

S E R M O N

ON PERSONS POSSESSING THE INIQUITIES OF
THEIR YOUTH IN AFTER LIFE.

By JACOB GREEN, A. M.



TH WHATEVER MEASURE YE METE IT SHALL BE MEASURED
TO YOU AGAIN. ————— Mat. vii. 1.

C H A T H A M:

PRINTED BY SHEPARD KOLLOCK, AT HIS
PRINTING-OFFICE, 1780.

A S E R M O N, &c.

JOB xiii. 26.

Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.

JOB was a man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief. In bitterness of soul he pours out his complaint; and among other expressions utters the words of our text. 'Tis probable he was as miserable as ever mere man was. He felt as much as human nature could, and not sink under it. We have reason to suppose this from the malice of satan and the permission God gave him to do what he would with Job, consistent with sparing his life. When he was allowed to do what he would without taking his life, no doubt he made him as miserable as infernal malice and wisdom could do, and human nature was able to bear. In all this Job maintains his integrity, wonderfully endured his trial, and is spoken of as a pattern of patience. *You have heard, says the Apostle, of the patience of Job.* This pattern of patience viewed himself in the hand of God. He keeps his mind on his maker; our text is an address to Jehovah. If we view all things under the divine direction, it may help us to patience in tribulation. Job's troubles came by the malice of satan, yet he eyes the hand of God in all that came upon him. So should we, let the instruments be
who

who or what they will. No enemy of God or man can go further than God permits; and nothing shall befall us but what God sees is for the best.

In our text Job calls to mind former iniquities, looks back to his youth, remembers the sins of early life, and supposes he is corrected for them. He might have been a great sinner in his youth, though now an eminent saint. Great sinners have sometimes become great saints. Paul was such an instance, and I know not but Job was another. He was now in years; had ten children, and these come to adult age, able to make and receive visits. Job now in years is visited with the punishment of his youthful sins. He turns his thought upon his sinfulness. See context, v. 23d. *How many are mine iniquities and sin? Make me to know my transgression and my sin.* Let us remember there is such a thing as possessing the sins of youth; and a thing to be dreaded. Job xx. 11. *His bones are full of the sins of his youth.* Psa. xxv. 7. *Remember not the sins of my youth, &c.* Jer. xxxii. 19. *I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.* Persons possess the sins of youth by bearing the punishment or correction that God thinks proper to lay upon them for those sins.

From our text I would observe this doctrine, viz. *God often causes persons, while in this world, to be punished or corrected for the sins of their youth, or past life.*—I shall

I. Briefly prove and illustrate this doctrine.

II. Shew

II. Shew what sins of youth persons are most like to be corrected for in after life.

I. *God often causes persons, while in this world, to be punished or corrected for the sins of their youth, or past life.*—God may punish or correct sooner or later, as he pleases. 'Tis as just for him to correct ten, twenty, or fifty years after, as it is for him to do it the hour that the sin is committed. The sinner is always the same person, or conscious being, and may therefore at any time receive deserved punishment. 'Tis as just for God to punish sinners in hell, ten thousand or ten million years after the commission of sin, as at first. There are many wise reasons why corrections should be deferred for some time in this world. God may correct persons after they have truly repented of their sin as properly as before. It may be much better for the person corrected to have it after than before he is a true penitent. Divine chastisements in this world are seldom, if ever, to be considered as part of his vindictive wrath; but they are proper displays of the evil of sin, and of the wisdom and propriety of his moral government. God does not correct all persons in the same manner in this world. He is sovereign, and varies his providences as he pleases. Some die in youth, and go quick down to hell, under the weight of all their sin. Some that live are not corrected here in any signal manner. God varies his punishments and providential dispensations so that we cannot in general discover persons characters by their punishments, though sometimes there is a remarkable correspondence

pondence between the sin and the punishment in the view of all observers. God governs the world so as to let it be known that there is a God that judgeth in the earth, as the psalmist says he is known by the judgments which he executes, and yet so as that we are not to know or determine persons states by their punishments. The person corrected, as Job, may see and conclude why God corrects, much easier than the rest of the world can. The person under the rod may generally see and be able to say, I deserve this correction, 'tis fit and proper; 'tis suited to my case: When at the same time others may judge very wrong in the matter. Thus Shimei cursing David, calls him a bloody man, and tells him that God had returned upon him all the blood of the house of Saul; and that he was taken in his own mischief, and the kingdom given to Absalom, because David was a bloody man. David was then in a penitent most excellent frame of mind. He knew he was a bloody man, that this trouble came upon him for his blood guiltiness in the case of Uriah; but he knew he was intirely innocent as to the house of Saul, concerning which Shimei charged him. So differently may the corrected person and the rest of the world judge concerning a case.

But I shall illustrate this doctrine by some scripture instances. Jacob, to obtain a blessing, told a wilful lie, and not only so but basely imposed upon his venerable father, taking advantage of his blindness, which ought to have excited his compassion.

For

For this sin Jacob was afflicted through the course of many years. The measure that he had meted out was measured back to him again. Instead of Rachel, whom he loved dearly, and expected as a wife, he had by fraud another woman imposed upon him. Such an imposition and disappointment as no doubt went to his heart, and made him think of his own iniquity. After this Laban imposed upon him, defrauded him, and changed his wages ten times. And when he fled from Laban he was in continual fear of his brother Esau, and that on account of his having obtained the blessing in the fraudulent manner that he did. Thus for a long time he possessed the iniquities of his former life. Again, as he had imposed upon his Father Isaac, so his sons imposed upon him in the case of Joseph's coat of many colours. How much sorrow did he endure on this occasion for many years! and his punishment was agreeable to the sins of his former life. I shall mention David as another instance. He was guilty of adultery. God punishes him by that sin taking place in his family. Amnon ravishes his sister Tamar: David's wives are taken and defiled before all Israel, and that by his own son. David was guilty of murder in the case of Uriah: He must receive the punishment of this iniquity. One of his sons kill another in cool blood. The sword pursues David himself as God had told him by Nathan. His own son seeks his life, and drives him from his city. At length he receives the news of his son's death, so distressing to him as to make

make him weep most bitterly. And all this as the consequence of his former sin : God had told him that the sword should never depart from his house. How affectingly did he possess the iniquities of his former life.

I add but one instance more, and that of an heathen who by the dim light of nature could not but acknowledge the righteous hand of God in his punishment. Adonibezek, a proud and cruel king, in Canaan, used to humble and torment his captives, even those that were kings, by cutting off their thumbs and great toes, and then reducing them to such hunger as to be glad to gather their poor sustenance under his table, like dogs. At length he is treated in the same manner, and reflects upon his former conduct, and says *as I have done, so God hath requited me.* Jud. i. 7. There are other known instances; and if we had the history of some other persons youths and after life, we might know many more instances of this sort.—I proceed now

II. *To shew what sin of youth persons are most commonly corrected for in after life.*

I. *Disobedience to parents is one of those sins.* A common sin of youth: A great sin, most contrary to the express command of God. *Children obey your parents,* is a divine precept. Disobedience to parents is remarkably threatened in the word of God. Disobedient children grieve their parents and cause their hearts to ache. These disobedient ones shall, e're long, possess the iniquities of their youth. They may have disobe-

dient

their turn. God bids twenty years roll on, and then he or she that was a disobedient child shall, by their own children, feel the anguish and sorrow which they caused their parents to feel, and thus possess the iniquities of their youth. Children often blast their parents hopes, and disappoint their fond expectations. In a few years these children shall have such hopes, and be thus blasted and disappointed. Parents are apt, may be too apt, to have pleasing hopes and expectations from their children, and are dreadfully disappointed when they see the children take to such ways and practices that will be ruinous in the end. Let such youth consider, that after a few revolving years, they may experience such disappointment, and such sorrow and vexation of heart: Then may they properly assume the words of our text, *thou makest me possess the iniquities of my youth.* Youth of both sexes, vain and giddy, fond of company, often go from their parents without liberty, and into wicked company, where they are much exposed to vice. Who but those who have felt the heart of a parent in such cases know the concern and anxiety they feel on such occasion, not knowing what vices and temptations the children may be exposed to and overcome with. These unhappy youth shall, e're long, possess their own iniquities. They are not immediately punished; but God remembers and records their conduct. It may be twenty or thirty years future; then their children leave them in the same

B

melancholy

melancholy condition : They sit alone and feel the anxiety which their conduct formerly caused.

Again ; children many times sin by unreasonable finding fault with a father-in-law, or a mother-in-law, and causelessly grieve their hearts. 'Tis probable, that in twenty years, or less, they shall sustain the same relation, and by the wise and holy providence of God be corrected for their former conduct.

II. *Going into and frequenting bad company, is a sin of youth that persons are often afterwards corrected for.* Youth are sociable, and company is agreeable. Children are not to be denied proper society ; but bad company is exceeding dangerous, and young ones are apt to rush head-long into it. They often refuse to be regulated in this respect, and not hearkening to the voice of those that would direct, then lay a foundation for trouble through the remainder of their life, and thus possess the iniquities of their youth. A woman that has married a man that loves company, while she continues hours or whole nights alone, may well think of the sorrow and anxiety that she caused her parents in her youth.

III. *Bad company is too often attended with the indulgence of sensual lusts, viz. Adultery, fornication, drunkenness, &c.* These are too often the sins of youth of which they possess the punishment in after life. By fornication children often cause their parents sorrow beyond what they can conceive, till in a few years, their own children, guilty of the same enormities, lead them to think of the sins of their youth.

By the sin of fornication young persons often bring themselves and their parents into a sad dilemma, not knowing on the one hand whether 'tis best to marry the partner in guilt, and be unhappy in a companion during the remainder of life ; or, on the other hand, submit to all the shame and reproach, cost and trouble, that is the natural and proper consequence of such a crime. By neglect of parental advice, rash and precipitate conduct, persons in youth often make such mistakes that they are miserable in a companion all their life after, and thus possess the iniquities of their youth.

Again ; by the vices above-mentioned, persons often contract such diseases as weaken their constitution, or bring on themselves a loathsome disease, and thus for a long time possess the iniquities of their youth. Nor do they less suffer in their character ; they get a blot that shall not be wiped off through the remainder of life, and they all their days possess their youthful iniquities. How many by such vices have blasted their reputation, prevented their marrying to advantage, and lived wretched in consequence of youthful sins. Let ruddy youths, who will not easily think there is danger, consider or recollect how many women they know here and another there, who by having a illegitimate child in youth, live solitary and neglected, and never like to marry with reputation.

Again ; intemperate drinking is often attended with quarrelling, whereby many have been wounded and

and maimed during life, and thus, till their death, possess the punishment of the follies and iniquities of their youth.

IV. *Unfaithfulness in their trust is often a sin of youth which they shall afterwards possess the punishment of.* Children and servants often neglect their proper business; are idle and unfaithful; cause or permit unknown damage to their parents or masters in interest, and thus vex and grieve the hearts of those who ought otherways to put confidence in them. These unfaithful youth little think what seed they are sowing, what an harvest they shall reap. A few years roll on, and then an unfaithful child or servant neglects their business, permits or causes waste and damage, disappoints their hopes, and vexes their hearts; thus those who were once unfaithful, afterward possess the iniquities of their youth.

V. *Prodigality in youth, or the former part of life, has often lavished away estates, so that persons have all their life after lived in poverty and want.* I knew a young man, heir to a good estate, who coming to the possession of it in giddy youth, by imprudent and prodigal conduct, dispersed it; scattered it as it were in the wind, and all his life after lived dependant, and without disgrace and contempt. Many have been thus punished for the follies of young life, and made bitterly to possess the iniquities of their youth.

I might mention other sins; but I shall conclude with an address: First to parents, and then to children.

I. *Let me address you that are parents, or heads of families.* You may be now in trouble: It may be you possess the iniquities of your youth. Let your sorrow lead you to view your sins; the sins of your youth. Few parents think they have sinned so much as they have. When they are vexed and perplexed with other persons, they think surely they themselves were never so bad. They do not imagine they ever caused such trouble. But have you not forgot my friends? Or were you sensible in the time of it how bad your conduct was? Your children now do not imagine they cause you so much trouble as you know they do. 'Tis hard to convince them that they are so bad as they are. And has not this been your case? Take a view of your past life. Try to get a sense of the evil of sin; of your own sin. If you are under the correcting hand of God, submit with an humble temper. Yield yourselves up into the hand of God: Say 'tis the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good. Look to the mercy of God in Christ. There is pardon for sinners; great sinners. Your chastisements are no sign that God has forsaken you, but rather that he is shewing you mercy, and doing you good. Look to the blood of Jesus that cleanseth from all sin. If you are true penitents, if you truly submit to God, you will be much better able to bear correction for your sins. You will then feel calm and resigned under the rod. 'Tis a great mercy for persons to be brought to repent of their sins before they come to bear the iniquities of their youth.

Look over your past lives ; think of your once grieved parents who are now in eternity ; let your hearts melt, and submit yourselves to God.

Again ; you that are parents should warn your children. Reason with them ; shew them what they are doing. Give them advice ; pray with and for them. Bring the case often before God. He has the hearts of all in his hand. He can sanctify and make your children obedient.

In a word, let your troubles make you set light by the world, and all things in it. If your difficulties are pressing, consider the time is short : They that have children should be as though they had none. You are not to expect your happiness in this world, but in the next. Give up all earthly hopes, and prepare for a better world.

“ What should we wish or wait for then,
 “ From creatures, earth and dust ;
 “ They make our expectations vain,
 “ And disappoint our trust.”

WATTS.

II. *I address myself to you who are in youth.*
 My dear young friends, your time of youth is an important time. You are now laying the foundation for time to come. The time of youth is a good time, and, oh, what an harvest will you have ! As you sow so shall you reap. Now is the time that you are ordering the future circumstances of your life. What will you choose to reap ? What would you choose to possess twenty or thirty years hence ?

How

How much comfort might you be treasuring up for yourselves and others. I trust some of you are laying a good foundation for time to come : Yes, there are some youth among us that are blessings in their families ; comforts to their parents ; afford a comfortable prospect to the church of Christ. Such youth rejoice the hearts of all good people. And had you not all better, far better, be of this happy number ? Had you not better avoid the sins and follies that will cause trouble and vexation in time to come ? Avoid bad company ; guard against profaneness ; deny and oppose fleshly lusts, which will surely entail sorrow upon you if indulged ; what bitterness will they be in the latter end. You are not only to dread the consequences in this world, but you are in danger of going to hell under the weight of all your sins.

But let me turn your thoughts again to the principal subject of our discourse. You are now children in families. If you should live to have children, how would you choose they should conduct ? You know something how amiable obedient children are ; and how vexing, paining, and distressing disobedient ones are. Can you be cruel to your parents, and cause them needless trouble ? Could you now feel the sorrow and anguish you shall feel twenty or thirty years hence, it would give you different views of things. You cannot, you shall not get out of the hand of God. He will bring you under the rod ; you shall possess the iniquities of your youth. Take this advice my young friends ; talk freely with your parents

about

about your present conduct. 'Tis reasonable that you should. Endeavour to know how your conduct appears to others. Consulting your parents may be an happy means of convincing you of some mistakes, and of leading you in the right way. Why will you not believe those that are older and more experienced than you are? Why will you not believe them that love you above what you can well conceive? Your parents hearts are bound up in your welfare & they will not deny you any thing that they think is for your good. Why will you not believe and trust God who has made it your duty and interest to obey your parents?

In a word; seek and serve the Lord. If you seek him, he will be found of you; and you will find the ways of religion and obedience to be pleasantness and peace. Look to Christ for the pardon of the sins you have hitherto been guilty of: He will forgive; and if he corrects you in this world, it will be in measure and in much mercy.

