselves in, by their apostacy from God. We ought to point out, whence arise those evil actions which are exhibited in the behaviour of mankind? Our Saviour is full in declaring that they all proceed from the heart. That is the fountain: the acts of wickedness which proceed from it are the streams. Hence, we may very properly desire to turn the thoughts of our children inward; and, from learning the disorder there, they may be led to seek a remedy. The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

Again; the evil tendency of sin, as pointed against our peace and happiness in the world, are to be dwelt upon. We must attempt to demonstrate to them, as it may be done, that, sinful practices tend to ruin our reputation among those whose esteem is worth having. They tend to unhinge and destroy communities, civil and religious. They lead on to the commission of the most heaven-daring crimes; and to bring down the judgments of an angry God on nations, families, and individuals. One sin leads on to another, by a very easy and almost unperceived transition. A long habit of sinning tends to that hardness of heart and blindness of mind, which evidence an entire desertion by God, and being abandoned to remediless ruin. Who can describe, in full, the misery of hell, where the finally impenitent must take up their abode forever! Whose heart can endure, or whose hand can be strong, in the day when God deals with the sinner agreeably to the full demerits of his crimes! That dreadful day is drawing near. And shall we slumber over the charge of souls? Shall heads of families forget that the souls of their children are precious, infinitely precious?

2. Heads of families, are to endeavour to restrain their children from sin, by setting before them the temptations they are liable to meet, and the danger of their being overcome. Every person may know that this is a world of temptations. They attack persons of every age, profession and character. And the more concern any one has with the affairs of the world, the more temptations he is sure to meet. Every path of life is thick set with them, before and behind, on the right hand and on the left. Youth is an age easily decoyed; and an evil adversary stands ready to make them his prey. As those under our government are ordinarily made up of young persons, what urgent need have we to point out to them their danger, and the means of escape!

The temptation of bad company is not the least which threatens the ruin of youth. Fair words, acts and warm professions of friendship, serve as a cloak to cover over the foulest heart and the vilest designs. Many a promising youth has in this way been undone, without suspecting it. A face of friendship, a flattering tongue, and an easy address, have ruined many a young female, for want of knowledge and consideration. And it is very probable too, that that want of consideration, has, in many instances, arisen from the very culpable neglect of parental cautions and warnings. Parents should carefully inspect the morals of their children: and to this end, should be watchful what company they keep; and should give them every possible caution, as they are arising from childhood into youth, against their being caught in that field of snares into which they are entering. Eli's neglect of this, was probably one thing which contributed to the ruin of his sons, himself, and his family.

3. Parents, and all heads of families, should use their utmost endeavours to restrain from wickedness, by labouring to excite in the minds of their families, honourable thoughts of religion and religious persons. Go into a family where religion and religious persons are made a matter of ridicule, and you will find nothing savoury in that house. It bears no resemblance to Bethel; but is a lively resemblance of a synagogue of Satan. It is probable that in the same house we shall find the Scriptures themselves treated as a book of plays and jests; and that they are rather made a butt for fools, than a rule of faith and practice. Youth should early be taught, that religion was never designed to be a subject of mirth and pleasantry: but of serious consideration; and that it is highly interesting to all mankind.

We who are concerned in the government of families, should be very watchful, lest, at some unguarded moment,

we drop a word which may be turned to the disadvantage of religion. Our children will be more ready to catch at this, than at any thing that is savoury; and perhaps much more than we are aware. There are many things said and done by men of real religion, in this imperfect state, which are unbecoming their profession. We should labour, at proper times, to convince our families that religion itself is chargeable with none of the imperfections of its professors. The devil and wicked men will blend these things together; but God forbid that these things should be so. Religion is too sacred a thing to be trampled under foot. We should labour to make our children believe the fact; and that upon scriptural and rational principles, true saints are the excellent of the earth, and are dearer to their heavenly parent, than all the highly esteemed of men who are yet in their sins. Though we should, at the same time, caution them against following any, one step further than he follows Christ. If we neglect to instil into the minds of our families honourable and reverential thoughts of religion and religious persons, we are exposing them to the mercy of professed scoffers at all religion; and to join in the impious cant of deists,—that the religion of the Bible is nothing but priestcraft. This way of treating revelation has been very common; and its effects have been written in blood in Europe; and they begin to be seriously felt in this country. This scoffing spirit, in a word, which leads to speak slightly of religion and religious persons, is an inlet to all that is evil, and an outlét to all that is good. It tends to introduce disorders in the house of God in time of worship; to the pulling down of a gospel ministry; and to destroy the sanctity of the Sabbath. Shall not parents, then, take seasonable alarm, and stand on their guard? Shall they not restrain from such daring wickedness, as far as in them lies?

4. Another thing implied in the duty which I am labouring

to enforce, is, that parents reprove and correct their children, and those under their government, for their wickedness, as they would restrain them from it. He that spareth the rod, in certain cases, hateth his son; if the words of Solomon are worth regarding;—and he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes. The perverseness of our fallen nature renders the correction of our children as necessary as food. He, therefore, who indulgeth his son, who connives at his perverseness, suffers him to contract vicious habits, and to grow stubborn in rebellion for want of correction, acts as if he hated him; because he permits those diseases of the heart to gather strength which will prove the sources of inexpressible sorrow to him in this world, and perhaps of eternal misery. Whereas, the parent who wisely loves his child, will early begin to teach him submission, application and the government of his passions. And having thus bent the tender twig, and established his authority, he will gradually be enabled to rule him more by persuasion and argument. But when children are permitted to get the mastery, in their tender years, they can scarcely ever after be taught subjection; and the attempt is often made by a severity which is both perilous and painful.

But, by correcting and reprovng, I more especially intend, those expostulations which we are to use with our children when they transgress the divine rule. We are to reason with them as rational creatures; set before them the nature of their crimes and their tendency; that God is dishonoured, and they themselves hurt by it; and are to frown upon them in such a manner as the nature of the case requires, and in such a manner as shall have the best tendency to work upon their peculiar habit of mind. Here is a work of great difficulty. In the first place, persons must learn to govern themselves, or they will not govern others; and must be exemplary, to give weight to their words; must time things well; and show a determined opposition

to the wickedness they reprove, from the best principles. But time forbids my proceeding any farther at present. I have entered upon too large a field to pass over in one discourse.

Those of us who are in covenant with God, may be instructed and reprov'd by what has been said. If we are those who by faith expect to be blessed with faithful Abraham, we must conduct like him in our households. We must study the object, nature, and effects of his faith; and be followers of those, who, through faith, inherit the promises. Of all men, it most becomes us to form and keep the pious resolution of Joshua. If we neglect this, the world, and, what is worse, our own consciences, will reproach us for our hypocrisy. We are called upon by all the bonds of the covenant, to walk before our houses in uprightness. Let us resolve, anew, to give up ourselves and ours to be the Lord's, saying: 'The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey.'

## SERMON XII.



GENESIS 18 CHAP. 19 VER.

*For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, and do justice and judgment.*



From this divine testimony of an excellent trait in Abraham's character, we took occasion, in the morning, to show, that parents ought to use means to restrain their children from wickedness. Several particulars were considered. The scripture doctrine was found to be very different from that of some modern philosophers on this subject, and from the practice of many weak fathers and mothers.

The reproof and correction of children is of divine appointment. And God has stooped from heaven, to tell us, that the wise and prudent use of the rod meets his approbation.

I proceed to observe, that heads of families, in domestic discipline, should use every proper method to find out the real state of the case, and what the wickedness of their children is. In this, they are to proceed with circumspection and prudence: ever holding up to view, that it is their wickedness that we mean to bear testimony against,

and that, from a tender regard to their persons and best interests, even that of their immortal souls. And here, let me remind fathers and mothers of a by-path in which they are exceedingly apt to be led astray, and that is, especially with regard to their own children, they are disposed to have too high an opinion of their integrity. Hence, when they are informed of any misconduct in them, they are ready to break out in angry resentment, saying to their informer, you are prejudiced against me or my child, you do this on purpose to vent your ill-will. I know that my child will not do so, it is false; there is not a word of truth in what you say. It is well if the evil stops here. For if it gets to the ears of the offending child, he will boast and triumph over the person whom his parent has taught him to look upon as his enemy, and be hardened in his wickedness, contrary, perhaps, to the intention of his parents. And as the child has now found out, that his parents will believe him rather than those of the most approved character, as the case may be, he feels safe as to reproof, and out of a spirit of revenge, if for no other reason, he will be induced to repeat his crime, till perhaps the poor wretch is undone, and a curse is brought upon his parents and their family by his villainy. Every parent need set a double guard over himself here. For parental affection is exceedingly blinding. It, in a great measure, shut the eyes and stopped the ears of so good a man as Eli.

On the whole; to administer reproof properly, requires much religion, wisdom, and prudence. We must reprove with sufficient spirit to show that we are in earnest; and with such a spirit as to show that we do it from true benevolence. But, difficult and disagreeable as it may seem, the duty is not to be dispensed with in certain cases. The fatal consequences of such things as we reprove must be plainly held up to the view; and we must bear testimony against them without reserve. Were this to be laid wholly aside,

all parental authority would have to be given up; and children being thus left to themselves, would bring their parents to shame. And what is yet worse, God would cease to be acknowledged in families; human societies would be turned into a bear garden, a den and a cage of every unclean beast and bird; and we must expect to feel the direful effects of the divine fury's being poured out upon us. O parents! I call on you, and I call on myself, to be faithful to the important trust reposed in us, as we would answer it to God, to our own consciences, to the church of God, to our country, and to generations unborn.

5. Heads of families should use their utmost influence to restrain their children from wickedness by their own pious example. This has been supposed, in what has already been said; and indeed it has already been hinted at; but we may dwell upon it a little more, particularly here. It is a maxim that has long obtained in the world, that example is better than precept. By which is meant, that example has much more influence upon others than barely laying down just rules to them. This is emphatically true as it respects heads of families. Would you discountenance wickedness of any particular kind? Beware that you do not practice it yourself. For your household will scruple your sincerity in reproving it, if you live in the avowed practice of it. No person is without failings: and the best come much short of their duty in this life. But this makes nothing against the argument I am now urging; but affords one reason for the greater watchfulness; and lays a foundation for much sorrow to those who do in the main walk uprightly before their families.

If, parents, you would expect to teach those whom providence has put under your care, you must yourselves lead serious and pious lives. You must persevere in this manner of life from day to day. Suppose you should labour, sometimes, with your children, to dissuade them from pro-

faneness, or lascivious conduct; and yet have indulged in these sins yourselves, what influence do you think your warnings would be likely to have upon them? They will think they have as good right to practice these vices as you have had. Would you dissuade them from profaning the Lord's day, and refrain not to find your own carnal pleasure upon it; what do you imagine your commands, exhortations, and entreaties would avail? The same observations may be made with respect to every other vice.

6. One excellent means of discountenancing sin, in those under our care, is the maintenance of family prayer in our houses. This is giving a sanction what we are saying to our households concerning the things of religion, from time to time. And besides it is a duty enjoined. We are commanded to pray with all prayer; which certainly includes praying with our families. In this way, heads of families should be showing forth the loving-kindness of the Lord in the morning, and his faithfulness every evening. We must know, that all our efforts to recommend religion, and to frown on vice, must be very ineffectual without the divine aid. How important, then, is it that we come before God in prayer for ourselves and families! As families, we have many wants, which should be brought to the throne of grace in prayer, and we experience many family deliverances, which are just matter of gratitude and praise to God. How becoming, how decent, how important, then, that this duty should be performed!

We must give our families a very mean and bad idea of serious things, if we pray not with them and for them. Will they think that we care much about religion, if we are ashamed, or afraid, to acknowledge God before them? If we set good examples in many respects, will not a neglect of duty in this one thing, take off the force of all we can say, and unnerve every argument? So far as our influence extends, it is very probable that our children will fol-

low our example in living without God in the world, and restraining prayer before him. And so the heathenism and impiety of our practice, will be transmitted from generation to generation, with our name and descendants. I pretend not to limit the Holy One of Israel. Far be it from me. He that could meet with Saul on his way to Damascus to persecute and destroy the saints, can open the eyes, and renew the hearts of those who are at the greatest remove from any seriousness. But this is not so common in a land of gospel-light. Irreligious parents, as a general rule, have irreligious children: and those who are brought up without prayer, are very apt to continue so. Education has a great influence, for the most part, on young persons, at the present time, and in future life.

I might go on further in pointing out the means of restraining families from wickedness: But it is time to enter upon the second general head of our discourse; which was—That if heads of families neglect to use their utmost endeavours to restrain those committed to their care from wickedness, they are exposed to the wrath and curse of God.

All mankind, as sinners, are bound over to eternal death and destruction. But if parents neglect to restrain their children, they bring aggravated guilt on themselves. How did the wrath of God arise against Lot, and Eli, and Jehoshaphat, who were good men with faults! And against Ahab, and Jehu, who were bad men, and cut off their families and all their outward good things! Though what we have to fear beyond the grave, is much more terrible than any thing which may overtake us in this world; yet this sin of parental negligence, even here, exposes to punishment, that makes the ears of him that heareth it to tingle. Vices of a domestic kind, are often their own punishment. How often has the excessive worldliness of parents, exposed them to the brutality of their children in

old age! Are shameful quarrels in the settlement of estates not generally founded on previous domestic sins, and defects of family government, and irreligious habits? The neglect of family religion, order, and government, tends, in many ways, to immediate punishment; and consequently, to bring down the wrath and curse of God. As,

1. Such a family will have a bad character, and be esteemed bad, among all the sober and judicious part of mankind, as giving credit to wickedness merely in one instance. An irreligious, insubordinate family, is often a stench in the nostrils of irreligious people themselves. The wise man observes, that a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches; and loving favour rather than silver and gold. It is certainly no small degree of punishment, to be looked upon contemptuously, by our fellow-men, for our beastliness, intemperance, irreligion, and profaneness.

2. If parents do not reprove their children, and endeavour to restrain them from wickedness, they will probably run into contentions among themselves, child against child, and children against the heads of the family. Now this is a little emblem of hell; where mutual hatred, and insubordination, and misrule, mark the character of its inhabitants. This tends to the ruin of the house: for a house divided against itself cannot stand.

3. The neglect we have been speaking of, tends to the ruin of families, as it tends to the ruin of the community to which they belong. Those who were never governed at home, will generally be very uncomfortable in their neighbourhood, town, and state. They will be impudent, self-conceited, and saucy to their superiours; overbearing to their equals and inferiours. They will corrupt the manners of other young persons, and lead in every party. Fierce, heady, and high-minded, their minds will be set on violence and doing mischief. When the mass of so-

ciety get to this pass, they are in great danger of destroying themselves; and so, consequently, of destroying particular families.

4. This neglect tends to destroy families another way; and that is, by running to such lengths as lead on to an untimely end. An ungoverned child is ripening for ruin. And those who have ended their lives upon the gallows and in the state prison, most generally date their ruin from their not being restrained from wickedness by their parents and governours in their childhood and youth. Certainly, an untimely death, leads to the ruin of families, as much as any outward thing that can be named. How must the hearts of parents be pierced with sorrow, at the tidings that the son of their love, and the son whom they nursed from his infancy, hath forfeited his life into the hands of justice among men! Who can endure the thought of the grief and disgrace which is now entailed on such a house! And how, think you, can such parents bear to look back on their past neglects, in suffering their young child to be their young master, till, alas! he has pierced their hearts through with many sorrows! One who has been well educated, may come to an untimely end, or die with infamy, it is true. But the probability is, most certainly, not so great, as where there were few, if any, parental restraints.

5. The neglect of endeavouring to restrain children from wickedness, tends to render God angry with a whole people. This is manifest, as a self-evident proposition, where such neglects are very general, from what has already been said. Such domestic unfaithfulness tends to shake and overturn the pillars of civil society, beyond any other evil; and carries death to the heart of the body politic, like palsy and universal mortification in the natural body. It was a sin noticed by the prophet to Israel as the certain precursor of the ruin of their nation.

6. This neglect exposes parents and governours of fami-

lies to future wrath. Far be it from me to say, that those who have wholly neglected their duty to their children are universally lost forever. They may repent, and obtain mercy and forgiveness of God. But this I may safely assert, that such conduct exposes to future wrath. God is angry with sin and sinners. And if parents countenance it in their children, they are provoking God to a very high degree, to pour upon their guilty heads the full vials of his wrath and holy indignation. Parents, and children, and masters, and servants must meet at the judgment-seat of Christ. There the secret history of their conduct will be brought to light, to determine their character, and to fix their state to all eternity in happiness or misery. How awful the consideration, that if the heads of families neglect to use their utmost endeavours to restrain those committed to their care from wickedness, they are exposed to future wrath!

Let us make practical use of what has been suggested. Let us begin with an use of examination, applied to us who are heads of families. Do we, like Abraham, command our children and household after us, to keep the way of the Lord; and to do justice and judgment? Do we lay open to our children, as they arrive to a proper age, and to those committed to our care, the state in which they came into the world, and to what they are exposed here and hereafter? Do we endeavour to warn them of the temptations they are to expect, and the danger of their being overcome by them? and do we, with all the fervor of parental affection, and the zeal of one that is a lover of souls, lay before them what probable methods will prevent their being overcome with the temptations that attack them? Or do we pass these things as of less importance than dress, or the getting and saving of money? Do we endeavour to excite within those belonging to our house, honourable thoughts of religion and religious persons? Or do we join in bantering and deriding things which are

serious? If the youth under our care are witty and severe in remarking upon seriousness and serious men, are we ready to join in the ungodly derision: or do we reprove and give no encouragement to such things? Do we teach by our example: or do we undo all in our practice that we had delivered in precept? Do we maintain prayer in our families? Are we influenced, in our deportment to our families, by motives taken from the character which religion or irreligion will give them; the harm a destitution of the fear of the Lord will do them, their danger of an untimely end; their eternal ruin, and our own with them? Have we weighed these things: or are we yet strangers to them?

I hope there are some who feel the weight of this subject every day of their lives; and are faithful to their trust in some degree. Oh, my friends! you have many temptations to lead you off from duty: such as custom, and the contempt you may fall into in the eyes of the wicked; the general neglect, and the fear of being thought singular. But keep up to the covenant yourselves. This will encourage others to enter into covenant, and to offer up their children to God in baptism upon religious principles. Keep a watch over yourselves. It is an evil day: wicked men walk on every side. They will ruin you and your families, if you do not guard, as much as possible, against the infection. Carry your children daily to the throne of grace. Plead covenant mercies for them, that they may be owned and blessed by the God of Abraham. Instruct them as well as you can. Restrain and reprove them. Point out to them the temporal and eternal consequences of living in sin and unreconciled to God in Christ; and be faithful.

Oh, my hearers! that, as an instrument in God's hand, I might prevail on you all to do thus! Take the matter into that serious consideration which it deserves, as you would avoid the curse that fell on Eli's house, and will fall

on all houses where there are similar neglects. What! have you no regard to the character of your children! Are you willing that they should join with others in serving Satan, and divers lusts and pleasures? Can you be willing that a mark of impudence should be nailed to their foreheads? and that the language of infamy and hell should proceed from their tongues? Are you willing that your children should be a curse to mankind, and a pest to every community they may, at any time, be connected with? Can you think of their coming to an untimely end without horror? and of their going to hell and being damned eternally? How can you be so unnatural, so inhuman, so void of the fear of God! Oh! then, as you would do your very best to restrain them, open to them their sinful state, their danger from temptation, the way of escape which is provided in the gospel. Recommend to them the religion of the bible, by precept and example. Keep them from bad company. Reprove them, with freedom and plainness, for their faults; and do not allow yourselves to justify your children in the commission of sin by such a charity for them as will lead to a foolish credulity in whatever they shall say to vindicate themselves, however slender. Do not live a day longer without prayer in your families and closets. Have you not daily mercies and deliverances to acknowledge? Is not help from God needed for you and yours, for soul and body, for time and for eternity? And will you not so much as ask God for it? Can you bear the thought of having your children rise up in judgment against you, and be the means of sinking you the lower in hell? What an awful meeting must the ungodly child have with the ungodly parent at the bar of God! What miserable, what wretched associates for each other in the burning pit!

Family government has alarmingly declined in our land. And consequently, the sanctions of all governments, hu-

man and divine, are weakened in their force with men. Irreligion, anarchy, and misrule begin here. When the fountain head is corrupt, the streams will be corrupt. No such streams will proceed from parental neglects as will gladden the city of our God; but such as shall make Zion mourn, and the throne of justice and judgment among men to tremble. Oh be warned in season; and do not plead any thing to justify you or yours in your wickedness. And may you all, at last, have a happy meeting with your children and friends at the judgment seat of Christ.

**R**

## SERMON XIII.

2 KINGS 9 CHAP. 11 VER.

*Then Jehu came forth to the servants of his Lord, and one said unto him, Is all well? Wherefore came this mad fellow to thee? And he said unto them: Ye know the man, and his communication.*

After the revolt of the ten tribes, Israel was cursed with a race of the most wicked and abandoned kings. Ahab did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him. He far exceeded Jeroboam, who had been preeminent in wickedness. For he took to wife Jezebel, the daughter of Eth-Baal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal and worshipped him. Jezebel, if possible, was worse than her husband. By her means, the Lord's prophets were cut off, Elijah was forced to fly for his life, and Naboth was murdered and robbed of his vineyard.

Such idolatry, impiety, and injustice, were not suffered to go unpunished. Elijah, many years before the subject-matter of the text occurred, had been commissioned to anoint Jehu, as a king of a new family immediately appointed by God to reign over Israel, and to execute vengeance on the family and adherents of Ahab. But a respite

having been granted to that prince, when he externally humbled himself before God; it seems that the anointing of Jehu was deferred and devolved on Elisha, the successor and representative of Elijah.

The iniquity of Ahab's house being full, Elisha despatched a young prophet with orders to anoint Jehu at Ramoth Gilead, and give him a divine commission to extirpate the family of his master.

When the young man came to Ramoth Giléad, he found Jehu sitting in converse or consultation with other military chieftains, took him in private as directed, poured the anointing oil on him, delivered his message, and departed. When Jehu came forth from this private interview with the young prophet to his companions, whose curiosity had been excited, one asked, Is all well? Wherefore came this mad fellow to thee? And Jehu replied, Ye know the man, and his communication. That is; is good or evil denounced? Does the prophet speak of good things, as we have often heard; or has he delivered some sharp reproof or predicted some dreadful calamity? Wherefore came this mad fellow unto thee? They doubtless knew him, from his habit and manners, to be a prophet. A madman is one distracted or deprived of reason; or one who acts foolishly, in consequence of some mental disorder. The term, mad fellow, was used in the text expressive of a profane contempt of religion.

Without excepting him who spake as never man spake, they who have faithfully delivered the Lord's message to sinners, have, in all ages, been treated as madmen: Hosea 9. 7, "The days of visitation are come; the days of recompense are come; Israel shall know it; the prophet is a fool; the spiritual man is mad, for the multitude of their iniquity and the great hatred." It is said in Mark 3. 21, 22, that they went to lay hold on Christ; for they said, He is beside himself: and the Scribes and Pharisees said, He

hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of devils casteth he out devils. John 10. 20: And many of them said, He hath a devil and is mad, why hear ye him? Acts 16. 24: Festus said, with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. 1 Cor. 4. 10: We are fools for Christ's sake; but ye are wise in Christ: we are weak; but ye are strong: ye are honorable; but we are despised.

The Lord's true messengers are so indifferent about those objects which attract the senses, and which man naturally desires and pursues, and so engaged about those things which are invisible, and therefore neglected, as if unreal; their judgment, conversation, maxims, and conduct are so contrary to those of other men; and they venture and endure so much in pursuit of interests and objects of which others have no conception; that worldly men naturally conclude them to be mad, when they deem them honestly in earnest. But this charge, I hope to make appear, is not founded on fact, but on malice and men's natural hatred to sound doctrine and holy example. The people round Jehu wished to know, what the mad fellow had to say. Ye know the man, and his communication, i. e. the prophets of the Lord are all alike, they have much one theme; they enforce duty, warn, reprove, and exhort, and therefore you know the substance of the message, from your knowledge of the man and his conversation.

My plan from the text will be,

I. To inquire, why mankind have been so ready to charge the prophets, and other teachers sent from God, with madness.

II. To shew the injustice and wickedness of the charge.

1. Mankind have been disposed to charge prophets, and other teachers, with madness, because they have been messengers of evil to the wicked. They have stated their sins without palliation, softening, or disguise; traced them

in all their aggrayations; and denounced the wrath of God against them. Isaiah 3. 11: Wo unto the wicked; it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hand shall be given him. Such addresses as these, when enforced, displease; they cut like a two-edged sword: and yet the heart will not forsake its wickedness.

The thoughts of many hearts are revealed in those words of Ahab concerning the Lord's prophet in 1 Kings 22. 8: I hate him; for he doth not prophecy good concerning me, but evil. The motive here expressed, will often lead men to reproach those teachers sent from God, and to charge them with madness. When the Saviour accused the Jews of the crime of refusing to hear him, because they were not of God, they replied, in the most malicious and scornful manner, He hath a devil and is mad; why hear ye him?

2. The prophets and messengers of the Lord have been reproached as madmen and fools, because they assigned such reasons for the evils which were threatened as the people thought unjust. They have taken occasion to alarm men from their idolatry, from their irreverence of God, their hypocrisy, their injustice, their selfishness, their self-righteous spirit, and from their ingratitude and pride. Isaiah 5. 20, 21: Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; and put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. Wo unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight. Such sinfully and wilfully blind creatures as men are in unregeneracy and sin, will very often charge enthusiasm and madness on those who give such reasons for their exposedness to punishment as have been enumerated. They will either deny the charge, or justify themselves in their conduct. We idolaters, irreverent and unmindful of God! are we hypocrites, unjust, and selfish! are we self-righteous, ungrateful, and proud! not so. What

can men mean, to charge us with sin in these instances? There are few, if any of our actions that can be called crimes. We are decent, and good, and moral, in the opinion of our neighbours. We are more liberal in our modes of thinking than the bigoted and contracted. We are free; and we will indulge as we please, and will not be moved by those madmen, or their rigid notions of right and wrong, of sin and holiness. We despise the men and their communications.

3. The prophets and teachers sent from God, have been accounted madmen, because they pointed to evils that were out of sight, as to the great mass of mankind. Why bring ye up imaginary evils? say they; they exist only in your own gloomy minds; they will not, and cannot, come. Men are stupid. They think but little of futurity; and generally practise less than they think. All sinners who consider, see their danger. But God said of the Jews; "My people do not consider." They believed none of the denunciations made against them in the days of the prophets, nor in the time of Christ. Therefore, when unbelief is very great and stubborn, men will charge him who points to future evils, as beside himself; as striking a blow in the air, where no object can meet it.

4. The prophets and messengers from the Lord taught a religion which was foolishness in the view of an ungodly world. 1 Cor. 2. 14: The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him. Israel, in the days of Jeremiah, clearly showed that they preferred the worship of the queen of heaven, the moon, or the whole system of heavenly luminaries, to the worship of the true God. Religion that is lust-soothing, showy, and formal, has ever been more pleasing, than that religion which is grounded on self-denial and humility.

When the apostle attacked the heathen mythology on Mars-hill, the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, who, like

modern infidels, had the vanity to think that all reason and wisdom dwelt with them, represented him as a babbler, and a setter-forth of strange Gods; because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection. As the world disesteemed the religion of the prophets and apostles, as they thought it foolishness, so they viewed those who were zealous to propagate it, as fools and madmen.

5. The prophets and other teachers sent from God denied themselves many of the fashionable pleasures of a wicked world; and, for this reason, had to encounter the charge of madness. Elijah, for instance, was unyielding to all fashionable vices and popular whims. He was more concerned about his conscience, and the good or ill will of the God he served, than of the good or ill will of his fellow creatures. His inquiry was—what is duty? rather than—what will please my countrymen and serve my personal interests?

As the prophets and teachers sent from God, many of them, lived in ages and places of great luxury and extravagance, they distinguished themselves from this world, and manifested that they sought another; and behaved like men who despised the riches, the honours, and pleasures of this short span, in comparison with the riches, honours, and pleasures of future existence. And therefore, measured upon the scale of the world, they appeared like fools and madmen. They behaved like men who counted not their characters or their lives dear to them, that they might finish their course with joy. Men generally will sacrifice much to stand well with their fellow-creatures. With a vast majority of human beings, the question is, not so much what is right, as what will serve my party and myself, and what is pleasing to those who can help me to be rich and to be honorable. But the messengers to a revolted world did not act upon such maxims. No: it was engraven on their hearts in imperishable letters,—Let us

obey God rather than man, at any risk. Hence they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword, they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, and tormented. See Heb. 11.

But, as the world despised the cause in which they suffered, so they despised and reproached *them*, and called them fools and madmen.

“They liv'd unknown,  
Till Persecution dragg'd them into fame,  
And chas'd them up to Heav'n. Their ashes flew  
—No marble tells us whither. With their names  
No bard embalms and sanctifies his song:  
And history, so warm on meaner themes,  
Is cold on this.”

Mankind will sacrifice their ease and safety to lay up treasures upon earth; they will labour and toil; traverse oceans and continents; will dig to the centre of mountains, and dive the ocean; and expose themselves to all the dangers of sickly climates, and warring elements; but they are extremely cautious in running any hazards in serving God, to maintain peace of conscience, or to lash the follies of an ungodly world. All sacrifices of property, ease, and character, to lay up treasure in heaven, are considered as chimerical. We see men deny themselves a thousand things, and become as pliant and fawning as spaniels to the most capricious humours of the populace, to secure the favour of men, or to rise into some elevated post. But they are not inclined to seek the favour of God, or to hazard any thing to promote the honour of his name or kingdom in this world. Hence men are inclined to treat those as madmen who will dare to risk the reproach of the scorner or stiff-necked of this world. We need not be surprised that all manner of evil should be spoken against them falsely. We might even expect to hear it, were the world under none of these restraints.

Once more:—we may account for the charge of madness, when we consider the holy examples of the prophets and teachers sent from God. They gave up worldly prospects, often of the most flattering kind, and renounced every thing that stood in the way of acting the faithful, benevolent, and the upright character. They kept their bodies under, using reins on their innocent appetites, and mortifying their criminal ones. They adhered to the true faith, whilst almost the whole of a professing people renounced it, in practice, if not in words. They worshipped Jehovah in the simplicity of his institutions, while the crowd ran after the forms and the pomp of idolatry, or the mockery of the traditions of men. While a furious populace cried, Great is Diana of the Ephesians, *they* preached Jesus and the resurrection; and while they preached, they followed the example of him they preached, and hoped to share in the triumphs of the resurrection morn. While the unsanctified breathed nothing but accusations, cruel mockings, imprisonments, and death; *they* breathed a spirit of benevolence;—they prayed for their enemies, and sought to do good to all men. While the ambitious courted the dominant party in the Roman empire, and the applause of Cæsar, *they* chose the saints for *their* companions and deemed them the excellent of the earth. They would embrace the beggar who was rich in faith, though as needy as the widow of Sarepta, or as wretched as Lazarus. To the ancient worthies, it was far more dreadful to offend one of Christ's little ones, than the man who wore a mortal crown, and held a vassal world at his footstool.

For *such* a life they were called fools; they were treated as madmen. The world stood reprov'd by such examples: they could not but feel the force of them. But, rather than take conviction home to the heart, they fell upon their reprovers, and treated them as beside them-

selves. But the accused held fast their integrity; neither their love nor their zeal abated. They could reply, with the apostle, to the charge of madness, 2 Cor. 5., "For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us. We pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. O my God, give me much of this holy temper! May thy spirit enter into me! May my addresses to men be always enforced with, "Thus saith the Lord!" May I speak with honest plainness, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear! And may my example become my profession and employment!

The more outrageous and insolent sinners are in wickedness, the more bold and faithful must ministers be in addressing them. It is decided that we cannot please men, and serve Christ. It becomes us, then, to prepare for hardship, and endure the cross. We must expect, then, to be harassed with briars and thorns, if not to dwell with scorpions. It is vain to look for ease, comfort, or safety, if we are faithful, except from the Lord. God grant that the proud looks, or blustering words, the mockings, revilings, or menaces of rebels, may never seduce me, or any of my brethren, to copy or countenance their ungodliness.

While the scriptures are filled with lamentations, mourning, and woe, to impenitent sinners—whether infidels, profligates, pharisees, or hypocrites—they abound with gracious and precious promises to the penitent, believing, and obedient servants of God. I shall conclude, this morning, with setting in one view the subject-matter of what hath been said from the text. Mankind have been ready, in all ages, to charge the prophets and other honest teachers sent from God with madness; because they have been messengers of evil to the wicked, assigned such reasons as, to the thoughtless, appeared incredible, pointed to evils out of sight to the stupid; taught a religion, which

men have called foolishness; denied themselves the darling objects and fashionable pleasures of a wicked world, having counted nothing of a worldly nature dear to them, that they might finish their course with joy, and faithfully discharge their ministry; and have set such an example, as hath both reproved and warned the ungodly. Verily this world lieth in wickedness. We must look for a better, or we perish. My soul! repent, believe, and be saved! Amen.

## SERMON XIV.

2 KINGS, CHAP. 9, VER. 10.

*Then Jehu came forth to the servants of his Lord; and one said unto him, Is all well? Wherefore came this mad fellow forth to thee? And he said unto them, Ye know the man, and his communication.*

Having suggested some of the reasons which influenced mankind, in former days, to charge the prophets and other teachers sent from God, with madness, I proceed,

*Secondly*, to show the injustice and wickedness of the charge. This will appear

1. From considering that the prophets, and others, always spoke of good as well as of evil, to come. At the same time that they foretold evil to the wicked, they were messengers of glad tidings to the righteous. Isaiah, 3. 10, "Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings." The sum and substance of the divine commission of the ambassadors to a revolted world is, to encourage the righteous to trust in God, and to exhort sinners to repent and return to him; and that, however God's providential dispensations may vary, he will invariably bless the penitent and be-

lieving; who shall reap the fruit of their faith and piety: and he will punish his impenitent enemies according to their works. Therefore, the prophets and teachers sent from God could not, with the least colour of reason, be charged with resembling the madman, who casteth fire-brands, arrows, and death. For, certainly, the messengers of good tidings cannot be conceived, in ordinary cases, as acting from malice; nor can the good things be represented as visionary, but such as might be expected to crown the labour, toil, and patience of the godly, and to flow from the sovereign mercy of God. Besides, the good things were coming to pass in every age; and, therefore, the people had reason to expect future good things, foretold to happen, in the appointed time. They could see mercies remarkably intermingled with judgments, in both providence and prophecy.

As a proof that mercies are remarkably intermingled with judgments, in both providence and prophecy, I have only to turn you to the history of the church, and your own experience. And that it is so in judgments and mercies foretold, I select the prophecy of Isaiah as a specimen. This prophet declares, chap. 34, "The indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon their armies; he hath utterly destroyed them; he hath delivered them to the slaughter. My sword shall be bathed in heaven; behold it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment." In the very next chapter, the whole scene is changed. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it—the excellency of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God. Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to

them that are of a fearful heart, be strong, fear not. Behold your God will come with vengeance; even God with a recompence: he will come and save you. Here, although one prophecy is most tremendously descriptive of the greatest carnage and desolation, that can be conceived or expressed, the other is full of consolation to such as fear God and keep his commandments.

2. The injustice and wickedness of the charge appears, from considering that warnings of future evil are acts of kindness, and expressions of love. If evils are threatened as to come for the sins of the person or people against whom they are denounced, to warn them that they are coming, and to point to a way of escape and a place of safety, by calling them to that repentance which would avert them, must be an act of the greatest kindness we can do to our fellow creatures. When a child, or a blind person is approaching a precipice, or deep water, where a plunge would be remediless, it is kind in a parent, or a friend to give warning of the danger, and, if they are obstinate in hearing or taking the warning, a degree of earnestness in pointing out the danger is pardonable. And love will induce a pious parent to forewarn his child against things which may endanger its soul, or eternal salvation. And did not the prophets express love and compassion to their fellow creatures, in warning an ungodly world? How, then, can there be the least colour of justice, in charging teachers sent from God with malice or madness?

3. The charge was unjust and wicked, because they pointed to such reasons for the evils to come, as were well suited to vindicate the character of God, and to enforce their warnings. Individuals, or a people, were never threatened without a full statement of all their sins, and explanations of their nature and their aggravations. The Israelites and the Babylonians were never doomed to de-

struction by holy men of old, till reasons in full for the divine conduct, were given. God must punish obstinately impenitent sinners, to maintain his purity, his law, and government. Hence, his character is vindicated, that pleads for the divine rights; and the reasonableness of the warning is apparent. The honest and faithful reprover is excusable, when we consider what dishonour would be done to God, and the injury that would be done to the sinner's own soul, by God's messengers' crying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace.

4. The charge was unreasonable, as the evils foretold came to pass, and were coming to pass, in every age. This is the criterion of the true prophet, mentioned, Deut. 18. 22: "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing, which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him." The prophets of the Lord of old, had this mark of credibility. The history of the church corresponds with the predictions of Moses, Samuel, and the prophets, and the predictions of Christ and his apostles. The Revelation of St. John is a storehouse of living argument for the authenticity of the Holy Scriptures, and the doctrines they teach. And every honest teacher may reply, with the apostle to Festus, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness." I declare nothing but what has truth for its basis,—nothing but what is of the utmost importance,—and able to stand the test of the most deliberate investigation.

5. The religion they taught was the wisdom of God, and the power of God. Therefore, a reflection upon this, was a reflection upon God. It was virtually saying, that God's revealed methods of grace to fallen men, were not suitable, nor wise, nor good; that the Lord Jehovah of the Scriptures, ought not to be feared; that men might

mock at his threatenings with impunity, and sport with damnation. And was not this casting reproach upon God, in a most shocking manner? And was not the guilt of such, of a scarlet colour, and of a crimson die?

Christ said, on sending out the seventy, "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me." They who charged the Lord's prophets, or any teachers sent from him, with madness, denied their divine commission. And in so doing, they despised the head of the church, and exposed themselves to an awful doom. Thus, it appears, that the charge was unjust and wicked.

#### IMPROVEMENT.

1. If what has been said is agreeable to the word of God, we learn, that the desire of having smooth things said to us on religious subjects, is a certain mark of great wickedness. It argues that the conscience is asleep, and proves that the heart is deeply attached to, and engaged in, sin. This inclines men to make a mock of what they scornfully call *damnation preaching*, and, *the corruscations of hell fire*;—in other words, to make a mock of all the threatenings that are revealed against sinners in the Holy Scriptures, and to abuse those, who hold them up, as enthusiasts, new-divinity men, rigid Calvinists, fools, and madmen,—saying, with the Jews on another occasion, why hear ye him?

What was the view of the most high God of the state of Israel, when they would endure no teaching but that which flattered them, soothed their vanity, and lulled their consciences? The God of heaven called them a "rebellious people, lying children, and children that will not hear the law of the Lord: (Isaiah 30.) which say to

us right things; speak unto us smooth things; prophecy deceits; get you out of the way; turn aside out of the path; cause the Holy One of Israel to cease before us."

Men have always been prone to lean to their own understandings, rather than to ask counsel of God. Yet, the event continually shows their wisdom to be folly, and their confidence to be a refuge of lies. They want ministers to leave the direct way of truth and holiness, and find some bye-path, either to countenance them, or, at least, to leave them unmolested, in their darling sins, and not to speak much of God's sovereignty, or justice; but to dwell upon his mercy and grace, and on the privileges of baptized and professing people indiscriminately; without being particular about duties, precepts, hypocrisy, or the wrath to come. This suits exactly. God gives such kind of preaching to multitudes; but when he gives it, his justice names the gift, a vial of his wrath.

2. When an individual, or people, have arrived at such a pitch of wickedness, as to treat true messages as marks of madness, they are in great danger of destruction. This is evident, from all sin's exposing to destruction. Every sinner is every moment in danger. "Destruction and misery are in his ways, and the way of peace he hath not known." But such a great degree of wickedness, as prompts persons to scoff and mock at every thing like experimental piety, preeminently exposes us to the wrath of God.

In the same thirtieth of Isaiah, to which we have just alluded, where the Jews asked after sin-lusting, and lust-soothing prophecy, we have these alarming words from God himself: "Wherefore, thus saith the Holy One of Israel: because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon; therefore, iniquity shall be to you as a breach, ready to fall, swelling out, in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at

an instant. And he shall break it as the breaking of the potter's vessel, that is broken in pieces: he shall not spare; so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a sherd to take fire from the hearth, or to take water withal out of the pit." As the Jews had resolved to trust to their *opium-taking, cradle-rocking, and lullaby* religion, their deceit and hypocrisy would undermine their safety. It rendered their state like a high wall, in which breaches are already made, and which bulges out, and at length rushes down at once: and the higher it is, the more dreadful the fall. And the Lord did dash in pieces their civil and ecclesiastical state, like a potter's vessel, till not a sherd remained. And so he is dashing formal christians in Europe, papal and protestant. And so he will dash us, if we refuse to hearken to the whole truth. Cold formality and sin-saving religion is as provoking to God as profaneness. And they who despise the office-work of the Holy Spirit, will derive no advantages from the gospel.

3. Let us all carefully consider the ground, on which we stand, as to religion. Sinners do not consider the evil of their ways, else they would not be easy in forms of religion, or their sins. If you saw your state, you would be alarmed—would see that you stood on the brink of hell. You would be alarmed at your unbelief and your pride, and see that God might justly cast you into the burning pit, the present moment. For, how unwilling are you, to see and know God's true character, and your own hearts! You had much rather bury all sober reflection in money-getting pursuits, or in the vanities of time, than have your hearts laid open. Ye are alive without the law, and have the same spirit with those, who, of old, were ready to charge the messengers of the Lord with madness, because to you they are the messengers of evil; condemn your conduct, which you justify; point to evils

that are coming, which you do not believe; hold up a religion, which, to you, is foolishness; and, by example, censure, both your loose religion, and prayerless conduct.

By all these things, you are ripening for hell; and you had long ago been confined in that dreadful place, had not the sovereign and mysterious forbearance of God prevented. The retribution day is at hand, when no doubt will remain in the mind of any one, in heaven, earth, or hell, who, among the children of men, had been wise, and who had been foolish. A line of distinction will be drawn between the wise and the foolish, as lasting as eternity, and in all the solemn majesty of the judgment day. On the right hand of the incarnate God and judge, will stand the faithful prophets and teachers, once charged with madness, because they would not stoop to be men-pleasers, and to daub human depravity with untempered mortar. Here will stand, not all that name the name of Christ, but all the faithful ones, who had washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. On the left hand will stand the scoffers at godliness and the godly. Accused and accusers will stand face to face. And oh! do not your consciences begin to predict your fate? Do they not tell you whom Christ will then own, and whom he will bid depart, with a curse, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels? The character of God and his saints, must, and will, be vindicated. The testimony of truth, from whose mouth soever spoken, will shine with a brightness, borrowed from the majesty of the Judge of angels and of men. "The Lord Jehovah shall be revealed from heaven, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."

I ask not what religion you have professed to believe and practise, but whether you can endure when God shall enter into judgment with you? Do not your souls shudder at the thought? Would you avoid the horrors of a public condemnation by a God of inflexible justice—a public and eternal banishment from joy and hope? Be exhorted to have something more of religion than the name; something more than a form; something more than a cleansing of the outside of the cup and the platter. In a word, be entreated now to lay aside folly, confess and forsake all sin, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be reconciled to God's true character. The warmth of divine love presses home the exhortation.

I know many of you are prejudiced against me and my brethren. You think us too rigid and too severe. But God is strict and rigid in his demand of the heart. He will not take lip service of any of his creatures. He will have all—heart, soul, and strength—or nothing. And a greater kindness cannot be done you, than to try to show you your hearts and your true state while out of Christ. The hurt of sin is so great, we dare not advise, or use, means, to heal it slightly. Therefore, we would call, with all the earnestness and fervour, a Saviour's dying love can inspire. We would entreat that ye become followers of God, as dear children.

4. All who would exhibit and declare the whole counsel of God in their professions or their lives, have need to become soldiers of the cross. The reproachful phrase, *this mad fellow*, has long been cast at the faithful witnesses of truth. The Saviour did not escape, nor the apostle Paul. And Christ hath forewarned his disciples not to expect to escape reproach from the world. Matt. 10. 24, 25, "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master and the servant as his lord. If they have called the

master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household!"

To bear up under slander, reproach, scoffs, and insults, with christian meekness and unabated love, requires the vigorous influences of divine grace on the heart. The temptations, considering the corruptions of the heart, are great. Lest we faint, let us remember that Christ endured far more than can fall to the lot of any of us. Yet, supported by his Father, he arose, he ascended, and reigns gloriously. Brethren, keep yourselves in the love of God. Forsake every appearance of evil. Strip things of all false colourings. Let the eternal difference between right and wrong, holiness and sin, true religion and its counterfeits, be written on your hearts, as with a pen of iron, and the point of a diamond. Sin will paint herself and dress in the garb of holiness. With counterfeit graces, she will shield herself under important characters in the view of the world. She will plead custom and the sinful inconsistencies of the best men who ever lived. But give no credit to her delusions. Like the strange woman whom Solomon describes, (Prov. 5.) her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell. To resist the dangerous charm, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ; and be not too much entangled in the affairs of this life. In the religion of this country, a vast number of gilded cents are passing for eagles. The word of God and the balance of the sanctuary, will detect counterfeits.

*Lastly.* To encourage all who love God's plain truth, and would support integrity at every hazard—the truth you embrace, is the *eternal* truth of God. The word of the Lord endureth forever. To bear witness to this, Christ came into the world, he lived, he suffered, he died. Its foundations cannot be shaken. It is as immovable as the omnipotent, unchanging God. And how animating

to embark in such a cause! How insignificant, in comparison, are the petty competitions and contests of mankind!

God is your shield and defence: need you, can you fear? You may adopt the triumphant language of the church in the forty-sixth Psalm. "God is our refuge and strength: a very present help in time of trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of our God: the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her: she shall not be moved. God shall help her, and that right early." Your light afflictions will work for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. The most sharp trials, through divine grace, will destroy the enemies of God and yourself. They will cure your mental disorders. They will rouse the whole soul to fight the good fight of faith. They will mortify you to the world. They will embitter sinful pleasures; and, in the same proportion, sweeten those of religion, and disarm death of its sting, and cause it to be swallowed up in victory. "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ! It is a faithful saying; for, if we be dead with Christ, we shall also live with him. If we suffer, we shall also reign with him."

## SERMON XV.



I PETER, CHAP. 4, VER. 17, 18.

*For the time is come, that judgment must begin at the house of God, And if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?*



ALTHOUGH true religion has the protection and approbation of God, it is now in a state of suffering and trial. The faithful Saviour told his followers, that they should have tribulation in the world. As there is nothing mercenary in pure Christianity, it is not the design of heaven, that persons should be drawn to embrace it from selfish motives. The disciple of Jesus must live on principles that are heaven-born; and his sincerity must be tried and proved in the school of adversity. His triumphs and glories, are reserved to the future and eternal state.

This sentiment is supported by the current of scripture, and particularly by the context. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing had happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and

of God resteth upon you. On their part, he is evil spoken of; but on your part, he is glorified." In the verse before the text, they are encouraged and comforted, who suffer for Christianity on christian principles. "Yet if any man suffer as a christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." In the words chosen for our text, the dreadful end of the ungodly, is predicted from comparing the heavy judgments which fall on them, with those that fall on the godly. The righteous feel the effects of sin in the evils which spring from it; but the awful end of the wicked, is beyond expression or imagination. "For the time is come, that judgment must begin at the house of God."

Judgment is a word here used to express the evils and calamities which happen in this life. We cannot in this place extend it further, because it is applied to the righteous, who can suffer no more when they have passed through temporal death. When Peter wrote, it was to be expected, that christians would be called to suffer for Christ's sake; for, the time predicted by Christ, when he would first begin his judgments, by sharply trying his professed disciples or the family of God, was then arrived. And if such fiery trials must try and purify the church, and purge out hypocrites from among them, before judgments were executed on the Jewish nation, and other open enemies, what would be the end of those who did not obey the gospel?

The persecutions by which the church was tried were introductory to the destruction of Jerusalem and the tremendous ruin of the Jews; and preparatory to the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. Or, the time is come, may refer to the period in general of the church's tribulation, throughout the dispensation of the New Testament. For, it is well known, that the church of God has suffered much more since the coming of Christ in the flesh than it did in the times of Moses and the prophets.

But, whenever judgment begins at the house of God, or however high it may rise, it will be nothing compared to the end of those who obey not the gospel. If the righteous are saved with difficulty; if, notwithstanding their interest in Christ, and their conscientious, self-denying obedience, so many trials, dangers, conflicts, and sufferings, are deemed needful for them; and if, according to their own feelings and apprehensions, they are often but just saved, and get to heaven at last through many narrow escapes, as a shipwrecked mariner scarcely gains the shore on a plank; where will the impenitent, the ungodly despiser appear, when as expressed in the seventy-fifth Psalm, "the wine in the cup of the hand of the Lord is red and full of mixture, and is poured out, and the wicked of the earth shall wring the dregs and drink them!"

The text leads us to consider,

I. The evils or judgments which God's people may experience.

II. The awful punishment of impenitent sinners.

I. Let us consider some of the evils and afflictive dispensations, which God's people may experience in their way to eternal felicity.

1. They may meet with great reproaches from the world, on account of their religion. This world, as a world, lieth in wickedness. Men who are under the dominion of pride, unbelief, and carnal security, have no relish for the things of God. They are disposed to look upon them with contempt, and to consider christians as weak and wicked. Hence, when they are unrestrained, they open their mouths in reproaching the name and cause of the Redeemer. From the same source, spring up those false reports and evil speakings, which are so common among the enemies of true religion. The Saviour, his apostles, and the primitive christians in general, were loaded with infamy by their virulent opposers and mali-

cious gainsayers. Matt. 25. 10, "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?"

Nor were primitive christians the only sufferers by the tongue of slander. The followers of Christ whose zeal has been warm to maintain the faith once delivered to the saints, have in all ages suffered in a greater or less degree in the same way. The spirit of true religion is a standing monitor of reproof to the wickedness of men. And they who do evil hate the light which reproves them, and endeavour to blacken the reputation of those who make heavenly wisdom the companion of their lives.

2. Judgment has sometimes begun at the house of God from the hands of violence and cruelty. The rage of bigotry, and a fiery zeal for a sect or party, have run so high in some ages and places, that they who have inflicted the most cruel tortures and excruciating deaths on christians, have esteemed themselves as doing God service, according to the Saviour's prediction. How did Christ, the king of martyrs, fall! and what was the end of Stephen and others, in the early spreading of christianity! What rivers of christian blood, have been spilt by pagan and by antichristian Rome!

3. The church of God has suffered greatly by the rise of heresies within its own bosom. There have, in all ages, risen up, those who wore the christian name, and yet spoke perverse things to draw away disciples after them. Such conduct has availed more to darken the glory of christianity and distress the people of God, than all the oceans of blood which have ever been spilled by persecutors. This has, in many instances, broken, divided, and scattered the flock, and has issued in virulent reproaches on the doctrines of the cross, by the open des-

pisers of the crucified Saviour. In this way, the candlestick of many a particular church has been removed from its place and never returned; and a thick and impenetrable gloom has settled over such regions.

4. Judgment hath begun at the house of God in great spiritual desertions. Ordinances have not been refreshing. Love and zeal have abated. The mass of churches have become worldly, lukewarm, and corrupt. Their discipline is all relaxed:—while the remnant of God's dear children, have laboured under the hidings of his countenance,—have long gone mourning under the frowns of their heavenly father. They have been hard beset and pressed with Satan's temptations; and have been ready to despair of the church of God and their own perseverance to the end. The path before them has appeared full of darkness, and they could see no light. The children of wisdom have been left to say and do many things, which throw stumbling-blocks in the way of the children of this world. They have been overwhelmed in review of their own backslidings, and been ready to sink into the depths of despair.

The judgments which visit the godly in the present unequal distribution of rewards and punishments, are very numerous; and the words of inspiration following the text, are often exemplified. The righteous are scarcely saved. The saved at last, in this world will be more severely chastised than other men are. Though they strive, wrestle, labour, watch, pray, deny themselves, and take up their cross daily, it will be with difficulty, and through many perils, conflicts, and tribulations, that they will ever enter into the kingdom. What then,

In the *second* place, will be the end of those that obey not the gospel of God! and where will the infidel, the worldling, the miser, the profligate, the licentious, the stupid, the hardened; and the enemy of goodness, appear,

when Christ shall come at death, and to judge the world! If such sufferings are inflicted on the people of God, on his beloved children, what will be the doom of his implacable foes! And if such diligence and watchfulness only just suffice to ensure the believer's salvation, what will be the event with the slothful, the prayerless, the heedless conduct of professed christians in general! What refuge from the wrath of God can they expect to find!

The triumphs of the wicked are short, and must all come to an end with this momentary life. In this world only, they have all their good things. And while the godly after death are comforted, they are tormented. The vain hopes that buoyed up the wicked in life, will all leave them at death. Prov. 11. 7, "When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish; and the hope of the unjust man perisheth." The evils which attend the godly, are but temporary. But the punishments of the wicked will be everlasting. The judgments which the righteous feel, are fatherly chastisements from the hand of God; but the punishments of the ungodly, are in wrath,—in wrath, without the least mixture of mercy. They are called vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction. The corrections of God's children, all issue in their good; but the displays of divine vengeance on the workers of iniquity, will drive them from one overwhelming billow to another, and from one punishment to another, to vast, never-ending eternity. So, all the plagues sent on Pharaoh, hardened his heart the more, contributed to fill up the measure of his sins, and to bring on him swift destruction. With respect to the faithful and beloved of God, all things are eventually theirs,—whether life or death, or things present, or things to come: but, with respect to the wicked; all things will rise up against them as swift witnesses in the future trial, and sink them into the blackness of darkness forever and ever.

This state is not far from every ungodly and christless soul that hears me, who shall die in his sins. Their opportunities for getting good, when their end comes, will all be past and gone forever. No more may they enjoy sabbaths, sermons, the prayers of the godly, or the oracles of God. The despised gospel, which they would never obey, will rise up against them, in future judgment. All its sacred truths will testify against them. The despisers, who wondered at it, with scorn and wilful blindness in this life, must now perish. They must be banished from the tribunal of the great judge of all the earth with the curse of God upon them, never to be revoked, nor any part of it mitigated. Perfect despair will fill their souls. The gnawing worm of an accusing conscience, will prey upon them eternally, upbraid them with their folly, in choosing the road to death, and wilfully despising gospel grace, which once offered them pardon and eternal life. - Lively and keen sensations of the wrath of God, will fasten on them. To hide from his presence, or to bury a consciousness of it, will be impossible. Vain and unavailing will be the wish of dropping their being, and falling into non-existence. They must exist while God has power. They must be tormented, as long as God hates sin. They must live to die an eternal death. Alas! if the righteous are scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

The feeling mind is struck with consternation, when it beholds the penalty of a violated law executed on the holy Jesus, who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. He was the beloved son of his father, when sweating drops of blood in his agony in the garden, and when he cried out in the excruciating pains of crucifixion, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me! If such punishment might be felt, in the sinner's place, by the holy Saviour, what are the torments which they must feel,

who suffer for their own sins, and with the guilt of their consciences full in their faces, while God endures! While Christ's enemies were leading him to mount Calvary to be executed, and numbers were following behind, bewailing and lamenting him, he turned about and exhorted them to lay aside their sorrow for him, and think on the evils which should befall them, adding, "For, if they do these things, in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" If I, the son of my heavenly Father's love, in suffering for sinners, endure such things, what must feeble creatures endure, when punished for their own iniquities? If such a fire were kindled in a green tree, that was altogether unfit for fuel, what would be the case with the dry wood, which is every way ready for the flames!

Let us now apply our subject.

1. We are assured, that God will vindicate the honour of his holy name, in all his conduct with his creatures. Judgment is brought on the house of God, and a dreadful end overtakes those, who obey not the gospel of God. God must look on sin with abhorrence in his own children. The application of the atonement, secures them from a state of final condemnation. But the character and privileges of the children of God, enhance the evil of their sins. They sin against light and love. God, out of regard to his holiness, will visit their iniquities with the rod of affliction and fatherly chastisement in this life. And to vindicate the honour of his justice, he will be exalted in the condemnation and everlasting punishment of the impenitent and christless. For all that are unreconciled to God in Christ, maintain a controversy with the great Lord, Lawgiver, and Judge of all the earth; arraign all his perfections at their bar; and lay in charges against them. As surely as the Lord liveth, he will gloriously triumph in the everlasting punishment of such arrogant worms of the dust. Ps. 11. "The Lord is in

his holy temple. The Lord's throne is in heaven. His eyes behold, his eyelids try the children of men. The Lord trieth the righteous; but the wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup. For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness."

2. God's people are called to special consideration, when judgment begins at the house of God. And such a day is the present. God's gracious presence is much withdrawn from many of our churches; and, I fear, from this. The wicked triumph. Many have become lukewarm, while stupidity and iniquity abound. Various methods are taken by the adversary, to scatter, divide, and disperse the flock of Christ. Let such as belong to the house of God, lay these things deeply to heart, and plead, with fervent, importunate intercessions at the throne of grace. Let them stand with their loins girt, and their lamps trimmed and burning. Let us carefully distinguish between those things which we suffer for the sake of Christ and righteousness, and those that we bring on ourselves by our imprudence and misconduct. In vain does any professor expect to escape the trial of his professed faith. Judgment will begin at the house of God; and hypocrites will incur the greatest condemnation.

As we would be saved, we must see to it, that we obey the gospel. We must strive, watch, pray, and deny ourselves, for Christ and his cause. If one truth in this discourse ought to be more remembered than another, it is this;—that the righteous are saved with great difficulty; and that every faculty of the soul should be put in requisition, to work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

The subject, lastly, addresses those who, to this day, have never obeyed the gospel of God. You have heard

something of the terror of the Lord in the awful end that awaits you, unless you repent and become christians indeed and in truth. Can you endure the thought of God's entering into judgment with you? Can you bear to have every hope and opportunity of good perish from you eternally? Can you endure the thought of being banished from God's presence, with his curse upon you, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels? Is not the thought insupportable of lying down in never-ending sorrows, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched? Surely it is infinitely better to undergo all possible pain here, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, and lose the soul forever. What man of common sense would deliberately prefer the rich man's lot in life, death, and eternity, to that of Lazarus!

Oh my friends! do you not endeavour to forget or disbelieve the solemn truths of God's word, that you may not be disturbed with painful reflections in your pursuit of worldly gratifications? And so you refuse to think or reflect, until you drop into hell; and then you will curse and bewail your own madness and folly, and envy the condition of the meanest christian whom you have scorned, loathed, and neglected. Be not deceived:—All these awful things, (yes, awful beyond what mortal mind can conceive, or mortal tongue can utter,) must soon overtake you, unless you repent and make your peace with God, in your short stay in this world. Will you delay and put off, and put off, while divine forbearance and patience alone keep you this moment from that state, where respite of anguish will never come, and the anchor of hope will be broken? Shall all the arguments from divine commands, natural obligation, and the Saviour's dying love, be urged on you in vain? Your next step may be into eternity, and the regions of horror.

My hearers! there is not a moment to be spent in trea-

uring up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. To-day if you will hear his voice and unbar the door of your hearts, Jesus will come in and sup with you, and there will be joy in heaven. If you persist in sin, in defiance of God's word, and the convictions of your own consciences, God will, by and by, wholly withdraw from you, and permit you to be hardened to your own ruin. Thus, like the ancient rebels in Israel, you provoke and tempt God, till being grieved by your obstinacy and carnal enmity to him and his ways, he will swear in his wrath, that you shall never enter his rest. Awake! ye triflers and loiterers on the brink of the bottomless pit. Look well to yourselves, for evil is before you. You know that your want of repentance and faith originates in the wickedness of your hearts; and that all your excuses, your delays, and even your objections to doctrines and preachers, arise from covetousness or sensuality: from pride and an aversion to the life of faith and holiness. Ah! your sins first deceive and then harden you; till negligence and offences in smaller things, terminate in more daring crimes, or more open apostacy.

I sincerely believe that great numbers who bear the christian name, not merely in other sects, but in our own, are as far from the power of true religion, as the Israelites were in the days of Moses, or the Jews in those of St. Paul. The Holy Ghost therefore still saith to them,—To-day, if ye will hear the voice of God, and submit to his righteousness and authority, do not harden your hearts. While you are yielding to sloth and making delays, God may be about to say,—This night shall your souls be required of you. What then will avail your houses and lands that you leave behind? or how rich your heirs are made by your decease? Indeed, it often happens that when men have spent their lives without re-

gard to God, to their neighbors, or their own souls, in order to enrich their families, they are disappointed in this vain ambition. Their riches are strangely dissipated, and their children reduced to dependence and poverty. For man walketh in a vain show: he disquieteth himself in vain. He heapeth up riches, and cannot tell who shall gather them. As, therefore, every one who layeth up treasure for himself is thus foolishly guilty and miserable, let us seek the true riches, that we may be approved of God himself as wise men; and be made honorable and happy in the eternal enjoyment of his favor.

# SERMON XVI.



ROMANS, IX. CHAP. 28 VER.

*For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth.*



THE gospel has enlightened spots upon the four quarters of the globe. Yet its publication has never been general. The time is not yet come when it shall spread from the rising to the setting sun, and when a nation shall be born in a day. Among the nations to whom the gospel has been preached in its purity, but few have received it as divine, or believed to the saving of the soul. The ancient complaint of the prophet has been repeated by the faithful heralds of divine grace in every age. Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? The text follows a quotation from Isaiah, purporting that but a remnant would be saved from the innumerable multitudes of Israel; and that God would finish his work with that nation in a righteous, but compendious manner; or by taking a short account of the chosen people among them, and consigning the rest to just destruction throughout the whole land.

The first accomplishment of the promise was in the

days of Ezra and Nehemiah, when a remnant of the Jews were brought back from captivity to the land given to their fathers. Here, in Romans, it is applied to the gathering in a remnant of the seed of Jacob to the gospel faith, while the body of the nation is cast off and left in unbelief.

When it is affirmed in the text, that God will cut short his work in righteousness; his people are assured, in every age, that God, in mercy and faithfulness to them, will hasten the work of gathering in the remnant to be saved. Because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. He with whom a day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness. His work on the earth in general, and in calling in his elect in particular, will soon be accomplished. When the promises to the church in the latter days are on the point of fulfilment, God will make a short work in removing the many obstacles out of the way, and in bringing his sons from afar, and his daughters from the ends of the earth.

In discoursing from the words of the text I shall

I. Attempt to point out some of the ways in which God may be said to make a short work in gathering in his elect.

II. Show wherein the faithfulness and grace of God appears, in completing this work in a short time.

Let us begin with the first of these. And here we ought carefully to distinguish between the haste which God makes in accomplishing his designs, and the haste observable among men in doing their work. Man is often in haste because he has heretofore loitered. He may be driven to haste through slavish fear. Disappointments unforeseen may crowd his whole business into a very narrow compass. Impatience may impel him to the most anxious labors; or, through a spirit of selfishness, he may

wear himself in his pursuits. Or his haste may proceed from a sudden alteration of his plan. None of these things can be applied to the Holy One of Israel. He never slumbereth nor sleepeth. His purposes cannot be broken. He is not selfish; but disinterestedly benevolent. Disappointment never entered his mind. His patience is marvellous. He is of one mind, and none can turn him. Yet exalted and perfect as he is, he is pleased to accommodate himself to the perceptions of men clothed with bodies, surrounded by a world of material objects, and whose first perceptions arise from the inlets of bodily organs. These things being premised, let us go on to consider some of the ways, or senses, in which God may be said to make a short work upon the earth, in gathering in his elect.

1. The whole term employed in this work is very short, compared with the eternal duration of the divine mind, or the state into which we are all soon to enter. The thousands of years which have passed since the creation, or those which may come before the end of the world, are all lost in comparison with the endless ages of eternity. They bear no proportion even to our future existence; much less to the duration of him who is, and was, and is to come. To him there is no past: to him there is no future. He is the great I AM. If time bore any proportion to eternity, eternity would consist of parts; and must, in the nature of things, begin and end. But since neither beginning nor ending, nor parts are properties of eternity, millions of ages bear no greater proportion to it than a minute or a second. In this sense, the work of redemption, so far as its fruits are seen in this world, is a short work. The interval is small between the day when Adam heard the voice of God walking in the garden, arraiging and condemning his conduct, and promising that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's

head, and the glorious appearing of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven. But I proceed:

2. To consider another sense in which God makes a short work in gathering in his elect. And that is, by bringing together and disclosing a number of great events in a small space of time. This is applicable to the times and seasons when God arises, or manifests himself in a remarkable manner, pleading the cause of his church in this world. In these instances, there is, in truth, no greater exertion in the mind or operations of God, than at other times. All possible things are done by him with equal ease. But more events in such a time than ordinary. The arm of Jehovah is more visibly displayed; and creatures are furnished with new arguments to admire, adore, and praise.

We have seen a building raised. Its timber was gathered out of the forest, piece by piece. Some of the pieces, perhaps, were very remote from the rest. They must all be cut, drawn together, hewed, and framed, before the building can be set up. Passing through all the preparatory steps must take up some time. From seeing merely a post, a beam, or a rafter, in the woods, we have a very imperfect idea of the frame, or how it will appear. Perhaps we may be so unacquainted with the intended shape of the edifice, as to have a very faint conception of the relation, or importance, of the post, the beam, or the rafter. It may further seem to us, that a building can never be reared up from such materials, so different from each other; and, for ought we can discern, bearing so little relation. But by and by, they are drawn together from different parts: and prepared in all respects for their respective places. To set up this frame, when compared with the time spent in fitting, is a short work. Many distant labors are now united; and many separate and far distant parts are now brought together, and make up one grand whole.

This may illustrate our subject. God's great design is, to build up his kingdom in this world. He aims at this in all his conduct. He promotes this by all the events which are brought to pass in the kingdom of his providence. But a multitude of these may seem to us to be parts of different systems, and to clash. We cannot see how they can ever promote one interest. But, in the fulness of time, they draw nearer and nearer together, in the view of creatures; and when connected from all parts, they then exhibit, like the materials of Solomon's temple, a grand and beautiful whole. Joining them together when they have approached the fixed point, *is a short work*. Much is apparently done in a little time: as in the crucifixion on Mount Calvary, the predictions and providences for ages are fulfilled in a day.

God made a short work upon earth when the first christian church was gathered at Jerusalem. The divine conduct with the patriarchs; the law given by Moses; the voice of the prophets; and the coming of the Son of God; had all been preparing the way for this event to take place. Yea, the conduct of Judas, of the Jewish Sanhedrim, of Herod, and Pilate, and the Roman soldiers, were preparing the way for a crucified Savior to display his Almighty power in the capital of Judea. At length the fulness of time came. The Holy Ghost descended on the Apostles. The mouth of Peter was opened. He preached a crucified and risen Savior. Three thousand were struck with the arrows of conviction: professed, at the peril of their lives, to own Christ for their Lord and Savior; and the same day became visible members of the same church with the Apostles. God here made a short work upon earth.

Many instances, equally in point, might be gathered from the history of the bible. But, passing them by, I proceed to observe, that, from the analogy of the divine

conduct in like cases, we may expect that God will make a short work in the earth, when that memorable era, so much celebrated in the prophets, shall commence. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. This prediction received but a partial accomplishment in the days of the Apostles, or from that time to the present. It is yet to receive a more extensive and glorious one, towards the close of the last days of the gospel dispensation. God will make great overturnings in the earth to prepare the way for this event: But when the time draws near for its occurrence, he will make a short work in the earth. Much will be done in a small compass of time. Wonders of divine grace will break forth from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south. Pagans, Mahometans, Jews, Papists, Protestants, and men of all denominations, will emerge from darkness. They will wonder at their past blindness, and rejoice at the breaking forth of heavenly light. The stone cut out of the mountains without hands, will become great and fill the whole earth.

II. As proposed, I will now show wherein the faithfulness of God appears, in completing this glorious work in a short time: for he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness.

1. It must be obvious to all, that the faithfulness of one who makes promises, is most apparent at the time when the promise is made good by performance. The application is easy. God has promised to appear shortly for his people, and to cut his work short in righteousness. And therefore his truth and faithfulness will be gloriously manifest, when he arises to plead the cause of his suffering church. They will then see events answering predictions; and admire the truth of a covenant-keeping God.

2. The grace of God, in this method of operation, will be conspicuous in unfolding the wisdom of the divine counsels. They had been gradually opening and exposing particular facts to examination. They had been trying the faith and patience of the saints, by their slow procedure. But now, when the saints had long sowed in tears, they shall come forth, rejoicing, bringing with them the sheaves of a glorious harvest. Besides, the long past survey of events will open a door, the better to see the glory of the divine counsels, in joining the parts together in a whole.

The human mind has narrow limits. It can take in but a few things at one time. A complicated object must be viewed by parts. And though some will never be fully understood, yet the canvassing of some and doubting of others, which are declared by God himself to belong to the same system, will make room for the greater and brighter displays of the divine glory, when the day comes for him to make a short work upon the earth. Past partial discoveries, and past perplexing doubts, to intelligences of our limited capacities and state of discipline, will both unite in raising holy admiration and the triumph of praise, when God appears to build up Zion in glory. The sovereign grace of God, and his Almighty power, will strike with the greater awe and reverence, when he rises, as it were, at once rises, in the midst of darkness and disorder, and says—peace, be still; and wars are hushed, and the ferocious passions of men are bridled, and the ocean of human wrath is smoothed to a calm. It will be glorious thus to behold him, bowing the heavens, and coming down to fill his house, the church, with glory.

3. God will make a short work upon the earth, in mercy to his elect. Vindictive justice and redeeming grace set off each other. Hence, when God has mercifully in-

terposed for his people, he has usually poured out his wrath upon his and their enemies. In this manner, God wrought in Egypt, when he redeemed Jacob. Plagues scourged that guilty land. An awful display of justice, and a signal wonder of mercy met at the Red Sea. While Israel passed over on dry ground, the Egyptians sunk like lead in the mighty waters. Israel's deliverance from their captivity, and the punishment of the proud Assyrian monarch, are remarkable in sacred history, and to our present purpose. Nor is the punishment of the Jews since Christ's coming, and mercy shown to the Gentiles, less remarkable proof than either of the former, that the sword of God's justice, and the sceptre of his mercy, are held out at one time, to their respective objects.

The judgments of God, when angry, alarm the fear of such as know his name. They feel their own weakness. They see their own danger. Miracles, indeed, might keep them alive in the midst of a fiery furnace, But miracles are not to be expected in common. Therefore, it seems absolutely important, that God should speedily arise and make a short work upon the earth. When Christ, in the 24th of Matthew, is speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the end of the world, he foretelleth the troubles which should go before those events. The former was, and the latter will be, in mercy to the friends of God. And yet Christ declares, that the shortening of those days of vengeance was necessary to the salvation of his elect. "And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved. But for the elect's sake, those days shall be shortened."

Thus, my hearers, I have endeavored to show that God will make a short work in gathering in his elect, both with respect to the whole term of gathering them in, and in the union of wonders which will occur in a short space

when the largest harvest of saints shall be reaped here below, that ever takes place from the beginning to the end of the world. I have also endeavored to show that this method of procedure magnifies the grace, the wisdom, the power, and the mercy of God.

The practical uses of the subject are these.

1. Does the Lord make a short work upon the earth? Then let none delay making their peace with him. The whole term of probation would bear no proportion to eternity, were it, as to each individual, lengthened out to the end of the world, however early he came into existence after the creation. And how much are an hundred years to this! And yet, not an hundred years, but three score years and ten, is the ordinary term of life, assigned by God himself to man. The few who live to this age are, for the most part, much enfeebled, both in body and mind. The greatest part of those who are born, live not to three score and ten. Most die in the earlier part of life. Shall, then, this mere point of a point of time be squandered away in sin and folly? Since the methods of grace are exhibited to an individual but for a short term, let each individual be exhorted to make no delay in repentance. Let each one fear lest he fall short of the heavenly Canaan, and be found among that throng who, though they hear God's voice, obey it not, and perish.

2. Since the Lord will finish the work of his grace, and cut it short in righteousness, christians are encouraged to patience under present threatening appearances. "Be patient, 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. Stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." Jas. 5. Be not disquieted because the God of grace proceeds no faster in carrying on his work. He is now putting all things in the best possible train, to present the bright

scenes of the latter day glory of Zion and the Jerusalem which is from above, the mother of all those who are born again. Will you dare to dictate to the infinitely wise God how fast to proceed in his work, and when to set up his temple in the world in its greatest majesty? Be contented with his decisions. Acquiesce in his will. Your place is at the footstool. It is enough for every child of God to know that he has encouragement to pray—"Thy kingdom come." Were the Redeemer to be moved from his purposes by your prayers, he would cease to be the object of supreme worship: he would cease to be God. Rejoice that his counsel shall stand, and that he will do all his pleasure. There is no depth but lies clearly in his view. There is no obscurity in his understanding: it is all comprehensive. The arm of his power is omnipotent; and his promises cannot fail. They who obey the gospel shall all share in the triumphs of Zion, and the glory of the general assembly and church of the first-born. If we shall have dropped this tabernacle before the short work is made, in the fullest sense, upon the earth, we shall be in a better state to learn and to enjoy, and have a warmer heart to attend to the displays of redeeming love.

Should we behold days of vengeance, if we trust in God, he will, in mercy to us, shorten those days. Is our faith called to trial by living amongst a generation of mockers? Let us despise the scoffs of the ungodly, and prove, by our christian temper and deportment, that we belong to a kingdom that cannot be moved.

3. What we have heard may lead us to infer that much of what God does upon earth, is preparatory work: preparatory to succeeding brighter scenes here below; and all done on earth is preparatory for a future state, and the judgment day. All things done below the sun, by the author of our world, our race, and our hopes, advance on in swift progression. The face of things is often

changing. The present scenes must disappear and make room for some succeeding ones. The glories of divine grace, as revealed to the soul, have had but a small spread; and showers of divine grace in awakenings, have hitherto been short. Yet these things serve to prepare the way for a more glorious harvest, when all the precious remnant shall be gathered in. We have often occasion to remember the words of the prophet **Zechariah**, on the present and future state of the church below. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear nor dark. But it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord; not day nor night; but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light." The long process of providence, prophesying, working miracles, preaching the gospel, and administering ordinances, with little apparent success, and often in much confusion, will, at last, in the hand of him whose is the kingdom, bring out the short work on earth;—the shooting up of the previous seed which had long lain buried, and the coming down of **Christ** to live and reign with power in the hearts of his saints.

Lastly. Since God is spending ages in preparatory work, let us not think it too much to spend a short life in preparing our hearts to seek him. And, for every event that may befall us, let the institutions of grace and the discipline of providence cure us of our mental disorders, and make us, by the divine blessing, meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Our whole work, while here, can be but short. My hearers, let it be our meat and drink to do the will of him who planted us down in this varying state of things. If faithful to God and our own souls, we shall soon be transplanted to the paradise above. God grant us all soon to join the triumphant songs of those who sing,—*"Amen; blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever."*

# SERMON XVII.



MATTHEW, III CHAP. 8 VER.

*Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.*



THESE are the words of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ. They were spoken to the Pharisees and Sadducees, who came to hear his preaching in the wilderness, and to be made partakers of his baptism. As the Pharisees boasted much of their religion in their outward life, and had none at heart, John addressed them in this severe manner: Oh generation of vipers! who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? He did this to wound their pride in their ancestors, whose virtues they by no means possessed, although they gloried in their relation to them. They seem to have flocked around John, not so much through real penitence, as from hypocrisy, the love of novelty, and to be seen of men as the foremost in the externals of religion. The prophet discerned their secret feelings; and therefore compared them to the most poisonous animal, who, when unprovoked, does not show his nature, but hides his poisonous teeth under his gums, as they hid their real characters under apparent zeal for religion. He let them know his real opinion of them, to bring them to true repentance. He did not bid them repent, without qualifying the term repent. He bid them

bring forth fruits meet, fit, worthy, or answering to repentance.

It may be proper, from the text, to inquire what we are to understand by repentance; and what are its fruits, or those effects which evidence it to be true repentance.

Repentance, in the holy scriptures, is a term used in two distinct senses. 1. It is taken for that regret and reluctance which arise in a person, after having done something which he ought not to have done. Thus, when Judas saw that Christ was condemned, it is said of him, that he repented of what he had done. He was greatly afflicted in his mind about it; and wished it had not been done. But this repentance arises from a fear of the punishment denounced against sin; and is not accompanied by hatred of sin. As when a malefactor suffers for his crimes, he reflects upon his actions with sorrow. But this being a forced act, proceeding from a violent principle, is consistent with as great a love to sin as he had before; and may be entirely terminated on himself. He may be sorry for his crimes, as they have exposed him to punishment; and yet not be grieved that he has thereby offended God.

Repentance is also taken for that saving grace wrought in the soul by the spirit of God, whereby a sinner is made to see and be sensible of his sin; is grieved and humbled before God on account of it; not so much for the punishment to which sin has made him liable, as that God is thereby dishonored and offended, his laws violated, and his own soul polluted and defiled: and this grief arises from love to God, and is accompanied with a hatred of sin, a fixed resolution to forsake it, and an expectation of favor and forgiveness through the merits of Christ. In this sense, it was urged on the Pharisees in the text. The Jews had been guilty of many and great crimes; particularly, they had grossly misapprehended the nature of

the Messiah's kingdom. Their wills were very perverse ; their affections very disorderly ; and their conduct very wicked. He would have them alter their thoughts and ways ; and reflect with sorrow and hatred on their past sentiments and conduct.

As repentance, as well as every other grace, may have its counterfeits, and many mistake false and partial repentances for the true, it is important that we cautiously mark those fruits that are meet, for effects that are suitable to its nature.

1. Where repentance is real, there is a change of judgment with respect to the past course and conduct of life. So long as we are ignorant of God's righteousness, we are naturally disposed to establish our own righteousness. Nothing formidable appears in sin, and nothing faulty in our vain attempts to wash it away. Even our iniquity is a little transgression ; and, with Ephraim, we conclude, that in all our labors he shall find none iniquity in us that were sin. Sin will never revive, till the commandment comes, and the Spirit sets home to us the purity and perfection of God's holy law. It will then, in an appropriate sense, appear to us exceedingly sinful. Many things of which we judged favorably before, we conclude against severely now. We shall have quite opposite views, and form different judgments of actions that once passed as trivial, and it hardly occurred to our minds that they were noticed of God, or that we should be brought into judgment for them.

2. In true repentance, there is not only a different judgment of the mind against sin and in favor of holiness ; but there is also a change of determination or will. The mind of the true penitent being enlightened to see the evil of sin, and judging it to be exceedingly sinful, it immediately determines to forsake it, and makes choice of holiness and righteousness as every way preferable to it. It

resolves and determines in divine strength, never to indulge those lusts and affections any more, which have had an influence upon it in times past.

3. In true repentance, there is a removal of the affections from those things which are naturally relished by the carnal heart, and a placing them on those things which are at the right hand of God, and which the gospel of Jesus sets before our eyes. The true penitent no longer loves sin, or approves of uncleanness and iniquity: he no longer opposes God and goodness: he is no longer attracted by the world, or the things which are in the world: he no longer fears them who can only kill the body: he no longer sets his heart wholly upon the things which are on the earth; but he places his chief love on God, the supreme good. He takes delight in his worship, *his ways*, and his people; and fears him who can cast both soul and body into hell. He sets his affections on things above; turns them all to, and fixes them on, God, on Christ, on holiness and heaven, instead of satan, sin and the world. In counterfeit repentance, there may be partial views and resolutions; many sins spared, while only the more glaring and gross are suppressed. But in true repentance, it is sin, as sin, and not any particular sin, that becomes the object of aversion. Sin, in its nature, appears to be a great evil; and the least sin, as partaking of the nature of sin, is therefore considered as exceedingly sinful, and as such avoided and abhorred. A real penitent not only sees that he has done some things amiss; but he sees that his nature is corrupt, and the whole heart defiled. And consequently, he is upon the watch against every corruption; looking upon a sinful thought or inclination to be evil in the sight of God, as well as a sinful action. And hence he is unwilling to spare the least enemy, as well as the greatest.

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4. True repentance implies an alteration of sentiments with respect to the divine government. The natural mind is very blind as to God, and our dependence on him, and duty to him. Impenitent sinners think little of him. God is scarcely in their thoughts; or they have very false notions concerning him; and consequently behave very improperly towards him. But when once the eyes of the understanding are enlightened by the spirit of God, and the truths of the gospel shine into the heart, then the spirituality, purity, truth and justice of the divine nature will appear. The authority of God, and the necessity of his laws, will be discovered in quite a different light from what they formerly were. And this alteration of sentiment will be followed by a total alteration of the will and affections.

Another characteristic of true repentance is, godly sorrow. The sight of sin, and a sense of desertion from God, our creator, preserver, and rightful sovereign, cannot fail to open the sluices of sorrow, and occasion great and real grief. To think that we have sinned against our God, our benefactor, our king, our friend, and our father, makes the penitent heart truly sorrowful, and must give the ingenuous mind much affliction. To look back upon a life spent in unprofitableness and disobedience, to look upon a heart that is justly to be charged with ingratitude and unthankfulness, to look forward to the danger and misery to which our conduct has exposed us, to look to an offended God, and awfully just sovereign and judge, must occasion heart-felt grief, and, in a word, mourning.

Again, in true repentance, there is not only godly sorrow for sin, but there will be confession of it. I do not mean of every particular sin of which we have been guilty: this would be as impossible as to number the sands of the sea-shore. Before God, indeed, the true penitent is

ready to acknowledge every sin : he knows he can conceal nothing from his all-seeing eye. He is so deeply afflicted at ever having sinned against God, that he goes to him, and pours out his whole soul before him. He humbles himself in his sight, and pleads guilty of whatever his heart and conscience charge him with, though it be of the blackest dye ; confessing himself to be altogether sinful, and justly exposed to the worst of sufferings. And if he is guilty of atrocious sins, which are known to the world, or any man, and is accused of them, it is essential to true repentance that he deny them not, but, when charged with them, confess, declaring his hatred of them, his sorrow for them, and determined resolution against them.

Again, he who is thoroughly changed, whose judgment is convinced of the evil of sin, whose will is set against it, and whose affections are turned from it to heavenly objects, will resolve entirely to forsake it : and he will be assisted by almighty grace, though not to lead a sinless life, yet to lead, in general, a godly, a righteous, and a sober life. He will set himself against, and strive to mortify, secret lusts, as well as open sins ; and abstain, as much as in him lies, from all kinds of evil—little sins as well as great. A true penitent never takes a view of the holiness of God with a spiritual eye, but he immediately reflects upon himself with shame, and, like Job, abhors himself, and repents in dust and ashes.

Having given as brief an account as I could, of what I conceive to be some of the fruits meet for repentance, to which the gospel of Christ calls us, and which is one necessary step towards qualifying us to join in fellowship with the church of Christ, and with Christ himself, in divine ordinances ; let us all ask ourselves, how it stands with us as to this grace ? Do we know any thing of true

repentance, or do we not? Be not deceived with mistaken notions of repentance. Do not let us fancy transient conviction, or mere sorrow, or a bare external reformation, or aversion to some great sins, to be heart repentance. Repentance is often more a flood of sorrow for one or a few great sins, than a perpetual stream of grief for every past iniquity, whether great or small. Like Saul, most persons are for sparing some of the best of the spoil, instead of cutting off every sin. And to such partial penitents it may be said, as Samuel said to Saul, to convince them that they want true repentance, what meaneth this bleating of sheep in mine ears, and this lowing of oxen which I hear? If you profess conviction and repentance of sin, what mean these carnal desires and worldly practices which you indulge? What means the predominancy of hurtful and fleshly lusts? Sure where these are there cannot be true repentance. Where the sheep bleat and the oxen low, repentance is only feigned; or, at least, very partial. You save that which true repentance would cut off and destroy. Judas is the most remarkable instance we have of this kind of repentance. He betrayed his Lord: he sold innocence; upon after reflection, his heart smote him; his mind changed; he knew he had done wrong; he repented, and went and hanged himself. His repentance was, no doubt, very sincere, such as it was; but it was very partial. It was wanting in value: it extended but to one sinful act. It was not an aversion to all sin, but only a conviction of sorrow for, and horror on account of, the flagrant crime of betraying his Lord. There are too many who sit down contented with such a repentance as this; a partial sense of great sins, and sorrow for flagrant iniquities; while others as bad, though not so open, are cherished in the heart: and even those that occasion sorrow are not wholly disapproved of, though the consequences of them may be feared.

Nothing calls forth the tenderness of the soul like receiving some vast obligation, of which we are unworthy, from one we have treated with the greatest disrespect, and to whom it is past our power to make the least possible return. These tender sensibilities are awake and alive in true repentance. Amazed at the riches of divine goodness, long-suffering and forbearance; astonished at his ungrateful carriage and unworthy behavior towards God; the real penitent seeks his closet, that he may unbosom his soul to God. I was ashamed, yea even confounded, said Ephraim, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. The oftener and more intently the penitent looks upon the long and black score which grace hath forgiven him, the more he is ashamed, and the higher does his just indignation against sin arise;—an indignation against himself for what is past, and a vehement desire to keep clear of the like offence in his future course. See 2 Cor. vii. 2: For behold this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you; yea what clearing of yourselves; yea what indignation; yea what fear; yea what vehement desire; yea what zeal; yea what revenge. Loathing of ourselves always follows admiring thoughts of the sovereign, matchless, and distinguishing grace of God. The blood of Jesus is the best glass wherein to see the filth and defilement of sin; and that man can never be said to repent, who is unaffected with the love of a dying Savior, or unconcerned at the purity and holiness of a sin-hating God. There may be fear, but there will be no love, without a sense of that everlasting love and kindness, by which Christ draws sinners to himself.

It was a mark of David's penitence, in the matter of Uriah, that his sin was ever before him. He was not, as one expresses it, weary of his rags to-day, and pleased

with them to-morrow ; he was not humbled at one time, and wallowing in the same dirt and mire at another. Wherever he went, he carried his sin with him ; he could never confess it too much, or humble himself too low for it. He never thought lighter of his sin because it was forgiven him ; it was still as grievous, as offensive, and as hateful, in his eyes, as ever.

Many are fond and proud of confessing themselves great sinners. But the penitent are most afflicted with the sins to which they are particularly addicted. Hypocrites have always a blind eye to the sin that easily besets them : but returning prodigals, and humble publicans, see it, and feel it ; they bewail it ; and their leading sin is most carefully watched against, and most frequently confessed before God. Consciousness of darling sins commonly pricks the real Christian to the heart. It wounds to the quick, when the law enters that it may convince of sin. Sinners, like the children of Israel, will often tremble and quake when they hear the thunderings of Sinai, and God's wrath denounced against the finally impenitent : and will as soon set up an idol at the foot of the mount, when the thunderings are stayed. In this way many have heart-relentings, and turn ; but not to the Most High : they may cease to do outward evil, and yet not learn to do well : they may turn from one sin to another, as from profaneness to superstition, or from presumption to despair. This is not that permanent principle, which leads us daily to repent, and make application to Christ's blood ; and that humbles us more and more, in proportion as we rise in the divine favor. It is quite different : it is fond of shewing itself by external humiliation, with noise, and, perhaps, violent outcries. And after a fashionable length of time, its subject will act as though he thought the work was done, and that he has nothing to do but to enjoy the

smiles of a reconciled God, and a quiet conscience. I have not so learned the christian religion. We must be continually sowing in tears, would we reap in joy. The Christian's course is through a continual valley of sorrow ; a constant warfare with the world, the flesh, and the grand adversary : and the day will never come, in which we cannot adopt, in heart, the prayer of the publican, until we arrive in glory. If we set about repentance from selfish views, merely that we may escape the punishment due to sin, we cannot expect to be forgiven. Many followed Christ while here on earth, merely for the loaves : and the devils themselves would repent in this selfish and mercenary way, if it would answer their turn ; and would be as fit inhabitants of heaven, as sinners, who repent, only, because they must repent or be damned. Love to God is the true spring of godly sorrow. That we have sinned against God, our father, and constant benefactor, our friend, the loveliest and most amiable being in the universe, is what most afflicts an ingenuous mind : it is the purity, rather than the penalty, of the law, that afflicts the wounded spirit. Is it not possible, that some of us may, like the Pharisees, trust in ourselves that we are righteous, and despise others ? Bring forth fruits meet for repentance. Talk not of your sorrow for sin, while you live in its indulgence. If we love holiness, we shall avoid its opposite. If we praise holiness, and yet live in the secret indulgence of sin, we are of the generation of vipers ; and how shall we escape the damnation of hell.

Christianity would be much more popular in the world, if it could be all shadow and no substance : even proud men would repent. But the corner stone of Christian practice is poorness of spirit ; to have continually a broken and a contrite heart, and an abiding sense of our wretchedness, poverty, blindness, and nakedness. In Christ's

family, the lowest is the highest; and the most self-abased is the most exalted. The saint will grow more and more humble, and will have continually worse and worse ideas of himself, until he gets to glory.

Thus I apprehend the scriptural doctrine of repentance. May all who hear it, savingly know it, and what it is to sorrow for sin after a godly sort.

## SERMON XVIII.



ACTS, XXVI. CHAP. 28 VERSE.

*Then Agrippa said unto Paul, almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.*



THE Apostle Paul, while a prisoner, declares, in this chapter, his life and conversion to christianity, in presence of Festus, the Roman proconsul, and king Agrippa. He goes into a detail of his faith, and manner of life as a Pharisee; and gives an account how Jesus met him on the road to Damascus, and his commencing a preacher of that religion he had labored to destroy. His narrative, and the reason for his change of moral sentiments and opinions, had influence on the mind of king Agrippa; and he was reluctantly constrained to say,—Almost thou persuadest me to be a christian.

From the words of the text and context, we may gather several important and useful observations and reflections, for our present instruction and improvement.

1. There is a propriety and fitness in addressing counsel, warning and exhortation to unregenerate men. This we may determine from the commission which Christ gave to his apostles after his resurrection, and through them, to all his ministers to the end of the world. “Go ye

into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. The apostle Paul saith, in 2 Cor. 5,—“Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.”

The apostle, in the context, was laboring to persuade his royal hearer, in a particular manner, to receive Christ and him crucified. Agrippa was, at that time, in a state of unregeneracy; and, for any thing that appears, he remained in that state.

The propriety and fitness of the divine conduct, in addressing counsel, warning, and exhortation to the unregenerate, appears, from the faculties of which the human mind is possessed. Such as, an ability to perceive truth; to follow it into its consequences; to distinguish it from error; to feel impressions on the conscience; and to choose or refuse the good or evil presented. These faculties cannot be lost unless man were to drop his existence. They are essential to his place, as belonging to the intelligent family of the creator, and as being under his moral government. Remove these faculties, and there would be as much propriety in addressing counsel, warning, and exhortation, to the beasts of the field, or the birds of the air, as to man. These faculties that constitute moral agency, however, he will never lose, whatever be his future destination. If he continue to rebel through life, he will carry his thinking and reflecting powers to the world of misery. There they will help to compose the worm that will never die.

What we call depravity, or holiness, respects the temper or disposition of the mind, often called the heart. A sinful creature hates what a holy one loves. With the hatred of the former is connected, or rather originates, all darkness respecting spiritual beauty. With the love of the

holy creature is connected that light which discovers the divine beauty of spiritual things. The temper of the mind, however corrupt, does not at all impair our obligations to God: his law still remains holy, just, and good; and it still remains true, that conformity to God is the only way to real, permanent happiness. Hence, we may see the propriety of giving good counsel to the ungodly; warning them of the error and danger of their way; and calling on them to repent and turn to God through Jesus Christ. This is the ordinary way in which sinners are led to repentance.

Let it also be remembered, that the apostle declares, 1 Cor. 2—"For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish." Christ is honored, and his kingdom is in some way promoted, by every faithful exhibition of gospel truth. However Festus or Agrippa heard in vain, as Felix, and many others had done before them, and many have done since, yet God's word shall not return unto him void.

2. We may remark, from the confession of Agrippa in the text, that gospel truths may make some impression on the minds of unregenerate men. Many who heard Christ and remained in their unbelief, listened to him with attention for a season. They hung upon his lips, and felt a weight in his discourses, which they had never perceived in hearing the Scribes. Herod revered John as a just and holy man, and as a preacher of righteousness; but his heart was never renewed. And he sacrificed the holy man at last, to gratify the revenge of a favorite lewd woman. Christ in his parable of the sower, compares one class of hearers to seed that fell upon stony places. He explains this part of the parable in the following words:—"But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word and anon with joy receiveth it, yet hath not root in himself; but endureth for a while. For when

tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended."

Leaving scripture history, we must have remarked, if given at all to serious reflection, that evangelical truths are weighty in some instances to the minds of the unsanctified. They sometimes own that the weight of reason and argument is on the side of the gospel; that the requirements, both of the law and gospel, are reasonable requirements; that they have just cause of alarm that they are not reconciled to God; and their minds are much moved in reading, or hearing, the doctrines of revealed religion. Perhaps few, trained up strictly in a land of light, escape such seasons of conviction, brought on either by hearing the word preached or by reading only some alarming dispensation of providence.

3. Externally addressing counsels, warnings, and exhortations to the unregenerate, will not change their hearts. Convinced as Agrippa was, that the apostle reasoned forcibly from the prophets concerning the death and resurrection of Christ, and the consequent propagation of the gospel among the Jews and Gentiles, he was but *almost* persuaded to be a christian. Weighty, nervous, and energetic as the Apostle was in his reasoning, and though under the superintending influence of the Holy Ghost, he could not conquer the hearts of those to whom he spake.

4. We see that none can be christians indeed until their hearts are gained over to the belief, and their lives are conformed to the practice of the gospel. We must be something more than almost christians, we must be altogether such, or the preaching of the cross does not become unto us the power of God. With St. Paul, we must cease conferring with flesh and blood, and count all things but loss for the excellency of Christ Jesus, and be found in him not having on our own righteousness, which is of

the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. However some may not be far from the kingdom of God, with respect to doctrine, and however tender the animal feelings of others may be, on the subject of their eternal concerns; yet nothing effectual is done so long as the heart remains at enmity with God. All men are *for* Christ or *against* him. There is no communion between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of darkness. Each individual of the human race is either in the road that conducts to heaven or in that which leads down to eternal death. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." Real piety of heart, forms the character of highest worth. Though one had the ability to speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and were destitute of charity, he would be but as a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. Christian love infinitely outweighs the gift of prophecy, the understanding of all mysteries,\* and all knowledge, and the faith that would remove mountains. The gift of prophecy may be bestowed on a Balaam, who loved the wages of unrighteousness: but real piety, or grace in the heart, is given to none but the heirs of heaven. Without holiness of heart, none can have communion with God in this world, or be admitted to the enjoyment of him hereafter. "God is a spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." If we are real christians, our fellowship is with the father and with his son Jesus Christ. "If we say that we have fellowship with God, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his son, cleanseth us from all sin."

5. From reflecting on the inefficacy of external means to renew man's heart, we are taught, that they who are alto-

gether christians have abundant cause to adore the God of all grace. Believers of whatever nation or age, are, by nature, children of wrath, even as others. They have been quickened, or made alive, by that God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved them. Why, then, Oh Believers! are ye at this hour, any thing more than almost christians. You cannot attribute your change to any good resolution of yours while your hearts were alienated from the life of God. Would your corrupt hearts, of their own accord, have ever given up themselves to God? You must be convinced that it is by the grace of God that you are delivered from the wrath to come, and made heirs of eternal life. Let it appear, by your humble, watchful and heavenly deportment, that you have been with Jesus, and are renewed in the spirit of your minds.

The spirit of the gospel is full of benevolence and compassion. When you look on a stupid, unbelieving, ungodly world, you must find abundant cause to pour out your hearts in fervent prayer to Almighty God, that he would have pity on those who have no pity on themselves. Remember the words of our apostle: "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." Pray, therefore, for the descent of the Holy Spirit on the hearts of sinners, that they may be made alive who are now dead in trespasses and sins.

6. The present subject furnishes a rule of trial which may assist us in distinguishing, within ourselves in particular, whether we are christians in name, or indeed and in truth. As rational creatures, we may as well reflect on the operations of our own minds touching moral and religious subjects, as any other. But on religious subjects, we are more liable to draw wrong conclusions than in any other case. We are in danger of being blinded by self-flattery to think ourselves something when we are nothing.

This strange liability to deception, in a matter of such infinite importance, arises hence: we have hearts that are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. What impressions have the counsels, warnings and exhortations of God's word made upon us? Have they passed away without leaving any more traces behind, than are left by the course of a ship in the sea? If any impressions have been left, are they of the holy kind? Are they such as have left a fixed and growing hatred of sin, and desires after present conformity to the divine will in all things? Or are the impressions those made by argument alone on the understanding and the conscience? If we have felt the movings of affection, are they like the morning cloud and the early dew? Or are they of a kind which influences us to live, not unto ourselves but unto him who died and rose again? Do all our wishes for the welfare of others terminate in objects which gratify a pharisaical pride in us, or the feelings of selfishness? Can we say, in the sincerity of our hearts, that we desire, above all things, that their souls may be in health and prosperity? Or, in the spirit of the apostle, that they may be, not only *almost* but *altogether* christians? Do we feel the worth of the cause for which Christ became incarnate, obeyed, died and rose again? and can we, through divine grace, commit the keeping of our souls to God, as to a faithful creator? Are we puffed up with pride, from a belief that we have made ourselves to differ from the profane and scoffing? Or are we disposed to lie low at the footstool of sovereign mercy, and to strive to subdue those corruptions which reign in the unsanctified, and so often give a wound in real christians, to their own peace and the cause of the Redeemer before men?

The characters of saints and sinners are clearly drawn in the holy scriptures: and we can all know whether we are going to heaven or hell. Religion does not consist in

words, or professions of regard to Christ; or in gifts, or zeal, or usefulness: but in doing the will of God from the heart. It is a small matter to be judged of man's judgment. Since, on the great day, the Lord will say to many who thought themselves christians, I never knew you: depart from me, ye workers of iniquity. That a man approves of religion and prays, is not a certain sign of grace. The wicked sometimes pour out a prayer, when God's chastening rod is upon them: but when the chastening is over, there is an end to their devotions, and they return to their sins as the dog to his vomit. So their may be transient convictions of sin, and terrific fears of hell; and these may lead, not only to temporary reformation, but to doing many things, as Herod did when he heard John gladly. But there may be all this, and much more, while men remain workers of iniquity. Men may be famous and useful in the church, and after all, be cast-aways. For it will not avail us if we can prophecy and cast out devils, while the devil is not cast out of our own hearts, and the wonderful works of God's grace have never been wrought in our souls. If we love sin and live in sin, be assured Christ is not deceived by compliments. It is to no purpose to call him Lord and Master, if we do not the things which he commands.

Lastly. The subject suggests a caution to those who may be attempting to satisfy their consciences with the belief that they are almost christians. Many boast that they are no hypocrites; for they never made any pretensions to religion. But can any be so foolish as to think that this will be any excuse? Will you dare to approach the awful bar of God with the incestuous Agrippa and say, I was almost persuaded to be a christian; and yet I loved the world and my sins so well that I lived like an Atheist? Answer that interesting question of holy writ if you can: "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

While you are hesitating about buying oil, the bridegroom may come, and the door will be shut. If a christian's life is like that of a soldier at warfare, can he be idle, and yet obtain the rewards of a soldier?

How did Christ treat those who manifested a willingness to follow him, if they might first accomplish this or that worldly object? What did he say to the apparently decent request of him who asked leave to go and bury his father? "*Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.*" Another would follow Christ, if he might first go and bid them farewell, who were at home at his house. But Jesus said, "no man having put his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. If ye love these more than me, ye are not worthy of me." Feeling well disposed to religion, as it is called, is not religion. It will not do to talk, like wicked Felix, about a more convenient season. God knows the gospel to be of such importance to sinners, that he will not take many denials, when he offers his grace. He said, in the parable of the feast, that the invited guests who made their excuses, should not taste of his supper: and he said it in holy anger. The Gadarenes, at the loss of their swine, besought Christ to depart out of their coasts: and he never visited their country afterwards. Where do you find your scripture to support you in the liberty of halting between two opinions, and to hesitate whether you will follow Christ or not? Must Christ knock at the door of your heart, till his head is wet with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night; and knock in vain? How dare any of the almost-persuaded, to go on in sin! Will you not be awfully condemned out of your own mouths?

If you offer the poor dregs of life to God on a sick bed, or in old age, how do you know that he will accept them? Oh! be honest, and you will acknowledge, that all your excuses arise from the darkness, worldliness, and enmity

of your fallen nature; and that they show the necessity of having "a new heart and a right spirit."

Sin, and ignorance, and carelessness, and unbelief, will certainly ruin the soul. Though the flesh may form a thousand excuses for not immediately complying with the gospel, and you may have the majority of the world on your side, yet God has said,—“The end of these things is death.”

Virtue and morality are excellent things, and promote the peace and welfare of society; but they are not Saviours. He that trusts in them leans on a broken reed: Christ alone can save sinners. He must be your wisdom, your righteousness, your sanctification, and redemption. Be not deceived. You have no lot or portion in christianity until your hearts are gained over to the belief, and your lives are conformed, to the practice of the gospel. We must be something more than almost christians: we must be altogether such. We must cease conferring with flesh and blood, and count all things loss for Christ.

I urge you to be decided: and to choose whom ye will serve, immediately. It is now an accepted time and a day of salvation. Every time you sin against the calls of conscience, you provoke God, and grieve the Holy Spirit. Every Sabbath, every day, and every hour's delay, increases the stock of original and actual transgression. My friends and neighbors, I pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. Out of Christ, God is a consuming fire; and it is a dreadful thing to fall into his hands, while he is incensed by our rebellion, ingratitude, and sin. Do not slight these things because they have been often said, and you have often heard them. This is the very circumstance that alarms christians for you. God has said his Spirit shall not always strive with man; and you know not how soon the divine patience may be worn out in waiting for you. As you have vexed his Holy Spirit, God

may this day, turn to be your enemy, and fight against you, and say to you as to Israel,—“By hearing ye shall hear, and not understand, and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive. For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted and I should heal them.”

Let every one who hears me, then, watch, and pray against pride and the love of wickedness, and those previous provocations that tend to this dreadful obduracy. If ye like not to retain the thoughts of God, and Christ, and his Holy Spirit, in your hearts, God will soon give you over to a reprobate mind, to do things that are not convenient. Nay, he may send you strong delusions that you may believe a lie and in this way hasten your own damnation. “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!”

## SERMON XIX.



LUKE, XIII CHAP. 24 VER.

*Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*



IF the doctrine of universal salvation were a scripture doctrine, and agreeable to the divine purposes respecting our revolted world, the Saviour had a fair opportunity to affirm it in the text. For, the words chosen are an answer to the preceding verse. "Then one said unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved?" "Perhaps the man who asked the question, inferred from the general tenor of Christ's preaching, that few would be saved; and was prejudiced against him on that account."\* Whatever might have been the person's views who asked the question, "it was apparently a question of curiosity; and our divine Master did not directly answer him, but took occasion to inculcate a very important exhortation: it not being so much our concern to know how many shall be saved, as how we ourselves shall be saved."\*

In the metaphorical language of scripture, heaven is often described by a city, and the entrance into it by a

\*Scott's Com. in loc.

gate. This gate, in the text, is declared to be strait, not because it is not wide enough in its nature; but it is strait on account of the corruptions of the human heart and attendant temptations; it is strait because many will seek for happiness, and what they think will be heaven, in other, or different ways from that which is pointed out in the gospel. "The strait gate is the passage from the broad way to destruction, into the narrow way to life: i. e. a sinner's conversion and reconciliation to God, by repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Many difficulties must occur in thus passing from death unto life. The gate is beset with enemies; and much must be left behind, broken off, broken through, overcome, and attained, in getting in at it. Yet without this there can be no salvation. They, therefore, who would be saved, must strive for the blessing. They must struggle with all their force, and employ all their attention and circumspection, as those did who wrestled in the Olympic games,"\* and ran in ancient foot-races. "To excite his hearers and followers to this, Christ, the Saviour and Judge of men, solemnly assured them, that many would seek to enter in, and would not be able."

The object from the text will be,

I. To point out the way to heaven, as marked in the gospel.

II. Inquire why this way is difficult.

III. The folly of those who expect heaven in any other way than that which Christ and his apostles have marked out.

I. The way: Heaven must be sought through Jesus Christ. He is the only name given under heaven among men whereby we must, or can, be saved. The words to Thomas, John 14. 16, are so plain that they cannot be misunderstood, except by those who are determined not

\*Scott's Com. in loc.

to see and hear. "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." The religion of the gospel requires the same kind of holiness as the law: but the law knows of no way in which mercy can be shown to sinners. The gospel opens a way in which sinners can be saved, consistently with the honor of the divine law and perfections. Christ came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost.

The way to heaven, proclaimed in the gospel, is marked by two grand and distinguishing peculiarities: repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. "Some seek admission into the favor of God and eternal happiness, without experimental conversion, or faith in the divine Saviour: others seek the blessing in a slothful manner, or in the use of such means as God has never appointed: others, with reserves for their worldly interests, reputation, or sinful pleasures, or for avoiding reproach and persecution. In these, and similar ways, many come short of salvation; notwithstanding convictions, temporary seriousness and earnestness, and partial reformation."\* To be more particular: I apprehend,

1. The saved are made acquainted with all their sins, original and actual. They are made to discern that destruction and misery are in their ways, in a sense which no person can discern, uninfluenced by the Holy Ghost. They all have a view of sin as exceeding sinful, as a breach of God's holy law, and containing the essence of all that is hateful and odious.

2. The saved, from the heart approve of the sum of the ten commandments, as holy, just, and good. They feel convinced that they are without excuse in their sins. Sinners will not repent, savingly, so long as there is a disposition to excuse themselves, by alleging that they were

\*Scott's Com. in loc.

tempted to sin, or decreed to sin, or think to charge the wickedness of their hearts on the God who made them. No person, with these feelings, can say sincerely, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." In the parable of the supper, when the servant was sent out, to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready; they with one consent began to make excuse. This ever has, and ever will, exhibit to us, the character and conduct of the impenitent.

The penitent are pricked in their heart. The veils of pride, prejudice, and sinful affections, are removed from their minds. The Comforter having come, has convinced them of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come; truth has entered their consciences as sharp arrows, or as the piercing sword. They have nothing to say in self-justification; but cry to those who they think have knowledge and experience: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

3. The saved are willing to come to the Father through the Son. They rejoice in him as the way to the Father and to heaven; in his person as God manifest in the flesh; and as our surety and mediator, by his obedience and atoning sacrifice, and by his intercession, as our advocate before the throne. They become reconciled to God's holy government as it is. They choose the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as their portion; approve of all the divine attributes, as they come into view; his justice as well as his mercy; his holiness and truth as well as his goodness and compassion. They are satisfied, and rejoice that mercy is exercised only in a sovereign way to sinners. "Even so, Father; for so it seemeth good in thy sight." They place their whole dependence on Jesus Christ for the pardon of sin; and rest upon his obedience as the ground of their acceptance with God. They are willing

to forsake all for the sake of Christ and his kingdom. The riches, the honors, and the pleasures of this world, are counted as nothing, and less than nothing, in comparison with an inheritance beyond the grave. Having denied themselves, and taken up their cross, they are willing to be disposed of according to the will of God; and do not count even their lives dear unto themselves, that they may finish their course with joy.

4. They who are going to heaven, confess Christ before men. Having publicly owned and embraced his doctrines, they stand up in defence of them, according to their ability, against their enemies. They attend on the ordinances of his appointment; and testify their love to him by lives of obedience. They come out from a wicked world, and live separate; uniting themselves principally with Christ's visible followers. Christ is the pattern and example they imitate. They study to live and pray and suffer reproach like Christ. And while the partially convicted and converted stumble and fall remedilessly, they are humbled for their backslidings. They cannot rest easy in the practice of any known sin, like hypocritical professors. They can enjoy no peace in their own apprehension, until they have returned from every sin by repentance, and godly sorrow. Again,

5. True Christians think much on the end of life. They often lie down and rise up with serious and solemn thoughts of their removal from this world, and their entrance into the eternal state. They are often asking themselves, "how would such words, thoughts, and actions, appear, were I now passing through the agonies of expiring nature? Will my Lord approve? Will he say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord?" In a word, their conversation is in heaven, and they are strangers and pilgrims in the world. The meditation and contemplation of heavenly and divine

things swallow up their thoughts, and influence all their actions in life. They are continually looking for Christ, and are anxiously expecting his coming. Their great object in living is to be prepared to be found of their Judge in peace.

Thus, in a summary manner, I have endeavored to show you the way to heaven which is pointed out in the gospel.

II. It was proposed to inquire why this way is difficult? And

1. This way is difficult because mankind are unwilling to see and acknowledge themselves, and their true character by nature. The doctrine of total moral depravity and moral inability is not generally believed among men; and will not be generally believed, until the day when the splendors of millennial glory shall dawn on the world. Having eyes, men see not on this subject; having ears, they hear not; and understanding, they do not perceive. Little did the Jews think, when garnishing the tombs of the prophets, whom their fathers slew, that they had the temper of their fathers.

2. The way to heaven is difficult in the eyes of sinners, because they do not approve of the law of God. It seems too strict, and the penalty too awful to be approved by those who have broken it. In the writings of how many has it been asserted, that to punish forever and ever, seems hard and unjust! How many declare openly, that they will not believe in so cruel a doctrine! With these feelings, nothing but an exertion of Almighty power can convince us of the malignity of sin; and the law will ever be a powerless school-master to bring us to Christ.

3. The way is difficult, because sinners do not admit themselves to be without excuse. Adam's posterity have ever shown a prevalent disposition to copy his example,

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not only in transgression, but also in making excuses; and such excuses as ultimately throw the blame upon God himself: "The woman thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Self-justification forms a prominent feature in the human character; discernable from tender infancy to hoary hairs; not only among the virtuous and moral, but even down to the murderer, the thief, and the prostitute. To this there is no exception. It is, indeed, artfully concealed in some, and suppressed in others, by that proficiency in vice, which, glorying in what is shameful, like Satan, attempts no excuse; and it is only subdued in others by the grace of the gospel, and the humbling influences of the Holy Spirit.

4. The way to heaven is difficult for sinners, as they are not disposed to give up all for Christ. They who loved the praise of men more than the divine approbation, would not come to Christ when he was on the earth. The young man, of whom mention is made in Mark 10. 22, went away grieved. There was a natural amiableness in the youth, compared with the base conduct of the Scribes and Pharisees, which excited our Lord's compassion. Many such will call Jesus, Good Master; seem to have some thoughts about eternal things; and approve, and even profess, very exactly to obey several of the commandments. But they have not understood the holiness of the divine character, the spirituality and extent of the holy law, the evil of sin, their own guilt and depravity, or their need of a Redeemer and his regenerating Spirit. A sharp trial often proves their moral goodness to be radically defective, and to be carnal selfishness in a more decent garb: so that self-denying, impoverishing duties, no more suit their love of this present world, than the doctrines of grace do their self-admiration. All these things render it difficult for persons in a state of nature to obey and follow Christ. They are not willing to

take up their cross; and their pride revolts at the idea of their leaving an earthly treasure, which they have in possession, for the hope of a heavenly treasure in reversion.

Once more.—To enter into the strait gate, to be honestly and truly religious, is difficult, because persons destitute of piety look to the end of life with reluctance. The eternal world is a state into which they wish not to go. They have no taste for the enjoyments of a holy heaven. Meanwhile, their own wicked and deceitful hearts are busy; and Satan with his emissaries continually tempts them to quit the narrow, and walk the broad road: which leads us

III. To consider the folly of those who expect heaven in any other way, than that which Christ and his apostles have marked out. “For many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”

1. Their folly appears in this. On their self-righteous plan, there is no way in which they can be acquitted from condemnation, and made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. “He that entereth not by the door into the sheep-fold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.” If we refuse to be saved in the way that God has prescribed, it is folly to expect salvation at all. And

2. If we enter not in at the strait gate, we shall have no moral fitness for heaven. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” It is the most absurd presumption in the world, to expect future happiness without knowing what it is, or that we can enjoy it without preparation. The carnal mind, which belongs to us all as born of the flesh, is enmity against God: so that they who are in the flesh cannot please him nor enjoy him. They then are fools who expect to enjoy happiness beyond death, who have experienced no moral change in life. That hope will fail that is built on the

sand. "Notwithstanding conviction, temporary seriousness, and partial reformation,"\* and forms of christianity, many will come short of salvation: many will at last seek to enter, and will not be able. "Whilst life lasts, the master of the house, the Lord Jesus, sits, as it were, at mercy's gate, over which it is written, 'knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' But, at length, he will rise up, and, by cutting off the sinner in an unconverted state, he will shut the door against him, and bar it forever."\*

Thus I have attempted to show you the way to heaven; the difficulties you must encounter in it; and the folly of those who expect to arrive at that happy world in any other way than that which God has appointed. The uses of improvement may be some of the following.

1. It appears that the way to heaven, pointed out in the gospel is an excellent way. It implies the reclaiming of the sinner from spiritual death to spiritual life: it restores him to communion with the blessed God: it delivers him from the curse of the law: it brings him into the divine favor. The followers of Christ are supported amidst all the temptations to which they are exposed. Their religion teaches them how to live, and how to die in peace. It brings them at last into the enjoyment of that rest which remaineth for the people of God.

2. We may see the unreasonableness of complaining of the difficulties in the way to heaven. God has so ordered things, in the natural and moral world, that objects which are of great worth should be sought and found with labor and diligence; and those which are obtained with ease are little prized. Ought we then to wonder that an immortal crown should not be obtained without difficulty? If it requires such exertions to obtain a corruptible crown, to which we are not natural heirs, what must be the struggle to obtain that which is incorruptible? Be-

\*Scott's Com. in loc.

sides, the difficulties which arise in obtaining heaven, originate in the depravity of our hearts. It is the plague of a selfish, hard, proud, and deceitful heart, which makes the gate strait and the way narrow, that leads to eternal life. We do well, then, to leave all complaint on ourselves.

The subject also may convince us, that persons who have no anxiety about their future state, cannot be in the way to heaven. When we reflect on the immense multitudes of the human race, it is very awful to consider how few of them appear to be in the way of salvation as marked out in the word of God. We need not shed our tears over heathen lands only. The great mass of probationers under the light of the gospel, are monstrously stupid. The form of godliness without the power, is the resting-place of a vast majority in Christendom. They trust in their sect and denomination rather than in Christ. My hearers, let us rather look to ourselves than to our sect and creed. It is a waste of time to calculate and make curious inquiries who, or how many shall be saved. It will not avail us how few or how many shall be saved, if we be not of that number. Every unconverted sinner should strive to enter in at the strait gate, by earnest prayer, by resisting temptations, by avoiding all occasions of committing sin, or silencing his conscience, and hardening his heart, and by attending diligently on every means of grace. It is in vain that we should hope, unless we labor and wrestle that we may make our calling and election sure. With solemn attention and application to our own souls, let us all hear our Judge declare, that "many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." We are indeed assured, that none shall seek the Lord, when, and where, he may be found, as in Christ, and on a throne of grace, by humble faith and fervent prayer, and at last fail of obtaining the blessing. But let every

man, woman, and child, beware of a proud, a slothful, a hypocritical, a partial seeking: and above all, let them beware of *putting off*, in soul concerns. How dreadful will be the disappointment of those who hoped and intended, at some future time to enter the strait gate, but who deferred the grand concern from worldly motives, till it became too late, and the door was shut against them forever! In vain will they call Christ, Lord, and entreat him to open to them. In vain will they plead that they heard his ministers, and frequented his table. He will utterly disregard their pleas, and refuse all pity to their anguish, whilst he shall bid them depart from him as workers of iniquity, whom he never acknowledged to be in the number of his redeemed people. And even the felicity of those with whom they formerly associated, as well as that of others whom they disdained, will add poignancy to their misery and despair.

Oh! ye who are conscious that you are unreconciled to God in Christ, feel the weight of this subject! Make haste; and act with decision in your souls' concerns. There is no time to be lost: everlasting consequences hang on every moment of probation. Deceive not yourselves with false hopes, and the external performances of a cold and heartless religion. Turn not your eyes away from that natural sink of corruption that is within you. Reflect on the extent and pure nature of the divine law. Do not justify yourselves in sin: rather smite on your breasts with the humble Publican. Come to the Father through the Son. Be willing to forsake all for Christ; and be not ashamed to appear on the Lord's side. Imitate Christ's example, and let your conversation be in heaven. Let neither earth nor hell divert or deter you from striving to enter in at the strait gate. The very expression in the text may prove to us that heaven is not to be obtained merely by assuming the name of a christian,

and by exercising the indolent, lazy, and half-formed desires of the lukewarm. Mark all the epithets in scripture, used to express the acts of the creature in obtaining salvation. It is called a strife, a labor, a fight, a wrestling, a race, a conflict, a duty to be done with fear and trembling.

“As there are but two places to which all human beings are removed at death: so there are but two roads: one to destruction, the other to heavenly happiness. The gate at which men enter the broad road is very wide; and as the road is broad, it has many paths, suited to men’s different humours and inclinations,”\* and all set with false guide-posts, inscribed with showy letters, “This is the way.” “The covetous and the spendthrift, the profligate and the hypocrite, the spiritually proud and the Pharisee, the decent moralist and the unprincipled infidel, have their select paths, and their select companies. Though they mutually despise and condemn one another, yet they all step one another in countenance, by agreeing to oppose the holy ways of the Lord. But when a man hears and believes the voice of Christ, he discovers whither this way tends, and feels the necessity of getting out of it. He makes a stand, and determines to proceed no further; and he learns, that by repentance, faith in Christ, and conversion to God and holiness, he may get into another way which leads to life. But the gate is strait. Sinful pleasures, prospects, interests, and connexions, must be relinquished. A man must lay aside his encumbrances, his pride and darling lusts: he must be humbled, stripped, and emptied: he must break loose from those who would retain him, and force his way through those that would impede his cause: he must deny himself, take up his cross, resist temptation, mortify the flesh, endure reproach, earnestly use all the means of grace, and

\*Scott’s Com. Matthew 7. 13, Notes.

cordially accept of Christ in all his characters and offices, or he cannot get in at the strait gate. After that he has entered, the way is narrow, or afflicted, as expressed in the original Greek. It is beset with thorns: it is afflicted, because it is narrow: it is the direct way of faith and obedience. A real christian cannot pick and choose his path, as men do in the broad road; but must go strait forward; turning neither to the right hand nor to the left. If he do, he will be scourged back again into the narrow path. When he meets an enemy, he must face him and overcome him. When he comes to a mountain of difficulty, he must climb over it. If the road be rough, he must still keep in it; and no persecution or tribulation must divert him from it. Therefore, in our day, few there be that find this way to life. Most men either neglect religion entirely, or rest in forms or notions; or are deluded into some of those more soothing, flattering, and fashionable species of religion, which Satan, transformed into an angel of light, takes care to propose to them, when uneasy about their souls. They are deterred by the difficulties to be encountered in entering at the strait gate; and they hope to get to heaven by an easier entrance; for they know not that this way hath its peculiar joys and consolations, which abundantly compensate for its difficulties and trials. Therefore, Christ warned his hearers and all men, to enter in at the strait gate without delay, and with all earnestness, and to fear nothing so much as being left without. For though the entrance is difficult, and found only by few; yet all who humbly, but resolutely, in God's strength, attempt it, will succeed: and it leadeth to eternal life, whilst all other ways lead to destruction.

“It is surprising how much this plain declaration of Christ has been overlooked by those who call themselves christians; and how much pains have been taken to soften

the asperity of it, and explain away its evident meaning. It cannot be inconsistent with the rule of not judging others, to suppose that most men, and most of my hearers, are in the way to destruction."\* I again warn and exhort you, really to repent, and sincerely to believe. There is so much ridiculing of conferences, praying meetings, and concern for the soul, that I apprehend the fear of man bringeth a snare on many. If we would serve God, we must be singular, as well as laborious and resolute in religion. Oh my friends, my fellow-sinners! delay not in this great affair. Life is short; death and eternity are near. Behold, this day, life and death set before you! God grant that you may choose life, and be wise unto salvation through Jesus Christ.

\*Scott's Com. Matthew 7. 13, & Prac. Obs.

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[The following appears to be the Farewell Sermon, which the writer delivered, on leaving the people of his charge, in Bethlehem, Connecticut, for Hamilton College.]

## SERMON XX.



PHILIPPIANS, I. CHAP. 8 VERSE.

*For God is my record how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.*



THE heart of the Apostle Paul was never warmer with divine love than when he was in bonds. With Silas his fellow laborer, he sung praises unto God when imprisoned at Philippi. He breathes the same spirit while writing to the Church, which he had gathered in that city, from his prison at Rome.

The Philippian brethren had in several instances given proof of their love to Christ and of their love to their spiritual father by ministering to his necessities. They had lately sent by Epaphroditus a supply for his wants. By him he sent them this epistle. And as an exhibition of christian love tends to awaken this heavenly affection, he speaks of their liberality as an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable and well pleasing to God. On this account he rejoices in the Lord greatly, that their care of him had flourished again. Beholding the amiable temper which they discovered in communicating with his afflictions, he is emboldened to salute them with great confidence in their

christian sincerity, as in the context. "I thank my God, upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all, making request with joy for your fellowship in the gospel from the first until now, being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my bonds and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye are all partakers of my grace." To give the greater force to the effusion of his heart, the apostle makes an appeal to the Omniscience in the text. "For God is my record how greatly I long after you all, in the bowels of Jesus Christ." From these words it is evident that he loved some of the Philippians, for their likeness to Christ, and that he longed after them all, with a holy, tender, and compassionate affection, like that of Christ to his people, and that he would gladly exert himself in any self-denying services by which he might be further useful to them and their spiritual concerns.

For any uninspired man to assume these words as his own, would savour of arrogance.

But that the connection between a minister and his people is a tender and interesting connection, cannot be denied. Like a father and his children, they have an united interest for time and eternity. The father is honored and comforted and rewarded in the good conduct of his children, and the children partake in the honour, happiness and respectability of the father. And mutual fidelity, with the interchange of kind and friendly offices, is sure to produce mutual attachment.

If men who want your votes for office, profess great love to you and your dearest interests, and are often believed, shall it be a sin in a minister to profess a regard for the temporal and eternal interests of his hearers. I am

sensible that of late years much pains are taken to convince children and youth, that standing, stable and abiding presbyterian ministers are their greatest enemies; that they regard their flocks only for their fleeces. Were youth to believe half that is said by vagrants, called preachers, and written by designing men, you would think that those who receive a compensation for their office work in the gospel, were to be hunted down like beasts of prey. But, my hearers, what interests for time or eternity, can a minister have, which are not bound in the same bundle with his parishioners by a thousand ties? Is it for the interest of a minister that heads of families, and the youth of his parish, should be poor and deprived of their liberties? that they should be idlers, drunkards and unprincipled spendthrifts, rather than the fearers of God and the observers of his commandments?

Strange and unaccountable must that prejudice be, which will lead any to think, that a minister is grieved to see promising youth of either sex rising among the people of his charge. Which is most desirable, the respect of a free, enlightened, honest and industrious community, or that homage of respect paid by a flattered, ignorant, knavish and idle people, for winking at their vices and prophesying smooth things? Were you all wise for time, and wise for eternity, would it not enable me to answer those who reproach me and my profession, as the enemies of the people to whom we minister? It will be to a minister's honour in time, and the crown of his rejoicing in eternity, to have many in his parish, who have been persuaded by him to forsake sin, for the service of their master. That many, yea all, should taste and see that the Lord is gracious, and let their own experience prove that the ways of wisdom are pleasant, and that her paths are peace. Think me not your enemy, if I have told you plain truths heretofore, that were unpleasant to corrupt and depraved human na-

ture. Flatterers are not always our best friends, nor the most indulgent, the kindest parents. If chastening is a token of love in our heavenly Father, to his sons and daughters, it is godlike in a christian minister, to chasten his careless people with truth, and to wound them that they may be healed.

The pastoral relation, which I have sustained towards you for almost twenty-one years has been dissolved by an ecclesiastical counsel. Their unanimous opinion has made me believe, that I should resist the plain intimation of duty, in the providence of God, if I did not yield to the call which takes me from you. My settled expectation certainly was to live and die in your service. But a minister of the gospel, in a peculiar sense, is not his own; he is devoted to the service of Christ, and is bound to forego his own inclinations and plans whenever the master and the cross require him.

This sacrifice therefore it was not for me to refuse. And it seemed the less difficult to make it, when I reflected that you already had the best services, (and would to God they had been more valuable,) of my best and most vigorous days. On the other hand, if I were at all capable of filling the sphere of usefulness to which I was called, it was, in the estimation of competent judges, of greater extent and importance, than the pastoral charge of any congregation whatever. These are, in substance, the considerations which have induced me to accept the unexpected appointment, which separates me from you: and I hope they will satisfy the candid and considerate.

To satisfy such, I would not be without concern; remembering, nevertheless, that the responsibility which most demands my regard, is not to man, but to God. Not to you, but to our common Lord. In the spirit of the text, I would now offer you my parting advice and exhortation. It does not seem unreasonable to hope, that what I may

say on this occasion, will claim your special attention and remembrance, since it is likely to be dictated by more than an usual solicitude to discharge my own duty and to promote your best interests. Allow me then to speak to you in a style of great freedom and plainness, as a father to his children.

I shall first call your attention to some duties specially incumbent on you, in consequence of my removal. When a congregation is what we denominate vacant, it is then a time of necessity with it. It needs all its strength and resources of every kind, and its members should consider it as highly dishonorable and unchristian to forsake it, unless compelled by motives of a truly conscientious kind. Let me also remind you, that, at such a season, it is not only peculiarly important to hold together as a society, but also to cultivate real harmony and unanimity, among yourselves. To keep together only to contend, is worse than to separate.

Remember, as peculiarly applicable to the case before us, the admonition of Solomon. "The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water; therefore leave off contention before it be meddled with." Divisions in all societies, but most of all in religious societies, are easily begun, but extremely difficult to end. Guard therefore, with a truly religious vigilance, against the beginnings of them. Indulge in no irritating and censorious language: have no parties or cabals: withdraw not your confidence from those whose fidelity you have proved: be ready to make personal concessions for the general good: let all feel the importance of yielding something to the convenience and opinions of others. Keep in mind the established principle of the government under which you live, that the majority must govern and the minority submit: learn to acquiesce in some things which you could wish were otherwise ordered. In the authoritative words of inspiration,

I say, "let nothing be done through strife, or vain glory: but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than themselves. Do all things without murmuring and disputing, that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world." Keep strictly to your confession of faith and the public standards of doctrine and discipline which you have received from your ancestors.

To those who would officiously show you a better way, reply, that "the religion of my forefathers has produced as many exemplary lives and happy deaths, as any religion I know of. If I must judge of the religion of the living and the dead by their fruits, that which has produced the most and the best fruit, is the best tree, my Saviour being judge."

2. The choice of a minister is the next point in order which demands attention. The members of a vacant congregation should be much and earnestly engaged in prayer to God, that he would send them a pastor after his own heart. Infinitely more may depend on this, than all other means and efforts which can be employed without it.

That people who do not receive a pastor in answer to prayer, have indeed much reason to fear that they will not receive a blessing with any one whom they may elect. While in the use of prayer you are making a selection infinitely momentous in its consequences, let the qualifications of a bishop, as marked in the epistles of Timothy and Titus, be your grand directory.

"Would I describe a preacher, such as Paul,  
Were he on earth, would hear, approve, and own,  
Paul should himself direct me,"

Says the pious Cowper.

"I would trace  
His master-strokes, and draw from his design."

I would express him simple, grave, sincere;  
 In doctrine uncorrupt; in language plain,  
 And plain in manner; decent, solemn, chaste,  
 And natural in gesture; much impressed  
 Himself, as conscious of his awful charge,  
 And anxious, mainly, that the flock he feeds  
 May feel it too; affectionate in look,  
 And tender in address, as well becomes  
 A messenger of grace to guilty men."

See that your candidate be free from all suspicious peculiarities, which often increase with time, and at length prove infinitely mischievous. Avoid all those who preach in a general and equivocal manner, so that you cannot clearly discover their sentiments and system. Such, when constrained to divulge their real sentiments, always come out on the side of error and against the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel. Mark whether he digests well what he delivers from the pulpit, or that his addresses are extemporaneous, loose, rambling, incorrect and incoherent. Whether he instructs and reasons in his sermons, or is only or chiefly a declaimer. Is he a man of a fertile mind, or is he an imitator of others? It is by no means to be understood that I advise you to choose no man for your minister in regard to whom all these inquiries cannot be answered in the most favorable manner. Far from it.—Such a man perhaps does not exist, and I think it proper to warn you distinctly against criticising the character and performances of ministers with a captious spirit, or a fastidious taste, which is always extremely injurious to those who indulge it, and which may sometimes be hostile to the edification of the whole congregation by keeping it vacant much longer than is necessary or useful. Piety, prudence, knowledge, diligence and aptness to teach, you should consider as indispensable. Solid and durable qualities are much to be preferred before any which are not likely to be lasting, however they may dazzle and charm for a season. If a candidate for your choice as a pastor, has been educated and has lived within the sphere of your

own observation, there will be less difficulty in ascertaining his real character and talents. But if he be a foreigner, or have come to you from a distance, remember, that much more reliance should be placed on the information and opinions of judicious people, who shall have known him familiarly and fully, than on any impression which he may have made on your own mind, by a few public discourses, and a few personal interviews. So many instances have occurred, of unworthy and inefficient men, in the sacred office, gaining the hearts of the people, and obtaining speedy settlements in important stations, to the unspeakable injury of the church afterwards, that every people ought to be cautious. In the treatment of a minister, be careful, on the one hand, not to idolize him, and on the other, not to despise and injure him. There is real danger of both these extremes; and, as is often the case of extremes, the one has a strong tendency to produce the other. It has often happened, since the time of the apostle Paul, that a people who once, if it had been possible, would have plucked out their own eyes, and have given them to their minister, have eventually slandered him, persecuted him, and sought to be separated from him.

The clergy are often reminded by the laity, that ministers are but men. Let them remember their own suggestion, and not load us either with praise or blame, which it belongs not to man to receive, without danger or injury. It will be for your temporal interest, and your eternal welfare, to give your minister solid proofs of your friendship and affection. Show him, that you "esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake," by attending diligently on his ministry, and endeavoring to profit by it; by a ready gratification of his reasonable wishes; by habitually and earnestly praying for him, and by letting him see that he has been the happy instrument of leading you to the Saviour. These are the means by which he is encouraged,

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and your attachment to him demonstrated. In this country there are ministers of all descriptions, and all prices. If you would have a man of talents, you must pay for him. If you would have one who will improve in his public performances, you must give him a liberal support. It is Pharaoh-like to require the full tale of bricks without the materials to make them. I have probably injured you, and my successor, by being too easy in receiving my nominal sum. You know that the substance has been much less than the sound, as I resorted to other means of support. I hope you will forgive me, and reform yourselves with regard to him that follows me. Of all savings those that respect the house and worship of God, are most likely to be moth-eaten. Every farmer knows, that the best hired man is not always the cheapest, and that nothing is to be gained by starving good working oxen and horses. But, lest I weary you by the length of my discourse, I will hasten to make a few remarks on the relation which we have sustained to each other; offer some special exhortations, and commit you and myself to the great shepherd and bishop of souls.

In the review of my ministerial life, I see innumerable short comings, deficiencies and imperfections, which I sincerely lament, and for which I earnestly implore, through Jesus Christ, the divine forgiveness. Yet, my conscience does not accuse me of the want of general fidelity. I believe that my labors, on the whole, have been equal to my strength, and that I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God.

On your part, I certainly have not only no complaint to make against you as a congregation, but abundant cause to be satisfied and thankful for the manner in which you have received my ministrations, and for the affection, respect, confidence and kindness which you have manifested towards me.

Often have I borne testimony in your favor in these respects, and even boasted of you to others. I have indeed loved you much, and I have every evidence that you have loved me in return.

To many individuals, I owe obligations of which I cannot think without emotion; which I can never expect to return, and in view of which I can only pray that God may be the rewarder of those who conferred them. But let all be assured, that while I live, though my pastoral relation to you will have ceased in *form*, on my part it is likely, in a measure to remain in *fact*. I must still have pastoral feelings toward you; and every service which I may be able to perform, either for the congregation at large, or for any individual of it, you may at all times command with the certainty that it will be rendered by me with unfeigned pleasure. It is our duty to make use of providential occurrences to promote our own improvement and that of others: and the separation of a pastor from his charge, is surely an event in providence, which calls on both parties concerned in it, to turn to some good account. It was this consideration which determined me to make this address: and if the situation in which we stand, at this mutually interesting period, may serve to give more impression than usual to what I may say, I would fain not lose the opportunity of doing any good which is thus offered to me. Allow me then in addition to what I have already addressed to the congregation at large, to direct a few words in particular to three descriptions of persons among you.

1. To professors of religion;
  2. To heads of families, and others to whom I have preached during my whole ministry with little or no apparent effect; and
  3. To the Youth.
1. To professors of religion. Your situation, my dear

brothren in this place, is at once trying and important in no ordinary degree. It is trying because you are exposed to snares and temptations. If sound faithful, you will insure to yourselves a brighter crown of eternal glory. You may be instrumental, not only in preserving your children from ruin, but in forming them for distinguished usefulness in this world, and in preparing them for endless happiness in the world to come.

“Wherefore gird up the loins of your minds; put on the whole armour of God; watch unto prayer; be sober, and hope to the end.” Be not yourselves conformed to the world which lieth in wickedness, and use your best endeavours to save your offspring from it. Be willing to exercise self-denial, and to bear the cross in the cause and for the sake of your precious Saviour. Give no unnecessary offence; be meek, and humble, and kind, and charitable, and liberal; but set your faces as flints against every vicious, every questionable practice. Be on your guard against too great a love of this world; it insensibly steals upon the heart; often seduces it from God, from love to his service, obedience to his laws, and affection to his people. Strive to excel in practical piety; in genuine holiness of life and conversation. Love the house and ordinances of God, and to associate with one another in prayer. Avoid all controversies; they destroy vital godliness. But hold fast the truth as it is in Jesus, in opposition to prevailing heresies and errors. If you have had hard feelings one toward another, I beseech you to pray them down, and to pray them out of church. Consider that the eyes of the congregation are turned on you, and that your conduct is often taken as a warrant for a doubtful practice.—Be watchful therefore, lest you become stumbling blocks to others. How intolerable the thought, that you should be instrumental in precipitating an immortal being to destruction. In the observance of all the laws of Christ, en-

deavour to be *unblamable*. In all social and relative duties, show a pattern which others may safely imitate. In the discharge of all moral obligations, be scrupulously exact. In all congregational concerns, let your temper and your actions teach others to be conciliatory, and to consult the general good, more than private gratification. Encourage charitable designs, and all suitable measures for the propagation of the gospel. Take the lead in these, and endeavor to draw the congregation after you. Prosperity, even in this world, is likely to attend the *community*, as well as the individuals, who are ready to serve God with their substance.

“These things I give you in charge that you may be blameless. Finally, brethren, farewell: be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind: live in peace: and the God of love and peace shall be with you.”

2. Some of the congregation, to whom I have been preaching during the whole of my ministry, or the larger part of it, are apparently yet in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity. To these, I am extremely anxious to say something at parting, which may possibly be useful to them, if God, peradventure, may yet give them repentance unto life. My dear friends, on the supposition that I have been faithful in delivering to you the messages of the gospel, (and in what degree I have been so, let your consciences testify,) then is your guilt before God such as may well give you the most serious alarm. Recollect that where God hath given much, he will require the more, and that consequently to slight the full dispensation of the gospel for more than twenty years, is to incur a most tremendous responsibility to your final Judge. Attempt not to excuse yourselves, and to soothe your consciences with the thought that it is only *omission* with which you are chargeable. It is against *omissions* that some of the severest denunciations of the gospel are

pointed. The tree which bore no fruit, the lamp which had no oil, the unprofitable servant who made no use of his talent, are there exhibited as emblems of peculiar criminality, and examples of the severest condemnation. The sentence which our Saviour represents himself as pronouncing at last, on those who shall be found on his left hand, is grounded wholly on *neglect*.

When the apostle, trembling at the thought of being a saviour of death unto death to some who heard the gospel from him, exclaimed—"Who is sufficient for these things?" It still appears that the guilt he contemplated arose from neglect. And shall it at last appear that all the warnings and entreaties which I have delivered to you, shall be a saviour of death unto death to your souls? That the whole effect of my ministry on you shall only be to aggravate your final condemnation? Insupportable thought! God forbid it! is your exclamation, as it is my own. Ah! unhappy men and women! But this event will not be forbidden, it will assuredly take place, if you do not speedily fly by faith to the Saviour, by whose atoning blood your crimson and scarlet stains may be washed away. Are you disposed yet to plead for delay? How often have I reminded you of its dangers and delusions? How often have I admonished you, that any future time would probably find you less inclined than the present to enter on a life of piety and holiness? And what is to be the end of this your delusive course? Does it not present to your view a most fearful issue? Verily, between you and the precipice of eternal ruin, the steps seem but few. Take them not: Oh! infatuated mortals, take them not, I beseech you! Stop, and turn, and speedily retrace your way, and you may yet be saved. Shall it not be seen that you will obey this call? May I not hope that the event of my leaving you, shall do more good than all my past admonitions have done? That though you were

proof against every other warning, yet you yielded to the last? Then, if permitted to enter into the joy of my Lord, I shall yet in his presence above, number you among the children that God hath given me. In the name of the Saviour, before whose judgment seat I am soon to meet you, by all the happiness, by all the horrors of eternity, I charge and conjure you to turn immediately from your sins, to embrace the offered salvation, and to become the triumphant monuments of redeeming love.

I would, lastly, address myself to the youth of the congregation. Precious youth, when I think of the numbers of you whom I have baptised and catechised, to whom I have delivered lectures of pious instructions, when I call to mind how often I have fondly looked upon you, as the best hope of my ministerial charge, my soul is ready to be melted within me, at the prospect of losing my pastoral connexion with you. But the thought which most afflicts me, and which I wish may most afflict you, is, that I leave so large a portion of you unreconciled to God through Jesus Christ.

Of those to whom I have administered the sacrament of baptism, alas! how few are there, that I have had the pleasure of admitting to the other sacrament: the symbol with us, of a profession of being truly and unreservedly devoted to the Lord.

Yet there are many of you, whose years would entitle you to this privilege, if your hearts were duly prepared to receive and seek it. It is, indeed, an anticipation that consoles me, that he who shall enter into my labors, may, at some future period, reap what I have sown;—that my successor may see a large harvest gathered from among you, for the granary of heaven. But why should this prospect be remote? Why should any of you risk the danger of perishing forever, by trusting to the future? Why may not my separation from you be the occasion, in

the dispensation of God's providence and grace, on which many of you may be brought to lay seriously and savingly to heart, the things which belong to your everlasting peace?

The thought is so grateful, that I know not how to abandon it. My dear children, compel me *not* to abandon it. Your eternal advantage pleads in concert with me, that you should not. That I should combat at this time, the pretences and temptations by which the young delude themselves, and are deluded by the great adversary of souls, into the neglect of religion in early life, as it is not practicable, so I think it cannot be necessary to you. Often have you heard me detect those fallacies. You have only to exercise your memory and your candour, and you will, I flatter myself, admit that I have demonstrated to you incontestibly, that youth is infinitely the most favorable time to enter on a life of piety; that such a life, truly understood and exemplified, cannot be gloomy and cheerless; that, on the contrary, it is favorable to every pleasure worthy of a rational and immortal being; that the sacrifices which it requires, are far outweighed by the enjoyments which it insures; that the sense of unconditional safety in all events which it produces, gives a serenity and peace, which nothing else can bestow; that true spirit, genuine honour, real dignity, amiable tempers, and gentle manners, are its legitimate offspring; that it enjoins industry and fidelity, and thus leads to prosperity on earth, as well as happiness in heaven: that, in short, and in the language of infallible truth, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." But to remove prejudices, is not enough. The life itself must be entered upon. Would to God, dear youth, that you might *now* receive and feel as you ought, the solemn and momentous truths, that you are sinners

by nature and by practice; and that till renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit, and united to Jesus Christ by a lively faith, you are every moment in danger of perishing forever, in jeopardy of hopeless and inconceivable misery.

From this danger and jeopardy, I urge you to flee, as knowing that the flight is for the life of your souls. And I point you to the Saviour as the only ark of safety, and tell you, that if you truly and perseveringly look for his grace and aid, you shall not fail to find them, and be led by them to safety and salvation. Young as you are, you have no time to lose in attending to this great concern. Some of your companions, whose hold on life was as firm as yours, you have seen sinking suddenly to the grave. Now, therefore, I beseech you, by every tender and awful consideration, to yield yourselves a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. Associate religion with every generous and manly endowment and enterprise; with improvement in knowledge, with emulation and activity in business, with inviolable integrity in every office of life. Shun, as a pestilence, the society of the wicked: be watchful against the thousand seductions to vice and misery which surround you: flee youthful lusts: be obedient to your parents, docile to your teachers, respectful to your superiors, kind to your inferiors, benevolent and just to all. Thus, if you should be spared in life, you will be preparing to pass it with happiness and true honor, and at whatever period you shall be called hence, you will insure to yourselves the reward of the good and faithful servant. My brethren, my friends, my children, I have done. I have but one more request, and that is, that I may still be specially remembered in your addresses to God, though my pastoral relation to you is dissolved. Give me this proof of your attachment and affection, and I will

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esteem it the most precious I could receive. Pray that I may be directed, assisted, and blessed, in the arduous trust which I have assumed, and for the right execution of which, I feel that I need much of that wisdom and strength which cometh from God alone. Pray that I may be made the humble instrument of promoting the Redeemer's cause, to the end of my days, and that at last, through his infinite merit and prevailing intercession, I may be permitted to have a happy meeting with you in the rest which remaineth for the people of God.

Called, as I believe, in providence, to another station in the great vineyard, I resign up the flock to the great Shepherd.

Through the infinite and effectual mediation of my adored Saviour, I earnestly beg the free pardon of all my ministerial sins; and not less that he would pardon the sins of this dear people since I have been among them. This church was founded in faith and prayer, and, I trust, the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

While they are saved from heresy and error, God grant that they may be saved from barrenness and unfruitfulness; from all discord and dissensions, and be made an example of all christian excellence. Blessed Jesus! pour out upon this people copiously the influences of thy most Holy Spirit, that they may be born and taught of God: that they may be greatly enlarged, and thine own people greatly comforted. Yea, Oh Lord! if it be thy holy will, we beg that not one of this flock may be wanting in the day when thou shalt make up thy jewels. And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, may they and their pastors receive his plaudit; and be permitted to rejoice together forever in the kingdom and glory of their Lord.

# SERMON XXI.



HEBREWS, III. CHAP. 8 VERSE.

*Harden not your hearts.*



THESE words were taken from the writings of King David, Psalm 95. 8. The warning which is contained in them, was first given to the rebellious Israelites, who tried the patience of their Lord, during their forty years' journey in the wilderness. For their obstinacy they were not permitted to enter into the land of promise.

The apostle, in the context, compares Moses and Christ. Moses was verily faithful in all his house, as a servant for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after: but Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope, firm unto the end. He then proceeds to apply the warning. "Wherefore, take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you, an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." And then quotes the text and other passages relative to the ancient Israelites, which have a moral use with respect to all mankind to whom the scriptures come. "Harden not your hearts." The nature and evil of the sin here forbidden, are now to be considered. I begin with considering the nature of the sin. The heart is the seat of all moral exercises; it comprises the taste, the will, and the affections.

Our own natural taste and relish, however, are not the rule of our conduct. The rule is the divine requirement.

In treating moral agents, God considers the heart as the seat of conformity and nonconformity to his will. Hence, he says, "My son, give me thine heart." "A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good things; and the evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth evil things." As is the heart, so is the man; so is his religion. To harden the heart, imports stupidity and obstinacy in sinning. Ezek. 3. 7. "The house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me, saith the Lord; they are impudent and hard-hearted as an adamant; harder than flint have I made thy forehead against their forehead." Hardening the heart is sometimes represented in scripture as the work of God; and sometimes as the work of man himself. God hardens the hearts of men by the just withholding of his gracious influences from them, by his casting them in a sovereign way, into such circumstances as that their native corruption can improve to bad purposes; and his permitting Satan, sinful companions, and their own lusts to draw them into one sin after another, and render them bold and obstinate in wickedness. Men harden their own hearts, when they grow more and more obstinate and incorrigible in wicked ways, and refuse to be reclaimed. As the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts when God had wrought wonderfully among them, and they would not let the people go. Jeremiah 5. "Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved. Thou hast consumed them, but they have refused correction. They have made their faces harder than a rock, they have refused to return."

To harden the heart, as in the text, then, implies,

1. In *general*, love of sin. This is common to all the children of apostate Adam, as they come into the world.

No sooner did pride and unbelief enter into the heart of man at the apostacy, than the heart became evil, and every thing, which in its natural state it has produced ever since, has been the fruit of this evil. It is the bitter root of all those corruptions and lusts, which have reigned in the world since the creation. And "as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." And the prophet, when drawing the just, though disagreeable picture of human nature, makes no exception. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Though we observe natural temper, education, and different circumstances produce great diversity of character among the human race, still the great fountain, the heart, is equally and completely contaminated and defiled in all men. How much soever advocates for the dignity of human nature may contend against the doctrine, it is an important truth of God's word, confirmed by the experience of man, for nearly six thousand years. The rage, taste, and passion of man for sinning, is universal. "He drinketh in iniquity like water;" i. e. men, with as great pleasure, indulge their lusts, as the thirsty allay their sensations by using the element of water. All men are, without exception, by nature children of wrath: they do not love God's true character, nor his holy, unadulterated, and unabated law. No unsanctified heart seeks the glory of God; all the unreconciled say by their practice, unto God, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

2. To harden the heart, implies opposition to the divine calls, warnings, and invitations. God calls sinners in many ways;—by his word, ordinances, and providences. To disobedient Israel, his words are, "I have stretched out my hands all the day long, to a disobedient and gainsaying people." As the great evil, which in the human heart corrupts and defiles it, is unbelief, so the

only purifier of the heart, mentioned in the scripture, is the faith of the gospel.

The gospel comes to man's heart and conscience: it speaks there; nay, so forcible is its language there, that when resisted, it is called hardening the heart. Thus our divine Master himself reproved the disciples going to Emmaus; "Oh fools, and slow of heart to believe! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to have entered into his glory?" Every time, then, we hear a call, warning, or invitation, and turn a deaf ear, we treat God, and Christ, and his religion with neglect and contempt; and the very rain and dew of divine influence and means, harden what they ought to soften. "Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out mine hand and ye did not regard; I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh."

3. To harden the heart, supposes continuance in sin, against the relenting of one's own conscience. Few have lived long under the light of the gospel, without having some short seasons, at least, of tenderness of conscience. God's word or providence, has, in some measure, affected them. All who continue in sin, and disobey the gospel, after such tenderness and conviction, harden their hearts. Such relentings had the wicked Pharaoh: such had the Israelites, once and again, in the days of Moses: such had Herod and Felix; and the hearers whom Christ compares to "seed sown in stony places." And such relentings have all sinners who have had a religious education, and have lived years where the gospel is preached. Like ungodly Israel, in a tender moment, they have been disposed to cry; "the Lord he is God, and we will follow him." The gospel is true, and we will obey it. Sin is hateful; we will mourn for it and forsake it. And yet, they soon return, like the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire. Oh!

friends, these are not such trivial, unimportant, and un-consequential incidents in your lives, as you may have imagined. Every call refused, and every conviction stifled, sears and hardens the heart against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

4. This sin, named in the text, supposes that persons become blind and obstinate. Hosea, 7. 11. "Ephraim, also, is like a silly dove without heart. They call to Egypt, they go to Assyria." The ten tribes were like a silly dove without heart, when, by means of the Assyrian oppression, and their own civil broils, they were weakened, perplexed, dispirited, and took no care to avoid their ruinous afflictions. This miserable people, in the days of the prophet, were blind and did not see where their help lay. Thus the hardened sons of iniquity have, in all ages, been blind to the true source of help. And when the sovereign grace of God has not interfered, have persisted in all the obstinacy of rebellion against God and good Luke 13. 15. "For this people's heart has waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed."

Having thus considered the nature of hardening the heart, let us secondly consider the evil of this sin.

1. To harden the heart is direct rebellion against God. God saith to every one, "Son, give me thine heart." Not to give God his dues is fraud of the most high-handed kind. The man who robs, and steals, and cheats his fellow creatures, is a sinner; but not so great a sinner as he who robs, defrauds and cheats his God out of that which belongs to him. Hence Christ himself said, that publicans and harlots should go into the kingdom of heaven before the morally honest and self-righteous Scribes and Pharisees.

2. Hardening the heart brings great guilt upon the soul. To cast off the authority, and to make war against the

great God, is a crime of that magnitude, which a finite creature cannot measure: but this all attempt, who do what God forbids; when they resist the motions of his spirit, and slight his reproofs; when they refuse to hear his word, believe his promises, receive his offers, or obey his laws. For these very sins in Isreal, God said, his spirit was vexed, and that he would turn to be their enemy, and would fight against them. Because they contemned the counsel of the Most High, it is said in the Psalms, that he brought down their hearts with labor, they fell down and there was none to help.

3. They who harden their hearts ought to fear lest they should be given up to hardness of heart, and blindness of mind. The Jews treated God, as sinners do under the gospel, and they were given up. They honored God with their lips, and made a show of honoring him with their substance, while their hearts were far from him. God endured long, but finally punished them in a more awful manner than any nation was ever punished. So the "almost persuaded to be christian," the "halting between two opinions," and the self-righteous, who are seeking something in themselves that they may prepare themselves to come to Christ, may be hardening themselves by the very means of grace which they think they are diligently using. While they are thus gone to buy oil at a forbidden market, the bridegroom may come, and they that are ready will go in with him to the marriage, and the door will be shut. Thus,

4. The evil of hardening the heart, appears not only in its direct rebellion against God, in its bringing great guilt upon the soul, and exposing us to irrecoverable hardness of heart, and blindness of mind, but all who continue obstinate must feel the wrath of God. Thus it was with the Jews whose carcasses fell in the wilderness, and with the same rebellious and hardened nation in the time of Jere-

miah when they had a form of godliness, but denied the power, and in the time of Christ, when with strict externals they had no religion in the heart, and made void the commandments of God, by their traditions, wrath was revealed against all their ungodliness. Judgment was executed, to convince them of all their ungodly deeds, which they had ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners had spoken against the only living and true God. Having considered the nature and evil of hardening the heart, and found that not a few in every age had been given over to a reprobate mind, and for blindness and hardness have been shut out from inheriting the promises, let us make an application.

1. Those persons who are ignorant of their own hearts, are not in the way to heaven. It is of no consequence to what sect of religion, or church; we belong; the pale of no church will save sinners with a hard heart. Neither the visible Jewish, nor the visible christian church, will entitle them to heaven. None were counted Jews, but those who were Jews inwardly, as the apostle asserts; and none are christians, but those who put on Christ, and put on his spirit and temper. The heart is the seat of moral exercise, and our moral exercises are all sinful as we come into the world. We must know and feel this, or remain ignorant of God and ourselves. We cannot discern our need of salvation by Christ, until we have been cut off from all hope of salvation by the law, and have seen our true character in the mirror of rectitude. Many of you may think you know much, and are ready to boast of your reasoning powers, and deep researches; but let him that is wise in his own conceit become a fool, that he may be wise. The understanding has less to do with soul concerns, than many through pride are willing to allow. "With the heart, man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

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II. Those sinners who have suppressed the expostulations of their own consciences, and have remained impenitent, after seasons of tender impressions, are in a dangerous state. It has been observed, that if we take pains to inquire into the history of the champions in iniquity and infidelity, a great portion of them will be found to have had some tender impressions in the course of their lives. They are the remains of the seed sown on the stony ground, or that which sprang up and was choaked with thorns.

Let those who are conscious that they have ever made efforts to quench the Spirit, reflect on their peril. As the Spirit of God is likened to fire, so, as men put out fire with water, in like manner men may quench the Spirit, by harboring a worldly, selfish mind, and giving the reign to their sinful propensities. It is now a time of joyful ingathering, as christians humbly hope; take heed, that while the young, and, in some instances, the despised are taken, you, for your obstinacy, be not left; lest the weary and the heavy laden, the humble and praying, obtain, and the strong, the self-righteous, and the prayerless, be blinded. Have you heretofore, and do you now, see the work of God and remain unmoved? beware lest that come upon you, which was spoken of the prophets, and of an apostle, the stupid, hardened and self-justifying murderers of Christ; "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish: For I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declares it unto you." In the language of the parable, it is now supper-time. Many who have heretofore been bidden, are invited by the servants to day, to come, for all things are ready. The master of the feast will take no excuses, however plausible. He is represented as being angry when the servants reported them; and when the rich, and the healthy, and the prosperous, and the wise in their own conceit, would not come, the servants were sent out into the high-

ways, lanes and hedges, to bring in the poor, the maimed, the halt and the blind, that his house might be filled.

When the servants had executed their orders, and reported that there still was room, the master's anger rose still higher, and was expressed in words which ought to bring every unrenewed sinner from his seat on to his knees. Go, compel the poor, the maimed, the halt and the blind, to come in, "For I say unto you that none of these men, who are bidden, shall taste of my supper."

Are you of these men who have been often bidden, and made vain excuses? Then hug your farms, your riches, and your merchandise; hug them close, for they will be your all. Eat and drink and indulge your lusts, for in this life only, you will receive your good things. Soon the obedient comer to Christ and the feast, will be everlastingly comforted, whilst thou art eternally tormented. The church can exist without you. The feast can be filled with guests without a soul of you. While I pray you, in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God, I do not cast myself at your feet, to ask an alms: I come as a messenger of the Lord of Hosts, to ask you to be merciful to your own souls; to warn you against hardening your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness.

I charge you not to tempt God, as many of your ungodly fathers have done, whose death-beds were gloomy, and whose funerals you attended without hope. Take heed lest you provoke God to say, I am grieved with this generation; they have seen my works many years; yet they tempt me by stupid ingratitude. They do always err in their hearts. Therefore, by the holy attribute of my justice, I swear they shall not enter into my rest. Yes; hug your farms; pursue your selfish interests; talk about all interests but those of your soul; grudge every cent you pay to support divine institutions; seek smooth religion, that has no cross or self-denial; "heap to yourselves teachers

having itching ears;" break the sabbath and live without prayer. Bite, and quarrel, and slander, and devour one another. The church of God can live without you. There will be ministers, and gospel churches, and full congregations, when your names perish and are forgotten, and your souls in anguish toss and welter in the fiery gulph. But what shall I say? My brethren in age, shall God sanctify our children, and leave us all to perish? Can you bear to think, that the visible number of Joshuas, and Calebs, is so small? Oh, be warned against hardening your hearts; reflect on the character of God; consider, that he is your Creator; that he has revealed his holy Law; that he has sent his Son to redeem, and that there is wonderful grace and mercy for those who repent and believe, even at the eleventh hour. How criminal are most of you for living so many years without an acquaintance with your hearts and with Christ! How you provoke God to give you up to yourselves! What an evil heart of unbelief do you prove in yourselves by thus departing from the living God! Exhorting one another daily, let us all fear lest we should seem to come short of such precious promises. To-day, then, let us hear the voice of the son of God, and come to the throne of his grace, that we may obtain mercy. Oh! blessed sabbath, may it be a day of God's power in your hearts! and may you turn and live, through Jesus Christ.

# SERMON XXII.



HABAKKUK 2 CHAP. 4 VER.

*The just shall live by his faith.*



To explain and enforce the sentiment in the text, I shall attempt three things.

I. What is meant by the just living by faith.

II. Prove the truth of the assertion in the text, as explained; and,

III. Endeavour to remove the difficulties, which may attend the subject.

To explain the first head, it is necessary to have distinct ideas, who are the just, what is the life and what the faith of which the prophet speaks. To form a clear idea, who the just are, it is necessary, with St. Paul, to distinguish two sorts of righteousness. A righteousness according to the law, and a righteousness according to faith.

By righteousness after the law, I understand that which man wishes to derive from his own personal ability. By righteousness of faith, I understand that which man derives from a principle foreign from himself. A man who pretends to be just, according to the first righteousness, consents to be examined and judged according to the utmost rigour of the law. He desires the justice of God to

discover any thing in him that deserves punishment. He, on the contrary, who is just according to the righteousness of faith, acknowledges himself guilty of many and great sins, which deserve the most rigorous punishment: but he does not give himself up to that despair, into which the idea of his criminality would naturally hurry him: he is not afraid of those punishments which he owns he deserves: he hopes to live, because he expects that God will deal with him not according to what he is in himself, but according to his relation to Jesus Christ. That these are the ideas which must be fixed to the term just, is evident from the words of St. Paul: "I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be saved in him." Remark these words, "not having on mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is of God, by faith." This passage sufficiently shows the sense in which the term *just* is to be taken in the text. The just shall live: that is to say, altho' divine justice had condemned him to eternal death, yet he shall be freed from it; and although he had rendered himself unworthy of eternal felicity, yet he shall enjoy it. He shall live by his faith. Faith, is a term used in various senses in the Scripture; it is sometimes a disposition common to the righteous, and the wicked. In a word, it stands as one of the distinguishing characteristics of a christian, and for the credence of devils, and the terrors that agitate them in hell. But among all the kinds of faith, there is one to which the Scriptures assign particular praise; that is, saving faith; the faith Jesus Christ requires of all christians: the faith of the text of which I am now inquiring. The great and principal object of this faith, is Jesus Christ's dying and offering himself to the justice of his Father. On this account, St. Paul says to the Corin-

thians, "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Faith contemplates the objects that are displayed in the cross of Christ, and persuades the christian, that there is no other way of obtaining salvation; or, in scripture language, "that there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." But this is a general notion of faith; it is subject to all the inconveniences of general ideas. It may lead us astray. We are not saved by wishing to be saved; nor are we justified because we barely desire to be justified. Faith works by love, not the fear of consequences. It works by love as a machine is moved by water. Love is the sole cause of this emotion in the soul. With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.

It is a living faith; a principle of renovation; of submission to God, of confidence in his sovereign government, and of devotedness to his service. In this sense I understand, the just live by faith. Hence the apostle observes, the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel, from faith to faith, as it is written, "The just shall live," alluding to the text, and also observes, "no man is justified by the law in the sight of God: for the just shall live by faith."

Having explained, let us now attempt to prove the sentiment, in opposition to those, who on principles of natural religion, assert that good works as much merit heaven, as bad men deserve hell. Or that good works, in virtue of the mercy of God, and of the new covenant, merit heaven.

And can it be so, that works that bear no proportion to the objects of our hopes, a few meditations, prayers, and alms-deeds, will buy heaven? Would the sacrifice of ourselves merit the eternal weight of glory which is to be revealed in us? Our works!—pray, can these, which are not performed by our power, works that proceed from grace,

works which owe their design and execution to God, who worketh to will and to do; can these attain—do these deserve a weight of glory for us? Does not all we possess come from God, and is not all we can render him his due? and, alas! a debt that is miserably discharged: for, when we have done our best, we are but unprofitable servants.

The text also opposes the opinion of those who say that works are meritorious, by virtue of the mercy of God, and the new covenant. For these terms are contradictory. Merit and mercy cannot associate. If it be of mercy, how is it meritorious? and if it be meritorious, how is it mercy? "If by grace, then is it no more of works, but if it be of works, then it is no more of grace." Rom. xi. 6. You know the language of St. Paul. Again, the idea of merit in human works, furnishes a pretext to pride, and if this is not evident, let experience judge.

Do we not often see people, who, unwilling or not capable, of entering into the distinctions of the epistle to the Romans, think by their good works so to merit eternal felicity, that God cannot deprive them of it, without subverting the laws of his justice? Are they not often offended at the expression "filthy rags?" and at the very text, "as many as are under the works of the law, are under the curse." In a word; do they not hate the text, and the subject I am now upon, because it drives them to the sovereign mercy of God alone for hope?

I consider Jesus Christ as alone the meritorious cause of our justification. If faith justifies, it is not as an instrument. Faith of itself can merit nothing. It contributes to our justification only as it fits us for participating in the benefits of the death of Christ.

And these are not new ideas; they were strongly urged by the apostle to the Romans, and maintained by Polycarp who was the disciple of John. He taught that men were righteous in the sight of God, who acknowledged their

guilt; and that they had nothing of their own but sin. And who, although they were saints, yet attributed nothing to their own merit. On these principles, we find in an ancient work that the sick were comforted in this manner: "Dost thou trust in the merit of Jesus Christ alone for salvation?" The sick person replied, "I do," The minister then added, "Praise God to the last moment of your life: place all your confidence in him: and when the supreme Judge of the world calls you to his tribunal, say to him, Lord, I interpose between thy righteous judgment and myself, the death of thy Son, and I ascribe no merit to any good works of my own." But while we oppose the one extreme, we may lead the selfish and depraved heart to the other.

Hence some, in opposing the merit of works, allege that the gospel consists in promises only, and that we are under no other laws than those of gratitude, to obey divine injunctions.

Against these ideas, we again oppose the nature of saving faith. It works by love. It is a principle of holiness. A faith unconnected with holiness, with which wicked christians have recourse to the mercy of God, cannot justify in any sense. For it is a self contradiction to say, faith is a meritorious cause or condition of salvation. For if Christ alone is the foundation of mercy, our most ardent desire is incapable of deserving mercy. If there is any in this assembly yet so ignorant of Christianity, as to suppose that he may be justified before God by a fruitless desire of being saved, and by a barren recourse to the death of Christ, let him attend to the following reflections:

1. Justifying faith is a lively faith. A believer cannot live by a dead faith; for St. James informs us, that faith without works is dead, consequently, the faith that gives life is a faith containing, at least in principle, all the graces and virtues of holiness.

2. Justifying faith must accord with the genius of the covenant to which it belongs. Had the gospel no other design than that of pardoning our sins, without subduing them, faith might then consist in a bare act of the mind, accepting this part of the gospel. But if the gospel proposes both to pardon sin, and to enable us to renounce it, faith, which hath to do with this covenant of grace, must needs involve both these articles. Now who will pretend to say, that the gospel hath not both these blessings in view? and consequently who can deny that faith consists both in trusting the grace, and in obeying all the laws of the gospel?

Justifying faith must include all the virtues to which the scriptures attribute justification and salvation. The bible does not speak a language that will comport with a fruitless faith. Sometimes salvation is attributed to love. "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom; for I was an hungered and ye gave me meat." Sometimes it is attributed to hope. "Hope maketh not ashamed." Sometimes to faith. "Whosoever believeth in him, shall have eternal life." I ask now, to which virtue, strictly speaking, does salvation belong? To love, to hope, or to faith? Or rather is it not clear, that when the scriptures attribute salvation to one of these virtues, it does not consider it separately, as subsisting in a distinct subject, but it considers it as flowing from that general principle, which acquiesces in the whole government and gospel of God.

4. All the encomiums that are put on justifying faith, as uniting us to Christ, show it to be a holy, active principle, conforming us to the moral image of God. It crucifieth us as it were with him. It raiseth us up together, and maketh us to sit together with him in heavenly places. In a word, it makes us one with him, as he is one with the Father. But the bare desire of salvation by Jesus Christ, devoid of obedience to him—is this to be crucified with Christ? Is this to be risen with him? Is this to sit in heavenly places with him?

5. Justifying faith must enter into the mystery of the atonement made by the Redeemer. Some have affirmed that God was entirely free, either to exact the punishment due to sin, or to release mankind from all obligations to suffer for it. But we affirm that on our apostacy, God could not pardon sinners, until the law we had broken was magnified and made honorable.

His perfections required that he should express to the whole universe his just abhorrence of sin. As he is a uniform spirit, it is impossible for him to lie and contradict himself. So, being a just and holy spirit, it was impossible for him to pardon sinners, without punishing, in them, or on some victim substituted in their stead. And can a God, to whom sin is so extremely odious, approve of a faith which is compatible with sin, and which in its very nature does not tend to the putting off of the old man, with his deeds, and putting on the new man? Can a God of order, love confusion in the administration of his government? and pardon, where his justice and public good require him to punish? No: faith does not make void the law; it establishes the law. Saving faith unites to Christ, and it is impossible for the members of a head so holy to remain in sin.

Hence it is demonstrated that the faith by which the just live, transforms the heart and the affections. It exalts God. It humbles man, who sees,

That when his holiest works are done,  
His soul depends on grace alone;

and that if God condescends to accept of his works, he will do it through mere mercy, and not on account of their merit. If any in view of this doctrine will "sacrifice unto his own net, and burn incense unto his own drag," I reply, that it is no new thing for men of selfish hearts and corrupt minds, to resist the most precious of scripture doctrines. I acknowledge that there are many inclined to a careless reliance on a kind of general grace, rather than to work out their salvation with fear and trembling.

But to form loose notions of obedience, to mutilate the covenant of grace, to render salvation the easiest thing in the world, to abound in flattering hopes, although we live without love, humility, or laboring to be saved, are rocks on which very many have lost their souls. This is not to live by faith, but to die by faith. I would then abhor myself, deplore my frailty, blush at the remembrance of my best duties, cast myself into the arms of divine mercy, and own that all my hope is derived from grace. I would own that it is grace that elects, grace which calls, grace which justifies, grace which sanctifies, grace that accepts a sanctification always frail and imperfect. But at the same time I would watch over myself. I would arouse myself to duty. I would work out my salvation with fear and trembling; and while I acknowledge grace does all, and my works merit nothing, I would act as if I might expect every thing from my own efforts. And let the man who expects to merit by his honesty and charity, hide himself in the dust. Miserable man! thou knowest not the length and breadth of the law, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, or the plague of thine own heart. Fix thine eyes on the ashes from whence thou wast taken, and lift up thy voice in these penitential cries: "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? Oh Lord! righteousness belongeth unto Thee: but unto us, confusion of face. God forbid I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Lay thy pretensions, thy virtues, thy merits, at the foot of this cross; divest thyself of thyself, and tear from thy heart, if possible, the last fibre of that pride which would obstruct thy salvation, and insure thy destruction. But, brethren, is this all, is this the whole of your religion; do you acknowledge no other engagement? Does this short system, think you, include the whole of a christian's calling? No: let us be watchful as well as humble. As no views are so dangerous as those which present them-

selves to us under the idea of exalted virtues, such as hatred under a cover of zeal, pride under the appearance of fervour; so no errors slide more easily into our minds, than those which conceal themselves under the names of the great truths of religion. To plead for human innocence, and to deny wholly, or in part, the necessity of Christ's atonement, are errors so gross, and so diametrically opposite to many express scriptures, that a little love of truth, and a small study of religion, will be sufficient to preserve us from them. But under pretence of venerating the cross of Christ, and of holding the doctrine of human depravity, with the pious design of humbling man, under I know not what veils of truth and orthodoxy, to widen the way to heaven, and lull whole communities into security: these are the errors that softly and imperceptibly glide into our souls, as the nature of this subject, and experience of the christian of a tender conscience will prove. Let then the maxim of the apostle, "Faith without works is dead," be the touchstone of our sincerity. One of you believes there is a God: without works faith is death. Art thou penetrated with veneration for his perfections, admiration of his works, submission to his sovereignty, deference to his laws, fear of his judgments, gratitude for his bounties, and zeal for his glory? Another believes Christ died for his sins: faith without works is death. Dost thou abhor thy sins for shedding his blood, for preparing his cross, for wounding his person, for piercing his side, for stirring up a war between him and divine justice, for making him cry in the bitterness of his soul, "Now is my soul troubled, my soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Thou believest there is a future state; faith without works is death. Dost thou place thy heart where thy treasure is? Dost thou anticipate, by faith and hope the blessed period of thine admission to future felicity? Dost thou desire to depart and be

with Christ? Is thy soul athirst for God? Dost thou pant after him, as the hart panteth after the water brooks? The just shall live by his faith; and how formidable is the touchstone and standard of this faith, as presented by St. James.

Can it be so, that we wish a religion not only accommodated to our wants, but to our wishes and vices? Do we want Christ not only to free us from condemnation of sin, but from the necessity of subduing it, and to merit a right for us to commit it? Oh, the madness of suffering salvation to be an object of more eager desire than the glory of God!

Alas! we are criminals; the wrath of heaven is kindled against us. The eternal books, in which our actions are registered, are opening. Our judge is seated; our trial coming on; our final doom preparing. And there remains no refuge from all these miseries, but Jesus Christ; and there is no faith in him, that will save, but that which is lively and works by love. To Christ let us flee: to him let us resign our minds, our hearts, and our lives.

# SERMON XXIII.



LUKE, XII. CHAP. 50 VER.



*But I have a baptism to be baptised with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished.*

THESE words were uttered by our divine Master, relative to his sufferings which were at hand. He does not attempt to conceal the dissension which his mission into this world would occasion, through the wickedness of mankind. The fire, even at that time, began to be kindled. In the text, he mentions an event which lay near his heart. "I have a baptism to be baptised with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished."

The word baptism, in this place, cannot mean the outward ordinance, wherein by washing with water, persons are consecrated to God. It seems designed to represent the sufferings which Christ had to endure, to accomplish the work for which he came into the world.

Baptism is used in the same sense, by Christ, in his discourse with the mother of Zebedee's children and her sons. Matthew 20. 22. "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with?" The sufferings of Christ lay with great weight upon his mind, through his

whole life. He knew that they were approaching, and surveyed them in all their magnitude. He knew that they could not be avoided, consistently with the divine mission. He felt an ardour of mind to meet this baptism, together with painful emotions, as he contemplated the trying hour. An inquiry here arises, how the mind of Christ could feel pain in the apprehension of his death, or while he was suffering it? The martyrs have, many of them, met death in its most dreadful forms, with composure, and even triumph. Why should the mind of Christ be burdened with sorrow, since he knew no sin, and was an object of his Father's highest complacential love at all times?

Why should he be so distressed, when he never doubted his Father's love? and his own conscience never accused him of transgressing his Father's will? That he did endure pain of mind, as well as of body, is manifested in a number of instances in the course of his humiliation; particularly in his agony in the garden, and when he was expiring on the cross. He said in the garden, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death:" and when in his last moments, he exclaimed, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"

This sorrow, or mental pain, must have arisen,

1. From Christ's bearing the sins of his people. Isa. 53. "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him." The sins of Christ's people were not so transferred as to become his own, for then he would have been a sinner; whereas, he was a Lamb without spot or blemish. This was necessary to prepare him to make himself a sin-offering for men. Jesus Christ never felt the pain of an accusing conscience, as he must have done, had he really been constituted a sinner. But he consented to feel all the bitter pangs of sin which could

be felt by one who is perfectly innocent and upright. An innocent person may consent to endure natural evil, without contracting any stain, or consenting to moral evil. An innocent person does not deserve any pain or misery; for if he did, he could not make atonement for the sins of others. He may voluntarily take pain upon himself. He suffers no injustice in that case. Christ was voluntary in his humiliation. He manifested that he had power to lay down his life and to resume it. He was influenced by infinite wisdom and love in subjecting himself to his sufferings and death. We cannot perfectly enter into the nature of Christ's substitution in the place of those he came to redeem. There is no other fact with which it will exactly compare.

That Christ was made a sin offering, is, however, a revealed truth of high importance. It lays the foundation of all our hopes of pardon and acceptance before God; and of all which leads penitents joyfully to embrace the gospel plan, and humbly to adore that unsearchable wisdom which they cannot comprehend.

2. It appears that the Father hid his face from the human nature, or rather the created mind of Christ, which filled him with sorrow. The Father forsook him; which must imply, not a final withdrawment, but, that he withdrew from him the light of his countenance for a time. This amounts to the same thing with a removal of that joyful sense of the Father's presence, which Christ so often enjoyed when on earth, and which has caused martyrs to triumph in the near view of a cruel death. When the mind of Christ was filled with a lively apprehension of the evil of sin; when the Father did not shine in upon his soul with his comforting presence, and when the powers of earth and hell were let loose upon him, he must have been in an agony of distress. He must have felt a degree of mental pain which no other holy person ever has or ever

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could feel. The pain indeed must have been of a peculiar kind, and have risen to a height, under which the human nature of Christ must have sunk, had it not been uphelden from on high. To the above weight of sorrow, is to be added the misery which sin has introduced, as felt in time and in eternity, of which the mind of Christ had, no doubt, a view in his agony, both in the garden and on the cross. To a mind sensible and comprehensive as was his; to a heart full of benevolence as was the heart of Jesus, and to a soul at the same time under a cloud, the pains endured must have been beyond the power of language to express. It was necessary that Christ should have the bitter cup assigned him in order that the wrath of God against sin might be expressed in the view of all intelligent creatures. Christ condemned sin in the flesh, not only in his discourses and in his behavior, but especially in his sufferings and death. We see not how in any other way the wrath of God against sin could have been expressed with such force and energy in the person of the Mediator. We do not see how the exceeding sinfulness of sin could have been placed in its present striking light in the atonement, if the mind of Christ had never felt sorrow, and if he had died in the raptures of holy joy. The martyrs may consistently die in this manner, because the main object with them is to seal the truth of the gospel with their blood. But Christ died for higher ends. He was made a sin-offering for his people, and "that they might be made the righteousness of God in him." The thoughts which have been suggested, may, as I hope, furnish us with some ideas on a mysterious subject. We may discover in a small degree, why Christ should utter himself as in the text, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished."

His mind could comprehend at once the whole series of events which were to open in his ministry, and he felt the

importance of going through the fiery trial which awaited him. He knew that the cup to be given him was a bitter one, and his mind as a man could feel painful solicitude at its approach. He did not shrink from the purpose for which he came into the world. He knew that he must undergo greater sufferings than had ever been known on earth, to make an atonement for the sins of men. His mind was pressed with great ardor and painful solicitude, to advance on and accomplish the glorious designs of his mission.

Reflections on the subject thus illustrated, may be some of the following.

1. We may learn the great evil of sin. We may determine the evil nature, and destructive consequences of sin, from its contrariety to the moral perfections of God, and from the punishment denounced in his law against transgressors. Heaven and earth bear witness against moral evil. It was sin which expelled the angels of light from their blissful abodes. It was sin which banished our first parents from the earthly paradise. It was sin which destroyed the old world, Sodom and Gomorrah, Pharaoh and his host, the inhabitants of Canaan, and the various other nations of the earth. Sin brought death into the world with a numerous train of calamities, and leads on to endless misery.

But sin appears in the most odious light when we behold it causing the bitter cup to be given to Christ. It was this that brought sorrow and pain upon his holy soul in the garden, on the cross, and through his whole life. This occasioned him to sigh, to groan, to sweat great drops of blood, and to exclaim, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" To make an atonement for the sins of men, he encountered poverty, reproach, scorn, cruelty, and all the evils which the powers of earth and of hell could bring upon him. He died on the accursed tree, between two

thieves, who were crucified with him. Christ has a divine, as well as a human nature; hence his sufferings in his human nature, (for he could not suffer in his divine) have infinite worth, and express in the strongest manner, God's infinite displeasure against sin. There can be no period of duration in which such a high expression of the divine wrath against sin can be made at once, as in the sufferings and death of the Son of God. The punishment of the wicked in hell will be forever accomplishing. There cannot therefore ever be a point of duration in which it can be said that they have suffered all the punishment they deserve. But in the sufferings and death of Christ we find a short period in which it can be said that an equivalent to the penalty of the law was ordained. Christ therefore condemned sin in the flesh beyond any thing that had ever before been seen in the world, and held up its evil nature in the most glaring light. Who can doubt whether sin be a detestable thing, which God's righteous soul hateth, when we behold him thrusting the sword of his anger through the heart of his beloved Son, standing in the law place of the sinner?

2. We are led to reflect on the love which Christ Jesus manifested by his suffering and death. He came into the world with that holy law in his heart, which man had broken. He came to confirm the law, and to vindicate all its claims and its threatenings. He manifested the strongest affection for that government which sinners had trampled under foot, and desired above all things that he might glorify the Father, to whatever sorrows and sufferings he might be subjected. When he prayed for the removal of the bitter cup, he said, "nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done."

What mighty love was that which could induce the Lord of glory to become incarnate, and be born in a manger, and to have not where to lay his head. He submitted to

a life of reproach, of sorrow, and of pain, and to an ignominious death, that sinners might be saved from eternal death, and inherit eternal life. He who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Christ did not die amidst the applauses of the surrounding multitudes, as some have done, who have laid down their lives for their country, but he died amidst the insults of an infuriated mob. He did not die for his people as being friends, but to reconcile them to God from a state of enmity. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely, for a righteous man will one die, yet peradventure for a good man, some would even dare to die. But God commended his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." There is a height, and a depth, and a breadth, and a length in the love of Christ which surpasses the power of language to utter, and the extent of the human intellect to conceive. It is the admiration of holy angels, and will employ their praises, and that of the spirits of just men made perfect forever and ever.

3. We are taught to admire the fidelity of Christ in perfecting his work. It was his meat and drink to do the will of him that sent him, and to finish his work. Whether in solitude or in company, he was about his Father's business. Among friends or enemies, he was constantly doing good to the bodies and the souls of men.

The prospect of the bitter cup did not prevent his giving his dying counsel to his disciples. The night in which he was betrayed, he joined with them in partaking the pass-over, and he instituted the ordinance of the supper, which is designed to keep his death in remembrance to the end of

time. After he had given them the memorials of his dying love, he went into a lengthy discourse on the trials which awaited them, and the help and consolation which they would find in the most trying seasons, by repairing to divine grace. He opened to them animating and glorious prospects beyond the grave, and concluded by commending them to his Father in that remarkable prayer which is contained in the 17th chapter of John. The blessed Jesus did not betray his cause by timidity, rashness, or indolence. He did not deviate from it for a moment, even in thought. He was faithful in his testimony before the multitude, and before Jewish and heathen judges. He adhered to the truth in life and in death.

4. We are led to admire the patience and fortitude of Christ. Without a murmur he submitted to all the labor and toil which his ministry required. He did not complain when he suffered poverty and reproach. Mark his patience when he was led to condemnation and death. "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth." Could any of us look forward and anticipate all our sorrows to our dying day, would they not in a measure drink up the joys of life. But Christ came into the world in full and clear view of all the evils which were to overtake him, yet he did not shrink from the dangers that awaited him. He knew, he clearly saw, that he should have a more bitter cup given to him than was ever given to any other man on earth, and yet he did not even complain of his lot, nor indulge a desponding temper.

He knew from the beginning, that he must fall by the hands of wicked men, and what disgraceful and painful circumstances would precede and accompany his death; but he felt no inclination to avoid the baptism appointed for him. He prayed indeed in the garden, that this cup might pass from him, if it were possible. This was necessary, in order to hold up evidence of the great distress of

his soul; at the same time he discovered perfect submission to the Father's will, and the full conviction that the distressing hour could not be avoided, without defeating the design on which he came into the world. The hero who dies fighting courageously for his country, is animated to the conflict by the example of his fellow soldiers, and by the belief that he shall be covered with laurels. The blessed Jesus had no one to encourage him by his example. His friends forsook him, and his enemies mocked and insulted his dying groans. He died like a malefactor, in company with felons, a most ignominious kind of death. In this hour of extreme distress, the Father hid his face from the Son of his love, and there was nothing which gave joy to his soul while he was expiring on the accursed tree. But firm and unshaken, he supported the conflict with the malice of wicked men and devils, until he bowed his head and gave up the ghost. Where can another instance of fortitude be found which will appear to have any worth when compared with the fortitude of our dying Saviour?

5. The subject shows us that Jesus is every way qualified to relieve and support his followers under all their trials and temptations. While here below, he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He had an experimental acquaintance with the troubles of human life, and therefore can feel for the children of men. As an example of patience and resignation, it behoved him to be made like his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest." For in that he hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted. Christians, when you are in anguish of soul under earthly trials, look to the garden of Christ's agony, and to Golgotha, where he groaned, and say not, There is no sorrow like my sorrow. "Having a high priest that can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities," with godly sorrow and faith, let us

“come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

6. If Christ thus suffered for sinners, what must sinners themselves suffer, when they are made the monuments of divine wrath!

While going to the cross, our blessed Master observed to the weeping women that followed him, “If they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?” If the sufferings of an innocent person, the sufferings of the Father’s well beloved Son are such, how terrible will be the sufferings of those who are in themselves as proper fuel for the divine wrath, as dry wood is for the consuming fire; vessels of wrath fitted for fire never to be quenched; food for the worm that will never die? Christ had an approving God, and a soothing conscience in his sorrow. But what sorrows will seize the finally impenitent, when God will hide his face, and forsake them forever. Self-condemned and without hope they will plunge in the depths of despair. Oh! hear the voice of the groaning, dying Son of God, when he invites you to flee from the wrath to come, and by repentance, faith, and prayer, to lay hold on eternal life. No serious communicant hath heard me to-day, I am persuaded, who is not grieved that he brings so cold a heart to his Master’s table. Did Christ love us so much: and do we love him so little? Our own death, and the importance of being prepared for it, are suggested by the subject. We all have a baptism to be baptized with, which will soon be accomplished. We have not to meet our death under many of the circumstances in which Christ met his; but we must pass through it in some form or other. And in whatever way we leave the world, we must consider death as a great and solemn event. We cannot determine what our views and feelings will be. If we die in the Lord, we shall die safely. To be prepared for death, is to be prepared for happiness beyond it. Every

person who is ripening for heaven, will reflect much on death, and will be sensible that he can with great propriety say of this baptism, "How am I straitened till it be accomplished." Cold hearts, and formal vows will not answer your purposes in this place, nor will they bring you to your graves in peace. Death is a subject upon which the descriptive powers of eloquence and poetry have been exhausted, and the pencil has made its most vigorous efforts. But revelation makes it a still more important event. It is a penal evil; it is the fruit of disobedience, and it decides our character and state forever, and the sting of it is sin. If we should hope to die the death of the righteous, we must live his life. The path in which we ought to walk, is most plainly drawn. We must work the work of him that sent us into the world, while life is continued. We must be faithful in the discharge of our particular trust. We must endure sorrows, and the reproach of men with patience; and count not even our lives dear unto ourselves, that we may finish our course with joy. We must constantly look to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. When we can cheerfully own Christ as the Lord, our righteousness and strength, and have our eye fixed upon his glorious example, we shall pass on in the journey of life with peace, and shall find our hope of a blessed immortality to brighten.

Then may we expect quietly to breath our departing spirits into the hand of him who is the sovereign Lord of life and death, and to triumph when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.

## SERMON XXIV.



JONAH, IV. CHAP. 4 VER.

*Then said the Lord, Doest thou well to be angry?*



God ordered this prophet to go to Nineveh, and warn the inhabitants of their approaching destruction. Fearing, and possibly knowing, that a merciful God might forbear punishing them if they repented, and so seemingly tarnish his honor, Jonah shipped himself at Joppa for Tarshish, that, being out of the promised land, the spirit of prophecy might forbear to excite him. A storm quickly pursued the ship in which he had embarked, and the heathen mariners awoke him, and required him to call upon his God for deliverance. Lots being cast to discern for whose sake the storm rose, the lot fell on Jonah. With shame he confessed his guilt to the mariners, and desired them to cast him into the sea, that the storm might be stayed. With reluctance they at last were obliged to do it, on which the storm immediately ceased. A large fish, prepared of God, swallowed up Jonah, and retained him safe in her belly for three days. Then he earnestly prayed to God, at whose command the fish vomited him alive on the dry land. His orders to warn the Ninevites of their approaching destruction were immediately renewed, and, all obedient, he hastened to that vast city. He had not travelled in it above a day's journey, denouncing their ruin, when the king and all his

people applied themselves to solemn fasting; on which, God forbore to execute his vengeance upon them, which had been but conditionally threatened. Displeas'd with the divine mercy, Jonah angrily wished to die, rather than live to see his prediction unfulfill'd. While he sat without the city, waiting for his desired view of Nineveh's ruin, God caused a gourd quickly to spring up, and overshadow him from the scorching heat of the sun; but next day a worm having bitten its root, it suddenly wither'd. The scorching sun and blasting wind vehemently beating on Jonah, he fainted, and angrily wished to die; and averr'd to God himself, that he was right in so doing. The Lord bid him think, if he had pity on the short-lived gourd, was there not far more reason for his and their Maker to pity the penitent inhabitants of Nineveh, in which there were more than one hundred and twenty thousand children and infants, that could not discern between their right hand and their left? "Jonah, doest thou well to be angry?" The text is an expostulation, implying that Jonah had no cause to be angry. If God reproveth anger, murmuring, hard thoughts of his dispensations, in one of his servants, certainly he reproveth them in all men. All men ought to be still under every trial, and in every situation, where it pleases God to put them, and to know and acknowledge, that he is God, and being a holy God, and infinitely wise, he has an unalienable right to do as he will with his own, and the best good of the universe is safe in his hands. From the text, therefore, I shall attempt to establish this general observation: Men ought not to be displeas'd with the methods of God's providence or the methods of God's grace.

To establish this, it will be necessary to inquire into the instances of man's displeasure with the ways of God, and then observe how God expostulates with them for their conduct. The heart of man is selfish and deprav'd; it

is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." Ourself is disposed to exalt itself above all that is called God or is worshipped. Jonah does not seem to care what became of the divine honor, if he could save his own in the eyes of the world. He was unwilling to be humbled that God might be exalted. He seems willing to serve God, if he could at the same time serve his own interests. But this is a temper very opposite to the benevolent principles of religion, which requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves. God saith, "My Son give me thine heart; acquaint thyself with me, and be at peace." And Christ's ministers, in Christ's stead, are continually interceding with sinners, to be reconciled to the law, government, and gospel of God. But to come to particular instances.

1. Worldly prosperity seems to be the natural desire of all men. When greatly crossed in this object, we see how most men act: we may see the temper of our own hearts, if we will look into ourselves. How much murmuring and complaining! If not directly against God and his providence, yet we complain against our fellow men, who, in the disposals of providence, are made instruments to thwart our designs. We complain of the seasons, and of the earth, if she does not yield her increase. Even Job, with all his religion, when under sore worldly afflictions, opened his mouth and cursed his day: "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night when it was said, there is a man child conceived. Why died I not from the womb? Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul? Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?"

God then expostulated—"Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker? Shall he arraign his dealings in the kingdom of providence or grace? My angels are charged with folly; they are not fit to govern the world; and how much less must

man be fit to govern, that dwells in a house of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, and who is crushed before the moth. The affliction that vexeth thee cometh not forth from the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground. Instead of complaining, seek God, and to him commit your cause. He judgeth righteous judgment, and he doth great things and unsearchable, marvellous things without number. Be still, and know that I am God. Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? He that reproveth God, let him answer it. Have I not often brought light out of darkness? Hast thou not often seen that crosses and losses were for thy present good, and do not all things work together for good to them that love God, and are called according to his purpose? Hath not an inspired apostle declared to Christians, that all things are yours—whether life, or death, or things present, or things to come? And what would you wish more? And of what avail is great anxiety? Can you controul providence—make a hair white or black? Read reproof in the lilies of the field, which God clothes, and hear it in the chattering of the crane and swallow. I well know what these need, and supply them, and no good thing will I withhold from such as fear my name—Oh! be not angry.”

Again:

2. When strange and dark events in providence happen to a community, land, or people, it is very common for men to be murmuring or angry. When the Lord visits with famine, pestilence, or sword, and nation rises against nation, or kingdom against kingdom, or a people's internal state is broken or confused, and all have a different language as at Babel, or religion appears to be all going, and the glory departing, even good men, like Elijah, are disposed to wish that they had the wings of a dove, that they might fly away and be at rest. Nay, the prophet was so afflicted with the sins, plagues, and the unjust government

of Israel, that he spoke out, and said he wished to die. "It is enough; now, Oh Lord, take away my life: for I am not better than my fathers. I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword: and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." But what does the Lord say to him? "Go forth, and stand upon the mount Horeb before the Lord." And what does he hear and see? "And behold the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake: but the Lord was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice." God would not have him think, that the most terrible things and occurrences, had any other direction or commission than he gave them. He would not have him judge of things merely according to their appearance, but that God worked like himself, and ever acted in character; that he appeared when and where men least thought of it, and was still and silent in accomplishing his greatest purposes. "If clouds and darkness are often round about him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." The words of Christ to Peter may well be applied to all such as belong to the same family. "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter;" and this should abundantly satisfy all christians. Christ has foretold that his disciples should see perilous times; that in the world they should have tribulation; but at the same time he has bid them be of good cheer, as he had overcome the world. "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice, and the multitude of the isles be glad thereof:" and do christians do well to be angry at these events, on the occurrence of which he bids them in patience to possess

their souls? Shall we confide in the divine wisdom and love at one time, and shall we be angry with them at another? Since God has assured us that all things shall work together for good to them that love him; since he is of one mind and none can turn him; and this one mind is the same perfectly wise, holy, and just mind, that it always has been, and always will be, who will not confidently trust and adore, when we cannot spell out the least trace of his wisdom and goodness in the footsteps of his providence.

8. It is extremely trying to a man that hath the good of religion at heart, and strives to promote it, to find all his labors for this end, at present to be unavailing; to be like water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up. But why should we be angry at this, or find fault? God hath the residue of the Spirit with him, and shall we claim his prerogative to pour it out when and where we please? Besides, is not God honoured by the faithful labors of his servants under discouragements? Which servant deserves the greatest honor,—he that labors on a kind soil, with suitable rain and sunshine, and with all the dews of heaven in his favor; or he that patiently delves, at the command of his Master, on barren rocks, and lands without rain, and where all the sweet influences of heaven are withheld? The prime reasons why the labors of any are accepted, are not human fidelity, but the sovereign grace of God. If ministers and private christians could make converts, they would have whereof to glory. But that no flesh may glory in the divine presence, God rains on one city and withholds rain from another. It is written, that “Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but that it is God that giveth the increase.” Isaiah 49. 4; “Then I said, I labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God.” 2 Cor. 2. 15; “For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish.” Jer. 15. 10; “Wo is me, my mother, that thou

hast borne me a man of strife, and a man of contention to the whole earth!" Prophets and preachers have often felt thus; but it is wrong, and savours of the temper of Jonah. Ministers were ordained, and private christians were let, to be men of strife and contention, with a world that lieth in wickedness.

Christ never promised the comforts of his religion without a cross, nor the happiness of heaven without warfare on earth. And we have no reason to be angry; for God saith to Jeremiah, for his comfort under his discouragements, "I will make you unto this people a fenced brazen wall; and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee. For I am with thee, to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the Lord." And dost thou well, Oh! minister, or Oh! private christian, to be angry because of thy ill success?

4. Men are apt to be angry with the method of divine grace. Only read the scripture, of one's being taken and the other left; of God's having mercy on whom he will have mercy, and hardening whom he will; tell them that none can come to Christ, except the Father, who sent Christ, draw them; that the elect obtain, and the rest are blinded; and that as many as are ordained to eternal life must believe; and the whole natural heart is in insurrection, and many cannot speak peaceably of the doctrine, or those who preach it. But, friends, do you well to be angry with a doctrine, because it makes you nothing, and God all and in all? Is not sovereign and electing power safe in the hands of infinite goodness and wisdom? Is it not better that God should govern by determinate counsel, rather than by contingence and uncertainty? Where can people find a God, who has no determinate rules of managing the universe, and who varies his plan according to the whim of free agents? Are you confident that man has liberty and power to reply against God? And that the thing formed may "say to him that formed it, why hast

thou made me thus?" Bring forth your strong arguments, and prove, that the potter hath not "power over the clay of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor." What hope of salvation could there be, were not God a sovereign; and had he not the hearts of all men in his hands; and had he not promised to turn some of them? Can you put God under obligation, by your righteousness and good deeds? I know of no plea that we can put in, but "God be merciful to me a sinner;" and if he hears and saves for this, it will be mere mercy, and what business have you to find fault, in a matter where you do not deserve any thing but evil? Again,

5. We are often disposed to be angry, that errors of various kinds are suffered to spread in the community. But for what reason should we be angry with these perishing gourds? It must needs be that offences come; there is a sense in which false religions are a blessing to the world. They serve to try the steadiness of ministers and professors. They come for the trial of spirits, and to confirm the bible. "I know," saith the apostle, "that after my departure, grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."

As issues and sores are to the natural body, so are errors in and about the church. They tend to draw off the bad humors, and purge and purify it. They serve to en-  
dear truth, and heighten our admiration of redeeming love, by showing us our dependence on God; teaching us not to rest on man; and that if ever we steer clear of rocks and quicksands, and get to heaven, it will be all of grace. For who is it that maketh us to differ from those who "are left to believe a lie, that they may be damned?"

Thus I have attempted to touch on a subject, which I think a very important one; viz. That men ought not to

be displeased with the methods of God's providence or grace. I do not expect that it will stop the murmurs of all who hear me. As I conceive it to be God's truth, I hope it may be sanctified, to comfort the children of God, and to convince his enemies of their unreasonableness, in complaining and finding fault with God and their fellow creatures. I know that it is a sermon needed by the preacher, and I trust not unseasonable for any hearer. "Doest thou well to be angry?" We live in a day of rebuke and blasphemy; when unusual temporal prosperity has swollen the hearts of men with enormous pride and selfishness; so that many almost speak out and say, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? I know not the Lord, neither will I obey his voice." For this and other sins, it is a day of darkness and gloominess with the nations. A fierce and general war is enkindled, that shakes the four quarters of the world. Parties have taken sides, that can never coalesce. Ambitious projects seem to be formed, to make the whole habitable world, one military and despotic empire. What will be the issue, is not within the reach of human conjecture. Worldlings say, that all will be well. But the holy scriptures predict perilous times, the great day of the battle of God Almighty; and that the earth shall be turned up-side down, and wiped as a dish. "Let God be true, and every man a liar."

We do not well to be angry, if things do not turn out to our mind. The best of men are very unfit to govern the world. The great mass of us love our country, and its free government, and pray for its independence. But as we have forgotten God, he may see fit to take them away, and to break down the last fences of the New-England institutions. Having had the best opportunity ever offered to any people, to be free and happy, our vices may forge us chains, to make us the hewers of wood, and the drawers of water, to a foreign power, who will support and give offices to a portion of our citizens, and help them

to humble and make vassals of the rest. Such a thing has occurred in the history of the world. The Greek and Roman maxim, of divide and conquer, is not forgotten by those with whom *might is right*. The church may burn like the bush of Moses, but consume it cannot. Christians through the world, deserve scourging for their lukewarmness and selfishness. From high national prospects and expectations, we may be called to drink the dregs of national humiliation. But still there are comforts and consolations, neither few nor small, for the real children of God.

The Lord reigns; he always has reigned, and he always will reign. He always has brought, and always will bring light out of darkness, and order out of confusion, and good out of evil. It has been his usual way, to restrain that wrath of man that will not praise him. Personal religion is our only refuge at all times. But in days of peril, it is emphatically the only chamber to which we can repair, and shut the door after us, till the day of divine indignation be overpast. Personal religion only, can lead us to triumph, on just principles; over those who have power only over the body; but cannot touch the soul. Let us all then diligently inquire, what is truth; and when we find it, let us embrace it, immoveable as the hills; and unshaken as the mountains. One of the best of men, who had his worldly troubles and sorrows, says, "Fret not thyself because of evil doers; for they shall be cut down like grass, and wither as the green herb: trust in the Lord, and do good, and he shall give thee the desires of thy heart; he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday."

The sword of the wicked shall enter into their own heart, and they shall consume into smoke. In a word, instead of complaining of the methods of God's providence or grace, let us in patience learn to possess our souls.

## SERMON XXV.



LUKE, VII. CHAP. 47 VER.

*Wherefore, I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.*



THE ancient Pharisees were zealous for outward purity, while their hearts were filled with pride and hypocrisy. They were zealous to the last degree, for certain rites of their law, while they omitted its weightier matters, as justice, mercy, and truth. They were in general among the bitterest enemies of Christ: for his plan of religion flatters none of the corruptions of the human heart, and places all on a level, in point of justification before God. It so happened, that one of the Pharisees invited the Saviour to his house to eat: and as he sat at meat, a certain woman of the city, who had been distinguished for her infamous character, brought a box of precious ointment, and stood at Christ's feet, as he was reclined at meat. She shed a flood of tears, washed the Saviour's feet with them, and wiped them with the hairs of her head; and in token of her love to Christ, she kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. The Pharisee was astonished, that Jesus suffered a person of so loose a character to be nigh

him; imagining that he must be defiled, by allowing her to approach him. The thoughts of the Pharisee's heart were in the following manner: "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is, that touches him; for she is a sinner." Jesus knowing what was in man, and the secret sentiments in the heart of Simon the Pharisee, who had invited him, replies: "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors; the one owed him five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss; but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. Mine head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment." The text follows: "Wherefore, I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

The creditor in the parable, evidently represents the Lord himself. The two debtors, one of whom owed him ten times as much as the other, denote different descriptions of sinners, who are all guilty, but in various degrees; and who have no power, in any measure, to pay their debts, or atone for their own sins. As, therefore, two debtors, thus circumstanced, and freely pardoned, would love their kind creditor in some proportion to the sum remitted to them; so pardoned sinners, may be supposed to love their gracious Lord, in proportion to the degree of their guilt, or

rather their own estimation of it. Our Saviour applies the parable to the case of the woman. She had been forgiven much, and hence her love to Christ would be fervent.

When it is affirmed in the text, "her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much;" the sentiment is *not* that the woman's love was the ground of her forgiveness; but the meaning is this: This woman, who has been a notorious sinner, has obtained mercy; therefore her love is great.

#### DOCTRINE.

Signal displays of divine grace in the soul, are followed with ardent love.

Every instance of pardon granted to a sinner, displays the glory of divine grace: for the least sin deserves eternal death. But signal displays of divine grace, are those, where the subject had been very aggravatedly guilty before God. Some misimprove more talents than others. The sins of some are attended with more aggravation in the sight of God, than the same general actions in others. When sinners have great natural capacities, great opportunity for religious improvement, are closely beset with convictions in their consciences, and yet act against them all for a long time, they are eminent in wickedness. And when divine grace stops such in their course, and gives them repentance unto salvation, the mercy is signal; the glory of divine power shines illustriously; and the love which follows in such cases, is uncommonly ardent. But let it be remembered, that this love is not selfish, but is fixed ultimately on the glory of God our Redeemer. All men wish to escape punishment, and would rejoice, on natural principles, could they be certain they could escape it. But the love of the redeemed of the Lord, rises above personal safety, and dwells on the glory of the God of all grace. The arguments, that signal displays of divine grace

in the soul, are followed with ardent love, are the following:

1. We know from scripture, that such persons have an uncommonly clear discovery, of the glory of the divine purity and justice. Deep convictions are necessary to bring them home to God. They must have a very full discovery of their exceeding contrariety to the holiness of the divine nature. In order to have this conviction fastened on their hearts, the glory of the divine holiness must shine with great clearness and fulness before them. When they see themselves, as reflected from the glass of the law, they must behold moral evil, with infinite abhorrence. Their apprehensions of these things are, in ordinary cases, as much clearer than that of sinners in general, as their crimes had been more enormous, or their guilt more aggravated. They are taught, in an uncommon degree, the nature and necessity of divine rectitude, to support his throne and dominion; how necessary the sceptre of righteousness is, to uphold the kingdom of Jehovah, and to render him glorious in all his administrations. In proportion to the signal exertions of divine power and grace on the soul, love to the divine character, as it is, will be ardent and strong.

2. My doctrine is confirmed, from the consideration, that the most remarkable monuments of God's mercy, have a very full discovery of the all-sufficiency and glory of gospel grace, in offering pardon to rebel men. It is an infinite condescension in the great God, to pardon the least offender; but the condescension rises in our own view, when we see it, all-glorious, in the forgiveness of the chief of sinners. The atonement is, indeed, as sufficient for the greatest as for the smallest offence. But its efficacy, in the sight of finite minds, is more conspicuous, in coming over vast mountains of guilt, than over less offences: and in such cases it must kindle more fervent love. As great offenders see it most in their pardon, they must, with the

woman in the text, love much. Rom. 5. 20: "Moreover, the law entered that the offence might abound: but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

The spirit of inspiration, knowing the disposition of fallen man, to use every artifice for a cloak of wickedness, has noticed the objection, that is apt to rise up in the corrupt heart here: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, who are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" God can never exalt one attribute, at the expense of another. The glory of his grace can never eclipse the glory of his justice. Besides, persons, in embracing divine mercy, are necessarily dead to sin; and hence, there can be nothing in the nature of divine grace, which can encourage them in wickedness. The reason why men abuse the grace of the gospel, as a license to sin, is not any thing in the doctrine itself; but the abuse arises wholly from the corruptions of their own hearts. If grace, in its own nature, encouraged men to sin, that grace might abound, then they, who had most of the spirit of the gospel, would be most inclined to wickedness. But saith the apostle, "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" And he further adds, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed; that henceforth we should not serve sin."

3. That signal displays of divine grace in the soul, are followed with ardent love, may be seen from particular instances, in vessels of mercy. We have a remarkable instance, in the life of the apostle Paul.

This man was endowed with uncommon talents, by the God of nature. These were improved by an education, at the feet of a learned doctor among the Jews. He had at his command, all the charms of a copious eloquence, and well understood how to rouse, convince, and engage the minds and passions of men. His nation esteemed him;

his influence was great; and his natural pride and ambition was heightened by the religion of the Pharisees. No man could be a more potent or bitter enemy to Christianity, than he was. He employed all his natural and acquired abilities against it. He spared no age nor sex, but persecuted Christians unto the death. The persecuted Saviour met him on the road to Damascus, convinced him of his sin, humbled him at his feet, revealed himself to his soul, and made him a chosen vessel, to bear his name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel. And what was the consequence? This once murderous persecutor, labored more abundantly than all the apostles. His soul was filled with fervent love, and ardent zeal, in propagating the Christian name. No labors, no trials, no reproaches, no suffering, no perils, could cool the warmth of his love, or quench the fire of his zeal, for the glory of divine grace. No man ever discovered greater affection towards the cause he once laboured to destroy, than this apostle.

The experience of all ages of the church, warrants us to believe the doctrinal remark from the text. It was illustrated in a pardoned David, a pardoned Peter, in a Gardiner, and a Newton. When it hath pleased God, in sovereign mercy, to subdue very stubborn sinners, they have discovered an uncommon sense, both of divine justice in their condemnation, and of divine grace in saving them. And we must believe, that such will, to all eternity, shout with distinguished triumph, the praises of God the Redeemer.

#### IMPROVEMENT.

1. The subject which at this time invites our attention, discovers the all-sufficiency of divine grace and mercy. We have seen, that some who have been great offenders, have been forgiven of God. Sinners, who have been

guilty of sins of a scarlet colour, and of a crimson die, may, consistently with the law and justice of God, be pardoned, and made heirs of eternal life. God is perfectly pleased with the atonement. The chief of sinners who embraces it, may be saved. Divine mercy could forgive the penitent Mary Magdalene, who had been the most infamous and base of her sex, and of the human race. Nor was the guilt of a persecuting Saul, too great to be forgiven, when he fled to the blood of the covenant.

The Mediator has wrought out a righteousness, sufficient to clothe the most naked of the sons of Adam; to pardon the most guilty, and to save the most wretched. In Jesus Christ, met infinite dignity, joined with the human nature; and the most perfect purity, with his obedience and death. He was delivered for the offences of his people, and rose again for their justification. He hath ascended to his Father, and their Father; to his God, and to their God. He sits exalted, to give repentance unto Israel, and the remission of sins. His pleas, as intercessor, are all-prevalent. The foundation he has laid to build on, is sure and unfailling: neither earth nor hell can destroy it. None can wrest out of his hands, those who receive the atonement. He is an Almighty Saviour. The government of the whole world is upon his shoulders. He sits King in Zion. He will reign for ever and ever. He moves all the wheels of providence, to support and advance his kingdom, and shall reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet.

2. Have some of those who have been very great sinners, been forgiven? then no sinner need despair of forgiveness. "Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely." The sufficiency of the atonement, exhibits a sure ground of hope to the penitent, however aggravated their offences may have been. Men cannot be forgiven, while impenitent. But the chief of sinners,

are invited to bow at the feet of Jesus, and humbly hope for heaven. Whosoever comes to Christ, shall not be cast out, though he has merited a very aggravated and dreadful damnation. The thief on the cross, who hung by the side of the bleeding Lamb of God, was one of the vilest of the vile, by his own confession; but he was heard, when he cried, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." The first publication of Christ's resurrection, was at Jerusalem. To them first, was pardon offered. Some of those who approved of the unrighteous sentence of death, passed and executed on Christ, were made the subjects of his grace, and were pardoned by that blood which they had spilt.

These things may encourage all penitent sinners, of every class, to hope for the remission of their sins, and for the inheritance of the saints in light. Let no sinner, then, though among the chief, doubt the sufficiency of the Saviour, to forgive those who come to the Father, by him.

3. We may infer from what has been said, that none may rest their hope of forgiveness, on the comparative smallness of their sins.

Besides the provocation, expressed in the pride and self-confidence of this hope, the very nature of grace sweeps away that refuge of lies, on which the hope rests. The least sin, unrepented of, must prove a damning sin. None are accepted of God, because they are less sinners than others: there is but one way or door of hope, for every class or degree of the guilty: except ye repent and believe, ye shall all perish. If we may hope, merely from the circumstance, that we have not been the greatest sinners, we might be allowed to detract from the glory of sovereign grace; but God will have no flesh to glory in his presence. "Let him that glorieth glory in the Lord." None can perceive the preciousness of Christ, or the glory of the gospel, except the broken-hearted. The self-sufficient

will not only be disgusted with notorious sinners, but will even think worse of the gospel, for giving encouragement to them. But did they know the real state of mankind, they must perceive the folly and madness of their objections: for "all," without exception, "have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

4. We may learn from what we have heard, how persons may discover that their sins are forgiven. They discover it by their love to Christ. In this way the woman discovered it, who washed her Lord's feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. They who are convinced of their own sinfulness, and expect pardon, and all the blessings of salvation, as the gift of God in Jesus Christ, will, in proportion, become humble, patient, contented, teachable, and obedient. Above all things, they will learn to love Christ in every part of his character, and to value him in all his offices. They will desire his favor, be thankful for his mercy, and zealous for his glory. They will become earnest, constant and diligent, in their endeavors to please him, and to recommend his salvation. They will love his ordinances, commandments, and disciples, and value every talent in proportion as it enables them to express their love to him and his cause. Thus it has happened, that the vilest, when sanctified, had loved much, because much had been forgiven them; and have labored much, because they loved much. The best evidence of our having been forgiven of God is, to be ready in saying from the heart, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."

A resemblance to the spirit of Christ, is far preferable to all the visions, secret whispers, and suggestions, which some imagine are indubitable evidences of their forgiveness with God. When the Spirit of God puts his seal on the heart, it impresses a likeness of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. When any, then, would examine them-

selves on the subject of their pardon, justification, and adoption, they must have recourse to the prevailing spirit and temper, which govern their hearts and lives. If they find, on faithful examination, that they are governed by the meek and forgiving spirit of the gospel, they may conclude, that their peace is made with God, or that they are interested in his favor.

5. The subject teaches us, that the subjects of Christian forgiveness, ought to distinguish themselves by the warmth of their love. If, my brother, or sister, you were among the chief of sinners, in times past, you are especially bound to love much. You can never enough admire that grace, which has plucked you as a brand from the burning, and hath made you to be to the praise of the glory of his grace. But whether you have been of the first class of sinners or not, if you are a Christian, you have seen very great guilt in yourself; you have seen that the God of truth and purity, must abhor every sin. You must have seen enough in yourself, to lay you very low in hell. All who see themselves as believers have done, must stand astonished, that a righteous and holy God, has not long since cut them down, as cumberers of the ground, and assigned them to the burning pit. For all who know the truth, know also, that they have had hearts deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; full of enmity to God, opposition to his government, and contempt of his glorious grace. Is it not shameful, brethren, that we, who profess to have been forgiven so much, love so little? Why will we not to-day awake from our lukewarmness, to the ardor of true Christian love. Christ is a glorious pattern; let us imitate his shining example. Let us seek more heart-affecting views of our own vileness, and of Christ's preciousness; that we may stand at a greater distance from the proud spirit of the Pharisee: that we may trust and rejoice in Christ alone; and so may be prepared to obey him more zealously; shine

as lights in the world, and recommend the religion of the dear Redeemer. Let us feel the force of the charming argument of the apostle, 2 Cor. 5: "For the love of Christ constraineth us. Because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again."

6. If signal displays of divine grace in the soul, are followed with ardent love, then we may learn, that such as have no special love to Christ, have never been forgiven of God. There are, and have been, persons in the world, in all ages, who have thought that all was safe, as to them, in futurity; who have been confident that they were Christians; and perhaps have thought, that they were the subjects of God's grace: and yet have borne no Christian fruit. Where are their charities to Christ's receivers? What sacrifices have they made to promote his glory? They appear to be ruled wholly by the spirit of the world. They are full of envy, malice, and revenge; hateful, and hating one another. The religion of that soul, that does not blossom and bear fruit, must be rotten at the core. Such are ignorant of the righteousness of God, and are still going about, to establish a righteousness of their own. They are yet in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. He who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and knows all the secret motives of action, in all his creatures, must look on such with abhorrence. What! can they be citizens of Zion, who have nothing of the spirit of the children of God? Can they be united to Christ, who have no likeness to him? All just sentiment, all scripture reason, all propriety and fitness of things, revolt at the idea. The sanctity and formal services of too many who call themselves Christians, either prove that they have no proper sense of their guilt, and of the redeemed sinner's obligations to Christ, or that they love but little, because they

suppose that little has been forgiven. But the scriptures put an end to all controversy. All those may know, that they do not savingly love the Lord Jesus Christ, who have not something of the spirit of penitents, and of the woman in the text. Whatever may be your amiable natural accomplishments, without appropriate love, you are none of Christ's. Though you may have the mask of religion, or the visible badges of discipleship, you are either the friends of Christ, or you reject him with your whole hearts. If you know nothing of Mary's love to her Master, and of the great apostle's devotedness of interest, reputation, and life, to his cause, you are guilty of despising the glorious Son of God, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace. You despise the glorious being, before whom angels bow, and devils tremble. You honour not that righteousness, holiness, or benevolence, which are displayed on the cross of Christ. Jesus invites you to live, and yet your hearts cleave fast to this dying world, and its fading glories. Though you are as decent and moral as Seneca, or Socrates, or the young man who went away grieved at Christ's preaching, it is impossible to escape eternal wrath, if you despise and resist so great salvation.

The Saviour will one day appear clothed in terrible majesty, against all who obey not the gospel, and are now trampling under foot his atoning blood. He will, he must, vindicate the honor of his kingdom, before angels, men, and devils.

The threatening, in 1 Cor. 16. 22, will be executed. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha." He must be accursed of the Lord when he comes. The Christian religion can have no substitute, and it will have no rival. "Though I, or an angel from heaven, should preach any other gospel, let him be accursed." And, my hearers, who are unconscious of any near or dear relation to Christ, how can you es-

cape the damnation of hell, if you continue to slight the only method, which infinite wisdom and goodness have planned and published, for the recovery of fallen man? How can you escape? Your sins provoke the Lord to anger: you must break off from them, be humbled in the dust; and in the feelings and language of penitence, supplicate divine mercy. The grace of the gospel is all-sufficient: why will you not come in by the door, and no longer try to climb over some other way?

The foundation laid for the sinner's acceptance, is sure and unfailling; but of what avail can a foundation be, unless you build upon it, and lay your hope upon it, for pardon and eternal life. Oh! why will you not hear, when Jesus calls? Have your sins been great? The blood of Christ is sufficient to atone. Have you been held back from the enormities of some others? Still you are sinners, and the blood of Christ alone can wash away your pollutions, and pardon your guilt.

All false hopes and false religion, all your plans of self-righteousness, must fail you. Come, empty, that you may be filled. Come, hungering, that you may be fed; and come, naked, that you may be clothed with the robes of the Saviour's, righteousness. Come to Christ's wardrobe, that you may not at last be among the confounded, that have not on the wedding garment. And may your forgiveness be sealed with the love of her, who washed the Saviour's feet with her tears; and with the righteousness, peace, and joy, of those who belong to the kingdom of God. Which may infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ.

## SERMON XXVI.



II. SAMUEL, XVI. CHAP. 11 VER.

*Let him alone, and let him curse: for the Lord hath bidden him.*



THE history of David's fall, in the matter of Uriah, and the history of the consequent judgments and afflictions brought on him and his family, for his backslidings, is a very useful and instructive part of scripture, to all the people of God. The text, as well as the 51st Psalm, is one of the strong evidences of David's genuine repentance. While the afflicted king was flying before his rebellious and parricidal son Absalom, he came to Bahurim, a city of Benjamin: and there "came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came. And he cast stones at David, and at all the servants of king David: and all the people, and all the mighty men, were on his right hand and on his left. And thus said Shimei, when he cursed, Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial: The Lord hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the Lord hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and behold, thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man

Then said Abishai, the son of Zeruiah, unto the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head. And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so? And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more may this Benjamite do it? Let him alone, and let him curse: for the Lord hath bidden him. It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day. And as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along on the hill's side over against him, and cursed as he went, and threw stones at him, and cast dust."

It seems that the translation of the kingdom to David, marred all Shimei's prospects of preferment. He disregarded the express appointment of God, and his heart was full of implacable enmity to David, as an usurper of the throne. Contrary to the fullest evidence, he accused him of murdering Saul's family; and interpreted his affliction into a proof of his guilt: and he took this opportunity to vent all kind of imprecations and reproaches, and to express all the rage of impotent malice.

But if David had been a bloody man, and disposed to slay the family of Saul, Shimei would soon have suffered the just punishment of his audacity: for David was so well guarded, that Shimei could only show his malice at a distance. Shimei, indeed, merited death for cursing the Lord's anointed. But David was now under the divine rebuke for his sins. Though free from the guilt charged upon him, he was consciously guilty of injuring and murdering Uriah. He therefore submitted to the justice of God, in permitting this treatment of a personal enemy: and he could not wonder that his enemies were stirred up against

him, when his own son sought his life. The sin of Shimei and the sin of Absalom, were from themselves, and from Satan, as the blameable cause: but David's affliction was from the Lord; and they were but instruments which God employed. Besides their purpose of correcting David for good, the curse, causeless, could only injure him who vented it. And David hoped that his humble submission to such usage from man, would prepare the way for the return of peace and comfort from a merciful God: and therefore would not permit Shimei to be molested.

But some have thought, that the amiable temper of the king was marred, by his charge to Solomon, not to hold Shimei guiltless, but to bring his hoar head to the grave with blood. If David was revengeful in this, he sinned. But Shimei deserved death, by the law of Moses: and Solomon was bound by oath to execute the law. Though private persons must not avenge themselves, but must return blessings and prayers for the bitterest curses and injuries of their enemies; yet such offenders will not be held guiltless before God: and if their crimes be a violation of human laws, good men, out of regard to public justice, ought to desire that they should be restrained and punished. When, in their proper station, they promote the execution of the law, they serve their generation according to the will of God, and prepare for death, no less than when they are recompensing their benefactors, and doing acts of kindness to the distressed.

The doctrine from the text, seems to be this: The religion of the Bible will lead those who heartily believe in it, to the justice of God, in all the injurious treatment they receive from their fellow creatures. "Let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him." It gratifies malevolence to insult the afflicted, and to vent imprecations and reproaches. And they who think nothing of the authority, providence, or word of God, in other respects,

are often ready to interpret the afflictions of their neighbors, as divine judgments, in opposition to the clearest evidence. But the Christian religion will lead us to see the hand of God, directing, though not dictating, the injuries of men. For this cause, though the Sabeans had wickedly taken Job's substance, the good man said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." The malice and power of enemies, often render a gracious and condescending Saviour, more precious to the believer. Their calumnies recal his sins to mind, and provoke to humiliation and prayer. Every child of God feels, in his soul, that he deserves worse from the Lord, than he can experience from his most cunning, cruel, and contemptuous enemies: and he will consider it all as correction; saying, "They are the sword; the hand is thine." And he will bear it patiently, humbly, and meekly, for his sake, who will graciously requite all sorrow for sin in his disciples, with inward peace and consolation. Seasons of peculiar humiliation before God, require peculiar long-suffering towards men. Private revenge must never be indulged; and especially on such occasions. For even the judge of the world, in his humiliation for our sins, bore with, and prayed for those who reviled and crucified him. A deep sense of personal guilt, will soften the spirit towards others, and dispose a man to be severe and indignant against himself. And the most zealous friends will be disregarded, when they counsel to what is evidently wrong.

#### IMPROVEMENT.

1. The temper of David, under affliction for his own sins, shews the fallacy of courting persecution. A selfish and self-righteous spirit may easily operate, in a fondness to being thought despised for Christ's sake. The man who is exposed to buffetings for his own faults, will take them patiently, if he has the spirit of the gospel. If every

thing that is persecuted were true, all the parties and religions in the world would be established as from God. Let us not rest in appearances, then, but look deeper. It is certain, that all the godly must be subjects of suffering, in some way or other. But we may not hence conclude, that every one who suffers is godly. The apostle Peter says, "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye: for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busy-body in other men's matters."

If we so suffer as not to be ashamed, the cause for which we suffer must be real Christianity, and the opinions we adopt must be essential truths. For, if we turn from truth to fables, and are persecuted for it, what glory is it? Saith the apostle, "If, when ye are buffeted wrongfully, ye take it patiently." The heart must be right with God, to constitute men Christians, and consequently to put men in a capacity for suffering as christians. Peter suffered by having his master say to him, "Get thee behind me, Satan:" but he did not suffer as a Christian. Hence we see,

2. That there is no more real suffering for Christ, than there is real religion in the heart. If a soldier, out of the line of his duty, gets wounded, or receives a wound in going to a place, or doing an action, which his superior forbids, his scar will not be a badge of honor, but a mark of his disobedience and disgrace. Honor and reward, are only connected with the faithful discharge of real duty, at our proper and assigned post.

3. Although the professors of religion are full of complaints, it is certain that but very few suffer as real Christians. Christians are called to do good to all men. And a part of their cross is, to endure ill usage from them, and patiently to experience their ingratitude. Indeed, we can-

not go through our duty as Christians, in any station, if we do not persevere in endeavoring to overcome evil with good. Our sufferings and reproaches can never be so unmerited, or so great, as his were, who when he was reviled, reviled not again; who suffered without threatening, and committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. As, therefore, he, his own self, bore our sins, in his own body, on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, might live unto righteousness; let us learn to copy his example, when we are reviled and abused, as well as to rely on his merits; and keep close under his gracious protection and guidance.

4. The subject suggests a caution to those who rejoice in the conspicuous fall of those who profess godliness. We might almost rest an appeal to common humanity, and ask, which appears the most amiable, the malicious and envious Shimei; or David, bowed to the earth under a sense of his sin. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord; and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand." The church addresses her triumphing adversaries, in this language: Mic. 7. 8. "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy. When I fall, I shall arise. When I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be light unto me."

The rejoicing of the enemies of God's people shall be short. If sorrow oppress the church, she will compose herself to bear the fatherly chastisements which her sins had provoked, and submit to God's displeasure with patience and hope. Darkness to such as have a broken and contrite heart for sin, will not long prevent comfort in the Lord: while all those who deride the Christian's confidence in God, shall be covered with shame, and trodden down as the mire in the streets.

When mourners are brought to cry to the Lord, and

pour out their hearts before him, they will not long hang down their heads to the ground. For he can heal those breaches, which to all others, are irreparable; and he will turn our earnest prayers, though presented in sighs and tears, into joyful praises.

Such an unspeakable gift is the gospel, to a world of sin and sorrow. But in these blessings, the impenitent, and the infidel, and the hypocrite, can have no portion. Take heed, then, ye Shimeis, how you boast and exult; how you scorn and rage. The measure you mete, may be measured to you again, pressed down, and running over. If Peter, through self-confidence, neglected to watch and pray, fell into grievous sin; wounded his conscience, and exposed himself to severe rebukes and disgrace; what will be the end of those, that obey not the gospel?

The very disposition in unsanctified men, which leads them to exult in the fall of a Christian, is an argument that the scriptures are true, and that Christianity is from God. Say, ye who live without Christian obedience, why is it that ye take such an interest in the fall of a professed disciple? Is it because ye hate sin, and love holiness? No. Is it because ye lament that Christ is wounded in the house of his friends?—that he is crucified afresh, and put to an open shame? No. Permit me to tell you why it is cause of joy, and a day of sending presents to one another. It is perversely used as an argument to continue at ease in sin; and that those who make no pretensions to religion, are as good, if not better, than those who do. It encourages you to cast off fear, and restrain prayer.

But to careless, Christless souls, I say, these failings of Christians, like all other vain hopes, will prove but miserable comforters. That Judas fell, and went to his own place, will be no comfort to Herod, or Pontius Pilate, or Felix, or Gallio. "If judgment must begin at the house of God,

where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?" If God is so severe in chastising friends, what will he do to his unreconciled enemies? If you are so severe and contemptuous to the fallen Christian, how will you, by and by, endure the everlasting contempt of the whole universe? David is, not unfrequently, the jest of the debauchee, and the song of the drunkard. Many have rejoiced over him in Christendom, and cast stones and dirt, and vented their curses, whose secret history, on the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, will be far more terrible than his. He will be found a penitent, interested in a better righteousness than his own: while they will be found with hard, proud hearts, and the iron sinew of their perverse wills unbroken, and the moral taste of their souls unconformed to the will and image of God. Having never experienced a saving change, they can neither see, nor enjoy, the kingdom of God. Having never been prepared by sanctification, they will have no relish for the enjoyments or employments of that world, where the sweet singer, washed in the blood of the Lamb, and clothed in white robes, will make every string of his golden harp accord with his voice, in singing, "The Lord reigneth! Oh, give thanks unto the God of gods, for his mercy endureth forever."

Oh! Sirs, the time is too precious, to be spent in vain inquiries into the state of our neighbors. Their fall will not raise us. Let not the lamentation of the prophet be taken up against us: "No man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done?" It is folly to be all awake to the sins of others, and asleep as to our own rebellion, ingratitude, pollution, and sin.

It is a common remark, that the greatest sinners are usually most severe and unforgiving to their fellow sinners. Hence we are taught, to make it a part of our daily prayers, to ask such pardon from God, as we impart to

our offending brother. If the love of Christ has taught us to forgive our brethren, for his sake, we may be assured of his ready forgiveness of our sins, though many and aggravated. But let us beware of malice and revenge. For whatever a man profess, if he forgive not others, God hath not forgiven him; and will not forgive him, if he continue of this rancorous disposition.

And let every Christian, instead of complaining of the severities of the world, and of his enemies, say with Job, "I will leave my complaint upon myself;" and let him say, of every vile scoffer and calumniator, in the spirit of the text, "Let him alone, and let him curse: for the Lord hath bidden him."

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## SERMON XXVII.



LUKE, XVI. CHAP. 26 VER.

*And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulph fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence.*



None could explain the great things of eternity, better than he who brought life and immortality to light in the gospel. Christ knew best how to describe the state of a saint in heaven, and a sinner in hell. The text is a part of a well known parable, designed to reprove the Pharisees, who were covetous and worldly. We here have an account of a very wicked man who was rich, and a very good man who was poor. Death came, and ended all the pleasures of the one, and all the pains of the other. The parable does not prove that it is a sin to be rich; but that it is dangerous to the soul, to be rich; as men are thereby tempted to love the world too much, to forget God, and to neglect their souls: Nor does it prove that there is any thing saving in poverty and afflictions. There is no merit in these things. Christ alone can save us from our sins; and there are many who are miserable here, who will be miserable beyond the grave. Lazarus differed from the rich man, in that he was a pardoned sinner, and was born

of God. He had borne the cross, as every one must do who follows Christ; and perhaps his afflictions led him to God. The rich man set his heart supremely on his riches; lived in sin; and neglected his soul. Now, sinners meet in the same church: but soon, an awful separation will be made, and no more intercourse suffered forever. A great gulph will be fixed between them.

The word here translated *gulph*, means the same as a chasm, a great rent in the earth, with abrupt descents, different from a gentle slope or gradual declivity. Not merely as, in passing from one mountain to another, we go down the descent, cross the valley, and ascend the other height: but a chasm, with such steep descents, that there is no descending of one side, or climbing of the other: A great trench, with impassable precipices for its sides, dividing different objects. The gulph is called great, in the text; that is, so steep and wide, that there is no passing from one side to the other.

The rich man, in the context, is represented as crying to Abraham afar off. The first idea from this, seems to intimate, that there is a great local distance, between saints and sinners in another world. But although the rich man and Abraham stood on different sides of the gulph; yet, wide as it was, they could converse together. From hence it seems natural to suppose, that something more than local distance, was intended by this part of the parable. It is granted, that ubiquity cannot be attributed to finite spirits. And perhaps there may be some place in particular, in which the souls of good and bad men, after they leave the body, shall more constantly inhabit. The place of good men, is sometimes called the third heavens: and the residence of bad men, hell; a lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; and, the bottomless pit.

Yet it seems, that finite spirits approach near to each other, who are of two different characters, or classes, with-

out any alteration in their state. The serpent approached near to Eve, in her state of innocence. Michael the archangel, and the devil, seem as though they were near together, when disputing about the body of Moses. Satan was not out of hell, when he came among the sons of God, as they presented themselves before the Lord; of which there is mention made in the book of Job. Neither was Satan out of hell when he came to our Saviour and tempted him forty days in the wilderness, and when he was permitted to carry him up to the top of an high mountain, and to the pinnacle of the temple. Besides, in Rev. 14. 10, the wicked are represented as being tormented in the presence of the angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. Facts, also, within our knowledge, may establish us in the belief, that distance of place does not constitute the difference of state with the righteous and the wicked, in the future world. We may discover the temper of hell in one person, and the temper of heaven in another, here in this world: and yet, they may lodge under the same roof, share the labors of the same field, or occupy the same seat in the house and worship of God. This is a proof, that, in the nature of things, local division is not the grand thing intended, by the figure of a gulph, or chasm, in the text.

In further discoursing from the words, I shall attempt to show the main or principal things, which constitute the essence of the great gulph mentioned in the text. I say essence, because a multitude of circumstantial things and modes pertaining to the invisible world, can never be understood, until this mortal shall have put on immortality.

1. One of these essential things, I conceive, is the purpose of God. God purposed from eternity, that an everlasting and unchangeable difference should exist, between the righteous and the wicked, in the future world. His counsel will stand immutable, and he will do all his pleasure. "Known unto God are all his works, from the begin-

ning of the world." There is an absolute certainty in God's mind and counsel. To apply this to things inanimate, or to the animal creation in general, and not to man, seems to infer something derogatory to the divine wisdom and perfections. As though God would extend his counsels to the outer court of his works and world, and yet leave the nobler part, man, undestined and uncontrolled by his purposes, and out of the course of his particular providence! This cannot be. And as the divine character is pledged to reward righteousness and punish iniquity; and as the divine purposes respect the division; the gulph, the dividing line, so to speak, between the righteous and the wicked, must be great, and immoveably fixed; no more to be passed over, than the counsels of the eternal Jehovah are to be broken, or than the constitution of the universe can be destroyed.

2. Another thing which constitutes the greatness, or the width of the gulph, is, the eternal rule of rectitude which exists, and exists as the law or rule of all intelligences. God never departs from this. This everlasting difference betwixt right and wrong, holiness and sin, is as unchanging as the divine nature. The moral law, summed up in love, flows from the moral perfections of God. It is a transcript of the divine nature. To the obedient, or holy, a reward is promised. And those who obey the gospel, which fulfils the law, cannot be finally miserable: and the wicked cannot escape punishment. Different portions are assigned to the righteous and the wicked, in the very nature of things. They have different objects; and therefore must be in different states, let them be thrown in what part of space they may. Wherever situated, the dove will be a dove, and the serpent a serpent.

3. The nature of the great gulph may be further understood, from the retributions of eternity and the judgment day. God said to Cain, "If thou dost well, shalt thou not be

accepted? and if thou dost not well, sin lieth at the door." The prophet Jeremiah observes, that "the eyes of the Lord are open upon all the ways of the sons of men, to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." And parallel to this, it is said in Matt. 16, "The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works." The same general subject is treated of in a more full manner, in the account of the process of the final judgment, in Matt. 25. All nations are to be gathered before the Son of man, the Judge, the Lord Jesus Christ; and the individuals of the nations are to be separated, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. The sheep are to be placed on his right hand, and the goats on his left. When the character of each is manifested to all intelligences, then the Judge is to turn to them on his right hand, and say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." And then to those on his left hand he will say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." It is added, in the close of the description, "These (i. e. the wicked) shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." Here you observe, an eternal difference is made: here a great wide gulph is fixed.

4. It may also be explained, by considering, fourthly, the moral character of the righteous and the wicked. The righteous love God. They love to behold him. They worship and praise him without weariness. They rejoice in his holy government, and that he does as he will with his own: working all things according to the counsel of his own will. They say, "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done." They love to be every where among God's works, that they may behold his glory. Wherever God

is, is heaven to the soul that loves him. To the soul made perfect, as the souls of good men are at death, their heaven is perfect. The breathings of their hearts are, "Oh, let me see God and adore him: I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness." But the wicked hate God, saying, "Depart from us." A view of his perfections, especially of his sovereignty, and justice, is painful to them. That his decrees and purposes should stand, is a matter of unceasing complaint. His government is too strict and immovable. And the more knowledge they have that he reigns, the greater are their torments. The more clearly they see the agency of God in his works, the more they are pained. They carry the principles and feelings of hell with them wherever they go. Each wicked man, when his conscience lashes and upbraids him, may say, "myself am hell." They wish to be free from pain: but they have not one desire to have the same heart with the saints. Devils, and damned spirits, filled with pain and torture as they are, have not one desire to be holy angels or holy men. When Satan meets with the sons of God, as represented in the book of Job; when he associates with holy angels, he still remains a liar and a murderer; ambitious, subtle, envious, and malignant. He hates the service of God, and is plotting mischief against his cause and people.

Thus I have attempted to explain the nature of the great gulph, that is fixed between heaven and hell; by applying it to the decrees of God, the eternal rule of right and wrong, the retributions of eternity, and the moral character of the inhabitants of both future worlds. Some inferences follow:

1. We may see the folly and vanity of that scheme of doctrine, which supposes the punishment of the damned to be only temporary. That there will be a purgatorial state, was an opinion embraced by a few at an early period

of the Christian church. It was first taken from the mythology and fables of the pagan world: it was afterwards advanced and adopted by the papistical church; and it has been revived by several sects of Christians, down to our time. The tendency of it is, to make mankind easy in their sins. In a word, it has much the same effect on a world lying in wickedness, as Satan's preaching had in the garden of Eden. Men are encouraged to pluck and eat, by being told that they shall not surely die. But how vain the pretence! The scripture is plain: "Between us and you there is a great gulph fixed; so that they who would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." The gates of heaven are fast barred forever against those who die impenitent. Neither labors of body, nor ingenuity of mind, nor the pleas nor cries of those without, can open them. As well might any expect to change the counsels of the eternal mind, alter the eternal law of rectitude, snatch the sceptre and the rod from the supreme Judge, prove God a liar in his word, or make sin and holiness harmonize. Alas, that any should be so blinded! But God may justly send strong delusions upon those who have long and obstinately resisted the light, and refused to come to it, lest their evil deeds should be reprov'd.

2. The subject teaches us the folly of expecting heaven without a change of heart. We have seen that one great thing in the great gulph, the separating barrier between heaven and hell, is the temper of the mind. The inhabitants of those two worlds are directly opposed to each other, in the disposition of their hearts. The one loves, and the other hates, the same object. How can any love or be happy in heaven, when they do not love God in all his perfections? If we hate God's decrees, and his punitive justice, here, the accomplishment and execution of them hereafter will afflict us beyond conception. The

enjoyment of God makes heaven. And if you are the enemy of the true character of God, if you are not conformed to his will, image, and character, how can you enjoy his presence? How can you sing the song of Moses, the servant of the Lord, and the song of the Lamb? The subject of this song is, the destruction of God's and the church's enemies. If you have a malevolent disposition towards a fellow creature now; if you have an innate abhorrence of his character and conduct; could you live happily with him, except either his character and nature were changed to meet yours, or yours to meet his? Could you live with him an age, and not be in torment?—could you forever? Could you join the heavenly hosts, in their humble and devout praise, without ceasing and without weariness, when you now consider the worship of a few moments as a burden? If you now hate to converse on religion; to keep religious company; if you are now full of pride and self importance; and exalt yourself above all that is called God; how will you feel in a world where God and religion are all in all? If you are unwilling that God should "have mercy on whom he will have mercy," how can you bow at the footstool of a king who has declared that he has "made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil?" Be not deceived. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." There is no living on Abraham's side of the gulph, without Abraham's temper. There can be no complacency in the character of Lazarus, without having the same heart that he had, while he lay at the rich man's gate. I do not say that we must be in the same outward circumstances: but I say we must have the same heart, to be on the same side of the gulph. If Satan could assemble with the sons of God, he would be Satan still. No man is proved to be a true Christian, by being found in company with the children of God, even when they appear before him in his house, or at his table.

There are but two kinds of moral agents in heaven, earth, and hell: the children of God, and the children of the devil. Those who are disposed to represent the most blameless professors of godliness, as hypocrites, or mercenary; to put a bad construction upon harmless, or even good actions; and to insinuate some suspicion or objection, in order to detract from the commendations bestowed upon pious and useful men, may easily know whose children they are, whose example they follow, and whose work they do. For they resemble, in every feature, Satan, the envenomed slanderer and accuser of the brethren. All the inhabitants of each world, or each side of the gulph, are alike in the general temper of their minds and hearts. And let every hearer ask, "Which do I most resemble?" When we die, we shall go to the only state and seat that can consistently receive us in the universe. I again ask, in the name and fear of God, which side of the gulph belongs to us? On which side should we stand, should we die this day, or this night? We must stand plunged in torment, without a drop of water to cool our tongues, if we have not within us something different from what we derive from natural generation. Marvel not, that we must be born again, or we cannot see the kingdom of God.

3. The poorest and most miserable Christians are blessed. To the poor the gospel is preached. If they have a new heart, they are made heirs of all things, and will soon exchange their beggarly garments, for robes of righteousness and joy; their indigence and hunger, for fulness; their sores, sickness and pains, for health, ease, and pleasure forevermore. A spark of grace, even with poverty, reproach, and pain, is better than all the gold of the wicked. The poor of this world, without religion, are poor indeed: but, with the love of God and Christ in their hearts, they possess all things. In the name of Christ, I bid such to be patient, contented, and to bless God for his grace. If you

will live religion, you shall be comforted; and your joy shall no man take from you. There is no ground to fret at the prosperity of the ungodly, or in the least degree to envy them. After all it will be ill with them. They have their portion in this life. When the wicked spring as grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is, that they shall be destroyed forever. This night their souls may be required of them. Then whose will be their riches? and to whom will they flee for help? and where will they leave their glory?

4. Hell must be a place unutterably dreadful, as it is a place to which hope can never come. There can be no relief in a state of things unalterably fixed. Not only Satan, and his infernal legions will be our tormentors; but, as the case may be, our parents, husbands, wives, brethren, sisters, friends, and associates, and children, who have lived and died in sin with us, may unite in the dreadful employment. So much the more, as they have lived together like the cattle; so much the more as they have been leagued together in mocking at sin, reproaching good people, and have animated each other in the ways of ungodliness: so much the more torment and sorrow will the Lord give them; so much the more will they give one another. "Wo unto you that laugh now; for ye shall mourn and weep." Should not all near connexions and relatives, be cautious of injuring each other, by vicious lives and bad examples?

Families without religion; ye companions in sin, who live at ease in wealth and pleasure; I beg you seriously to contemplate what the end of these things will be. Behold the miserable man in the parable, lifting up his eyes in torments! Hear his unpitied groans and unavailing prayers! Contemplate his fixed, unalterable condition! And know, that "unless ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Would we, like Lazarus, be carried to Abraham's bosom, like Lazarus we must be conformed to God. All things must

be set down below the divine honor, in our hearts and lives, and as much lower as Lazarus' seat was at the rich man's gate.

A greater curse cannot befall a man, than to be rich, if this be his all; if his heart be set on these things; if by it he be tempted to live in sin, neglect his soul, and be alienated from the life of God. The remembrance of such a carnal state, one observes, will be the hell of hell. Remorse for such folly, is the worm that never dies; the unconsuming fuel of that fire that never will be quenched. Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we would persuade men. There is no benevolent person, who would not cheerfully spend a whole life preaching and praying, if he could but be made instrumental in saving one soul. An eternal and unchangeable state of misery, is beyond all our conceptions. Imagination can but imperfectly paint how dreadful it will be. But all who are conscious that they have not the temper of heaven, without repentance toward God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, are certainly candidates for the burning pit, where their worms dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And let your consciences say, if the opinion is cruel and unjust, should I say, that I fear some of my hearers in this assembly, are unprepared to meet God in judgment. They have not secured the one thing needful. They have not chosen that better part which shall never be taken from them. Pardon me, then, if I am importunate and repetitious on this subject. "Awake, thou that sleepest! and Christ shall give thee life." Behold the the Judge standeth at the door. Sell not your heavenly birth-right for a mess of pottage. Soon you will find "no place for repentance, though you seek it carefully with tears." Read the parable, with the text, when you go home, and you will see that I have not overstated the argument from it. And let your fears bring you on your knees, at the throne of divine grace.

## SERMON XXVIII.

LUKE, XXIV. CHAP. 32 VER.

*And they said one to another: Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?*

As the disciples of Christ were slow of heart to understand the nature and necessity of his atonement; his being betrayed into the hands of his enemies, his crucifixion, burial, and resurrection, astonished and confounded them. When he was crucified, they all forsook him and fled. All sad and sorrowful, on the morning of the third day after Christ's burial, certain women, belonging to his followers, had been at his sepulchre, and found that his body was not there; but were told by two angels that he had arisen from the dead. Alarmed, these women ran unto the eleven, and to the rest of his disciples, and told them what, that morning, they had seen and heard at the sepulchre. Their faith was not at all strengthened by the report. Their words, i. e. the women's, seemed to them as idle tales: and they believed them not. Peter and John, however, went to the sepulchre, to satisfy themselves more fully concerning the report they had heard from the women concerning Christ's resurrection. It is expressly said of Peter, that, on his stooping down and looking into

the sepulchre, and seeing the linen clothes laid by themselves, which had been wrapped round the Saviour's head, he departed, wondering in himself at that which had come to pass.

The same day, two of Christ's followers, the name of one Cleopas, the other we know not, some think it was Nathanael, went to a village called Emmaus, about sixty furlongs, or seven miles and a half, distant from Jerusalem. The topic of their conversation was, the things which had so lately happened to Jesus, whom they so greatly loved; verifying the declaration of scripture, that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. And it came to pass, that while they communed together and reasoned on the road, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. On which, one remarks, that "it is a good thing to be discoursing of Christ: it is the way to have his presence and company with us." But their eyes were holden, and at that time they did not know him. Taking advantage of their ignorance that it was he, he inquired of them as follows: "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk and are sad? And one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering, said unto him; Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things that have come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and, besides all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre: And when they found not his body, they came, saying, That they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them

which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said; but him they saw not. Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. And they drew nigh unto the village whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?"

Never man spake like Jesus. He had a superior majesty and power in his discourses. He could, when he pleased, make all he said effectual and energetic on his hearers. This power hath no man: and Christ did not always put forth such power. For vast numbers who heard Christ preach, never had their hearts effectually touched. But, aside from divine energy, there is a different tendency in different preaching. Some kinds of it tend to make the cold or lukewarm heart more so: or, at least, make the conscience easy in sin; while other kinds tend to thaw and warm the frozen heart. But yet, what one observes, is to be noted, viz. "Where preaching makes our hearts to burn within us, Christ throws in the coal which the best preacher doth but blow up." Whenever and wherever any soul is baptized with fire at hearing a sermon, it is also baptized with the Holy Ghost. When the hearts of Christ's disciples in the text burnt within them,

the meaning is, their coldness was removed, and love in their hearts rose up into a flame. Their taste for truth was fed; their taste for revealed truth was gratified, "While he talked with them by the way, and while he opened to them the scriptures." The pious soul is not fed by fables, or the productions of men's fancies or imaginations, but by the truth as it is in Jesus, no matter how old. Christ's disciples were fed by the writings of Moses and the prophets expounded to them. They had read them often, and heard them read: but they now came home with power on their hearts.

To enter more fully into the spirit and marrow of the text, let us inquire,

I. When our hearts may be said to burn within us, in the sense of the text; and,

II. Inquire what keeps alive, and feeds, the fire of divine love in the heart.

And may God grant, that while we are upon the subject, the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts, may be acceptable in the sight of our Lord, our Strength, and our Redeemer.

I. When may our hearts be said to burn within us, in the sense of the text?

1. This happens, I apprehend, when they are recovered, in any degree, to real engagedness in matters of religion. In our natural state, we are indifferent as to divine things; or, rather, worse than indifferent. We like not to retain God in our knowledge. Contemplations on his law, character, and government, come, not as welcome, but as unwelcome intruders. And hence, exertions are made, by the natural man, to dismiss them as soon as possible; and the impressions made, are not unfrequently like the morning cloud and the early dew. But when our hearts burn within us, divine subjects become pleasing. We delight to dwell on the thoughts of God, his government, law, and

methods of grace. The glory of God, as manifested in the face of Jesus, charms and animates us. Such were the feelings of the man after God's own heart, as expressed in the 104th Psalm: "My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord." The heart of man naturally takes no proper notice of God's law: it does not feel its force; or it views it as hard and severe, and its author as cruel and oppressive. But when the heart burns, as in the text, then its binding nature and force is felt with pleasure. The soul chooses the law and government of God, as revealed; and would exchange them for no other. "Oh, how love I thy law! It is, my meditation all the day." The natural man views the works of God, only with sensual delight: But when the soul is new born, and all its faculties are burnished by grace, the finger of God is every where visible in all his works; and the heart burns at the displays of wisdom, power, and goodness, in every object. Psalm 143. 5, 6: "I remember the days of old: I meditate on all thy works: I muse on the work of thy hands. I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land. Selah." Above all, when our hearts burn, we feel engaged in our whole souls toward Jesus Christ, and the work of redemption which he has performed. He becomes to us the wisdom of God, and the power of God. We see and feel an interest in him to be of the highest importance; and that there is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must or can be saved.

2. Our hearts burn within us, when, with heartfelt pleasure, we behold the harmonious display of the divine attributes, in redeeming love. Here is justice, in not suffering sin to go unpunished; here is truth, in executing the threatening; here is holiness, in reprobating and abhorring every thing which rises against the throne and government of God; here is love to the law; here is love to man, to

sinful man, to rebels, to Christ's betrayers and murderers; here is love to the bitter enemies of the divine government; here is pardon offered them, freely offered, offered on the most reasonable terms; here is offered a reward, a crown, glorious and incorruptible, and that fadeth not away. Our hearts leap within us and rejoice at such glad tidings, if they are governed by the sensibilities mentioned in the text. Happy, blessed, glorious tidings, shall we say within ourselves. Never, never let such subjects be uninteresting to my heart. Let it embrace them. Let it never grow cold and lukewarm towards them.

8. Our hearts burn within us when, in a teachable frame, that is, an humble one, the field appears great before us, and we are desirous of learning concerning our God, our Saviour, and ourselves. The two who walked to Emmaus had this temper. When Jesus came and joined their company, they were all attention. They felt their need of instruction, and were glad to improve the opportunity then presented. If they had not been of an humble and teachable temper, they would have been displeased when Christ addressed them, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" They could take a reproof very kindly, as they had such an inward consciousness of their ignorance and weakness. They were attached to divine teaching. "Thy word is very pure," or precious; "therefore thy servant loveth it." The holy heart is charmed and entertained with divine instruction. A person in such circumstances, will go far to meet with God's people, and hear his ministers. They will put up with all the inconveniencies of weather and travelling, to spend an hour in the divine courts. The things that concern their souls, the glory of God, and the honor of the Redeemer, are not matters of form and habit, indifferent in themselves; but pleasing topics, of which they can never grow weary. The two disciples were so entertained with

divine instruction, that, though at that time Jesus was, in one sense, a stranger, they could not consent to part with him. While he made as though he would have gone further than their stopping-place, they constrained him, saying, "Abide with us." In a word, when our hearts burn within us, we can use the language of the spouse in Canticles: "I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him and would not let him go." When the soul is in this frame, nothing more is wanting to embrace any revealed truth, than to have it set before the mind; for the heart will go out to every divine object as soon as it is seen.

II. As proposed, let us inquire what it is that keeps alive, and feeds, the fire of divine love in the heart. The question is summarily answered in the text: "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and opened to us the scriptures?"

1. Communion with Christ keeps alive divine love: drinking into his kind, loving, and benevolent spirit; feeling his disinterested affections; conversing with him by prayer and every holy ordinance. Drop all converse with a friend, by word or letter, and forget to think of him, or choose some other object of affection; and how soon is he forgotten! how soon does the warm heart grow cold! But revive the acquaintance by seeking his company, and make sacrifices to enjoy it; keep up frequent correspondence by letters; and dormant affections will revive, and friendship and attachment will grow with our growth and strengthen with our strength, in youth; they will knit heart and heart in old age, by ties that are stronger than death. Just so in things of religion. Hence, conversing frequently with Christ by prayer and meditation, is a great means of keeping alive divine love in our hearts.

2. This fire of divine love in the hearts of believers, is kept alive by Jesus himself. He sends the Holy Spirit, who dwells in the hearts of his disciples. The Holy

Spirit begins the good work at first; and the same blessed Comforter carries on the work which he begins, to the day of its perfection. He grants fresh anointings, as it is commonly expressed. He gives such divine light, purity, life, righteousness, and joy, as marks his peculiar people, and certifies to them their saving interest in the promises of eternal life. As an earnest, he gives them foretastes; feeds them with the hidden manna; treads Satan and their indwelling corruptions under their feet; gives earnestness and efficacy to prayer; bears witness with their spirits that they are the children of God; invigorates their inward graces, and makes them discernible amidst all the remains of corruption. Divine love is kept alive, and kindles and burns with every breathing of the Spirit.

3. This fire of divine love is kept alive in the heart, by opening and applying the scriptures. It is observable that Christians flourish most in religion, when they are most abundant in the prayerful study of their bibles, and strict attendance on the duties of the sabbath and prayer. When the scriptures are opened and explained, they open to us new beauties in the objects we love—new beauties in Christianity. How harmonious is the system of grace! how full, how complete, how adapted to every case! The mind gets a more full understanding of itself, of its own weakness, and proneness to temptations; espies, and endeavours to shun, the rocks of presumption and despair; discovers but one person ever found in the fashion of man, that was perfect; learns that the best of mere men are but men: hence, improves by the history of the backslidings of good men recorded in the scriptures.

Finally: divine love is kept alive, by having the nature of future happiness opened and explained to us. The Christian's paradise is very diverse from sensual enjoyment, or the dreams of worldly greatness. As the heaven of Christians has nothing in it allied to sensual gratifica-

tions: the holy soul learns to act more worthy of its nature as an immaterial spirit, and to seek enjoyments that are spiritual. Burdened, it cries, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" It feels the need of inherent holiness, to prepare for the enjoyment of holy company, and to be fit for the holy enjoyments of a blessed eternity.

Thus, I have attempted to show, in what sense our hearts may be said to burn within us; and what it is that feeds and keeps alive the fire.

Let our first use of improvement be, by way of examination. My hearers and brethren, do we commune with Christ? Do we love his company; and with the spouse, do we lay hold on him, unwilling to let him go? Have we any real heart-engagedness in religion—the religion of the holy Jesus? Have we ceased to be indifferent in our thoughts on God? Do we love to dwell upon him? Do we love so just and good a lawgiver as the King of Zion? Do we survey the works of our divine parent, in nature, providence, and grace, with heart-felt joy? Having ceased to be alive without the law, do we feel the need of crying, "Lord, save us, or we perish?" Do we rejoice in the glad tidings, the most glorious tidings that ever reached a mortal ear, that there is peace and pardon for penitents through Jesus Christ?—that God can be just and yet the justifier of every one that believes? Do we feel the teachable temper of the two disciples who walked to Emmaus? Are we charmed with the Divine Teacher, and loth to part with him? Do we stand ready to make divine truth welcome, whenever proposed to our understandings? Have we communion with our blessed Saviour? Have we imbibed his spirit? Do we desire to keep alive our acquaintance with him, and to improve every ordinance to that purpose? Do we feel that a supernatural power begins, increases, and perfects, all that is good in man; and find

that divine truth is the food of the soul? Do our hearts exult, and beat high with immortality, when the scriptures are opened and explained to us? In a word, do our hearts burn within us, on our way through life; and does the holy flame grow brighter as we approach the end of our hope? Words, forms, and professions, may answer purposes with men; but with God they avail nothing, without the affections of the heart. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?"

2. That religion, which is of the right kind, is derived from the Old Testament as well as from the New, and has, "Thus saith the Lord," to support it. Hence, let us learn to bring all our religion "to the law and to the testimony." If our religion, or religious affections, are not agreeable to these, the light, the true light, is not in us. The law of God is the standard of duty: his sure testimony, the standard of truth: and his promise, the firm ground of hope. If any want instruction, counsel, and encouragement, let them go to the law, as well as to the gospel. If they doubt the doctrines of Christ, let them recur to the law of Moses, and other preceding parts of revelation. Those who contradict or reject the Old Testament, must be blind leaders under the New. The enthusiastical pretenders to new revelations, in answer to prayer, or otherwise, stand condemned by the subject. True religion is supported and connected with Moses and all the prophets; and the true disciples felt their hearts burn when they heard them explained. The Patriarchal, Jewish, and Christian Church are essentially one church. "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." "Know ye, therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." Gal. iii.

8. Let every Christian be fully convinced that he is slow of heart to understand divine truth. A sense of our stupidity and unteachableness should shame us, and humble us, and lay us open to conviction. "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him." Grace in the heart will always excite a low esteem of our own knowledge. It will shew the imperfections of our natural faculties, and our readiness to mistake. It will lead us to acknowledge that we are slow of heart to believe: i. e. we are averse to do it, without uncommon, or even improper evidence. Asaph was sensible of this folly, through his remaining sinfulness; and acknowledged it in the 73d Psalm: "So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee." He was deeply ashamed of the distrust and want of faith in his own heart. With his remains of unbelief, he appeared to himself, and knew that he must appear in the sight of God, to be as ignorant and stupid as a beast, which has no conception of any other good, than present sensual enjoyment. When a Christian is wiser in his own conceit, than seven men that can render a reason, he is always on dangerous ground. He is a candidate to embrace error. Peter was never so confident, as when Satan was about to sift him as wheat. In his own opinion, he seemed to know every thing; and to feel, that in his own strength he could do every thing. When there is such unhumbled pride in the heart, it can never burn, as in the text. While the deceitful heart is slow to believe truth, it is quick and ready to believe a lie. On this ground,

4. I would exhort Christians, never to think highly of their own attainments; but, with St. Paul, to "forget the things that are behind;" and, with the same good man, to "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." In proportion as we are conformed to the commands and precepts of Christ, we may

expect the gladdening influences of the Comforter. If we desire to share these blessings, we must renounce, and even forget, our carnal and sinful attachments and pursuits. Other Lords must be disavowed: for he must be our Lord, as well as our Saviour. All idols must be thrown away, that we may give him our whole heart, and render him unreserved worship, as well as seek all our happiness from him alone. To the Laodicean church, who were neither cold nor hot, and yet thought themselves rich, increased in goods, and needing nothing, the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, saith; "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." If any who hear me, long for that communion with Christ which the disciples in the text enjoyed, let them open the door of their heart, and turn out all other company, for the reception of heavenly guests. Fire will not burn in materials formed of ice. Gladness is only appointed to mourners in Zion: joy and the garment of praise, to those who lie self-abased before God, as in sackcloth and ashes. Do any sigh for the consolations of the Holy Spirit? He who dwells in the high and holy place, has promised to dwell with him that is of an humble and contrite spirit. Simplicity and spirituality are the excellences of divine worship. And a broken heart is above all notions, forms, gifts, visions, or revelations.

## SERMON XXIX.



GALATIANS, I. CHAP. 10 VER.

*For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.*



THE church of Galatia was early enticed from the faith and purity of the gospel, by seducing teachers. Alarmed at their departure from the faith, the apostle expresses himself in these strong terms: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." And to give it emphasis, he repeats: "As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." And to enable them to distinguish his gospel from those that were spurious, the apostle continues thus: "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." Thus the text, in its connexion, if it contains any doctrine, it is the following: The faithful preaching of the gospel, is incompatible with the friendship of wicked men: which doctrine will be attempted to be established.

This I think will appear, both from the humbling doctrines the gospel contains, and the pungent manner in which a servant of Christ will preach them. As to the

doctrines, Paul informs us in the verse following the text, that they are not after man: that is, there is nothing in them that gratifies or favors a single bias of the human heart, in its natural state. It tells men, that there is a God possessed of all possible perfection, to whom they are accountable: that he has given a holy law which they have broken, and cannot repair; and that he will by no means clear the guilty: that he cannot look on the least sin but with abhorrence: and, that these are truths which they will be made to feel, whether, through their haughtiness and self-sufficiency, they are pleased to believe them or not. Nay, it declares that many men, of the most shining talents, and the most profound erudition, have lived and died, and that others will live and die, in utter contempt of the truth as it is in Jesus. "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

The doctrine of total depravity, on which the whole scheme of atonement and grace is founded, has ever been, and ever will be obnoxious; as it strips every dignity from man, and leaves him wretched, and poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked; as it cuts the sinews of all mock virtues, and leaves us no holiness which is not wrought by the Spirit of God. When Christ preached it to his followers, many went back and walked no more with him. When he told them that they must deny and forsake all; not only houses and lands, and all earthly connexions, but all their own righteousness and goodness, it cut them to the heart. Could we have heard their reflections, they might have been in the following words: What! have I no original righteousness in me? nothing that is good, holy, and virtuous? Must I be entirely dependent on Christ for a new heart, sanctification, perseverance in grace, and complete redemption? Must I have none of the honor of

my salvation? Must not my prayers, and frames, and charitable deeds, count for something in making me acceptable to my maker? No! Well, then, I hate this scheme: I will not follow him who preaches thus. I feel that I have some remaining goodness about me. Only let me have a little divine assistance now and then, and I can get to heaven.

This is natural religion. But says Paul, in a verse following the text: "I received not the gospel from men, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Again: The doctrines of the gospel are very illiberal. Of course, they will render the preacher of them hated. They will allow no other way of salvation, than this humbling way. "He that preaches any other gospel, let him be accursed." "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Nothing can be more rigid, than the preaching of Jesus Christ in this particular. It is natural for every man to wish that he might worship God when he pleased, and how he pleased, and not at all if he pleased; and yet to get to heaven at last. But Christ's religion will have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. It will not hold out the hand of charity, in the modern sense of the word, to the worshippers of Jove, Baal, Beelzebub, Lama, and Mahomet. Of course, it does not suit the tastes of men. It is so illiberal as to say of men, "Ye are of your father the devil; and the works of your father ye will do: that the road to heaven is strait and narrow, and that few find it; while the road to destruction is broad, and crowded with travellers." And its founder hath said, "Whosoever does not enter by me, as a door, is a thief and a robber, that climbeth over some other way." And so rigid was an apostle of this religion, that he could say, notwithstanding the diversity of sentiments among men, that there was "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one

hope of our calling;" and that Christ was not divided, nor his real followers. Now men long to get rid of such a pinching religion.

Again: Natural men are opposed to religion, as it is opposed to every lust and all sensuality. Men are lovers of their own selves; and of course, they love that religion that touches the lightest on their crimes: and for the same reason, are bitter to the real religion of the Bible. If this were not the case, why all this virulence in all the opposers of Christianity? Why did the Scribes and Pharisees pursue Christ with such a spirit, till they had crucified him? It was because he called them whited sepulchres, a generation of vipers; exposed their lusts and the pride of their hearts. He preached the divine law home, in its full extent; which galled and cut them to the heart. They could not put up with it. Though they affected to treat him as a poor despised Nazarene, they could not let him alone, till they had imbrued their hands in his blood. The plain precepts of the divine law, backed with the penalty, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them," has probably made more infidels than all the mysteries of the Bible. It leaves men no room to act nature, and live as they list: but shuts every door to lust and sensuality.

Again: The gospel is unpopular, as it inculcates nothing as virtue which is not, in its nature, disinterested; and teaches to give up all selfish, personal good for the general good. Self is a mighty thing in religion. When it is crossed, it often takes away all spiritual appetite and all the form of godliness, and spoils the preacher of it. The gospel also speaks lightly of all worldly greatness. It tends to render all the wit, learning, and art of this world infinitely insignificant and contemptible, without the good and the honest heart. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the under-

standing of the prudent." And the apostle adds, with an air of holy triumph, "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? The foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." The offers of salvation are equally to the learned and unlearned: the rich and poor have equally to say, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Nay, a Lazarus may rest in Abraham's bosom: while a Dives is cast out.

Now, it is apparent that such doctrines cast contempt on the little greatness of this world; and make all the little bustle too much like that of the ants of a larger molehill. Men wish to be elevated; or, at least, wish to be thought so. But in the gospel, are the same humbling truths to be embraced by the servant and his master. The learned and unlearned are treated alike, by him who never respected persons. Pride is a very natural growth in the natural human heart. Its roots spread so wide, that, though it be ever so much mortified and wounded, it will soon sprout, and become as thrifty as before. This, with hypocrisy, the doctrine of the cross saps at the root; as it does not so much respect outward appearance as the heart. It does not leave men the least thing to be proud of, but their wretchedness: and humble, hypocritical pride, will sometimes take this last retreat. But it is immediately routed by the searchings of divine truth.

Oh! it is a standing miracle, that religion, in its purity, is still in the world; since it has not one natural friend. It is only habits that restrain the greater part of this audience from crying out, as the Jews did of our Saviour, Crucify it, crucify it; and from casting stones and dirt to sully and destroy it.

Farther: Religion is unpopular, as it inculcates meekness, gentleness, and long suffering; contrary to the natural notions men have of honor, spirit, courage, and revenge.

Those humble virtues are beneath the boasted dignity of all-important man. Many have attacked religion on this ground; as encouraging pusillanimity, a low and dastardly spirit. The unwearied and painful labors of the apostle Paul are passed in silence, to heap encomiums on his judges and accusers. Instead of that humble manner in which Christ rode into Jerusalem, men would have had him outshine all the splendor of earthly conquerors. But Christ's kingdom is not of this world: it is directly the reverse of it. The lowest in his kingdom is the highest; and the most honorable, the most meek and the most humble. These are maxims of preferment that men do not like. They do not quadrate with worldly customs and maxims. Hence they would be more ready to commend that disciple who said, "Master, shall we call fire from heaven on our adversaries;" or Peter, when he drew his sword and smote the servant of the high priest,—than a character formed after the model of Christ's sermon on the mount. Such religion is worse than the most absurd paganism to the human heart. Hence we find, that when it was first preached, some laughed, and many mocked, even in the learned city of Athens.

Mankind are not flattered, from the beginning of the Bible to the end of it. They cannot bear to look in a mirror, that gives them such a deformed appearance, as their characters make when compared with the divine character, and as their lives make when brought to the standard of the divine law, which is holy, just, and good. Herod not only feared, but hated John. Why? He was of unblemished moral character. The reason was, he reproved him for his adultery with his brother Philip's wife. This is the root of all unbelief: the scriptures say nothing but evil about me and my heart; and point me to hell for my wickedness. Hast thou found me, O, mine enemy? is the language of every heart, when discovered to our-

selves by the searching, piercing rays of divine truth. How, then, can one be a faithful preacher of Christianity, and a servant of Christ, and yet please men?

But if the truth of the doctrine, that the faithful preaching of the gospel is incompatible with the friendship of wicked men, is thus apparent from the nature of the matter they are called to preach; it is no less so, when we consider the manner which is prescribed for a faithful preacher in the word of God. A preacher must impress the minds of his hearers, or he will do them no good. Unless they feel, as well as hear, he will be to them as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. The faithful preacher, therefore, aims to penetrate the heart; and he will no farther regard their eyes or their ears, than that he may convey truth, and make the deepest impression. He will exhibit such truths, as, either by their own weight or by their natural connexion, will find the nearest way to the soul, and touch it in the most tender and sensible part. He will not preach about and about truths: he will explain and describe them. He will not preach about saints and about sinners: he will describe both characters; and trace them in all their various appearances and attitudes. When he preaches as he ought, he will tell every hearer how he has felt, and how he still feels. He will enter into every bosom, and search the most secret corners of every heart: and his words will be those of the wise, which Solomon compares to goads or nails, which fasten and clinch on every mind. He will always aim to hit every hearer: and he will always hit them, when he describes their characters. Elijah often described Ahab: and Ahab felt the description; and therefore cried out, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" The Jews felt the preaching of Christ, which described their characters; and it pierced them to the heart. Thus every faithful servant of Christ, will always apply his discourse according to the particular

character of his hearers. What is said of saints, and belongs to saints, he will apply to saints: and what belongs to sinners, he will apply to sinners. And, if he is a servant of Christ, he will not leave his hearers to apply his discourses, but he will apply them himself; and in such a manner, that each individual will receive a proper portion of divine truth. No sinner can help feeling those truths which condemn his character and destroy his hopes. Felix trembled, when Paul applied the truth to his particular character. The promising young man was filled with grief and despair, by the injunction of a particular duty. The servant of Christ, by his very office, must make particular application of particular truths to particular characters of his hearers. He ought to handle the sword of the Spirit with such dexterity and skill, as to strike every hearer in the most tender and vulnerable part. This is a difficult, but it is an important part of preaching. When we do thus, we must wound, if we do not heal; we must destroy, if we do not save, all that hear us. How, then, can we be the servants of Christ, and yet please men; when our very business is to address ourselves with force and energy to the consciences of natural men, whose hearts are at enmity with God; who "say to the prophets, Prophesy not, and to the seers, See not;" who love smooth things, and are charmed with the sounds of peace, even when there is no peace? How can they love those whose duty it is to direct the sword of the Spirit to the most tender and defenceless parts; who strike at the foundation of all false hopes, seek out their haunting places, destroy their strong holds, bring down their high thoughts, and lay them defenceless before God and their own consciences.

As I think the doctrine established, that no man can be the servant of Christ and please men; let us make some practical uses of it.

1. We learn the absurdity of those ministers, who stu-

diously avoid disturbing the consciences of their hearers; who seek to please, rather than penetrate, the minds of their audience. Some choose a style which buries all their ideas; and thus take off the force of truth. Some speak of religion in that manner, that leaves it doubtful whether they care about what they say or not. This flatters people; because it makes it look as though it was of very little importance, whether men believe or disbelieve the doctrine of the gospel: whether they perform or neglect the duties of religion. It gratifies them, that they have done their duty of hearing, and have been saved from feeling, divine truth. Many people love to come to church to hear, but they hate to come to church to feel. Those, then, are dangerous preachers, who seek to please their hearers, rather than to disturb their consciences.

Another mode, with preachers of some denominations, is, to preach smooth things, and silently pass over the more penetrating and disagreeable truths of the gospel. Some seem to take pains to avoid saying any thing about the character of God, the decrees of God, the sovereignty of God, the agency of God upon the hearts of men, the character of men by nature, and the immediate duty of all to yield unfeigned obedience and unconditional submission to their great Creator. They studiously avoid mentioning these truths; not because they are ignorant of their nature and tendency, but because they wish not to penetrate and impress the minds of their hearers. But, the prophets, Christ, and his apostles, meant to impress the minds of their hearers, by the manifestation of truth, and by commending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. These are examples, which the servants of Christ should follow, though it should give pain, and even offence, to their hearers.

2. If it be the duty of preachers to make their hearers feel as well as hear, then hearers have no reason to com-

plain of the most close and pungent addresses to their consciences, and reproofs for their darling sins. This is disagreeable to human nature; and people are very apt to complain of it. Ahab, king of Israel, hated plainness, and the pointed addresses of the prophet; and he spake it out: "I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." Nor was this king alone: the people of Israel were of the same disposition; for which God severely reproveth them by the mouth of Isaiah: "Go write it before them in a table, and note it in a book; that it may be for the time to come forever and ever, that this is a rebellious people, which say to the seers, See not, and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things: speak unto us smooth things; prophesy deceits."

Human nature is still the same. People now are disposed to find fault with ministers, for being too plain and pointed in preaching. There is not perhaps a single congregation in this land, who are all willing to have the great and essential truths of the gospel clearly explained to them, and strongly impressed upon them. There are many, in most places, who will either leave their minister, or cause their minister to leave them, rather than suffer him to harrow their hearts and consciences with divine truth. Such flying from pungent to smooth religion, is a more dreadful thing, than some, by their conduct, seem to imagine. God represents it so in his own people. "A wonderful and horrid thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bare rule by their means; and my people love to have it so."

If the servants of Christ are right in dealing plainly, the people are wrong in complaining of it. They act a most unreasonable, as well as sinful part. Searching preaching is for their good, and they ought to desire it and seek after it. It is their highest interest to feel, and to be made to discover the state of their souls. They always desire such

plainness and fidelity in other men whom they employ to promote their temporal good. They wish their attorney to examine their cause with care, discover every flaw, and tell them the naked truth. And they heartily desire their surgeon to probe their wounds to the bottom, and apply the most effectual remedies, though ever so painful and distressing to endure. Why, then, should they complain of a preacher for dealing plainly and faithfully with their souls? This is an absurdity in its own nature; hinders the good he may do them; and may be eternal destruction to themselves.

3. If it is the duty of a servant of Christ, to make his hearers feel, there is blame somewhere, if they are not impressed with divine truth. The speaker is either deficient in duty, or his hearers resist the force of truth. To find where this blame lies, is a matter that highly concerns us all. When truth is held up, some impressions always take place; although they may be different in different persons. Some may feel pleased, and others displeased: some may feel happy, and others unhappy: some may feel comforted, and others reprov'd and condemn'd: some may feel their hopes enlivened, and others may be led almost to give up their hopes. If no impressions are made of any kind, the blame must fall on the minister: and he must be exceedingly criminal, to preach so as to stupify and sooth, rather than to penetrate and impress. But on the other hand, the blame will fall on the hearers, if they remain stupid and unfeeling under plain and searching preaching. This is a sin which exposes those who are guilty of it to the heaviest condemnation. "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish." If the words of faithful preachers are so searching and painful to natural men; if they are so pungent and displeasing, how much more irresistible and insupportable will the words of Christ himself be, at the great and last day! He will then tell sinners

all they ever heard, as well as all they ever did, in their lives. He will then make them hear all the sermons which they have neglected to hear, and make them feel all the truths they have neglected to feel: yea, he will give to divine truth such energy, that it will harass and torment their guilty consciences to all eternity.

Let all therefore who have hitherto resisted the preached gospel, be entreated to hearken to it speedily, while it may be a savour of life unto life to their souls. A preached gospel must, sooner or later, cut its way, and make dreadful execution among those who have heard it. If sinners resist the force of it in time, they must feel the weight of it in eternity. "Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!"

Finally: Can we consider it among the lesser arguments that Christianity is heaven-born, that it has hitherto been preached by men of like passions with ourselves; who had the same natural biases and propensities; and yet that it has maintained the conflict with earth and hell, and even with its very professors? By nature it has not one friend. To the Jews it has been a stumbling-block; and to the Greeks foolishness: to the learned a matter of ridicule and mockery; and to the unlearned a hard saying, and a theme unpleasing to the great body of mankind. Yet, like a mighty stream, it has borne down all before it, when impeded in its progress by the lusts and passions, by the hatred and malice of its enemies. Like the mountain torrent, it has been checked only as a preparation for it to burst away in more signal devastation of its opposers. So that the very want of relish, in the human heart, for the doctrines of Christ, argues their divine original, and leaves us without excuse in unbelief.

## SERMON XXX.



AMOS, VIII. CHAP. 11 VER.

*Behold the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land: not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water; but of hearing the words of the Lord.*



AN apostle informs us, that the things that happened to the Jews, are ensamples, written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. God's dealings with his professed worshippers, in all past ages, are for the instruction of the present Christian Church.

The prophet Amos lived when the glory was about to depart from Israel; and this prophecy had special reference to the miseries of that people, after the invasions of the Assyrians, and the consequent dispersion of the ten tribes.

The method from the text will be the following:

I. To inquire into the nature of the judgment threatened in the text: "a famine of hearing the words of the Lord."

II. Inquire into the causes, or moral reasons, why the Most High thus punished Israel.

I. What is the nature of the punishment threatened in

the text: "a famine of hearing the words of the Lord?"

Doubtless, this threatening primarily respected Israel's being denied instruction and warning from true and faithful prophets; as God would cease to send them. The kingdom of Israel seems to have been favored with fewer prophets, during some time before the Assyrian captivity, than in former ages. After that catastrophe, the motley people and religion of the Samaritans succeeded in the land. The dispersed Israelites were either incorporated with the heathen, or lived without prophets or teachers qualified to explain the scriptures to them, and far removed from divine ordinances and the means of grace. They had none to tell them of God's gracious promises to sinful men; for, rejecting the counsel of their faithful prophets, their religious privileges were withdrawn. So under the New Testament dispensation, when a preached gospel is taken from a people, they may be said to have a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. Publicly explaining and applying the scriptures, is a great means of advancing the interests of religion among a people. When this fails in any region, the people famish, through ignorance of the word of God; there is little or no check to delusion, error, and wickedness; and bibles are very little read where they possess them.

Our Saviour had not instituted a regular gospel ministry, to continue to the end of the world, had not their existence and use been highly important. Hence, when this divinely instituted order of men are driven into corners, or are removed, it is a great judgment on any people. God's word seldom tarries long, when a regular preached gospel is gone. For conformation of this, look on heathen and Mahometan countries, and to portions of the United States where preaching has become extinct.

2. A famine of the word of the Lord may occur, when a people are unchurched. When christian ordinances are

enjoyed in their purity, their instructing, restraining, quickening, and comforting influence, proves that God dwells among a people, and all their humanizing, civilizing, and moralizing effects, are felt and realized. Their extinction must ever be considered as the execution of that dreadful threatening, recorded in Rev. 2. 5: "I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." The use of a candlestick is to receive the materials of light, and then to spread it abroad. Even so the church receives the truth in the first place, and then holds it forth. When the regular church ceases, or becomes wholly corrupt, the whole region becomes dark; and if there is any light, it is false, and guides only to misery in this world, and death in the world to come.

II. As proposed, let us inquire into the causes, or moral reasons, why the Most High thus punished Israel with a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. And,

1. It was on account of their rebellion against God and their Redeemer. They rose up against the God that made them, and gave them a system of laws from heaven; against him who had redeemed them from bondage, who had borne them on eagle's wings, and brought them unto himself. They resisted the authority of him who had delivered them from the hand of numerous and potent enemies, and who dwelt among them by his ordinances and by his Spirit. Isaiah 1. 2: "Hear, O heavens; and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me."

2. Another moral reason, why God thus punished this people, was, their idolatry. The sin of idolatry consists in worshipping any thing in the room or place of the true God. The Jews never had any idols of their own; but adopted those of the nations around them. Isaiah 2. 8:

“Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made.” This they did early in their existence as a people. It was a custom they probably took from Egypt. They appeared disposed to worship on high places, in groves, and under green trees. In a word, they would worship anywhere; and anyhow, except in the way God had expressly pointed out. Jeroboam, a wicked prince, from worldly policy, to prevent the ten tribes from going up to the appointed worship at Jerusalem, set up golden calves in Dan and Bethel, and made the lowest of the people priests. He brought cheap and easy religion to every man’s door. But uninstituted worship, sooner or later, will prove the ruin of a people. When they reject God’s appointed ministers, they will seek in vain for other teachers, to instruct them in his truth and will. Hence, it is predicted in the context, that the fair virgins and young men would faint for thirst; i. e. the most amiable and zealous, who were best disposed to religion, would rest in outward forms and decency of conduct. And, being destitute of the wells of salvation, would at last perish for want of that water of life, which Christ alone can bestow.

3. Luxury and intemperance were reasons why God cast off and rejected this people. Israel lived in a fertile country; a land which flowed with milk and honey; for which they ought to have been thankful. But their conduct was directly the reverse. Abundance of bread and idleness led them to the abuse of creature comforts. So intent were they upon their excesses, that they rose up early to begin them, and continued till night, inflaming their passions with strong drink. And, to render the pleasures more exquisite, they employed all kinds of music. But God and his works were not in all their thoughts. They only regarded second causes in their

prosperity; and they despised the predictions of wrath, as well as the promises of mercy, which God sent them by his prophet. Hence, the prophet cries, "Wo unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them; and the harp and the viol, the tabret and the pipe, and wine are in their feasts. But they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands." And it is added, "Therefore, are my people gone into captivity; therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it."

4. A fourth reason why God cast off this people, and scourged them with a famine of the word, was, that they were excessively engaged to get this world, and aggrandize themselves at the expense of religious principle. They were avaricious and rapacious, intent on increasing their estates, caring not who was turned destitute, provided they could add house to house and field to field, that they might be placed in the midst of the land, as sole proprietors, attended by their vassals and dependants. But the Lord told the prophet, that ere long, many of their magnificent houses would be left desolate, and that their estates would become of no value.

5. They did not regard justice in their dealings with one another, or in their treatment of their neighbors. Justice had fallen in their streets, and equity could not enter. The cause of the widow was not pleaded, and the widow and the fatherless were neglected and abused. Oppression, fraud, false witness, and every kind of injustice, abounded among them. All sincerity and integrity were done with. And if any one ventured to be so singular as to make a conscience of his duty, he became a prey to his less scrupulous neighbors; and was treated by them

as a fool. Under colour of law and justice, the poor were robbed, and the orphans and widows plundered of their little property.

6. God punished this people with a famine of the word, because they were full of hypocrisy in their religion. Instead of the expense of their instituted worship, and going up to the temple, they had now got a temple and an altar in every little neighborhood, and in almost every house; and ignorant priests, of the lowest of the people, to minister. Thus they would be thought to regard God, in the midst of all their wickedness. They covered their knaveries under a cloak of religion; as if exterior zeal for something, they knew not what, would atone for their sins. Hence, after Isaiah had been directed to raise his warning voice, to show Israel their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins, it is added: "Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God. They ask of me the ordinances of justice. They take delight in approaching to God."

It would seem as though the present generation in christendom had set for this picture. Many Jews, even when God was about to unchurch them, were not openly idolatrous and irreligious. They were earnest and constant in their formal devotions; seeking the Lord daily, and taking pleasure in learning his truths and precepts, as if they were a very pious nation. But they were pleased with these things, merely because they gratified their pride and curiosity, entitled them to respect, and increased their presumptuous confidence. To seem religious, was fashionable and creditable; and it was an easy commutation for their secret injustice, and a cheap quietus to their consciences. This wretched people, after all, had so high an opinion of themselves, that they could complain to God: "Wherefore have we fasted and thou seest not?" They

could say to a poor heathen, even when crying for mercy, "Stand by thyself; come not near to me; for I am holier than thou." Such a people, saith the Most High, Isaiah 65. 5, "are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day." As smoke is most offensive to a man who continually breatheth it; so the nearer this people were to God, by their external worship, the more he abhorred them; and thus they kindled his indignation, and rendered it as a fire that burneth all the day. With all their pretensions, they were false in their covenant. Jer. 5. 2: "And though they say, The Lord liveth; surely they swear falsely."

7. The sin of uncleanness greatly prevailed among this people. Many gave the reins to all their lusts, passions, and appetites. They committed adultery and fornication, with little or no restraint, shame, or blushing. The prophet says, They assembled themselves by troops, in harlots' houses; and that they were as fed horses in the morning; every one neighed after his neighbor's wife.

Could it consist with the honor of God, to pardon such a people; who thus abused the good land he had given, by making their houses styes of filth, and abusing their plenty to every kind of self-indulgence? Ought he not to take such vengeance on them, as would show his entire abhorrence of their abominations?

8. The Jews disbelieved the divine threatenings, and did not feel their danger. They saw nothing so terrible or dreadful as the prophets of the Lord proclaimed. Jer. 5. 11, &c. "The house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously against me, saith the Lord. They have belied the Lord, and said, It is not he, neither shall evil come upon us, neither shall we see sword nor famine; and the prophets shall become wind, and the word is not in them: thus shall it be done unto them." An awful threatening follows: "Wherefore thus saith the

Lord God of hosts, Because ye speak this word, behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them."

9. It was right and fit to scourge Israel with a famine of the words of the Lord; because, with all their sins reeking upon them, there was no consciousness of personal blame among them. Each one was disposed to exculpate himself. For, saith the prophet, "no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done?" Sinners generally washed their mouths, and wiped their hands, and said, I am clean. None felt as became their circumstances. None condemned themselves of ingratitude or folly. On the contrary, they returned to their sinful practices, with as little regard to consequences, as the impetuous horse rushes to the battle. When a people will not hear or apply divine warnings, they are prepared to feel divine judgments.

10. They were obstinate under all the means God used to reclaim them. He sent special messengers, repeatedly, to expostulate with them; but to no effect. Jer. 25. 4: "And the Lord hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them; but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear."

11. This people fitted themselves for their judgments, by listening to false prophets, who preached Peace, when there was no peace; and cried, No danger, when they were in imminent perils. When a people are willing to be deceived, there will be no want of deceivers. Thus Israel said to the seers, and to the prophets, "Prophecy not to us right things; speak unto us smooth things; prophecy deceits." They said, "Get you out of the way," to those who reprov'd their iniquities, alarmed their consciences, and disquieted them in their sins. They used menaces and reproaches, or bribes and blandishments, to induce their prophets to feed their pride and lull their consciences

into a false peace. They said, "Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease before us." They hated the expression, and were disgusted with the frequent use of it. But, in fact, they did not like his holy character and commandments; his holy hatred of sin, and his determination to punish it. The ignorant, groveling, low-minded, deceitful, double-tongued, and flattering priests of Jeroboam, were more acceptable, in the palace and the cottage, with the rich and the poor, than the honest messengers of the Lord of hosts. They had such prophets as their sins prompted them to choose. Like people, like priests. Hence, that solemn warning from God; Jer. 29: "Let not your prophets and your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you; neither hearken to your dreams, which ye caused to be dreamed. For they prophecy falsely unto you in my name: I have not sent them, saith the Lord."

12. They treated God's regular and authorised messengers, in the most cruel and abusive manner. They slandered the whole order, and treated them as enemies. Some they imprisoned; and others they put to death. They beat Jeremiah with rods, put him in the stocks, and threw him into a dungeon. And Zechariah was stoned to death in the court of the temple.

Finally, and to complete the outline of Israel's character, an universal stupor and insensibility pervaded people of all ranks and conditions. They had rather hear lies than the truth. In the inimitably descriptive language of God's word, "The prophets prophecy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so. Stay yourselves and wonder: cry ye out and cry: they are drunk, but not with strong drink. For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes, the prophets and your rulers. The seers hath he covered; and the vision of all is be-

come unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I cannot, for it is sealed. And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I am not learned.”

Thus, I have briefly pointed out some of the causes, or moral reasons, which led to the removal of God's word from Israel; or brought on a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. In improving the subject, we may be led to reflect,

1. On the rectitude of the divine government. In all God's dealings with communities and nations, a curse never comes on a people, without an adequate cause. Punishment is never inflicted, without great ill desert. What more could God do with his vineyard than he did? It is easy to see that God hath always acted in character; supporting the dignity and honor of his government, and the rights of Deity. A famine of hearing the words of the Lord, was brought on by contempt of them. When there is a persevering, obstinate, and irreclaimable contempt of God's word among a people, shall he never arise and plead his own cause?

2. The punishments which God inflicts, are such as naturally proceed from the crime committed. When men love delusion, God gives them up to it. When men are obstinate, God gives them up to obstinacy. When men have no appetite for God's pure word and unadulterated ordinances, they are removed. The punishment inflicted ever shows the wisdom of the Judge, and wounds the criminal in the tenderest part. This holds true of all present and future punishments. “For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord; they would none of my counsel, they despised all my reproofs; therefore they shall 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." Let all who have not been given up to judicial obduracy, hear and take warning! Let all notice the equity of this most severe infliction of vengeance, on the hardened enemies and despisers of true religion!

8. If the sin of neglecting, abusing, mutilating, and changing divine institutions, has been thus visited on one nation, we may rest assured, that the same sins, unrepented of, will not go unpunished in another. Christ walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks, to notice and mark for judgment, as well as to protect. All churches, communities, and nations, must have their reckoning day. "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction." If we indulge corruption without control, we shall act over all the crimes of Israel, and their ruin will be ours. And what crime did Israel ever perpetrate, which is not common to men? "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man."

And to apply the subject still closer; Where is New-England? Where is this community? "Watchman! what of the night?" Though an Edomite might put the question in scorn, it becomes us to be serious in the answer. Have we not rebelled against God our Creator, Lawgiver, and Redeemer? Have we not forsaken, in many respects, the God and the religion of our fathers? What Jeroboam acted over at Dan and Bethel, has long been acting on the American stage. Any religion that is easy, or cheap, or that will gratify the unsanctified passions of the human heart; any religion that suits the convenience, agrees with the interests, does not much disturb men's consciences, or urge to self-denial, finds many followers and abettors: and what but a torrent of ungodliness, and a famine of the unadulterated word, can be expected!

It is generally agreed, that the slaying of the witnesses, who were to prophecy in sackcloth one thousand two hundred and sixty years, is at hand. And what description of ministers is most obnoxious to the powers that be, and the great mass of christendom? Certainly, not the prophets of the high places and of the groves. Certainly, not those who are for healing the hurt of the daughter of God's people slightly. It is an able, a respectable, an honest, and faithful ministry, that must be the victims. Is not the noise of riot and intemperance in our streets? Are not thousands and thousands beggaring their families and destroying their souls with strong drink? Religion, and peace, and liberty, may as well exist in the bottomless pit, as in a community of drunkards.

You complain that property is rolling into heaps; and blame all causes but the right one. Your vices are forging your chains. A swinish and gross love of the world always precedes and follows the train of departing religious institutions. Justice and truth are regarded as strangers, which are bidden to depart. When Israel grew corrupt, the rich were ringleaders in impiety and false religion; and yet they oppressed and devoured the poor. Sabbaths, also, became a great weariness to them. It was those who swallowed the needy, that said, When will the Sabbath be gone, that we may return to worldly pursuits? By their vices, the poor gave themselves up to those wretches for a pair of shoes, and the refuse of something to pamper their appetites. The departure of religion, with idle and intemperate habits introduced, will as certainly render a community masters and slaves, as cold weather produces ice. And though some may say, The Lord liveth, i. e. profess religion, do not their lives prove that they swear falsely? The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, are every where. What covetousness and bestiality are in many families, where

there is a profusion of this world's goods! Every small community is a little wicked world; a Sodom in miniature; with but here and there a righteous Lot, to be grieved and vexed at the filthy conversation of the wicked. How many openly profess, and many more practically declare, that the religion of the New-England fathers is a needless waste of time and expense! And yet, they are prodigal of their time, and prodigal of their property, for sensual gratifications.

Now, my hearers, divine threatenings are written in sunbeams, and set before us. But how few read and tremble at them! How few are there, who feel that there is any danger! We are a new people, say they. Just as though a youth, by his vices, could not bring on a premature death! How few are there, who feel that any blame attaches itself to them, and, with a sense of it, humble themselves before God! Warnings we have; but who incline their hearts to hear! Warnings of the faithful, with many, are considered as the effects of gloominess, or sinister views. We seem to love deception in religion, and every thing else. Deceivers of all classes have multitudes to caress them. So that we may adopt the language of the prophet: "If any one, in his own name, prophecy lies, he shall be the prophet of this people." Let Satan bait his hook ever so coarsely or improvidently, he is sure of catching multitudes. The day is come, when men turn from truth to fables. Most professing christians will not endure sound doctrine. They are offended by the heart-searching, distinguishing, practical truths of God's word, which detect their sins. They desire to be soothed and flattered, living just as they do; and choose teachers accordingly. Hence, some admire emollient, complaisant harangues; and others, warm addresses to the passions, without coherence, sense, or scripture; and virulent invectives on men of divers sects and sentiments. Thus, their

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consciences are quieted, and their self-preference and contempt of others are humored, together with an uncharitable and captious temper. And because they have itching ears, the pruriency of which is not easily quieted, they keep to themselves such teachers; and always want new voices, new gifts, new ways and places of worship; and commonly, a way and place, where they can, by all means, show their own gifts; till their ears are wholly turned from truth unto fables.

Ah! we are told of perilous times; but of all who have been forewarned, how few are forearmed! A leaf of the forest is not more easily agitated, than many minds are tossed with every wind of doctrine. And in what manner are the appointed messengers of God treated? But it does not become us to complain, when much better men have been much worse treated. God, it is true, is reviving religion in some places. But what is the wheat to the chaff! An universal stupor reigns. God's presence is withdrawn, much withdrawn, both from ministers and people, from churches and individuals. We are all tried; and multitudes have fallen, and are falling away. Oh, my friends! "who may abide the day of the Lord's coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire and fuller's soap." Behold our rents and divisions; our departures from the faith; our prayerless families; our mis-spent Sabbaths; our thin assemblies at the house of God; our crowds of stores and other places of debauch; our headstrong, ungoverned, and unprincipled youth; our wretched spendthrifts; our despicable misers; our miserable poor, and their increasing numbers! See ten thousand casks, dribbling out their base contents, infusing the poison of natural and moral disease, and scattering the curses of the first and second death! Our country riven into parties, that never can or will unite. Our feeble government tottering to its fall. Our nation

smitten at the heart, with the fatal folly of foreign influence. Our candlestick on the move, and threatening to be gone. A little light glimmers in the socket; but, like a dying taper in a gloomy horizon, it only shows the clouds, curling with tempests, that must soon empty their torrents upon us.

Awake, my hearers! A reformation must take place, or a famine of the word of God must come; it is now at the door. Look to the fifth chapter of Isaiah, and weep over what may one day be your doom: "When I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes. And now, go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down. And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns." A return to God! A return to God! A return to God! is the call: and there is not a moment's time for delay. Let us all, ministers and people, rulers and subjects, young and old, rich and poor, be humbled in the dust, and mourn apart with our families. Let us adore a God, awful and glorious in justice, and rich in mercy. Then will light spring up out of darkness, and glory dwell in our land. Which may God in mercy grant.  
**AMEN.**

# SERMON XXXI.



MATTHEW, VI. CHAP. 21. VER.

*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*



THE sermon on the mount, of which the text is a part, is a great storehouse of instruction and reproof. Christ, who knew what was in the heart of man, saw through the fair exterior of the Pharisees; and that their great object was, not the things of another world, but the things of this. That all they did "was to obtain applause and reputation, and to gratify their covetousness. He, therefore, warned his disciples against their destructive conduct and example. As a christian is a pilgrim on earth, and a citizen of heaven, he here only wants subsistence, or, so to speak, travelling expenses; but needs a treasure in heaven. He ought not, therefore, to lay up for himself a treasure on earth; for that must be shortly left to others; and all things here below, however idolized or valued, are liable to decay and waste. Moths eat and spoil the garments of those who have rich wardrobes. Nay, even metals are corroded by rust; and thieves break into the houses of the rich, to seize their treasures, and often to attempt their lives. However wealth be secured, it is

uncertain, and far more constantly a source of vexation and disappointment than of solid comfort. Such things are not the christian's treasure: the acquisition of them should not be his object: he should be contented without them. And if they be entrusted to him, he should neither store them up for himself, nor spend them on himself; but lay them out in doing good."\* A reason is given in the text for laying up for ourselves a treasure in heaven, and not upon earth; and that is, that where our treasure is, there will our heart also be. Whatever we estimate as our supreme good, governs our heart and commands our affections: our heart and treasure meet in the same object. This is so evident, that it would be thought a waste of time to bring arguments to prove the assertion. "If a man's treasure be laid up on earth, his heart will be earthly; and all his thoughts and affections, projects, conduct, and conversation, will be earthly. But if heavenly things be chosen as a man's most valuable treasure, his heart will be heavenly. He will continually be thinking about spiritual matters. His very soul will be in heaven; and this will give a heavenly savor to all his discourse, and the whole tenor of his actions."†

By divine assistance, I shall spend the time allotted for discoursing on these words, in attending to certain rules of trial, proper for each of the two characters that divide the human race.

I. I shall produce some marks or evidences, which prove the heart to be fixed on the present world.

II. I shall produce some marks or evidences, which prove the heart to be placed on heaven.

In beginning with the first general head, it may be observed, that some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment. They exhibit such characters in the eyes of mankind, as affords decisive evidence that they

\*Scott's Com. Notes, ver. 19—21, ch. XII. †Id.

belong to the kingdom of darkness. Some men's sins follow after the judgment; or will not be disclosed to their fellow-creatures until they stand at the judgment seat. They may have a fair outside so long as they live: but the day of the revelation of God's righteous judgment, will lay open the pollution of their hearts; and they will be found fit for no state but the one reserved for the punishment of the enemies of God.

1. I observe, in the first place, that the openly wicked, whatever christian hope they may profess, and to whatever sect they belong, give evidence that they place their hearts on this world. "Know ye not," saith the apostle, "that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived! Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." It is not meant that such characters are beyond the reach of mercy in this life; for the apostle adds, of the ones justified; "And such were some of you. But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." But whoever persists in the vices above mentioned, and is never reformed through life, is a man of the world, and has his portion in this life.

2. Those who deny the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, are in the same state with the class above described. Heresy is placed, in the 5th to the Galatians, among the works of the flesh, which exclude men from the kingdom of God. It is written in the 9th verse of the 2d epistle of John, that "whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God." The gospel is a peculiar system. Whoever denies its fundamental truths, is not the friend of God, but a friend of the world.

3. Their hearts are placed on this world, or lay up

their treasure on the earth, who perform all their external religious actions to be seen of men. This was the case of the Scribes and Pharisees in Christ's time.

4. Their hearts are not raised above the world, who are not raised above slavish fear, in what they do in religion. "Perfect love casteth out fear." The Israelites were governed by this slavish fear, in their religious professions in the wilderness. See Psalm 78: "When he slew them, then they sought him; and they returned and inquired early after God: and they remembered that God was their Rock, and the high God their Redeemer: nevertheless, they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant."

The filial fear which governs in the hearts of true christians, is of a nature wholly different from slavish fear. It is not of the nature of one who labors reluctantly, from the dread of a hated master's indignation, but of a dutiful child, who performs services to a beloved father.

5. On the same ground, we may safely pronounce, that those persons who live without prayer, live only for this world. Those children who have no communion or conversation with a father, show, thereby, that they have no love or confidence in him; that they hate his ways and company; and they never have, and never will any further regard him, than as they expect benefits from him.

6. Those whose whole discourse is of a worldly nature, evidence that this world is their supreme good. In the common concerns of life, the righteous are interested, and must intermingle with the rest of mankind. But they have a desire for an intercourse of a higher kind with their fellow-creatures. Christ declares in the 12th of Mat. "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Words are de-

signed to exhibit the character of the inward man. If we can ascertain the leading drift of the conversation of a person at all times, and under all circumstances, we have a way of concluding concerning his temper of mind. "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." "If a man be humble, pious, spiritual, a lover of God and man, his affections become a treasury of good things, from which he will bring forth edifying conversation, conducive to the glory of God and the good of mankind. But wicked men have within them, a treasury of pride, malice, impiety, and selfishness, from which they naturally educe evil things; nor can they help, at times, venting their avarice, arrogance; envy; or enmity, against true religion."\*

7. Those who think little of death and eternity, are living wholly for the present world; and here only they will have their good things, unless they repent. Related, as we all are, to a world beyond this, whence there is no return, and in which we are so deeply interested, it is not possible that we should be in the way to happiness, and in the road to heaven, and yet think but rarely or slightly on the subject. A strait and narrow way demands circumspection and caution. Carelessness and inattention, then, may prove to us, that we are, with the great, giddy throng, in the broad road, whose end is destruction.

II. I would now produce some marks or evidences, which may prove the heart to be placed on heaven.

1. Real friendship to evangelical truth, furnishes evidence that the heart is right with God. After Christ had affirmed before Pilate, that he came into the world to bear witness unto the truth, he adds, Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. He who loves the divine character for its own beauty; he who loves the Lord Jesus Christ, as the brightness of the Father's glory, and

\*Scott's Com. Notes, ver. 37, ch. XII.

the express image of his person; shows his heart to be placed on a good superior to the present world. If our hearts are pleased with the truths which Christ exhibited in his sermon on the mount, we belong to his kingdom.

2. Those show that they are above the world, and that they keep all its possessions under their feet, who, by their conduct, manifest real affection to the good which God offers to the children of men: who aim, above all things, to approve themselves to the searcher of hearts; and give proof that they are more concerned for this, than to appear well in the eyes of mankind, and to get their good-will and applause: in a word, who obey God rather than man.

3. Another mark of being an heir of heaven, is, a filial or child-like temper towards God. The righteous are drawn, in their services, by real love to God, and real love to the Lord Jesus Christ. Slavish fear, or selfish or mercenary hopes, are, by no means, the governing motives of their repentance, faith, and new obedience; but the beauties and excellences of the divine character, in itself considered. God, and all his perfections and ways, are amiable to their souls; and they will love him, and trust in him, though he slay them.

4. Such as delight in prayer, give evidence that they are the servants of the most high God, and are preparing for the enjoyment of him. The Lord's people, in all ages, have been abundant in the performance of this duty. They have not been influenced, in the performance, however, by a fondness for being seen of men; but from a desire and love of communion with God. They love his presence and company; and a day in his courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. The duty of the closet, of the family, and of the house of God, are all lovely and pleasant; and there is no weariness and unwillingness in its performance.

5. Another mark of having the treasure in heaven, may be gathered from the general tenor of our conduct and conversation. Whatever is in the heart, will out. True, there is a way of talking about religion, that is disgusting to all piety, taste, scripture, and common sense. There is a boasting way of discoursing about one's own religion, which is an evidence against sincerity. Thus did the Pharisees. Still, I conceive there is a way of aiming to recommend religion to our fellow-men, by our words, which affords good evidence that our hearts feel its force. This is conversation which is accompanied and enforced by a good life. If one were to discourse like an angel, and live like a worldling, the language of his lips would testify against him, rather than for him. He who prays and bites, as one expresses it, will do more to dishonor religion, than its open and avowed enemies.

6. A readiness to obey commands the most crossing to flesh and blood, may be an evidence that our hearts are placed on heaven. To be religious when it is not in fashion; to defend a brother when the whole multitude cry, Crucify; not to be ashamed of Christ and his doctrines, when the whole host of the ungodly gnash their teeth against you, treat you with contempt, ridicule and scorn, may show to you that you have profited by the cowardly conduct of Peter, and will, through grace, stand through all fiery darts.

7. Those whose hearts are placed on heaven, delight to fix their meditations on that world whither they are going. St. Paul to the Philippians saith, "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence, also, we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ;" i. e. in opposition to that catalogue of base and grovelling characters he had been describing, "whose end was destruction, whose god was their belly, who minded earthly things." It is pleasing to every truly pious person, to meditate on the enjoy-

ments reserved for the faithful in the eternal world. Having in his mind "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen," he exclaims, with the man after God's own heart, "Whom have I in heaven but thee! and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee!"

## REFLECTIONS.

1. What has been said, may convince us, that there are many, *very many*, who live only for the present world. What great numbers are there, to whom the marks of worldly-mindedness will apply! Some riot, chamber, and wanton, and lay no restraints on their lusts; live in all the lusts of uncleanness, and drown their reason, health, and estate, in intoxication. Others restrain only enough to save appearances in the sight of men; but live polluted in the sight of God. Others lay aside the bowels of compassion in their dealings with their fellow-men. They forget the rule of doing to others what they would reasonably require in an exchange of circumstances. The cries and distresses of the poor and the needy, touch not their hearts: and they unblushingly sacrifice humanity and justice to the love of gain. In a word, they sacrifice all hope in the future world, to the emoluments of the present. There are others, who give up the truths of the gospel, for the inventions of men; and adopt any thing for religion that will favor their covetousness, flatter their pride and other corruptions. Whatever they do in religion, is to attract the notice of their fellow-men. If they can secure the applause of mortals, they are regardless of the approbation of him whose eyes are as a flaming fire, and who cannot be mocked or deceived. In all their religious fear, they never rise above a dread of punishment; and view the Deity with the feelings of a slave,

and not with those of a child. A God they expect to cheat out of salvation, by a form without the power. How many are there, at this time, who live without prayer, and openly neglect to call on the name of the Lord! From their coldness and indifference to social prayer, we cannot believe that they pour out their hearts to God in their closets. How many trifle with the name of God in common discourse! How many content themselves with discoursing about religion, without any conformity to the divine law in their behaviour. Others again, from their whole discourse, furnish proof that their treasure is on earth. If they have any tears to shed, it is about their worldly circumstances, and not for their sins. How remote are the things of eternity from their minds! It is evident, vast multitudes make a home of this world, and feel as though they were sure of a long and prosperous life: that to-morrow will be as this day, and much more abundant. Oh! beware of covetousness! No sin is more damning in its nature and effects. It cannot exist in the same breast with the heavenly mind.

2. God may righteously give up the worldly-minded to destruction. How just is it, to leave them to the gods they have chosen! How proper to leave them to enjoy all the happiness they will ever know, on this side of the grave! They have no relish for heaven. If they could not sleep in wicked company, they would be in torment. Who can say that God is cruelly just, if a wicked man is left to reap as he had sown, plunging in everlasting ruin, and knowing all the bitterness of everlasting death. God is under no obligation to stop one sinner in his evil and dangerous course. It is just, that when men have spent their lives without regard to God, or their neighbors, or their own souls, plodding to enrich their families, that they should, in providence, so often be disappointed, even in this vain hope. Such riches are usually strangely

dissipated; and the children of such are more commonly reduced to poverty and beggary, than others. "For man walketh in a vain show: he disquieteth himself in vain: he heapeth up riches, and cannot tell who shall gather them." As every one who layeth up treasure for himself is thus foolish, guilty, and miserable, let us seek the true riches, that we may be approved by God himself, and be made honorable and happy in the eternal enjoyment of his favor.

3. Let the present subject be improved in a way of self-examination. Are we among those who, in the temper and taste of the heart, are mere earth-worms, slaves to the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; or do we crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts? Have we made a covenant with our eyes, that they should not lead us to fix on forbidden objects? Do we feel a fixed opposition to divine truth, in its various branches; or do we love the peculiar and distinguishing doctrines of the gospel? Do we view them with disgust; or are they as an inexhaustible treasure to our souls? Are our religious performances only to attract the notice and applause of our fellow-mortals; or do we aim, in the first and highest place, at the approbation of infinite purity? Are we willing to take up the cross, and obey the commands which are most trying to human corruption; or do we select some of the outworks of religion, which may agree with a carnal heart? Do we find a devotional frame of mind; or do we refrain from prayer? Is eternity much on our minds and hearts; and do we feel that we are pilgrims and strangers on the earth; or is eternity remote from all our views, thoughts, and conversation? Brethren, the exhortation of the beloved disciple, ought always to be before us: "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth,

and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God."

To lay up treasures in heaven, we have every inducement, and every solid motive. The enjoyments of the world are unsatisfying: those of religion can satisfy the soul. Worldly enjoyments are uncertain: those of religion are sure: they are of a kind not to be consumed by moths, or corrupted by rust. Earthly joys will soon end: those which religion inspires will never end. The crown which Christ will give his followers is incorruptible and undefiled: it fadeth not away. The glory of this world will perish, to the surprise and amazement of all who love it supremely. "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. The earth, also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up." A glorious state of things will then follow, adapted to the taste, wishes, and prayers of the people of God. To them cometh down out of heaven, the holy city, the New Jerusalem, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. "God will wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." The holy city has "no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God lightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." What, then, for a moment, should divert us from seeking so vast a blessing! True, with the religion of Jesus, tears may now furrow our cheeks, and anguish may sometimes distract our hearts; because of sin within us and around us, and because of its distressing effects. But the conflict is short. Yet a little while, and the flight of faith, the agony of repent-

ance, the race of progress in sanctification, and the terrors of death and the grave, will be no more. Let us pray for patience, that, having done the will of God, we may inherit the promise. If our neighbors and relations will not be entreated to fly with us from this Sodom to the mountains of hope, let us not loiter or look back. And as nothing unclean can enter the rest of God's people, let us be stirred up to those glimpses of heavenly things which are given us in the scriptures, in giving diligence to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God:" that we may be approved as Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile, and have a sure evidence that we are written in the book of life, of the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world.

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