

**THE
PROVIDENCE OF GOD,
ORDERING AND CONDUCTING
THE
AFFAIRS OF MEN:**

**A
SERMON,**

PREACHED

IN THE

INDEPENDENT

OR

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,

CHARLESTON, SOUTH-CAROLINA,

SEPTEMBER 14, 1806.

BY ISAAC STOCKTON KEITH, D. D.

ONE OF THE PASTORS OF SAID CHURCH:

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

**PRINTED BY W. P. YOUNG,
FRANKLIN'S HEAD, NO. 41, BROAD-STREET,
CHARLESTON.**

TO THE
R E A D E R S
OF THE
FOLLOWING PAGES.

IT is deemed proper to observe, that *two Discourses* were preached from *the same Subject*; the former on the 14th, and the latter on the 21st of September. As no public intimation, however, had been given, that *a second Discourse* was to be expected—before this was generally known, a copy of *the first* was solicited, with a view to its being printed. Considering the respectable names, and number of those who concurred in this request, and the reasons alledged in support of it, the Author, though still really reluctant, felt himself, in a manner, constrained to promise a compliance with it.

After the second Discourse was delivered, several friends, whose judgment is highly respected, were pleased to express their wishes, that *some parts*, at least, of *this*, also, might be incorporated, and appear with *the other*, when transcribed for the press. Accordingly the liberty has been taken of adopting this measure; which necessarily required a considerable enlargement of *the Discourse* as it now appears, beyond the limits at first contemplated. But as in its *present state*, it may be read at leisure, it is hoped that *this circumstance* will not render it less acceptable to any of those, to whose perusal it is now submitted, with the sincere desire, and in the humble hope, that, attended with a Divine blessing, it may prove, in some degree, useful in the promotion of their best interests and highest happiness, for time and eternity.

Charleston, October 13th, 1806.

S E R M O N.

P S A L M xxxi. *Verse 18.*

“ MY TIMES ARE IN THY HAND.”



THE time of human life on earth is very short; and our condition in the world is subjected to many vicissitudes. While the scenes around us are continually changing, and while the events which now particularly interest us, are immediately succeeded by others, pressing forward, and challenging our attention, a correspondent variation is usually experienced in the feelings of our hearts. Hence our hopes and fears, our joys and sorrows, so far as they are excited by, or dependant on the things which are seen and temporal, are ever in a fluctuating state.

In these circumstances, where shall our souls find any solid ground of rest and peace? How little of the *time that is past*, can be recollected and reviewed with satisfaction! And who would wish to spend it over again, in the same course of vanity and folly, of error and sin, or in the experience of the same superficial unsatisfying pleasures—of the same heartfelt troubles, and bitter vexations of spirit?—The *present moment*—but what is the particle of time that we call the present moment?

Before we can say that it is arrived—it is past and gone, beyond recall! If we look forward, *the time which may be yet to come*, with all the cares and comforts of a worldly nature, which may accompany it, is advancing with equal haste to meet us, and to leave us! And soon, very soon, will the several short seasons, and fleeting, varying scenes of this mortal life, come to their appointed period, and terminate in that immortal state of existence in another world; where our happiness, or our misery, shall be complete, immutable, and everlasting!

Amidst these changing scenes of life, through which we are passing, in a rapid progress to the eternal world, how desirable is it to be allowed and enabled to look up in faith to the eternal, unchangeable, and all sufficient God, who made and who governs the world; who gave us our being, and continues to “perform all things for us;” and who has set before us the blessed hope of salvation, and of everlasting life, in his beloved Son! How important, how precious is “that faith by which the Just live;” and in the exercise of which, the subjects of it are led to view the only wise God, the God of all grace, as “doing all things well,” and as ordering, directing, and sanctifying “all things to work for their good,” in the promotion of their present best interests, and the advancement of their future immortal happiness!

It was under the influence of this faith, that the words before us were penned by their inspired author.

The general tenor of the Psalm to which they belong, denotes the devout penman of it, to have been in circumstances of great distress and immi-
 uent

ment danger, at the time when it was written, or to which it alludes. But with a strong faith, and full persuasion of the wonderful and unceasing love and kindness of the Lord to his people, and a lively sense of gratitude for distinguishing favors conferred upon himself, he solemnly commits himself to the mercy, the care, and disposal of his God; encouraging his own heart, and the hearts of all the pious, still to repose an humble confidence, a steadfast trust, a cheerful hope in him.

Having, in the preceding verse, declared, that he trusted in the Lord as his God, he proceeds in the words before us, to observe, with a most evident and peculiar satisfaction, that “his times were in the Lord’s hands.”——

In this comprehensive and expressive language, the Psalmist may be understood as declaring, that he considered his life, with all the circumstances attending it, the several seasons of trial and suffering, of deliverance and comfort, and all the occurrences which befel him, as being not in his own hands, or in the hands of any of his fellow-creatures, but in the hands of his God; or under his direction, and at his disposal, by whose unerring wisdom, unchanging love, and most holy and all powerful Providence, every event, in which he was concerned, would be ordered in the time and manner which would be best for him.

The same pious, humble confidence towards God, and strong consolation connected with it, which the devout Psalmist thus expresses, are equally the duty and the privilege of all genuine believers.—“Being justified by faith, they have peace with God, through their Lord Jesus Christ;” and according to the sure, well ordered, and ever-

lasting covenant of grace, they are assured, that all the paths of the Lord towards them shall be mercy and truth; and that they shall be conducted in the right, the best way, to that everlasting rest which remaineth for the people of God. And while they are experimentally acquainted with the Divine principles, and blessed influence and effects of the faith, hope, and submission, expressed in the words of our text, how high must be their satisfaction, when they can adopt these words as their own, and with an unwavering heart and tongue say,

O Lord thou art *my God*: “My times are in thy hands.”——

May the Spirit of God, the Spirit of grace, enlighten our minds, and impress our hearts with the most correct, enlarged and profitable views of Divine truth—while in our meditations on this subject, we are proceeding to consider some of the leading and most important ideas, included in this general observation,

“My times are in thy hands.”

Now we are here instructed, that—

I. The times of the *natural life* of man are in the Lord's hands.

The inspired, royal preacher, the celebrated Solomon, having asserted, that to every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven, proceeds to observe, that there *is a time to be born*. In this observation it could not have been the intention of the wise son of David, merely to remind us of a fact, the certainty of which is most obvious, and must be universally admitted, without controversy. His design, doubtless, was to impress upon the mind the important
idea,

idea, the interesting truth, that the *time of our birth is not casual*, or dependant on uncertain contingencies; but that it is determined and fixed by the great Author of our being, “to whom all his works are known,” as by him they are unalterably ordered and arranged “from the beginning of the world.” This event, therefore, from which we begin to compute the days of our mortal life, is to be viewed as taking place, at the precise time chosen and determined by the purpose of Him, “who worketh all things, according to the counsel of his own will.” And within the wonderful plan of his works of government, formed by the infinite knowledge and wisdom, and fixed, from eternity, by the sovereign will of the Creator, were included, together with the time of our birth, all the circumstances attending it, and all the consequences resulting from it.

In this view of the subject, therefore, we must perceive and acknowledge, that according to the Lord’s everlasting and unchangeable purpose, it was determined from what particular lineage, or branch of the great family of mankind, we should descend, and of what immediate parents we should be born. With equal certainty, too, was it determined by him, what should be the land of our nativity, the place in which we should, at any time, reside, the station in the community which we should occupy, and the employments which we should pursue. It is, also, in consequence of his appointment, that we enter into every new connexion which we form, and that any of the relations which subsisted between us and others, is dissolved; that the number of our families and friends is adjusted, and remains what it is, or becomes

comes increased or diminished, at any particular period. According to his allotment, we spend our days in hard labour, or in more easy and agreeable pursuits; we feel the heavy pressure of poverty, or partake of the desirable comforts of a state of competence, or share with the rich in the more splendid, but perhaps less satisfactory, enjoyments of a state of affluence. At his pleasure we are favored with a time of health, or exchange this for a season of sickness. When he pleases, we dwell among our friends in safety and peace, under his protecting care and smiling providence, or are exposed to injuries from the hands, or the tongues of enemies, and become involved in various difficulties, perplexities, and distresses. It is He, in a word, who orders every scene of prosperity and adversity, of joy and of trouble through which we pass; who now "loads us with his benefits," and "with smiling mercies crowns our lives;" and then lays his chastising hand upon us, "which strikes our comforts dead." In all these instances, and indeed in all cases, the Lord invariably "doth what seemeth unto him good," directing every event of our lives, and ordering every circumstance of our situation, in exact conformity to that infinitely wise and excellent plan, by which he rules the universe, and which was established by his holy will and immutable decree, before the world was created.

Among the numerous testimonies of scripture, which might be produced in addition to those already mentioned, in support of the doctrine under consideration, I shall only take notice of the few following, which assure us, that "in the Lord we live, and move, and have our being;"
 that

that “the way of man is not in himself, nor is it in man that walketh to direct his steps:” but that. “though there are many devices in a mans heart, nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand;” that “the Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich, that he bringeth low and raiseth up:” that “he woundeth and his hands make whole:” that “as not a sparrow falls on the ground, without our heavenly Father, so the very hairs of our heads are all numbered;” that man’s days are determined, and the number of his months are with the Lord, who has appointed the bounds which he cannot pass;” and “that as he made of one blood all the nations of men, to dwell on the face of the earth, so he hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;” allotting to all, the times and the places, in which they should respectively live, and all the vicissitudes which should attend the progress of their lives.

Thus we are instructed, that in respect to the commencement, the progress, and all the changes of our natural lives, the wise counsel, the unvarying purpose, the all-directing and disposing hand of the Lord is to be religiously observed and acknowledged.

II. The times of the *spiritual life* of believers, including their *new birth*, and all the varieties of their religious experience, which accompany or follow it, are in the Lord’s hands, and take place conformably to his will and appointment.

In the present fallen, corrupted state of our nature, the children of men are all born depraved creatures, alienated from the life of God, averse from his holy service, inclined to violate his
 righteous

righteous law, and prone to abuse the riches of his goodness. Thus "guilty before God," they are justly condemned, and continually exposed to the awful miseries, included in an everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power. Hence, in order to their being restored to that true life and happiness of the soul, which can be found only in the favour of God, and that they may be qualified for seeing and enjoying the kingdom of heavenly glory, they must be *born again*, they must be regenerated by the Holy Spirit. By his gracious agency, they must be brought to exercise that faith in the Son of God, the Divine Redeemer, which introduces the soul into a state of justification and peace with God; and by the same Spirit of grace, they must be renewed in the spirit of their minds, in the dispositions of their hearts, and in all the principles of their conduct. Thus must they be reconciled to God by Jesus Christ, and be made new creatures in him. And thus will they, as thus alone they can, become prepared and disposed to walk in newness of life, and to pursue, on evangelical principles, that course of obedience to the gospel, that most excellent and desirable way of well doing, which leads to Heaven, and will there terminate in "glory, honor, and immortality."

Now the time when this great change takes place in the souls of those who become the subjects of it, is the most important period in the course of their lives. For then they begin *truly to live*; to live to the great end of their being, that of glorifying God, and enjoying the highest happiness of which their nature is capable in communion with him. And the time for the accomplishment of

of

of this all-important change, this glorious work of Divine Grace, by which they are “turned from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God,” and are made to “pass from death unto life,” is most surely determined in the counsels of Heaven, and uniformly kept in view, in all the dispensations of Divine Providence towards them.

From eternity, the only wise God, the God of all grace, “foreknew them, and predestinated them to be conformed, by the new-creating energy of his spirit, to the image of his son, and to be partakers, through faith in him, of salvation with eternal glory;” and having thus predestinated them, he, at the appointed season, “calls them by his gospel, and justifies them, freely, by his grace, according to the redemption that is in Christ Jesus;” and then by a progressive work of sanctification, prepares them, in due time, for the heavenly kingdom, prepared for them before the foundation of the world. This desirable event, this great work “the Lord will surely accomplish in his time,” and all the circumstances which lead to it, and prove instrumental in effecting it, are arranged and managed by him, with unerring wisdom, invincible power, unbounded love, and infallible success.

For a while they are permitted to remain with “the world which lieth in wickedness,” “to walk after the ways of their own hearts, and in the sight of their own eyes,” departing farther and farther from God, wandering in the fruitless pursuit of happiness, through the various scenes of worldly vanity, and amidst the multiplied snares of the cruel destroyer, “who leads the children “of disobedience captives at his will,” exulting
with

with a most malicious triumph, in the expectation of soon plunging them headlong into everlasting perdition: But the time of Divine mercy and love at length arrives, when their insatuated servants of sin must be ransomed; when these wretched captives of Satan must be delivered; when “these lost sheep must be brought back to the fold of their heavenly Shepherd.” When in their mad career of bold impiety, unrighteousness, and licentious indulgence; or in their thoughtless progress down the broad road of worldly business, of fashionable amusement, or of the decent, lifeless forms of religion and virtue, they were hastening to eternal destruction; they are mercifully arrested by an invisible power. For now the Divine Spirit, given by the father, through the mediation of the Son of God, comes to carry into effect the great design of redeeming grace and love in their favour.—In order to this end, he awakens their solemn attention to the demands of the law, and the calls of the gospel. Thus he convinces them of sin, awakens their fears of the wrath of God due to it, and constrains them, seriously to consider and enquire, “what they shall do to be saved?” Then pointing their views to the only and the all-sufficient Saviour, revealed and offered in the gospel, he suffers them not to remain on any fallacious ground, on which they would be ready to feel themselves secure, and to promise themselves peace; nor will he allow them to conclude that they have found rest to their souls, till they have “fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose is the only name given under heaven by which any can be saved.” And

now.

now, in a day of Divine power, they are made willing, cordially willing, to forsake their sins, to renounce their self-righteousness, to give up the world, and “to suffer the loss of all things,” which were once most dear to their hearts, “that they may win Christ, and be found in him,” and become his genuine disciples and followers. For his sake, they are now disposed “to deny themselves” in respect to all worldly interests and pleasures, which may be incompatible with their obligations and their duty to him; they are now ready, also, “to take up the cross” of reproach, or of any other kind of suffering, to which they may be called on account of their attachment to him, and their fidelity in his service; and thus they are prepared, cheerfully, “to follow their Lord and Saviour.” to his heavenly kingdom, in that way of obedience and trial which he has marked out in his gospel, and which to their natural pride, and self-love, heretofore appeared to be the most unpleasant and irksome, beset with the most formidable difficulties, and surrounded with the deepest and most discouraging gloom.

While the word of God, as has been already intimated, is the great instrument employed by his Spirit, for the conversion of the souls of his people; that word of truth and grace is applied and made effectual, for this purpose, to different persons, in different ways; and to the success of it, a variety of circumstances are, by the wise and good providence of God, made happily subservient; to some, it comes with that power which proves effectual to their salvation, while perusing it, or hearing it read, in the sacred volume of the Scriptures; and to others, while attending the

the

the public ministrations of the gospel; to some, while engaged in, or preparing for scenes of worldly vanity, of unhallowed festivity, or dissipating pleasure; and to others, under some painfully afflictive dispensation of Divine Providence; when crossed in their worldly schemes, pursuits, and expectations; when brought low on the bed of sickness, or, in any circumstances of peculiar danger, apparently exposed to the awful stroke of the uplifted hand of death; or when bereaved of near and dear connections and friends, they are called to spend many of their days, and perhaps years of promised satisfaction and comfort, in the house of mourning: to some, in the days of their youth; to others in the meridian of life; and to a few, though to few indeed, in the season of their declining years, and even of extreme old age.

Oh blessed time, and memorable period! when the gospel thus becomes “the power of God unto salvation,” to any who hear its joyful sound, and whose hearts are penetrated by its heavenly light, communicating the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ! But more especially, happy are they, who become partakers of this salvation in their earliest days! For thus are they seasonably prepared for all the remaining changes of life, for higher attainments in Divine knowledge and grace, and for greater usefulness in this world; for a desirable dismissal by an early death from the present state of sin and sorrow, into that “rest which remaineth for the people of God;” or after a lengthened course of service and trial on earth, for an higher glory and blessedness in heaven.

The

The day in which this salvation comes to the soul, or in which the subjects of it obtain satisfactory evidence of their interest in it, is usually a season of "joy and peace in believing," and of fervent praise, and cheerful, ready obedience to the Lord their God and Saviour, "by whose grace they now are what they are." But being only in part renewed and sanctified, they are apt "to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think," on account of their being so graciously distinguished and highly favored of the Lord. Happy as they now are, in "the grace wherein they stand, rejoicing in hope of the glory of God," they are ready to flatter themselves with the idea of their present peace and comfort, as well as their final perseverance and future blessedness, being so effectually secured by the provisions and promises of the gospel covenant, that they may, without hazard or injury, gradually remit their watchfulness, relax the strictness of their walk, and allow themselves greater and still greater liberties in conforming to the spirit and manners of the world, and in the pursuit and enjoyment of its interests and pleasures. Thus "they leave their first love;" and "their latter works, instead of being more and better, are fewer and more defective than "the first."

Hence, for the correction of this self-sufficient spirit, and for the recovery of the soul from the manifold evils of this declining state, "the only wise God, their Saviour," in the tenderest compassion and love to his erring and offending people, sees it proper to exercise them with dispensations, which often appear to them under a very dark and threatening aspect. Chastisement has now be-

come necessary for them, and therefore he chastens them, “not willingly, or for his own pleasure, but for their profit, that they may become, in an higher degree, partakers of his holiness.” With this view the restraints, which were laid upon the corrupt propensities of their nature, are sometimes, to a certain degree, suspended; so that the “body of sin, which yet dwelleth in them,” is set at liberty to work and war more discernibly and powerfully against the principles of grace implanted in the souls, and is allowed to manifest itself in criminal dispositions and practices, of which they could scarcely have supposed themselves to be any longer capable. Their subtle, malicious, restless adversary, the devil, is also permitted to harass them with temptations, gently insinuated, or boldly and violently pressed upon them; all artfully contrived to excite into action the various evil thoughts and desires, and corrupt principles still lurking in “their hearts, which were by nature deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” Frequently, too, they may be called to suffer distressing vicissitudes, losses, and disappointments, in respect to their most valuable worldly interests, and their favorite comforts in, and most pleasing hopes from, the relatives and friends, to whom their souls were united by the strongest and tenderest feelings of human affection. And they may be still more painfully tried, by the hiding of their Heavenly Father’s face, while he suspends the cheering light of his countenance, and seems, “to be favorable no more; but rather appears to be contending with them in judgment, and ready to cast them off for ever.”

Such are the ways in which the Lord often leads
his

his people, or the methods in which he deals with them, “to humble them, and to prove them, and to discover to them what is in their hearts; that they may see and feel how weak and perverse they are, how incapable in themselves of doing any good, and how prone to all manner of evil, “in order to do them good in the end.” Thus they are admonished to watch with greater jealousy over their own hearts, and to guard, with greater vigilance, against the wiles and assaults of the tempter; thus they are excited to redouble their diligence, in the performance of their various duties, and instructed to moderate their regards to, and expectations from, the world: and thus they are engaged to rest more entirely in their God, as their only satisfying and all-sufficient portion, and to exercise a more simple and a more steadfast faith and trust in their Redeemer, in whom, alone, can be found the pardon and peace, the righteousness and strength which they constantly need, and “in whom they are complete,” while “he is within them the hope of glory.”

When their trials, accompanied with the sanctifying agency of the Spirit of Grace, have in such ways as these, produced their proper effects, they are then prepared to be again favored with “times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord,” and to rejoice in the evidences of his forgiving love, and in “the restored joys of his salvation.”

Now all these times—the time of the first conversion, and of the first love, peace, and joy of the new-born soul—the time of its subsequent decline, temptations, and trials—and the time of its revival, and recovery, and accelerated progress

in the Divine life—are to be regarded as being wholly in the Lord's hands; as by him they are all permitted and ordered, overruled and made subservient to the great design of glorifying his own great name in the accomplishment of their salvation. And from the season of their first entering upon the Christian life and warfare, they may expect these varying times of comfort and of trouble, of declension and reviving, of defeat and victory, till the important period arrives, when then shall, by the order of their Lord, finish their course in death; and, rising “more than conquerors over the last enemy, through Him who hath loved them,” shall enter triumphantly into his full and everlasting joy, in his kingdom of glory.

And, as *all the times of the natural and the spiritual life*, are in the Lord's hands, so, likewise, is,

III. *The time of our departure* from the present into the future world.—

“To all men it is appointed once to die.” On account of sin, the whole human race is subjected to this awful sentence of death.” “For as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death has passed upon all men, because all have sinned.” As we are sinners we must surely die; for “in this war there is no discharge, neither hath any man power over the spirit to retain it in the day of death.” And that solemn, interesting, concluding day of this mortal life, is certainly fixed by the unalterable decree of Heaven. For in this view, as “there is a time to be born,” so there is, also, “*a time to die*”—a time determined by a divine, unchangeable appointment of the Almighty—a time which cannot, in strict propriety, be either retarded or hastened by any art

or power of man, or by any circumstance or means whatever; while yet the voluntary agency which is employed, and which is, in a sense, instrumental to the purpose of preserving or of destroying life, may be truly virtuous and commendable, or deeply criminal, and deserving of punishment.

This time, thus appointed and fixed by the unchangeable will of God, is to us altogether uncertain; so that while we know, in general, that it must come, and that it cannot be very distant, we know not, in particular, when it may be expected, or how soon it may occur. That we may be kept more watchful against temptation, more active and diligent in the work which we are called to do, and more earnest and assiduous in our preparation for "the coming of our Lord," he wisely keeps us in ignorance of "the day or the hour, when he will come," by his messenger, death, to summon us away. Some, though few indeed, he allows to reach the utmost bounds to which human life has been limited, since the age of the patriarchs; others are called hence, in the midst of their expected years, while busily and anxiously occupied with their plans and pursuits "for laying up to themselves treasures on earth," or rising, as high as possible, towards the summit of worldly honors; others in the days of their youth, while their thirst for the pleasures of the world is most ardent, and their hopes of happiness, in the gratification of all the desires of their hearts, are most sanguine; and others fall, and fall in multitudes, in their morning bloom; so that scarcely have the flattering prospects of
 life

life begun to open them, when they are immediately closed in the gloom of the grave.

The several causes, also, which bring human life to its period, and the various circumstances which attend the death of every individual, are equally in the hands of God, as they are all ordered, or permitted and controlled by him, by whom the time itself is appointed. Whether our bodily frame shall languish and sink under a weight of years, or long continued, wasting infirmities; or be demolished by disease, violent in its assault, and rapid in its destructive progress; or suddenly fall under a stroke of the last enemy, which, in the view of mortals, may seem to be accidental, and of which no previous warning is given; and what shall be the place in which we shall be called to meet death, whether at home or abroad, whether on the dry land, or on the waters of the smaller rivers, or of the great and wide sea; whether alone or among friends, or strangers, or enemies—All these circumstances are with Him “in whose hands is our life and our breath, and whose are all our ways.” And respecting these circumstances, it becomes not us to be solicitous or careful—our great concern and care should be, that in all the business of life and godliness, we may be found “faithful unto death,” and continually looking out for the coming of our Lord, to dismiss us from the labors in which we are employed, and to require an account of the stewardship with which we have been entrusted. Then may we, with cheerful resignation, and cordial satisfaction, leave the time of our death, and the manner in which it shall take place, to the disposal of our Lord, who has pronounced “those ser-

vants

vants blessed, that are found so doing, and thus watching and ready, when he cometh." And then may we, with humble confidence, hope "to finish our course with joy," and "to receive the crown of life," even "a crown of glory, which fadeth not away."

I M P R O V E M E N T.

AS our times are thus in the Lord's hands; as all our affairs, our interests, our comforts, our trials, personal and relative; as, in a word, all the circumstances of our lives, and of our deaths, are under his direction, and subject to his disposal, are ordered and arranged according to the unerring dictates of his infinite wisdom, and the immutable determinations of his holy will; it must surely be our indispensable duty, with attentive minds, to observe, and, with adoring hearts to acknowledge, the hand of God, in all the events which take place around us; and especially in all the occurrences which have a more immediate relation to ourselves, and to those with whom we are most intimately associated, and in whom we are most deeply interested.

The aspect which may, at any time, be presented to our view, by the Providence of God, in the administration of the great affairs of the world in general, and in his dealings with the several communities of mankind, challenges our respectful notice, and our serious consideration. If viewed aright, if judiciously studied, the contemplation of it will be found well adapted to promote humiliation and joy, fear and hope,

prayer and praise, and to furnish the most useful employment, and desirable improvement, to the soul. Remembering that “the kingdom is the Lord’s, and regarding him as the governor among the nations,” the works which he is, under this character, continually accomplishing by his providence, will, to the reflecting, enlighten’d mind of the believer, appear to be great indeed; and they will be carefully “sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.” The humble and reverent investigation of these great works of Providence, pursued by the light of divine revelation, and on the principles of a Christian faith, will not only yield an high satisfaction to the serious, devout mind, but prove eminently conducive to the edification of all whose hearts are truly disposed to “rejoice that the Lord reigns:” while they will be led to view him as looking down upon “a world lying in wickedness,” and upon the guilty nations, with a mixture of awful frowns and tender compassion; with fiery indignation, sending abroad his righteous judgments, and yet evidently manifesting himself willing and ready to remember and exercise unmerited mercy, in the midst of deserved wrath: and while, through the clouds of darkness which surround his throne, they will perceive the cheering rays of light, sent out in the revelations of his word, to give them a glimpse of the eternal, grand designs of his wisdom, love, and grace, respecting his church; and to assure them of the approaching happy day, which the revolutions of time and of human affairs, are hastening forward—when “the whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge, and with the glory of the Lord.”

Lord." And after having, with solemn dread, seen "the earth so often and so long trembling at the wrath of the living God, the everlasting King, and the nations unable to abide his indignation;" how reviving and animating to the benevolent hearts of the truly pious, must be the prospect of that glorious day, which shall be prolonged to the end of time; when all the nations of the earth shall be united as brethren in Christ, "and love each other with pure hearts, fervently, and by love serve one another;" when, no longer suffering the dire calamities of war, and exempted generally from those manifold and great evils, with which, on account of their abounding iniquities, they are now, most heavily afflicted, they shall dwell safely and quietly in a state of the most desirable peace and harmony, and in the enjoyment of every blessing, temporal and spiritual, adapted to give the sweetest relish to life, and to make social intercourse most pleasant and improving; and when, thus highly favored of the Lord, "all the people, even from the rising of the sun, unto the going down of the same, shall praise and glorify him," and rejoice and triumph in him, as "the Lord who is King over all the earth;" and as the God of their mercies, and of their salvation.

But the dispensations of Providence, which respect ourselves, and others with whom we are connected in a *more circumscribed sphere*, claim, in some points of view, our *more particular attention and improvement*.——

These, if not more instructive in themselves, usually appear to us in a clearer and stronger light, and are felt by us with a livelier sensibility, and a deeper

deeper interest. Hence our personal enjoyments and afflictions, or those which we share, by a spirit of benevolence and sympathy, with our friends, or with that portion of the community in whose concerns our own are most immediately involved. As they naturally make the strongest impression upon our minds, so they have a peculiar tendency to direct our views to the Divine hand by which they are ordered, and to awaken our solicitude to understand and comply with the will of the Lord, relative to the proper use and best improvement of them.

And what is the season that passes, or what the circumstances that may, at any time, distinguish our situation, in which He, "in whose hands are all our times," is not calling upon us to receive instruction and benefit, by the dispensations of his Providence, respecting ourselves, or those whose concerns it becomes us to regard as more or less blended with our own? When we think of our own condition in the world, and the occurrences which most immediately touch and move our feelings; or when we consider the events and vicissitudes which are continually taking place within our view, and by which others around us are more deeply affected—every day of life will appear to furnish us with occasions for "singing of mercy and of judgment." Yet there are doubtless some seasons more strikingly marked than others, by events, which from their peculiar nature, or from their particular connexion, or from their occurring in unusually quick succession, if not, also, from causes and in ways the least expected—are adapted to arrest our special attention, and demand our most careful

ful improvement. In this light, may not the *present season* be justly considered and regarded by us? In this view, I think, it must be contemplated by all among us, whose minds are disposed to indulge sober reflection, and “to regard, with due attention, the works of the Lord, and to consider seriously, the operation of his hands.”

Within the short space of a few weeks past, the prospect of an abundant harvest of the several valuable products of the earth, in our southern clime, was, in the highest degree, flattering, and seemed to promise the most ample recompense to the planter's toil and care: But, when expectation was high, when ardent anticipation was beginning to gather its fruits, and planning how to dispose of its goods, how suddenly was the bright prospect overclouded, and the favorite plans founded on it, disconcerted!—For, behold! “He whose will and word the stormy winds fulfil,” and who warned his ancient guilty people, that they should, for their sins, “be visited of the Lord of Hosts, with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise; with storm and tempest, and with the flame of devouring fire; even He was pleased to command and raise that stormy wind,” by which these pleasing hopes, from the flourishing crops, were generally very much diminished, and, in many instances, brought low indeed; while, in some cases, they were blasted with almost complete disappointment.

Under the same visitation of the holy and mighty hand of Him “who rules the raging sea;” what scenes of terror and disfires were produced among those, “who go down to the sea in ships, and do business in the great waters!”—What awful

ful

ful works and “wonders of the Lord did they witness, while, by the fury of the tempest, and the lifting up of the waves, they were mounted up to the heavens, and immediately plunged down again to the depths—their souls melting within them because of trouble!”—And how painful to every heart of sensibility, have been the tales of woe, and the evidences of distress, which, by almost every arrival in our port, and every other channel of communication, have been since conveyed to us, day after day, in rapid and gloomy succession!—What wrecks of vessels!—What damage and loss of their valuable cargoes!—But, ah! how much more affecting—how inexpressibly afflicting—what destruction of the numerous, precious lives of our fellow mortals, who have been overwhelmed by the boisterous winds and waves, and have sunk into a watery grave!—In these calamities, not a few of the inhabitants of our city have largely shared: some, from rich portions of their property; and others from friends of inestimable worth, and importance to their happiness, suddenly buried in the depth of the sea. While by many, who have not experienced these afflictions to the same extent, they have yet been felt almost as deeply as if they had been fully realized; by some, while they witnessed the fate of their companions perishing before their eyes, and being themselves in the same circumstances of danger, would naturally feel their minds tossed in a state of most painful suspense, and agitated with a tumult of conflicting emotions, between the trembling, distant hope of life, and the alarming prospect of immediate death—and by others
again,

again; who, remaining at home, far from these scenes of death and terror, supposed some of their dearest friends to be exposed to these awful perils; and from the apprehension of this, felt their hearts wrung with unspeakable anguish, during the tedious lapse of time in which they were waiting for the anxiously expected information, which was to decide the interesting question, whether those endeared friends were spared among the living, or numbered with the dead.

Oh! that all concerned, would learn to reverence the Lord, “the great and dreadful God,” “who maketh himself known by the judgments which he executeth;” that all who feel the pains and sorrows occasioned by the infliction of his righteous judgments, would be duly “humbled under his mighty hand,” in the exercise of “that godly sorrow for sin, which worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of;” and that all who have seen the “wonders of his mercy,” shewn to themselves and to their friends, in the midst of the destructive calamities which have been permitted to fall upon others, would, “with their souls, and all within them, bless the holy name of the Lord, who hath graciously redeemed the lives, most precious to them, from destruction, and crowned them with loving kindness and tender mercies!”*

The present summer has been a season of uncommon general health in our city.—The degree and extent in which this blessing has been hitherto enjoyed among us, has not, perhaps, been paralleled for a long course of years past. Yet, during this uncommonly healthful season, we have
been

* See Note at the end of the Discourse.

been called to lament the death of several persons within the circle of our acquaintance, who occupied important places in the community, or whose lives were peculiarly dear and valuable to their families and friends. Within the limits of *our own congregations*, in particular, some fond parents have been called to witness the opening buds and blossoms of beauty and loveliness, which they were admiring, and with which they were, from day to day, more and more delighted, in the young children of their affections, smitten, in an unexpected hour, by the chilling blait of death; and all the growing satisfactions and pleasures which were anticipated from these sources of happiness, turned into painful disappointment and unavailing tears. By other families, the bereaving dispensations of Divine Providence have been much more deeply felt, while those who sustained the respectable characters, and filled the important stations of worthy, affectionate, and most valuable wives and mothers, have submitted to that awful stroke of death, which dissolves the strongest and the sweetest ties of nature, and terminates that most intimate and endearing connexion in which human friendship is the most perfect, and productive of the largest portion of reciprocal benefits and comforts: and thus have their dear children been deprived of those maternal, pious counsels and cares, which were of the highest importance to them, in forming their tender minds, and guiding their inexperienced years, and bringing them forward into life, with good principles and correct manners, and with all the peculiar advantages, which a religious and virtuous education,

tion, recommended by the most persuasive example, is adapted to secure.

In other families again, we have seen those branches which were growing up to the full glory of youth, or flourishing in the first stage of maturity of years, and, like the flowers of spring, in their sweetest bloom, were coming forth with the fairest promise of continuing long the ornaments and the blessings of society—these we have seen, in the season of the highest expectation, and while the brightest prospects were opening before them, cut down by the unsparing hand of death. While the eye of admiration and affection was looking upon them with the fondest delight and hope, “they have, as shadows, fled away, and continued not” in the scenes, in which they were ready to rejoice, and were apparently prepared to diffuse joy and pleasure among all around them.

Shall I be allowed to call your attention to several late instances of this nature, which have been deeply felt in extensive circles among us, and which are particularly fitted to minister the most useful instruction and improvement to all who were acquainted with them?

Those early victims of mortality, to which I allude, were all of that class, in which the mild lustre of the accomplishments, and the virtues which belong eminently to the female character, gives to youth its most attractive charms.

The first of these*, in the order in which they have been presented to our notice, on the gloomy roll of death, was just completing the course of a polite education:

* *Miss Hannah Shubrick*, daughter of Colonel Thomas Shubrick, and of Mrs. Mary Shubrick.

education. Her temper and manners, and the improvements which her mind had derived from the attention and care with which it was cultivated, were well adapted to conciliate the goodwill and affection of her acquaintances and friends, and to excite in the hearts of her parents, especially, and of all her near connexions, the most grateful satisfactions and pleasing hopes. But how transient and delusive may be those satisfactions and hopes, which rest on the precarious ground of youth and health!—While the bloom of youth, and the glow of health, illumined her countenance, and seemed to indicate the secure and long continued enjoyment of life, an excursion to that island, in our harbour, to which so many of our citizens resort, during the summer-months, as an agreeable retreat, and particularly favorable to the preservation or the restoration of health, furnished to her the occasion for receiving into her system the seeds of a violent disease, which soon terminated, with her mortal life, all the rising joys for this world, which were expected from her society, from her ripening intellectual powers, and from her increasing attainments in wisdom and virtue!

Soon after this afflicting event, the melancholy tidings were received of the death of an only daughter * of a widowed mother, who was, in an high degree, the joy and hope of her fond parent, and the delight of her other connexions and friends. With the attainment of a few additional years beyond those which had been reached in the affecting instance, which we have been considering,

* *Mrs. Jane Stock*, wife of Dr. Thomas Stock, and daughter of the late Thomas Smith, esq. and of Mrs. Jane Smith.

sidering, she had proportionably advanced in the improvements of the mind, and had enjoyed a longer season, with increased advantages, for displaying the most amiable dispositions of the heart, and for performing every duty of filial love, and every office of benevolence and friendship, within the sphere in which she moved. Hence she became endeared to her family, and to all who enjoyed her society, in the same proportion in which her solid worth was more and more known, and the charms of her amiable character, and pleasing deportment, were more and more fully manifested. Blessed with a very desirable measure of intelligence, sensibility, and discretion, her mind was carefully cultivated by a religious, as well as a refined education; and for some time past she exhibited, in her conversation and conduct, the pleasing indications, that, by the Spirit of Grace, through the instruction of the word of God, she was ultimately led to choose and to embrace the religion of Christ, as the crowning excellence of every character, and to regard this as the only foundation upon which the rational hope of happiness can be built. Thus was she eminently qualified to enjoy, and to reciprocate, the peculiar happiness of the married state. Into that state she had lately entered; and, in every respect, excepting the possession of health, she found herself as happy in it, as a correct judgment, and reasonable affection, could anticipate. But alas!—latent disease was making its sure progress, though advancing by almost imperceptible steps, in undermining her constitution: and this having baffled all the previous means of relief, and finally the only remaining measure, which seemed to

promise any benefit, that of her removal to the more temperate summer climate of the middle states, she there*, at length, yielded to its irresistible, wasting power. A long course of most distressing bodily pain and suffering, she supported with a remarkable and most exemplary christian fortitude and patience, till she approached the long expected, and now ardently desired hour of her dissolution; when, composed, serene, and peaceful, she breathed out one of the mildest, most gentle, and affectionate spirits, by which human clay was ever animated, into the hands of him who had redeemed it, and in whom she continued, even to the close of the trying scene, to trust, with an humble confidence, and animating hope, as her only and all sufficient Saviour. Thus did she fall asleep in Jesus, her Redeemer; and thus has she left the connexions and friends, who were most dear to her heart, and by whom she was deservedly beloved, with a most cordial affection—long to mourn her early removal from them, as an affliction, which would be almost insupportable, if it were not alleviated by the consoling consideration, that they are not left “to sorrow, in this case, as those who have no hope;” but as those, who seem to have good ground, indeed, for cherishing the blessed hope, that their heavy loss is her great, her unspeakable, and everlasting gain.

Scarcely was the mind allowed time to muse upon this affecting, impressive scene of mingled sorrow and consolation, when the deeply afflicting intelligence was received, that another widowed mother, who had, for the summer season,

retired

• At Germantown, in Pennsylvania.

retired, with her family, to a situation on the sea-board,* not very distant from our city, had been called to mourn, under a most painful, bereaving stroke of the holy hand of God, which had cut short the days of her eldest daughter, while yet in her sixteenth year†. This stroke was the less apprehended, and gave the greater shock to the feelings of those who were most nearly concerned in it; as the subject of it, favored with an excellent constitution, had enjoyed, almost without interruption, a measure of health rarely equalled even at that early period of life. But what are the flattering hopes which rest on such precarious grounds?—How imperceptible the line which divides health from sickness! How short the step from life to death. Our lovely, youthful friend, in the course of a walk, undertaken for the purpose of recreation, or as an healthful exercise, laid the foundation of her last illness; which, in its first attack, put on no very alarming appearance; but which, nevertheless, very soon consumed all the strength and beauty of her fine mortal frame, and laid it low in its kindred dust. This young lady was the daughter of parents, both of whose fathers‡ were ministers of the gospel, and honorably distinguished by their talents and their pious and useful labours, in their respective important spheres of service and influence, in the church

C 2

church

* An island in the harbour of Georgetown, South-Carolina.

† *Miss Eliza Ramsay*, daughter of the late Doctor Joseph H. Ramsay, and of Mrs. Mary Ramsay.

‡ The late Reverend William Ramsay, of Fairfield, New-Jersey: and the late Reverend William Tennent, who was, for a number of years, pastor of the *Independent or Congregational Church*, in this city, and the immediate predecessor of its present pastors.

church and in the community. Her own father was long well known, and justly, and highly esteemed, as an active, zealous supporter of our church, and as a valuable physician, in extensive and growing practice, in our city. Deeply lamented by his numerous friends, and to the unspeakable loss of his bereaved family, he finished his mortal course about three years ago, at a period in which he might be considered as yet in the prime of his days. The worthy mother of his children, thus bereaved of the husband of her youth, of her best mortal friend, and earthly support, was at the same time subjected to an ill state of health, of long continuance, which unavoidably rendered her attention to the concerns of her family, peculiarly difficult and trying. In these circumstances, it seemed as if a wise Providence had kindly raised up this excellent daughter, furnished with qualifications, rarely possessed at so early a period of life, to be the companion and friend of her afflicted mother, and a most valuable helper in the variety of her affairs; and to be also a judicious, attentive instructor, and an useful guide and example to the younger children of the family. Endued with a superior understanding, well cultivated by a judicious education, and with an uncommon degree of activity and firmness of mind, she was fitted for the management of important concerns, that might have been supposed to be above her years; and distinguished by a very amiable temper, and by many personal attractions, she was not only peculiarly endeared to her affectionate parent and nearest relations, but greatly esteemed and beloved by all who were intimately acquainted with her, and were qualified

fied to form a proper estimate of her merit. Possessed of these advantages, her prospects, for future life, were, in various respects, more than ordinarily flattering. But how suddenly were those bright prospects covered with a cloud of the deepest gloom! How quickly were those pleasant scenes of present and of expected happiness, and usefulness, closed in death and mourning! How mysterious the Providence, which so soon inflicted this fresh and deep wound upon the heart of a tender mother, "whose life was now, in a manner, bound up in the life of this darling child;" and which called so many affectionate, weeping relatives and friends, to give up the many dear comforts and pleasures, already enjoyed in her society, and to suffer the most painful disappointment of all those pleasing hopes, for this world, which were founded on the well known virtues, and the still unfolding, growing excellencies of her character!

But let all concerned "be dumb," and not allow a repining thought to be cherished in their hearts, or a murmuring word to escape from their lips! If the Lord gives grace, he has a right to crown that grace, as soon as he pleases, with glory: and he can abundantly compensate the disappointments and sufferings of this present time, with the satisfaction and joys of eternity. In all cases, he has an absolute right "to do what he will with his own." To his sovereign, holy will, in this case, let every mourner humbly and cordially bow; remembering, "that the Lord hath done it," and assured that "He doeth all things well," however incompetent our feeble, limited faculties may be to scan his works, or fa-

thom the depths of the infinite knowledge and wisdom which mark all his dispensations.

And shall not every mourner, under this heavy affliction, still be disposed to say, "it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good;" even when, like the messengers of Job, arriving in quick succession, with the information of some new calamity fallen upon him, the sorrowful tidings are again brought to them, from the same quarter, announcing that, within the space of one short week, after the lamented death of *her*, for whom the tears of affectionate friendship and tender sorrow, were yet freely flowing, the days of another youthful friend, her cousin, and her familiar and dear companion,* were also "numbered and finished!"—Thus, within the sphere of the nearest family connexion, sorrow was quickly added to sorrow. And thus was a new circle of the afflicted, called to mingle their tears with the former numerous mourners, in lamenting the loss of a worthy and beloved daughter, wife, sister, and friend; who, before she had yet passed through the season of youth, was summoned, so soon, to follow her dear, departed relative to the world of spirits!—Oh! how many of the sweetest enjoyments, and of the favorite hopes of this mortal life, have, by these events, been shaken down to the earth, and now lie deeply buried in the grave, "that land of darkness, which is as darkness itself, even the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is darkness!"

But with Aaron, when his two sons were, at
once,

* *Mrs. Francis Tucker*, wife of John Tucker, esq. and daughter of Charles Brown, esq. and of Mrs. Susanna Brown. Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Ramsay are sisters, both of them being daughters of the late Rev. William Tennent.

●nce, struck dead before his eyes; and with Job, when, in one day, he was bereaved of all his children, even of his “seven sons and three daughters,” it surely becomes all, who have been thus called to suffer under these painful strokes of the bereaving hand of the only wise and most Holy Lord God, to “hold their peace” in silent adoration; or, if they must speak, to say, with profound submission, “The Lord hath given and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord;”—and in the spirit of the most prompt and ready obedience to his authoritative and gracious voice, to “be still and know that he is God!”

In the several instances which we have been contemplating, we see, as an excellent moral poet* observes, that “Death loves a lofty mark.” And oh! how affecting to every feeling heart, to see the fatal arrows of this “last enemy” thus discharged with the surest aim, and thus bringing down to the dust, in such quick succession, so many amiable persons from the lofty eminence of youth, and joy, and hope, on which they lately stood!

But while such instances of mortality are most afflicting to the feelings of our nature, they are peculiarly adapted to yield to the reflecting mind, and to the heart softened and humbled under the affliction, much profitable instruction, and spiritual benefit. According to the descriptive, pathetic, and nervous language of the celebrated author of the “*Night Thoughts*,” just quoted:

—————“Smitten friends

“Are angels sent on errands full of love;

“For *us* they languish, and for *us* they die:

“And shall they languish, shall they die *in vain?*”

C. 4

No,

* Dr. Young, in his “*Night Thoughts*.”

No my friends, God forbid, that we should refuse to be instructed and profited, by the lessons of wisdom and piety, which their death is fitted to impress, most deeply upon our hearts!

And profitable, indeed, to those who have been called to mourn, and to "humble themselves under the mighty and the holy hand of God," which has "taken away the desire of their eyes with a stroke," if their sorrows shall lead them to lean upon the Almighty arm of "Him who has smitten them," for the support which they need; if the anguish of their bleeding hearts shall constrain them to seek for, that they may become partakers of those "consolations of God which are not small;" if the removal of those dear mortal objects of their affections, shall engage them, to resort to the ever-living and all sufficient God, as "their refuge and portion in the land of the living," and from the little streams of pleasure and delight which have failed them in the creatures, to betake themselves to the infinite, everlasting, inexhaustible fountain of joy and happiness, in the Creator, who is blessed forever; if the painful trial of giving up, at their heavenly Father's call, those highly valued temporal comforts, which their hearts would have most fondly retained, shall serve to teach them the wisdom of "setting their affections, not on things on earth, but on things above, where Christ," the Divine friend and advocate of his people, "who can be touched with the feeling of all their infirmities and distresses," "sitteth on the right hand of God," and there "ever liveth to make intercession for them, and is ever ready to make his grace sufficient for them,
and

and his strength perfect in their weakness:" if, in short, the distressing disappointments, which have been experienced in the love of the creature, shall prove effectual to persuade them to employ their most solicitous and active endeavors, to obtain a genuine and encreasing experience of "the love of God in Christ Jesus the Lord," and of the satisfying, the immortal and ever-growing fruits and felicities of this love, "from which they can never be separated, neither by the frailty or power of any creature; neither by life, nor by death; neither by things present, nor by things to come:" If, through the sanctifying blessing of the only wise, and most gracious God and Saviour; "who chastens those whom he loves, and afflicts them not for his pleasure, but for their profit"—"these afflictions, which are not for the present joyous but grievous, shall be made thus to yield to the subjects of them, the peaceable fruits of righteousness," the ineffimable benefits of the holy religion of Christ—they will then know and feel that "happy are the persons whom the Lord correcteth," for such salutary and beneficent purposes; and they will then be led with humble, submissive, grateful hearts, to acknowledge that, "it is indeed good for them that they have been thus afflicted."

The bereaving dispensations of Divine Providence, which we have been contemplating, are well adapted to admonish and to engage parents, generally, to cherish and to manifest, amidst their lawful and reasonable cares, for the temporal comfort and welfare of their children, a still more solicitous and tender concern, to cultivate their minds with the best religious instruction, and, as far

far as human instrumentality can go, to form their conduct according to the divine principles and sacred rules of the Gospel of Christ. Then might they hope, that the distinguishing advantages of a truly christian education, for the present world, would be sooner or later happily realized by the children of their affections; and then would they have the peculiar satisfaction of having faithfully laid the best foundation within their power, for the enjoyment of the greatest comfort in their beloved children, while living with them, and of the strongest consolation respecting them, if they should be removed from them by an early death. Or whatever may be the success of their pious attentions and labours, directed to the promotion of the spiritual benefit, and eternal salvation of their children, rather than to the advancement of their temporal interests and worldly prosperity, they will, at least, have the most satisfactory ground for "rejoicing in the testimony of their own conscience," and in the consoling hope, warranted by the word of God, that they themselves shall be graciously accepted, honored, and recompensed as "the good and faithful servants of the Lord," who have, like "Abraham, the father of the faithful," instructed and "commanded their children, and their household, that they might understand and keep the way of the Lord."

To the youth in our assemblies, the voice of Providence, in these early instances of mortality, most clearly speaks, with the greatest solemnity and emphasis, demanding their special attention, and adapted to be effectual with them to the purposes of admonition and persuasion.

Some of you, from your near connexion with
those

those amiable relatives and friends, who were your pride and joy, while living, and from the deep interest which you have felt in their seemingly premature, and much lamented deaths, have, probably, learned to enter, in some measure, into the spirit of the elegant and pious WATTS, who, when speaking of our dearest joys, our nearest friends; the partners of our blood, observes—

“ The brightest things below the sky
 “ Give but a flattering light;
 “ We should suspect some danger nigh
 “ Where we possess delight.”

And all of you, by these affecting events, taking place in such quick succession, have certainly been reminded, in a manner the most convincing and impressive, that “the time is short”—that the continuance of human life, in every stage and period of it, is extremely precarious—that, “in the midst of life,” when your hopes of a long protracted enjoyment of it may be the most sanguine, “you may be in death.” You may, perhaps, be inclined to view yourselves, as just setting out in the journey of life: You may, however, in reality, be now advanced to the very borders of the grave, and ready to descend into that “house prepared for all living;” there to be joined with *those*, who have gone down to the long home of the children of men, in the midst of as promising a season, and from as bright scenes and prospects of a worldly nature, as those which *you* now enjoy, and in which you may be still disposed to glory and to triumph. Be admonished then, by the unexpected death of others around you, and by the equally precarious circumstances of your own situation, to guard against
 the

the folly of indulging any longer delay, in the all-important business of preparation for death and eternity: and be persuaded to seek the Lord your God and Saviour, while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near," for the communication of his Spirit and grace, which he is ready to give to those who ask him; that, by his agency, you may be immediately made new creatures in Christ, and henceforth pursue a new course of life, even that life of faith, of holiness, of happiness, and of usefulness on earth, in which you will be daily acquiring the best preparation for a safe, a peaceful, a comfortable death; and which you will find, beyond the grave, perfected and perpetuated, in a state of the highest glory and felicity, through all the ages of an unwaiving immortality.

My dear young friends, do you not respect your pastors, and love your parents? Now, so far as they feel a spirit of Christian piety, they cherish a cordial and most tender affection for you, and "they could have no greater joy, than to see you" beginning, without farther delay, "to walk in the truth," or according to the doctrines and the precepts of "pure and undefiled religion." Do you not love your own souls, and desire that they should be happy in life, in death, and forever?—You cannot then, consistently, think it too soon, but must rather consider it as "high time," to enter upon and pursue those peaceful, pleasant ways of heavenly wisdom, in which alone the true happiness of the present life can be found, and which will certainly conduct you to the final enjoyment of a future blessed and glorious immortality. Do you feel any measure of a becoming

ing

ing regard for the church of Christ, for its perpetuity, its prosperity, its increase in the world, in the view of its comprehending those inestimable and most precious interests of our being, which unquestionably demand the first attention, and the most solicitous and unremitting cares of the children of men?—Remember then, that it claims the earliest, and the longest continued support of which you are capable, and that it might be greatly benefitted, particularly by the ardent pious zeal, and active generous services of your youthful years; and be assured, that as it most kindly invites, so it would, most willingly, and gladly receive you into its parental, affectionate bosom. Would you wish to shew that you are influenced by the fear of God, and to manifest, in your conduct, the noblest and best disposition that can possibly animate your breasts, the disposition to love and to honor, with all your powers, the adorable Author of your being and redemption, of all your mercies and hopes? Would you now enjoy “his favor, in which is your life? Would you find him “the strength of your heart, and your unfailing portion, when your flesh and your heart shall fail you in death?”—Would you stand, “with holy boldness, before him in the day of judgment?” And would you dwell forever “in his presence, in which is fulness of joy, and at his right hand, where are pleasures forever more?”—By these considerations then, and by all that is instructive, admonitory, and persuasive in the word, and in the Providence of God, be entreated to think seriously of the great ends for which your life, with all your exalted, rational faculties have been given you, and to keep in
constant

constant view the solemn scenes of death, of judgment, and eternity, to which you are hastening. Then would you, “according to our earnest expectation and hope,” be persuaded immediately to “give your hearts,” and devote yourselves to your Maker and your Redeemer, and thus would you be prepared “to live and to die to the Lord;” and at the end of your mortal course, whether this may be shorter or longer, you will be numbered with all the saints, and with them rejoice and triumph in glory everlasting.

As it well becomes the young to remember their Creator and Redeemer “in the days of their youth;” that they may, immediately, begin to “live to God,” and for eternity, “which is their most reasonable service; so it deeply concerns all, whether in the period of more youthful or more advanced years, who have yet known only the times which belong to the natural life of man, to seek, without further delay, for “the grace by which they may be saved through faith,” for the communication of the Spirit of Grace, by whose Almighty agency they may be made new creatures in Christ, and thus be prepared to enter upon and pursue the course of that spiritual life, on earth, which is the beginning of life eternal, perfected in heaven.

While you remain impenitent and unbelieving, you continue to be, what all men are by nature, “children of wrath;” you are now “dead in trespasses and sins;” and, according to the sentence of the holy, violated law of God, which declares, that “the soul which sinneth shall die,” you are condemned to that eternal death, which constitutes the just punishment and full wages of sin.

~~But will you~~

The

The delay of the execution of this sentence, which you have experienced, is suspended, as it were, upon a breath—and this you know, is in the hand of the Lord—against whom you are continually multiplying your offences; while “his wrath still abideth on you,” because you still refuse to repent, and turn from your transgressions, and to believe in his Son Jesus Christ, in whom, alone, you can obtain reconciliation and peace with him. In the moment when He, whose justice and patience you are thus provoking, “shall take away your breath, you die;” your bodily frame returns to its earth—and your immortal spirit, if not interested in the Saviour, who is “the resurrection and the life, sinks into inevitable and hopeless perdition.

In these circumstances of guilt and danger, is not “the great salvation,” which the Redeemer has purchased with his precious blood, and which is most freely offered to sinners in the gospel, “the one thing needful” to your souls?—And is this accordingly an object of your earnest desire; and is it your serious concern, that you may become the happy partakers of it?—But when you think of seeking it, are you discouraged by the apprehension that all your solicitude about it, and all your attempts to secure it, may be unavailing; as the purposes of God, and the plan of his proceedings, respecting every person, are, from eternity, unalterably fixed?—This is, indeed, a truth most clearly asserted, and most abundantly confirmed in his word; and on any other principle we could not, rationally, allow him to be a God, “whose understanding and wisdom are infinite;” or consider him as properly qualified to be the Gover-

nor of the universe, which he has created. On any other supposition, indeed, it must be admitted, that contingencies may occur, which he had not foreseen, or for which he had not provided, and by which the most important designs and measures of his government might be defeated; and the subjects of it could have no solid ground of confidence towards him, that they shall realize the expectations from him, which they have formed and entertained, according to his word. But why should you, in the present case, allow your minds to be perplexed with “those secret things which belong to God?” With these things you have no concern as motives of action. Is it not enough, that “the things which are revealed belong to you,” and which have been revealed with the view of influencing your conduct? And has not the great God, “whose judgments are unfathomable, and whose ways are past finding out,” revealed himself to us, as “the God of all grace,” and “the Father of mercies,” in his beloved Son?—Has he not manifested his wonderful and unparelled love to guilty, ruined, and helpless men, in sending his beloved Son into the world, in our nature, “to suffer for sins—the Just One for the unjust,”—“that *whosoever* believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life?”—Does not his sacred word testify, that “he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance?”—Has he not, most plainly, and positively declared, and confirmed his word with a most solemn oath, saying, “As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live:”—turn ye,
turn

turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"—Have not, also, the various dispensations of his Providence towards you, apparently concurred in speaking the same language, while, by the "riches of his goodness," he has been alluring you, and, perhaps, also, by the severity of his chastisement, he has been exciting you to repent of your sins, that you may obtain "the forgiveness which is with him;" and "to believe in his Son Jesus Christ, that you may be saved;"—that you may be saved from your sins, and from the future punishment which you deserve, on account of them; and that you may enjoy that peace, which he gives, when in the world you may find only tribulation! And does not the blessed Jesus, who, in his Divine nature, is one with the Father, most affectionately invite "the laboring and the heavy laden to come unto him, that they may find rest to their souls;" solemnly assuring them who come unto him, "that he will, in no wise, cast them out?"

Before you will come unto him, indeed, for these blessings, you must be drawn to him by the Spirit of Grace. But his Holy Spirit, "your Heavenly Father, is most ready to give to those who ask him." Pray, then, that He may thus favor you; and, though you may be conscious that you cannot pray with the proper dispositions of heart, and may apprehend that you have no right to plead any promise of God, as applicable to your particular case; yet, pray as well as you can, till you obtain the genuine "spirit of prayer and supplication;" and still encourage the hope that He, who is represented under the character of "the Hearer of prayer," with the view of en-

gaging “all flesh to come unto him,”—that “He who heareth even the young ravens, when they cry, and giveth them their food”—that “He who often delivereth the children of men out of their distresses, when they cry unto him in their temporal trouble”—that He, who has, in innumerable instances, glorified his name in the everlasting salvation of sinners, when they have been led to enquire “what they shall do to be saved?”—and to improve the appointed means of grace; though they have done these things, at first, merely from a regard to their own happiness: that He will be found still ready “to shew you his mercy,” when you earnestly implore it; and “to grant you the salvation,” for which you call upon him, as in this work of grace he eminently delights! The husbandman, who “plougheth and soweth in hope,” is universally allowed to act wisely, although he has no assurance that he shall be “a partaker of his hope”—since this depends on the will of God, who appoints and orders the seasons, so that, at his pleasure, they kindly bring forward, or prove unfriendly and destructive, to the expected crop. Be you admonished, then, to go and do likewise; to act with equal wisdom in the concerns of your souls, still attending to the word, and improving, in the best manner of which you are capable, the means of salvation; in the hope, not of saving yourselves, or meriting salvation, by these means, but that “He who is gracious to whom he will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom he will shew mercy,” and who bestows the blessings of his favor in his own way and time, may, sooner or later, give you the repentance and faith which he requires of you, and may make

YOU

you partakers of the salvation which you deeply need, which you continue earnestly to seek, and which will, as it alone can, make you truly happy in time, and complete your blessedness, through all the ages of eternity.

And now, let those who are experimentally acquainted with the times included in the spiritual life, be exhorted to remember their obligations, that they may act conformably to them; and to consider and improve their privileges, that they may enjoy the comfort of them, to “the praise and glory of God” in Christ their Redeemer.

As the Providence of God, in all its varied dispensations, from the earliest dawn of your existence, was constantly employed in ordering every circumstance and event, in which you were interested, in such a manner, as would, ultimately, prove most favorable to the accomplishment of the great design of your salvation; so, from the period in which, by faith in Christ, “you passed from death unto life;” all the succeeding dealings of the Lord with you, have been marked with the evidences and tokens of his distinguishing loving kindness and tender mercy: while all things comfortable and afflicting, under his directing hand, and through his sanctifying grace, have been “working together for your good;” and your greatest trials, especially, have been most wisely and kindly ordered, with the view of their yielding to you the present peaceable fruit of righteousness, and of “working for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of future glory.”—Thus highly favored of the Lord, “let your souls, and all within you, bless his holy name, for all his benefits,” which you have already experienced;

perienced; and, confiding with a ftrong and fted-
 faft faith, in “the great and precious promifes
 of the gofpel, which relate to the life that now
 is, and to that which is to come. and which are
 in Chrift, yea and amen”--go on your way, re-
 joicing--affured, that “goodnefs and mercy fhall
 ftill follow you,” even to the end of your courfe.
 Called to be the followers of Chrift, your Saviour
 and your Lord; and profefling to have devoted
 yourfelves, unrefervedly, to his fervice, ftudy and
 labor, with conftant prayer, for increafing light
 and grace, that you may underftand his will, and
 approve yourfelves his good and faithful fervants;
 and fhew yourfelves worthy of the high honor
 with which he diftinguifhes his difciples, when he
 fays--“*Ye are my friends, if ye do whatfoever I
 command you.*” In the ftations, which he ap-
 points to you, in the world and in his church,
 diligently attend to the duties which he requires
 of you. If in thofe ftations, “he gives you rich-
 ly all things to enjoy, be thankful, and humble,
 and rich in all good works;” or if he allows you
 no more than fimple “food and raiment,” ftill
 “be content with fuch things as you have:” And
 whatever may be your circumftances to-day,
 “take no anxious thought for to-morrow;” but,
 “cafting all your care on the Lord,” cheerfully
 fubmit yourfelves, and leave all future events, in
 which you may be concerned, to his difpofal,
 “who well knows what things you have need of,”
 and who alone knows what is beft for you. “Thus
 walking by faith,” and with a conftant, practical
 regard to “the covenant and the testimonies of
 the Lord, you fhall affuredly find, that all his paths
 towards you are mercy and truth.”

“Happy

“Happy is the people that is in such a case;—yea”—happy indeed—unspeakably “happy is the people whose God is the Lord:”

In all the seasons and vicissitudes of life, the Lord, “whose they are and whom they serve,” is graciously with them as “their sun and shield”—“their light and their salvation—their joy and their strength.” In their last solemn, dying hour, however suddenly, or in whatever circumstances it may come, “they need not fear to walk through the valley and shadow of death;” because the Lord, their Heavenly Shepherd, their Divine Saviour, who never leaves nor forsakes his people, shall there be with them, to support and comfort them, and give them the victory, in the conflict with the last enemy; and to honor them with “an entrance ministered to them abundantly into his everlasting kingdom.” And having guided and kept them in the right and best way through life; having prepared and enabled them to finish their course, in death, with joy; and having, finally, received them to glory; they shall, then, be “ever with their Lord”—and “beholding his glory”—“and sharing, to the utmost extent of their capacity, “in his joy,” they shall, with all the redeemed who surround his heavenly throne, “sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb—saying, great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints!”

By his grace, may we be prepared for joining, in due time, that great and blessed assembly; that “with all the saints, we may be forever joyful in glory,” and forever triumph “in the high praises of our God!” “To whom be glory in the church,
by

by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end." . . . **A M E N !**

N O T E,

Referred to at the bottom of Page 29.

THE observations here made, have a special reference to the storm, which was felt in the latitudes of the southern states, on the 22d; but which rose not to its height in the latitude of New-York, till the 24th of August, 1806.

During this tremendous gale, an immense number of vessels, at sea, sustained very great injury, and many were completely wrecked, and finally lost:—And, in their destruction, a multitude of human lives were inevitably involved. Among the instances of this nature, particularly noticed and felt in our city, was the fine schooner *Comet*, Captain Drummond, which was upset, and wrecked, on the passage from Norfolk to Charleston. On board of this packet were more than twenty passengers; and, in the whole, about thirty persons, of whom only five or six were, by the good Providence of God, preserved on the wreck, till they were happily relieved from their perilous and distressing situation, by the friendly agency of Capt. JAMES SERRILL, of the brig *South-Carolina*, who had encountered, and weathered, the same gale, on his passage from Philadelphia to this port.

But the catastrophe of the ship *Raja-in-Bloom*, one of the principal vessels, regularly employed in the coasting trade, between this city and New-York, excited the most extensive and painful sensibility, that has been experienced among us, from any similar event, for a long course of years:—That ship was pursuing her course from Charleston to New York, when she was overtaken with this dreadful and destructive storm; and after long contending with the fury of the elements, was, at length, upset, on Sunday morning, the 24th of August, at no great distance from the New-Jersey shore. Of *forty-eight* persons who were on board of this vessel, when this calamitous event took place, *twenty-one* perished—Included with the last mentioned, were several respectable inhabitants of our city, who have thus left their respective families, connexions, and friends, to mourn under this sudden and very afflicting stroke, with deep and lasting sorrow.—Among those, here particularly

particularly alluded to, were General M^cPERSON, Mr. TAIT, Mr. BOWERING, Mr. MILLER, and Mrs. BOOTH and SON.

In a very well written and interesting account of this awful scene of distress, first published in one of the daily papers in the city of New-York, the writer begins with observing, that “since the wreck of the *Hazael* Indiaman, on the horrors of which the most pathetic strains of the mourning muse have been lavishly poured forth, and the painters pencil so frequently employed, nothing of the kind has occurred, at least, that we can at present call to recollection, so well calculated to wring the heart of humanity, and to excite sorrow and sympathy in every bosom, not wholly shut against the tender visitings of our nature, as the *Shipwreck* of the *Rose-in-Bloom*.”

Proceeding to give a pathetic detail of some of the most remarkable circumstances, attending this disastrous event, he states,—among other affecting particulars, that “in the gallant efforts of a brave father, to save a beloved child, General M^cPERSON, who, from the earliest to the latest moment, incessantly exclaimed, *Save my daughter*, was numbered with the dead;” and that “Mr. BOOTH, another of the passengers, was called to suffer the peculiarly painful trial of seeing his wife and child buried forever in the deep.” Miss M^cPERSON was, in a manner, almost miraculously snatched from the devouring waves, at the moment when it seemed, as if she must be inevitably overwhelmed by them. Those, who, together with her, were, by a wonderful interposition of Divine mercy and power, delivered from the destruction, with which all appeared to be equally threatened, after conflicting with dangers and distresses, which no language can describe, during the remainder of that memorable day, and the succeeding gloomy night; were, on the following day, taken off the wreck, by Captain PHELAN, of the British brig *Sariff*, who cheerfully consented to go out of his course, and carried them safely into New-York. The benevolent and great exertions employed by this worthy man, for the relief and preservation of these deeply distressed sufferers; and the very humane and kind attentions by which he labored to make their situation, while under his care, as comfortable as possible, were, in a very high degree, honorable to his character, as well as most peculiarly reasonable, and beneficial to them: and by them, his truly friendly and important services, were felt.

felt and acknowledged with the liveliest sensibility, and with a correspondent spirit of honor and generosity.

The *Rise-in-Bloom*, besides being charged with so many precious lives, was freighted with property, estimated at the value of 120,000, or 130,000 dollars—and it was but a small proportion of this, that was ultimately saved.

This very afflicting disaster, has been thus particularly noticed, on account of the particular interest in it, which has been so deeply felt by many in our city. It was, however, but a sample of many similar calamities at sea, produced by this awful visitation of heaven: and so far as it prevailed on the land, it has proved extremely injurious to the crops, which it has, in very many instances, greatly diminished; and in some cases nearly destroyed. ~~Was~~ was this the only violent and destructive storm, which occurred during the season, under review—for within the short compass of a few weeks of this season, several other storms, not less severe, though much less extensive, have been experienced in the West-Indies, and in different places along the American coast, and especially in the more southern latitudes; which have not been equalled in number, violence, and destructive consequences, in the same space of time, within the knowledge, or recollection, of our eldest inhabitants.

In these remarkable dispensations of Divine Providence, may we not clearly discern, that the Lord “in whose hands are all our times,” “hath a controversy with a guilty people,” and is manifesting his displeasure against their sins, by the infliction of his righteous judgments?—Let all, then, who have thus seen “his mighty hand lifted up;” and especially those who have felt the painful strokes of his chastising rod, humble themselves before him, in deep repentance for their past offences; and meekly receiving the correction for these, with which they have been visited, let them learn to acknowledge, reverence, love, and serve him, more devoutly and faithfully, for the time to come; that in all things they may, according to their obligations, henceforth glorify his holy name. “Them, who, from the heart, thus honor him,” he will also honor with the distinguishing blessings of his favor, on earth, in heaven, and through eternity.

FINIS.