A

SERIES OF SERMONS,

UPON THE MOST IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES

OF OUR

HOLY RELIGION,

In Two Volumes.

By ALEXANDER MACWHORTER, D. D.

SENIOR PASTOR OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, IN NEWARK, NEW-JERSEY.

VOL. I.

Christ the Power of God and the Wisdom of God.

PAUL.

Copy Right Secured.

NEWARK:

PRINTED BY PENNINGTON & GOULD, FOR THE AUTHOR.

1803.

Digitized by Google

WE the subscribers, members of the First Presbyterian Congregation of Newark, unite in preferring a respectful request to the Reverend Doctor Macwhorter, our much esteemed Pastor, that he would favor us with a copy of the systematical Lectures, which he is now delivering, that we may put them to press for the present and future benefit of us and our children; and that we may enjoy the happiness of hearing our beloved minister and guide speaking to us, even when he shall be sleeping in the grave. And if, at this our earnest request, these Lectures shall be published, we do hereby severally agree to take the number of copies which underneath is annexed to our respective names

[*The above was followed by a subscription for two hundred and four copies.*]

Digitized by Google

PREFACE.

THE public seems to have a claim upon every Author, either from custom, or the nature of the case, that he should give some account why he ushers his productions into the world. This claim is no where made with more propriety than upon the publishers of common sermons. All the author can say in apology for his own conduct, is, that this publication was not a matter of his own devising or choice. It was much importunity that prevailed upon him to submit to this business. Some kind and peculiar friends, to whom it was difficult for him to refuse any thing, in a measure pressed him hereto.

His objections were, that they were only common place discourses—that there was nothing new in them—that they contained nothing but such truths as had been preached and printed over and over again ever since the *Reformation*—that the world was full of sermons, whose method, stile, and composition were vastly superior to any thing to which he could make a pretension, and therefore, he might stand excused from such an undertaking.—But it was plead, every one has his friends, and that he had many throughout the *Union*, who would read his works, and that too, because they were his, and that it was proper they should be gratified—especially, that it would be acceptable to the people of his own charge—that these discourses would be read by the younger part of his congregation, when others would not—that they might be useful to souls when he should sleep in the dust—that they

Digitized by Google

would be an evidence to posterity of the doctrines which had been taught in this Church, while he was Pastor of it, throughout a period of more than forty-four years—and that when he should be dead, he might still preach unto them.

These, with other considerations laid before him, prevailed, and with reluctance and diffidence, he has given them up to public view.

Whether these are the best selection he could make from his manuscripts, he does not pretend to say—but he endeavoured to choose the best he could think of, at the time of making it.

When these Sermons were composed for his usual preaching, not dreaming of their ever being desired for publication, and not having made notes of reference to authors from whom he obtained assistance, and it is now impracticable for him to do it; all he can say is, he knows that he is obliged to many; therefore, this general acknowledgment must suffice. Were it in his power to be particular, he would with pleasure do it.

In these Discourses, he has avoided the intricacies of controversy; because it never was his custom to carry such things into the pulpit, neither did he ever observe much good arising from it. His mode of preaching has been to inculcate upon his people the great doctrines and duties of the gospel; and if the plain truths of religion will not be beneficial to souls, it is not probable disputation will be of much service in promoting the sweet, tender and blessed spirit of christianity.

Seeing these discourses are now published, the author's earnest and fervent prayer is, that God of his special grace would be pleased to bless them, render them useful in the instruction, awakening and conversion of some poor sinners, and for the edification, direction and consolation of some of the dear friends of the precious Immanuel; to whom be glory in the churches forever.

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS.

Page

SERMON I.

The existence of God demonstrated.

Rom. i. 22. For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood from the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse. . . . 9

SERMON II.

The divinity of the Holy Scriptures proved.

II Tim. iii. 16. All scripture is given by inspiration of God. 20

SERMON III.

The doctrine of the Trinity established.

I John v. 7. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. . . 35

SERMON IV.

Jesus Christ proved to be very God, co-equal and of the same essence with the Father.

John x. 30. I and my Father are one. . . 48

SERMON V.

The equality of the Holy Ghost as God, with the Father and the Son, proved.

Acts v. 34. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whilst it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. . 59

Digitized by Google

SERMON VI.

Some of the natural perfections of God considered.

Psalms cxlv. 3. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be feared, and his greatness is unsearchable. . . . 63

SERMON VII.

Contemplations on some of the moral perfections of God.

Exodus xxxiii. 19. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee. 80

SERMON VIII.

The primitive rectitude of man.

Gen. i. 26, 27. And God said let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let him have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him. . 93

SERMON IX.

The primitive covenant made with man, or the covenant of works.

Gen. ii. 16, 17. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou mayest not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die. 106

SERMON X.

The image of Adam impressed on all his posterity.

Gen. v. 3. And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness and after his image. 117

SERMON XI.

The first intimation of hope to fallen man considered.

Gen. iii. 15. And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. . . . 129

Digitized by Google

SERMON XII.

The impossibility of man's salvation by the first constitution, yet a strange disposition to seek eternal life by it.

Gen. iii. 24. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden, cherubims and a flaming sword, which turned every way to keep the tree of life. 140

SERMON XIII.

Original Sin established.

Rom. xv. 12. Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. . . . 149

SERMON XIV.

The exceeding greatness of man's depravity.

Jer. xvii. 9. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. 158

SERMON XV.

The first advent of Christ, a great event.

Psalms xl. 7, 8. Then said I, lo I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me; I delight to do thy will, O my God. 170

SERMON XVI.

Looking to Jesus for Salvation.

Isa. xlv. 22. Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth; for I am God and there is none else. . 181

SERMON XVII.

Safety in repairing to Jesus.

Isa. xxxii. 2. And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. 190

SERMON XVIII.

The blood of Christ the ground of Salvation.

1 John i. 7. The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin. 200

Digitized by Google

SERMON XIX.

Christ a precious Saviour.

I. Pet. ii. 7. Unto you therefore who believe he is precious. 211

SERMON XX.

Security in a state of sin described.

Rom. vii. 9. For I was alive without the law once. . 221

SERMON XXI.

The nature and use of convictions.

Acts xvi. 29. 30. Then he called for a light and sprang in, and came trembling and fell down before St. Paul and Silas, and brought them out and said, sirs, what might I do to be saved. 232

SERMON XXII.

The doctrine of regeneration considered.

John. iii. 3. Jesus answered and said unto him, verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. . . . 243

SERMON XXIII.

Some of the first effects of Regeneration.

II. Cor. v. 17. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away; behold all things are become new. 253

SERMON XXIV.

Conversion considered.

Psalms. xix. 7. The law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul. 263

SERMON XXV.

The putting off the Old-Man.

Ephe. iv. 22. That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old-Man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. 273

SERMON XXVI.

Evangelical Repentance.

Acts xvii. 30. And the times of this ignorance, God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent. 284

Digitized by Google

SERMON XXVII.

The doctrine of Repentance farther considered.

Luke xiii. 3. I tell you nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. . . . 296

SERMON XXVIII.

Saving faith described.

Heb. ii. 1. Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. 307

SERMON XXIX.

Saving knowledge distinguished and explained.

Jer. ix. 24. Let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving kindness, and judgment and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight saith the Lord. 319

SERMON XXX.

Justification by the righteousness of Christ.

Rom. x. 4. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. . . . 330

SERMON XXXI.

Acceptance with God by Christ's obedience to the law.

Isa. xlii. 21. The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake, he will magnify the law and make it honorable. 342

SERMON XXXII.

Adoption.

I. John iii. 1. Behold, what manner of love, the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God. 353

SERMON XXXIII.

Sanctification.

I. Thes. iv. 3. This is the will of God even your sanctification. 351

Digitized by Google

SERMON XXXIV.

The nature and necessity of Holiness.

Heb. xii. 24. Follow—Holiness without which, no man shall see the Lord. 376

SERMON XXXV.

Love to God, the great commandment.

Mark xii. 30. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment. 387

SERMON XXXVI.

Love to our neighbour explained.

Gal. v. 14. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. . 397

SERMON XXXVII.

Love the great principle of all religion.

I. Cor. xiii. 2. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and tho' I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have no charity, I am nothing. . . . 408

SERMON XXXVIII.

Assurance of grace established.

II. Pet. i. 10. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give all diligence to make your calling and election sure. . 418

SERMON XXXIX.

The testimony of a good conscience.

II. Cor. i. 12. For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and Godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you ward. 429

Digitized by Google

SERMON XL.

A Gospel Hope.

I. John iii. 3. And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure. . . . 439

SERMON XLI.

Growth in Grace.

II. Pet. iii. 18. But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. . . . 450

SERMON XLII.

The perseverance of the Saints proved.

Rom. viii. 38. 39 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which in Christ Jesus our Lord. 463

Digitized by Google

SERMON I.

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD DEMONSTRATED.

ROMANS, I. 20.

For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood from the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.

ALL nature declares there is a God. If any thing which is seen, felt, or understood exists, then there exists a first cause, and that cause is God. If we are sure that we ourselves are, and that we see, hear and understand, it is equally certain to the most perfect demonstration, that God exists. If we and all around us are non-entities, and there is nothing in the universe, then it will be granted, that there is no God. Persons who are under such derangement of mind, as to argue that they themselves are nothing, that they have no such thing as are called senses, that there is no feeling, seeing, smelling or tasting, that this world, and all its inhabitants, furniture, order, and beauty are nothing, no man, unless equally deranged, would enter into reasoning or argument with such. Where nothing is, the attempt to originate an argument, must be both foolish and contradictory.

A leading doctrine of Saint Paul, in this epistle to the Romans, was, to prove the absolute necessity of the justification of sinners before God, by the atonement of a Mediator, or by the righteousness of Jesus Christ alone. And as a master reasoner, he demonstrates every proposition advanced, as he passes along,

Digitized by Google

that his doctrine might come home to the judgment and conscience of every one, with the most perfect certainty, and highest conviction of its truth. Hence he first proves that all, Jew and Gentile, were sinners, under the wrath of God, and liable to be punished with everlasting destruction. He opens and produces his proofs in the first place against the Gentile world, and afterwards against the Jew, and undeniably establishes this melancholy and awful truth, "There is none righteous, no not one."* In respect to the Gentiles, he declares, "The wrath of God is revealed "from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of "men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." The particular instance here assumed, in order to convict them of ungodliness and unrighteousness, is, that they stifled, suppressed, and counteracted those notions of right and wrong, and that knowledge of God which they had. "They held the truth in unrighteousness," that is, they wickedly and wilfully acted contrary to what they knew to be just, reasonable, and proper with regard to God. To support the charge of acting contrary to the knowledge they had of God, it was necessary to prove they had some knowledge of him; hence he declares, "That which may be "known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it "unto them." The existence and some of the perfections of God were displayed among them, for he had given abundant and clear evidence hereof; he had shewed it unto them in every thing they beheld, in all the works of creation.

In the words of the text, the Apostle proceeds particularly to state that knowledge which was attainable, and which they had from this source, to wit. the knowledge of his being, and supreme and eternal power: "For the invisible things of him from the "creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the "things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead, so "that they are without excuse." The plain sense of these words, and the evident design of the Apostle is, to establish this truth,

That the existence of God, and some of his perfections, may

*Rom. ii. 10.—*Verse* 18.—*Verse* 19.

Digitized by Google

be learned or deduced, with the highest certainty, from the works of creation.

What is intended at present, is a brief and rational demonstration of the being of God, after the manner of arguing his existence here proposed by the Apostle, to wit. from his works.

By the name God, is meant an eternal, uncaused, independent, necessary, active, infinitely powerful, and intelligent Being. This description is sufficient for my present purpose. If the existence of such a Being be proved, the existence of God is proved. For such an existence is God, in all rational enquiries after or respecting the reality of his Being.

There are various topics or heads of argument, from whence this truth may be solidly evinced, but I mean to pursue one simple chain of reasoning founded on an undeniable fact, which cannot be controverted or contradicted by the greatest sceptic. In this way, I suppose the existence of the Being described, is capable of strict and perfect demonstration. And this is the way in which the Apostle proceeds in our text—For he makes it manifest, that the Gentiles, who were destitute of a divine revelation, were, or at least *might be assured* of the existence of God, from the works of creation; but if the works of creation, or the things clearly seen, would not afford undeniable and satisfying evidence to the mind of this truth without revelation, there could be no assurance of the divine existence and power—and, consequently, the heathens would have a just excuse for their atheism and wickedness; whereas the Apostle argues, that they are without excuse.

That such a Being does exist, which we signify by the term God, is now to be proved. And that all may understand and have conviction hereof, I shall proceed, by the most easy and gradual steps, laying the foundation of the reasoning in the most plain, obvious, and incontestible facts and principles. Wherefore observe,

First, That something does now exist, or that some external

Digitized by Google

objects, and obvious to our senses, now are. Nothing can be more evident or certain than this. This it a fact, of which every person is perfectly assured. We are as sure of this, as that we have senses or understanding. No one doubts of the existence of the things without him, and around him. No one doubts that the world in which he lives, is something. Every one is assured, that it is replenished with inhabitants, and those he daily converses with, are real existences. At least, every one is convinced of his own existence. Every one is sure that he himself is. If he be not sure of this, he can be sure of nothing. There can be no such thing as assurance, or evidence of any fact. In a word, the present existence of something, of this world, and of ourselves is so clear, as not to permit us to reason upon it, in order to make it clearer. One who denies this, cannot be reasoned with at all about any thing whatsoever. Because it is one of the first and most evident of all truths. It is so evident, that it can admit of no additional evidence. It is a self evident and notorious fact. A man cannot open his eyes, nay, he cannot think one thought, or speak one word, but he must receive irresistible conviction, that something now is, or does exist. Therefore, I observe,

Secondly, No being or thing, which now exists, could make itself, or come into being of itself. Consider the terms in which this proposition is expressed, and every one must immediately be convinced of its truth. Is it not impossible that any thing should make itself, or give being to itself, when as yet it was a nonentity, or nothing? Is it not self evident, that which is nothing, can neither act nor do any thing? Now for a thing to make itself, or come into existence of itself, is certainly to do something; therefore, it must be, and not be, that it must be something and nothing, act and not act, at the same time. In order to make itself, it must be—for surely what is not, cannot do any thing; and yet it must not be or exist—for if it already exists, it cannot now begin to be, or come into existence; because that which already has obtained existence, cannot have existence

Digitized by Google

given to it; nothing that now has had a beginning, could, therefore, have made itself. Thus far the proposition must be evident.

Though it is clear to all, that nothing could make itself, yet it may not be equally clear to all, that no being could come into existence of itself. Let this matter be now particularly attended to.

The supposition is, that some being or thing, which now exists, did, at some certain period, begin to be, or came into existence of itself. Before this period it was not, and there was nothing existing. Let it only be contemplated, that every thing which begins to be, must have some ground or reason of its beginning to exist; but in this case, there could be no reason, cause, or ground of its existence. Because, to suppose this, will be to return back to the former absurdity of its making itself, or of being and not being, at the same time. There also could be no ground or cause of its beginning to be, in any other being or thing—because, on the supposition, there was no other being or thing existent at the time it began to be, of consequence, no other being or thing could have contributed to its existence, but itself; neither could itself, for antecedently to the particular time it began to be, it was nothing, and, therefore, could do nothing in any respect whatever; it is, therefore, evident, with the greatest certainty, that nothing that now exists, could come into existence of itself.—From hence, it necessarily follows,

Thirdly, That something always was, or some being is eternal, and never began to be.

This proposition is as evident as either of the former, and follows from them as an absolutely necessary inference. Because they are true, this must be true also. For seeing something now is, it is plain something always was, or that some being is eternal. Because, on the supposition that at some certain period there was nothing, it has been demonstrated, there never could have been any thing. For if at any time there was nothing, and now there is something in existence, then, necessarily, some-

Digitized by Google

thing must have made itself, or something must come into being of itself, all of which, we have clearly proved to be impossible; now, from the plain fact, that something exists, no other conclusion can remain, but that something always was, or is eternal, and never began to be. That something always was, or existed from eternity, is, therefore, as certain, and rests upon as sure a foundation, as that something now is. Whoever admits the latter, must be obliged to admit the former. There is no possible evading this conclusion, that something existed from eternity, never began to be, but by denying that any thing now exists. And where any thing is made so evident, that it cannot be evaded by a person, but by renouncing all his senses, his reason, and his own existence, it may be justly said to be strict and proper demonstration.—From the preceding propositions, it follows, with the utmost certainty, in the

Fourth place, That some being was uncaused, or was from eternity of itself, without a cause. Attention to the preceding propositions, will administer the fullest conviction of this truth. For what always was, and never began to be, but was from eternity, can have no cause of its existence. To say that any being has a cause of its existence, is the same thing as to say, that such a being was produced; but to say a being that always was, and never begun to be, was produced, is a gross contradiction. Because, saying that a being is produced, is the same thing as saying that once it was not, or that antecedently to this production, it did not exist. Whereas this Being is eternal, did always exist, and never had a beginning.—Besides, all beings had a cause of their existence, or some being is uncaused. If it be said that all beings had a cause of their existence, then it is plain that some being must have caused or produced itself. The first being that existed, at least, must have come into being of itself, or have been the cause of its own existence, which returns us to the old absurdity, of some being making itself. Therefore, it is absolutely certain, that some being is uncaused, or exists eternally, without a cause of its existence, and this being is God.

Digitized by Google

It may be proper here to observe, that this being without any cause of its existence, is a part of the idea intended to be expressed, when we say, that God is self-existent. It does not mean that he came into being of himself, or was the cause of his own existence, but it is used to signify, that he is not of another, nor of himself as a cause, but that he is a Being of so peculiar, exalted, transcendent, and incomprehensible a nature, as renders it impossible that he should ever not have existed.

From these foregoing principles, it follows,

Fifthly, That there is a being which is absolutely independent.

If there be some being which exists without a cause, then it is undeniable, that in regard to its existence, this being must be independent, he exists in an inconceivable manner, in and of himself. And he who is independent as to his being, must be equally so with respect to the continuance of his existence, and all that he is. For there can be no possible reason, why the continuance of his being should be dependent, whose existence itself is independent. He who receives not his existence from another, but has it in himself, cannot be dependent on another for the continuance of it. Because, to have his existence in himself, and yet to be dependent on another, is a plain contradiction. Moreover all being is dependent, or some one being is independent. To say that any being is dependent, necessarily implies, that there is some one on which he depends; for he, who depends on no one, does not depend, or he is independent. Therefore, it is perfectly certain, that there is some being, which is simply and absolutely independent, the cause of all other beings, and on which all other things depend, and this independent Being is God. Thus far, the demonstration is clear. Hence we proceed to add,

Sixthly, That some being exists necessarily, or which is the same thing, is self-evident.

He who is an eternal, uncaused and independent being, must

Digitized by Google

needs be a necessary or self-existent being. For such an one could not be produced by another ; it is eternal, and never began to be. It could not make itself—for this supposes it did not always exist, but had a beginning, the contrary of which, has been already proved. If, therefore, it did not come into existence by its own will, nor by the will of any other, it is undeniable, that it must be self-existent ; and the true and proper notion of self-existence is necessary existence, that cannot but be, and it is impossible, it should not have always existed, or should cease to exist.

Now for a being to exist, necessarily is to be all that it is by the necessity of its own nature. This is plain from this consideration. Because if there exists not such a being, there never possibly could have been any thing. And there is no way of avoiding the force of this conclusion, that some being exists by an essential and absolute necessity of nature, but by denying the existence of any thing and every thing, than which, we have seen, nothing can be more absurd.

When we say that a being exists by an absolute necessity of nature, it means that its nature is of such a kind, it is impossible but that it must exist, or that its nature implies existence, as much as any one proposition or truth implies another. .

With regard to a being, whose essence is simply necessary, all the attributes, properties, and perfections which belong to his being must be necessary also, in the same absolute manner as his essence. To suppose otherwise, is to suppose he is not necessarily what he is. But the weakness and inconsistency of this, has been before shown.

From this character of a necessary, self-existent, and independent being, it is easy to demonstrate his almighty and eternal power. Contemplate the things which you see, hear, feel and understand—contemplate your own existenee, the world on which you dwell, with all its furniture and inhabitants, and lift up your eyes and behold the heavens, the sun, moon and stars, those im-

Digitized by Google

mense and unnumbered orbs which roll around us, and scepticism itself cannot deny infinite, almighty, and eternal power. But I do not mean at present to discourse of the astonishing attributes of the most high.

I proceed, therefore, to say,

Seventhly, That the being whose existence hath been demonstrated, must be a self-active being.—Activity must be essential to his nature, or he must necessarily possess a power of action in and of himself, underived and independent.

In order to evince this matter, let it be considered, that it is altogether unreasonable to suppose, that the only being who can be proved eternal and independent, should be an inactive being, destitute of all ability to do or effect any thing. Such a being could be of no service whatsoever; the existence of such an one could answer no purpose—there could be nothing desirable or excellent in the existence of such an inert and sluggish being. It would be as fit a thing in itself, that there should be no being, or nothing whatsoever, as one perfectly incapable of doing any thing. A being that can do nothing, is plainly no better than non-entity. Therefore, to suppose the only being who can be demonstrated to be eternal, is an inert or inactive being, one destitute of all power of action, is very little short of an express contradiction. Can any thing be more absurd, than to suppose that a being which is eternal, and exists by the necessity and fullness of his own nature, should, notwithstanding, be destitute of that which only can make his existence better than non-existence.

It is very clear that something now exists, and, therefore, that something has always existed, or been from eternity, without beginning, and exists necessarily and of itself; because, otherwise there could have been nothing that now is. For as nothing could make itself, the things which are, must necessarily be made by some one who is unmade and self-existent. It is impossible to ac-

Digitized by Google

count for the existence of things in any other way. It is impossible that any thing should exist, if there be not some being who exists necessarily and eternally. But let it be supposed that this eternal and necessarily existent being is not self-active, is destitute of all power of action, we are where we were, as to any possible account for the existence of things. For if this self-existent being be without a power of action in and of himself, it is manifest such an existence can contribute nothing towards an explication of the original of all things. Because a being who has not a power of action can do nothing, and, therefore, cannot be the author of any thing. Such a being could never be the cause of other things, for an inactive or inefficient cause cannot be said to be any cause at all. That which is inert cannot do any thing—for doing always supposes activity. So that to imagine an eternal, self-existent, inactive being, can signify no more towards accounting for the existence of all other things, than if it were imagined that there is no self-existent being whatsoever. It appears, therefore, from the present existence of things, that the only eternal, uncaused, independent, self-existent being must be indued with a power of action in and of himself.

There is no relief from the force of this reasoning, but by supposing all things were eternal and necessary as they now are, which is nothing less than supposing that all the things we see are eternal, that I am eternal, and each of you eternal, which surely would be folly, madness and absurdity in the extreme.

Upon the whole, we conclude on the most certain grounds, that there is a God, nay, we are obliged to yield to this conclusion, or to renounce our reason, our senses, and even our own existence. Every thing about us, and in us, forces this conclusion upon us in the most irresistable manner.

Let us now, as rational creatures, set our hearts to the consideration of this most important matter. Let this great truth, God is, attend us at all times, in all places, and in all our transactions

Digitized by Google

of every kind. Let us remember, that if we act as if there were no God, we have our reason and conscience against us, so that we shall be without excuse. If the heathen shall be without excuse, much more will this be our case. If, in our practice, we forget there is a God, our reason at last will be a swift witness against us. As God exists and is the author of all things, there can be no room to doubt, that he takes notice of, and is the supreme governor of all, and will finally bring all to an account for their conduct. Let this reflection dwell on our minds, and let us live and act as persons who believe the same.

As there is a God, his rational creatures ought to love him with a supreme affection. He is worthy of their most exalted esteem, devotion and reverence. Therefore, let us give him our whole hearts, and delight in him as our chief end. Let us fear before him, let us fear to sin, knowing that he is infinite in power, and will punish all iniquity. It is of the highest importance, that we serve him with faithfulness, with sincerity, integrity and uprightness of mind; that we acknowledge our absolute dependence upon him, and worship him in purity of heart. Let it be ever remembered by us, that "He that cometh to God must believe that he "*is*, and that he *is* the rewarder of them that diligently seek "him."

Digitized by Google

SERMON II.

THE DIVINITY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES PROVED.

II. TIMOTHY III. 16.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.

THE truth and certainty of the Holy Scriptures being a revelation from God, for the instruction of mankind in faith and practice, when properly established, must be a matter of the highest importance. Every christian ought to have sufficient reasons to support and comfort his own mind respecting this great reality, and ought to possess some arguments for the refutation or silencing of gainsayers and unbelievers. The truth of the scriptures being a revelation from heaven, may be proved from a great variety of topics; from the purity of the matter, the holiness of their tendency, the dignity of their style, the consistency of all their parts, the blessedness of their effects, and the design of the whole, to shew forth the excellencies of all the divine perfections, to display the glory of God, especially the fullness and exceeding riches of heavenly grace and mercy, in the recovery of a lost and ruined world, to holiness and eternal felicity. But the two principal arguments on which the scriptures, as the inspiration of God, most certainly rest, are miracles and the fulfilment of prophecies. Miracles are abundantly sufficient to administer conviction to the minds of them who are present or behold them, of the truth of the doctrine delivered, and the divine commission and authority of those who performed the same. We are ready to suppose if we had been present, and seen the miracles wrought by Moses,

Digitized by Google

Elijah, Christ and the Apostles, we should surely have believed; but we know that many who saw those stupendous works, remained still in unbelief. So, if these wonders were performed again, in the presence of the world, it is highly probable it would be as it was then, many would attribute them to wrong causes, many would not believe them. We have these matters handed down to us in the most uncorrupted record, and established by irrefragable testimony—yet, what multitudes continue unbelievers? But, that the eternal God might leave mankind absolutely without excuse for their infidelity, he has confirmed his revelation by predictions of future events, and the exact and perfect accomplishment thereof. And these predictions were made from the earliest times, and have been fulfilled in all periods of the world, and are fulfilling at this day, and will be fulfilling throughout all future ages. These things fully demonstrate the prescience of God, and are standing monuments to every generation, of the divinity of the holy scriptures. But if the predictions and the accomplishment of the events foretold, be stated before men with such clearness of evidence, that they cannot be denied or evaded, then infidelity objects, that the history was written after the fulfillment of the prophecy, and thus, instead of proving divine truth, proves the basest wickedness, and the grossest imposture. If the predictions of events which are yet to come to pass, be retailed to them, they reject their possible fulfillment as foolish and absurd. When predictions, which have been delivered hundreds and thousands of years ago, are represented to them as facts now accomplishing, as realities now exhibiting before the world, as events now obvious to the eyes and understanding of all, infidels are here non-plused, stunned and confounded, and although they cannot answer, they remain, generally, obstinately unconvinced. For thorough-paced infidels have, in all ages, with a very few exceptions, remained infidels still. But frequently, to bring forward the arguments in favour of our holy religion, to show its divine authority, is of the greatest benefit for the comfort and confirma-

Digitized by Google

tion of christians in the truth, and for the conviction of the wavering and doubting.

It is impossible to enter into extensive reasoning on this head, in the limits of a contracted sermon, therefore, I shall omit all the arguments drawn from the possibility and necessity of a revelation, and from the nature, advantages, and moral goodness of the scriptures themselves, as also from miracles, the certainty of their having been performed and rightly established to us by infallible testimony. I must also omit many arguments taken from the fulfillment of prophecy, and confine myself only to three instances of it, one of which has been already fulfilled, and the other two are now fulfilling before the world in the present day, and are standing miracles of heaven, monuments visible to all, of the divine inspiration of the scriptures.

The first instance of prophecy, and its exact and astonishing accomplishment to which I shall lead your attention, is, the predictions respecting the birth, life, doctrines, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

It was predicted by the prophet Isaiah, that he should be born of a virgin. * "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and "shall call his name *Emmanuel*," which was literally accomplished, when the virgin *Mary* brought forth her son Jesus. Attend to the history of this matter, given us by St. *Matthew*. † "That "which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall "bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he "shall save the people from their sins. They shall call him *Em-* "*manuel*, which being interpreted, is God with us."

The prophet *Micah* foretold the place of his birth. ‡ "Thou "*Bethlehem Ephratah*, though thou be little among the thou- "sands of *Judah*, yet out of thee shall come forth unto me that "is to be ruler in *Israel*, whose goings forth have been from of

* *Is. vii.* 14. † *Mat. i.* 20, 21, 23. ‡ *Mic.* v. 2.

Digitized by Google

"old, from everlasting." This was plainly fulfilled, when *Mary* with *Joseph* went up to *Bethlehem* to be taxed there, where she brought forth her first-born son. Thus *Matthew* declares, * "Je-"sus was born in *Bethlehem* of *Judah*, in the days of *Herod* the "king." So Luke asserts the same: †"And Joseph also went "up from *Galilee*, out of the city of *Nazareth*, into *Judea*, unto "the city of *David*, which is called *Bethlehem*, to be taxed with "*Mary* his espoused wife; and so it was that while they were "there, that the days were accomplished that she should be de-"livered, and she brought forth her first born son." *John* like-wise witnesseth to the same fact, when he says, ‡"Hath not the "scripture said, that Christ cometh of the seed of *David*, and out "of the town of *Bethlehem*, where David was?"

Were not the predictions concerning the forerunner of Chirst expressly fulfilled? Thus saith Isaiah, §"The voice of him that "crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make "straight in the desart a highway for our God; and the glory of the "Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." In the same language speaks the prophet *Malachi*, ‖"Behold I will "send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me." How perfectly were these prophecies accomplished in John the Baptist? Did he not preach in the wilderness of Judea, saying "repent ye; for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Was he not "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the "way of the Lord, make his paths straight?" Does he not ex-pressly affirm this of himself? And does not St. *Mark* directly apply these prophecies to John, when he says respecting him, ° "As it is written in the prophets, behold I send my messenger be-"fore thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee."

Let us attend to what was foretold of Christ in respect to his life, and the wonders he should perform. *Jacob* prophesied of

* *Mat. ii.* 1. † *Luke iii.* 4, 5, 6, 7. ‡ *John vii.* 42. § *Is. xl.* 3. ‖ *Mal. iii.* 1. ° *Mark i.* 2.

Digitized by Google

him, when he said, * "The sceptre shall not depart from *Judah*, "nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until *Shiloh* come, and "till the gathering of the people be unto him." The word *Shiloh* means one who is *sent*, and this is abundantly declared as the characteristic of Christ, that he was *sent* by the Father, *sent* of God, &c. It was in his day, *Judea* was reduced by the *Roman* power to the state of a province; their government was in a great measure taken from them; *Rome* appointed governors over them; and at the crucifixion of our Lord, their civil auth ority was so far lost, that they did not possess the right of putting even a malefactor to death. It was foretold by *David*, respecting Christ, that when he should come, he should abolish the Jewish sacrifices, as insufficient to make atonement for sin; that he himself should make a perfect and effectual sacrifice, and preach the doctrine of righteousness and holiness for the salvation of men. † "Sacrifices "and offerings thou didst not desire, but mine ears hast thou "opened; then said I, lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is "written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God; I have "preached righteousness in the great congregation; I have de-"clared thy faithfulness and thy salvation." This is particularly applied to Christ in the epistle to the *Hebrews*. It was foretold that he should work many and beneficial miracles. ‡ "Behold "your God will come, saith *Isaiah*, and save you; then the eyes "of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be "unstopped; then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the "tongue of the dumb shall sing." This was perfectly fulfilled in the wonders performed by Christ. § "The blind received their "sight, the lame walked, the deaf heard." &c.

The prophet *Daniel*, in a very pointed manner, predicted the very time when the *Mesiah* would make his appearance in the world. ‖ "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and

* *Gen. xlix.* 11. † *Ps. xl.* 6, 8. ‡ *Is. xxxv.* 4. § *Mat. xi.* 5. ‖ *Dan. ix.* 24.

Digitized by Google

" upon thy holy city, to finish the trangression, and to make an " end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring " in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and pro- " phecy, and to anoint the most holy. From the going forth of " the commandment to restore and to build *Jerusalem* unto the " *Mesiah*, the prince—which *Mesiah*, shall be cut off, but not " for himself; and the people of the prince that shall come, shall " destroy the city and the sanctuary." Seventy weeks, in prophetic language, is seventy times seven days: that is, four hundred and ninety years. This was precisely the time from the commission granted to *Nehemiah*, to restore *Jerusalem* and the temple, to the coming of Christ; and soon after he was cut off, the people of the prince, that is, the *Romans*, made an utter destruction of the holy city and the sanctuary.

Zechariah declares he should triumphantly enter into *Jerusalem* as the king of *Zion*, meek, and proclaiming salvation, riding upon an ass, the fole of an ass. * " Rejoice greatly, O daughter " of *Zion*, shout O daughter of *Jerusalem*: behold thy king " cometh unto thee; he is just and having salvation; lowly and " riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass." This was exactly accomplished according to the testimony of *St. Matthew*; and upon this occasion, † " Very great multitudes spread " their garments in the way, others cut down branches from the " trees, and strewed them in the way, and the multitudes that " went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the " son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the " Lord; Hosanna in the highest."

The contempt with which he was treated in his life, his rejection by men, and his sufferings and death, are particularly described by the prophets, as they afterwards came to pass. He was ‡ " As a root out of dry ground, he hath no form or comeli- " ness. There was no beauty that he should be desired.—

* *Zech. ix.* 10. † *Mat. xxi.* 8, 9. ‡ *Is. lii. throughout.*

Digitized by Google

and wandering life, been always in enmity with the rest of mankind, and all around them have been enemies to them; that great exertions have been made by the most powerful nations of the earth to subdue and destroy them, but that they have never been vanquished to this day; and that they have now existed for near four thousand years the same people, while multitudes of great nations have been utterly lost, and sunk into oblivion, except what history has preserved concerning them; If, I say, these things can be clearly established, and that such a people were exactly and perfectly delineated by prophecy before they had an existence, and before their great ancestor was born, surely this must afford a demonstrative evidence of divine revelation; nothing could foretel this but prescience itself; nothing could possibly inspire the persons who drew the picture, and delivered the prophecy, but that Almighty and Omnsicient Being, to whom all past and future are forever and unchangably present. The nation to which all this has a reference, is the descendants of *Ishmael*, the son of *Abraham* by *Hager*, the bond woman. And these predictions were pronounced partly by an angel, and partly by *Abraham* himself, the father of the faithful, who had been favoured with various revelations from heaven, and partly by the eternal *Jehovah*, who beholds all things in one comprehensive view. God declared to *Abraham* how he would bless *Ishmael*. * "Behold I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation."—Twelve princes shall he beget; this was punctually accomplished, and we have the names of the twelve princes recorded. † "These are the sons of *Ishmael*, and these are the names, by their towns, and by their castles, twelve princes according to their nations." Thus they were divided into twelve tribes in the manner of the *Israelites* in after times, and each tribe had a ruler or a prince over it. God likewise said

---

* *Gen. xvii.* 20.—† *Gen. xxv.* 16.

Digitized by Google

unto *Abraham*, *"Also of the son of the bondwoman will I make "a nation;" and the same thing is elsewhere repeated to *Hager*: †"I will make him a great nation." Thus they quickly encreased and grew to a numerous people, so that in the time *Joseph* was sold by his brethren, there were *Ishmaelites*, merchants, who traded into *Egypt*. They became a mighty nation, and overran a great part of the world; and the *Arabs*, their descendants, are a very numerous, fierce, and warlike people, possessing an amazingly extensive territory, and holding a very large empire at this very day.

The most distinguishing part of the prophetic description of this wonderful people and their progenitor, is, what the Angel of the Lord delivered to their mother *Hagar*. ‡"The angel of the "Lord said unto her, behold thou art with child, and shall bear "a son, and shall call his name *Ishmael*, because the Lord "hath heard thy affliction. And he will be a wild man; his "hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against "him; and he shall dwell in the presence of his brethren." He will be a wild man: This is perfectly true of the *Ishmaelites*, throughout all their generations, and continues to be equally descriptive of them at the present time. What people on the earth so wild, untamed, fierce and uncivilized, as the roaming inhabitants of the *Arabias*? They dwell, in a great measure, in tents, range from place to place, live by the bow and the chase, and by robbing and plundering their fellow men.—Their hand is against every man, and every man's hand is against them: They are, and always have been, enemies to all mankind, to whom they can have access, and all mankind are enemies to them. They live in a state of war with the world. And yet, notwithstanding this, they continue a great, powerful, and dreadful nation. They are the terror of all around them, and all who approach their country. And yet this barbarous people remain free, independent and unmixed with other nations; which is a striking fulfillment of ano-

* *Gen. xxi.* 13.—† *Verse* 18. ‡ *Gen. xvi.* 11, 12.

Digitized by Google

ther branch of this prophecy. *They dwell in the presence of their brethren.* Their cruelties and robberies have provoked many and mighty nations to attempt their extirpation from the face of the earth. *Cyrus*, that great conqueror of the *East*, who subdued all the great nation of *Chaldea*, reduced *Babylon*, that magnificent city, once the wonder of the world, and vanquished many other people, yet failed, was baffled and repulsed by these wild archers and savage tribes. *Alexander* the great, the famed conqueror of the world, whose wrath was wrought up to the utmost fury against them, they mocked his menaces, despised his mighty armies, and he died under all the mortification of disappointment. *Antigonus*, his greatest successor, though different times he attempted their destruction, was confounded and unsuccessful. The *Romans*, who vanquished a great part of *Europe*, *Asia* and *Africa*, and received the denomination of the conquerors of the world for many ages, sent against this people the greatest commanders, and most potent armies they ever had; they sent against them *Lucullus*, *Pompey*, and others, each of whose names were as an host; they sent army after army, and while the nations of *Asia* around them were reduced to a state of vassalage, this astonishing people maintained their liberty and independency, and enjoy their own country, rights and government, even to this day. What do these events, what does this prophecy teach us? They demonstrate to us the almighty power of God in their miraculous preservation, and that nothing could produce such predictions, but the foreknowledge of the Most High. These things prove to us, beyond all rational contradiction, that the holy scriptures are given by the inspiration of God.

I shall now direct your attention, to a

Third argument in favour of the divinity of the sacred oracles. We have seen a nation dwelling in the same country, inhabiting the same territory, and sustaining an uniformity of disposition, customs and manners, for a multitude of ages, and no people on

Digitized by Google

earth ever continued thus so long, and all exactly corresponding to divine prophecy; let us now look at another nation, of a very different character, placed in a different situation, subjected to different vicissitudes, which, instead of inhabiting one country, have been dispersed through all the countries of the world, and yet remain a distinct and remarkable people. If we can prove that there has been a great and powerful nation, and of long continuance, that they have been vanquished and carried captive into a foreign land; that they have been restored to their country; that they have flourished again as a mighty kingdom; that they have again been subdued, their land desolated, their cities and their capital destroyed; and that they are now scattered among all nations, and that they are in all their dispersions, distinct from all others, and that this has been their case for more than seventeen hundred years, and yet they are a people known unto all; and we find prophecies particularly designating those events, and describing those people in their present state, in the view of the whole world, will not this afford an irresistable conviction of the truth of divine revelation. These predictions, and their perfect accomplishment we see in the most luminous manner, in the nation and now existing condition of the *Jews*. Was it not early foretold that they should be a great and flourishing nation, and that they should inhabit the land of *Canaan?* Did not they dwell in that country for a multitude of generations? Were they not at last totally vanquished by the *Assyrians* and *Chaldeans?* Did not the former destroy and carry away ten tribes; and the latter, the other two into *Babylon?* Was it not predicted that these last tribes should be held in their *Babylonish* captivity seventy years, and that at the end of this period, they should be restored to their own land, that they should rebuild their city *Jerusalem*, and their temple? All which was punctually fulfilled. And did they not continue a great and respectable nation for many ages?

But the final overthrow of this unhappy people, the desolation of their country, their banishment from their own land, their dispersion among all nations, and their present existing state,

Digitized by Google

must be more especially attended to. And we can only now select a very few of the many prophecies strongly descriptive of these events. Were we not sure that the predictions were delivered long ago, and that we now behold them daily accomplishing before our eyes, we should be tempted to suppose them a history of things past, rather than of things to come.

That the land of *Judea*, is a waste barren, and desolate country at the present time, is testified to us by all historians and travellers; it is such a notorious fact, that none pretend to deny it, though it was once a land flowing with milk and honey. Let us hear what *Moses* and the prophets say on this head. *Moses* declares, * "Your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste." *Isaiah* says, † "Your country is desolate, your cities are burnt "with fire; your land strangers devour it in your presence, and "it is desolate as overthrown by strangers." *Jeremiah* also predicted the same event. ‡ "They have trodden my portion under "foot, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness; "they have made it desolate, and being desolate it mourneth unto "me." Now has not this been the unhappy state of the land of *Judea*, for a multitude of ages? And is not this its melancholy condition at this very day? And what could indite the history of these things so many centuries before they happened, but the spirit of God?

Observe likewise the prophecies concerning the banishment of the *Jews*, from their own land, and their dispersion over the face of the whole earth. § "Ye shall be plucked from off the land, "whither thou goest to possess it. || And thou shalt be removed "into all the kingdoms of the earth. ° The Lord shall scatter thee "among all people, from one end of the earth even unto the other." What people have ever been scattered like the Jews? Where is the kingdom or nation in *Europe*, *Asia*, *Africa* or *America*, in

* *Levit. xxvi.* 23. † *Is. i.* 7, 8. ‡ *Jer. xii.* 10, 11. § *Deut. xxxviii.* 63. || v. 25. ° v. 64.

Digitized by Google

which there are not many of this dispersed and forlorn people? Are they not exterminated from their own country, spread over the face of the earth, and intermixed with all nations? And yet they remain to the present time, a distinct people, clearly known to all, and clearly distinguished from all. This was foretold by Moses. * "Yet for all that, when they be in the land of their "enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, "to destroy them utterly." Thus speaks *Jeremiah*, † "I will "make a full end of all the nations whether I have driven thee, "but I will not make a full end of thee." Thus the *Jews* are erected as a monument in the midst of all nations, of all tribes and languages, of the truth of divine revelation. Was the pillar in the wilderness, which shed light through all the *Israelitish* encampment by night, so that they stood in no need of candle or lamp in their tents, and covered the whole host with a shady cloud by day, so as to screen them from the scorching beams of the sun in that parched desart and sultry clime? Was this a standing miracle to the Israelites, of the presence of Almighty God with them, and is not the exact fulfillment of prophecy with regard to the Jews equally before all nations, a standing miracle of the power of God in favor of the scripture as being of divine inspiration? Why should I mention, that it was predicted, ‡ "They "should become an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word "among all nations. § That their plagues should be wonderful "and of long continuance," all which, and a thousand other prophecies respecting this nation, have been accomplished and are now accomplishing in the view of the whole world. Was there ever any thing besides like this under the sun? What evidence of revelation can the unbeliever wish, if this does not demonstrate that the scriptures are given by the inspiration of God?

This subject would now admit of a very large and useful improvement, but I must close with one counsel only.

---

* *Lev. xxvi.* 44. † *Jer. xlvi.* 28. ‡ *Deut. xxviii.* 37. § *Verse* 59.

Digitized by Google

Seeing the truth of the Scriptures can be established as it were by occular demonstration, how should all be induced to search them, for our life is in them, even the life of our immortal souls? How should we give the most earnest heed unto them, as a light shining in a dark place? How should we be all attention to them, lest at any time we should let them slip? Remember if we believe not *Moses* and the prophets, neither should we believe, if one came to us from the dead. O, for God's sake, for the sake of our never dying souls, let us believe with all our hearts. Let us fervently pray, saying, "Lord we believe, help thou our unbe-"lief." If the word spoken "by Angels was stedfast, and every "trangression received a just recompence of reward, how shall "we escape if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first "began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us "by them that heard them; God also bearing them witness by "signs and wonders, divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy "Ghost."* Let us without wavering, stedfastly and perseveringly believe that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God.

* *Heb. ii.* 1, 2, 3. 4.

Digitized by Google

SERMON III.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY ESTABLISHED.

I. JOHN v. 7.

For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.

HAVING produced a few arguments for the proof of the divinity of the holy scriptures, I proceed now to consider and establish one of the most solemn and fundamental doctrines revealed therein, to wit, the mysterious and important doctrine of the Trinity, or that there are three persons in the Godhead. A belief of this branch of divine revelation is, doubtless, of high moment in the christian religion. It is hard to conceive how any person can be a real christian, who denies this doctrine, because it seems to lie at the foundation of the scheme of redemption, and the salvation of sinners. It is here plainly and strongly asserted in this text. I shall not waste your time, by leading your attention to a learned discussion of the genuineness of this passage, which would very little promote your edification or comfort. Although it has been omitted in some ancient copies of the Greek testament, and found in others of equal antiquity and authority, yet it would be very uncharitable to attribute this to the wickedness of transcribers either in the omission or interpolation. It could serve no useful purpose in one case or the other. This text, with great certainty, could be made appear to be genuine from the context, from the nature of the Apostle's discourse, from the propriety of its introduction in this place, from what precedes it,

Digitized by Google

and what follows after it. The very dust of gold is precious, therefore, we ought not easily to surrender one passage of sacred writ. It is but one among a multitude of authorities, to confirm our faith in the doctrine of the holy Trinity. If this text were expunged from our bibles, it could be of no service to the cause of our adversaries, for we have a variety of other texts as full and explicit in support of the doctrine of three persons in one divine essence or Godhead as this.

The apostle *John* is here evidently establishing the faith of christians in this great truth, that *Jesus* of *Nazareth*, who was crucified without the gates of *Jerusalem*, is the son of God, the promised *Mesiah*, the only Saviour of the world. This faith, as it is essential to the being, comfort and salvation of the christian, it is of the utmost consequence, that it be evinced by the most ample testimony. For this purpose, he produces six witnesses, each of whose testimony is infallible, and cannot be denied, nor evaded. Three of these witnesses are in heaven, and three upon earth. The former three are said *to be one*, and the latter three are said *to agree in one*. Waving the apostle's design and mode of argumentation, we shall endeavour to attend to the text in a disconnected and independent view, as it represents to us the doctrine of the ever glorious Trinity. We have here a Trinity plainly and fully declared, mention being explicitly made of three, and an express distinction of names ascribed to them. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Fa-"ther, the word and the Holy Ghost." The matter of the testimony of these wonderful persons is, that Jesus is the Son of God and the Saviour of sinners, as has been already observed. By the words *in heaven*, no doubt is meant the grandeur and exalted truth of their testimony, as well as the dignified place from whence it proceeds. The sacred *Three* bear witness in a majestic, glorious and celestial manner, the habitation of whose transcendent excellency is in heaven, from whence this extraordinary evidence comes. The first is God the Father, who testified in favor

Digitized by Google

of the incarnate Redeemer, at his baptism and transfiguration: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."—The second witness is the Word. It is remarkable, that the term Word, is most frequently employed by St. John, when he would express the Son of God, or the second person in the Godhead. Hence he says, "The word," that is the eternal son of God, "was made flesh, and dwelt among us." "In the beginning was "the *word*, and the *word* was with God, and the *word* was God." Thus the second witness is God, the son of God, the uncreated word who testified, "That he and his father are one." "Thou "father art in me, and I in thee." He proved himself to be the mighty God, the true *Mesiah*, the son of the highest, the Saviour of the world, by the stupendous miracles which he wrought, especially raising himself from the dead, and his ascension to heaven, in the presence of many spectators.—The third of these heavenly witnesses, is the Holy Ghost, who gave abundant attestation to our blessed Lord, as the only Saviour, by the miraculous production of his human nature, descending upon him at his baptism, in the form of a dove, &c.

It is here observable, that these *three* who bear record, are said *to be one*: "And these three are one." They are not said merely to agree in one testimony, as the other three witnesses are, but they are one in heaven, in a high, eminent, and peculiar manner, they are declared one; they are one thing, one being or essence. It is probable that this oneness is beyond the conception of any created intelligence, therefore, we have no description or explanation of it in the divine oracles. Hence, for any to attempt to investigate, unfold, or illustrate this matter, must always injure the cause of truth; to endeavour to say wherein this unity consists, and wherein the distinction of three are placed is indeed to pretend to wisdom above what is written, and to become vain in their own imaginations. It is enough for us to be assured, that it is a mystery hidden from men, and far transcending rational investigation, there is nothing in it contradictory to

Digitized by Google

sound reason. The mode of the divine existence itself, and the manner in which there are three subsistences in a unity of being or essence, will remain forever inscrutable to a created mind. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the "Almighty to perfection?". There are innumerable declarations in the scriptures of this sublime doctrine, that there are three persons in one simple, undivided, and eternal Godhead.

When in this case we use the word person, it is not to be taken in a vulgar or common sense. Men and angels have all their distinct personal beings, unconnected one with another; but the Trinity is three glorious subsistences, inseparably united in one and the same essence. The word person is employed in this business, because it is the best term our language affords, and because the scriptures use it for this purpose. Hence Christ is described as "The brightness of his glory, and the express image of his "person," that is, *the person of God.* We read also, "of the "person of Christ; of the light of the knowledge of the glory of "God in the person of Jesus Christ." For the word which is here translated *face*, ought to have been rendered person. Thus we find the term person, used to express the person of the Father, the person of the Son, and, therefore, in perfect propriety, it is used to express the person of the Holy Ghost.

All I shall say upon this subject, will be reduced to these two propositions, of which the holy scriptures every where assure us, to wit: That there is but one only living and true God:—And that there are three persons in one Godhead, equal in substance, power and glory.

First, There is one simple undivided Godhead or essence. When God is spoken of as one, we are plainly to understand it, 1st. In opposition to the innumerable deities among the heathen, who have Gods many, and Lords many, and whose vanities are not Gods. 2d. In opposition to all titular Gods, as magistrates and civil rulers are sometimes thus termed in the bible: "I have

Digitized by Google

"said ye are Gods, but ye shall die like men." 3d. As exclusive of all composition of parts. A man is but one individual; yet he is compounded of parts: but God is one, as opposed to all such composition. 4th. God is one in distinction from a oneness of species, which admits of a great variety of individuals of the same nature, and of the same name. But Jehovah *is one* by a peculiar, essential, and transcendent excellency of being, whereby he is undivided in himself, and absolutely indivisible in any respect.

He is the first, greatest, and best of beings—therefore, he can possibly be but *one*. For, to say there are many, who can be first, greatest and best, is a solecism in language, as well as in ideas.

Reason proclaims that God is infinite, that he is infinite in all his perfections, that infinitude is an essential property of his nature, and as it is impossible there should be two or more infinite beings, therefore, God can be but one, incomprehensible in his existence, and in all his attributes.

And this, which is the great dictate of the light of nature, is also the uniform doctrine of divine revelation. "Hear O Israel, "the Lord our God is one Lord. Before me there was no God "formed, neither shall there be after me. Is there a God besides "me? Yea, there is no God, I know not any. I am the Lord "and there is none else, there is no God besides me. God is one. "One God and father of all, who is above all." These, and a multitude of other authorities from the sacred oracles, demonstrate that there is but one, only living and true God.

I proceed now, to the

Second proposition, That there are three persons in one Godhead, equal in substance, power and glory.—The sacred three have such distinguishing personalties, both of character and conduct ascribed to them, that it is impossible that the actions of the

Digitized by Google

one person, can be attributed to either of the others. There are such things ascribed to the Father, which cannot be ascribed to the Son or Spirit; and there are such things ascribed to the Son, as cannot be attributed to the Spirit or Father, so likewise there are such properties ascribed to the Spirit, as are never given to the other two.

The Father is declared to beget the Son. Thus speaks the Psalmist: "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." This is repeatedly applied to Jesus Christ in the New Testament, and he is often stiled the only begotten of the Father. Neither of these personal characters can be applied to the Spirit. "The "Father sent the Son into the world to take flesh upon him, and "to be born of a woman. The Son became flesh, and dwelt "among us." But neither the Father or the Spirit ever became flesh. The Spirit is said to be *given* or sent by the Father and the Son, and to proceed from them; but the Father or Son are never said to be sent by the Spirit, nor to proceed from *him*. This is sufficient to show that there are properties, operations, and conduct ascribed to each of those divine persons, and not common to all, and in these they stand distinguished one from another.

I shall now go on to bring forth the more direct proofs in favor of the doctrine of the Trinity, both from the old testament and the new. The old testament was, in many respects, a dark dispensation; but the saints were saved under it, by that grace and mercy which it revealed. They had not those full, clear, and spiritual discoveries of divine things, which are afforded to the people of God under the new. And among other things revealed to them more darkly than to us, was the doctrine of the Trinity. However, they believed in the mercy of God, through a Mesiah who was to come, and to whom the ends of the earth were to look for salvation. And this manifested that they had some knowledge of a plurality of subsistences in God.—They daily read in their scriptures, that the name which we translate God, is, in the Hebrew, in the plural number, and this must

Digitized by Google

have given to the serious and attentive mind, *some* glimmering apprehensions of some distinctions in the Godhead; especially when they met with the terms creators, makers, &c. frequently in the plural in such places as these: "Remember thy *Creators*, "in the day of thy youth. Let Israel rejoice in his *Makers*; "one saith, where is God my *Makers?*" Thy "*Makers* is thy "*Husbands*," and various other places, to the same effect.

But a plurality of persons in one God was fully intimated to the ancient saints, when God says, "Let *us* make man." And after the fall, "The Lord God said, behold the man is become "as *one* of us." This is a very strong and distinguishing expression in favor of there being more persons in the Godhead than one. Remarkable is that sentence recorded by the prophet *Isaiah*: "Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying, whom shall I send, "and who will go for us?" Here Father, Son, and Spirit seem evidently to be denoted, *I* as one God, and *us* as three persons. The same prophet elsewhere says, "The Lord God and his "Spirit hath sent me." Whether saith David, "Shall I go from "thy Spirit?" And "God, thy God, hath anointed thee with "the oil of gladness above thy fellows." This is particularly applied to Christ in the epistle to the Hebrews. Here we find God anointing, and Christ Jesus receiving the same. Job seemed to have a clear understanding of this doctrine, when he declares, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the "latter day upon the earth; whom I shall see for myself, and "my eyes shall behold, and not another."

But we proceed to the more full and perfect display of this, as well as most other spiritual things in the new testament. Here we are plainly taught the doctrine of a Trinity in an unity of Godhead. "I came not of myself," says Christ, "but of my Father who "sent me." Here is one coming, and another sending him. It would be contrary to all propriety of speech, and even to truth itself, for one to say that *he sent himself*, and that *he came not*

Digitized by Google

of himself. Our Lord again says, "I will pray the Father, and "he shall send you another comforter." Here is now one person praying, a second prayed to, and a third to be sent. It would be a strange interpretation to say, that Christ prayed to himself, that he would send himself as another comforter.

Further, a Trinity of persons is taught in the most express manner at the baptism of our Saviour. "Jesus when he was baptised "went up straightway from the water, and lo, the heavens were "opened, and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove, "and lighting upon him; and lo, a voice from heaven saying, "this is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased." Here is one going up from Jordan, one descending in the likeness of a Dove, and one speaking from heaven. Surely if the most High had not designed to reveal to us a Trinity of persons, there would never have been such a representation made unto us. Wherefore it was wont to be a common saying among the primitive christians, "Go to Jordan, and you will see the Trinity." Attend to this exhibition—here is God the Father, speaking in a voice of thunder; behold God the Son, cloathed in all the humiliation of human nature, and see God the Holy Ghost, resting upon him in the form of a dove.

The same thing is confirmed from the institution of christian baptism. This is commanded to be performed in the "Name of "the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Nothing has a higher tendency to lead us into the belief of a Trinity, than this divine institution. If there were not three personal distinctions in the Godhead, surely they would never be so explicitly mentioned in such a solemn act of worship, as our consecration to God in the holy ordinance of baptism. This ordinance is a standing monument in the church, that there are three persons in the Godhead. And to deny the Trinity, seems to be drawing nigh to renouncing christian baptism. Sure I am, did I disbelieve this doctrine, I never would baptise more in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Digitized by Google

This doctrine is likewise established from this declaration, "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from "the Father, even the spirit of truth which proceedeth from the "Father, he shall testify of me." In this passage, we have the distinct personal conduct of three, strongly expressed: the Holy Ghost, or Comforter, as coming and testifying of Christ; Christ as sending him, and being witnessed of by him; and the Father as the person from whom he comes, and from whom he proceeds.

The same thing is clearly evinced from the apostolic benediction, which St. Paul gave to the Corinthian christians, "The "grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the "communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." This benediction, comprehends all the graces and blessings necessary for the salvation or eternal life of guilty man—therefore, the Apostle particularly addresses the three persons of the Trinity. But St. Paul, in another place, most directly and explicitly declares this doctrine. "There is one Spirit, one Lord, one God and Father "of all." What can be more clearly or plainly expressed than this? Here is the Holy Ghost, the Lord Jesus Christ, and God the Father, each of them declared to be one. It is remarkable that the word one, is here three times repeated, and with great beauty and force applied to the three divine persons; so that with the utmost propriety, we may declare the God of the bible to be the *three one God.*

Lastly, to all these testimonies in support of three personal distinctions in the Godhead, may be added the words of our text. "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the "Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one."

You will please here to observe, that I have quoted only a few of those scriptures where the three persons are distinctly mentioned. Time would fail me to produce all those passages which relate the personal conduct of the Father, the personal characters of the Son, where he is called Redeemer, Mediator, Son of God, &c.

Digitized by Google

and the personal actions of the holy Spirit, as being a witness, sending forth the Apostles, forbidding them to preach in certain places, speaking in them, and dwelling in true believers. Every one who attentively reads his bible without prejudice or prepossession, must be effectually convinced, that there is a Trinity, three distinct subsistences, having communion in the same essence, or that there are three divine persons, and yet but one God.

It is vain and impertinent to object, that this doctrine is too deep and incomprehensible for created minds. Is not God himself, and every attribute and perfection of his nature, far beyond the comprehension of any mortal creature? Who can explain the existence of God without a beginning; the eternity of God without succession, an eternity past, and an eternity to come; the immensity of God without extension; that he loves without passion, repents without change; with whom that which is past is not gone, and that which is future is not to come? Three persons, in one indivisible essence, is not more mysterious and incomprehensible, than these branches of the divine character. He who would attempt the explication of the nature and mode of existence of these things, would he not darken counsel by words without knowledge? Would he not prove himself a vain man, knowing nothing? God, in all respects, and in every view, is "As high as heaven, what canst thou do? Deeper than hell, "what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the "earth, and broader than the sea."

Wherefore, my brethren, though we cannot comprehend, perfectly understand, or strictly explain any of these matters; though we cannot describe how far the Godhead is one, or say where the personal distinction in the divine essence takes its origin, yet being fully assured, that there are three persons and but one God, let us with our whole hearts believe and adore; as what is revealed is abundantly sufficient to make us wise to salvation.

I shall not at present detain your attention to a farther confir-

Digitized by Google

mation of this glorious doctrine, or point out to you how it is absolutely certain, that the Son and Holy Spirit are very God, in all respects co-equal with the Father, the same in essence, substance and glory. Perhaps these will be the subject of some future discourses.

I shall conclude at present, with a few obvious inferences from what has been said.

First, we infer from this doctrine, the unhappy, dangerous, and awful condition of all *anti-trinitarians*, however they may shine in human literature, or be distinguished with honors by men. Truth itself declares, "He who honoreth not the Son, honoreth "not the Father. And he that believeth not the Son, shall not "see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Dreadful denunciations indeed. He who worships not the Son, nor believeth on him for eternal life, is not a worshipper of the Father; and, therefore, must perish forever from the presence of God, and by the glory of his power. How dangerous is the condition, to stand exposed to all the terrors of Jehovah's wrath? Who can know or conceive the power of his anger? "If he that despised "Moses' law died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment "suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under "foot the Son of God?" Oh, my hearers, let us be careful how we treat Christ Jesus, the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world! We must give him equal love, honor, faith and worship with the Father. Let us beware of setting at naught, denying, or despising any of the adorable persons of the Godhead.

Secondly, we infer the nature and proper manner of christian worship. In order to offer an acceptable worship to God, two things are requisite. First, that we know and have some just apprehensions of the object of divine worship. Secondly, that we understand the manner of it, and perform the same, agreeably to the Gospel. The only object of worship is the supreme God, who is Father, Son and Spirit. Hence we are directed in worship to

Digitized by Google

address ourselves to the eternal *Three*; to approach unto the Father, through the Son, by the aids of the holy Spirit. "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name," says Christ, "he "will give it you. Pray always with all prayer and supplication "by the Spirit. Through Jesus Christ we have access by one Spirit "unto the Father." Here in the sacred Trinity, the scriptural plan of religious worship is taught us. We must direct our worship, and have access to God the Father, through the atonement and mediation of the Son, by the influences and aids of the holy Spirit. Let us in all our worship, duly attend to this divine order; and then shall we worship God in spirit and in truth. Let us see in all our approaches to the throne of grace, that we be paying proper honor to all the persons of the Trinity; that we be honoring the Son as we are honoring the Father; and that we be honoring the Holy Ghost, "who maketh intercession for us with groan"ings which cannot be uttered."

Thirdly, we infer the transcendent excellency and glorious suitableness of the gospel, to secure all the rights and honors of the Godhead, and to recover to perfection and felicity, the sinful children of men.—Is the divine government injured by sin? It is compleatly repaired by a divine person.—Is the holy law of eternal righteousness violated by transgression? The law is magnified and made honorable by Jesus Christ.—Is God infinitely offended with the rebellion of sinners? Behold the lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.—Have we lost the holy image of our creator by our fall and apostacy? The blessed Spirit descends to convince of sin, to form in us a new nature, and to create us again after the image of God in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness.—Are we become blind and ignorant, through the corruption of our hearts? We have an unction from the holy one, whereby we may know all things.—Are we condemned and guilty in law and equity? There is an all sufficient righteousness provided, so that there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.—Thus the doctrine of the Trinity displays the divine cha-

Digitized by Google

racter in the highest conceivable manner, and at the same time secures the greatest glory and happiness to all them who believe. Let us then believe in the Father, receive the Son, and cherish the motions of the Holy Ghost.

Fourthly, it is inferred, that this doctrine ought to excite all christians to cultivate union, peace, harmony and love one with another. Is there harmony, love, peace, and union in the holy Trinity? Ought not christians to be followers and imitators of God? Ought they not to be like-minded one towards another? Ought there not to be, in a measure, a oneness of heart, views, and interest among them, in resemblance, in a degree, of the oneness of the three persons in the Godhead. Hearken to our Lord's prayer for this purpose. "Holy Father, keep through thine own "name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one "as we are. That they all may be one, as thou Father art in "me; and I in thee, that they also may be one in us. And the "glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may "be one even as we are one." Let us all, therefore, who profess the religion of the Gospel, keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Let us walk in love and peace; for he that loveth not, hath not seen God, neither hath he known him. Oh that the hearts and minds of christians were united in a holy and heavenly affection, which shall never be dissolved; so that all creation may unite in one eternal anthem of blessing, honor, and glory to the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, forever and ever. Amen.

Digitized by Google

SERMON IV.

JESUS CHRIST PROVED TO BE VERY GOD, CO-EQUAL AND OF THE SAME ESSENCE WITH THE FATHER.

JOHN x. 30.

I and my Father are one.

CHRIST Jesus, the Son of God, and the Saviour of mankind is co-equal and co-essential with God the Father, of the same eternal essence in one eternal Godhead. This doctrine is expressly and plainly taught by our Lord himself in this text. The occasion of his making so explicit a declaration of his nature and divinity, at this time, was this: There was at the present season, a great festival held in Jerusalem, called *the feast of the dedication*. After the old temple had been destroyed by the *Babylonians*, and the Jews had returned to their own land, they built a new temple, and at the dedication of it, they instituted a festival, which was annually observed ever afterwards, until this temple also was entirely demolished by the *Romans*. This feast was celebrated about the beginning of our December; hence it is said, "It was winter." Jesus Christ attended this feast, as in all things he conformed himself to the *Jewish* rites, institutions, and ceremonies. He was walking "in the temple, in *Soloman's* porch," a place so stiled after a porch in their former temple. Here the Jews collected around him, to put ensnaring questions to him as usual. Therefore they ask him, "How long dost thou

Digitized by Google

"make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." Our divine master enters upon a very particular answer to them. He assures them, that he had told them this already; that he had proved it by the mighty works and miracles which he had done; that he was the author and giver of eternal life; that he possessed infinite power to save and preserve all his followers, all true believers, that none of them should perish, that earth and hell were not able to pluck them out of his hands. He assures them that he possessed the same omnipotence with the Father, that he was of the same essence and Godhead: "I and my Father are "one." This plain, full and explicit answer, instead of satisfying them, or inducing them to believe and become his disciples, which it ought in all reason and justice to have done, it had an effect directly the reverse. It wrought up their enmity and rage against him to an intemperate fury. "They took stones to stone "him." Thus the highest evidences of the divinity of Christ, will not convince some, but they will still continue in unbelief. Yea, not only so, but the greater light flashed upon them, and the stronger the arguments stated before them, the more will they be hardened in their hearts, and the more will their anger be enkindled against the truth. Thus, my hearers, though some will never receive Christ, nor believe his divinty, notwithstanding it should be testified by all in heaven, and all the saints on earth, which really has been the case, let not us be of that unbelieving and unhappy race, but cordially receive the truth in the love of it, and believe to the saving of our souls. The fact is, that Jesus Christ and the Father are one; one thing, one being, one God. This is the doctrine plainly contained in our text, and abundantly revealed throughout all the sacred oracles.

Now, if it shall fully appear, that the same names and titles are given to Christ—the same attributes and perfections ascribed to him—the same operations or works performed by him—and the same divine worship paid to him, which are given, ascribed, and paid to the Father, will not these things demonstrate him to be

Digitized by Google

very God, co-equal, co-essential, and co-eternal with the Father; and in all respects, the same in substance, power and glory.

First, we are to show that the same names and titles are given to Christ which are given to the Father, and whereby God maketh himself known.—Let it be here observed, that the term Lord, in the old testament, when printed in capital letters in our translation is always the name Jehovah in the original. And the word Jehovah, is a peculiar term, never given to any but the only living and true God. The word Jehovah, is in itself, necessary, eternal, independent, immutable, self-existence. Therefore, it is the incommunicable name of the Most High. Now this singular and incommunicable name, which is never given to any other but God, is often ascribed to Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Hence it is said in the prophecy of Jeremiah, * "This is the name where-"by he shall be called, the Lord, or Jehovah, our righteousness." This is expressly applied by St. Paul to Jesus, when he declares he † "is made unto us righteousness." Thus speaks Isaiah, ‡ "Surely shall one say, in Jehovah have I righteousness and strength; "in Jehovah shall all the seed of Israel be justified." This is directly interpreted of Christ, in the new testament. § "By the "righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life." And Christ ‖ "was made sin for us, that we "might be made the righteousness of God in him." He is stiled Jehovah by the prophet *Zechariah*, when he predicted that he should be sold for thirty pieces of silver.

The name of God is likewise frequently applied to him. He is called the true God, the great and mighty God, the wise God, and God blessed forever. ** "This is the true God and eternal "life." †† "To us a child is born, to us a son is given, his name "shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, *the mighty God*, the "Prince of peace." Thomas, when he is aroused from his stupid

* *Jer.* xxxiii. 6. † 1. *Cor.* i. 30. ‡ *Isa.* xlv. 24, 25. § *Rom.* v. 18. ‖ 2 *Cor.* v. 21. ** 1. *John* v. 20. †† *Isa.* ix. 6.

Digitized by Google

unbelief, cries out "My Lord and my God." Whoever reads the fourteenth chapter to the Romans, will find the terms Lord, God and Christ, used in a promiscuous and synonimous manner, so that the former are as really applied to Jesus as the latter. He is called the only wise God by St. Jude. * "To the only wise God, "our Saviour, be glory, and majesty, dominion and power." He is declared to be God, blessed forever, by the apostle Paul. †"Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh, "Christ came, who is God over all blessed forever." Thus Jesus Christ appears to be called God, the true, the great and the mighty God, the only wise God, and God over all blessed forevermore.

We also find him styled the Lord God of hosts. Thus the prophet Hosea, when he retails the history of Jacob's wrestling with the Angel, declares, ‡ "By his strength he had power with "God; even the Lord God of hosts." And another prophet says, § "Thy maker is thy husband, the Lord of hosts is his name, "and thy Redeemer the holy one of Israel, the God of the whole "earth shall he be called." He is proclaimed king of kings, and Lord of Lords. Thus saith St. John, ‖ "The lamb shall over-"come, for he is the Lord of Lords, and king of kings." And another apostle styles him, "The blessed and only potentate, "the king of kings, and Lord of Lords, to him be honor and "power everlasting." He is pronounced the first and the last, a peculiar title of the supreme Jehovah. This is frequently ascribed to him in the Revelations. "I am the first and the last; I am "he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore. "These things saith the first and the last, who was dead and is "alive. I am alpha and omega, the first and the last." Thus we see the most sacred titles, and the most divine names, are attributed to Christ in the scriptures; and what can all this teach us, but that he is truly God, co-equal and co-essential with the Father, or that he and his Father are one.—I proceed

* *Jude, verse* 25. † *Rom. ix.* 5. ‡ *Hos. xii.* 3, 5. § *Isa. liv.* 5. ‖ *Rev. xvii.* 14.

Digitized by Google

Secondly, to make it appear that the same attributes and perfections are ascribed to him, which are ascribed to the Father. We find omniscience, omnipresence, immensity, eternity, omnipotence, and immutability, justice, holiness, goodness, mercy and truth; yea, were I to recapitulate all the perfections of Godhead, we would behold them in a rich profusion attributed to the divine Jesus, "who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery "to be equal with God. For in him all the fullness of the God-"head dwell bodily." That he is the all knowing, heart searching and reintrying God, is asserted in places almost innumerable. Peter declares, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest "that I love thee." And St. John says, "Jesus knew all men, "and needed not that any one should testify of men, for he knew "what was in man." Matthew affirms, "That Jesus knew the "thoughts of men." He himself declares, "I am he which "searches the reins and the hearts, and I will give to every one "of you according to your works."

Christ is every where present, in heaven, in earth, and under the earth. "If I ascend into heaven, thou art there; if I make "my bed in hell, behold thou art there." Can "any hide him-"self in secret places, that I shall not see him, saith the Lord? "Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?" Thus he promises to his people to be always with them, and this he could not accomplish were he not omnipresent. He says to his disciples, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there "am I in the midst of them." And again, "Lo, I am with you "always to the end of the world."

His immensity is involved in his omnipresence, and is proved by the same scriptural authorities. The Redeemer in whom Job believed, his being "was longer than the earth, and broader than "the sea," that is immense, without measure and without bounds. To be in heaven and earth at the same time, proves his immensity.

Digitized by Google

This he himself affirms. * "No man hath ascended up to hea-
"ven, but he that came down from heaven, even the son of man
"which is in heaven."

Eternity is also ascribed to him: "From everlasting to ever-
"lasting he is God. Before Abraham was I am. He is without
"father, without mother, without descent, having neither be-
"ginning of days, nor end of life. His throne is declared to be
"forever and ever." It is affirmed by the prophet Micah, † "His
"goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Thus
he is as certainly eternal as the Father.

Almighty power is also another divine attribute which is as-
cribed to him: "All power he possesses in heaven and in earth."
He is styled "Almighty," once and again, and is said "To uphold
"all things by the word of his power."

He is likewise unchangeable. "Jesus Christ is the same yes-
"terday, to day and forever. The heavens and earth shall be
"changed, but *he* is the same, and *his* years shall not fail."

Your patience would be exhausted, were I to take time to show
how all the moral perfections of Jehovah; how justice, holiness,
goodness, mercy and truth are attributed to him. He is the just,
merciful, good and gracious Saviour. Not only are those things
declared abundantly concerning him in the bible, but his whole
life, humiliation, sufferings and death, proclaim him to be a mira-
cle of divine beneficence, righteousness, grace, compassion and
love.

Thirdly, if we find the same operations or works ascribed to
him, which God only can perform, then Jesus Christ is in all
things co-equal with the Father. We have the whole works of
creation and providence attributed to him—and these are such
mighty operations, that none but an omnipotent and infinite God

* *John iii.* 13. † *Mic.* v. 2.

Digitized by Google

is qualified to do. "In the beginning was the Word, and all "things were made by him, and without him was nothing made, "that was made. The world was made by him. Of old hast "thou laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the "works of thy hands." This is repeated concerning him in the epistle to the Hebrews. "He spake and it was done, he com-"manded and it stood fast."

He is the preserver of all things, "upholding them by the word "of his power. By him were all things created, that are in hea-"ven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible; whether they "be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things "were created by him and for him. And he is before all things, "and by him all things consist." He governs all things by the might of his power, and his dominion and providence is over all. What being can be higher, greater, and more powerful than this? He, who is the creator, upholder, and governor of all, surely he must be the Almighty God, the same with the Father. "I and "my Father are one."

Fourthly, the same worship, homage, and adoration are paid to the Lord Jesus Christ, by all in heaven, and all the saints on earth, which are offered to God the Father. The divine commandment is, "Let all the angels of God worship him." All men are to "honor the Son as they honor the Father." Thomas worshipped him, when he adored him as his Lord and his God. He had homage paid him by the proto-martyr Stephen, with his dying breath; when the last words he spoke were words of profound adoration, saying, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit." St. Paul prayed unto him: "For this, says he, I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me," that is, that the thorn in his flesh might be taken away. This is the adoration and praise given to him by all creation in the Revelation of John: "And "every creature which is in heaven and on earth, and such as are "in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying blessing,

Digitized by Google

"and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth on "the throne, and unto the lamb forever and ever."

These texts of scripture quoted, which are but a few of the multitudes that might be produced, are fully sufficient to show that divine worship, homage, and praise are given to the Lord Jesus Christ, and that, therefore, he must be really and truly God, co-essential and consubstantial with the Father.

To all these things, only a few more observations shall be added, in support of the divinity of our exalted Saviour. He is to be the final judge of the universe, and of this only Jehovah is capable: "For God is judge himself." God shall judge the world. It is abundantly affirmed, that, "We shall all stand be- "fore the judgment seat of Christ. That he shall judge the "quick and the dead at his appearing." Christ Jesus is an infinitely wise and perfect judge. He possesses every qualification for this dignified office. He has an omniscient mind, and an almighty arm; he can discover and punish all the secret iniquities of the wicked, and reward all the righteousness of those who love and serve him, and believe in his name.

It is a prerogative of the Most High to pardon sin; but Christ showed himself to be a sin-forgiving God. He speaks to the sick of the palsy, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." Stephen prayed to Chirst for those who persecuted him, and wickedly stoned him to death, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." And the apostle Paul exhorts the Colossian christians, "Even as Christ forgave "you, so also do ye."

It is likewise a peculiar prerogative of Jehovah, to hold rule and dominion over, and claim a propriety in all things. "His "kingdom ruleth over all." Christ declares, "All things that "the Father hath are mine. All things that are mine are thine, "and all things that are thine are mine." We are commanded to believe in him, to trust, and to look to him alone for salvation

Digitized by Google

and eternal life. He is the great author of the resurrection of the body, and this is solely the property of God, and a work which none but a God can perform. He makes proclamation, saying, "I am the resurrection and the life. The Son quickeneth whom "he will. The hour is coming and now is, in the which all that "are in their graves, shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and "they that hear shall live. All that are in their graves shall hear "his voice and shall come forth, they that have done good unto "the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the "resurrection of damnation."

Now, from all these scriptural authorities, arguments and considerations, collected into a single view, does not the conclusion burst upon us with irresistable force, that Jesus Christ is truly God, co-equal, co-eternal, and co-essential with the Father? On what a firm and immoveable foundation does the declaration in our text stand? "I and my Father are one." The Jews, the Scribes, and Pharisees were compelled to acknowledge, that "He made himself God." But instead of submitting to the conviction, and receiving him in his proper character, as the God of *Israel*, and the *Mesiah* of their bible, the more they saw his divinity displayed, the more they hated him, and the more their hearts were enraged against him. Instead of bowing down to him as their God and Saviour, they cried out, he is a blasphemer, he hath a devil, he is not fit to live, away with him, crucify him, crucify him.—This, which was the temper of these infidels and unitarians of old, remains the temper of all their unbelieving followers to this day.

But I shall now close this discourse with some practical improvement.

First, how happy and blessed are all they who receive the divinity of Christ, acknowledge him in all his mediatorial offices, believe in him as their Redeemer and Saviour, trust in him for eternal life. They are blessed in this world with the peace and

Digitized by Google

favor of God, with the consolation of the promises of the covenant of Grace, and with the sure and certain hopes of a glorious immortality. They are blessed in life, blessed in death, and will be blessed and happy forever.

Secondly, we are here taught the infinite sufficiency, fullness and perfection of the mediation and atonement of God our Redeemer. All fullness dwells in him. So that from his plenitude we may receive grace for grace. He is infinitely sufficient for the salvation of all who believe. His sufficiency arises from his unsearchable wisdom, from his irresistable power, from his ineffable love, and in one word, from his incomprehensible Godhead. "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All "power in heaven and in earth" he possesses. His love is altogether inconceivable. "He so loved the church, that he gave "himself for it. We are more than conquerors through him "that loved us, and died for us." He is the Almighty God, therefore, none shall be able to pluck his people out of his hands. Thus, O believer, you have an all sufficient, and infinitely sufficient Saviour to trust in. Wherefore, let your hearts glow with love and gratitude to him. Proceed on in your heavenly course rejoicing. Testify the purity and fervency of your affection to him, by diligently keeping his commandments. Then are ye his disciples when ye do whatsoever he shall command you.

Thirdly, we here learn the important duty of submission to his dominion, government, and providential dispensations. He sits at the head of the universe, and in wisdom and goodness directs all events. "Let every knee bow to Jesus, of things in heaven, "and things in earth, and things under the earth." When the aspects of his providential government are dark and gloomy towards us, and it is a season of sore affliction with us, our souls ought to say, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." Remembering always his promise, that all things shall work together for good to them that love him. Let us duly consider,

Digitized by Google

the more resignation and submission to his dominion and rule we exercise, the more we glorify him, and the more comfort and felicity we enjoy in this state of probation, and we lay up a surer foundation against time to come. Wherefore, "let us all kiss "the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his "wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their "trust in him."

We will close in these words of our glorious Immanuel:— "Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will "I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But who- "soever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my "Father which is in heaven."

Digitized by Google

SERMON V.

THE EQUALITY OF THE HOLY GHOST, AS GOD WITH THE FATHER AND THE SON, PROVED.

ACTS v. 3, 4.

But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan, filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whilst it remained was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

IN these words with their connection, we have the melancholy and awful story of *Ananias* with his wife *Sapphira* related. The primitive christian church, when it was here in its infant state in the city *Jerusalem*, had agreed to throw all their temporal property into common stock, from whence they should draw according to their various necessities—from whence the wants of the poor should be supplied, and that they might have money for the support of the apostles and other ministers of religion, for the propagation of the gospel, and for other pious uses. This institution, being a voluntary thing, and not of divine appointment, was of very short continuance in the church. And perhaps the unhappy conduct and fate of those persons mentioned, soon put an end to the whole scheme. For we read no more of it throughout the apostles time, nor throughout the apostolic churches. This custom has been often attempted at different periods, by va-

Digitized by Google

rious sects of christians, but hitherto it has never been attended with success. And, indeed, it is altogether impracticable among large bodies of christians, or in any great and extensive churches. And it appears in our text, that it was not an institution of divine authority, for *Ananias* and *Sapphira* were not called upon by the apostles to put their money into this common fund. They might have been true christians, without this act of extraordinary and uncommanded generosity. Their land was their own possession before they sold it, and the money was their own afterwards. Hence *Peter* said to *Ananias*, "Whilst it remained, was "it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine "own power?" But the crime of these wretched persons was hypocrisy, covetousness, pride and falshood. In their acknowledgment of christianity, they professedly gave up themselves and all they had to God, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, but in reality they had done neither the one nor the other. What could induce them to make a profession of religion, is extremely hard to conceive; but since they did it, they ought to have done it in sincerity. Hypocrites and false professors are often apt to make the greatest show—thus it was with this miserable couple. They would make an appearance of exceeding all their fellow christians in religion, charity and generosity. Pride and avarice, though both predominant corruptions in their hearts, yet the latter was too powerful for the former. They pretended to give all their mighty possessions for the glory of God, and for the good of the church, but they combined together to belie their profession, to cheat God, and deceive the church and the apostles; and this brought down the immediate judgment of heaven upon them, a sudden death, and everlasting destruction. It was highly expedient that God should make this public and terrible example in this early and beginning state of the christian church; to exhibit himself, the glory of his power and justice, to be a terror to all others, to restrain them from the awful vices of pride, covetousness, and base hypocrisy. This he did in the formation of the

Digitized by Google

Jewish church in the wilderness, when *Nadab* and *Abihu*, in the intoxicating pride and folly of their hearts, offered strange fire before the Lord. They were immediately struck dead, and perished in the sight of Israel, and in the presence of the Lord. So here the Gospel church was just forming, and if such gross deceit and falshood were to be admitted and tolerated in it, instead of being a divine institution for the honor of God and the happiness of mankind, it must be a reproach to christians, scoffed at by the *Jews*, and have the utmost contempt poured upon it by the Gentiles. Yea, if such gross wickedness, and such abominable offenders against the very light of nature, were to be suffered, it would and ought to be the abhorrence of all flesh. These people came with grand pomp, and declared they gave all they had to God, and said, all they possessed they laid at the apostle's feet; what would *Jews* and Gentiles said, if this outragious act of deceit and falshood had passed unnoticed? Therefore God, in order to preserve the honor of his name, and give dignity to the gospel, made public and awful examples of these transgressors. Hence he inspires the apostle to speak as he did. "And Peter said, *Ananias*, "why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost? "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." And afterwards, when his wife was detected of being in combination with her husband, in the same deliberately pre-concerted plot to deceive God, and impose upon men, Peter saith, unto her, "How "is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the "Lord?"

But omitting further observations upon this tragical history, the reason I selected this text at this time, was to lay before you the evidences of the divinity of the Holy Ghost, the third person in the Trinity, and to prove that he is one God, equal with the Father and Son, in all the perfections, attributes and glories of the Godhead. As this subject has never been denied by any that have allowed the divinity of Jesus Christ, and his co-equality with the Father, our labour here will be easy and short. For even our adversaries

Digitized by Google

themselves acknowledge, that if the co-equality and co-essentiality of the Son be certain, then the divinity of the Holy Ghost is equally certain.

Now, if it shall appear that the same names, titles, attributes, perfections, divine works and worship, are ascribed and given to the Holy Ghost, which are attributed to the Father and the Son, and he is declared to be one thing, essence and being with them, will not these things demonstrate that he is very God, the same in substance, eternity, power and glory?

First, We shall prove that the same names and titles are ascribed to him, which are attributed to the Father and the Son. The Holy Ghost is called God, and the Spirit of the Lord in our text and context, as has been already shown. He is stiled the "eternal Spirit," by St. Paul. "Whither shall I flee from thy presence, whither shall I go from thy Spirit," saith David. "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. "The things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God." We have a quotation in the Acts of the Apostles, wherein he is stiled Jehovah, by the prophet *Isaiah*. The prophet says, "Jehovah said, go and tell this people, hear ye indeed, but understand not." The apostle in the Acts, says, "Well spake the "Holy Ghost by Isaias, unto your fathers saying, go unto this people and say, hearing ye shall hear, and not understand," &c. It is affirmed, "The Lord or Jehovah, did lead Israel in the wilderness:" this is interpreted, "The Spirit of the Lord did lead "thy people to make thy name glorious." Thus speaks the Psalmist, "The Lord, or Jehovah, is a great God, and a great "king above all Gods: To day, if ye will hear his voice, harden "not your hearts." This Jehovah is called the Holy Ghost in the Hebrews: "Wherefore the Holy Ghost sayeth, to day, if "you will hear his voice," &c. *Stephen* when reproving the infidelity of the *Jews*, and speaking with an edge of keenness, says, "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do "ye." Now this person, whom he calls the Holy Ghost, is stiled

Digitized by Google

Jehovah, Lord and God, in the old testament, whom their *Israelitish* fathers murmured against and resisted. Let these few authorities suffice to show, that the same names and titles are given to the Holy Ghost, which are ascribed to the one God, the eternal Jehovah.

Secondly, The same attributes and perfections are ascribed to him, which are attributed to the Father and the Son, therefore, he is of the same indivisible Godhead with them. He is the eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, wise and holy God. He is in the scriptures declared to be the "Everlasting God, the eternal Spirit, "filling heaven and earth with his presence." He knows all things past, present, and to come; predicted all things, "For "holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. He is "omnipotent; therefore, the saints are to abound in hope, through "the power of the Holy Ghost. The Gentiles are made obedient "by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the "power of the Spirit of God." Because he is infinite in wisdom, he is pronounced "The Spirit of wisdom; the Spirit of wisdom "and revelation." Holiness is a distinguishing perfection attributed to him. He is holy absolutely in himself, stiled the Holy Ghost, and the author of holiness in all the saints. "They are "sanctified by the Holy Ghost. They are born of the Spirit. "Their bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost. Ye are the tem-"ples of the Holy Ghost, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." He is the fountain of goodness, and the giver of all grace. "The "Spirit is good; he reproves the world of sin, and of righteous-"ness, and of judgment." He forms the soul for glory and felicity, and replenishes it with every grace. But there would be no end to retailing the attributes and perfections of the Holy Ghost, all which prove him to be very God.—I proceed,

Thirdly, To say, that the same divine works are ascribed to him, which are to the Father, and to the Son—therefore, he is one with them, and the same Jehovah. The work of creation is attributed to him, as well as to the other persons of the Trinity.

Digitized by Google

"By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens." The Spirit of the "Lord hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given "me life. By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and "all the hosts, or angels of heaven, by the breath, or Spirit of "his mouth." The regeneration and sanctification of man, which is termed creation, and a new creation, is his work. The renewed man is born of God, born of the Spirit. By him "we are "created unto good works. The Gentiles are sanctified by the "Holy Ghost. We are chosen to salvation through sanctifica- "tion of the Spirit." The resurrection of the dead, is also a divine work, ascribed not only to the Father and the Son, but likewise to the Holy Ghost. The resurrection of Christ Jesus is attributed to him. "He that raised up Christ from the dead, shall "also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in "you. Christ was put to death in the flesh, but quickened by "the Spirit." Thus you see those stupendous works which God alone can perform, are ascribed to the Holy Ghost.

Fourthly, The same divine worship, homage, adoration, and praise are paid to him, as to the other persons of the Trinity. We are to be baptised in the name of the Holy Ghost, as much as of the Father and of the Son. We are dedicated to the Holy Ghost in this solemn ordinance, which being an holy sacrament, is an exalted and distinguishing act of worship and adoration. The Holy Spirit is to be prayed unto for a blessing, as well as the other persons. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the "love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with "you all." Since we expect and receive such blessings from the holy Spirit, as the regeneration and sanctification of our natures, the illumination of our minds, and the consolation of our souls; seeing he is to us the author of faith, love and every grace, surely we ought to pray unto him, and pay him continually homage, adoration, and praise; and raise our whole hearts to him, in gratitude or thanksgiving for all his blessings and benefits. The doxologies of the ancient church, with which they frequently

Digitized by Google

concluded their divine service, was an hymn of profound adoration and worship to the sacred three, when they pronounced these solemn words, "Glory to the Father, the Son and the Holy "Ghost."

I shall only subjoin one or two considerations more, in support of this important branch of our holy religion. The holy Spirit is the author of the inspiration of the scriptures. "Holy men of "God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. All scrip- "ture is given by inspiration of God;" therefore, the Holy Ghost is God. And none could foretell all the future events, with such perfect exactness contained in the sacred oracles, but the Spirit of prophecy; and none could be the Spirit of prophecy, but the omniscient Jehovah, to whom all things past and to come, are continually present.

The sin or blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, seems to have a greater punishment annexed to it, and heavier wrath threatened against it, than blasphemy against the other persons of the Trinity. "All manner of sin and blasphemy "shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against "the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And who- "soever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be "forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, "it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in that "which is to come." And perhaps this is the same sin which St. John means, when he says, "There is a sin unto death; I do "not say that he shall pray for it."

Now, if all these arguments and considerations be duly weighed, must they not force conviction upon the judgment and conscience of every candid and impartial mind, that the Holy Ghost is really and truly God, that he is of the same being and essence with the Father and the Son, the same in substance, equal in the nature and in all the adorable attributes and perfections of God.

Digitized by Google

head. "Why hast thou lied unto the Holy Ghost? Thou hast "not lied unto men, but unto God."

From this subject, in a way of improvement, we learn

First, The exceeding great importance of the Holy Spirit in the economy of man's salvation. Without this blessed Spirit, it is absolutely impossible for any of the guilty children of men, to obtain everlasting life, or arrive at eternal felicity. "Jesus answer- "ed, verily, verily, I say unto thee, except, a man be born of "water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of "God." Without holiness no man shall see the Lord, and without the Spirit to form the soul to holiness, it is impossible it ever should be acquired. Of what consequence is it, that every one should receive and become partakers of the Spirit; "that the love "of God be shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost given un- "to us." Happy are all they, who by sweet experience can say, "We have received the Spirit which is of God, that we might "know the things, that are freely given us of God." The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the mercy, goodness and love of God, must be all applied and communicated to us by the Spirit of grace. We must be led, guided, instructed and comforted by him, if we hope to be the heirs of eternal glory.

Secondly, We are here taught, how careful and watchful we should be, that we preserve and cherish the motions of the Spirit in our hearts. "Thus saith the word of the Lord, not by might, "nor by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord, shall ye pre- "vail. The Holy Ghost, God hath given to them that obey "him." By his assistance and influences, our corruptions are to be subdued, our sins mortified, and sanctification promoted and increased in our souls. Thus say the scriptures, "Walk in the "Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. And if we "live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit." Let all who believe, diligently and perseveringly use all the means which God hath appointed, for the cultivating the motions of the Spirit. Let

Digitized by Google

us hear the gospel with attention, meditate with devotion, pray with faith, and in all things seek the glory of God, and look to him through Christ, that he would not take his Spirit from us.

Thirdly, We here learn the great duty of caution; that we never yield to any temptations, or indulge ourselves in sin, whereby the Spirit may be provoked to withdraw from us. The Spirit never withdraws from the christian, but by reason of sin. And how unhappy is the soul of the saint in a season of desertion? He is destitute of light, peace and consolation. Fears and doubts, misgivings of heart, and evil forebodings swallow up all his hopes; gloominess and darkness spread thick clouds over his soul. And in anguish of mind, he often cries out, "Where is "God, my Maker? O that it were with me as in times past," when I enjoyed the light of God's countenance, and experienced the preciousness of Christ, and the loving kindness of heaven. Let us ever bear upon our hearts the divine injunctions, "Quench "not the Spirit. Grieve not the Spirit of God, whereby ye are "sealed unto the day of redemption."

And that we may be all directed, drawn and led by the Spirit, and be blessed with the consolations of the Spirit, in life, in death, and throughout eternity, may God of his infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Digitized by Google

SERMON VI.

SOME OF THE NATURAL PERFECTIONS OF GOD CONSIDERED.

PSALMS CXLV. 3.

Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.

PROPER meditations on the glorious attributes and perfections of Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the one living and true God, are productive of useful instruction, and great pleasure and delight. Writers on the lofty subject of the divine attributes, often arrange them under two eminent heads, to wit, his greatness and his goodness. Under the former, they comprehend all his natural—and under the latter, all the moral perfections of God. The greatness of Jehovah, is indeed a grand and exalted subject. When we set ourselves to meditate upon, and contemplate the same, how should we raise, enlarge and expand our souls? How should we lift our hearts in fervent and devout supplication to the throne of grace, that our understandings may be eradiated with light from on high, with rays from the sun of righteousness, and that beams of glory may shine around us, as they did around *Moses* of old, when God in splendor passed by, and proclaimed his name before him.

The greatness of God is beautifully expressed in this text, by the sweet singer of *Israel*. "Great is the Lord, and greatly to

Digitized by Google

" be praised ; and his greatness is unsearchable." *David* here, as was usual with him in his Psalms of devotion, is extolling and praising God, upon the account of the transcendent glory of his greatness, as well as of his other adorable perfections. Hence, let others do whatsoever may seem meet to them ; let them " speak of the might of his terrible acts ;" as for my part, I will make it supremely my employ, " to declare his greatness." Truly, " great is the Lord, and greatly to be feared and praised. I " will speak of the glorious honor of thy majesty, and of thy won- " derous works." He is not only engaged in the dignified work of praising the Most High himself, but his whole spirit is exerted in inducing others also to praise him. " Let all flesh bless his " holy name forever and ever. They shall abundantly utter the " memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteous- " ness." And he was not merely engaged, that the then existing people should celebrate in their praises, the exceeding greatness of their Creator and Redeemer, but that this should be the business of all future generations. " One generation shall praise " thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts." How exalted and expanded is the idea contained in these words, " Great is the Lord ?" His presence is unbounded, his glory inconceivable, his power irresistable, his brightness insupportable, his majesty awful, his dominion infinite, and his sovereignty incontestable. Surely then, " Great is the Lord, and greatly to be " praised." He is greatly to be praised by all intelligences ; by Cherubim and Seraphim, by all the hosts of heaven, and all the myriads of inhabitants on earth ; he is to be praised, to the utmost extent of their abilities, and those abilities wrought up to the highest pitch of energy, with all the most exalted circumstances of devout and holy solemnity. The greatness of God is declared to be altogether inscrutable : " His greatness is unsearch- " able." No created mind can conceive or exhibit his greatness. He is higher than the heavens, what can we say ? Who by searching can find out God ? This inconceivable summary of the divine attributes, cannot be comprehended. Its height, and depth,

Digitized by Google

and length, and breadth, is therefore so much the more to be praised. How glorious is his majesty in the superior world, far above all heavens? His great glory confounds the vision of angels, therefore, they cover their faces with their wings, utterly incapable of bearing the brilliant lustre. He is the former, governor, upholder, and director of all the marvelous works, which our eyes behold. When we contemplate the sun, moon and stars, and all the astonishing furniture of our earth, what can we say, only that God, in the greatness of his power, and wonder of his might, has made, and by the greatness of his wisdom, preserves them all.

To impress upon our minds some sense of the divine greatness, we shall, in the briefest manner, consider it under his infinity—eternity—omnipotency—immensity—immutability—omniscience and omnipresence.

First, For a moment contemplate the infinitude of God. He is infinite in his essence, and this is a quality which appertains to all the personalities and perfections of Godhead. The Father is infinite, the Son is infinite, and the Holy Ghost is infinite. All the attributes of Jehovah are infinite. With the strictest propriety may we exclaim and say, "Thou art great, O Lord, and "there is none like thee. There is none like unto the Lord our "God. O Lord God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in hea-"ven above, or on earth beneath. Who is like unto thee, O "Lord, amongst the Gods? Who is like unto thee, glorious in "holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders."

Secondly, God is great, as he is eternal. Eternity is properly applicable to God, not only as he is without beginning and without end, but there is no succession or duration with him. Angels and the souls of men are to continue in existence throughout eternity, yet as they are creatures who had a beginning, time, duration and succession, are fitly predicated of them; but not so with God, the simplicity and identity of whose essence admits of no change, increase or diminution; therefore, there can be no

Digitized by Google

succession or duration ascribed to him. Angels and the saints will be enlarging in their ideas and knowledge, and will be growing in happiness forever and ever. Therefore, mutation and succession, are applicable to them. This is not, neither possibly can be, the case with God. His knowledge cannot be increased or lessened, neither can his felicity; hence, no mutation, alteration, succession, or duration can be attributed to him. Age, and years, and time, are not to be applied to him—therefore, his eternity excludes every idea contained in the words duration and succession. He is no older than he was millions of years ago, nor will he be older millions of years to come. Hence he is often styled by divinity writers, an "eternal NOW." All past and all futurity are ever present before him. These things shew both that he is eternal, and eternally the same. This is beautifully expressed by God himself, when he sent *Moses* to deliver his people from *Egyptian* bondage, he should declare to them his name, "I am "that I am, hath sent me unto you." This name *I am*, in the original, means simple *Being*, simple existence, or eternal essence. He had been long and abundantly known to the *Israelites*, by the name of Lord and God, the God of their Fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, &c. Therefore, *Moses* wished to be able to answer all the enquiries they should put to him, respecting the name, nature, perfections, and essence of the God of their fathers. This is plainly implied in the interrogation of *Moses* to the Lord. When I shall say to them, the God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they ask me what is his name or nature, how shall I describe it, or what shall I say unto them? To this God replies, in this strong and clear description of his nature and eternal existence, "I am, that I am; and thus shalt thou "say unto the children of Israel, I am hath sent me unto you." The whole scriptures declare the eternity of Jehovah: "He is "the king eternal, and immortal; the high and lofty one that in- "habiteth eternity." He is stiled the "Eternal God, the ever- "lasting Lord. He is the same, and his years shall have no end.

Digitized by Google

"The name of the Lord endureth forever, and the memorial of "him throughout all generations."

I hasten to mention,

Thirdly, The greatness of God appears from his omnipotence. He is infinite in power. "Great is the Lord and of great power, "his understanding is infinite. Thou art great, and thy name is "great in might." We read of the thunder of his power, and that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Thus God manifests his infinite greatness, by his infinite power. He is able to perform all things, except working contradictions; he cannot create an eternal and infinite being; he cannot make the same thing to be and not to be, at the same time. His incapability of performing contradictions, is so far from being an impeachment of his omnipotency, that it is an invincible argument in support of it. It is weakness and not power, which works contradictions. Therefore, God's not being able to perform contradictions, to do absolute impossibilities, or produce things not producible, evinces that he is omnipotent, or infinite in power. The heavens are the works of his fingers, and his hand laid the foundations of the earth. His power is almighty, and altogether irresistable.

Fourthly, The immensity and omnipresence of Jehovah, shew forth his unsearchable greatness. He is every where a present God, he fills all space. There are no possible limits or bounds that can be prescribed for him. These perfections were acknowledged by many of the heathen, who had no other instruction, only what the light of nature afforded; whence says one, "All "things are full of Jove." And another declares, "That God "passes through all lands and tracts of sea, and the profound "heaven." The holy scriptures, in almost every page, bring these attributes into the view of all intelligences in heaven, earth and hell. Heaven glories in his presence; torment and horror inconceivable, fill hell with his immensity; earth is a middle state, partaking in a measure of both. Some, their extatic raptures are

Digitized by Google

such, they wish to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord; others, without hope, wish to be rid of their present existence, and plunge into the gulf of uncertainty, "to be or not "to be;" but by the infinitely wise direction of heaven, the great multitude desire a continuance in the condition in which they are, as long as they possibly can, or the omnipresent ruler of all events will allow. God's immensity and omnipresence, fill heaven, and earth, and hell. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither "shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou "art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there; if "I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts "of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right "hand shall hold me. Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, "and not afar off? Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the "Lord?" These things demonstrate the greatness and terribleness of the immensity, ubiquity, and omnipresence of Jehovah. "Thou art the great, the mighty and the terrible God. Thine, "O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory.

I proceed,

Lastly, To say, the immutability and omniscience of God transcendently illustrate the unsearchable glory of his greatness. He knoweth all things, and is the Lord who changeth not. With him there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning. The immutability of God is both terror to the wicked, and hope to the righteous. Let not the ungodly and profane, vainly imagine that his menaces may be evaded or altered. All his threatnings will as surely be accomplished, as if at this moment they held existence. He will turn the wicked into hell, with all that forget him. And "God is not a man that he should lie, nor the "son of man that he should repent." Multitudes in this infidel age, believe hell to be only a Popish purgatory—and many, that even this purgatory is nothing. These believe neither the greatness, nor immutability of God. These, in the gross ignorance

Digitized by Google

of their hearts, and blindness of their minds, foolishly imagine that God is altogether such an one as themselves, veering about like the uncertain wind of their own fancies. But they will find themselves at last eternally disappointed, and eternally tormented. They fashion their mutable deity to their own minds; but they will find the God of the bible, to be the great and terrible God, who changeth not, either in his nature, perfections or threatnings. But if his unchangeable greatness speaks terror to the workers of iniquity, it affords the strongest consolation to the righteous. "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the "whole earth, to shew himself strong in behalf of those, whose "heart is perfect toward him." And he is the unchangeable God, who hath declared, "None shall be able to pluck them out "of his hands." He will infallibly guide them by his counsel, and afterwards receive them to glory. The immutability of Jehovah administers to them full assurance, that he who hath begun a good work in them, will continue it to the end. "For I am "persuaded," says St. Paul, "that neither death, nor life, nor "angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor "things to come, nor heigth, nor depth, nor any other creature, "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in "Christ Jesus our Lord."

The divine omniscience equally exhibits the exceeding and unsearchable greatness of the Most High. His knowledge is too wonderful for us—it is an heigth to which we cannot attain. He equally extends to all things past, present, and to come. Time and chance happeneth to all, but this is inapplicable to the all-knowing God. All what we term contingencies, or casual events, are perfectly plain to the divine omniscience. The falling of a sparrow to the ground is with us a most trivial and incidental thing, yet such an inconsiderable matter as this falls under the notice of God. "Not a sparrow falls to the ground without the "notice of your heavenly Father." The death of king *Ahab*, by the random shot of an arrow, for he, who drew the bow, did it

Digitized by Google

at a venture, may be reckoned a pure accident, yet this contingency was known to God, and foretold before the king entered into the battle. There never was a more accidental or unlikely event, than the advancement of *Joseph*, from a state of the deepest ignominy, to an high degree of exaltation and honor in the *Egyptian* court—yet the all comprehending knowledge of God, predicted it many years before it happened. What could be more improbable, or contingent to created minds, than the hurling the proud, the powerful, and haughty *Nebuchadnezar* from his throne, and when he was reduced to the most abject and forlorn condition of depression, to be raised again to authority and glory, far beyond his former splendor? Behold this eminent *Chaldean* monarch, banished to run wild in the fields with the common crouds of lunatics; was there not a humane heart in his extensive dominions, to afford him the hand of charitable care? And when in this melancholy state, covered with rags, browzing with the ox, his hair rigid like eagle's feathers, and his nails protracted like bird's claws; who could expect this dismal figure would be again set on the exalted and splendid throne of *Babylon?* Yet such surprisingly accidental, contingent and unlikely events, were all perfectly in the view of the omniscient Jehovah, and predicted by him with the most accurate precision. Thus, "All things are "naked and open to the eyes of him, with whom we have to do." Hence, each one may adopt the language of the Psalmist, and say, "Thou knowest my down sitting, and my up rising; thou "understandest my thoughts afar off; thou compassest my path "and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways; for "there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou know-"est it altogether. Yea, he is perfect in knowledge, and his "understanding is infinite. Hell is naked before him, and de-"struction hath no covering. Darkness hideth not from *him*, "but the night shineth as the day, the darkness and the light are "both alike to him."

Do not all these things demonstrate the ineffable greatness of

Digitized by Google

God. "He is higher than the heavens, what canst thou do? "Deeper than hell, what canst thou know?" He is incircumscribable, incomprehensible, and unlimited in all his attributes, infinity, eternity, omnipotence, immensity, omniscience, immutability, and omnipresence; therefore, our hearts and mouths should be filled with praises, and from the overflowing fulness of our souls cry out, "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be feared, and his greatness is unsearchable."

I proceed now to some instructive improvement of this subject.

First, When we contemplate a theme so sublime, as the greatness of God, how should this fill us with humiliating and self-abasing views of ourselves? What is man, under a proper sense and proper apprehensions of Jehovah? He is nothing, and less than nothing and vanity. "Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the ballance; behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations are before him as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing." What can be more inconsiderable than the drop from a bucket? What more contemptible than a particle of dust in the ballance, which is blown off by the slender breath of the mouth; yet great and whole nations are before God inferior to these trivial things.—What then must an individual man be in the presence of his Maker? He is incalculably less than a drop of water, or a particle of trifling dust. How should this humble us in the deepest abasement, before the mighty God of heaven? Especially when we reflect that we, who are but dust and ashes, have rebelled against this supremely great and terrible Jehovah? Let us expel pride, vanity, and folly from our hearts, and think soberly, humbly, and meanly of ourselves, as we ought to think. Let us prostrate ourselves in the lowest penitential humiliation before God, and not only exclaim, we are less than nothing, but in all the sensible

Digitized by Google

feelings of brokenness of heart, acknowledge, saying, "Behold "we are vile."

Secondly, From the infinitude and eternity of the unsearchable greatness of God, we should be taught to magnify and exalt him with all the faculties of our souls. The greatness of our Creator, should awaken in us a magnanimity of mind; a magnanimity in our thoughts, desires, devotions, affections, and in all our deportment and conversation. Our desires ought to be so insatiable, that nothing but this infinite God can satisfy them; our affections so sublimated, that nothing but the eternal Jehovah can gratify them. How should we feel a superior disdain of all earthly things as forever incapable of giving felicity to a creature formed for immortality? Seeing we are made with capacities for the fruition of an eternal God, "let us not be looking at the things "which are seen and temporal, but at the things which are un-"seen and eternal." Let nothing but this great, infinite, and eternal Jehovah, form a satisfaction and happiness for our souls, created for an interminable duration. Let us enter into the holy experiences of *David*, who in the magnanimity of his mind, said "My soul thirsteth for thee, to see thy power and thy glory. As "the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul af-"ter thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living "God." Here are longings, breathings, desires, and experiences proper for an immortal soul towards a God eternally great.

Thirdly, Do the almighty power and unchangeableness of God display his marvelous greatness. How should these tremendous attributes strike terror into the sons of iniquity? Who knoweth the power of his anger and unchangeable wrath? It is an awful thing, to fall into the hands of the mighty God. He is immutable in his threatnings, omnipotent in his vengeance; he is the great and terrible God, and where is the hardy sinner that can stand before him? He exhibited a little of his splendid power in thunders, lightnings, and burnings on Mount Sinai to *Moses*, his ancient favorite, and with whom he spoke face to face, as

Digitized by Google

with his friend, yet this man of God said, "I exceedingly fear "and quake." If this was the state of this good man, what must be the condition of the unrighteous, and finally impenitent, when this omnipotent and unchangeable Jehovah, shall make known the whole power of his wrath, in their eternal destruction? Could his almighty arm in a moment bring worlds into existence, and can poor guilty man, who is feeble and crushed as the moth, dare to entertain the proud thought of sustaining, withstanding, or vanquishing his irresistable power? "Hast thou, O sinner, an "arm like God, or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?" Remember, O impenitent sinner, "God's power and his wrath is "against all them that forsake him. Who can stand before his "indignation, or abide in the fierceness of his anger?" Wherefore, O sinners, be intreated to change your minds, humble yourselves, and turn to this immutable God. You must change and turn to him, or he will never change or turn to you. "Let the "wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; "and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon "him—and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

Fourthly, The divine immensity, omniscience, and omnipresence of God, while they manifest his inconceivable greatness, administer lessons of the highest instruction in holiness to the children of men. Is God continually present with us, and is he intimately acquainted with all our thoughts, how holy should we be in heart, and in all our conversation? How watchful and careful, that no vain thoughts arise within us, and that we never grant indulgence to any sin? Is God infinite in knowledge? Then let us seek to be renewed in knowledge after his image.—Is he continually present with us, at all times and in all places? What encouragement does it afford for the duty of payer? We should, therefore, pray with all prayer and fervency.—This doctrine should fill us with a solemn reverence, and an holy awe at all seasons. Let us set the Lord always before us. He filleth all heaven and earth with his presence. He is all in all. How should

Digitized by Google

this subject support and comfort the children of God? He is perfectly acquainted with all your difficulties and all your wants. "And your Father which seeth in secret, will reward you openly." Now to the king immortal, invisible, omnipotent, immutable, omniscient and omnipresent, be ascribed all glory, honor, dominion and greatness, forever and ever. Amen.

Digitized by Google

SERMON VII.

CONTEMPLATIONS ON SOME OF THE MORAL PERFECTIONS OF GOD.

EXODUS, XXXIII. 19.

And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee.

THE goodness of God, is like himself, a theme of infinite extent. His goodness is as his nature, incomprehensible by the largest capacity of the most exalted created spirit. It is a term used to express the whole moral essence of Jehōvah; it is a word employed to communicate some idea of his moral attributes or perfections. When the whole of the moral excellencies of the great Supreme, in the most summary manner, would be given in a single phrase, sometimes they are expressed by the word *holy*, sometimes *love*, but more generally and frequently by the word *good*. As God is holy, God is love—but it is almost every where said, God is good. And perhaps, this may be a reason, why Theologians, when they treat of the moral perfections of God, in a compendious view, often fix upon the term goodness. However this may be, I have selected the phrase, goodness of God, for my present purpose. When we contemplate this pleasing and glorious subject, with what fervency should we raise our hearts to this infinitely benificent and good Being, that he would shed abroad, in a rich profusion, his gracious goodness upon our souls, that we may behold it with admiration and love, and taste and see its precious excellency.

Digitized by Google

The occasion of the Lord's making this declaration to Moses, "I will make all my goodness to pass before thee," was briefly this. Moses had offered a strange and extraordinary petition to God, saying, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory." What it was that he precisely and particularly requested, is difficult to investigate or explain any farther than is revealed by the answer which the Lord gave him in our text and context. Moses seems to have had nearer access to, and more intimate converse with God, than any other mere man ever had. God often manifested himself to him, and conversed with him face to face, as a man with his friend. He had made often extraordinary exhibitions of himself, in a glorious manner to Moses; as he appeared to him in great splendor in the burning bush; the bush appeared before him as a flame of fire, yet it was not consumed. An articulate voice proceeded from this luminous appearance, informing him that this was God in his presence, that the place where he stood was holy, and gave a large account of the afflictions and oppressions of the children of Israel in Egypt, and furnished him with a divine commission to go and bring forth his people from that state of bondage. Here was truly a wonderful discovery of God to him. But the Most High, gave still a more miraculous display of his perfections to him and before all Israel, at Mount Sinai. Here God appeared in glorious and terrible majesty, with thunders, lightnings, and earthquakes, and not only a bush, but the whole mountain, was wrapped in fire. And Moses was called up to enter into this universal blaze, and there he continued in the presence of God, to converse with him forty days and forty nights. Now, after all these astonishing manifestations of the eternal Jehovah to Moses, what could he mean by this uncommon prayer, "Shew me thy glory." Was it possible for mortal to see more of God than he had seen, or receive more distinguishing communications from him than he had done? Some have supposed that Moses desired to see that glory which should be conferred on the Messiah, after he should have made an atonement for the sins of men, and ascended to heaven, and seated on the

Digitized by Google

right hand of the majesty on high. That is, that he might see that glorious splendor of Christ Jesus, as he is now enthroned in the celestial world. Whatever it was he desired, God, in his infinite wisdom, saw it improper to grant it in its fullest extent. Therefore, the Lord said unto him, "There shall no man see me "and live." Yet God, in the wonders of his condescension and love to Moses, determines to gratify his desires as far as it was possible for him to receive in his present state of mortality.— "And the Lord said, behold there is a place by me, and thou "shalt stand upon a rock, and it shall come to pass, while my "glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock; "and will cover thee with my hand, while I pass by. And I will "take away my hand, and thou shalt see my back parts; but my "face shall not be seen."

Moses prayed to behold the divine glory; God answers, "I "will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim "the name of the Lord before thee. Accordingly he passed by "and proclaimed, the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, "long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping "mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and "sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." Jehovah does not say to him, that he would shew him his glory, but notwithstanding, he would gratify him to the utmost extent, of which his nature and present existence were capable. "I will make my "goodness pass before thee." The goodness of God is selected here, to express all the moral excellencies of Godhead. Goodness is a quality which renders sweet, amiable, and illustrious, all the other divine and glorious attributes. God, before he makes proclamation of his name to *Moses*, gives in the first place, this summary view of it. And he comprehends all the glory thereof in the term goodness, hereby teaching us, that his goodness is his glory; and that he would make himself more known to mankind by the riches of his goodness, than by the splendor of his majesty.

Digitized by Google

Now, in speaking of this goodness, we shall confine ourselves to that description and delineation of it, which God himself here gives in the proclamation of his name and character. He makes known his supremacy—his sovereignty—mercy—grace—patience—love—faithfulness—forgiveness of sin—and righteousness or justice. And this grand collection of his moral attributes, constitutes the divine goodness. There are many summaries of the divine character afforded us in the sacred oracles, but we have chosen this for our present purpose, as it is both a description drawn by himself of the fullness of the excellency of his goodness, and as the heavenly design was to display the same to *Moses*, as far as the conception of a created mind could receive it. The whole of this exalted and majestic picture is delineated by the mouth of Jehovah, every word communicating a distinct idea, and every idea too vast for the human soul to comprehend, we can arrive at some faint apprehension of the same, and admire and adore in the divine presence. "I will proclaim the name of the "Lord before thee, and will be gracious to whom I will be gra-"cious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy. The "Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering and "abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, "forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by "no means clear the guilty."—The

First thing mentioned in this description, is the supremacy of the divine goodness. The Lord—and again, the Lord, the Lord God. These words, so frequently repeated, shew forth the transcendently supreme dominion of Jehovah. And all this dominion is exercised in goodness, for the highest good of his intelligent creatures, and to display the glory of his name, that is, the glory of his goodness. Hence it is said, "Thou art the God of "all the kingdoms of the earth. Dominion and fear are with him, "he maketh peace in his high places. He is the living God, and "stedfast forever, and his kingdom is that which shall not be de-"stroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end." And

Digitized by Google

all this supremacy and dominion, are only exhibitions of the greatness of his goodness. Therefore, with propriety may we exclaim with the Prophet, "How great is his goodness? How great is "his bounty?" Let us fear the Lord and his goodness.

A Second branch of the glory of divine goodness contained in this sacred description, is the sovereignty of it, which is expressed in these sublime terms, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy." He is absolute proprietor of his own, and he makes what distinction in the bestowment of his gifts and benefits, as to him seemeth good. He is not debtor to any, neither accountable to any, therefore, may do what he will with his own. All his reasons for mercy and goodness originate from himself, and not from any merit or supposed goodness in his earthly creatures. He extends or confers his grace and mercy according to his sovereign pleasure. He does according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of this lower world. None can stay his hand, or say, what dost thou? It may be here observed, that all the descriptions of divine sovereignty given us in the holy scriptures, are all manifestations of sovereign goodness and beneficence. It is never said, "I will be angry at whom I will be angry;" for his wrath, and all the displays of it, are always perfectly righteous and just. But he will shew mercy on whom he will shew mercy, for his grace and loving kindness are always sovereignly free. St. *Paul* quotes this very declaration to *Moses*, that though God was sovereign in the dispensations of his grace, yet there was no unrighteousness with him. "Is there unrighteousness with God? "God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on "whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion, on whom I "will have compassion." God saves the children of men by the prerogative of his goodness, and never condemns any by the prerogative of wrath, but always justly, for their rebellion and transgressions. Therefore, the *Psalmist* declares, "Men shall abund-"antly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of "thy righteousness.

Digitized by Google

A Third thing brought forward to our view, in this retail of the glory of goodness, displayed in all the divine perfections is, his grace and mercy—hence, he is proclaimed, "The Lord gra-"cious and merciful." The object of mercy is misery and distress; the object of grace is not only misery and wretchedness, but demerit, guilt, and wickedness also. Mercy pities and administers relief to the forlorn and miserable; grace confers heavenly blessings upon the sinful and ill-deserving; where there is no present merit, nor any just ground to expect future favor.—How charming ought the sounds of mercy and grace to be in the ears of our apostate and fallen world? They are sounds which fill the heart of the saint with joy and gladness, and how should they call up the listening attention of the guilty and impenitent sinner? O ye saints, who have experienced the power of sovereign grace, and know what it is to bask in the sun beams of divine mercy, let your souls ever be filled with extatic praises of these glorious perfections and goodness. And, O ye sinners, awake from your lethargic slumbers, to hearken to the voice of a gracious and merciful God, before your ears shall be stopped by eternal death, and the things of your peace be hid from your eyes. Mercy and grace, what delightful attributes in the name of our God? How precious the proclamation, "The Lord, the Lord "God, gracious and merciful?" Attend to what the *Psalmist* says, when describing these branches of the divine character, "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plente-"ous in mercy." Here is a diversity and variety of terms, that our conceptions of these glorious perfections might be enlarged, and wrought up to the highest degree possible. The sacred historian, *Nehemiah*, when describing Jehovah, uses almost the same language. "Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and "merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness." Thus speaks the prophet *Isaiah*, "I will mention the loving kindness of the "Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the "Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the "house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them." I proceed,

Digitized by Google

Fourthly, to direct your thoughts to his patience and his love. How richly is the super-eminent goodness of the Most High displayed in his forbearance, long suffering, patience, and love? These perfections are daily manifested before the world, in his long bearing with provoking and heaven daring-offenders. Instead of causing his jealousy to smoke against them, he exercises long suffering, and waits to be gracious. Long suffering is that attribute, whereby God suspends deserved punishment, and instead of wrath, he showers down a rich profusion of his beneficence, as if it were to see whether his goodness would not lead men to repentance. To you, O men, he calls, and the voice of his patience is to the sons of men. Let us not despise the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering. When we speak of love, as an attribute of God, our souls are lost in admiration. Who can take a prospect of its height, contemplate its depth, or survey its length or breadth? Yea, when the Godhead would be comprehended in one word, the Apostle John employs the term love: "God is love." There is an incomprehensible extension in this concise phrase, that even the penetration of an archangel cannot reach. Its transcendent excellency and exuberant glory, celestial eloquence would sink into debility and meanness, in attempting the infinite description of it. God is nothing but love; love in his nature, love in his essence, love in all his operations, and love in all the exhibitions and revelations which he hath made of himself. What spoke this world into existence, replenished it with innumerable inhabitants, and filled it with all its variegated beauty and usefulness, but almighty love? What upholds it in all its order and harmony, but superlative love, and overflowing and unbounded goodness? What but love, inconceivable love, provided a Redeemer for the lost and ruined children of men? "God so loved the world, in such a marvelous and "astonishing manner, that he gave his only begotten son, that "whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have ever-"lasting life." What but wonderful love, peoples the celestial

Digitized by Google

kingdom with inhabitants from this wretched and guilty world of ours? What is the hope of the saints on earth and the happiness of heaven, but divine ineffable love? "O that we may be able "to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, "depth, and heigth, and to know the love of Christ which pass-"eth knowledge, that *we* might be filled with all the fullness of "God." Let each one continually be uniting in David's prayer, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kind-"ness; hear me, O Lord, for thy loving kindness; turn to me "according to the multitude of thy tender mercies."

Let us proceed in our contemplations, and consider

Fifthly, The faithfulness, forgiveness, truth, and holiness of the great eternal, and how these perfections unfold the wonders of his goodness. He is every where illustrated as the faithful God. Faithfulness enters into his nature, into his word, and into all his promises. His faithfulness is the great support and consolation of his people. To this perfection they look in times of trouble. It cheers the melancholy mind, heals the broken heart, cures the wounded spirit, is a sweet balm under all the discouragements of life, disarms the king of terrors of his sting, and gives fortitude to the soul, to venture down into the gloomy mansions of the dead. "He is the faithful God. His mercy is in the "heavens, and his faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. His "faithfulness is unto all generations. The heavens shall praise "thy wonders, O Lord, and thy faithfulness also in the congre-"gation of the saints."

The forgiveness of God, is also an amiable branch of his character. How delightful are these words in the proclamation? "The Lord God, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniqui-"ty, and transgression, and sin." That is, every manner and kind of offence he can pardon, all manner of sin and blasphemy, every species of transgression, whatever may be its nature or ag-

Digitized by Google

gravations, his goodness is infinitely sufficient to forgive. Whoever repents, confesses, and forsakes his iniquities, is sure to meet with a sin forgiving, and a sin pardoning God. "Though your "sins be as scarlet or crimson, they shall be as snow or as wool. "I, even I am he, that blotteth out thy transgression for mine "own sake, and will not remember thy sins. I will cleanse them "from all their iniquity whereby they have sinned against me; "and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, "and whereby they have transgressed against me."

The holiness of Jehovah is a distinguishing property of the Most High. This is a peculiar quality in all the attributes of his nature. Holiness is inscribed upon his whole name. He is holy in all the persons of Godhead, and in all his perfections; he is holy in his ways and in his work. He is commonly stiled the thrice holy God. Because this term holy, is frequently three times together pronounced, in order to shew forth, as far as possible, its superlative excellency. "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of "hosts. Who is like unto thee, O Lord, glorious in holiness? "There is none holy as the Lord. And heaven is the habitation "of his holiness." This is the beauty of every divine attribute, and forms the glory around the throne of the great Supreme.—And it is the indispensible duty of all his intelligent creatures, to be conformed hereto. Be ye holy as the Lord is holy. The happiness of saints is in proportion to their holiness. The greater degrees of holiness, the more felicity, and when their holiness is perfect, their happiness will be perfect too. Holiness may be said to be the "abundance of his goodness."

And not only is he the holy, but also the true God. His name, his operations, his judgments, his word, his laws and government are truth. Hence, in this description, it is declared, "That he is "abundant in goodness and truth." He is infinitely remote from every thing that deviates from the most perfect rectitude. Any variation from truth ascribed to God, must involve in it

Digitized by Google

blasphemy. For it is his distinguishing characteristic, that he is "A God of truth, without iniquity; just and right is he. All "the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth. All his works are "truth, and his ways judgment. The Lord is good, and his truth "endureth to all generations." This is the consolation of his people, the joy and strength of their hearts. They may have the most absolute confidence in all his declarations and promises. "His counsels of old are faithfulness and truth. Just and true "are thy ways, O thou king of saints."

We come now, in the

Last place, To speak of his righteousness or justice. This is contained in this part of the divine character. "And will by no "means clear the guilty." This is as much a branch of the name of God, as any other; and his justice and righteousness are equal manifestations of his glorious goodness. But here it will be asked, how is it possible that righteousness and justice can be a display of goodness? Is not justice continually exercised in the infliction of pain and punishment? Is it not a display of terror, of power and wrath, rather than goodness? These things are in part true. Yet there is no punishment inflicted by God, but what is a manifestation of his goodness. Is it not goodness to form good laws, and to enforce the same by good sanctions? The laws of God are all holy, just, and good; therefore, the execution of them must be good also. The laws of men which are good, the proper execution of them, can never be objected to as evil or bad. Much less can any objection of this kind, be brought against the perfect laws of heaven, or the execution of them. It is true, abstract punishment or misery, can never be considered as a good thing in itself, or an object of pleasure or delight—yet, when taken in all its bearings, relations and connections, it is an exhibition of supreme goodness. When punishment and misery are entailed for their own sake, it raises abhorrence and indignation in every virtuous and good mind. These are expressions of tyranny, cruelty,

Digitized by Google

malice, and iniquity among men, and justly held in the utmost detestation. But every idea of this kind is utterly inapplicable to the blessed God. What puritive justice was displayed in the awful sufferings and cruel death of Jesus Christ? What must be the excruciating pains he sustained in the garden of Gethsemine, when his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground? What must be the tormenting agony of his horrid crucifixion And was there ever such discoveries of benevolence, love, and unbounded goodness made to the universe of intelligences, as in these dreadful transactions? Is not this tremendous tragedy the sole foundation of the salvation of all pious and good people? And that which encreases the felicity of angels, and secures the eternal blessedness of all penitent, believing, and righteous men, must exhibit the goodness of Jehovah in the highest fullness and perfection.

These are only a few imperfect hints of the goodness and glorious moral excellencies of the Most High. Your own meditations may enlarge upon them, to the utmost extent of your capacities, but eternity itself can never fully develope, much less exhaust the subject of inconceivable and infinite goodness. "Justice and "judgment are the habitation of his throne, mercy and truth shall "go before his face. I will make all my goodness to pass before "thee.

A very few conclusions, must bring this theme at present to a period.

First, We conclude that all who would repent, forsake their sins, and turn to God according to the gospel, must make his goodness, mercy, and grace their only plea. Their chief prayer must be, "God be merciful to us sinners." All imaginary merit and self-righteousness, must forever be banished from our hearts. O let us, with our whole souls, embrace the mercy of God in Christ Jesus; and let us trust and depend upon his abundant goodness and truth.

Digitized by Google

Secondly, We conclude that these perfections of Jehovah, as displayed in the holy scriptures, afford the greatest encouragement to poor, helpless and broken hearted sinners, to repair to this overflowing ocean of goodness. Here, O distressed souls, are enough and to spare. What is your petition, and what is your request? What are your hungerings and thirsting, and the longing desires of your hearts? Come hither, and they shall be satisfied with the fullness of God, with a perfection of grace, mercy, and goodness. Yea, "the Lord will rejoice over *you* for "good. O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the "man that trusteth in him." He keepeth mercy for thousands.

A Third conclusion is, that the righteousness and justice of God, though dressed in all the amiable robes of celestial goodness, must be a terror and dread to all the workers of iniquity, and to all the finally impenitent. Remember, O sinners, "The "wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness "and unrighteousness of men." The compassionate Saviour himself, who is all goodness and love, "Shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels to take vengeance." He is now, as it were, shedding tears of tenderness and love over you. He is saying, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have ga"thered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings; "but ye would not. As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no "pleasure in the death of the wicked. How shall I give thee up "Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee Israel? How shall I make "thee as Admah and Zebaim? My heart is turned within me, "my repentings are kindled together." Wherefore, be entreated not to despise the riches of his goodness, but flee from the wrath to come; flee into the open arms of divine compassion, mercy, and love.

Lastly, We conclude with the highest certainty, that if God be thus good, and abundant in goodness, that he ought to be loved with all our hearts, with all our minds, and wit all our

Digitized by Google

strength. "Take diligent heed to love the Lord your God. O "love the Lord all ye his saints. Keep yourselves in the love of "God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal "life. If a man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be "anathema, maranatha."

Digitized by Google

SERMON VIII.

THE PRIMITIVE RECTITUDE OF MAN.

GENESIS I. 26, 27.

And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let him have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him.

COMPARISON is a peculiar characteristic distinction in our world. Few consider the implication and extent of this term. What is it that has formed the distinction among men, as philosophers, politicians, warriors and divines, but this criterion?—What placed Sir *Isaac Newton* at the head of all the philosophers and mathematicians that preceded him, but comparison; comparison between him, *Galileo*, *Copernicus* and others; and he was favored in his calculations, demonstrations, and especially in the run of popularity above all his predecessors. What raised the fame of the great Mr. *Locke*, in the investigation of the operations of the human mind, but a comparison with those who had preceded him? What made *Nimrod*, *Alexander*, *Cesar* and other generals great in war, but their pre-eminence above other warriors, in the butchery and destruction of the human race? In like manner among divines: one important matter with them has been to

Digitized by Google

investigate man in the original state in which he was created, and compare the same with his present condition.

With regard to the present situation and character of man, this shall be a matter of future attention—but what his state and condition was, when he first came from under the hand of his Creator, is to be the subject of our consideration at this time. If we can from reason and revelation, clearly delineate man in his nature, qualities, and endowments in his primitive state, as formed by his God, and exhibit with justice, truth, and precision his present character, situation, and condition, we will then see what man was, and what he now is—and thus it will be rendered easy to the unprejudiced mind, and even the feeblest understanding, to make the comparison. It is impossible for me to work up the picture to a perfect likeness in one case or the other, but I shall honestly endeavor to follow the scriptural descriptions of both, as far as my abilities, aided by the Spirit of God, shall enable me.

In respect to man in his original state, as brought into existence by his Creator, the text before us, with a few others illustrating it, must comprehend our meditations in this discourse. And here we will learn the Maker of man, the materials of his formation, the excellency of his character, and the happiness of his primitive condition.

These things are expressed in a summary way in our text. "And God said, let us make man, in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and "the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, "and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created "he him." We are here plainly informed, that God is the author, maker, and creator of man. He was not made from nothing, as the world was, but he was made from what we should naturally consider very improper materials, to wit, the dust of the earth.

Digitized by Google

" And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and " breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a " living soul." Although we are here expressly acquainted with the matter of which man was made, yet there is a very clear distinction between the formation of his body and his soul. His body was created of the dust of the ground, but not so the soul. It was of a much higher, and more dignified origin. It takes its rise from the breath of heaven. The body was framed from the dust of the ground, but the soul is the breath of God. After the body was duly formed, God breathed into his nostrils, and by this man became a living soul.

It may be here properly observed, the formation of man was marked with peculiar distinction from all the other works of creation. Of all other things, the fiat was pronounced, let them be, and they immediately started into existence; but when this world was compleated and replenished with all its furniture, and a creature was to be made to have superintendancy and dominion over the whole, a council seems to be called, and consultation held. Hence, it is said, " Let us make man." This strongly intimates a plurality of persons in the Godhead; that the holy Trinity is here represented as taking counsel together, how this creature about to be created may be of proper dignity and excellency, so as to be the perfection of the creation, and capable of that universal sway and authority with which he shall be invested. Judgment was instantly formed, that he should be made, in their " own image, and " after their own likeness."

These are terms of the same import, expressive of the same thing, in order to heighten the resemblance of man to the supreme God. These words are used in like manner with respect to *Adam*. "He begat a son in his own likeness, after his own image." And they are separately and indifferently used elsewhere by the sacred historian, when he says, " Man was made in the likeness " of God;" and again, " In the image of God." These instances sufficiently show us, that these two terms are employed to ex-

Digitized by Google

press the same idea, and only to encrease and heighten it; and to show the compleat similitude that man should bear to the glorious Jehovah. But not only should he be made after the divine image and likeness, but he should likewise resemble him in authority and dominion. "Let them have dominion over the fish of "the sea, and the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over "all the earth, over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the "earth." Some have observed, that the plural number being used in this place, when the direction and government of the whole world was to be committed to man, for it is not said, let him be invested with this great authority, but *let them*, implies in it an argument in favor of *Adam's* being the head and representative of all his posterity. This is an undoubted fact, that he was to be the federal head of all his progeny, but the present is not a proper place for attending to this subject.

The repetition in our text, "That God created man in his "own image, and in the image of God, created he him," holds forth the superior excellency of his form, the dignity of his nature, and happiness of his state. It is often asserted that God created man in his own likeness and image, and that he was his maker or creator. He was the former of his body, and the father of his immortal spirit. He was a compounded being, partly of earth, and partly of heaven. Though his body was framed from the earth, yet his soul was immediately created by God, and infused or breathed into him. The special enquiries on this subject, must be these two.

First, Wherein did this image and likeness consist, in which man was originally created.

Secondly, What was the glory and felicity of his state or condition.——The

First enquiry is, wherein did this divine image consist; or wherein did this man bear that resemblance or likeness to God, so much spoken of throughout the holy scriptures.

Digitized by Google

And in order to be as plain and intelligible upon the subject as possible, it may be considered under various particulars.

First, We may consider the dignified frame of man's body, his elevated appearance, his mein and exalted deportment as wearing in some respects a resemblance of his glorious creator. It is true, God is a spirit, not consisting of body or any compounded parts, so that in this respect, man has no similitude to him whatsoever. Yet as man is more curiously and marvelously formed, erect in his posture, and far superior to all other corporeal creatures in excellency, glory and majesty; therefore, in these things, he may be said to bear a resemblance to his infinitely majestic, excellent, and glorious Maker. Hence the *Psalmist*, in considering the wonderful workmanship of his body, though exceedingly wicked and impaired by the fall, exclaims, "I will praise thee, O Lord, "for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are thy "works, my substance was not hid from thee, when I was made "in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the "earth." All animals look to the earth from whence they came, but man alone looks upwards, and can contemplate and survey the celestial world, from whence his superior part descended.

The supreme God is the object of wonder, admiration, and astonishment to all intellectual creatures. He is incomprehensibly wonderful in his essence, infinitely mysterious in the Trinity, and in all his attributes and operations; so man is the most admirable and wonderful part of all creation. He is as it were the universe in miniature, a compend of the whole world, and an abridgment of all the workmanship of Jehovah. He is material and immaterial, corporeal and spiritual, visible and invisible. He possesses vegetative, animal, and angelic life. Thus man is in all respects a wonderful creature, resembling his wonderful Creator.

Secondly, Man was made like unto God in regard to authority, rule, dominion, and dignified power. The glorious Creator governs all worlds, and has the most absolute dominion over them.

Digitized by Google

"His kingdom is over all. To him pertains the kingdom, the "power, and glory. The Lord's throne is in the heaven, and "dominion and fear are with him." In the original creation of man, he was invested with a similitude of this divine and extensive government. He was constituted lord of this lower creation. Great and extensive power was given to him. He was cloathed with perfect authority and dominion over all the creatures in this world. In this respect he was made after the likeness of God, and received what might be stiled the governmental or political image of the Most High.

Thirdly, Man was made more eminently in the image, and after the likeness of God, both in the nature of his soul, and in the qualities and endowments of it. The human soul is a substance, a spirit, immaterial, invisible, and immortal, so also is the uncreated Jehovah.

The soul is a substance which can exist without connection with, or dependence upon matter. It can and doth exist without the body—therefore, is a substance distinct from it. It subsists or continues in being, when the body is destroyed or mouldering into dust. *Solomon* informs us, "When the body returns "to the earth as it was, the soul shall return unto God who gave "it." Christ, who had a real human soul, when expiring on the cross, commended his soul into the hands of his Father; knowing that it would exist when his body should be dead. So the proto-martyr Stephen, when dying, prayed to Jesus to receive his spirit; having full assurance, that though his persecutors could kill the body, they could not destroy his soul. Thus we find the souls of the rich man and Lazarus, both in existence after their bodies were dead and buried, the one in torment, and the other in felicity. These things prove to us, that the soul is a substance, and does exist independent of the body. God is a substance independent of all matter—and in this respect, angels and the souls of men, bear the image of the great Supreme.

Digitized by Google

The soul is also a spiritual and immaterial substance. It consists not of matter or material parts, as blood, and flesh, and bones. Hence, says our Lord, "A spirit hath not flesh and "bones, as ye see me have." It would be endless to cite all the passages in the bible, where the souls of men are termed spirits. Herein does the soul resemble God, who is every where declared to be a Spirit.

The soul is likewise invisible. This necessarily flows from its immateriality and spirituality. Was there ever man so weak and foolish as to call into question the existence of his soul, because he could not discern it with his bodily eyes? They might with equal propriety question the existence of angels and of God, for these were never seen. And when we read of Angels, or God himself appearing to men, it was not their real being which was visible, but only the shape or figure which for that season they had assumed. Wherefore, in this respect, the soul bears the image or likeness of God, who is called "The king invisible, "whom no man hath seen or can see."

Moreover the soul is immortal. It cannot die with age, or perish by disease. Nothing can extinguish its existence but God, who gave it; and this he pledged himself never to perform; in his promises of eternal life to believers, and in his threatnings of everlasting punishment to the finally impenitent and unbelieving. Thus, as the soul lives forever or is immortal, does it not herein wear a resemblance of the ever living and immortal God? It is true the immortality of God is infinitely different from the immortality of men or angels, but the present business is not to show the difference, but the similitude.

Fourthly, The soul is constituted of understanding, will, and affections—and in these, he is eminently created after the likeness of Jehovah. "God's understanding is infinite. There is no "searching of his understanding." His will is perfect. And all the things which are, is because he willed their existence. We

Digitized by Google

and also affections and passions attributed to the Most High, such as love, hatred, pity, compassion, anger, wrath, &c. so man was created with all those faculties in the image of the great Supreme.

Thus far, we have considered the natural image and likeness of God in which man was created. And man, in his fallen state, still retains all this similitude to his Creator, but it is exceedingly marred and impaired. Yet there is a superior and distinguishing part of the image in which man was originally formed, remaining for consideration. Therefore, I proceed to say,

Fifthly, Man was created in an holy likeness to his Maker. This is frequently stiled the moral image of God. About this there has been, and still is, a continual controversy among moral writers, and among divines. Those who will not allow original rectitude or righteousness to man, readily grant that he was created in a state of innocency, but that he had no more bias to virtue and holiness, than he had to sin and iniquity. And they also affirm, that the souls of all children come into existence in the same state, and that there is no such thing as original righteousness or original sin. Others suppose that man at first was created in a state of moral rectitude or holiness; and it satisfactorily appears to me, that these have the strongest reasons, and the most scripture on their side.

Will not reason itself argue from the goodness, justice, and holiness of God, that if he made a rational and immortal creature to love and serve him, he would not only make him innocent as a common plant or animal, which are innocent creatures, but as this was a rational immortal, the divine perfections seem to require that he should be endued with an inward bias or propensity to holiness and virtue. But the scriptures appear to shed a splendid light upon this subject. *Solomon*, the wisest of men, assures us, "That God made man upright." The original word, which is here translated *upright*, is in almost all other places rendered

Digitized by Google

righteous, and thus it ought to have been here, "God made man "righteous." Now, if he was made righteous or holy, then he was made in the moral image of his Creator. But St. *Paul* explains to every unprejudiced mind, with the most perfect accuracy, what *Moses* meant by the image and likeness of God. The chief part of the similitude of Jehovah, in which man was originally made, must have been knowledge, righteousness and holiness; and the Apostle having been once a Jewish Pharisee, was easily lead to this construction, when speaking of the new creation of man, by the spirit of Christ Jesus. In one place he says, this image consists in *konwledge*: "And have put on the new man "which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that "created him." Again he declares it consists also in *righteousness and holiness*. "And that ye put on the new man, which "after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Now, as the regenerated man is created after the image of God, and we are precisely informed wherein this image consists, to wit, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness; hence, it appears in a striking manner, that this was the main resemblance of man to God in his primitive state; and that the image and likeness in which he was first created, was chiefly the moral image of his Maker. His knowledge was perfect both in a natural and moral sense. That is, his knowledge was in all that measure and degree, which infinite wisdom deemed expedient and proper. His knowledge was extensive, sagacious, and penetrating, when he could instantly give names to all the beasts of the field, and all the fowls of the air, and these names were expressive of the nature of every species. "For whatsoever Adam called every living "thing, that was the name thereof." His knowledge must have been exceedingly great to accomplish him for that high and universal dominion and rule, with which he was invested. He had a perfect knowledge of the whole law which he was to obey; he could not be ignorant of the smallest tittle of that homage and service he was to perform to his Creator. And all this knowledge was of the spiritual, or perfectly holy kind.

Digitized by Google

Moreover, this divine image consisted in righteousness. "God "made man righteous." The heavenly will was the rule, agreeably to which he was formed. His will was made compleatly answerable to the divine will. Therefore, there was in him no blemish or defect. There was no perverseness, refractoriness, or stubborn obstinacy in his will, no corruption in his heart, no bias, or propensity to evil; the positive bent of his will was to love God supremely, to serve him perfectly, and to enjoy and delight in him ultimately.

He was created also in holiness. He came from the hand of his Maker a holy being. Holiness was the glory, the ornament, and beauty of his soul. This gave the highest polish and grace to all his other excellencies. His holy will was under the direction of an holy understanding, his knowledge was holy, and all his volitions holy—hence, all the powers and faculties, inclinations and appetites in man were in the most perfect and holy harmony. There were no jarring desires, no corrupt wishes, no irregular or interfering passions, no murmuring or repining thoughts, no remorse or clamours of conscience. All was perfect peace and tranquility within, and no apprehensions or fears of danger without. Thus "God created man in his own image, in the image "of God created he him."

I hasten now to invite your attention to the

Second head of this discourse, which was to enquire what was the glory and felicity of man in his primitive state or condition.

As he was perfectly holy, so he must be in a compleatly happy situation. Holiness and happiness are always in an indissolvable connection; yea, holiness is felicity itself. This state bore a near relation to the state of the blessed in heaven. Nay, I know not any thing, by which it can be better illustrated, than by saying, "It was heaven upon earth." It wanted nothing of celestial perfection and eternal felicity, but confirmation. Man, in

Digitized by Google

his *Paradisaical* state, was not only a holy, but a very glorious creature. How glorious was his appearance, how majestic his countenance, and how beautiful his mein, and all his deportment? Did *Moses'* face shine with a dazling splendor, after he had been with God in the mount? What must have been the superior and divine lustre in *Adam's* face, when he came perfect in holy purity from the hands of his Creator, dwelt in his immediate presence, and enjoyed the fullest and most intimate communion with him? God is glorious in holiness—therefore, man, as he was made after his likeness, was without doubt altogether glorious. His thoughts, words, and actions all shone with a divine glory.—There was no stain nor spot without, and there was no defilement or impurity within. With the utmost propriety it may be said, the king's son was ineffably glorious, and his apparel of wrought gold.

Man was not only glorious, but he was a peculiar favourite of heaven. God then, in very deed, dwelt with man. There was a free intercourse between heaven and earth. There was no need of *Jacob's* ladder, nor of *Elijah's* fiery chariots to bear man to the fruition of his God. How inconceivably happy was the original condition of man?

He was also in confederacy, in a league of peace with the great Supreme. And while he was true to his allegiance with heaven, surely no evil could befal him. How exalted was the dignity and honor of man? He was the great personage, whom the Most High delighteth to honor. He was the companion of *Seraphs*, and attended by *cherubic* hosts, and the highly honored of the Lord.

Another ingredient in the happiness of the *Paridisaical* state, was the high authority and government with which he was invested. He was the only sole monarch that ever existed. His dominion extended over the whole of this inferior creation. And the palace of his residence was in the most delightful spot of the whole earth. His habitation was in *Eden*, which signifies plea-

Digitized by Google

sure ; and not only in *Eden*, but in the garden of *Eden ;* the most pleasant apartment in all this delightful place. And it is not said that this garden was created like the rest of the world, but that God planted it, which holds forth that there was in it a collection of the most curious, beautiful, and useful plants and trees in the whole creation, Every thing that charmed the eye, delighted the fancy, and pleased the taste, " every tree that was pleasant to " the sight," created fragrancy in the air, " and good for food," was introduced and disposed of in all the grandeur of divine order. From hence man was happy in his nature, happy in his circumstances, and perfectly happy in all his enjoyments. Of what does the imaginary happiness of fallen man consist ? Is it not riches, and pleasure, and honor ? This man, in his primitive state, possessed far beyond any thing the human mind can now conceive. Honors, pleasures, and riches, he enjoyed to the utmost of his wishes, and in the highest possible perfection.

Let this suffice for the original rectitude and felicity of man, which might be easily enlarged with great advantage, but I proceed to close this subject with a few reflections.

First, We are here taught the infinite wisdom, goodness, and love of the glorious Jehovah, in the formation of all creatures, but especially in the creation of man, the glory of all his works, and dignifying him with power and dominion over this lower universe. He was framed with sufficient abilities, and endowed with every quality and accomplishment to fit him for his exalted station. How glorious was the Creator, how illustrious was the creature ?

Secondly, We here learn how excellent a being man was when he came in all his brilliant lustre from the pure hands of his celestial Maker. He must be wonderful in his nature, endowments, and dignity, about whom divine wisdom called a council, as it were, to exert all the powers of Godhead, in his formation. What must the production be but something as near as possible to the

Digitized by Google

similitude of God, distinguished in excellency, and conspicuous in glory? Was man this illustrious, this blessed and happy creature? Was he the chief of all this lower creation, the being whom the great eternal delighted to honor; and did he view him with pleasure, when he pronounced him not only good, but very good?

Thirdly, This doctrine might with much propriety be improved in the way of gratitude and praise, humiliation and lamentation. In gratitude and praise for all the divine wonders of creating beneficence, in conferring such riches, honors, and happiness on man. In humiliation and lamentation: O man, O glorious man, from whence art thou fallen? How has thy glory forsaken thee, and thy beauty fled far from thee? All his riches, and honors, and pleasures are lost. The crown has fallen from his head. Instead of all calmness, peace, and tranquility within, nothing dwells in these once happy mansions, but anxious cares, jarring passions, and foreboding and tormenting fears. Instead of freedom from all apprehensions of alarms and dangers from without, every creature, animate and inanimate, is dressed in armour for his destruction. All heaven, earth, and hell are arrayed to hurl upon him eternal ruin. Here is an unwasting source of humiliation and lamentation. But I will not introduce you at present into the abodes of weeping and sorrow, of death, darkness and the grave.

O

Digitized by Google

SERMON IX.

THE PRIMITIVE COVENANT MADE WITH MAN, OR THE COVENANT OF WORKS.

GENESIS II, 16, 17.

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden, thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou mayest not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

AS we have contemplated man in his primitive state of rectitude as he came pure and perfect from the hands of his Maker, let us now consider the privileges he enjoyed, and the peculiar advantages under which he was placed for the service of his God, and the continuation of his felicity. He was, in a high degree, a favorite of heaven, and great immunities and privileges were granted to him, far beyond what a mere creature, however perfect, could, according to the strict laws of creation demand. Reason seems to require, that if God make a rational creature, for his service, that he should be perfect in his kind, and endowed with every qualification and accomplishment, necessary to enable him to answer the end of his creation, and for the continuance of his own happiness. It seems to be inconsistent with the justice and goodness of Jehovah, to form a creature in a state of sin and misery, or in such circumstances that this must be the necessary and unavoidable consequence. There appears nothing to an

Digitized by Google

eye of reason inconsistent with the benevolence and holiness of God, to create a rational being in a state of perfect righteousness, with powers to yield obedience to his will, and by such obedience, to continue and increase his own felicity, without stamping upon him immutability, or an impossibility of falling. This was the very state in which man was created, and no doubt the state of the angels too. They were created perfectly holy or good, yet in their nature capable of sinning; hence, multitudes of them fell, but much greater multitudes of them stood in the love and service of their Maker, and will continue to stand in glory and blessedness forever.

Man, in his original state of innocency, had not only conferred upon him every thing which the laws of creation required, but inconceivably more—innumerable favours and honors were granted to him besides. He was placed in Eden, in a garden of pleasure, planted by the hand of the Almighty, with every fruit tree, and every flower, which could please the eye, regale the senses, or gratify the taste. To him was given dominion over every creature, so that he was constituted sole Lord of the whole creation. He had the most intimate converse and unreserved communion with God. And besides all these dignities and honors, his Creator was pleased in astonishing condescension and grace, to enter into a covenant of life with him, which is commonly stiled, to distinguish it from all others, the covenant of works. Before we enter upon the consideration of the nature and conditions of this covenant, or to bring forward the proofs, that such a covenant did really exist, there are two questions here, which are frequently asked. They are rather matters of curiosity than moment, and every one answers them according to the conjectural opinion of his own mind, without the infringement of any useful doctrine of religion.

The first question is, how long did Adam continue in his state of innocency and happiness?

Digitized by Google

Various have been the conjectures in reply to this question. Some, in running the similitude between the first and second Adam, have supposed the former maintained his rectitude, as long as the latter lived upon earth; if so, he must have supported his innocency for more than thirty three years at least. Many others have supposed, that he fell the evening of the day in which he was created. But the greatest probability lies between these distant opinions. Upon the whole, after viewing all the conjectures on this subject, and as the scriptures are entirely silent upon it, it is most probable he did not hold his integrity for years, or even months—yet it is very likely to me, he stood for a number of days, perhaps a few weeks. We know there was business done between the creation and the fall, which must have taken time. It is probable that Eve was created the same day with her husband, and we find the next day sanctified for a sabbath, when all still remained very good. After this, we find the garden of Eden planted, the man put into it with various directions given him, the covenant of nature or works was entered into, and all beasts of the earth, and fowls of the air passed before Adam, to receive their names according to their respective species, Eve must have suffered the temptations of the serpent, Adam the enticements of his wife, and all these things must have taken up some time. They could not have been done in a few hours. It is rational to suppose, they must at least have occupied a number of days. For though God can do all things in an instant, yet man must have a rational portion of time for every purpose or work. Therefore, upon the lowest estimation we can form, there must have been a number of days between the creation of man and the fall.

A second question is, could Adam and Eve be naked during their state of innocency, and be ignorant of it?

Immediately after their eating the forbidden fruit, the sacred text informs us, "That the eyes of them both were opened, and

Digitized by Google

"they knew that they were naked." This seems strongly to imply, that they knew not this circumstance before. And there is another text previous to this, affirming the matter of their nakedness. "They were both naked the man and his wife, and were "not ashamed." The reality of this circumstance, as it has always appeared to me, though it is only matter of private opinion, was briefly this: They were not covered in their innocent state with any thing which we now call garments, or covering of any kind, as they afterwards were. Yet I apprehend they had a dress of a celestial nature, that their bodies were surrounded with a bright shining glory, as an external evidence of their own innocence, purity and perfection, and also as a token of the divine presence and favor. They were cloathed in such glory as that in which sometimes angels have appeared; in such glory as shone upon Moses' face, when he had descended from the mount, after having been forty days in the presence of God; such glory as enveloped the burning bush, which was not consumed; such glory as rested over the mercy seat between the cherubim in the tabernacle and in the temple; such glory as surrounded the body of Christ at his transfiguration; and such glory as the saints shall be cloathed in at the resurrection. The saints, at the resurrection, will be dressed in white, splendid, and celestial robes, and these shall be their glorious covering throughout eternity. Hence we read in the resurrection, there will be celestial bodies, spiritual bodies, and that the saints shall be raised in glory. If these things be just, then nothing strange, that our first parents, upon their transgression, found themselves naked. Immediately this heavenly apparel, this glory which surrounded their bodies departed from them, as well as the image of God, and holiness from their hearts, and here they were naked indeed; they became instantly naked both in soul and in body. This image of God, will be re-produced in the soul of the saint at his conversion by the second Adam, and perfected therein after death, when it shall be received to heaven—but the body, the wretched body,

Digitized by Google

shall not be cloathed again with its original glory, until the resurrection.

But enough of these conjectures: it is time we should proceed to consider the nature and conditions of the covenant of works, and produce the scripture authorities, that such a covenant did really exist.

As to the nature of this covenant entered into between the Creator and his creature, it must always be remembered to be very different in many respects from covenants entered into between man and man. A covenant agreed upon between men for mutual offices to be performed, and mutual benefits to be received, always supposes an equality in the parties simply or in some degree; that they have it in their power to perform the reciprocal good offices, and that they are not under obligation to the performance of them without such a bargain or agreement; but certainly no covenant of such a nature can possibly take place between God and man; because there is no equality or proportion between them, that neither the blessings God promises by covenant, nor the offices or duties which man is held to perform, can be of any reciprocal advantage, or of any benefit or utility to God. "Can man be profitable to his Maker, or can his good-"ness extend to the Most High?" Because also, man without any covenant is obliged to perfect and holy obedience to the divine will; and he is likewise wholly dependent upon God for all strength and ability for the performance of every good thing. Yet the great Supreme, in the superabundance of his goodness and condescension to his creatures, hath been pleased of his love and good pleasure to deal with them in the way of covenant. Indeed, God might have justly demanded perfect obedience of man as his Creator, without any promise of reward, but that he might temperate his sovereign dominion with the highest goodness, he entered into covenant with him, which should consist of a promise of reward on his part, and the performance of perfect obedi-

Digitized by Google

ence on the part of the creature man. Thus Jehovah, at the same time, shews forth his almighty power, and demonstrates the exceeding greatness of his beneficence and love to him. Hereby he ensures communion with himself, and happiness to man, and binds him to himself by the strong and endearing bond of mutual affection and mutual obligation. Thus God binds himself to man, and engages to confer upon him immortality and interminable felicity upon the condition of stedfast fidelity and unfailing obedience.

This is the nature of the covenant which God made with man at his first creation, which is sometimes called the covenant of nature, a legal covenant, or more usually the covenant of works. It is stiled the covenant of nature, not by reason of a natural mutual obligation, of which no such thing can possibly take place between God and man, but because when man was primitively formed, there was founded in his nature sufficient righteousness and strength to perform his Maker's commandments. It is called a legal covenant, because the condition of it, on the part of man, was to conform to the law of nature, which was originally inscribed upon his heart. And the covenant of works, because it was by holy works, or by perfect persevering obedience, he was to fulfill all righteousness, and be entitled to the reward of eternal life.

Now, that God made a covenant of this sort with man in his primitive state of rectitude, may be abundantly established from various passages of sacred scripture, of which, at present, I shall only select a few.

This may be argued from the words of our text. "And the "Lord God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the "garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of knowlecge of "good and evil, thou mayest not eat of it, for in the day that "thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." As Adam was under a law, the sanction of which was mortality or death, in case

Digitized by Google

of transgression, and there was a sign and seal annexed to it, to wit, the tree of knowledge of good and evil, of which he was by no means to eat, otherwise he should loose all his glory, immortality, righteousness, holiness and felicity, and immediately become mortal in the utmost extent of the threatning; so it is certain on the other hand, that God also gave him a covenant of life, promising him that if he eat not of the forbidden fruit, he should be established and confirmed in all his glory, dominion, and happiness forever. There was another tree also in the midst of the garden, which was appointed a sign and seal of this part of the covenant, called the tree of life. He was to partake of the one as a seal of his confirmation in bliss and immortality, and avoid the other as the sure source of perfect destruction. Hence, after his folly, wickedness and disobedience, God would not suffer him to taste of the tree of life. "Lest he should put forth his hand "and take of the tree of life, and live forever, he is expelled from "the garden of perfect pleasure and felicity. So God drove out "the man." These things clearly show, that there was a covenant entered into between God and man at his first creation.

This is further evident, from a covenant of works being repeatedly mentioned by Moses, in other parts of his writings. "He that doeth these things shall live in them." This covenant is often referred to by St. Paul in his epistles, when he says, "The man that doth the commands shall live by them." This he also denominates the law of righteousness, which entitles a man to the promise of life, and it is called, "The command-"ment of the law, which was ordained to life."

That God made a covenant with Adam at his first formation, we are assured of by the prophet Hosea, when he declares, "They "like men have transgressed the covenant." In the original it is, "They like Adam have transgressed the covenant." And if it had been thus translated, the sense would have been more clear, and the idea more accurately expressed. This must administer conviction to every mind, that Adam was under a covenant of

Digitized by Google

blessedness and life, as well as under a law which threatened a curse and death. The great difference between a law and covenant is, that the former menaces with a penalty every transgression of it—but the latter, promises remuneration in case of an exact obedience. Where there is nothing but pure precept and penalty, that is a law—but where there is a compensation annexed for the observation of the precept, there is a covenant. Perfect law rewards not, but punishes the disobedient; but a covenant always promises and remunerates those who fulfil the conditions of it. Adam, for his transgression, had death inflicted on him according to law—but if he had continued obedient, he would have been recompensed with life, glory, felicity, and immortality.

But the grand difficulty in this matter of covenant, is God's selecting Adam and constituting him head and representative of all his posterity, and as he conducted, so should be their fate. This is a matter which has employed the abilities and pens of the great and learned for many ages, and it would be highly absurd and improper, for any one to thrust himself into the seat of judgment, as thousands and tens of thousands have done, wherefore, I shall only lay before you in the briefest manner, what appears to me the scriptural representation upon this subject. And this representation, after a long and close investigation, irresistably decides to my mind, that in the covenant of works, Adam was the head and representative of all his posterity. I have not time to produce the arguments from the nature and reason of things, or existing circumstances, on this occasion, but only mention the scripture texts in favor of it.

We are soon informed that Adam propagated his posterity, not in the image and likeness of God, in which he himself was created, but in his own sinful likeness and image, without righteousness, and without holiness, destitute of external glory and internal goodness. "He begat a son in his own likeness, after "his own image." And thus all his posterity have propagated their offspring sinful and mortal, down to the present day. This

Digitized by Google

shows that he was the head and representative of all his progeny. In the book of Job, the same thing seems to be expressed :— "What is man that he should be clean, or the son of man that he "should be righteous? Who can bring a clean thing out of an "unclean? Not one." The Psalmist David also declares the same matter in the afflicting language of lamentation. "Behold "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive "me." These things demonstrate that a degeneracy and sinful corruption was conveyed from one generation to another; and the same must have descended from Adam, and therefore, that he was the head and representative of the whole race.

Arguments innumerable might be drawn from the most eminent Jewish writers, in support of this doctrine, of which I shall only quote this one from the second book of Esdras. "O thou, "Adam, what hast thou done? For though it was thou that "sinned, thou art not fallen alone, but we all that come of thee."

But the apostle Paul establishes this doctrine beyond all rational contradiction. Hearken to what he affirms in various places. "As by one man's sin death entered into the world, and death by "sin, so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. By "the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemna-"tion. By one man's disobedience many were made sinners. "Through the offence of one many are dead. Death reigned "from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after "the similitude of Adam's transgression," that is, infants who had not committed actual sin. But there would be no end of producing authorities to evince the absolute certainty of this important truth, that Adam was taken into covenant by God as the federal head and representative of all his posterity, or of all mankind. As he should conduct himself, so it should fare with them. If he should behave well and be obedient, they would be all happy, holy, and glorious forever; if he should conduct amiss and transgress, then all must suffer the penalty of the broken covenant, all must die.

Digitized by Google

Before I close this subject, a few words must be said respecting the sanction of the covenant of works. "In the day thou "eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." What is the import of the death here threatened? It must evidently be correspondent, or co-extensive to the life, which Adam enjoyed, and the continuance of it promised upon his persevering obedience.

This consisted of three great articles; natural, spiritual, and eternal life—so the reverse must be natural, spiritual, and eternal death. In the day Adam eat of the forbidden fruit, and at that very hour, he became mortal. He had forfeited his natural life, and God might take the forfeiture of him, and all his posterity, whensoever he pleased, which has actually and universally been done. In the same unhappy hour, he also lost his spiritual life; holiness departed from his heart, and all his glory and happiness forsook him, and he became dead in trespasses and sins, as all his progeny are. He likewise lost all claim to immortal felicity. And immortality, without happiness, is a curse and not a blessing. Therefore, he had incurred the awful curse and indescribable doom of death eternal.—But it is time I should finish this subject, in a very few reflections.

First, We may reflect, whatever may have been the misconduct of Adam, and the state of mankind in all generations, yet God's throne is clear, and iniquity is not to be imputed to him: God cannot be the author of the fall of man, or of any sin, either directly or indirectly. Whatever we may charge upon man, let us always beware of charging God foolishly. Whatever may be our blindness, darkness, and ignorance, respecting the introduction of sin into our world, and when we shall have proceeded in our investigations, as far as rational and scriptural disquisitions will carry us, and we find new difficulties in our course, let us, in want of satisfaction, take all blame to ourselves, and ever acquit and vindicate the ways of God. Whatever man may think, believe and do, the great Supreme is, "A God of truth,

Digitized by Google

" without iniquity, just and right is he. God is just in all that " is brought upon us. There is no iniquity with the Lord. " Surely God will not do wickedly. And shall mortal man be " more just than God ?"

Secondly, We may reflect, that however man hath sinned and come short of the glory of God, this cannot in the least impair or dissolve his obligations of love, gratitude, and duty to his infinitely glorious Creator. Every one will readily acknowledge, that the crimes and perverseness of malefactors do not dissolve their obligations of obedience to good laws, or in the least impair a righteous government. Evil conduct in such cases, in the common sense of mankind, always aggravates their offences, and heightens their transgressions. Therefore, we are under the same obligations of love, service, and homage to God, as if we and our first parents had never sinned against him.

A Third reflection is, that we ought to love God with all our hearts, and praise him for once placing us in such happy and dignified circumstances, as well as to abase ourselves in the deepest humiliation and repentance, that we have wickedly fallen from that blissful state, and perversely rejected all our priviledges, honors and happiness. O man, thou hast destroyed thyself. How art thou fallen, O thou favorite of heaven? Alas, man being in honor abideth not. O let all the children of men humble themselves before their offended God, and repent in dust and ashes, and return unto him with your whole hearts, if so be he may yet have mercy upon you.

Digitized by Google

SERMON X.

THE IMAGE OF ADAM IMPRESSED ON ALL HIS POSTERITY.

GENESIS, v. 3.

And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness and after his image.

THE original offence in our world, which was sinful in itself, and gave rise to all the sin that now is, or ever have been in it, was of a complex nature, and analytically considered, many constituent particulars formed that combined and awful crime, commonly called Adam's transgression. The mere overt act in itself, abstracted from the covenant, law and commandment of God, and from the principles and grounds originating it, must be a matter of indifference. Aside from the divine authority and constitution, it is probable there was no more evil or harm in eating that fruit than any other. But it was the violation of the holy precept, inclusive of the motives, views, and exercises of mind, that formed the malignity and horrid criminal nature of that first transgression. And these principles, tempers, and dispositions Adam has propagated to all his unhappy posterity.—There is no exempt case here; not a single exception has ever taken place; in him all his progeny fell, sinned, and died.

In the first verse of the chapter from whence our text is taken, it is said, "God created man, in the likeness of God made he

Digitized by Google

"him." That is, he was made in the righteous and holy image of his Creator, and consequently in a happy and glorious state; but after man had fallen, and the divine image had forsaken his heart, and his glory and happiness had departed from him, we read in our text, "Adam begat a son in his own likeness, and "after his image." He did not beget a son after the divine likeness, or in the holy image in which he himself had been created; but he now has a son in his own likeness and image, a fallen, sinful, frail and mortal creature; guilty, miserable, wretched, and naked, obnoxious to the displeasure of God, and liable to suffer all those penalties annexed to a violated constitution. The son was in his *own* likeness, the very reverse of the divine image. Adam having lost this, he could not convey it to his children.

Some things seemed to have entered into the very nature, and constituted the transgression of Adam itself; some corruptions appear to have followed immediately after, and are transferred to his posterity throughout all their generations.

The evil principles, views, and exercises which seem to have constituted the very nature of his transgression, were most probably such as these—An aversion to restraint, discontent, vain curiosity, covetous desires, a pride of knowing, and a disposition to hearken to evil counsels. What a similitude to Adam does all his posterity bear in these unhappy tempers?

First, Let the supreme Lord of the universe, either by holy laws, or his governing providence, lay any restraint upon us. How does the very restriction itself, raise and strengthen in us a propensity to enjoy that which is prohibited? In this we bear a strong resemblance to our first parents. Thus we were restrained from eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This restraint was designed for their advantage; to be a test of their obedience, to support them in the season of their probation, and to cause them to exercise faith, confidence, and a steadfast dependance upon God, and to look to heaven for the completion and

Digitized by Google

confirmation of their felicity. Yet this small restriction seems to awake in them an evil propensity, which brought ruin upon themselves, and all their descendants. And this perverse and contradictory disposition, is strongly apparent in all their posterity. This proverb of Solomon is founded in nature, "Stolen waters "are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." Man is a creature naturally averse from every species of restriction. This early manifests itself in children, and it is exceeding hard to extirpate it from the human heart.

Secondly, Discontent seems to be inwrought in our very constitutions. Who is contented with his own lot? How are all eagerly desiring change? And what multitudes are there, who imagine other people's circumstances are preferable to their own? Adam was not contented in Paradise, neither would his posterity be, were they placed in the same situation. He, by his folly, multiplied his wants, and thereby encreased his discontentment, so his children are always imitating their common father; changing from good to bad, and from bad to worse, wreathing along through this miserable life in the corroding torment of discontented minds. Few, very few, living under the influence of that gospel counsel, "That in whatever calling ye are called there-"with to be content."

Thirdly, A vain curiosity reigns in the hearts of men, which is also an impress of our progenitor's image. How much more are we delighted with novelties, than properly grateful for substantial realities? Our first parents, through a vain curiosity, were desirous of knowing both good and evil. In this they became gratified to their entire undoing. They experienced the bitter acquisition of evil, and the loss of all that was truely good. And this unhappy conduct is approved and followed by their miserable offspring.

Fourthly, Alas, what crouds of covetous desires arise and pre-

Digitized by Google

vail in the hearts of the children of men? How are they constantly in pursuit of some visionary benefit? Herein we prove ourselves to be the true descendants of Adam. Although he possessed and enjoyed every matter and thing necessary for his complete felicity, yet he imbibed the mad and covetous desire of obtaining that which proved his destruction. Adam was faithfully warned of his perdition, if he should eat the prohibited fruit—yet all this prevented him not from perpetrating the horrid deed. And is not this awfully the case with mankind? Will either threatnings, arguments, or promises restrain their covetous propensities? Will they not surmount every obstacle, and rush through every obstruction to gratify their irregular passions? And what is their gain? Nothing but disappointment, sorrow and mortification. "They toil for that which is not bread, and weary themselves for "very vanity."

Fifthly, The pride of knowing much, what an intoxicating influence has it upon the human mind? Our first parents would be as gods, wished to have understandings equal to their Maker. Thus, what the children of men, in the pride of their hearts breathe after, is knowledge rather than holiness. They seek for knowledge which puffeth up, but assimulates not the soul to God. Adam pursues vain knowledge, that he might equal the gods, and became conformed unto Satan. Is not this the case with many? They labour for speculative science, till they sink down into endless darkness.

Sixthly, What a strange disposition is there in man to hearken to evil counsels? To dangerous advice they will be all attention; the alluring persuasions to folly and vice they will drink in like water. Thus our first parents stood to listen to the insinuations of the serpent, rather than obey the plain oracles of heaven. They would yield to the counsels, allurements, and persuasions of the destroyer of their souls, rather than recollect or be induced to a proper conduct by the commands and by the voice of the most High. How natural is it for us to stand, ponder, and parley with

Digitized by Google

temptations, while our strength is weakening and their's encreasing, till at last they acquire the ascendancy, and we plunge into iniquity. The best mode of arguing against temptations, is immediate resistance. If you dispute, you are undone ; if you reresist, you conquer. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you. "Get thee behind me Satan," is against the evil one, an invincible argument. In all these particulars, how is the resemblance of Adam imprinted upon his miserable posterity ?

He conveys to them likewise various dispositions which appeared in him immediately after his fall.—There is a natural disposition in us to lay the blame upon others—to spread a mantle over our own infirmities—a readiness to follow evil examples—to avoid the presence of God, and a reluctance to confess our sins. In these things we appear evidently to possess, in a striking likeness, the features of our great ancestor.

First, How natural is it to us to lay the blame of our misconduct upon others ? Thus Adam imputed the blame of his disobedience to Eve, and Eve her evil conduct to the serpent. Yea, rather than take blame to ourselves, we will in some form or other impute the fault to God. Adam not only put off the blame from himself, and laid it upon the woman, but his language implied a strong reflection upon his Maker. "The woman which "*thou* gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree." This involves a tacit implication that God was to blame in this business as well as the woman. For it fully intimates, if he had not given her to be with him, he would have maintained his integrity. And this is the wretched disposition of man throughout all ages. They are continually blaming one another, blaming certain incidents which intervened, often indirectly blaming God himself, and in short blaming every thing that occurs to their minds, rather than laying it where they should, cordially taking the blame to themselves, and sincerely pleading guilty.

Secondly, It is exceedingly natural to us to spread a mantle

Digitized by Google

over our own infirmities, and to cloak our sins. Adam and Eve, as soon as they had eaten the forbidden fruit, and their glory had departed from them, and they perceived themselves to be naked, "They sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons." Instantly they engaged in projecting a covering for their shame and for their folly. In this, their children bear an exact resemblance of the parents. Let them be guilty of any sin or iniquity, they immediately invent some cloak or excuse for it. Yea, they will make the most indifferent coverings as our guilty progenitors, rather than be absolutely destitute. If any remorse of conscience for any of their wickedness arise within them, how ready is their invention in forming excuses or apologies for it. And if they find something must be done to palliate their offence, they pick up a leaf here, and a leaf there, to form a righteousness to cover them before the judge eternal. The leaves of their own works, their honesty, their prayers, church membership, regular deportment, charities, &c. must be patched together, to frame a mantle or cloak of righteousness to screen them from the wrath of Jehovah. And, alas! what poor, wretched fig leaves do they often collect, which will be of no more avail to cover them in the day of judgment, than the fig leaves of our original parents were to protect them, "when they heard the voice of the Lord God "walking in the garden in the cool of the day." O the folly, the ignorance, infatuation, and madness of the children of Adam.

Thirdly, How ready and prone are we to follow evil examples? Ill example has the force of a violent torrent to drive us away from duty, or as a boisterous wind to hurl us into iniquity. Let the unhappy example be set before us, we need no other persuasion, enticement, or inducement. Thus Eve only eat the fruit before her husband, and gave it unto him, "and he did eat." Good examples have no such influence upon mankind, as those which are evil. Beholding one doing wrong, this has a bewitching effect upon another to do likewise. Yea, hearing from afar, the conduct of such and such persons, especially, if persons

Digitized by Google

of eminence or fame, what a strange influence it has upon the corruptions of the human heart? Many think it no harm to imitate the reported example, to allow themselves in indulgencies of the same or similar kind. Evil example blinds the mind, bribes the conscience, and stupifies the heart. O let us beware of it, and guard against its infatuating tendency.

Moreover, when persons indulge themselves in sin, how are they disposed to avoid and flee from God and his presence? How natural is it to us to follow the steps of our primitive parents in this respect? "Adam and his wife hid themselves from the pre-"sence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden." What clouds of ignorance and thick darkness instantly enveloped their minds? They quickly imagined, that a few trees, or some thin shrubbery, could conceal them from the eyes of Jehovah. Thus it is with mankind in general; they fancy, if in secret places, that God neither sees nor hears. In hidden retirements, or under covert of the night, they choose rather to perpetrate their wickness, than in open day. "The eye of the adulterer waiteth for "the twilight, saying, no eye shall see me." Multitudes will commit that in a dark and secreted place, which they would scarcely venture upon in the presence of a babe; as if privacy or darkness could cover them from the all penetrating, and all discerning eye of the great Supreme. How gross the ignorance, how inconceivable the folly, which has taken possession of the souls of men? "They know not, neither will they understand, "they walk on in darkness. My people is foolish, they have not "known me; they are wise to do evil, but to do good, they have "no knowledge." This is matter for lamentation, mourning, and sorrow. O man, how art thou fallen? How is the glory of wisdom and knowledge departed from thee?

Lastly, Among all the evils we have derived from our unhappy ancestors, they have conveyed also to us an extreme reluctance to confess our sins. As we imbibed an aversion from all communion or intercourse with God, so like Adam, we flee from his.

Digitized by Google

presence, and never wish for any fellowship or connection with him. God called after him, and brought him by almighty power to his feet, and with what difficulty and reluctance was wrung from him the feeble confession of his offence, "I did eat."— When first detected, "And God called unto Adam, and said unto him, where art thou?" He acknowledged his nakedness, but not his transgression. It was with the utmost struggling, and against the very grain of his heart, he was at last brought to make the simple confession, which compulsion alone extracted from him. Alas, how natural is it for us to conduct ourselves in like manner? With what reluctance do we confess our guilt and our sins? "No man repenteth him of his wickedness, saying, "what have I done? Every one turneth to his course, as the "horse rusheth into the battle. All this evil is come upon us, yet "made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we "might turn from our iniquities." O that men could be brought to renounce with abhorrence the reluctance in their souls to the confession of their offences, and come forward in frank and sincere acknowledgments, saying, "We have sinned, and have "committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebell- "ed. O Lord to us belong confusion of face, because we have "sinned against thee."

All these things exhibit, in the clearest light, the astonishing similarity between the human race and their great progenitor. Face does not answer to face in a glass more perfectly than all the children of men, in temper, disposition, and practice answer to their original parent.

We may also briefly consider, how strikingly similar natural men's principles are to those principles, which actuated the soul of Adam. Did our first parents hearken to the allurements and temptations of Satan, rather than to the reasonable, just, and benevolent authority of their Maker and Benefactor? And how does this perverse principle reign in the hearts of all their degenerate offspring?

Digitized by Google

Did not all the haughty pride of ambition fill their minds, when their aspiring thoughts arose so far above their highly favored condition, that nothing would satisfy them, but to be as gods? How lamentably is this the case, that proud ambition engrosses the hearts of men? Every one striving to be before another in honor and dignity. The commons would be nobles, and nobles would be kings, and kings would be gods. Yea, there is such an indescribable ambition in man, were it in his power, he would depose the supreme Jehovah, usurp his authority, and place himself on his throne. The fable of Phaeton ascending the chariot of the sun, and driving till he set the world on fire, is an apt description, or a true portrait of the proud, haughty, and ambitious spirit of man.

Did not the sensitive appetite prevail in our guilty original, and fatal indulgence plunge them into all their inextricable calamities? And does not this base principle still hold the ascendancy in corrupted men? Are not their appetites still hurrying them headlong into guilty criminality, and criminality sinking them in misery and destruction? They preferred the creature above the Creator, and desired it more than God. And is not this the awful principle which pervades all universally? Satan filled their minds with hard thoughts of God, as though he envied them the felicity of a better state, so all their guilty progeny have ever been entertaining hard thoughts, complaining of and murmuring against God and his providences, even down to the present day.

They despised the penalty of the law, and the menaces of death. And does not this principle prevail among sinners? They contemn the threatnings of heaven. "They set at naught all the "counsels of God, and would none of his reproof."

Did not Adam and Eve undervalue all the rich blessings which they enjoyed, and spurn at all the promises of immortality and eternal life? And does not this principle pervade, and this con-

Digitized by Google

duct abound among mankind? Do they not reject all the offers of mercy in the gospel, and undervalue all the promises of everlasting felicity? "Fools despise wisdom and instruction."

They were not thankful for all the happiness, honor, and glory conferred upon them. And how does a principle of ingratitude dwell in the heart of every man? "When they know God, they "glorify him not as God, neither are they thankful. Men are "lovers of their ownselves, unthankful and unholy." O what monsters of ingratitude are the children of Adam to their heavenly Benefactor?

In all these, and a multitude of other things, in our tempers, dispositions, appetites, passions and practice, do we not wear the full image and likeness of the original stock? Does the seal impressed upon the wax leave its perfect image and superscription? Do the printer's types form their likeness on his paper, letter for letter, point for point, and line for line? So is the image and likeness of Adam imprinted on all his posterity. I speak not of bodily lineaments or features, but of moral propensities, principles and conduct. Thus we see the truth and perfect propriety of the assertion in our text: "Adam begat a son in his own like-"ness and in his image." And if there be such an exact resemblance in all the human race to their first father, and that father was a sinner, therefore, this is the character of all mankind. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Are we now born in the image and after the likeness of *Adam?* Are we not then all born guilty, and children of wrath, as he by his folly and transgression made himself? True is that apostolic affirmation, "We are by nature all the children of wrath even as others." And thus we remain till we become the children of God by faith in the second Adam, even in the Lord Jesus Christ. We will all continue in this corrupt image and degenerate likeness, until these shall be marred by divine grace, and effaced by the sanctifying influences of the holy Spirit.

Digitized by Google

A question here of infinite magnitude arises, whether we still bear the image of the earthly, or whether we are again renewed after the image of the heavenly ; whether we are still in our corrupt nature, wearing the deformed likeness of apostate Adam, or whether we are regenerated, and formed anew after the likeness of God by his almighty power, and are created in Christ Jesus unto good works. We bear the similitude either of the first, or second Adam. Therefore, it becomes us all, seriously to ask ourselves, in whose image and likeness we are. If the former, then we are in a miserable condition, poor, and wretched, and blind, and naked ; if the latter, then we are in peace with God, and there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.

Allow me here to sum up the leading constituents of the image of Adam, and the constituents of the image of Christ, and leave it to every one's judgment and conscience to decide whose likeness he bears.

The image of Adam consists, in a prevailing discontentment with the allotments of providence, and habitual desires to carve for ourselves ; in a sinful curiosity to pry into forbidden things ; in irregular propensities and inordinate inclinations after the things of this world ; in having more pleasure in attending to the suggestions of Satan, than in yielding obedience to God ; in delighting more in the gratification of sensual appetites, than in the observance of the precepts of heaven ; in choosing to imitate and follow wicked, rather than good examples ; in extenuating their faults before God, and laying them at his door, and imputing the blame of them to others, and with the greatest reluctance taking it to themselves, and confessing their guilt only by compulsion ; in avoiding the presence of God, his people, and his worship ; in neglecting communion and intercourse with God by prayer ; in despising his commandments and ordinances, and indulging themselves in overt acts of iniquity. This is a summary of the lines in Adam's picture.—Let us now contemplate the constituents of the image of Christ.

Digitized by Google

It consists in a supreme love to God, and a genuine faith in the gospel; in a sense of their own unworthiness and sinfulness, and of the fulness, sufficiency and glory of divine grace; in renouncing their own righteousness, and depending wholly and entirely upon the atonement of Christ for salvation; in having more delight in obeying the commandments of God, than walking in the ways of sin; in cultivating contentment with our circumstances in life; in restraining our inordinate desires and passions, and in a weanedness from the vanities of this world; in choosing to imitate holy rather than evil examples; in resisting temptations, and yielding obedience to the precepts of heaven; in aggravating their faults, if possible, before God, and freely confessing the same; in taking pleasure in the presence of God, in the society of his people, and in his worship; in maintaining communion and intercourse with heaven by prayer; in delighting in divine ordinances, and avoiding all manner of sin; and in holy walking with God, and practising righteousness in all their commerce or dealings with men. This is a summary of the lines which constitute the image of Christ.

Let each one now examine and try himself. He who hopes on scriptural grounds that he is blessed with this latter likeness, let him praise God, and become more holy; he who is conscious that he still bears the former image, let him humble himself, repent, and turn unto the Lord.

Digitized by Google

SERMON XI.

THE FIRST INTIMATION OF HOPE TO FALLEN MAN CONSIDERED.

GENESIS III, 15.

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

THE existence of God is the first reality in the universe; and greatness, goodness, justice, and holiness are the constituents of his nature. These are the essence of his Being. It is a summary of his character, nature, and existence: "The righteous Lord "loveth righteousness," and is infinitely distant from all moral evil or sin. From the very idea of God, his existence, nature, and perfections, arises the impossibility that any thing corrupt, impure or unholy, should be an original production of his hands. From hence it is certain, he cannot be the author of moral evil or sin. To say this, is to say, what all nature abhors, that he is a sinner. Hence his existence and perfections establish this fact, that if he makes a moral agent, an immortal and accountable creature, he must make him upright; he must make him a righteous and holy being. His moral perfections cannot be vindicated, but on this principle. Yet, notwithstanding this, nothing is more certain than that moral evil or sin is in the world. The

Digitized by Google

evidence of it is as certain as that there are men or moral creatures.

How moral evil or sin came into our world, has been the origin of learned investigation, and many laborious disquisitions. The malady has been observed by all people in all ages, by Pagans, Mehometans, Jews and Christians—but the solution of this paradox, "how sin came into existence," has baffled all the philosophers and disputers of every age and denomination in this world.

Yet, when the world, by their philosophy and wisdom knew it not, it pleased the infinitely wise God, by a revelation from himself, to furnish us with an account of its introduction, rise, progress, and what is more, the method of its cure. Strange it is, that unhappy man should despise this discovery.

This revelation informs us, that an order of beings, superior to mankind, made a defection from their original state. They were headed by a chief, who was afterwards distinguished by various names, such as Satan, Devil, Appolyon, and from the method in which he practised his malignant designs upon the progenitors of the human race, the Old Serpent.

It is probable, soon after his revolt from God, he meditates the ruin of this new creation, and especially the destruction of man, placed in perfection and glory at the head of it. Man had just come pure and holy from the hand of his Maker, cloathed in excellency, basking in his presence and smiles. His instant resolve was, the seduction of this innocent and happy creature, and thereby to mar all the beauty of divine creation. The resolution being formed, he immediately proceeds to its execution. He takes possession of the body of the serpent, the most subtle of all the beasts of the field, and therefore, the most proper to be employed for his purpose. In this shape he makes his appearance, and assaults the woman. Whether because she was the weaker sex, or at this time in solitude, is not said. His stratagem succeeds, and by artifice he obtains an interview with Eve, draws her into

Digitized by Google

conversation, and by false and flattering pretences, that he only consulted her increase of happiness and knowledge, allures her into a compliance with his solicitations, so that she took of the prohibited fruit and did eat, and she also gave unto her husband, and he did eat. Now Satan thought he had carried his point, overwhelmed man in perdition, and defaced all the creation of God. No doubt the Devil triumphed, and all hell rejoiced, if any thing like joy could enter those unjoyous regions.

Poor, unhappy and guilty man could expect nothing but instant death and destruction. But lo, mercy interposes, Satan is taken in his own craftiness, and the sinners are reprieved; a ransom is devised, and God publishes a decree of grace to fallen man, in the words of our text; which denounce an awful threatning against the serpent, while they are calculated to infuse hope into the despairing breast of wretched man. "I will put enmity be-"tween thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; "it shall bruise thy head, and thou shall bruise his heel."

In attending to these words, it would be impossible to confine myself precisely to the ideas which they were fitted to awaken in Adam's mind. They must have afforded him hope, but of a dark, glimmering and uncertain nature. Yet I shall limit myself to the intimations of grace and mercy herein contained, perhaps as much as a christian ought to do living under the full accomplishment, and perfect explanation of this obscure declaration. All I shall say on this subject, shall be reduced to the following observations and remarks.

First, These words seemed to be designed to administer relief and support to man under the insupportable feelings and miseries of his late fall.—Man stood now exposed to suffer all the penalties of a broken covenant and a violated law, which threatened nothing less to the transgressor than death temporal, spiritual and eternal. Lo, the natural root and general representative is become a bankrupt, and by one unhappy advent ure, impoverished

Digitized by Google

his whole progeny. Fearful apprehensions of wrath and fiery indignation, must now possess his soul. Hence he flew like a desperate malefactor, from the face of his Maker. Stung with intolerable remorse, behold him all hurry, flutter and distraction, gathering leaves or any thing to hide his shame, sculking and concealing himself behind the trees of the garden. What pencil can paint his horror, or the change of his circumstances, the feeling of his naked body, and the cutting reflection of his guilty mind? Who can describe the inconceivable sufferings of Adam in the interval between his transgression and the delivery of the words in our text? All horror surrounded him, and he was all hell within.

One design of them is to support the fallen wretch, sinking under the awful sense of his dreadful circumstances, to abate his guilty fears, and allay the agonies of his soul. This appears from the matter of them, the time in which they were pronounced, and the tormenting situation of those in whose hearing they were addressed. They had ruined themselves, and expected nothing but to be immediately made the eternal examples of inexorable justice. Their consciences cried, "The next interview will fix "our irreversable doom." Behold these unhappy creatures, while parleying with the serpent, to be gods was their great idea, but in the instant of their offence, dark dreadfulness surrounded them, and all within was damnation. In this tremendous moment, these strange words were ushered in, and expressed with such tenderness, gentleness and feeling compassion, as were sufficient to extinguish hell, and implant heaven in their bosoms. How could they support under the first idea flashed upon them, "That God would not immediately cut them off; he would not "instantly execute the fierce perfection of his justice upon them." This was life, it was salvation from destruction. The sentence delivered in this conjuncture, and to creatures in their situation, must have brought down heaven, and spread it before them.

Secondly, The words imply ideas of forgiveness and salvation

Digitized by Google

to fallen man.—The Serpent, who just now smiled a ghastly grin in the destruction of all creation, how do they strike confusion, chagrin, and disappointment into his whole scheme? They shed upon the turbid mind of our first parents, some alleviation of hope, under the pressures of the guilt, they had lately contracted. Nothing could furnish a gleam of relief to creatures in their circumstances, but an intimation of possible forgiveness, and divine reconcileableness. They had been guilty of the greatest crime, and most complicated iniquity; broken the harmony of creation, spread confusion over all its order, and deformity over its beauty. A little before God had pronounced all things very good, now behold curse, calamity, desolation, and every ruin introduced into the whole system by their sin. They had destroyed themselves and all their posterity. They felt their direful case, and stood trembling, self convicted, and self condemned. They knew they deserved nothing but all the strictness and severity of inflexible justice. Now, what could support or administer relief in such an awful condition, but some signification of pardon, some declaration that God might yet be reconciled. The implication of a continuance of life, and that they should multiply and replenish the earth, could contain no encouragement or consolation, without some supposition of an intimation of forgiveness. It could afford them no comfort to contemplate themselves as about to be instruments of a future progeny, who should be forever accursed, by the entailment of their unhappy management. Nay, what an aggravation of their case, to consider themselves authors of existence to beings destined to eternal destruction? From whence it is plain, nothing but some discovery involving forgiveness, and possible deliverance, could afford any relief in these circumstances.

Besides, we soon find them after this declaration, employed in acts of devotion and worship, which necessarily supposed a persuasion that their Maker might some way be appeased and reconciled. Utter despair is always accompanied with a rejection of

Digitized by Google

all means. No means are admitted in hell. The use of means is ever founded in the possibility of the attainment of some end. Where there is an absolute despair of the accomplishment of the end, it cuts the sinews of application, and an attention to means ceases. In the next chapter we find these forlorn culprits offering sacrifices, which sufficiently proves, that they viewed this text, as in some way implicating a promise of pardon. None can doubt but Abel's offering was a sacrifice typical of the great atonement which should in future be made by the seed of the woman, and being offered by faith, he obtained forgiveness of sin, and was accepted with God.

The words themselves evidently express a design of grace and mercy towards them. "It shall bruise thy head." This strongly implies, that the serpent should be baffled, confounded, and disappointed in his designs upon the human race, and that his attempts to ruin them forever should be abortive. And this could only be done by their recovery and restoration. Therefore, these words must be considered in this view, as containing a declaration of forgiveness, and possible salvation to mankind.

Thirdly, The words imply a promise, that God would in due time raise up a distinguished person, who should defeat the purposes of Satan, and effect the salvation of men. It is evident some one person is here spoken of by way of eminence, who should be opposed to the serpent, between whom enmity was to take place, and consequently they were to act with contrary purposes and in direct opposition. He spoke not of seeds, as of many, but one single seed. The manner of expression in the promise is very peculiar and distinguishing. "I will put enmity between thy seed "and her seed." This must surely design some particular and super-eminent person. "It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt "bruise his heel." This important person was to defeat the fatal design the devil concerted against mankind, and carried a dreadful length into execution. He was to bruise his head. By the

Digitized by Google

head may be understood the seat of counsel and wisdom; and thus taken, it signifies the policy and craft of Satan; the hellish purpose he had formed against the human race, and the hopes he entertained of its perfect execution. It may be considered as the fountain of life and spirits, from whence all motion takes its rise, and by which every movement is directed, and is often used to signify power and authority, and thus it properly denotes his dominion over sinners—and in this sense it is, that he is said to have the power of death, to have a kingdom, to be the prince of the power of the air, the prince and God of this world. This mighty dominion, the glorious person promised was to break, he was to strip him of his usurped power, destroy his tyrannic sway, and to redeem men from the slavery of sin, save them from death and ruin, and all the consequences of their fall. There was to be perpetual enmity between him and the serpent. It was the great design of Satan to cause enmity between God and man, but it should be the business of this eminent seed of the woman to effect peace and make reconciliation, and create friendship, and thus bruise the serpent's head, baffle his horrid purpose, and turn his infernal counsels headlong.

Fourthly, This wonderful person was to be born of a woman, and become a partaker of human nature. He is stiled *the seed* of the woman. He was not to take upon him the nature of angels, but the nature of man. He was to be found in fashion as a man, and appear in the likeness of sinful flesh. A body was to be prepared him, that he might in all things be like unto his brethren. And in this nature, according to the promise, he was to bruise the serpent's head, demolish his kingdom, and vanquish the principalities and powers of darkness, to effect the salvation of wretched sinners, rescue them from the ruins of the fall, restore them to the divine favor, and reinstate them in life and happiness.

Fifthly, These words fully intimate, that it should be through sufferings, this eminent seed of the woman, was to destroy the

Digitized by Google

works of the devil. "He was to bruise his heel." This phrase must signify, that the seed of the woman, should not merely receive molestation and much opposition in his undertaking, but that he should pass through much pain, affliction and sufferings. A bruised heel creates tormenting anguish. Thus the promised seed was to undergo excruciating sufferings, his afflictions were not to be light or inconsiderable, but to be great and grievous beyond all conception. He must suffer unto blood and bruising, in order to the recovery of lost man.

Lastly, This sentence was pronounced in the presence of our first parents, as the head and representative of all their offspring; the declaration not only personally respected them, but it had a direct reference to all who should spring from them. By them came death upon all men to condemnation; by their disobedience many were made sinners; so by the promised seed, life and immortality are brought to light. The benefits and blessings of his redemption are freely proposed and may be offered to all. They are to be preached ro every creature. "He is a propitiation for "our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the "whole world." His voice is now to the children of men, that whosoever will repent and believe, shall receive the forgiveness of his sins, be restored to the divine favor, and made an heir to everlasting felicity.

Thus I have considered, in the briefest manner, the first promise, and limited myself as far as I could, to the ideas communicated therein. This primitive declaration of mercy, and of a Saviour for fallen man, must have a peculiar tendency to confirm our faith in the whole scheme of revealed religion. Behold, the analogy and agreement between this original promise, and the promises, events and transactions of later times.

This subject would admit of a very large and useful improvement, but I shall confine myself to these three reflections. How evident is it, that Jesus of Nazareth is the distinguished person

Digitized by Google

referred to in this sacred passage:—How should we praise and bless God for the first dawnings of grace and salvation for an apostate world—And with what gratitude should we improve the most distant intimations of pardon and forgiveness.

First, How evident is it that Jesus of Nazareth is the distinguished person referred to in this sacred passage. How admirably well does the description given in this promise agree to Jesus Christ, the glorious Saviour of mankind, who was to be the seed of the woman? This is a precious and peculiar mark of the divine Redeemer. He was born of a woman, in an extraordinary manner different from all others. Miraculously conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary, and born of her. We read of the seed of Abraham, Jacob, David, &c. but the seed of the woman is a singular and uncommon phrase, and used only here to signify something peculiar and extraordinary; therefore, eminently descriptive of our blessed Saviour, and only applicable to him. "A virgin was to bring forth a son." The person spoken of, was to bruise the serpent's head. How many, while Christ tabernacled upon earth, did he deliver from the power and possession of the devil? What an astonishing dash did his appearance and coming give to the triumphs of the evil one? How was he expelled from the hearts of multitudes of men, where he had reigned by sin? The blessed Jesus led captivity captive—hence the promise and prediction were perfectly accomplished in him. It is likewise said, the serpent was to bruise his heel. How did Satan exert all his malignant vengeance against him? What indescribable sufferings did he endure? He was all his life long a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. How did the malice of the serpent raise the whole Jewish nation, in a joint conspiracy to kill and crucify him? How do all these things evidently point Jesus of Nazareth to be the promised seed? What a full confirmation does our text afford of the divinity of the scriptures, and that the Lord Jesus Christ is the true Mesiah? Let us, my brethren, ever apply to him for salvation and comfort.

Digitized by Google

Secondly, How should we praise and bless God for the first dawnings of grace and mercy to an apostate world. Here is the most admirable display of divine goodness and love. It overshadows all the glory of the works of creation. This is the first exercise of divine mercy and grace, of which we have any account. And behold it is extended to the fallen race of Adam. Were we the only creatures in the universe, in circumstances of guilt and misery? No. There were fallen angels, whose condition was equally deplorable and wretched, a race of a more excellent order; yet they are passed by, and left in all the misery of their fall. Mercy stoops to our inferior world. How unexpected, how surprising was this event? Our first parents looked for nothing but the execution of the penalty of a broken law; to be treated as they knew they deserved, and to be animadverted upon with the keenest severity. A little while before God had made the angels, who left their primitive state, the monuments of vengeance, and bound these creatures of a superior rank in chains of darkness, against the judgment of the great day. And if he spared not the angels, who could entertain the thought that he would spare man, whose foundation is in the dust? There was no motive in man to induce pity or compassion. If dignity of nature, or capacity for service could be any excitement to mercy, every thing of this kind lay on the side of the angels. Man had nothing to plead, why favor should be extended to him.—His offence was voluntary; he had none to blame but himself; he had reasons, motives, abilities and strength, abundantly sufficient to have resisted the tempter. Wherefore his recovery could be nothing but sovereign, free, and self moving goodness. And shall we not with our whole souls adore, and praise, and bless the Father of mercies for the wonders of grace and love, in contriving a plan for our salvation, and raising up such a glorious Prince and Saviour? Were it not for this astonishing interposition in our favor, alas! what would have been our circumstances at this moment? In what depths of anguish, and horrors of dispair should we now be engulphed? Our associates would be de-

Digitized by Google

wils, and our sufferings the vengeance of eternal flames. But lo, a condescending God lights up life and immortality in this promise, and places heaven again within the reach of guilty man. O shall we not adore and magnify that grace whereby the day spring from on high hath visited us? Let our hearts ever bless the Lord in the highest strains of praise, for the morning streaks and first dawnings of this great salvation.

Thirdly, How should we be all attention, and how carefully should we improve the most dark and distant intimations of forgiveness. Heaven is here offering to be reconciled to sinners, after the most tremendous breach of friendship occasioned by the fall. A method, O sinners, is opened for your restoration to the forfeited favor of God; an accommodation is proposed, and a Mediator provided, who is able to lay his hands upon both, and adjust the infinite difference; who can repair all the honors of injured majesty and divine government, and make ample provision for the commencement of friendship between heaven and earth again. Is not this a matter which should call forth peculiar consideration, and awaken in our minds all the sentiments of gratitude? We are intimately concerned in this business. To us is the word of reconciliation sent. To us is preached the forgiveness of sins through the mediation of this eminent seed of the woman. God is now in Christ Jesus reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their iniquities unto them. God is willing to multiply pardons, as you have multiplied transgressions. Will not sinners then cease from their hostilities against their Maker, cast away the weapons of their rebellion, humble themselves and repent, accept the offers of love, and with grateful hearts, embrace the tendered Saviour? Let your souls dissolve into gratitude, and repent of all your offences. "Praise the Lord with a "song, magnify him with thanksgiving. Sing praises to the Lord, "which dwelleth in Zion, declare among the people his doings. "Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise."

Digitized by Google

SERMON XII.

THE IMPOSSIBILITIES OF MAN's SALVATION BY THE FIRST CONSTITUTION, YET A STRANGE DISPOSITION TO SEEK ETERNAL LIFE BY IT.

GENESIS III, 24.

So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden, Cherubims and a flaming sword, which turned every way to keep the tree of life.

MAN's creation was the result of divine counsel, and particular design. He was to be the combined perfection of material and immaterial creation; heaven and earth were to form an union in him—and his station was to be the visible ruler of this world, which had been created and replenished with every inert, vegetive and animal production, in an inconceivable variety. All appearances proclaimed the divinity and existence of a Being of infinite power and wisdom. Man was formed of heaven and earth—the dust of the ground, and the breath of God, with reason and understanding that he might survey, and admire the beauty, grandeur and magnificence, and that he might render to the Great First Cause, in active praises, the glory due to the wonders of perfections displayed. Natural and moral excellencies were wrought up in man by an Almighty hand to such a degree, that angels were amazed, and earth cried out, fearfully and wonder-

Digitized by Google

fully is he made. Reason, understanding, will, affections, and appetites were all placed in order, proportion, and harmony in the body and soul of this wonderful piece of creation.

Ought not this extraordinary creature, so exactly fitted for moral government, be placed in a happy situation, a law given him, and recommended by such penalties as would be honorable to his Maker, respectable to himself, and dangerous to transgress?

Especially when this law or constitution, originating from the necessary relation between the Creator and a creature, is ameliorated into a covenant, so that man, with all his posterity, was entitled to a whole heaven of eternal felicity, in case of his obedience, beyond any thing that could have been demanded by the principles of pure law. Law, strictly such, secures to its subjects protection of interest, life, property, and all safety, but no further reward for obedience; yet, by the bountiful covenant of works, man was ensured of endless felicity, and all the blessings comprehended in eternal life.

The tree of knowledge of good and evil, was assigned as the test of man's felicity, and of this tree he was not to eat; but, in compensation for this restriction, he was indulged with the tree of life, in case of his obedience.

Man, unhappy man fails, the contract is violated, the covenant broken, and the penalty incurred in its whole extent. In consequence of this awful catastrophe, man is driven out of the garden, and effectual measures are taken by his Maker, to administer full conviction to him that a return to Eden, Paradise, and happiness, by the covenant violated, was absolutely impossible. "So he drove out the man." God hurled him headlong into the wide world of folly, temptation and sin; and lest he should attempt a return, and try to taste of the fruit of the tree of life, Cherubic centinels were placed with swords of brandishing flame, to prevent a re-entrance in every way. "God placed at

Digitized by Google

"the east of the garden of Eden, Cherubims and a flaming sword "which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."

The full intention of these words, without any curious investigation, may, according to my apprehension, be justly comprised in these two sentences.

First, That salvation for man, by the tenor of the original covenant, is absolutely impossible. And

Secondly, There still remains in man a strong propensity to return to the garden of felicity, and seek salvation by his own doings. The former of these I shall endeavor to evince—and the latter, to illustrate.

First, I shall evince, that salvation for man, by the tenor of the original covenant, is absolutely impossible.

Every thing in the divine government and procedure with fallen man, appears to him in his corrupt, blind, and wretched state, strange and unaccountable. And this will forever remain the case until his mind shall be rectified and illuminated by divine grace. What need of all this pompous parade of a cherubic host, with flaming swords brandishing in all directions to guard the gate against the re-entrance of man to Eden? Could he burst through an angelic phalanx? Could he avoid and escape a seraphic eye? All this is impossible. Adam knew it was impossible. Attempts at natural impossibilities, man will not make; but, extravagant as it may seem, spiritual impossibilities is the aim of his depraved heart, in full contempt of all the ways, wisdom, and mercy of God for his recovery. How are the methods of salvation by a Mediator, looked at askance, and with the disdain of contemptuous abhorrence, and with the implicated sneer on God, "Salva-"tion shall be found without the eternal debit of your mercy." But poor, blind infatuated man, a thousand and ten thousand times ten thousand, stand before you to convince you of your impotent folly, and to arrest you in your mad career. Madness en-

Digitized by Google

tered the heart of man at his fall; madness possesses him while he lives, and unless a wonderful interposition of grace takes place, he must perish in madness. No man can enter again into the pleasurable garden, and eat of the tree of life, until he shall have conquered and subdued all the armies of heaven. The almighty arm must be broken, the thunders of divine wrath averted, Jehovah's vengeance extinguished, and all above prostrated to all below, before such an event can take place. Conquer angels, conquer cherubim and seraphim, conquer the omnipotent eternal, and then proud and feeble man may triumph. Are these things impossible? It is equally or more impossible for any to obtain life everlasting by the first covenant.

But, this may be more plainly considered from the nature of the covenant of works, and from man's relation to the same. The covenant of works required perfect and perpetual obedience. Obedience in heart and life, disposition and practice. Eternal felicity was attainable by it, and it was easily attained by the constitution of our first parents. Their tempers were right, and all was perfect, and their salvation was suspended upon their fidelity.

This obedience or fidelity involved three qualifications. It must be perfect, personal, and perpetual. It must be perfect both in parts and degree. The law must be obeyed without the least deviation or failure. Any flaw or deficiency absolutely ruins the whole, and defeats every expectation of salvation by it.—The least misstep or moral miscarriage, however small, is utter destruction. The most inconsiderable irregularity in heart, speech or behaviour, incurs the forfeiture of eternal life. An idle word, or a vain thought, renders salvation absolutely impossible by the tenor of this covenant. It admits of no repentance, and its nature utterly secludes pardon. Its language and spirit is, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all and every "thing contained therein." Whosoever will enter into life by this covenant, must be conformed in heart to the law, must keep

Digitized by Google

the commandments and do them perfectly. This evinces the impossibility of salvation by the original constitution.

This obedience must not only be compleat and perfect, but it must be personal. The covenant admitted of no Mediator, intervening or substituted righteousness, but required, under the awful penalty of death and eternal perdition, an exact fulfilment of the law in our own persons. This demonstrates the impossibility of salvation in this way.

This obedience must not only be personal and perfect, but perpetuity is an essential qualification of it. Who then has presumption and confidence to dare to entertain a thought of salvation by the covenant of works? Is it possible for any to yield such obedience as it requires? Where is the man, that will avouch he has performed this obedience? Has any mere man, for the shortest duration, done it? Can any say, my hands are clean? I am free from sin? Let a dumb silence, and self-condemnation, envelope every individual of the human race. Each one must lay his hand on his mouth, and acknowledge transgression and guilt. These considerations, and multitudes of others arising from the depravity of nature, the propensity to wrong, aversion to right, and unceasing acts of offence, form an irresistable force of demonstration, that salvation is absolutely inattainable by the law or covenant of works. Yet, notwithstanding these insurmountable mounds in this way of salvation, man feels an astonishing propensity to seek it in this method, which is unreasonable, unjust, wicked and impossible.

This leads me, in the

Second place, To contemplate this strange and wonderful disposition in man, to return through all this infinite opposition to the garden of felicity, to the Eden of pleasure, and seek salvation by his own doings.

Let the conduct and practice of mankind be duly considered

Digitized by Google

and attended to, weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, compared with the holy scriptures, and see what is its tenor. Hearken to St. Paul on this head, in his epistle to the Romans. "For "they being ignorant of the righteousness of God, that is, of "the method wherein God will justify fallen sinners, have gone "about to establish their own personal righteousness, not sub-"mitting themselves to the righteousness of God." However strange and extraordinary it may appear, sinners are always endeavoring at a compromise with the law, and through darkness covering their minds, the impossibility in this way of salvation is compleatly lost. God declares Jesus Christ to be the appointed end of the law for righteousness, to all who believe. Yet man, until renovated by almighty power and wonderful grace, will seek every devious and unattainable way of salvation, rather than this. The methods they contrive, and the measures they pursue for this purpose, are altogether unaccountable only on this divine position, "The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately "wicked." The main scope of various epistles of the apostle Paul, is to warn us against this error, and to turn us off from all dependance upon our own merits, either in whole or in part, as any ground of our own justification before God. How often does he repeat the idea, "That by the law, no flesh shall be jus-"tified." The reiteration of these assertions, strongly imply that the tendency of sinners' hearts is to acquire salvation in this way. If there had been no propensity in human nature of this sort, where would have been the wisdom and goodness of divine inspiration, to throw in such full and frequent remonstrances against it? Why should such arguments of cherubim and flaming swords be placed in terrific array, but to strike full confusion into every expectation and thought of life, by the first constitution. But foolish man, covered in ignorance and darkness, having sunk far below any just views and sober reason, vainly imagines the superiority of his own clouded understanding.

When every direct source fails, there arises in the bewildered imagination of man, an attempt to accommodate and moderate

Digitized by Google

the covenant of works to their enfeebled circumstances; to relax its high demands, and reduce it to the power of their ignorant and feeble wishes. Hence the declaration is, we will new vamp the first covenant, throw in a quantity of spices of grace and mercy, and if not the whole, we will in part obtain our own salvation. Few men, under the light and instruction of the gospel, can entrench themselves so very deeply in ignorance, as to say, "We will have salvation by our own works;" yet the covert disposition of their hearts is, as the Apostle beautifully expresses it, "They seek, *as it were*, justification by the works "of the law."

Men's practical conduct declares, that a freedom from open and gross impieties, will abundantly atone for small irregularities; and a little innocence or imaginary inoffensiveness, will satisfy for some positive unrighteousness; as if a man should plead in a court of justice, the penalty of the law of burglary or robbery, of which he had been fully convicted, should not be inflicted upon him, because he had never shed human blood, or been guilty of murder.

Strange, but true it is, man wishes to participate a little of the merit of his own salvation. O, if he could thrust in a crumb, slip in a grain of mustard seed, and mingle it with the mercy and grace of the gospel, when reduced to great extremity, the thought would bloat his whole soul, that he had a particle of merit in his own salvation. But a total humiliation to another, wholly to appear in borrowed robes, and to be perfectly clothed with the righteousness of Christ for acceptance with God, this is infinitely too much for a proud heart to bear: "It is to the Jews "a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness."

What address will the convinced sinner employ to worm himself someway, upon the footing of law into the favor of God? He will mourn, weep, fast, and go through a thousand penances, rather than submit to the terms of free and sovereign grace.

Digitized by Google

When convictions run high, and hell appears opening for their reception, how will they struggle, pray, and catch at every floating straw, rather than accept an absolute Saviour. They must, in some measure, prepare themselves a little better, and then they will bow to the sceptre of Jesus, and submit to sovereign grace.

All this is not only the picture of what are stiled moralists, pharisees, and self-righteous persons, and such as are under awakening and concern about their salvation, but this legal disposition strikes a luminous line into the character of the grossest sinner. Enquire of the morning and evening drunkard, of the grossest liar, of the profane swearer, of the sabbath breaker, and the open debauchee, what are the grounds on which you hope for salvation? They will unitedly answer, "Though we have our "foibles, we are honest men; we impose not upon the ignorant "and unwary; we are charitable to the poor, and give for public "purposes, far beyond the whining hypocrites—therefore, we "know the weaknesses of our frail natures are overbalanced by "our virtues; hence, we disturb not ourselves with fears and "doubts, but we firmly hope in the mercy, love, compassion, "and benevolence of God. We know he is not a mean, illiberal, "and uncharitable being, like many of his grovelling and little "hearted creatures."

What is all this, in every point of view, but a plain and compleat demonstration, that there is a propensity in sinners to seek salvation by the law, by the first covenant, a method in which it is absolutely inattainable. The pharisee, the hypocrite, and every grade of sinners, from the highest to the lowest wallowing wretch of vomit in the street, seek salvation in reality, or, *as it were*, by the deeds of the law.

This subject must close with a short inference or two, which would easily admit of a whole sermon of improvement.

Digitized by Google

First, If possible, let us beware of seeking salvation in any way or contrivance by the works of the law. No conduct can be more fatal. Every step in this way is certain progress to eternal destruction. It is no more possible to obtain heaven by the covenant of works, than to drink up the infinite ocean of divine wrath. Every dependance upon your own strength is vain, and to seek salvation by your own hands will absolutely fail you. God, the invariable God, has expressly declared, "That by the works of "the law no flesh shall be justified in his sight." Must it not then be infinitely dangerons to venture our salvation upon a foundation which God himself, with awful solemnity, has pronounced totally insufficient? Allow me to address you in the presence of heaven, and in the full view of eternal happiness and eternal misery. You hope:—on what is your hope founded? On your own wirtue, righteousness, the law, and covenant of works, or on the free, perfect, and absolute mercy and grace of God, exhibited by a crucified Redeemer? Recollect what God says by the Prophet, "When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, "then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb, "yet he could not heal you, nor cure you of your wound." Let us then trust in the Lord our righteousness, and commit our souls to Jesus the captain of our salvation.

Secondly, Let us bless and praise God, that he hath introduced a new covenant, revealed a better hope, established another and more glorious way of salvation. "God so loved the world, that "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the "flesh, he sent his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for "sin condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the "law might be fulfilled in all them that believe." Christ is the end of the law for righteousness. God is well pleased for his righteousness sake, and is willing to forgive and except all who by faith and unfeigned repentance, return through him. Let us, my brethren, look to this gracious and wonderous device of salvation, renounce ourselves and every legal hope and dependance, and apply to this method alone, opened in the gospel, most honorable to the majesty of heaven, and perfectly safe to our souls.

Digitized by Google

SERMON XIII.

ORIGINAL SIN ESTABLISHED.

ROMANS v, 12.

Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

IN these words with their connection, the Apostle Paul is running a parallel between the first and second Adam. That as the former introduced sin and death, wretchedness and every misery into the world—so the latter brought in life and righteousness, grace, mercy and every blessing. The first Adam, as a public head, communicated sin and death to all his unhappy posterity; "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." We behold the world overwhelmed with sin and death; full of iniquities, and deluged with calamities. From what source do all these things, thus dreadful, proceed? From the awful and general corruption of human nature. And the opening hereto, we find to be Adam's first sin. It was by one man, and by his guilty fall, the whole race became polluted. By him sin entered into the world of mankind, entered as an enemy to kill and destroy, and as a thief to rob and despoil. Then entered guilt, and an universal corruption and depravity of human nature.

"The wages of sin is death," Death came by sin, and so

Digitized by Google

death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. Sin and death are inseperably connected. As none are free from sin, so none are exempted from death. It is not more certain that all die, than that all are guilty. All flesh have corrupted their way. "There is none righteous, no not so much as one." All mankind have now in their very nature, a prevailing tendency and propensity to sin and wickedness.

If the truth of these assertions can be evinced, then the ancient doctrine of original sin must be granted as a real and solemn truth, however much it may be exploded by many, and however grating it may be to the feelings of corrupted sense. If every doctrine must be discarded, to which a blind, depraved, and darkened mind objects, few truths can be maintained either in the natural or moral world. If it be found by observation, reason, experience and scripture, that mankind are altogether corrupted and depraved, have in their natures a prevailing tendency and propensity to sin and wickedness, then the doctrine commonly called original sin, can no longer with justice be denied.

First, That this is the nature of man, evidently appears in that all men, without fail in any one instance, have fallen into sin, or run into moral evil. This is fully demonstrated from our text, and manifold other passages of sacred writ, of which, I shall only mention a few. "God saw that the wickedness of man was "great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thought "of his heart was only evil continually. There is no man that "sinneth not. There is not a just man upon earth that doth "good and sinneth not. The Lord looked down from heaven "upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did un-"derstand and seek God; they are all gone aside, they are alto-"gether become filthy, there is none that doeth good, no not "one. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, "and the truth is not in us." All these places, with many more to the same purpose, establish this fact, that the nature of man has a prevailing tendency to moral evil, and that they do univer-

Digitized by Google

ally fall into sin. And as this is a fact, there can then remain no doubt, but they are originally depraved. Can we argue from effects to their causes? Can we reason upon the origin of events? Then this truth must evidently appear, that mankind have in their natures, a tendency to sin and wickedness.

The word tendency, signifies a proneness, inclination, fitness or liableness to such a way, or event. Any thing of a globular figure is fitted to roll, and the least motion produces this event; and water possesses a proneness to run downwards. That which never fails of producing such an effect, we always say, it has a tendency thereto. Now, if mankind never fail of falling into sin, can language be more properly applied, than to say, his nature has a tendency to the same? Suppose a certain kind of tree, planted in all countries, soils, and climates for many ages, and in some places had been cultivated with the utmost care and attention, and yet it invariably produced bad fruit, would not all unanimously declare, that the tree was evil and bad in its very nature. Now contemplate man universally in every age from the beginning, in every country and climate, under every manner of education and instruction, all the various divisions of Pagans, sects of Mehometans, Jews and Christians, have they not, without a solitary exemption, gone into sin and wickedness? Will not this demonstrate that their natures are vitiated, and have an unhappy tendency to wrong?

If the case was this, that there appeared only now and then an instance of a man transgressing the laws of God, and was guilty of sin, it would be an abominable absurdity to say, that mankind were vitiated, and had in their nature a tendency to evil. But if all, without a single exception, in every age, and of every name and denomination, become sinful and wicked, how can the conclusion be resisted, that all mankind have in their natures, a tendency to evil, or something that renders them prone to wrong?

Digitized by Google

Secondly, That mankind are universally corrupted, is also manifest in this, that they do evil as soon as capable of action. Moral agency, as well as all other things, must have a beginning; now, if the first appearances of action in a moral creature, wear the aspect of a perverse tendency, can we avoid the inference, that there is something evil in its nature? Consider infants in the earliest moments of their exhibition of action, do they bear the appearance of holy innocency, or a sweet conformity to right? Or do they not strongly mark an evil propensity of nature? However we may account for it, the fact cannot be denied.

Is it not strikingly obvious in the tenor of the conduct of mankind, that there is a greater inclination in them to sin than holiness? Does not this prove, that there is a tendency to iniquity in their nature, far beyond any such tendency to righteousness? And will not this evince the depravity, or that there is something very much amiss in the very nature of man?

Thirdly, Consider the folly and stupidity of man in every thing relative to religion. Have they not universally at all times, been prone to forsake every rational idea of the true God, and to go off to the most astonishing absurdities of idolatry? Have they not made Gods for themselves of a thousand forms, of gold, silver, wood and stone, and then bowed the knee, offered sacrifice to these dumb objects, and devoutly prayed and supplicated them for protection, direction, and salvation? Can this conduct be accounted for upon any principle, exclusive of a deep depravity of nature? Hear the true God expressing himself in wonders of complaint on this head, by the mouth of his prophet Jeremiah. The complaint implies no astonishment with the unenlightened heathen, or the world in general; stupid and foolish idolatry was incident to them, and expected from their nature; but the divine surprise was at his own people, favored with a clear revelation, and the daily instructions and remonstrances of his prophets. Attend to the exclamation of the Almighty God.—

Digitized by Google

"Be astonished O ye heavens at this, and be ye horribly afraid, "be ye very desolate saith the Lord; for *my* people have com- "mitted two evils; *they* have forsaken me the fountain of living "waters, and have hewed out to themselves cisterns, broken "cisterns, that can hold no water." Were it not for the light of the gospel, the world would be filled with craftsmen forming shrines, melting graven images, spreading gold over them, and casting silver chains, to hold fast that which could not move; and the poorer sort would be selecting blocks of wood that should not rot, and all would be bowing down to the operations of their own hands, to their home made Lares and Penates, saying, "These are our Gods that will save us." This is ignorance and stupidity, which astonishes christians; but this was not the case with the dark corners of pagan barbarism only, but it is too strikingly illustrated in the whole conduct of the learned and philosophic Greece, of the enlightened and polished Rome, and the divinely instructed Judea. All the accomplishments of an ancient Egypt, renowned for erudition, could not exalt them above the worship of their Apis and Serapis, the stupid ox, the ugly adder, and even the leeks and onions of the garden. Rome, in the highest glory of her philosophers and orators, her greatest improvement in arts and sciences, paid continual homage to more than thirty thousand different gods in that one city. Do not these things exhibit stupidity, ignorance, folly and depravity, even to a prodigy? Yet our modern infidels, educated in the full blaze of gospel light, are, by the power of this very light, trimming the midnight lamp, to return us back to this Roman, Grecian and Egyptian darkness.

Do not these things demonstrate a moral corruption, and an evil propensity in the nature of man? What but some strange depravity of nature, could capacitate it for such marvelous infatuation? "They have eyes and see not, ears and hear not, neither do "they understand. They are like the horse and mule that have no "understanding. The stork in the heavens knoweth her appoint-

Digitized by Google

"ed time; and the turtle, the crane, and the swallow observe "the time of their coming, but my people know not the judgment "of the Lord."

The moral corruption of mankind still further appears, that throughout all generations, they have been wicked. Before the flood, had not all flesh corrupted their way? In the four populous cities of the plain, ten righteous persons were not to be found. In the days of Abraham, the world was sunk into iniquity and idolatry. Our Lord declares in his time, few entered in at the strait gate, but multitudes crouded the broad road to destruction.

Fourthly, The universal mortality of the children of men, is an irrefragable argument, that there is evil or something wrong in their nature. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by "sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sin"ned." Death is mentioned in the bible as the most tremendous calamity that can take place. Reason and the common sense of mankind indicate terrible punishment as a sure evidence of great transgression. Barbarians, when they saw a venomous viper fasten upon St. Paul's hand, instantly concluded, he must have been a heinous sinner, a murderer, that divine vengeance would not suffer to live. When God deals out the desolations upon the world, of war, famine, pestilence, &c. which strike terror into all beholders, death is the only evil idea these awful names convey. Deadly destruction is the most terrible destruction; deadly sorrow, the most extreme sorrows; deadly enemies, the most malignant enemies; and the whole combined force of the sufferings of the Son of God, could only be represented in the strong language, "that he suffered unto death." Death is a standing testimony of God's displeasure with sin. Can it be supposed that a good and righteous God, would inflict this highest token of his anger upon creatures perfectly innocent? Surely not. Yet death has reigned over all the human race, from Adam to

Digitized by Google

Moses, sparing neither sex nor age, quality nor condition. This awful calamity befals infants, who have not been guilty of actual sin, or sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression. But by the fall, these unhappy creatures became some way participants of the offence, and, therefore, suffer in its awful consequences. This illustrates the scripture assertion, "That we are all by na- "ture children of wrath." These arguments, drawn from observation and sad experience, abundantly evince the fact, that we are originally corrupted and depraved. The existence of fact, is deemed in all cases, a sufficient demonstration of the alledged truth, therefore, in the present instance, ought to come home with irresistable force, and be deeply impressed upon the conscience of every sinner. Could men be persuaded duly to consider the character of God, the propriety and perfection of his law, and make just observations upon what they behold every day, they could no more resist the belief of the doctrine of original sin, than that they could disbelieve the sun's shining when above the horizon, where there are no intervening clouds.

Fifthly, This humiliating reality is established from innumerable passages of holy writ. Yea, the whole scriptures, the whole plan of man's redemption begins upon this foundation. Hearken to the declarations of heaven. "The imagination of man's heart "is evil from his youth. Foolishness," that is, according to Solomon's stile, wickedness, "is bound up in the heart of a child. "What is man that he should be clean, or he that is born of a "woman that he should be righteous? How then can man be "justified with God, and how can he be clean, that is born of a "woman. Behold, says the Psalmist, I was shapen in iniquity, "and in sin did my mother conceive me. The Lord looked down "from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any "that did understand and seek God; they are all gone aside, "they are altogether become filthy, there is none that doth good, "no not one. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. In Adam "all die. By the offence of one, judgment came upon all to

Digitized by Google

"condemnation. By one man's disobedience many were made "sinners." There would be no end of retailing the scripture authorities in support of this doctrine, that man is originally depraved, and has a tendency and propensity in his nature to sin and wickedness.

But it is time I should close this discourse, and this must be done with a few brief reflections.

First, We learn, that if mankind are thus corrupted, and have this evil tendency in their nature to iniquity, that it is impossible justification with God can be obtained by our own righteousness. No person, by the strictest obedience to the divine law, can make reparation for the breach he hath made. We must be justified by some other righteousness than our own, or remain forever under condemnation. A glorious and all sufficient righteousness for the justification of all the children of Adam, who will repent and believe, is revealed in the gospel. "Christ "is the end of the law for righteousness. This is a faithful say- "ing, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into "the world to save even the chief of sinners."

Secondly, This doctrine informs us of the great blindness, ignorance, and stupidity of many, who suppose themselves small sinners, and so in no danger of perishing, though they neither repent, bow to the scepter of Jesus, nor submit to the terms of the gospel. "There is a generation that are pure in their own "eyes, and yet not washed from their iniquity. Ye will not "come unto me, says the blessed Saviour, that ye may have life. "Therefore, ye must perish in your sins." Though in Adam all have died, yet by faith in Christ, all may be made alive. "I was alive, says St. Paul, without the law once, but when "the commandment came, sin revived and I died."

Thirdly, We are here taught the absolute necessity of being cut off from the stock of Adam, and ingrafted into a new stock,

Digitized by Google

even into Christ Jesus. For so long as we remain in the connection of mere children of the former, we lie under the condemnation of the law, and stand exposed to the wrath of the judge eternal. Adam was once able to have conveyed life to his posterity, but now nothing proceeds in this line only sin and death; but by the precious Redeemer, life and immortality are brought to light, and heaven is proposed to your option, and by the hand of faith we may lay hold of eternal felicity. Hearken to the persuasive voice of the tender and compassionate Saviour, "Come "unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy ladened, and I will "give you rest."

Fourthly, We here learn our true and real state by nature; the melancholy and moral state in which we are born; under the dominion of a sinful nature, and under the curse of an holy law. Well may we say, "We have an Amorite to our father, and a "Hittite to our mother;" we are born in our blood; with hearts full of alienation from God; we are born in a state of death; dead in trespasses and sins. But thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ, and by the mighty operations of the Spirit of grace, we may be born again, renewed in the spirit of our minds, made alive to holiness, and revived to eternal felicity.

Fifthly, This doctrine affords matter for the deepest humiliation and self abasement. Let us abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes. Let us mourn over the depravity of our natures, and the corruption of our lives. We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. Let those who are in a natural state, be filled with horror, and be horribly afraid. Confess your sins, and turn from all your iniquities, accept of the offers of mercy, and you shall yet live. "Let the wicked man forsake his way, "and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and turn unto the Lord "and he will have mercy on him, and to our God and he will "abundantly pardon."

Digitized by Google

SERMON XIII.

THE EXCEEDING GREATNESS OF MAN's DEPRAVITY.

JEREMIAH XVII, 9.

The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?

THIS is a description sufficient to fill the minds of all rational beings with horror. The prophet Jeremiah, is, in this chapter, continuing his prophecy of the destruction of the Jews. "Their "sin was written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a dia-"mond; it was graven upon the table of their hearts." Their reason, judgment and consciences, their children, altars, and groves were witnesses against them.

They were threatened with the loss of their substance and treasures, which wounded to the quick—and total expatriation was their doom. The prophet takes occasion from hence, to depict the deep wickedness of mankind in general. The words of our text are an universal proposition, not limited to the Jews, but applicable in its extent to the whole human race. "The "heart," that is, wherever the heart of man is found in its natural and unregenerated state, "is deceitful above all things, and "desperately wicked."

Digitized by Google

In these words, two things are observable. First, a certain subject spoken of. And secondly, something very evil predicated of it.

First, The subject spoken of, is the heart. The heart is taken here in its utmost extension, pertaining to every man, as he is by nature. This appears from the assertion in the tenth verse. "I the Lord search the heart, and try the reins, even to give "every man according to his ways." This is every where declared to be the prerogative and conduct of God, not only in respect to the Jew, but also in regard to the Gentile, and every individual of the human race. By the heart, is meant the volitions, affections, disposition, and exercises of the soul.

Secondly, Something very evil is predicated of the heart. It is here affirmed to be an exceedingly bad and wicked thing; "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." The understanding is blind and dark, the will refractory and perverse, the passions disordered, and the whole mind and conscience defiled. The thoughts are evil, and the very imagination is evil, and that continually. But it is not merely said, the heart is deceitful and wicked, but it is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. This expresses an exceeding high degree of wickedness; that it is perfectly destitute of all good, prone to all that is wrong, and in the language of the Psalmist, it is absolute wickedness itself. "Their inward part is very wickedness." The heart is the cage of every unclean bird, and the hold of every foul spirit. All sin is forged and framed there, and all manner of impiety issues from it. "All manner of sin and blasphemy, says our "Lord, proceeds from the heart."

This now is the true character of the heart of every unconverted man. However mortifying to our pride and vanity, it is certainly the scriptural account of the matter.

What we shall attend to at this time, will be to illustrate the

Digitized by Google

Prophet's doctrine, namely, the exceeding great wickedness of the human heart. This will give a true, although a very melancholy picture of human nature. We shall herein see what man is in himself since the fall, and what is necessary for his recovery.—This will tend to show us the wisdom, beauty, and propriety of the system of divine grace in the gospel. It is ignorance of the deep depravity of the human heart, which causes many of the peculiar doctrines of grace to be treated with contempt. If we remain ignorant of our hearts, my brethren, we shall surely stumble upon the dark mountains of everlasting ruin. Wherefore, let us lift our hearts to God, while we consider this subject, that he would lead us into the knowledge of this deep and dark place, and make us truly acquainted with the plague thereof.

First, The unregenerate heart is totally and compleatly wicked. There is not the least tincture of spiritual and holy goodness in it. If there were any principle of moral goodness in the heart, or any disposition to, or exercise of holiness, how could it be said, to be deceitful above all things and desperately wicked? Can there be any goodness in abstract wickedness, or any tendency thereto? The apostle Paul assures us, "The carnal mind is enmity against "God." There is no love in it to his being or perfections. It is against his whole character, against his mercy and grace, as well as against his justice, righteousness, and holiness. Carnal men imagine that they love God's mercy and goodness, but this is only one of the deceivings of their own heart. For he who truly loves any one perfection, loves God. They imagine in their corrupted minds, something they stile mercy and goodness, these they attribute to God, and suppose they love him; but this is only affection to an object of their own imagination. The divine mercy is holy mercy, and is really as much an object of their aversion, as holy justice or holy sovereignty. They love the mercy and goodness of their own fancies, as the heathen love their idols, or the idolatrous Jews their groves and high places. But all the

Digitized by Google

raptures of affection to these vanities, cannot prove the least regard to any of Jehovah's attributes, but perfectly the reverse.

Holding this doctrine advanced, it is entirely consistent with the admission of a great deal of difference among natural men in many respects. Some of them have much more softness, humanity and gentleness than others. They have more natural affection, tractableness and tenderness; a better education, and superior means to sweeten and polish their manners; greater restraints of divine Providence, deeper impressions of the evil of sinful courses; or a greater share of what is called common and restraining grace. Yet, notwithstanding all these things, there is not in reality the least difference in their hearts, they are all equally destitute of an holy temper. This was the doctrine of Christ, preached and applied to the Jews, "I know you that you have "not the love of God in you." Where there is the absence of the love of God, can there be present any holy goodness; or any thing but absolute and perfect wickedness? Do not these observations shew the heart of man to be desperately wicked.?

A Second proof of the wickedness of man's heart is, that he does not wish or choose to be reconciled to God. A plan of reconciliation is proposed in the gospel to a guilty world, but the feelings of the heart of man, arise in aversion from this way of reconciliation. To be filled with enmity and malice against any person, so as not to be willing to be reconciled upon equitable and reasonable terms, all the world, depraved as it is, will say, this argues great wickedness. God has revealed an easy and most rational plan of reconciliation through the blood of his only begotten Son; soliciting, and in all the most tender language of persuasion, beseeching them to be reconciled. He sent forth his Prophets of old, crying, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will you die?" He sent forth his Apostles, "to pray them to be reconciled;" and even to this day, he is sending forth his ministers to perform the same errand. He is calling aloud upon them, by his providences of adversity and

Digitized by Google

prosperity, by the preaching of his gospel, and by the awakenings of his spirit; he is striving with them in an inward and external manner; "Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons "of men;" and the whole prayer is, of angels, and of saints, "Be ye reconciled to God." Yet unhappy man chooses wickedness, hugs his lusts, and rolls sin "as a sweet morsel under "his tongue." Yet, notwithstanding all these endearing arguments of divine persuasion, man turns his back upon, and spurns at reconciliation. Every impediment is removed, and obstructive causes no longer exist; and the proclamation of the compassionate Saviour is, "O sinners, sinners, how often would I have "gathered you, and brooded you under the wings of unbounded "mercy, and under the umbrage of all protecting beneficence." There is nothing now in the way of man's salvation, but his own obstinate unwillingness. They wish not to be reconciled to God, but to abide in their wickedness. Do not all these things show, that the heart is desperately, or exceedingly wicked?

Thirdly, There is such an extremity or extraordinary wickedness in the human heart, that it is not to be overcome by common power, or healed by usual means. The original words here are rendered by some "incurably wicked." It is a disease which baffles the power of medicine, and mocks the skill of the physician. God alone can heal it.

No length of time will cure this disorder. Time will wear off some bodily diseases; but not so with spiritual. The longer the latter continues, it becomes the more inveterate. "Can the "Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots, then may "they who are accustomed to do evil, learn to do well." So rooted is the wickedness of the human heart, that it will resist and defeat the most rationally adapted means, however skilfully applied. The strongest arguments and motives, the consideration of interest, honor and pleasure, which prevail with men in every other case, are utterly without effect in this. The promises

Digitized by Google

and assurances of a seat among the blessed, and an inheritance in heaven, are of no avail to overcome their unhappy disposition. Their exposedness to hell, and the greatest possible misery, will not move them to relinquish their iniquities, and become reconciled to God.

Let all the loveliness of the divine perfections be exhibited to their view in the most perfect light, and in the brightest colours, it cannot charm their hearts. Let their baseness and ingratitude be set before them in the strongest force of deformity, it will not prevail with them to cease to do evil. Let God threaten or promise, let pious parents entreat, godly friends persuade, ministers pray and preach, all will not succeed.

Mercies and favors will not vanquish their hearts; judgments and afflictions will not subdue them. Let the favors be ever so great, or the furnace of affliction ever so tormenting, they are not to be altered. Bray them in mortars, they will not depart from iniquity.

All signs, wonders, and miracles have proved ineffectual. The providence of God to Israel, was a series of miracles for a multitude of years. What wonders did God perform to bring them out of Egypt, conduct them through the red sea, feed them in a dreary wilderness from heaven, give them drink from the flinty rock, was a pillar of light in their camp by night, and a cooling umbrage over them by day, did all these miracles excite them to love God, or induce them to depart from wickedness? Yea, these daily and continued wonders could not keep their wickedness suppressed, or prevent its outbreaking into the grossest acts of rebellion.

How many miracles and good works of grace and mercy did Jesus perform, in the days he sojourned on earth, but did those for whom he wrought them, turn from their wickedness? Did not the people of all denominations and ranks rise against him,

Digitized by Google

and treat him for his goodness with the most implacable outrage, till they imbrued their hands in his innocent blood?

Let men perform ever so many duties, and attend ever so constantly upon ordinances, all will not remove their wickedness. Witness the Scribes and Pharisees, and the whole body of the Jewish nation in our Saviour's days, whose prayers were long and many, and their sacrifices without number, and yet iniquity was never at an higher pitch.

Farther, no common operations of the spirit of God on the minds of men will conquer this wickedness, or bring them to a right temper. If men have ever so much light with respect to their duty let into their minds, have ever such great terrors; deep humiliations, and legal convictions; let their hope and encouragement be wrought ever so high, that God will shew them mercy, all this will not overcome or eradicate their wickedness; it will not produce any holy goodness in their hearts. Thus we see the heart is so deceitful and desperately wicked, it is not to be subdued, or healed by any common or usual means.

Fourthly, This wickedness is of a deadly nature. Thus Junius and Tremellius translate the words, "Fraudulentum coripsum "supra omnia, et mortiferum est." This translation, though feeble in comparison of the Hebrew, manifests the heart to be full of fraud, and a deadly wicked thing. It implicates not only death and destruction, but total ruin to universal existence; the extinction of itself, of men, angels, and God. An ancient saying was, "Homo homini demon;" man is a devil to man; to which might be added, he is destruction to himself. This corresponds with the apostolic description of men, "They are hateful and "hating one another." That men do not immediately rend one another to pieces, is not owing to any goodness in them, but to the wonderful, influential, and restraining providence which God has fixed in this world, for the promotion of the kingdom of his grace. Wicked men are here, as though in chains, their hearts

Digitized by Google

cannot be acted out to the life. Uncover the dope of hell, where no restraining grace is, and behold that world all in tumultuous foam, and rage, and their utmost fury cannot bring on the destruction, much less the annihilation that they wish. This confinement to the indiscribable scourges of vengeance, will be their tormenting abodes forever. O my brethren, let us beware of going to hell.

However much one man may have in his heart a bitter enmity to another, yet their wickedness is against none so deadly as God himself. The wicked hate all beings, but they hate God above all. They hate his sovereignty, dominion, and government with a perfect hatred. They would unsettle and demolish the throne of God, were it in their power. They would reduce him lower than the Philistines did Sampson; they would not only shave off the locks of his almightiness, put out the eyes of his omniscience, and make him grind in a prison house for the subserviency of their lusts, but their deadly wickedness would be the death of the high and lofty one of Israel; they would extinguish the existence of God. Natural men are doing all they can in this way, blaspheming God, reproaching his character, traducing his name, trampling upon his laws, and depreciating and contemning his authority, committing every act of rebellion against him they can devise, thus doing all in their power for the demolition of Godhead; crying out in the language of the Psalmist, "O that there was "no God." If the bent of their hearts could be gratified, there should be none. His existence should be demolished, "For the "poison of asps," that is, instant destruction, "is under their "lips."

If the Supreme Jehovah were to put himself in the power of men, and allow them to act out their souls, and shew forth their whole enmity against him, would not this be a fair trial of our argument, to see whether men had it in their heart to kill and destroy God? If the experiment were made, and men proceeded to

Digitized by Google

the dreadful length, that they murdered God in reality, could there then remain any hesitation about the truth of our doctrine.

The experiment has been made, and a fair trial taken of man on this very point. God was manifested in the flesh, assumed a mortal body, and put himself in the power of man; delivered himself into their hands, took off restraining grace, and permitted them to treat him according to the disposition of their hearts. One view in this, was to show to all intelligences, how man stood affected to the divine existence; whether they had deadly wickedness in their heart toward God or not; and whether they were disposed to treat the divine Being with kindness, respect, and honor. You all know the event. Was there any lenity or mercy showed to the God-man, Christ Jesus? The more they knew of him as God, the more they were imbittered against him? Was he dealt with upon the common footing of justice and equity? The reverse of every thing rational took place. "This is the "heir," the Son of God, yea God himself, "come let us kill "him." Hear how the crouding multitudes unite in the malicious cry, "Away with this fellow from the earth; he is not fit to "live; crucify him, crucify him." This was the result of the experiment of divine condescention. There is no disputing against fact. Thus our doctrine is not only proved by reason, scripture and observation, but it is demonstrated by a clear and open experiment. Thus we see the heart of man is full of the most deadly and incurable wickedness. So that what the Prophet affirms, remains an unshaken truth, "That the heart is deceitful above "all things and desperately wicked."

A few deductions must close this subject.

First, It is clearly deducible, in what respects natural men are equally distant from the kingdom of heaven, and in what respects, some are nearer to it than others. All unregenerate sinners are equally far from it, as far as it consists in gracious or holy habits

Digitized by Google

and exercises of heart. Yet as far as the kingdom of God can be understood to consist in right speculative notions of the doctrines of religion, legal convictions and just apprehensions of the divine government one unconverted sinner may be much nearer to it than another. Thus our Saviour says to the Scribe, who appeared to have a good speculative understanding of divine things, and some concern about them, "Thou art not far from the king-"dom of God." He was in this sense nearer to the kingdom of salvation than others. Although he was as destitute of real holiness as any other sinner, and must be as much beholden to unmerited mercy; yet his knowledge, attention, anxiety, and convictions, cast him more into that way, if I may so speak, in which God displays his sovereign grace.

Secondly, It is deducible from this doctrine, that natural men, by all their strivings, endeavours, and duties, will never of themselves work up their hearts to true goodness or holiness. Were there any thing spiritually good in the human heart, any right foundation or holy principle, then, by endeavors and common gracious assistance, it might be encreased and improved to something of high moment. But this is not the case. And if ever there shall be any saving good in them, it must be produced by the immediate and almighty power of God. Hence the Apostolic doctrine will forever be held by the saints, "It is not of "him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that "sheweth mercy."

Thirdly, We here learn, what end endeavors and legal convictions serve, and what end they do not serve. They do not serve to give them any holy meetness for heaven. "For that which is "born of the flesh is flesh." It is carnal, and under every modification, unfit for heaven. All the exercises, strivings, convictions and concern of unregenerated sinners are carnal and unholy. Notwithstanding these things, the awakenings and distress of sinners serve various ends of great importance. Such as to show them how bad they are; how desperately ruined and undone their

Digitized by Google

condition is; how they are altogether to blame; that they are in a compleatly wicked and helpless state; that nothing can help them but the almighty arm of divine grace; that they are so perfectly hell-deserving, that the justice of God would be conspicuously displayed in casting them off; and that if ever they are saved, it must be by the most free and wonderful mercy.

Fourthly, An evident deduction from the preceding is, the absolute necessity of regeneration to peace and favor with God; and the propriety and reasonableness of the scriptural descriptions of this matter. If the heart of man be so wicked as described, can any thing be more plain than it must be renovated, and have new and holy principles implanted in it, to form it for the enjoyment of God.

Fifthly, The last inference is, the marvelousness and astonishment, that God should have any thing to do in a way of mercy and salvation, with creatures so awfully wicked as we are. All heaven must be in amazement, that he should turn his heart to any of the human race. How beautiful the observation of St. Paul: "God commended his love towards us, that while we were yet "sinners, Christ died for us." What constellations of wisdom and mercy burst forth here, that God was effectually devising man's salvation, when the temper of man was devising the demolition of Godhead. Divine love and the wickedness of man, exhibit a conspicuous contrast on the cross of Christ. Does it not appear upon the whole, in the most demonstrative manner, that the salvation of sinners must be of the most self-moving, free, and sovereign grace? And will not the compassion, mercy, and goodness of God touch our hearts? Will it not prevail with you, O sinners, at least *to think* of forsaking your wickedness, and returning to God? Will it not be aggravatedly dreadful to be found in the ways of sin, after all the displays of divine love in the gospel; after all the sweet and amiable manifestations of God by his dearly beloved Son, Jesus Christ? O never be easy or con-

Digitized by Google

tented till you find the love of God, in warm emotions in your hearts, and find your souls going forth in fervent breathings after him, and you infolded in the precious bosom of a crucified Saviour.

W

Digitized by Google

SERMON XV.

THE FIRST ADVENT OF CHRIST, A GREAT EVENT.

PSALMS XL. 7, 8.

Then said I, lo I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me. I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea thy law is within my heart.

THE appearance of Christ in our unhappy world, as the second Adam, to repair the ruins of the first, is an event of the greatest magnitude. Heaven sung, and earth was astonished. This surprising matter was predicted from the beginning, by many ancient Patriarchs and Prophets, but a blind world believed it not—and when he came, he could not be received. David, under the power of the spirit of prophecy, is in this Psalm, still continuing to repeat and hold up this wonderful expectation. This prediction is, in a very pointed manner, applied to the coming of Christ by the Apostle: thus he speaks in the epistle to the Hebrews. "Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith "sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou "prepared me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin, thou "hast had no pleasure; then said I, lo I come, in the volume of "the book, it is written of me, to do thy will, O God."

In these words, our minds are immediately carried to three observations.

Digitized by Google

First, Christ's coming was by a preceding agreement in the Holy Trinity; that he come not merely and absolutely of himself, yet by his own voluntary consent, according to previous compact or covenant; which covenant is often stiled by divinity writers, in way of distinction, the covenant of redemption. It would be foreign to my purpose, in the present discourse, to describe to you the difference between what is commonly called the covenant of redemption, and the covenant of grace. Let it suffice to say, the difference between the covenant of redemption, strictly so termed, and the covenant of grace is this: the former was the compact in the Trinity, and the part each divine person was to act in the economy of the salvation of a fallen world; and the latter respected the chosen of the race, who were effectually secured to Christ Jesus, as the seed and travail of his soul, and who by the powerful operations of the Holy Ghost, should be made the participants of eternal life.

Secondly, Christ Jesus, the second person of the adorable Trinity, was to sustain a grand part in this glorious plan. "In "the volume of the book, it was written of me." Some have referred the volume of the book to the eternal purposes and decrees of God, respecting the salvation of sinners. But it is abundantly evident, that this "volume of the book," can only refer to the scriptural predictions of the Messiah. I need not mention Moses' book, "That the seed of the woman should bruise the "serpent's head." Nor Jacob's prophecy, "That the sceptre "should not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his "feet, until Shiloh come," with many others to the same purpose, long before David's time.

Thirdly, All that Christ did and suffered in the wonderful undertaking on his part, which makes so conspicuous a figure in the New Testament, was in conformity and obedience to the eternal agreement. Hearken to the consent of the blessed Saviour: "I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea, thy law is within my

Digitized by Google

"heart." The will of the eternal covenant absorbed his whole heart.

The eminent enterprise of Christ in this business, is here exhibited in a very conspicuous point of light. "Lo, I come:" With what raptures of pleasure and delight, does he rush out and stand forth to this mighty undertaking? "I delight to do thy "will:" The counsels of heaven in eternal agreement, charm and engage my whole heart. Some have translated the following words, "Thy law is within my bowels;" hereby wishing to express Christ's distinguishing and invincible inclination to accomplish the salvation of man. Every difficulty he would bravely surmount; hell and earth he would vanquish, and strew the way for the triumphs of his redeemed, over fields of blood.

After these observations, the words afford to us the following subjects for our attention.

First, That the undertaking of Christ may be contemplated in the whole of his humiliation; and his humiliation is often considered as consisting of his active and passive obedience. By the former, in the room of guilty man, he fulfilled all righteousness. All the rights and ceremonies of the Jewish religion were conformed to by him. He submitted to circumcision, faithfully attended the Passover, and all the parts of the temple worship, until all those ancient ordinances were nailed to, and finished on the cross.

The moral law, obedience to it, was his nature and delight. The purest and most perfect love ever flowed in his heart to God and man. The Scribes and Pharisees always observed him with the most jealous eye, but never could discover any just cause of accusation against him. Satan used every opportunity to tempt him to transgression—but when the prince of the world came, he found nothing in him, "For the law of God was in his heart."

In regard to what is called Christ's passive obedience, consist-

Digitized by Google

ing in his voluntary engagement to undergo all those sufferings which had been agreed upon in the eternal consultation, this was in the most perfect manner accomplished. Passive obedience, if it had not been long and usual language in the church, would have been an inadmissible solecism. There can be no such thing in scripture or reason, as passive obedience. The terms maintain a strong opposition. Yet by definition and explication, they are become easy, intelligible, and even comfortable to the christian. Perhaps there is nothing fills the heart of a believer with more sweet and rapturous pleasure, than the sufferings of Christ; you may call them active or passive, or what you please; the christian's delight is in the atonement of Jesus. "I delight to do "thy will, O my God." No expression can equally answer the christian's heart in this view. His whole soul is absorbed in Chtist's making satisfaction for sin. "He became obedient unto "death." This is an assertion, which swallows up, and almost overwhelms his mind, in the strongest exercises of faith. Christ was as active in laying down his life, in his last sufferings, and more so, than any part of his wonderful atonement. Hear his own declaration, in the concluding scene of his obedience. "I "lay down my life, that I may take it again; no man taketh it "from me, but I lay it down of myself; I have power to lay it "down, and I have power to take it again." I wish I had, in consistency with my original plan, liberty to enter into this description—but this extends far beyond my limits. The voluntary obedience of Christ, for the redemption of mankind, is an inexhaustable theme for the praises of eternity. How precious is this declaration to the heart of the believer? "I delight to do thy "will, O my God."

Secondly, It was necessary to the acceptableness of Christ's character, as Mediator in the wonderful plan of displaying the divine attributes in the recovery of lost men, that he should fulfil all righteousness. Such an high Priest was absolutely expedient for us, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from

Digitized by Google

sinners. The reason of the institution of a Mediator was, that we were sinful, guilty and unclean, altogether incapable of making atonement, or satisfying divine justice and government.—Had the least imperfection adhered to Christ Jesus, his mediation could have been of no avail. No glory could have redounded to God by a defective Mediator, and consequently no possible advantage to man. The prerogatives of God are of such a nature, that nothing can contribute to the benefit or happiness of the creature, but what is both consistent with, and conducive to his own glory. Therefore, the satisfaction or mediation of Christ, was infinitely perfect and compleat. He testified to his persecutors, and before the world, "That he always did those things that pleased God." Hence it was declared by the prophet, "The Lord is well pleas-"ed for his righteousness sake." This testimony was astonishingly confirmed at his baptism, by the descent of the Holy Ghost upon him, in the form of a dove. How perfect was Jesus in all conformity to the eternal plan, and unfailing in obedience and sufferings? His delight was to do the will of God amidst the most direful conflicts. Hence, he accomplished all righteousness for them that believe.

Thirdly, The exceeding greatness of Christ's humiliation and obedience to the eternal council, more eminently shines forth to view, in some parts of his life than others. The whole time of his sojourning on earth, was filled with an uninterrupted series of obedience and sufferings. In the very nature of things, all acts of obedience and suffering cannot be equally conspicuous.—Though all is divinely perfect, yet some must shine forth with a lustre far superior to others.

The degree of difficulty and self-denial, the quality and rank of the person, his condition and circumstances, all these things may exhibit super-eminent acts of humiliation, yet some of these must bear a distinction above others. These things show that the last sufferings and death of Christ, were principal and distin-

Digitized by Google

guishing parts of his undertaking. To debase his Godhead to the character of a servant, to submit to the humble grades of life, to bear the pressure of the wrath of heaven due to sin, to agonize in reeking blood in the garden, to bleed and expire in a painful and most ignominious death on the cross, these were lines of distinction in his suffering, obedience and humiliation, of a marked and superior nature.

Fourthly, Christ's giving up his life in the wonderful manner he did, is the peculiar and distinguishing test of his mediatorship. Not eating the forbidden fruit was the test of Adam's fidelity, and was to have been the foundation of glory and felicity to all his seed; so the sufferings of Jesus to the death threatened to Adam, was to prove salvation to all his seed. Thus the accomplishment of all undertaken by him, appears in the scriptural declarations. "Who being in the form of God, thought it not "robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputa-"tion, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made "in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, "he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the "death of the cross." He informs us, "That he came down "from heaven, not to do his own will, but the will of the Father "that sent him." He laid down his life as his own act and deed, ever offering profound obedience to the Father, who was to be head and principal in the eternal system. "This he had received "of his Father, to lay down his life for the sheep." In his great conflict in the garden of Gethseme, as the cup of sufferings approached his lips, behold his willingness to drink it to the dregs. "Nevertheless, says he, not my will, but thine be done." The design of eternity was, that he should suffer unto death—hence, in all faithfulness, he readily submits to the decree of heaven. "The cup that my Father hath given me to drink, shall I not "drink it?" As if he had said, the sufferings and death I engaged to pass through, shall I not undergo with a willing and obedient heart? "He deemed it his meat and drink to do the will of

Digitized by Google

"his heavenly Father." Hence he declares by the Prophet, he turned not away from any ignominy, contempt, or punishment. "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that "plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting." All to all this, the words of our text, with the preceding verse. "Sacrifice and offering, thou didst not desire, mine ears hast "thou opened; burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not "required; then said I, lo I come in the volume of the "book, it is written of me; I delight to do thy will, O my God; "yea thy law is within my heart."

From all these considerations, it is abundantly evident that Jesus Christ underwent his last sufferings and endured death in express conformity to the eternal stipulation, or agreeably to the covenant of redemption. From hence it likewise appears, that the principal and super-eminent part he performed in this great business, was his last passion, and being obedient unto death. If we attend to his own exercises and declarations when this concluding scene drew on, we shall need no additional reasons to convince us, that this was the high, distinguishing, and trying part of his duty. He wrestles for strength and support in this mighty conflict, with strong cries and groans. His sweat was great drops of blood falling to the ground. How full of ardor was his prayer, and how much agony and anguish of soul does it express? "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me, "nevertheless not my will, but thine be done." How fully do these things demonstrate, in his own feeling and judgment, that his final sufferings were the greatest trial of his fidelity, and the most illustrious part of his Mediatorship?

A few reflections will bring this subject to a conclusion.

First, We are here taught the glory and the beauty of the scripture account, respecting the wonderful device of man's salvation. The foundation of this astonishing work is laid in the eternal Trinity. The Father is represented as sustaining all the

Digitized by Google

dignity of Godhead; the Son as passing through all the sufferings, and making the atonement necessary; the Holy Ghost as the applicant of the whole, in the completion of the work.—Hence Christ declares upon all occasions, that he came to do the will of his Father, that his Father sent him, and to glorify God he undertook the business of redemption. Thus he declares in his last prayer, he had glorified his Father on earth, and finished the work which he gave him to do. The work of atonement which Christ Jesus performed in his humiliation is represented as the work appointed him of the Father. "For he sought not "his own will, but the will of his Father that sent him."

Yea, all the accomplishments with which Christ was furnished to discharge the business of mediation, are continually spoken of as conferred upon him by the Father. Although he himself was truly God, and in his divine nature co-equal with the Father, yet in the great part he had to act in the redemption of men, he submitted to an inferior character, so that he made himself, as it is said, of no reputation. The human person of Christ, in which he suffered for the sins of mankind, is represented as given him by the Father. Thus he speaks, "A body hast thou prepared "me." It was adjusted in the counsels of heaven, that the nature he should assume, should be without pollution or sin, and should be perfectly adapted to make an atonement. It was a body so constituted, that it might be offered as a real and substantial sacrifice. This body was prepared with a living and rational soul; and on the reasonableness and voluntariness of the sacrifice, its whole virtue and efficacy depended. Therefore, his sufferings have power "to purge the conscience from dead works." His human nature had a super-abundant unction of the Holy Spirit that all fullness in him should dwell. The great cause of Christ's undertaking the business of redemption, was, that Jehovah might be glorified, and that it should appear to all intelligences, that the divine government was supported and magnified,

Digitized by Google

while salvation was procured for lost sinners. "I delight to do "thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart."

Secondly, We here learn, that nothing can glorify God in the removal and pardon of sin, but the obedience and blood of Christ. "Behold the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." From hence arises the vehemency of the rejection of all other things for this purpose. "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not "desire, burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required." The sacrifices and offerings under the law, were all typical of the gospel dispensation, and the great sacrifical atonement which should be made by Jesus Christ. These ancient sacrifices had no virtue in themselves, but the offerer by faith in the great prefigurations, obtained pardon of sin, and peace and comfort in his mind. The church of Israel, as they became carnal, lost their views of the design of these institutions, and began to consider the operation of the sacrifice as sufficient to satisfy for their offences—therefore, God here, by the mouth of David, declares with abhorrence their utter insufficiency. "For the blood of bulls "and of goats, cannot take away sin." The peculiar virtue of the blood of Christ, is the only thing adequate to this grand accomplishment.

Thus the commands in the New Testament to christians, to perform good works, are innumerable—but when any begin to depend upon their doings and performances, upon their virtue and merit, for pardon of sin and acceptance with God, with what detestation and sinking condemnation are they with abhorrence rejected? Yea, such conduct is charged with uncommon criminality, as trampling under foot the blood of Christ, setting aside the whole gospel and righteousness of God. If the provided righteousness of God be despised by sinners, whereon can they found any hope or expectation? Wherefore, the exhortation arising from the doctrine is, that we should renounce ourselves, and our own righteousness, and look only to the atonement and satisfac-

Digitized by Google

tion for forgiveness, and an admittance into the favor of God. Would we live, eternally live, let us cleave to Christ, and him crucified, as the only and last anchor of hope. "Then said I, lo "I come in the volume of the book, it is written of me."

Thirdly, Our reflections should turn upon the wonders of the love of Jesus, in the amazing undertaking. Angels fell back with astonishment; cherubim and seraphim flew from the wine-press of divine wrath. In this awful conjuncture of man's guilty affairs, behold the Son of God steps forth in the greatness of his strength, as mighty to save. He proclaims aloud, through heaven and earth, "My arm shall bring salvation." Was there ever heard such a proclamation of mercy, grace and benevolence, in circumstances so hopeless and forlorn? "Lo I come." How astonishingly great was his readiness to lay aside the divine radiency of his celestial glory, to stoop to the assumption of the nature of the seed of Abraham, and become obedient unto death, to bring such hell deserving creatures as we are to everlasting life. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid "down his life for us." This has been such an expression of love, that there has been none like it in all the earth, nor ever will there be such another. "O that we may be able to compre-"hend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth "and heigth, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth "knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fullness of "God."

O christians, surely you never can sufficiently admire the love of God and Christ Jesus. Ought not your hearts to glow with seraphic affection, while you contemplate the glorious theme? Let your hearts and your whole lives be expended in gratitude and praise. The subject of redeeming love will employ your souls and tongues throughout eternity.

Will not all these considerations induce you to live by faith,

Digitized by Google

and to walk with ready minds in all the commandments of the blessed Jesus? Herein you will prove to angels, to men, and your own consciences, that you are the followers of God, and the disciples of the precious Redeemer.

Awake, O sinners, to consider Christ's worthiness of your love, and your infinite need of him. Renounce all your idols and vain confidences. Hear his sweet and persuasive voice, "Look unto me all ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved."

Digitized by Google

SERMON XVI.

LOOKING TO JESUS FOR SALVATION.

ISAIAH XLV. 22.

Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else.

IN ancient times, when Israel was journeying from Egypt to the promised land, and could not obtain leave to pass through Edom, and were forced to go the great round of that country, the dreary length of the way, caused them, as usual, to complain and murmur against God and Moses. As a correction for this offence, God sent fiery serpents among them for their punishment. And when they found themselves bitten and dying by multitudes, they were awakened to apply to Moses to make intercession for them. Moses, the servant of God, and their servant, ever stood upon the post of obedience. The consequence was, God directed him to make an image of a burnishing hue, erect it on a pole visible to all parts of the camp, and to issue proclamation, that all persons bitten, should look to the brazen serpent and be healed. Allow me to remark, that no person complying with the proclamation, was ever disappointed. God mingles mercies with his judgments—and a due attention to the former, always prevails.

This brazen serpent, we are informed in the New Testament, was an eminent type of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was lifted up

Digitized by Google

to the view of the whole world on the cross, and proclamation has been made in the gospel to every creature, that whosoever is stung or wounded by sin, may look unto him and be saved. The Israelites, when bitten by the fiery serpents, no skill of the physician or medical application could heal them, till God provided a remedy. Thus man, perishing by sin, cannot investigate a method of cure—but God has discovered a miraculous Saviour exalted on the cross, that all who will look unto him, may live. Thus Christ speaks of this wonderful recovery: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have eternal life." As the children of Israel were commanded to look to the brazen serpent and live; thus sinners are called upon in our text, to look to Jesus and be saved. Those in the most distant parts of the camp, might see the brazen serpent and be healed, so the inhabitants of the remotest and darkest corners of the earth, may only look to an exalted Saviour, and become sure of eternal life.

This text, with its connection, point out in the most certain manner, the Messiah, in his mediatorial and saving character. He is the righteousness and strength of his people. These are his peculiar characteristics. It is also added, "That to him every knee shall bow." This is applied with emphasis by St. Paul to Christ, in his epistle to the Romans, when he declares, "As I live saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me." Wherefore let sinners, who feel themselves perishing by their iniquities, look unto Jesus, and they shall be saved.

I will not here detain your attention to the Hebrew criticism, respecting the commanding and future time; the sense is obvious, that they who look by faith to Jesus, shall obtain salvation.

The phrase, "All the ends of the earth," to which the address presented, is an easy and common figure, expressing all the rational inhabitants of the remotest parts of the world. And this

Digitized by Google

extensive invitation, is enforced by a most commanding motive: "For I am God, and there is none else." Christ Jesus is God, and he is almighty to save. All other Gods, refuges, and dependencies are entirely insufficient for this purpose. On this account it is said in our context, respecting Jewish and heathen idolaters, "They have no knowledge, that set up the wood of their graven "image, and pray unto a god that cannot save."

The Prophet challenges all the adorers of false deities, to produce a single instance of their ability to save, or their capacity of foretelling one truth. "Tell ye and bring them near, yea, let "them take counsel together; who among their Gods have de- "clared the redemption of my people from ancient time? Have "not I the Lord, and there is no God else beside, a just God "and a Saviour, and there is none besides me." After this affirmation of his alone sufficiency to save, is immediately subjoined the exhortation in our text; "Look unto me, and be ye saved, "all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else."

Now allow me to direct your attention to this subject, in the following manner:

First, Let us consider what is implied in looking unto Christ; "Look unto me."

Secondly, What is the import of the salvation here promised and commanded, "And be ye saved."

Thirdly, The motives urging us to a compliance; "For I am "God and there is none else."

First, We are to consider what is implied in looking unto Christ; "Look unto me."

First, This idea directly arises in the mind, that sinners are unable to help themselves. If they could relieve themselves, why should they look to another? They are destitute of power for this purpose. They are like the lame man, which lay by the pool

Digitized by Google

of Bethseda, incapable of casting himself into the water, when the troubling angel descended. Thus sinners are every where in the gospel, held up to view as impotent creatures in matters of religion. They are represented as dead ; dead in trespasses and in sin. A dead body can neither re-animate itself, nor form any plan for its resurrection. They are represented as reduced to such a state of inability, that they cannot think a right thought, or speak a right word ; and our Lord declares, "That without him, "they can do nothing." Thus sinners must perish, and they may cast their despairing eyes on a thousand objects for relief, but unless they turn them to Jesus, they are forever lost. Their false refuges fail, and every floating straw sinks at the touch.—No hope for them, but casting their eyes "Upon the rock of ages, "upon the Lord, in whom there is righteousness and strength ; "on him, in whom the seed of Israel shall be justified and glory."

Secondly, It implies that a sinner's hope of life and salvation, must be fixed on Christ alone. He is the only Saviour, the anointed of God for this purpose, the alone propitiation for sin. Sinners cast their eyes to the law as an original resort, though they know it is not adequate to their wishes, yet their deceived minds fondly expect, their failings and deficiences will be supplied by the merits of Christ. Thus a compounded satisfaction, partly their own, and partly in their corrupted fancy, borrowed from the atonement of Christ, lay the baseless foundation on which they expect pardon of sin, and acceptance with God. Thus a collection is formed, of a motley mixture of their own performances, and the obedience of Christ—and on this composition, they quiet their consciences, and rest their mistaken hopes. This, like the feet of Nebuchadnezer's image, partly iron, and partly clay, and the stone which is cut out without hands will dash to pieces, and their hope, like that of the hypocrite, will perish. It shall be like chaff on the summer threshing floor, which the wind carrieth away, and no place found for it. Hence the righteousness of Christ must remain pure and unmixed, to every soul that be-

Digitized by Google

lieves. The gospel call is, "Come unto me all ye that labour "and are heavy ladened, and I will give you rest. To as many "as receive him, he gives power to become the sons of God."

Thirdly, Looking unto Christ, implies the most perfect and absolute dependance upon him for righteousness and eternal life. The lame man mentioned in the Acts, when he beheld Peter and John going into the temple, asked alms, and they said, "Look "on us." Thus looking unto Jesus, signifies dependance upon him, and hope of mercy from him alone. Jehoshaphet, reduced to the extremity of distress, and in all the anguish of perplexity, cries out, "We have no might against this great company that "cometh against us, neither know we what to do, but our eyes "are unto thee." The prophet Micah, when surrounded with universal calamity, declares, "I will look unto the Lord; I will "wait for the God of my salvation." Thus poor, undone, and perishing sinners, must turn their eyes to God alone, and look only to Jesus for forgiveness of sin, sanctifying grace, and life and every blessing. The desires of his heart are drawn forth to this glorious Saviour; he renounces his own righteousness as filthy rags; and looks unto him as his beloved and his friend. His sufficiency charms his heart, and his mediatorial glories captivate all his affections.

Now the sinner that thus looks to Jesus, though he may apprehend himself at the ends of the earth, and, as it were, beyond hope, yet casting one look of the eye of faith on the precious Redeemer, assures to his soul the infallible promise, that he shall be saved.

This leads to the

Second head, Which was to consider the import of the salvation here promised and commanded: "Be ye saved."

It imports that they who look to Jesus, are delivered from the guilt of sin. By this single believing look, they become united

Digitized by Google

to Christ. "And there is now no condemnation to them that are "in Christ Jesus." However great and heinous their iniquities may have been, yet by his justifying righteousness, they stand in a sure acquittal before God. "Who shall lay any thing to "the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he "that condemneth. Being justified by faith, we have peace "with God."

It imports a recovery from the dominion and power of sin. Their lusts and corruptions do not habitually triumph over, direct and govern them as formerly. Although there remains in the believer a ground of conflict between the flesh and spirit, between the old and renewed nature. They too often stumble and fall, and are found in anguish to utter the melancholy groan, "Who "shall deliver us from this body of sin and death?" But O christian, always bear in your mind, "That the old man is crucified, "the body of sin is destroyed, and through Christ you will come "off more than conquerors."

It imports that those who look to Jesus, are, in a measure, freed from those awful terrors of conscience, which beset the wicked in times of calamity. The natural man, whose dependance is upon himself, and his supposed duties, his conscience is often flashing horrible conviction in his face, that he must be eternally damned for his imperfections and deficiencies. But he whose trust is not in himself, but his expecting eyes are to Jesus, though he feels himself imperfect, nothing and less than nothing, yet his soul magnifies the Lord, that Christ is his hope, his munition of rocks, and he reposes himself at seasons with raptures of joy on the bosom of his beloved.

It imports in a measure, deliverance from the wiles and temptations of Satan. This salvation introduces them into the liberty of the sons of God. Satan will harrass them, but he will not prevail. He will throw sinful objects into their way, adapt his suggestions to their corruptions; take every advantage of their

Digitized by Google

weakness, usages and constitution; he will even change himself into an angel of light; fill their hearts with spiritual pride; though he has no hope of their recovery, yet to molest them, cause them to dishonor God, and bring a reproach upon religion, and restrain others from engaging in it; these gratify him with an hellish satisfaction. But they who look to Jesus have full assurance, that he knows, and is both able, willing, and ready to succour them that are tempted.

This sweet promise and command, "be ye saved," imports a deliverance from the sting of death. Though fears of death may at times subject the believer to bondage, yet the king of terrors is disarmed. At seasons they look at the gloomy tyrant and say, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dis-"solved, we have a building of God, an house not made with "hands, eternal in the heavens." What have those to dread, who have fled to Jesus for refuge? He is a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. He is the city of refuge, wherein the manslayer is preserved from the avenger of blood.

This salvation imports the possession of comfort in this world, and a certain hope of unspeakable felicity in the next. Even here, they have the consolations and communications of divine grace. These charm their souls more than apples of gold in pictures of silver. They have here sweet converse with God in prayer, and in all his holy ordinances. They have times of comfort, that they are ready to say with the disciples at Christ's transfiguration, "It is good to be here." A Solomon, who had tried pleasure in all its various and extensive forms, yields the preference to the delights of religion: "Wisdom's ways are "pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." The lowest grade of piety, David exalts above all his royalty and magnificence; "I had rather be a door keeper in the house of God, than dwell "in tents of wickedness." Moses chose adversity with religion, rather than prosperity in courses of iniquity. "He chose to suf-

Digitized by Google

" fer affliction with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the " pleasures of sin for a season ; esteeming the reproach of Christ " greater riches than the treasures of Egypt ; for he had respect " unto the recompence of reward." But the salvation that is prepared for them in a future state of existence, when they shall be perfectly freed from all the remains of sin, admitted to the unremitting fruition of their Saviour, the intimate fellowship of angels, and to unite in all the anthems of praise to him that sitteth on the throne, and to the lamb forever and ever—these employments will be joy unspeakable and full of glory. Yea, the felicity comprehended in this salvation, " Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, " neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive."

I hasten

Thirdly, To close this discourse, with some motives to urge us to a compliance with this divine counsel, " Look unto me, and " be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God and there " is none else." The powerful argument here used, should immediately induce every sinner to fall in with this scheme of salvation : " He is God and there is none else." Christ Jesus is God, and he has an indefeasable right to lay the plan, and state the terms of saving lost men. Here mercy is spread at the feet of sinners, and salvation reduced as low as possible.

He does not here say, come unto me, lest you should object your weakness, infirmity and impotency, that you can neither rise nor walk ; he does not say, lay hold on me for eternal life, lest you should reply, we dwell in the ends of the earth, and our immense distance makes it impossible ; but behold his condescending grace is exactly suited to your helpless and forlorn circumstances ; the command is, look unto him and be ye saved. In your perishing and deplorable situation, cast your eyes to Jesus, as the stung Israelites looked to the brazen serpent, and obtained life.

There is no other name given under heaven, by which any can

Digitized by Google

be saved, but the name of Jesus—therefore, we should look to him alone. The law cannot save us, because we are transgressors; we cannot save ourselves; the prayers of the righteous cannot do it; for though Noah, Daniel and Job stood and made intercession, they could only deliver their own souls.—"O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in Christ is thy help "found." Seeing he is the only Saviour, let us hear and attend to his declarations. "See now that I, even I am he, and there "is no God besides; I kill and I make alive, I wound and I "heal; neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand; I, "even I am the Lord, and besides me there is no Saviour."

Moreover, Christ Jesus will have no partner with him in the glory of our salvation. He must be a whole Saviour, or none at all. Therefore, we should look away from every other consideration, and place all our confidence solely in him. He trod the winepress of his Father's wrath alone, and of the people there were none with him. So he expects the entire honor of the salvation of his people.

Wherefore, let us deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow him; let us have no confidence in the flesh—but look to, trust and depend on the Lord our righteousness and strength, who is God eternal, and mighty to save.

Let all be persuaded of every rank, state and condition, to turn their eyes by faith to this great salvation. Let the careless be alarmed, and the secure sinner awake; let the self-righteous be confounded, and the helpless hear; let the stupid arouse, and the concerned soul look hither; let the hypocrite drop his mask, and the desponding creature raise his eyes. Here is an abundant and overflowing salvation for all who will look unto it—How should the joyful voice, "look to me," cause every sinner's heart to leap with pleasure?

Let the eyes and hearts of the saints ever be turned to this glorious object, the God of your salvation.

Digitized by Google

SERMON XVII.

SAFETY IN REPAIRING TO JESUS.

ISAIAH XXXII. 2.

And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind; and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

HERE is a beautiful description of some personage; every line gives pleasure, and every word fills the heart with delight. Here is security for the wretched; protection for the hopeless; refreshment for the perishing, and a comforting rest to the fainting traveller. Any one who reads this delineation, or beholds the picture presented to his view, it calms, sooths, chears, and sheds into his mind, a flow of sweet contemplation. The thought naturally arises, what can be the design of this amiable historic print? Attend, and it shall be explained, to afford sweetness to the understanding of the philosophic mind, and ecstacy to the christian's heart.

All uncypherings must be in the simple stile. No man ever viewed a house of paintings, but wished his director to be plain in his explications. Established custom, cannot, with any face of decency, deny me this indulgence.

Admit me to begin with St. Paul, who in the days of his ministry, from his conversion to his martyrdom under Nero, that

Digitized by Google

bloody emperor, in bonds, prisons, or liberty, his wonderful exultation and happiness was in a *man* called Christ Jesus, and even this man had been crucified. Yet this ancient saint, however contemned in modern times, his whole determination was to know nothing but this strange and humiliating object, the cross of Christ. From this resolution, originates many surprising accounts of the Redeemer of men. This same saint, was a great reader and admirer of the prophet Isaiah. Hence he quotes him, and alludes to him in innumerable instances.

This prophet Isaiah, had predicted a multitude of things, which had all been fulfilled in the person, sufferings, and cross of Christ, and that with such plainness, that in after times, unbelievers affirmed they were so far from being a prescience of future events, they were only a simple narration of things past.

Thus much learned pains have been expended on the picture in our text. We readily grant this prediction, in a primary aspect, referred to Hezekiah and his reign. God bringing forth this ruler, in the extreme idolatry and degeneracy of Judah, awakened a certain astonishment. "Behold, a king shall reign in right-"eousness, and princes shall rule in judgment." Such a declaration from the mouth of a prophet, amidst the numerous reigns of kings, princes, and rulers which they had known, exceeded credibility, and overwhelmed them in astonishment. Let us for a moment, apply the prediction to king Hezekiah, who arose soon after it was delivered. "A king shall arise and reign in righte-"ousness." Such a magistrate had been so long unknown to the nation, unknown to their fathers and themselves, that the prophet was believed with much hesitation. When the event took place, what pleasurable streams of happiness, civil and religious, flowed throughout all the land of Judea? "Judgment run down as wa-"ters, and righteousness as a mighty stream."

A good government, well administered, is a hiding place from the wind; a security to oppressed innocence; a guard against

Digitized by Google

blasting reproach; a fence against the infectious breath of envy; and an opposing rock to the dashings of the furious whirlwind of violence. It is a covert from the tempest, so that the storms of desolation pass over, and injury is not felt.

The good ruler is a refreshment and consolation to his people. "He is as rivers of water in a dry place," cooling, cherishing, strengthening and comforting. "He is as the shadow of a great "rock in a weary land." Here the poor traveller finds an umbrage from the scorching heat of a burning sun. He obtains his property, the security of all his civil rights, and the enjoyment of all the blessings of conscience.

Now, if a good government, if the man Hezekiah, could be so much as this to the people of Judah, how much more applicable is the prophecy to the man Christ Jesus, and the blessings which flow from him to his church, and to the faithful subjects of his kingdom? When the greatest evils befal men, evils of a spiritual and everlasting nature, the winds of divine wrath, the storms of guilt, and the tempest of almighty vengeance gather around them, and begin to beat upon them, what can be a hiding place or a covert, but *the man* of the gospel? He is to the guilty soul, a strong tower, into which he may run and be safe. He will prove to the penitent and miserable wretch who believes, not only water, but a river of water to quench his thirst; not merely as the shade of a tree through which sun and rains can penetrate, but he will be the covert of a great rock, through which neither scorching beams, nor stormy winds can make their way.

Wherefore, Christ Jesus, in all the perfection of his mediation, as I conceive, is here drawn before us in this grand picture. Of whom can it, with such strict propriety be said, as the mediator between God and sinners? "He is a man, who shall be a hiding "place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as rivers "of waters in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a "weary land."

Digitized by Google

In conformity to this description, and almost in similar language, the Psalmist speaks of the blessed Jesus. "The Lord is "my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in "green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters. He "restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness "for his name's sake."

While we attend to the lines of this precious picture drawn by the prophet, we shall only touch upon some of the properties of our glorious Redeemer, as held forth to view in these strong figures.

We here observe,

First, Christ is called a man. Had he not become man, he could have been of no saving benefit to mankind. In his divine nature, he could not suffer, make atonement for sin, or set an example of holy conversation before his people. As God, it became necessary to assume human nature, to be born of a woman, to be made under the law, that he might undergo all those sufferings proper to make satisfaction for iniquity. "For verily," says the Apostle, "he took not on him the nature of angels, but "he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things "it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might "be a merciful and faithful high priest in all things pertaining to "God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people; for in "that he himself suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour "them that are tempted." He is stiled man, and the son of man, by way of eminent distinction, because he bore the wrath of heaven, and became a Mediator between an offended God and offending sinners. As God, he was of sufficient dignity to approach our Maker; as man, he was well qualified, in point of condescension, that access might be had to him, by those who were fallen and guilty. By this wonderful union of his divine and human nature, the former gave infinite worth and value to the sacrifice made in the latter. As it was the altar that sanctified

Digitized by Google

the gift, and not the gift the altar—so the divinity was the altar in Christ, which renders effectually propitious the sacrifice that was offered upon it. The humanity could have been of no avail without the divinity, neither could the divinity have answered the end without humanity; for it was incapable of humiliation or suffering. But both natures conjoined in one person, was a plan of infinite wisdom: the one, that it suffered—and the other, that it might render the sufferings worthy. Thus divine justice was satisfied, a broken law honored, sin atoned for, and a way opened for guilty offenders to eternal life and glory. This was the glorious man Christ Jesus, who performed these wonders for our salvation. As Satan triumphed over man, so Christ, in fashion as a man, vanquished Satan and the powers of death and sin; led captivity captive, and made way for the bringing many sons to glory.

Secondly, We observe this man Christ Jesus, is "an hiding "place from the wind." An hiding place is a security from dangers of every kind. Thus the prophets of old, when Ahad, that wicked king, was enraged against them, and Jezebel had raised a fire of persecution to destroy them, were hid by fifty in a cave, that they might be in safety from the storms of tyrannic fury. David retreated into an hiding place, that he might be secured from the anger of Saul; therefore he dwelt in a cave, in the wilderness of Engedi.

Thus persons, who by faith repair to Christ Jesus, and take sanctuary in his atoning merits and righteousness, retreat to a safe assylum from all their bitter foes, and are hid from the wrath due to sin. To these shall be fulfilled what is spoken by the prophet respecting Israel. "When the iniquity of Israel shall be "sought for, there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, they "shall not be found." Christ Jesus, is an hiding place indeed, when by him our sins shall be covered, and our iniquities remembered no more. He averts Jehovah's wrath, and the fiery indignation of a violated law. When he shall descend to judg-

Digitized by Google

ment, and search shall be made for transgression, it shall not be found—but he will say to all who are hid in him, "Come ye "blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you "from the foundation of the world."

Christ is an hiding place from the wind. When the winds arise, wrapt in black and scowling clouds, and portend a dreadful hurricane, sweeping houses, trees, and all before it, hurling promiscuous ruin, how acceptable in this awful distress and danger is a secure hiding place, into which the traveller may run and be safe? Thus is Christ to the soul, when the wind of the Spirit descends upon him in strong convictions. The operations of the Spirit in the sacred oracles, are often compared to the wind.—When he places before the sinner all his sins, in direful array, uncovers hell to his view, and shows him the anger of God as an irresistable storm ready to dash him into the gloomy abyss, then in anguish of soul, he cries out, "What shall I do to be saved?" Here is a place of refuge provided in the blood of Jesus, to which the convinced sinner may betake himself and be safe. The creature, who a little while ago, was bemoaning himself as wretched, miserable and undone, having fled to this hiding place, his horrors are dispelled, and his mourning is turned into joy.—Wherefore let sinners, who are under a deep sense of their guilt, and filled with direful apprehensions lest the storms of divine vengeance should burst upon them, be exhorted instantly to fly to Christ, who is an hiding place from such destroying winds.

Thirdly, Christ is a covert from the tempest. Now a covert in scripture phrase, is either a cooling shade—the haunt of wild beasts, or an impregnable defence. It is used as a cooling shade, when the place where Abagail met with David is designated. "She came down by the covert of the hill, and David and his men "came down against her." That is, they met under the umbrage, the hill projected, which was a pleasant and refreshing place. It is used also as the haunt of beasts of prey: "Lions

Digitized by Google

"abide in the covert to lie in wait, and Behemoth lieth in the "covert of the reed." But it is here employed to express a secure shelter, or a strong defence. Thus Christ Jesus is a munition of rocks to all who resort to him. When tempests rise, lightnings flash, and thunders roar, and torrents burst from the ponderous clouds, then a covert at hand, into which we retreat, affords peculiar pleasure. But what tempest so terrible as the vengeance of almighty God? "He is a consuming fire; and de- "clares, the wicked he will persecute with his tempest, and make "them afraid with his storm. Upon the wicked he will rain "snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest; this shall "be the portion of their cup." But Christ is a covert and secure defence against all these dreadful things, to those who flee to him. Noah was safe in the ark, when the cataracks of heaven were opened, the floods descended, and the highest mountains were deluged in the waves. He enjoyed himself in peace, when millions were swimming, sinking, and drowning around him. Thus they possess sweet tranquility, who have taken shelter in the precious ark Christ Jesus. He is a strong tower, into which we may run and be safe. Blessed and happy are they, who have made Christ their covert from the tempest.

Fourthly, Our excellent prophet proceeds, not only to represent the Saviour as a place of perfect safety and security, but as an abundant source and fountain of consolation. "He is as ri- "vers of water in a dry place." A country, whose verdure is sunk in dust, withered by incessant heat, and scorched by a burning sun, what so pleasant and refreshing as to meet with a running water? Christ is this, and more than this, to the poor despairing and broken hearted soul; of whom the parched earth affords a resemblance. Even the christian graces and virtues often languish and wither, like the grass and herbage of the field without rain; and then, a renewed effusion of gracious communications, is as streams of water gently overflowing a thirsty soil. Rivers are not like land floods, which swell high and deluge for

Digitized by Google

an hour, and quickly all is dry again, but they continually flow; thus Christ is an ever living river of refreshment, a source that never wastes or dries. He ever liveth, dispensing bountifully the waters of his grace, to all who will approach unto him. His voice is, "Whosoever will let him come and take of the water "of life freely."

Fifthly, the last line observable in this divine portrait, to which your attention is directed, "Christ is the shadow of a great "rock in a weary land." Contemplate for a moment, the massy rock; can heat penetrate it, or storm produce any effect upon it? This rock is great, it is the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, which fills the whole earth, and therefore, must project its shade to the most distant corners of the world. When the summer sun pours forth his insufferable heat, and all nature wilts and faints under his blazing rays, a cool and refreshing shade to the half burnt labourer, restores life, and fills his fainting heart with comfort. The weary traveller casts himself into the umbrage, with feelings of pleasure inexpressible. Thus a poor soul, in the sultry clime of legal convictions, and in the weary land of unavailing strivings and endeavours to happen to behold the gospel shade, to feel the wings of a crucified Saviour extended over him, it is life to his despairing heart. It revives, invigorates, and fills his soul with consolation. The wings of salvation are not as the boughs of a tree, which extend their coolness to a small distance, but they are as the umbrage of a stupendous rock, which has prohibited the sun to shine for ages, casts his friendly shade over extended lands, and affords the cooling breeze amidst the most fervent heat. Thus the precious Jesus is to the weary soul, who hath long laboured and been heavy ladened, worn down with legal convictions and the toils of self-performances, finding him affords more extatic delight, than all the pleasures of the shade of a great rock, to the fatigued and fainting traveller.—What refreshing streams flow from Christ Jesus? What cooling and reviving shades do the covert of his wings

Digitized by Google

afford to all who repair to him? "He is a man that shall be an "hiding place from the wind, a covert from the tempest, rivers "of water in a dry place, the shadow of a great rock in a weary "land."

A brief application, must close the pleasing reflections.

First, How should our admiring thoughts be excited by redeeming love, and the excellencies of the glorious Jesus? All the perfections of heaven and earth are concentered in Immanuel. His condescension—his humiliation—his life—death, merits, and righteousness are an impregnable defence to the believer—a fortress of rocks for his safety—rivers of everlasting waters for his refreshment—and cooling shades of eternal consolation.

Secondly, Who can exhibit the compleat felicity of those who have fled to Jesus? They are secured from the storms of wrath—fortified against the tempests of temptation—freed from the stings of conscience—delivered from the ensnarements of the world—sustained in afflictions—sweetly supported in sorrows—eased in pain, and armed against the terrors of death. Blessed and happy is that people, whose God is the Lord.

Thirdly, We may here pass a gloomy glance upon those who are still out of Christ. Their case is awful beyond conception. Nothing to shelter them from the storms of divine vengeance—nothing to allay the surges of a wounded conscience—to ward off the fiery darts of the evil one—no comfort in distress, affliction, or death—and soon, instead of cooling shades and refreshing rivers, they will be in the world of burning and tormenting flames, where a drop of water cannot be administered to their scorching tongues.

Indulge me to end the subject, with a word of exhortation.

First, To those who have fled to Jesus, as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest. Allow me to

Digitized by Google

congratulate you upon the glories and safety of your retreat. You are in the land of certain pleasure, of security, comfort, peace and joy. You have entered into the ark of salvation, and God, who is faithful by his promises, hath closed the door.—Wherefore, remain in this impregnable tower, rest under the transporting shadow of the rock of ages, and drink plentifully of the rivers of living water. In simple language, cleave to Christ—live by faith upon him—look to him for strength, for the performance of every duty—for succour in temptations, support in afflictions, and to be your staff and stay in the valley of death. He will never leave you, nor forsake you. He will guide you by his counsel, and afterwards receive you to glory. Ever then proceed in your celestial course, rejoicing in hope of a crown of glory which fadeth not away.

Secondly, Let thoughtless sinners be exhorted to awake from their fatal slumbers, and attend to the things of their peace. The hiding place from the wind, the covert from the tempest are still open—the rivers of water, and the shading rock are free to all. Now is the time for you to enter in, drink and live. "Now "is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." If any are under concern about their souls, there is no other place to which they can possibly flee and be safe. Remember, O sinners, your case is dangerous—your duty should urge you—your misery alarm you—your necessity compel you—and your interest and happiness draw you. Remember Christ is worthy—he is able and willing to save—he is a place of security, and a fountain of consolation. Hearken to the persuasive voice of heaven. "Ho, "every one that thirstest, come ye to the waters, and he that "hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine "and milk, without money, and without price."

Digitized by Google

SERMON XVIII.

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST THE GROUND OF SALVATION.

I. JOHN I. 7.

—*The blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.*

THE blood or death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the only source of a believer's holy hope, and the sole foundation on which he rests for eternal life. The apostle John is, in our context, giving an account of the character and mediation of the blessed Redeemer. He is the great subject of the gospel, the ground of the christian's faith, and the medium by which the sinner may return, be reconciled to, and have access to God. Hence he is stiled, the "Word of life, even of eternal life, which "was with the Father, and was manifested unto us. And these "things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." Christ and his Apostles, all ardently wished and desired the consolation and joy of believers. With what ardor and affection does St. Paul express himself to the Colossian christians, in relation to this matter? "I would that ye knew, what great conflict I have for "you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not "seen my face in the flesh, that their hearts might be knit to-"gether in love, and unto all riches of full assurance of under-"standing, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, even

Digitized by Google

" of the Father and of Christ." So when God gives commission to the Prophet Isaiah to proclaim his name and his ways to the children of men, he gives him this in charge: "Comfort ye, " comfort ye my people, saith your God." The gospel dispensation is not so strictly a dispensation of terror, as a dispensation of spiritual pleasure and holy joy. It ought to be joy to the world, that the Son of God is come to seek and to save them that are lost; that he has made a full atonement for sin; conquered death and hell, and forever lives an intercessor and advocate in heaven; and that he will come again to perfect and to glorify his people. Believers ought to rejoice in their happy relation to God, as his beloved and adopted sons; in their relation to Jesus Christ, as brethren, members of his body, and co-heirs with himself; in the Holy Ghost, as sanctified by his power, and rendered meet for eternal felicity. Hence we read, on a certain occasion, "The disciples were filled with joy and the Holy "Ghost." And we are assured that the foundation for all happiness in God, for pardon of sin, deliverance from its thraldom and dominion, and for all expectations of future glory is laid in the death and blood of Christ. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son "cleanseth us from all sin." He shed his precious blood for us. His blood applied, discharges from the guilt of all sin, original and actual, internal and external, and by this we are constituted righteous in the divine sight. The sufferings, death and meritorious atonement of Jesus, are such a prominent part in the salvation of man, that the whole of it in its extent, is frequently attributed to his blood, and thus the case is here; "his blood "cleanseth us from all sin." The only import of the sentence is, that we obtain sanctification, forgiveness, and eternal life by virtue of the blood of the Redeemer. St. John here sets before us the importance, necessity, and influence of his blood, for our deliverance from all the fatal consequences of our apostacy and our restoration to the peace, favour, and enjoyment of God. This wonderful salvation is attributed to his death in all its branch-

Digitized by Google

es. This is the sentiment most plainly and explicitly contained in these words.

For the illustration of which, and deeply impressing our minds with the important truth, admit your attention to the following particular considerations.

First, It was by the death or blood of Christ, sin was rendered pardonable at all.

Angels were the first transgressors in the divine dominions; and from the conduct of heaven towards these revolted lofty spirits, it appeared that rebellion against the government of God was an unpardonable crime. They were immediately doomed by an irrevocable sentence, to endless punishment. This shows that sin must be an exceeding great offence, that could by no means be overlooked. Thus it appears from divine procedure, with respect to this first instance of transgression, that rebellion against the divine government was unpardonable—could not be remitted, or passed by. This was the face of things, thus far, with regard to sin.

Man was the second instance of rebellion in the universe. The circumstances of his trangression, we are much better acquainted with, and therefore can better explain the difficulties that lay in the way of his pardon—which, with respect to all created views and measures, were absolutely insuperable. We are informed that God was pleased to enter into covenant with him at his creation, which was at once the rule and trial of his obedience. By his obedience, he was to secure to himself a perpetuity of his then felicity. The nature of this constitution was such, that in case of violation, it admitted not of any relief against the penalty. The penal sanction of it was death. "In the day thou "eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." No provision is here for any failure or defect of obedience; but on the contrary, inevitable ruin was fixed as the certain event of disobedience. Utter

Digitized by Google

ruin was the evident import of the threatening. Man, unhappy man, did rebel. And there could be no reason now why God should depart from his established rule of procedure. Yea, on the contrary, there was the highest reason, from the nature of divine government and perfections, as also the circumstances of this particular constitution, that God should inviolably adhere to it; that his laws should be rendered respectable, and his truth maintained by a full reparation of all injuries. Hence man's case admitted not of pardon; the matter excluded remission, and required that the penalty should be endured; and this was impossible to man but by interminable sufferings. No mercy could be shown to the sinner, no step could be taken for his recovery, until the demands of the law to which he was a debtor, were compleatly answered. Here was a difficulty, no created intelligence could adjust, nor any finite ability remove. But lo, the divine deliverer appears. In this dreadful conjuncture of man's affairs the Son of God interposes. Agreeably to the covenant of redemption, entered into in the eternal counsels of the adorable Trinity, Christ undertakes to answer all the demands of a broken law, to suffer its penalty, and do proper honor to the old constitution; to set aside the covenant of works as the way to eternal life, and to form a new constitution, a covenant of grace, which should in future be the measure of divine administration towards man. To answer these purposes, and fulfil these stipulations, in the fulness of time he became incarnate, in the human nature shed his blood, and died a sacrifice for sin; all which was accomplished on mount Calvary. In this way, a door of hope was opened for wretched sinners; sin rendered pardonable, and salvation made possible. God now, consistently with all his perfections and government, can exercise grace and mercy to guilty man. Hence you see the propriety of the assertion in our text: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." It is by the blood of the Redeemer, sin becomes pardonable, and salvation possible.

Digitized by Google

Secondly, Had the matter been left here without any farther provision, it is obvious it would have been of little benefit to mankind; though so much as this, was infinitely more than they deserved or could expect. By the death of Christ, a new covenant was introduced, a treaty of pardon and reconciliation set on foot, and published to mankind in the gospel, as the now rule of God's proceedings towards them. Herein pardon is offered to every one, who as a lost, helpless, and hell-deserving creature, repents and returns to God through Jesus Christ, and accepts of him as his Saviour and his Lord. All former transgressions are proposed to be freely forgiven and blotted out. Only sincere faith, love, gratitude, duty and obedience, are required throughout the remaining course of life. They are to take God for their God and portion, Jesus Christ for their Redeemer, and the Holy Ghost for their Sanctifier, be devoted to the eternal Three, worshipping and serving the everlasting Father through the Son, by the aids and influences of the ever blessed Spirit.

This is the tenor of the covenant in which God now deals with mankind. This is a summary view of the gospel dispensation, or what the apostle Paul terms, "The law of faith." What could express more grace? What could more fully demonstrate the freeness and riches of divine mercy and compassion? Wherefore, it is in virtue of this covenant of grace, that salvation is proposed, and pardon offered, and that repentance and a return to God is insisted upon.

Now it is by the blood of Christ this covenant is established, and this treaty of reconciliation is opened. Herein it is founded, ratified and confirmed. To this purpose is that ever memorable expression of our Lord, in the institution of his sacred supper, "This cup is the new testament in my blood." This he established as a pledge and confirmation to all, of the reality and truth of God's treaty of peace with guilty sinners. And we are to remember, as often as we drink of it, that this treaty received its existence, and obtained its ratification from his blood. Thus

Digitized by Google

far it appears, that the salvation of sinners has its origin in the death and sufferings of Jesus.

Thirdly, Christ has not only procured by his blood, that a plan of reconciliation might be proposed to his forlorn and apostate creatures, in perfect consistency with all the rights of divine government—but he also brought it to pass, that the Holy Spirit should some forth with all his sanctifying operations, for the effectual accomplishment of the designs of his death. This part of Christ's cleansing us from all sin by his blood, was not only as necessary as the others mentioned, but in many respects, more so. The design of saving ruined man, must have certainly miscarried, had not the agency of the Holy Spirit been engaged to restore and bring him back to God.

It was not the only inconveniency attending our fallen state, that we had become debtors to the law, and obliged to suffer its awful penalties; it was not our only misery that the image of God had been effaced from our hearts, that all intercourse between heaven and us had been broken off, and the just requisitions of the divine government were our eternal destruction; these, I say, were not the only consequences of our apostacy, but man, with the first transgression, contracted an indisposition of heart towards God. Before this awful event, God was the Father, friend, and portion of man, and man delighted in him with the most tender filial affection; he was to his feeling the life, and joy, and happiness of his soul. No sooner had he perpetrated the forbidden deed, than this blissful temper was changed into estrangement of heart, and alienation of affection from God. Immediately he runs away and hides himself from God, not merely through fear of his wrath, but through aversion from his friendship, and hatred to his perfections. This is the universal temper of mankind by nature. They choose to be far from, and to live without God in the world. They have no taste for his presence, or desire of intercourse with him,

Digitized by Google

While this remains the temper of man's heart, it is evident from the nature of things, as well as the gospel offers, his salvation must be impossible. Hence, if man is to be recovered, some agency must be employed, to redress this unhappy cast of mind. For the removal of this dreadful impediment, it was provided in the eternal counsels, that the third person of the adorable Trinity, should descend to the world, and deal internally with the hearts of sinners, and render the proposed treaty of reconciliation effectual to the salvation of man, by the ministry of the gospel.

In subserviency to his designation in the stipulated scheme, the Holy Spirit descends, impresses the hearts of sinners with a sense of their departure from God, and the fatal consequences of their horrid conduct; he brings strongly into their view, by the application of gospel truth, the character of God, the excellency of his law, the deformity of sin, and their own abominable wickedness and folly. He creates in the sinner a new heart, and disposes him to return to God again. He forms the penitent sentiment, and promotes the returning resolve. The Holy Spirit effectually performs the great business of reconciliation, subdues the stubborn heart, disposes the guilty creature to accept of Jesus Christ, as his only Lord and Saviour, to trust in his righteousness alone for justification, and cordially to obey the holy and self-denying laws of the gospel. When the sinner's heart is thus formed anew, he immediately submits to the gospel covenant, and becomes the subject of the precious promises and blessings thereof. He receives the remission of his sins, and a title to the heavenly inheritance. God becomes again his God, and he is considered in the character and relation of a child and heir. The Holy Spirit is given him as a seal of his sonship, to dwell in him, to form his soul into a habitation of holiness, and to be his constant instructor and comforter. That the Holy Spirit thus descends, in consequence of Christ's death for the above purposes, is the evident sense of the divine oracles in various places. It is in this view, that the Holy Ghost is so frequently stiled the spirit

Digitized by Google

of Christ. And often times his gracious influences are represented as the gift of the Mediator, for the accomplishment of the purposes of his death, to wit, the reconciliation of sinners to God, and the sanctification of their natures. It is on this account, the proper effects of the Spirit's agency on the heart, are ascribed to the death and blood of Jesus. Thus we read, "He himself bore "our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin "might live unto righteousness." Now both these particulars, "dead to sin, and alive to righteousness," which are here ascribed to the sufferings of Christ on the tree, are the peculiar operations and effects of the Spirit. Therefore, "He was made a "curse for us, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit." It pleased the Father, that in him all fullness should dwell, having made peace by the blood of his cross, and that he might reconcile all things to God. But in the accomplishment of this high concern, wherein every thing is attributed to the blood of the Redeemer, the whole scriptures every where represent the interposing operations of the Holy Spirit, as his part of the work of salvation, though the cross, rationally speaking, was the deobstruent cause of this infinite business, yet the Holy Spirit, in conducting this matter to its full event, is ever introduced as of essential consequence. He had his part appointed him in the eternal counsels, and it was and is fulfilling with almighty power; therefore, while we magnify the blood of Christ, in which the whole work of the Spirit is comprehended, we must not lessen the latter, to appreciate the former. In the general adjustment, there can be no doubt, but the first and third person, supported their perfectly equal part with the second, in bringing forth, or exhibiting all the glories of God to the whole universe of intelligences. In this world, the cross of Christ bears such a conspicuous part, in conducting the grand plan, that all, in many places, seem to be attributed thereto. Hence our text, in one comprehensive phrase, comprises the eternal counsels and decrees, the part each person in the adorable Trinity should sustain, and the event of the full display of all the attributes of Godhead, in

Digitized by Google

this single sentence, a sentence which nothing but divine inspiration could suggest, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Hence the whole system is represented in the revelation of St. John, that we are washed from our sins in the blood of the Mediator. His office in the grand economy, constituted him the Mediator. A mediator he was, to the astonishment of heaven, earth, and hell. These are all the worlds we know, and Jesus Christ is the joy, wonder, and terror of the whole. Allow me to remark, the Holy Spirit is too much neglected, in lectures on the gospel—but in revivals of religion, he is always brought forth, as bearing a distinguishing part; and I would also observe, that at those times alone, as far as my observation extends, he is only admitted to a common share in the salvation of man. The Spirit is the great agent in the negociation of grace. But the Spirit descends for the sanctification of sinners, only in consequence of the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

Fourthly, We are cleansed from our sins by the blood of the cross, as the death and sufferings of Jesus, have a tendency in their nature, to command the attention of the guilty children of men.—To paint to their senses the odious and vile nature of sin, its abominableness in the sight of an holy God, its contrariety to his nature, and its perfect opposition to his government.

If the human heart was not sunk beneath every proper feeling towards God, the sufferings of Christ would have a powerful influence to make us hate sin, and induce us to vigorous endeavors after holiness; to fill our souls with love and gratitude, to quicken us in duty, and to engage us to cultivate a divine and holy temper of soul. Under every consideration, "The blood of "Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

I hasten to close this subject, with a brief improvement.

First, How important and necessary is the death and blood of Christ, to the salvation of men? This is all to them. Their

Digitized by Google

hope, their life, their happiness. Without it, they must have eternally perished; but by its virtue, they are brought to immortality and eternal glory. Let us, therefore, rejoice in the blood of the cross, and glory in Christ Jesus, the God of our salvation.

Secondly, How great, transcendant, and wonderful the love and grace of God and the Saviour, in the recovery of lost and guilty man? These things are the astonishment of heaven, and angels bend forward and stoop to look into these stupendous things. As these matters engross the attention of the celestial world, how should the hearts of the children of men be filled with admiration, praise, and thanksgiving? "Sing praises to "the Lord, which dwelleth in Zion, declare among the people "his doings. Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord." Let us unite with "The multitude of the heavenly hosts, saying, "glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will to-"ward men. Thanks be to God, who always causeth us to tri-"umph in Christ."

Thirdly, How beautiful the address of our Apostle in another place, when communicating the same idea in our text. "Unto "him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own "blood; and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his "Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."—Where can this ascription be so justly and deservedly applied, as to the Son of God, bleeding and dying for the salvation of a lost and ruined world? Shall the little heroes of mankind, be distinguished with the applauses of all ages, their names and merit recording in historic page, their praises sung by every bard, and the marble made to exhibit their everlasting figure? And shall the Saviour and deliverer of a whole world, be passed by unconsidered and unadmired? Shall the Son of God bleed and suffer the worst of deaths to save a guilty race, and yet receive little or no affectionate regard, even from the persons for whom he died?

Digitized by Google

Be astonished, O ye heavens at this; and, O earth, be thou horribly afraid! What love, what gratitude, or what praise can with sufficient ardor be rendered unto him? If heaven admire and adore, how shall man fully appreciate and magnify the value of this soul-cleansing blood?

Let us all see that we become purified and cleansed by the virtue of this atoning blood; and this will be life to our souls, even life eternal.

Digitized by Google

SERMON XIX.

CHRIST A PRECIOUS SAVIOUR.

I. PETER II. 7.

Unto you therefore who believe he is precious.

THESE words are the expression of an heart which hath submitted to the gospel. Every thing respecting St. Peter, shows him to be a man of a sanguine disposition. He was first to plunge himself into the sea to meet his Lord, and to make the forward declaration, "Though all should deny him, yet he would not." Whoever will read the gospel history with attention, understanding and care, will find that our Lord selected for his disciples, persons of every character, temper and disposition. He gives us in his choice an epitome of mankind, and an epitome of the infirmities, failings, and wickedness of all future christians.—Look into the family of Christ, and there you will perceive in his disciples, every virtue and religious exercise, from the raptures of full assurance, with all the intervening grades down to the most determinate scruples and infidel objections. Yea, we find in his family the grossest kinds of iniquity, hypocrisy, avarice, and treachery; the greatest expressions of attachment, with cursing, swearing, lying, and the most utter renunciation of any connection or acquaintance with him. His family are a true picture of the christian world.

Digitized by Google

His disciples are almost universally, by theological writers, represented as poor ignorant creatures, illiterate fishermen, &c. True, the most of them were men unlearned, when called to be his followers. But, being at least four years in his college, and under his daily lessons and divine instruction, is it reasonable and fit to be continually holding them up to the world as ignorant and illiterate?

However destitute of what the world terms learning, when Christ took them under his care, it is abundantly apparent, when he constituted and ordained them apostles, they were men of distinguished erudition, and eminently furnished with an extensive acquaintance with all the parts of divinity. Let us hear no more of the illiterateness and ignorance of the disciples, who had been under the tuition of our Lord long enough for a modern college education. This false and mistaken sentiment has introduced into the christian church, hosts of truly ignorant preachers of all denominations, to instruct christians more knowing than themselves. This is the pride of folly, and many of their more learned adherents choose to have it so.

The words of our text, are a conclusion from what the apostle Peter had been before affirming. He had been previously declaring, Christ the Lord, was a living stone, chosen of God and precious; that believers "had been born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible." That they had tasted that the Lord was gracious, full of mercy and goodness, having every thing that was amiable and desirable, and capable of attracting affection in himself. That Jesus Christ was to their views and feelings, the most acceptable and sufficient medium of access to, and communication with God. "To whom coming as unto a "living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and "precious." And that they who apply to him for salvation shall never be confounded. They shall never be disappointed, put to shame or confusion of face. They shall have sweet consolation

Digitized by Google

and confidence in God in this world, and perfect joy and felicity in the next.

From these principles possessing the hearts of all true believers, the apostle makes this important and natural inference in our text, "Unto you therefore which believe he is precious."

The word precious, communicates a leading idea in this sentence. In the sacred oracles, the original word is often translated honor. "Render honor to whom honor is due." It is used to express filial duty and obedience, "Honor thy father and thy mother." It is employed to designate the price, value or great worth of any thing, "There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box "of very precious ointment." And his disciples were filled with indignation at the waste, and said "It might have been sold for "much." This shows us that this precious ointment was of great valuation. In this way almost every thing that is important and dear to mankind, both in things temporal and in things spiritual, is expressed by the word *precious*. The productions of the earth are stiled, "precious fruits;" the promises of salvation, "pre-"cious promises;" the grace of faith, "precious faith." All which show the transcendant excellency, infinite worth, value and sweetness of Jesus in the estimation, and to the taste and delightful feelings of the believing heart.

Christ is the exalted head of the universe, a glorious ruler; who can declare the pleasing joy, with which the believer bows down to his government? His government fills his soul with delight, that all the governments of this world cannot afford. He is cloathed with the dignified offices of prophet, priest and sovereign; all names, titles, and honors are concentered in him; all riches and pleasures dwell with him; nothing strange then, that he should be the object, precious to them that believe. He is glorious and valuable beyond conception in his nature; the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, and he is all in all to his people.

Digitized by Google

I selected this text, with a view to endeavour to express something of the preciousness of Christ to the soul that receives him. But the term is too extensive, and at the same time too comprehensive for my feeble pencil to make the desirable impression. Your own experience must bring home to your own bosoms, the feeble suggestions, and then fill your hearts with all the heavenly and ineffable pleasures contained in the word *preciousness*; a word comprehending more than eternity can expand.

Christ Jests, how precious! Precious as God—precious as Mediator—precious in his offices of prophet, priest and king—precious in his states of humiliation and exaltation—precious in his life and doctrines—precious in his death, resurrection, and ascention. In one word, infinitely precious in himself, and in all his benefits.

What he was to these ancient christians, he is still the unchangeable Saviour, in the estimation and feeling of all true believers to the present day. He is the Saviour who changeth not, and from everlasting to everlasting, is precious to believers.

The inference in the text is an established truth with respect to every individual real christian. Whatever may be his thoughts of himself, his misgivings, fears and doubts, no exception is admissable here, Christ is precious to all who believe. However strange, it will be found a fact; let every christian enter into the experience of his heart, and if he does not feel a love and preference of Christ, above all things that ever entered into his sober and rational view, (melancholy and vapoury clouds excepted) can he suppose himself in his expatiated hope a friend of Christ? The gospel hope is to all, and this hope is laid before every creature.

The preciousness of Christ is an essential characteristic of every believer. This is a distinguishing mark of the christian. To whom Christ is not precious, whatever his sensations or convictions about religion may be, his works and endeavours, his fair

Digitized by Google

profession and orderly conduct, in want of this characteristic of the preciousness of Christ, he cannot be a gospel believer.

Lest we should mistake, in a point of essential and eternal consequence, let us enquire into the experimental import of the phrase of Christ's preciousness to believers.

Before we proceed in this solemn enquiry, let it be observed, it is not merely Christ's favours, benefits and blessings, flowing to a fallen world, but it is he himself in all the perfection of his character, as God and man, the Saviour, in the full view and belief of his mediatorial offices, he becomes precious. All the benefits of his redemption, it is true, are precious to believers; but what is it that gives value to those blessings? It is his excellency and worthiness divinely considered. Deluded professors may feel a certain respect to the precious benefits of Christ, but when this does not originate from spiritual apprehensions of his transcendant glory, there can be no grace in all their imaginary and supposed feelings. Many would be glad to possess Christ's benefits, whose heart is enmity to his laws and doctrines, and this must prove they are not believers.

When Christ is said to be precious to believers, the phrase must signify, that the sensations of their hearts are such as persons feel to their beloved friends. From this inward feeling, arise all outward acts of kindness, civility, and respect shown to peculiar favorites. But when all this apparent friendship is without foundation, and the mere ebullitions of a selfish soul; what are they? Mere compliment and show; only things of course; a compliance with the established laws of decency and custom.

Thus it is in the case before us; the person to whom Christ is precious, feels a peculiar sensation of heart towards him. He contemplates him as glorious, of high value and incomparable worth. In his view, he is the chief among ten thousand, one altogether excellent and lovely. His beauty, amiableness, and

Digitized by Google

dignity fill the heart with tender feelings, with a sweetness of affection that cannot be uttered. From these internal sensations, originates the true believer's external obedience to the commands of Christ. Where this takes place, there is holy and acceptable obedience. This is that keeping the commandments of God, wherein there is a great reward. All pretended obedience, which does not arise from such views and sensations of respect, cannot be holy or acceptable to Christ. Neither can they be any evidence to persons themselves, of the safety of their state. Here lies the great difference between true and false religion, between formality and sincere obedience, between a dead and living faith, delusion and reality, hypocrisy and piety that is pure.

To descend to particulars upon this precious subject.

The wonderfulness of Christ's mediation, and all he did for the salvation of sinners, rush into the convinced and renewed mind with such floods of celestial love; his glory and beneficence strike him with such force, that the out-cries of his soul are, "My "Lord and my God; my Saviour and precious Redeemer."—Nothing can possibly be precious or of high value to us, but what is excellent and supremely desirable. If Christ be without form and comeliness in our view, he cannot be desired. We may have indeed convictions of judgment, that unless we receive Christ, we must perish; but this forced acceptation, altogether against the inclination and choice of the heart, can never be of any avail. But to the true believer, Christ appears with inimitable comeliness and excellency; no name under heaven so savoury and acceptable; every thing attributed to Christ, suits, pleases, and charms his heart.

Christ's character is to him of ineffable importance. Whatsoever is precious to us, is always of consequence, of the highest moment and consideration. The believing soul feels the infinite importance of Christ in all his concerns with God. With what strength and beauty is this sensation expressed by St. Paul?—

Digitized by Google

"I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge "of Christ Jesus my Lord." Here we behold the native genius of true religion, and the operation of it on the heart, exhibited in the experience and declaration of the best of men; a man superior to all suspicions of an enthusiastic tincture, or a weak and undiscerning judgment. A person whose learning was extensive, and intellectual powers strong, and whose sense of religion was manly, though warm and fervent. In his experience, you see the important light in which the Redeemer appears to true christians. The excellency of his knowledge is such, that all other things compared with it are as nothing. To win Christ, found in union with him, cloathed in his merits, divested of all self-righteousness is considered, preferred and desired by the believer, as his chiefest joy.

In the term precious, is implied an application and adherence of soul to the Immanuel. The phrase imports a nearness and dearness, that the person has a sensible interest in our hearts, a superior place in our affections, and that we cannot but adhere and cleave to him. The application and bearing of the heart will ever be to the object precious to it. We can no more prevent our souls from pursuing after that which is precious in their esteem, than we can withhold the sun from running in its course. Thus when it is said, Christ is precious to believers, the feelings of their hearts are towards him, the affections and desires of their souls go forth after him, and the remembrance of his name forever. His character in the captivating view of their mind is excellent, meek, lowly, condescending and benevolent—hence he is to them the object of admiration, pleasure, complacency and delight, and sheds abroad an inexpressible sweetness over all the frame and passions of their souls.

Thus Christ Jesus is altogether precious to them that believe. Many things might be introduced as a further illustration of this doctrine; but I shall close at present, with a few reflections.

Digitized by Google

First, We infer that the great distinction between a believer and an unbeliever, consists not in what is external and visible, but what is internal and spiritual. A characteristic difference is marked in this text. Christ is precious to believers. This is an inward sensation and experience of heart, and where this is absent, the person is not a believer. A soul entirely destitute of this internal feeling of Christ's preciousness, no external profession, no outward duties, however showy and regular, can prove to his own conscience that he is a true christian. External works, with an orderly conversation, and the customary profession, ought to satisfy others that we are believers, but they neither can, nor ought to satisfy ourselves on this head. These outward things are proper evidences to the church, and to all who can look only on the outward appearance, but our heart ought to be our attention, as it is the principal inspection of God. The soul, in want of internal exercises and experiences, can receive no scriptural consolation respecting the goodness of its state, however exactly he may perform the external parts of religion. The preciousness of Christ in the soul, gives all outward duties the life and virtue of real christianity. Persons under delusion, and the power of formality and hypocrisy, often imagine the contrary; but these are often the food of a fatal hope. Good works will always flow from a good heart, and to a good heart Jesus will always be precious.

Good works, like many other things, are rarely well understood in their nature or precisely determined. No term perhaps used more loosely or equivocally than this. A good work is not a mere adjustment to the outward rule of action; the heart must bear its part as well as the bodily organs, in order to give it completion before God. "The tree must be good before the fruit "can be good." There is in it an internal principle, as well as an external conduct. If the former be wanting, the latter, however useful to society in this world, can be of no saving benefit. These works may be fitly compared to the fabled apples of Sodom,

Digitized by Google

fine and beautiful in appearance, bnt when opened, afford nothing but stench and ashes.

Let us look into our hearts, my brethren, and see that Christ is precious there, or we may be sure, we are destitute of an essential mark of true christians.

Secondly, We learn that nothing can compensate this want of the preciousness of Christ. If professors be destitute of this, in vain are all our pretensions to true christianity. We are exceedingly apt to substitute false criterions of religion, in the room of true; because the false are the easiest purchase and attainment. To suppose our virtues, good deeds, and fine qualities will be set aside as insufficient to secure us the rewards of christians, because we want this or that holy principle and branch of experience, is a false, dangerous, and fatal way of thinking. Many, in the great day, will cry, "Lord, Lord, and "declare they have prophesied in his name, and in his name have "cast out devils and performed mighty works." Here are qualities and stupendous feats of goodness. Yet notwithstanding all their glorious, splendid and apparent excellencies, they are rejected by the compassionate Saviour, as workers of iniquity whom he hath not known. If this be the case, what will become of inferior characters, to which Christ hath never been precious? Let us not think God will recede from his plain declarations in complaisance to us; or that he will consider and treat us as christians, while destitute of those things, which he in his word hath made essentially necessary to an entrance into heaven. Be not deceived, God will neither be mocked nor imposed upon. What multitudes of christians expect a glorious felicity, who have not even a pharisee's religion?

Thirdly, This discourse should direct us, my brethren, into a very serious examination of ourselves, whether Christ be precious to us as he is to those that believe. If he be not, whatever else we may be, we are not true believers. And if not believers,

Digitized by Google

then we are unbelievers. There is no medium between these states. If unbelievers, your destiny is known. There is an indissolvable connection between this character and eternal destruction. The decision of the invariable judge is, "He that "believeth not shall be damned."

Let us apply this rule of trial to our own souls.—Is Christ precious to us? Have we an heart felt sense of his excellency and desireableness? Is he altogether amiable in our eyes? Have we ever been smitten with his beauty, captivated and charmed with his personal and mediatorial glory? Is his name and character to us as ointment poured forth; a sweet savour to our souls? Is he the person of highest value in our esteem? Do we feel the worthiness and importance of his offices in all our approaches to, and transactions with God? Do we look only to his atonement for righteousness to justify us in the divine sight? Is he to our souls the chief among ten thousand, one altogether lovely?

Now what reply do our consciences make to these few and plain interrogatories? If our hearts can understandingly answer in the affirmative, saying, "O Lord, through the riches of free "grace, if I am not deceived, thou art above all things precious to my soul." Transporting declaration! Blessed are ye indeed. Your blessedness is indescribable. Blessed are all they who believe, for your portion is eternal life.

But, alas! are there not some here, to whom Christ is not precious? To whom if they feel not a hatred, they have a most prevailing and perfect indifference to him. O unbelievers, your case is dangerous and forlorn, and unless it be soon changed, you are undone forever. Wherefore, be entreated to awake and attend to the things of your peace, before they shall be eternally hid from your eyes. Let the profane, the deluded, the hypocrite and formal professor, turn from their ways and vain hopes, and taste, and see, and feel that the Lord Jesus is precious.

Digitized by Google

SERMON XX.

SECURITY IN A STATE OF SIN DESCRIBED.

ROMANS VII. 9.

For I was alive without the law once.

IT is of high moment for understanding any subject, to consider all its parts, and observe the relation they bear to each other. A defect here, often indutes an indistinct knowledge of the matter. Hence originates great confusion and ignorance about the design and use of the law under the gospel. Some imagine that the law and gospel stand in such direct opposition, that they cannot possibly consist together. To preach the law, they suppose undermines the gospel, and overturns the new testament method of salvation. It is hard for persons, under clouds of darkness, to discover either the true nature of the law or the gospel. To preach the law as a covenant of works, and our defective obedience thereto as sufficient for our justification, is to hold it up in a view which is entirely abrogated. Although the law is absolutely incapable of giving salvation in this way, yet it remains of essential consideration in the new Testament, or in the constitution of the covenant of grace. It answers the highest purposes under the gospel, so that there could be no gospel without the law. Therefore, the Apostle brings it forth as a schoolmaster to direct us to Christ. This is the thought St. Paul

Digitized by Google

illustrates in out context; the use he assigns to the law, in the words of our text, and exemplified by his own experience. It is evident he herein holds himself up to view in his secure, self-righteous and unregenerated state. "I was alive without the "law once." This, which he declares as his own condition in his former life, may justly be applied as the state of all persons while secure in sin.

In attending to the Apostle's affirmation, I shall consider,

First, What it is to be without the law.

Secondly, What is implied in being *alive* in this situation.

The first enquiry is, what it is to be without the law.

It cannot signify a real freedom from the obligatory nature of the law. Every rational creature must be in a subjective relation to its Creator. Creation gives God a necessary right of dominion over, and disposal of his own productions. This he can no more resign than his Godhead.

To be without the law, does not intend an unacquaintance with the letter of it. The Apostle had as good a speculative knowledge of the law, it is probable, before his conversion as afterwards. The study of the law had been the business of his life, in the school of Gamaliel, and all the record we have of his history, exhibits his proficiency therein.

To be without the law, does not mean an absolute disrespect to it in the exterior life and conversation. No such intimation could be hinted by the Apostle. He informs us in another place, while in his unregenerated state, he was a pharisee, and as to the law, that is, as to the formal and external observation of it, blameless.

But to be without the law, in the plain purport of the text, evidently involves these four things—a destitution of a proper sense of it on the heart—no feeling of its condemning power

Digitized by Google

and authority—no conception of its extent and spirituality—nor any just understanding of its holy strictness and inflexible perfection.

First, To be without the law, supposes a destitution of a proper sense of it on the heart.—An easiness with regard to the law of God, possesses the soul of every unregenerated sinner. What aspect it has upon them, in its obligatory nature, never commanded their consideration. They proceed on in life, without any attention to it as a standard of their behaviour, or containing any condemnatory sanction in its precepts. If they do not fall into gross abominations, or run to any excess of riot, but maintain a good reputation, according to the customs of the community in which they are, they remain as quiet and comfortable as if no law of God existed, or they were not within the compass of its authority.

Secondly, They are without any feeling apprehension of its condemning power and influence.—The curses it denounces against the transgressors of it, are unheeded by them. Its language is, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things "written in the book of the law to do them." The law speaks nothing but vengeance to all the violaters of it. It assigns them over to the hands of inexorable justice, till its demands are fully satisfied, and all its wrongs and indignities duly repaired. They who are without the law, are insensible to all this dreadful influence of its power. Their hearts are impenetrable to all the thunderings and lightenings of Sinai. To all the threatenings of incensed heaven, and to all the storms and tempests of divine vengeance, ready to burst in fiery torrents upon their devoted heads. A blind and unconcerned stupidity makes them as pillars of salt, while dreadful inundations of wrath are collecting inevitable destruction around them.

Thirdly, To be without the law, is to have no just conception of its extent and spirituality. Multitudes of sinners imagine that

Digitized by Google

the law only respects the outward man; and even this no farther than it falls under the cognizance of their fellow creatures. If they are in a common measure circumspect in their lives, regular and decent in their deportment, do no gross injustice to their neighbour, and preserve themselves free from scandalous enormities, they feel in peace, tranquility and security. Especially, if they add hereto some religious duties of the family and the church, then they enjoy the full approbation of their own minds. They reflect not that the law extends to the inward man; respects the temper, tendency, and sentiments of their souls. All such persons are undoubtedly without the law. When the Apostle makes this declaration of his own experience, he certainly means that he had no sense of its spiritual extent, or that it gave orders in regard to the frame of the heart, and required an internal as well as an external circumspection. An insensibility of this matter, is a sure evidence that a person is without the law; that it never has been effectually applied to, or impressed upon his conscience.

Fourthly, To be without the law, is to have no just understanding of its holy strictness and inflexible perfection. How apt is man to imagine that God, in some manner, is like himself—that he will not visit for his iniquities, nor be very strict to mark his transgressions. As they have no sense of the holy dignity or extensive perfection of the law; and although they hear its curses, yet they bless themselves in their hearts, and the hope arises within them, that things will turn out better than what is contained in the threatenings. They cry out, "If these "menaces should be executed, Lord help us; what will become "of the world?"

Some conceive, that many things forbidden by the law, if they are sins, are only small ones, and cannot incur all that weight of punishment, the law seems to import. Let it suffice to say at present, this must be a very sandy foundation to build upon.—Many think, whatever the law declares, God is too merciful to condemn them eternally, for some idle words, a few irregular

Digitized by Google

thoughts, or some incidental indiscretions in their lives. These unhappy persons think not, neither do they consider. The law has never come home to their hearts, in its power, spirit, or authority.

I proceed to consider,

Secondly, What is implied in being *alive* in this situation, or what it is to be alive without the law.—It may be proper here to observe, that the Apostle's representing himself as being alive without the law once, that is, while he was in an unconverted and Christless state, influenced his life in its delusive hopes, while he was acting contrary to God, and breathing out persecution against the gospel. The words being alive, imply great ease and security—a vain hope and confidence—a kind of self-enjoyment and satisfaction in these circumstances.

First, The words imply a great deal of ease and security in certain respects. They are alive in their own feeling; proceeding on jovial and chearful; inapprehensive of danger; and destruction from the Almighty is no terror to them. Any serious concern about their immortal souls, they allow not themselves to meditate upon. Thoughts of this kind would be death to their life. They live along from day to day, and year to year, without any solemn reflections how their affairs stand with God, or what will be their condition in a future world. They cast not their thoughts beyond the present state of existence—hence, they feel themselves perfectly easy. The attempt to persuade them that they are dead, while they live, dead in trespasses and sins, they reject with the utmost scorn, saying, "who are so "lively and cheerful as we are?" Their consciences are compleatly still and silent, benumbed with the busy cares and stupifying amusements of the world. The strong man armed, keeps the house, and all within is quiet and composed. They feel no difficulties, perplexities or foreboding fears disturbing their repose. No religious concern molests or assaults their tranquility. While

Digitized by Google

many others, in a better state, are deeply afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted; filled with anxious distress least they should at last miss of heaven and life eternal. As to their part, they bless themselves they are strangers to killing exercises of this sort. Perhaps, indeed, there are few unregenerated sinners under the light of the gospel, but alarms of conscience break in upon their peace and quietude; but these remonstrances are soon overcome and reduced to silence. They speedily return to their wonted security and inconsideration. And as they live, so many of them die, and seem to have no bonds in their death.—Some appear to exchange time for eternity, the place of hope for a state of punishment, with as much indifference and thoughtlesness, as they change their raiment, or pass from one room to another.

Secondly, Persons being alive without the law, implies that they enjoy much deceitful hope and vain confidence. They seem not to have a misgiving thought, but that their state is good.—What is more common than for dead sinners to imagine themselves rich and increased in goods, and that they need nothing. They possess the conclusion of perfect safety, and at death a direct translation to glory and felicity. Their hopes are strong, and always were so—and some are ready to thank God they never had a doubt about their future welfare. If they are enquired of respecting the grounds or reasons of their confidence. Some can give no answer, only they are so persuaded—some will reply, their hope is, God is merciful—others, that their lives are unstained with gross abominations—and others, that they perform their duty to God and man; the duties of the church, devotion, honesty and charity. Thus, they compass themselves about with sparks of their own kindling. Their hopes, though destitute of every scriptural and rational foundation, and have not one property of a gospel hope, yet no arguments can induce them to a relinquishment of them. A christian hope purifies the heart, animates the soul in the service of God, engages and warms the

Digitized by Google

affections in religion—but theirs bear the full complection of the reverse of all this. They imagine it a most easy thing to obtain heaven, hence the most inconsiderable matters will support their confidence. Those persons are alive without the law. This, the Apostle assures us, was once his case. Before the holiness, strictness, and extent of the divine law came home to his heart, by the powerful application of the holy Spirit, as he was on his way to Damascus, no man entertained stronger hopes of his good estate, and standing high in the favor of God, than he did. All the concerns of his soul, in his imagination, were safe; and he enjoyed himself in perfect security, entirely inapprehensive of danger, and a doubt entered not his mind, but that he was proceeding to heaven.

Thirdly, To be alive, implies a high degree of satifaction and self-enjoyment in present circumstances. The Apostle conceived all things were well with him. Contemplate the extent, fullness, and pleasure of the expression, "I was alive." Life is sweet, joyous, and desirable. The carnally secure in sin, their lives are serene, jovial and merry. Their hearts are whole, their consciences quiet, their hopes strong, and all is apparent happiness with them. They live at ease, their present moments are delight, and their future prospects without a cloud. They rejoice in the business, amusements, and diversions of life, and no inward jealousies about futurity to create uneasiness. When we consider a state of carnal security, it would at first blush, throw out signals for envy and desire. How charming are the ways of sin; they are as the rolling of a sweet morsel under the tongue. They live not only in pleasure, but in hope. But, O their end, their dreadful end, when their refuges of lies are swept away, and their hopes vanish into delusive air. The hope, the vain hope of the secure sinner and hypocrite shall perish.—How awful is their case in the midst of all their comforts, pleasures, and fancied prospects, to find the earth opening beneath them, and their souls sinking into the yawning pit? These are

Digitized by Google

the circumstances in which the Apostle once was, in his unenlightened and unconverted state, and in a similar situation are all hypocrites, deluded professors, and secure sinners under the gospel.

Here you behold the tranquility, peace, and comfort of a sinful state. My plan is not to unveil its fatal dangers at present. A conviction of its evils will be matter of future consideration.

The hints now given, shall be improved in a few remarks upon a state of security in sin. The

First remark on this discourse is, that persons whose state is ill, may possess a strong confidence that it is good. This is abundantly exemplified in the case of the Scribes and Pharisees. Who more confident than they, that they were high in the friendship of heaven? They had Abraham for their father, and felt sure from the promises, they were eminent favorites of God.—Was ever wickedness so great, delusion so strong, mistakes so gross, and opinions of goodness so high, as in this fatal instance?

Another instance we have in the parable of the foolish virgins. They had no doubt of the goodness of their state, that they were interested in the love of God, and would find a sure admission into his kingdom. But how did their hope turn out when the bridegroom came? They had no oil in their vessels with their lamps. They held the lamp of profession in their hands, but had not the oil of grace in their hearts. Their confidence vanishes, and their souls perish. The whole scope of the parable bears this intimation: that the case our Lord describes is very common; that many persons maintain a full security that they are in a safe condition, while in reality they are mistaken, deceived, and fatal disappointment will be the issue.

The Church of Laodicea, is an undeniable proof and flagrant example of our doctrine. They imagined themselves rich, en-

Digitized by Google

creased in goods, and standing in need of nothing. They were confident of their goodness, and that their future happiness was well secured. But Christ the judge, who searches the heart, entertains a different opinion of them. He pronounces them poor and miserable, wretched, and blind, and naked; quite the reverse of what they supposed themselves to be. Many are of a similar character, and under the same deception in all ages.

Thus a high boasting confidence may be an evidence of a state of life and security in sin, while it affords no marks of a gracious condition. A strong persuasion of being the favorites of God, may be a delusive fancy, a mistaken conception, and the very reverse of reality. This delusive persuasion may be continued to the moment of dissolution, and then the discovery of truth is too late.

Let us then be cautious and jealous with regard to the foundation of our hopes. It is not the greatest security that is an evidence of our goodness, but the scriptural grounds whereon it is built.

How often do we see poor careless sinners, whose conduct and practice clearly evince that they have no inward sense of God upon their souls, and yet have no misgivings of heart, but all will be very safe with them at last. They live chearful and gay, indulge themselves in mirth, pleasure and jollity. There is a natural propensity in man to think well of himself; and a natural aversion against every disturbance of their ease and comfort. Let us beware, lest we should be ruined by groundless hopes, by fatal security, and the indulgence of vain imaginations.

A Second remark is, that the reason why sinners live so secure and unconcerned about the salvation of their souls is, that they are without the law. This the Apostle assigns as the cause of his own former security. And this is the case with respect to all others. The law has not been set home upon their hearts; they

Digitized by Google

have not seen its extent and spirituality, nor felt its strictness and severity; hence they perceive not the evil and malignity of sin. They have no sense of the deep depravity, and desperate wickedness of their hearts. They consider not they must be convinced, regenerated, and converted, by the powerful operations of the Holy Spirit, in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven. From hence, we see that the preaching of the law, in all its spiritual extension, is absolutely necessary to a proper preaching of the gospel.

A Third remark is, that all the security and confidence in the gospelised world, that persons indulge about the goodness of their state, results from their inattention to, and ignorance of the law. Perhaps it may be here enquired, how shall it be discerned, when person's security and good opinion of themselves, arise from an insensibility of the law. The answer is easy.—Sometimes the security suggests the thought, it is an easy thing to get to heaven. Notwithstanding it is expressly said, straight is the gate and narrow is the way, that leadeth thereto. In others, their quietude and hopes proceed from a feeble knowledge of the evil of sin. They consider it not so dreadful a thing in its nature and effects as represented. They believe not the ministers of the gospel, and what is more, they believe not God.—Blindness of mind creates security of heart, and security is the fruitful womb of foolish confidences and delusive hopes.

There is a disinclination in sinners to attend to God, their souls and things spiritual, hence ignorance broods upon their hearts, and stupidity gives them support. O proud, thoughtless and self-conceited sinners, you compass yourselves about with sparks of vanity, and this will be your fate at the hand of God, that you must lie down in sorrows.

Let us beware, my brethren, lest we be hurled into the gulf of destruction, whilst we are securely expectiug eternal felicity. How awful must it be for a poor creature flowing along in the

Digitized by Google

delights of life, and living sumptuously every day; carnal pleasure and mistaken hopes filling up his whole time; fine prospects entertain him, till we hear of him lifting up his eyes being in torment. O what a reverse of fortune! Stript of all your pleasures, joys and prospects in a moment, and unexpectedly doomed to exquisite and everlasting anguish and horror. Behold for a moment the exalted professor, towering on the pinacles of hope, whose house stands high upon the sand of his own imagination; the little assault of death, sweeps away his foundation, and plunges him into that gloomy world, out of which there is no redemption.

O my brethren, let us attend and beware of security; St. Paul was shook from his foundation. May God grant that we may be all shaken from the fatal grounds of security.

Digitized by Google

SERMON XXI.

THE NATURE AND USE OF CONVICTIONS.

ACTS xvi. 29, 30.

Then he called for a light and sprang in, and came trembling and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out and said, sirs, what must I do to be saved?

VARIOUS have been the conjectures and opinions of divines, eminent for learning and experience, and also among common and sensible christians, about the nature and use of those distresses and exercises which frequently take place, previous to regeneration, commonly called convictions. As to ignorant and wild enthusiasts upon this head, who have no intelligible judgment, or any decisive sentiments upon the subject, a rational christian ever passes them by with neglect, yet with a tenderness of feeling for their weakness and infirmities. In no christian country, has the doctrine of previous or legal convictions, been so particularly attended to as this. And the discussion of the subject was conducted, with what now appears to be unchristian warmth, about sixty years ago.

Some have believed that all convictions were, as they express it, saving convictions, and a person under concern about his state, it was a sure evidence that he was in a state of grace.—Others have found, by abundant experiments, that there have

Digitized by Google

been multitudes of convictions, that fell short of conversion. Allow me to lay down this as a principle, that convictions are not absolutely necessary as previous to conversion; yet they usually take place in adults under the gospel. God displays his sovereignty in a remarkable manner, in the effectual calling of his people, not only converting them of all ages and characters, but also in a variety of ways, and by a variety of means. Some are regenerated in infancy, others in early childhood, by whom little can be exhibited in the process of their conversion. May I be indulged here to deliver, what has long been a private opinion of my own, that those who are regenerated in infancy or childhood, often pass through in early life, a series of convictions, very similar to others, and receive comfort and hope in the usual way.

We have only feeble and uncertain accounts of convictions and conversions, under the old testament dispensation; yet we have most ample information of their pious experiences, godly exercises and trials, and that many of them were eminent saints. In our Saviour's time, we have a very slender account of the conviction and conversion of the Apostles, only that they were called and became his disciples. And it is probable, some of them were good men previous to this event. After the outpouring of the Spirit in the days of Pentecost, we have retails of a more particular nature on this head. Peter's hearers were pricked at the heart, and enquired, what they should do to be saved. The Apostles directed and instructed them, and they became converted and comforted. And this is the history of many others, both as individuals and companies.

The relation of St. Paul's conversion, has been the subject of much attention and dispute. Its reality was never controverted, but its mode has originated various opinions. The principal question of difference has been, whether he was instantaneously converted, when struck down on the way to Damascus, or whether he was for three days under legal convictions. Great

Digitized by Google

names, learning and experience, and distinguished christians, have arranged themselves on both sides of this question. And it remains to this day, a "lis sub judice," an unissued determination. Every one enjoys his own sentiments. The decision of the controversy either way, affects no point of religion or experience. For my own part, I think he was three days under convictions, and was not converted until the time Ananias, "putting his hands on him, said, brother Saul, the Lord, even "Jesus that appeared to thee in the way as thou camest, hath "sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled "with the Holy Ghost." Though St. Paul's conversion was wholly of the unusual, or as some say, miraculous kind, yet it is very observable that of all who were affected by the heavenly light, none appears to have been converted afterwards but the Apostle. This single instance might prove, that there may be terror, alarm and convictions, where conversion does not ensue.

Among the histories of convictions in the new testament, I have selected the case of the jailor, for our present meditations. In the history of his exercises, various things are observable.

First, It is highly probable he was well acquainted with the reasons of the imprisonment of Paul and Silas. He was an officer of the court; heard all the pleadings and the whole of the trial; and perhaps he might have heard them before in their preaching in the city, which became the occasion of their prosecution; what feelings of mind might have been excited in his breast by these great commotions in the city, or whatever his apprehensions might have been respecting the truth of their doctrine, yet, as a thorough paced court officer, hackneyed in the service, he executed all the adjudications against these good men, he scourged them with all Roman severity according to the decree, put them into close prison, and strongly fastened their feet with staples and fetters, and all was perfectly secure. The jailor had so performed his business, that he concluded, it was safe for him to go to sleep.

Digitized by Google

Secondly, An unexpected earthquake burst the prison doors, and unbolted the chains of the prisoners. In this astonishing alarm, what was the effect upon the awakened and frighted jailor? He saw the doors open, and supposed the prisoners fled, and knowing the strict charge the court had given him, "to keep "them safely," he instantly concluded the escape would be imputed to his connivance or neglect. The consequence he knew was either the loss of his place and living, or the loss of life.—The thought struck him, instant death is better than suffering poverty, or an ignominious exit. In the noise, hurry, and distraction of passion, he drew his sword and stood in the awful attitude of plunging it into his bowels, when St. Paul's voice, arrested his attention, "Do thyself no harm, for we are all here." Suicide was not a matter of disapprobation among the Romans, nor condemned by their laws.

Every thing rushed upon the mind of this unhappy man, their doctrines, the causes of their imprisonment, his beating them, thrusting them into the inner prison, acting with cruelty, up to the extremity of his orders. All this perhaps was contrary to his judgment and the dictates of his conscience. And he might conceive the decrees of the court a sufficient plea for all his severity. But these apologies, from whatever high authority they might arise, they instantly vanish at the reproaches of an awakened conscience. It is not the orders or judgments of mortals that can calm the terrors of an awakened mind. Conscience will bring and hold the sinner to the rule, that God is to be obeyed, rather than man.

Thirdly, We observe, being stopped in his purpose, he appears at once under deep concern about his state and future salvation. He was immediately stung with the guilt of all his sins. What the Apostles said to him were the words blessed to his conviction. "Do thyself no harm," reached the heart, and penetrated the inermost recesses of his soul, and harrowed up all the clods of his iniquities; and in despairing anguish of mind he cries out,

Digitized by Google

"What must I do to be saved?" God here shows his power in the conviction of an hardened sinner. What an earthquake could not effect, he causes a simple word to accomplish.

When Saul was grown mad in persecution, divine grace arrests him in his hellish career. God could have done this at any other time, before he had made such havock of the church, but this period of extremity is chosen to give a greater lustre to the efficacy of his mercy. So here this jailor is saved, in the moment of the attempt of suicide, on the very brink of ruin. Thus in the moment of difficulty, God often displays his interposing power, and marvelous grace.

Fourthly, It is further observable, the remarkable effects of a genuine conviction. How does it bring down the haughty and stubborn spirit? Behold this proud officer, a little before glorying in the lashes inflicted on the Apostles, now prostrate and trembling at their feet, begging for forgiveness and mercy.—Strange the change, reduced from contemning them, to hold himself in abhorrence.

Thus an anxious and distressing concern about salvation, is involved in the very nature of true convictions There are many qualms of conscience, misgivings of heart that all is not right, purposes of amendment and reformation, fears of hell, and wishes for heaven, prayers, confessions and enquiries, that do not amount to what is properly called conviction.

The author of genuine convictions, whatever the termination of them may be, is the Spirit of God by a common agency and operation. I call it common, in distinction from that special operation, which is exerted in the regeneration of the sinner, or the production of an holy temper in the heart. The frequent fears, and occasional apprehensions of sinners, arising from a pious education, and from the means of the gospel, and living under a faithful ministry, are hardly of importance enough to be stiled convictions. All the effect of these desultory feelings, un-

Digitized by Google

less something more takes place, will only render their future condemnation more terrible.

That conviction which is likely to be productive of a good issue, and which I conceive to be real convictions of the Spirit of God, consist of two things, and they may both come to pass, and conversion not follow.

First, They command the vain mind of the sinner, to a serious consideration of the nature, tendency, and dreadful consequences of sin. The best adapted means of instruction and gospel education, will not bring a person to this without some application of the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit applies the gospel and its instructions, it fixes the mind, fills it with anxious thoughts; he cannot but think about his unhappy and dangerous condition.—This matter governs and engrosses his whole mind. The world and all its pleasures, become indifferent to him while this concern continues. Wide is the difference between fits of temporary thoughtfulness, which falls in the night, vanishes with the morning cloud, and evaporates with the early dew, and real and substantial convictions. Though, I do not mean, that the latter always issue in a saving conversion. It would take more than a lecture to delineate its various events. Many terminate well; many issue in a different event. Perhaps these will be matter of future consideration.

Secondly, True convictions fix on the consciences of sinners, a sense of his demerit, the misery contained in its nature, and the wrath and punishment annexed thereto. The bare contemplation of sin, and that we are sinners, however serious in the business, cannot bring us forward to a state of conviction. A sense of guilt, and an horror of misery, impressed on the conscience and affections, seem to be the lowest means for the production of this event. The convinced sinner feels and acknowledges the connection between sin and death, between his present state and eternal destruction. Some drops of divine wrath he

Digitized by Google

feels dropping upon his soul, and the arrows of the Almighty seem fastening within him. He perceives what he never viewed before, that without Christ he must perish forever. He feels, what was altogether incredible to him in times of security, that if sovereign grace does not interpose, he must be lost forever; he confesses the propriety of his being sent to hell; acknowledges divine justice, and that the only ground on which a hope can be suggested, is the mere mercy of God in Christ Jesus.

Can any person hesitate, that a sinner seeing and feeling himself in such hopeless and forlorn circumstances, must be in the utmost anxiety, inquisitive for relief? His awful concern must naturally involve such things as the following.

First, A dissatisfaction with and a renunciation of all earthly enjoyments, while this eternal concern is in danger. The convinced soul sees very clearly he must perish forever, and that it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, and unless he can obtain an interest in Christ, to which he can have no claim, his eternal doom is irreversably settled. Persons who believe this to be their situation, is it possible for them to enjoy themselves or the world? The most prosperous earthly circumstances give no comfort to their hearts. They feel themselves perishing amidst all their wealth. However they may be surrounded with an abundance of the good things of this world, they afford no real enjoyment. These rather aggravate his misery, that he must go away into torment from all the circles of happiness, and taste them no more. All those things which the carnal and secure mind admire, their value vanishes in the view of the awakened soul, contemplating himself, just ready to be swallowed up of the wrath of God.

Secondly, The greatest thoughtfulness about their state and condition employ their minds. Their dangerous condition commands their habitual attention. The concerns of the world, which formerly gave them the greatest pleasure, now yield irk-

Digitized by Google

someness and painful uneasiness. This solemn thoughtfulness turns on such things as these; his awful guilt and sinfulness; his daily exposure to the everlasting vengeance of heaven; and the consideration whether there be any way of escape, or avoidence of the divine wrath. These are things which run out his thoughts into innumerable conjectures and imaginations. When they see sin in the glass of the law, and the deplorable condition in which they are, they are ready to spend themselves in contrivances to escape eternal punishment, and to embrace any measures of escaping the wrath impressed upon their minds.

Thirdly, This concern implies, an application to every mean subservient to their deliverance. This is the matter which engrosses their hearts. How they shall escape the wrath to come, is their great enquiry. Every thing that opens a glimmering of success, becomes an object of attention. From hence spring their prayers, cries, fastings, reading, hearing, reformations, resolutions of amendment, &c. Every thing they ever heard of, as practised for relief in their case, will be now eagerly applied. Every method that wears the aspect of assistance in their case, and throws any favorable appearances upon their condition, however delusive, is grasped at with avidity. It is the nature of man, when sorely pressed with the apprehension of approaching evil, to fly at every floating straw of relief.

Fourthly, A diligent attention to the use of rational and scriptural means, is involved in the very nature of true convictions. A sinner, under proper concern, becomes in earnest about his salvation. Therefore, he sticks at nothing which in his opinion, is calculated to answer this end. A partially convinced sinner, is easily diverted and comforted. A few flimsy apologies can readily throw his mind back into its wonted security and tranquility. If strong difficulties arise, he bounces back, saying, "There is a lion in the way; he shall be slain in the streets." Or he has a multiplicity of business on hand, and cannot con-

Digitized by Google

veniently attend to matters of seriousness on the present occasion. He quiets himself with hopes of a more suitable time.—The feebly convinced sinner is quickly discouraged, and readily warps out of the uncomfortable harbour of concern. But this is not the case with the soundly convinced sinner. He retires from business and the world, and betakes himself to a woody cops, or some secret covert, prostrates himself on the earth, and cries, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Fear impels him, necessity urges him, and all is horror within. And a peradventure of salvation is a sufficient motive for all his distress and exertions.

It may be here enquired from whence this anxious concern arises.

It arises from the movings of the Spirit of God upon the natural principle of self-preservation. This principle appertains to all created intelligences aside from moral goodness. This principle will always have force in every state to dispose the creature to seek natural happiness and avoid natural evil. This is a law of nature, and operates necessarily to influence a persuit of happiness and an avoidance of misery. This principle, touched by the holy Spirit, awakens the most alarming concern. The sinner, viewing himself, his guilt and danger, the connection between sin and damnation; feeling his conscience stung with the wrath of God, and beholding himself ready to be plunged into the gulf of eternal misery, it is impossible he should not be filled with anxious concern, and most solicitously enquire with the jailor in our text, "What shall I do to be saved?" Hence the creature will fly to every mean which recommends deliverance. Sin and their consequences, seen in their proper light, must effect every power and passion of the soul. And a trembling concern will seize the heart, how to escape the wrath to come.

These few hints upon the doctrine of convictions, must be concluded with a very brief improvement.

First, We here learn the reason why sinners are entirely quiet

Digitized by Google

about their salvation, is the want of a suitable concern of heart of their sin and danger. When persons have no anxiety about their future state, the fundamental ground of their security is, they have no proper convictions. They have no views of their evil case, or that they are in any danger. Let the Spirit of God, by the application of the law to their hearts, set their iniquities before them, they can no more help being concerned than the poor jailor. Many laugh at religious convictions, who with pale countenances, run first from approaching danger. If they could see hell uncovered before them, how would they stand aghast, and their souls be filled with agonizing fear and horror?— This would instantly silence the pipe and tabret, put an end to the dance, scatter the dice, and throw the cards under the table. If real convictions should take place, the midnight revels would cease, and wicked gaming would vanish from every board and every shop.

Secondly, We are here taught what judgment we should form, of persons who acknowledge their state is bad, and yet are perfectly unconcerned about it. The proper conclusion is, they have no true convictions. They have no more concern about their salvation, than the brutes who fancy death to be an everlasting sleep. They are in their sins, impending over the pit of destruction, yet, notwithstanding all their confessions, they neither see, hear, feel, nor are they afraid.

Thirdly, We infer from this discourse, till persons are convinced of their sin and danger, they will never be in earnest about salvation. No one will be in earnest about escaping danger, unless he feels an apprehension of his exposedness thereto. Until persons are brought to a seriousness about their salvation, they are never likely to be saved.

But you will here ask to what end and use are convictions, if they do not ensure conversion? I answer as the Apostle did with regard to circumcision, they are profitable every way. Their

Digitized by Google

use is not to work in us any real goodness, but to convince us that we have none; not to lay a foundation in us for any thing recommendatory to God, but to show us we are destitute of all recommendations, and that there is nothing in us to induce God to extend mercy to us. Their end is not to dispose us to believe in Christ, but to make us know we have no disposition to this purpose. They are not to adorn and qualify us for the favor of God, but to strip us of all ornaments, qualifications and worthiness, and reduce us to the feet of a righteous God; to lie at the threshold of sovereign mercy, to be disposed of according to divine pleasure.

Convictions are designed to stain the pride of all flesh, and to give the glory of the salvation of every sinner to God.

Convictions prick the sinner to the heart; he dies to every thing in himself. This is the true sense of St. Paul's experience, when he says, "when the commandment came, sin revived and "I died."

Digitized by Google

SERMON XXII.

THE DOCTRINE OF REGENERATION CONSIDERED.

JOHN III. 3.

Jesus answered and said unto him, verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

WHEN God was pleased to create man, he not only formed him after his natural image, that is, with an immaterial spirit, commonly called the soul, but this was adorned with his moral image, consisting in knowledge, righteousness and holiness. This is the principle of the holy nature of all intelligences. This principle is a distinct thing from the nature or essence of the soul. A spirit may loose it, and be a spirit still. This was the case with the apostate angels; this principle departed from them; yet, by no means, was their essence affected hereby; for they remained spirits still, though their tempers were changed from angels to devils. And such was the unhappy fate of man, when he revolted from his God. This holy principle ceased in his heart, yet the nature of his soul remained the same. All that took place was a change of its temper, from love to God to a hatred of him, and every thing that was morally good. This is the deplorable state into which man fell. "We are now all become "sinners; shapen in sin and brought forth in iniquity; by na-

Digitized by Google

" ture children of wrath, and enemies in our minds by wicked " works." And this will remain the condition of man forever, unless this moral image, this holy principle be restored. Now, by the redemption of Christ Jesus, God can, consistent with all his prerogatives, and to the glory of all his perfections, reproduce this principle in the soul of man. Hence the doctrine of the necessity of the reproduction of this holy principle, is so strongly asserted by our Lord in the text, and is what is stiled regeneration, or being born again. A certain great man, a ruler among the Jews, named Nicodemus, applied to our Saviour by night, to learn of him the doctrines which he taught. Our Lord informed him, that a leading doctrine in his whole system was, that man must have a new and holy principle formed in him, in order to his turning to God, and becoming eternally happy, which he terms being " born again."

The phrase astonished and disconcerted this Jewish doctor; hence he cries with unbelieving amazement, " Born again ! how " can these things be ?" He appears thrown into the utmost perplexity, how such an event could come to pass, or such a mighty change be effected. Our Lord repeats the sentence again with very little variation. " Verily, verily, I say unto thee, ex- " cept a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter " into the kingdom of God." By the kingdom of God, and by seeing and entering into it, is plainly meant, becoming the subjects of divine grace here, and the partakers of eternal life hereafter. And no man, without being regenerated, or being born again, can ever enjoy these priviledges, immunities, and blessings.

Regeneration and conversion are terms generally used in the sacred oracles, as expressing the same idea. But when they would be accurately distinguished, the former is used to mark a simple principle, and the latter the motions or actions of this principle. However proper it may be at times, for the sake of theoretic instruction, to go into those distinctions, yet they will al-

Digitized by Google

ways be found of little use in experience. The word regeneration, is not used in the old Testament, and only twice in the new. Being renewed, begotten by the word of truth, born again, born of the Spirit, created anew, &c. are terms more commonly used to declare the first implantation of grace in the human heart.

I shall endeavor to confine myself in this lecture, to the simple ideas contained in the word as found in the scriptures. Therefore shall endeavor

First, To explain the term itself.

Secondly, Show that the principle intended to be expressed, is implanted in the soul by the immediate power of God.

Thirdly, That without this principle there can be no admittance to divine favor, no acceptance with God, nor obedience to him.

First, We are to attempt an explanation of the word regeneration. Though this is only used twice in the bible, yet terms of similar import are frequently employed, as has been already observed. It would be rather an exhibition of reading, to show the common use of the word regeneration in the primitive church, especially from the second to the fifth century, and the unhappy improvement of it to the present day; and how it was also considered as much different from conversion, faith, and repentance, as a profession is from a reality of religion in the present day. How it came into use, would be improper for a pulpit investigation. But the fact was this, it expressed an acknowledgment of the christian religion, and an initiation into the church of children of believers, of pagan parents and families, and from hence, they who were baptised, were stiled regenerate. Regenerated persons were the same then, that we call baptised persons now.—This was the origin of what is called baptismal regeneration. All it meant in early times, was, that persons made a profession of

Digitized by Google

religion. It is still confined in some churches to this idea; but in the protestant churches in general, it expresses a reality of religion—and in ours, the vital principle of true godliness. With us it is not merely a relinquishment of evil courses, and becoming decent and orderly; not departing from profanity, and becoming civil and sober; not merely engaging in some of the external ceremonies of religion, or even entering upon some of its solemn duties. All these things may take place and many more, and yet have nothing of what we call regeneration. Some escape the pollutions of the world, yet in the scriptures are only dogs and swine; St. Paul, before his regeneration, declares he was of the strictest sect of religion. Many may have great convictions and terrors, and obtain great joy like the stony ground hearers; and persevere long, and at last cry Lord, Lord, we have prophesied in thy name, preached thy gospel, and in thy name wrought miracles, and yet be found destitute of this principle, or of true holiness. Yea, St. Paul informs us of persons who may have made astonishing progress in apparent religion; "To have the gifts of prophecy, understand all mysteries; have "all faith, to be enlightened, to taste of the heavenly gift, to "be partakers of the Holy Ghost, taste of the good word of God, "and the powers of the world to come;" and yet wither and perish, because they have no root. Regeneration is a thing to which the natural soul cannot attain, to whatever high pitch its exercises may be wrought. It is a principle created in the heart, by the immediate power of God. I call it a principle, because there seems to be no term in our language so expressive of it. The scriptures call it a root: "The stony ground hearers had "no root in themselves," that is, the principle of regeneration was not in them. They also stile it a seed: "Being born again, "says St. Peter, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible." Whether this may be considered as the instrumental cause or the effect, it amounts to much the same thing. As a root or seed is the foundation of vegetation and fruitfulness, so regeneration

Digitized by Google

lies as the principle of every gracious exercise, and the root and seed of all righteousness.

Regeneration means a principle which had not existence before, as generation is the production of a creature that had not previous being. Hence this disposition given to the soul, is called a *new creature*, and a *new creation*. The terms used to express the formation of this principle of regeneration in the heart, are forcibly indicative of some supernatural or extraordinary efficacy.

Some divines, of distinguished note, have spoken of regeneration, as a spiritual sense implanted in the soul. And they have scriptural authority for this language. It is described an *eye to see*. This illustration is borrowed from the bodily eye. As the eye is necessary to the discerning worldly objects, so regeneration is a kind of intellectual eye for the discernment of spiritual objects, that the improvement of the discovery may be for spiritual and holy purposes.

It is also described by another sense, "An ear to hear."—The ear is the principle of hearing sounds; thus regeneration gives a spiritual sense of hearing to the soul, which becomes the foundation for hearing the saving voice of God in the gospel.

Morever this principle, regeneration is stiled the inward man, the hidden man of the heart, the new man, a new heart, a new spirit, &c. All which must most evidently express a foundation for some exercises or conduct of an holy nature.

Therefore, the conclusion is, that it is a radical habit formed in the soul by the creating power of God, whereby an inclination is founded to that which is good, and an aversion from that which is evil.

Previous to this renovation, all appears wrong in the human mind; afterwards something very different and new seems to take place; so that the change is great and marvelous. This

Digitized by Google

thing called regeneration, appears to be a living and active principle. Therefore, it is represented in the scripture as a *new life*, and the recipient of it, as one brought to life from the dead.

Activity is ever held up to view by philosophers and divines, as something connatural to spiritual existence; a dead or sleeping soul is beyond a soul's conception. But this we believe, the soul is an active being; and regeneration is a foundation or principle of holy activity or righteousness in it. It is the foundation of all those views and exercises, which constitute conversion, repentance, love, newness of life, &c. and all that train of graces and virtues which form the christian character, and prepare the soul for eternal felicity.

This holy thing, by whatever name it may be called, is the principle of all goodness in holy beings. This was the principle in Adam in his state of innocency; in angels before they fell; and will be the principle of recovered man, and of all the holy exercises and services of the saints forever.—Having thus illustrated regeneration as a principle of righteousness, I proceed,

Secondly, To show, that this is implanted in the soul of the sinner, by the immediate power of God.

This is apparent from reason, from experience, and the divine oracles.

If all mankind have corrupted their way, and are prone to evil as the sparks fly upward, reason declares the absence of a good principle, and that there is a defect in the heart. It also teaches that no being can act above its capacity; that a quart measure cannot contain a gallon. And so a soul destitute of an holy principle cannot perform holy actions. Hence reason testifies a holy principle must be implanted in the soul, before it can do any thing spiritually good.

The experience of the saints establish this doctrine, that the change effected in them is by the mighty power of divine agen-

Digitized by Google

by; to enter into a retail of this kind would far exceed our limits. The whole current of experiences, in all ages, unite in one uniform testimony of its truth.

But the universal tenor of the sacred oracles, agree in this affirmation, that regeneration is some mighty power of God on the heart. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, but that "which is born of the spirit is spirit." Here a change from flesh to spirit, is attributed to the operation of the Spirit of God.—The saints are said to be partakers of a divine nature, that is, a nature similar to God, or a nature produced by a divine power. "They are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of "the will of man, but of God." This expresses the power of God in the new birth. Yea, the cross of Christ, when it becomes effectual to the regeneration of sinners, is stiled *the power of God.* St. Paul employs an uncommon emphasis of phraseology, when he says, "It is the exceeding greatness of God's power, "and the working of his mighty power." The creation of divine power is no where expressed in stronger and more nervous language, than in this new creation. It is represented, as "that "power which wrought in Christ, when God raised him from the "dead." This principle is termed "the new-man, created after "God in righteousness and true holiness." And elsewhere it is said, "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto "good works."

The implantation of this principle is illustrated by the resurrection of the dead, which is always attributed to Almighty power. "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses "and in sins." It is stiled, "a passing from death unto life." But there would be no end of reciting authorities for the support of this doctrine, that regeneration, or the new birth, is a principle effected by divine power, or produced by the immediate efficacy of supernatural grace.—The

Third thing which falls under present consideration is, to show that without this principle of regeneration, no sinner can see the

Digitized by Google

kingdom of God, be admitted to divine favor, accepted with, nor obedient to him.

Ou Lord's declarations upon this head, can stand in need of no corroborating support. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, "except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." God works "in us both to will and to do of his own good plea- "sure. We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing of "ourselves." How could persons be said to be born of God, raised from death to life, made new creatures, &c. was there not an exertion of almighty and immediate power in the renovation or regeneration of the heart.

The constant objection to this doctrine of the new birth, by a certain class of christians is, that it reduces men to mere machines, and renders them not superior to stocks and stones. To this it is answered, when man fell, he lost none of the natural faculties of his soul, but only holiness of heart, or the moral image of God. Now, in regeneration, there is no rational power given to the mind, no increase of the natural faculties; these remain afterwards strong or weak, as before; only a holy principle or the restoration of the divine image. To regenerate a machine, a stock or stone, it must first be made a rational and intelligent being, and then this principle of holiness, stiled regeneration, must be superadded to this intelligence. Yea, it is true, God, of the stones could raise up seed unto Abraham, but this is not his plan of operation in this world, but to renew and recover sinners to himself, regenerate rational creatures, and form them for glory. Therefore, regeneration is a well of water opened in the soul by the power of God, which he will maintain unto life eternal. "The water, that I shall give him," says Christ, "shall "be in him a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life."

A few inferences will close the discourse.

First, We infer that regeneration is not a mere change of the

Digitized by Google

natural temper and disposition; this may be the case without any supernatural principle of grace implanted in the heart. A gay and lively temper may be changed into a sober and melancholy one; a choloric spirit may be reduced to apparent meekness; a proud and haughty mind brought down to humility, &c. A thousand changes of this sort may take place, from common providences, alteration of worldly circumstances, or some invisible impulses on the mind, which have nothing in them of the nature of the change wrought in regeneration. Persons may have great convictions, and great terrors, and be frighted from evil courses for a time, yet no gracious or radical change in the complexion of their souls. May God ever save us from self-deception, and dispose us to examine and be jealous of ourselves!

Secondly, We infer, there can be no christian good works, or acceptable obedience, until the sinner is regenerated. Without regeneration there can be no saving faith, and without faith it is impossible to please God. While unregenerate is the state of sinners, hear what the scriptures say of all their imaginary goodness. "Unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing "pure—being abominable and disobedient, and to every good "work reprobate." Nothing avails until the soul is renewed; "Neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, "but the new creature." The tree must be good, before the fruit can be good. Good works, in the view of the heart searching God, must flow from good principles.

Thirdly, We infer, that wherever the principle of regeneration comes into existence, good works will in some measure shine forth in a common, habitual, though not in a perfect way, in the life. Hence they, who are created in Christ Jesus, are created unto good works. Therefore, the spirit and evidence of regeneration is an holy conversation. If a decent, godly, and christian practice does not follow from this supposed change, we should be very guarded against conclusions of comfort.

Digitized by Google

A Fourth inference, is, that without being born again, no participation of eternal life. "Without holiness, no man shall "see the Lord. There shall in no wise enter into that kingdom, "any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomina-"tion, or maketh a lie; but they whose names are written in "the Lamb's book of life."

A Fifth inference, is, that this subject commands peculiar searchings of heart. Principles are only known by their effects. Hence we should enquire, if we have received the principle of regeneration—what effects hath it produced? Hath it produced love to God and our neighbour, repentance of sin, faith in the gospel, and holy living?

Those who hope they have been regenerated, their souls ought to be filled with praise and gratitude to God, and with purposes of new and holy obedience.

Those who have reason to apprehend they are not; alarm and terror ought to possess their hearts. Consider your exposure to eternal wrath. Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.

Digitized by Google

SERMON XXIII.

SOME OF THE FIRST EFFECTS OF REGENERATION.

II. CORINTHIANS v. 17.

Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.

THESE words are a description of a renewed man. They give us an account of the principle regeneration, in its primary exercises and effects. Natural life is the foundation of living actions, so the new birth is the foundation of holy views, new dispositions, and a godly practice. The character here attributed to the man in Christ, is that he is a new creature. This language is strong and emphatical, and must certainly be great in its signification. The Apostle never used swelling words of vanity, nor did he dress up sentiments of small moment in language of high import.

The observation in our text, is plainly an inference from the preceding discourse. The zeal the Apostle had discovered for the interest of Christ, and the salvation of souls, had brought upon him the imputation of enthusiasm, and that he was beside himself. Hence he replies to this groundless charge, "For "whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God; or whether we "be sober it is for your cause." He begs to be excused, if he appeared peculiarly warm in the cause of the gospel. "For the

Digitized by Google

"love of Christ," says he, "constraineth us." Our apprehensions of the importance of divine things, of the love and condescension of the Son of God in our redemption, and our obligations to be devoted to him in all holy service to the utmost, therefore, we cannot but act agreeably to our judgment, and lay out ourselves faithfully for the souls of men, whatever aspect it may have upon our reputation, or temporal advantages. And this, in a measure, is the case with all those who are renewed and in Christ Jesus. "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a "new creature, old things are passed away; behold, all things "are become new." These words express a change of heart and of life. If a man will prove himself to be a christian, he must be a new creature. Not only must they assume a new name, make a new profession, take up a new religion, but they must be new in heart, and of a new nature. And this new creature will manifest itself thus, "old things are passed away." Old views, purposes, principles, and practises are passed away. And "behold, all things are become new." The regenerated man imbibes new views of divine realities, new principles, new purposes, and designs engross his mind, and his determination is to act for new ends.

The intention of the present discourse, is to show some of the immediate effects of the renovating principle, before we enter upon a large description of the particular graces which constitute the christian character.

The immediate effects are in adult persons, an holy illumination of the understanding, and a new bias of the will. Some have considered these as essential constituents of regeneration itself. And it is certain, they can in no other way be distinguished from it, but as philosophically we distinguish a principle from its operation, a substratem from its modes and qualities.—Operation we experience and feel—but principle we know nothing of but by its effects. No man could know he lived by the mere abstract principle of life, but its operation assures him that

Digitized by Google

he is a living creature. So here, the effects of regeneration, by feeling and experience, demonstrate a principle of holy and spiritual life.

First, It exists or shows itself in the illumination of the mind. Hence it is termed light, and the subjects of it, "children of "the light and of the day: God's shining into the mind, to give "the knowledge of Christ Jesus," &c. By this illumination, the soul is brought to entertain new apprehensions of God, of the divine law, of itself, of eternity, of Jesus Christ, and the glorious method of saving lost sinners in the gospel.

All these things he beholds in a new and very different manner. Formerly he was in darkness, through the blindness of his mind, but now is he become light in the Lord. He views God as all glorious and transcendently excellent. Every divine perfection in the bible appears with a peculiar and amiable lustre; his holiness and justice, as well as his goodness and mercy. The soul, as it were, quits itself, and fixes with admiring wonders upon God as altogether lovely. There is now a rectitude and propriety in all the goings and providences of God, which charm and delight his mind.

The law of God is to his contemplation without blemish, exactly what it ought to be, perfect and right. He now feels with a distinguishing sensation, the Apostle's description of it, when he says, "The law is holy, and the commandment is holy, and "just and good." He cries out, "All is infinitely holy and "good, come of me what will."

He becomes enlightened with new discoveries of himself. He sees himself a sinner. He had from education under the gospel, been used to make this acknowledgment. But, alas! what is a customary and formal acknowledgment, to what it is to have his eyes opened to behold himself in the light of God, and in the mirror of a perfect law? He sees nothing reflected upon himself but

Digitized by Google

depravity and moral deformity. He feels himself before the glass, "poor, and miserable, and wretched, and blind, and "naked." And in the awful view, his lamentations are, "Be- "hold I am vile, I have not the understanding of a man." And he dashes himself to the earth, saying, "I am as a beast be- "fore God."

This illumination gives him new views of eternity. Tremendous is the prospect which opens before him. Eternity! dreadful and solemn is the thought! A sea never traversed, an ocean without a shore. Its entrance is found, but no return to port. It is an everlasting voyage. The view fills him with horror, and causes his soul to start back upon itself. What shall be his fate in this endless course—whether he shall pass this interminable scene in perfect felicity, or plunge in the fiery billows of divine wrath and utter despair. All is uncertain—his mind terrifies and fills him with awful pain and misgivings.

His next discoveries are the mediatorial wonders of Jesus Christ. As God and man; as interposing for transgressors; his humiliation, sufferings, and death; satisfying divine justice, fulfilling the divine law, making atonement for sin, vanquishing death and hell, and ascending to glory. These discoveries overwhelm his soul, give him pleasure, joy and transport, previous, sometimes, to his having the reflex acts of believing that he is comprehended and interested herein. Christ, in his mediatorial offices, appears all glorious and beautiful, as an object to the illuminated mind. In his view, his divine excellencies strike his attention, command his soul, and captivate his heart, beyond any thing he ever beheld. The beauties of the rainbow are nothing to the natural eye, in comparison of the beauties of the Redeemer, to the eye of spiritual illumination.

The discoveries of the glorious method of saving guilty sinners in the gospel. The views often astonish and charm his heart, without any sensible consideration of himself. The

Digitized by Google

benevolence, condescension, compassion, mercy, grace, and goodness displayed therein, as pure objects of his illuminated contemplation, shed over his soul a feeling, and an indescribable pleasure and delight.

But all these things will come into a more particular review, when your attention will be directed to the doctrines of conversion, repentance, faith, love, &c.

Secondly, The principle of regeneration shows itself by the new bias of the will. Understanding and will, philosophers have considered as the constituent faculties of the soul. Some have added hereto the passions and affections, but the moderns have reduced these to volitions or acts of the will. However this may be, metaphysically and logically considered, it can make no difference in theological discussions, or the experience of christians. Experience and feeling is the great business of christians, in the view and under the operation of the Spirit and gospel truth.

The will, whether it follows the last dictate of the understanding, or is as the understanding, as the more refined express it, common sense teaches us, it is that power of the soul which approves or disapproves of objects or actions as they stand in the conception of the mind. Therefore when we say regeneration gives a new bias to the will, all that is intended, is, that this faculty becomes determined about spiritual objects, in a new and different manner from what it formerly was. For instance, as the will formerly was not exercised in the approbation of God, or choosing him as an amiable and excellent being, nor in the disapprobation of sin as exceedingly base and odious, the bias of it now is, a well pleasedness with God, and an aversion from iniquity.

In this new choice and determination of the will, conversion properly consists. This is the precise point wherein the exercises of true religion begin. The exercises of the renewed will be-

Digitized by Google

come easy and unrestrained. They tend towards God and heavenly things, as the needle tends to the polar star. Not so with the ungodly. With reluctance they call God to remembrance. If any occurrences force the recollection of him into the mind, they feel uneasiness, and seem to have no enjoyment of themselves until it is banished hence. But it is not thus with the renewed soul. A marvelous change takes place in his affections, propensities and attachments.

In the affections much of vital and experimental religion consists. Unless our affections be raised and directed towards spiritual things, our religion will be apt to wear the complexion of formality. Proper allowances are ever to be made for different constitutions. Some are sanguine, forward, and petulent—others timid, modest and reserved. These various constitutions will give a various appearance to religious affections. Yet there will be leading radical traits, which will prove a genuine correspondence in all.

But to be a little more particular in considering the renewed affections. Perhaps admiration is one of the first passions awakened into sensibility in the illuminated mind. He feels himself, as it were, introduced into a new world, and all are wonders around him. God, in all his perfections, in all his ways, in all his operations of creation, providence and grace, appears marvelous in his eyes. The patience of God, in sparing such a wicked generation; his goodness in pouring down beneficence upon it; his loving kindness and tender mercies; the projection and execution of the method of salvation, swell his soul into rapturous bursts of admiration.

This change in the affections, is especially manifested in love. This may be termed, the superior passion of the soul. Its direction fixes the character of a person, with regard to religion or the reverse. He whose heart is more attached to the objects of sense, than charmed with the beauty of divine things, is a lover

Digitized by Google

of pleasure, more than a lover of God. Love implies esteem, approbation, and complacency. The renewed heart esteems God above all. Beautiful greatness constitutes the object of esteem. This is transcendantly the character of Jehovah—hence, supreme approbation follows estimation, and complacency and delight are indissolubly connected with both.

New desires come forth into exercise in the regenerated soul. Once his propensities were earthly and sensual—and as to God, he desired not the knowledge of his ways. But now the knowledge of his name is the ardent desire of his heart. He hungers and thirsts after God, even the living God. The desire of his soul is to the remembrance of him forever.

New aversions are passions which arise into existence, in consequence of this renovation. What he formerly loved, now he hates. He abhors every false and evil way. He hates the lawless liberties of the sons of impiety; and turns away from the indulgencies which formerly gave him pleasure. He feels an indignation at the risings of vain imaginations and irregular inclinations. "He walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor "standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the "scornful." With regard to the wicked, he is often saying, "O my soul come not thou into their secret; unto their assem- "bly, mine honour be thou not united."

New fears are another train of passions which arise in the illuminated mind. Having his heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, he dreads its defilement. He now, not only fears the punishment annexed to sin, but its turpitude fills him with horror. He also fears his own weakness, lest unbelief should prevail, and he should be left to return again to sin. His heart trembles within him, lest he should dishonor God, wound the interests of religion, and fall back into sin, folly, and ruin.

The renovated soul has also new joys. The prospects opened to his view of glory and felicity; the sweet communion he feels

Digitized by Google

with God; and the hopes awakened in his heart, fill him with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Hearken to the exhortation of the Psalmist, "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righte-"ous, and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart. Let "those that seek thee, be glad and rejoice in thee. Thou hast "put gladness into my heart more than in the time that their "corn and wine encreased."

But the renovated person has likewise new sorrows. It is true, religion's ways are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. Yet the pious man hath often great cause for sorrow and mourning. At seasons God hides his face, and then his heart is troubled. His own improper behaviour brings on clouds and darkness—hence, distress and mourning must succeed. In such a case, "As a crane and a swallow will he chatter, and mourn as a dove." He grieves for the inconsiderable advances he makes in religion; laments his barrenness and unfaithfulness; and often utters before God in secret, the bitter moan, "O my leanness, my lean-"ness!" The waste and desolation of his soul, its not being more replenished with divine grace, often fills him with pain and anguish, and breaks his heart. It also affords him the tenderest concern to behold redeeming love, and the charms of a precious Saviour neglected and despised. It afflicts him deeply to behold men dishonoring God, and instead of working out their salvation with fear and trembling, rushing with a dreadful resolution into everlasting destruction. For these things he weeps in secret places, and rivers of water run down his eyes. Blessed are they that mourn, and blessed are they that rejoice. The various and different operations of the passions and affections, in the regenerated and enlightened soul, must be the subject of some future lectures. Let the hints thrown out, suffice for the present, to show some of the effects, fruits, feelings and experiences, immediately flowing from a principle of holy and spiritual life, implanted in the heart by divine grace, in that great work stiled regeneration.

Digitized by Google

This discourse shall close with a brief application. And how can it be more usefully applied, than by calling upon you, my hearers, to examine into your respective states and characters, and try the same by the things you have heard. It is a subject of the last importance, and in which we are all most intimately concerned. If any have carefully attended to it, and with understanding considered and applied the same to themselves, they must by this time come to some conclusion, whether they are regenerated persons, or yet strangers to experimental religion.—Allow me, with all meekness and humiliation, to ask you whether ever you have found those exercises and motions of affections, which are the effects of the regenerating principle, and always, in a greater or less degree, arise from a new heart. Did you ever so behold the glories and excellencies of the divine perfections, as they shine forth in the scriptures, in creation, providence and redemption, especially in the designs of grace, mercy and love, as excited in you astonishing wonder, and overwhelmed you with admiration? Have you felt the determination and bias of your wills, the tendency and bearing of your inclinations towards God, and the remembrance of his name forever? Are the longing desires of your souls prevailingly after communion with him, and conformity to him? Are your sorrows for sin, both in yourselves and others, causing you often to weep before your heavenly Father? At seasons do your spiritual joys shed a sweet pleasure through your souls, and in experiences something like raptures, do they cry out, with regard to God, "Whom "have we in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth we "desire besides thee?" I trust, my beloved brethren, that exercises and affections similar to these, have been experienced by numbers of you. My soul congratulates you, upon your blessings, graces, comforts and happiness. O christians, rejoice in the Lord, and evermore rejoice. And let your holy affections always appear in holy living.

But, alas! as to many, is not your case much the reverse? You never felt or experienced any of these things. Instead of

Digitized by Google

any inclination of heart towards God and divine things, you are strangers to it, and have strong propensities to a thousand other inferior and worldly objects. You never saw any thing in God, in Christ, or the glorious gospel, to awaken your wonder, or arouse your thoughts to divine admiration. All your contemplations of these things were cold, spiritless, and indifferent. If you turn your eyes inward, you can easily perceive a preference of the creature to the Creator. Do not your own hearts condemn you? And do not your consciences at times raise convictions in your bosoms, that you are in an undone, forlorn, and dangerous condition? Are not your souls reproaching you under this discourse, that you are still in a state of unregeneracy, graceless and unconverted—and thus continuing, you must perish, eternally perish? Is not the heart of many now whispering to them, "O my soul, thou art an utter stranger to all these things."

Therefore, give me leave, in all tenderness and compassion, to leave these few words of exhortation with you. As you fear the reproofs of your own minds, dread the consuming wrath of Almighty God, and wish for the happiness of your immortal souls, no longer indulge this awful and fatal security. Suffer me to address you, as the angel did lingering Lot. Though the sun had just arisen fair, yet it was instantly obscured with lowering clouds, impregnated with fire and brimstone, impending the storm of destruction over the fatal city; in this tremendous moment, his voice sounds, "Escape for your life, look not behind "you, stop not in all the plain, flee to the mountain." Had I an angelic voice to reach your hearts, thus would I say, O sinners, flee to the mountain of deliverance, tarry not in the plains of death, look not behind you on the valley of destruction, escape to Jesus Christ, the Zoar of safety, and the refuge of protection, from all the tempests of divine vengeance. Behold his spreading and extending wings of salvation, ready to cover you, and brood you in eternal and ineffable felicity.

Digitized by Google

SERMON XXIV.

CONVERSION CONSIDERED.

PSALMS XIX. 7.

The law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul.

THERE are two grand volumes, which display the transcendant glory of God, have been published for the instruction and edification of the children of men; to wit, the volume of creation, and the volume of divine revelation. Both these are beautifully considered in this Psalm, and strongly recommended to our attention and study. The sweet Singer of Israel, finely illustrates the perfections of God, directing our contemplations to the heavenly luminaries. The sun, moon, and stars demonstrate the power, the wisdom, and goodness of the glorious Creator. The heavens declare the glory of God; the rotation of day and night sheweth infinite knowledge; the circuit of the sun, coming forth from his morning tent, till his retirement to his evening chamber, illuminating and warming universal nature, speak with a loud voice, and in language easy to be understood, the wonderful works of the most High.

The Psalmist then proceeds, in the words of our text, to another illustration of the attributes of Jehovah, more excellent than the former, which he stiles the perfect law. He does this, partly to prevent an excessive admiration of the splendor of the

Digitized by Google

visible heavens, which became the occasion of much idolatry among the heathen, an evil from which the Israelites were not always free; and partly to make the latter sensible of their obligations of love and duty to God, who, besides the common light of the celestial bodies, had given them the more necessary and beneficial light of divine revelation. This latter volume, was to be for the advantage of the whole world, as well as the former. For the direction and instruction of the Gentiles, as well as the Jews. Hence, as it was designed to be of superior use, he pours forth superior encomiums upon it. We should be all attention to this important and grand assertion, "The law of the Lord is "perfect converting the soul."

By the law of God, various things are understood in the sacred oracles. Sometimes it signifies the sacrifices, rites and ceremonies of the Jewish worship; sometimes the Pentiteuch or five books of Moses, as distinguished from the rest of the old Testament, called the prophets. At times, it means the whole of the old Testament, in distinction from the new, frequently termed the gospel. It is used to express the compend of morals in the ten commandments—and for a still briefer summary, comprehended by our Saviour, in love to God and our neighbour. Sometimes the term law, is employed to express the written word of God; and this appears evidently to be the meaning of it in this place. Thus, by an easy and natural extension, it may be applied to the whole scriptures. And this law of the Lord is perfect. With the utmost propriety this epithet is predicated of all the scriptures, of the law and prophets, of the old Testament and the new. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God," is full and perfect, without blemish or defect; discovering the nature, will, and perfections of God; as also the nature and whole duty of man, in his various relations to God and his neighbour; whatsoever he is, to believe and practise, in order to glorify his Maker, and to obtain compleat felicity in the eternal fruition of him. The exceeding great excellency of the law, is its virtue in converting the soul.

Digitized by Google

This fully indicates that the soul of man, stands in absolute need of conversion. This was one leading end in the gift of a revelation from heaven, to the sinful and lost children of men. Conversion signifies precisely the same thing with the word turning. And to express the idea, the latter term is most frequently used in the old Testament, as "Turn ye at my rebukes, turn "from all your iniquities; turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die," &c, with a multitude of other places. It is a melancholy truth, that the whole human race hath departed from God, forsaken the fountain of all happiness and goodness, sunk down into sin, and are in a state of the utmost wretchedness and guilt, exposed to the wrath of God and eternal destruction. But the glorious Jehovah, in the wonders of his wisdom, and riches of his inconceivable and ineffable grace, has devised and executed a plan, whereby unhappy man may be converted from the error of his ways, recovered from sin and guilt, restored to the divine favor, and reinstated in blessedness. This scheme he hath revealed in his holy word, which is here called the law. This is the great mean or instrument used by the Holy Ghost, in effecting this great and important change. And without the conversion of the soul, salvation is absolutely inattainable.—Wherefore, in our attention to this subject, we shall endeavour briefly to show,

First, What the conversion of the soul is.

Secondly, The absolute necessity of it in order to eternal life.

Third, How the word of God is instrumental in this change.

And then close the subject, with a few arguments to induce us to become converted.

First, We are to show what the conversion of the soul is.

It consists in certain motions or exercises of the heart, influenced by the holy Spirit, under the light, guidance and direction

Digitized by Google

of divine truth. Hence the soul in these exercises, influences and means, turns from certain objects, in which it formerly delighted, to objects to which it had been opposed. After it had received the principle of regeneration, it becomes active in this important business. Wherefore, conversion is a turning from sin to holiness—from the service of Satan, to the service of the true God—from a dependance upon his own righteousness, to an entire dependance upon the righteousness of a crucified Jesus—from the practice of iniquity, to a conscious performance of the duties of religion—and from things below, to things above.

First, In conversion, there is a turning from sin to holiness. Sin was formerly his pleasure. The natural man rolls it in some form or other, as a sweet morsel under his tongue; but now his heart rises in indignation against it, and he feels an abhorrence of it as odious and vile. Thus God expresses the conduct of his people Israel, when he shall shew saving mercy unto them.—"Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee saying, this is the "way, walk ye in it. Ye shall also defile the covering of your "graven images, and the ornament of thy molten images of gold, "thou shalt cast them away; thou shalt say unto it, get thee "hence." Thus sin is treated by the soul in conversion. The sinner mars those things which were formerly his delight, rejects them as base, and casts them from him as an unclean thing. His wonted lusts he views as deformed monsters. If it be a right eye, it must be plucked out; if a hand, it must be cut off. As sin is his aversion, so now he turns to holiness, and chooses it as his pleasure, his happiness and delight. The ardent breathings of his soul are, to be free from moral pollution and defilement, and to be adorned with all the graces of the Spirit. "As new "born babes, they desire the sincere milk of the word that they "may grow thereby."

Secondly, Conversion is a turning from the service of Satan, to the service of the true God. Once he was the willing slave of Satan, of the same principles and interest, and embarked in

Digitized by Google

the same cause; directed by his lusts, and carried on war against heaven. But now he relinquishes his leader, ceases from the war, enlists under another banner, chooses another captain, enters into an opposite service, and with his whole heart turns unto God. He now beholds and esteems him as infinitely glorious and worthy, and he elects him as his sufficiency, comfort and blessedness. His heart adopts the language of the Psalmist, "Thou "art my portion, O God. My soul shall make her boast in the "Lord. In God is my salvation and my glory, the rock of my "strength, and my refuge is in God."

Thirdly, It is a turning from his own righteousness to an entire dependance upon the righteousness of a crucified Jesus. Formerly he trusted to himself, to his own imaginary virtues, duties, and performances. He compassed himself about with sparks of his own kindling. But now he turns from his own righteousness as filthy rags, and flies to the righteousness of Christ, which he wrought out in his active and passive obedience. He sees its perfect fitness, to answer the demands of the law, appease the wrath of heaven, justify the sinner, and cloath his poor, miserable, and naked soul. This righteousness, in its glorious sufficiency, charms his heart, and becomes his choice, his hope, and his joy.

Fourthly, It is a turning from the practice of iniquity, to a conscientious performance of the duties of religion. That which was once his task, is now his highest pleasure. The sabbath, which had often been a weariness to him, is now his delight; prayer, that had been his burden, is now his sweet consolation. The law, which he hated, and to which he could not be subject, is become his delight; his inward man rejoices in it. The exercises of devotion, to which he had been a stranger, are now the solace of his soul. Moral and relative duties, which he had much neglected, now commands his faithful and diligent attention. Thus he turns from the practice of sin, to the practice of

Digitized by Google

godliness, being fully assured, "that without holiness, no man "shall see the Lord."

Lastly, There is in conversion, a turning from things below, to things above—from things earthly, to things heavenly. Formerly he was attached to, and served the mammon of unrighteousness; he eagerly pursued the enjoyments of sense, looking for satisfaction in the creature; but now he feels all these pursuits, vanity and vexation of spirit. Therefore, he forsakes these unsatisfying objects. All the riches, pleasures, and honors of the world, sink into nothing in the view of his mind, in comparison of the pearl of great price. His ardent desires are, to obtain celestial treasures, which shall endure when suns and worlds shall be no more. His heart is fixed on treasures above, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break not through nor steal. He experiences the apostolic counsel, with peculiar force in his soul, "Seek those things which "are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set "your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."

We proceed to show,

Secondly, The absolute necessity of this change, in order to eternal life.

A very few observations on this head, must suffice for the present. Any, who give credit to the scriptures, have the conviction in their own judgments and consciences, that they must be converted, or perish forever. This is the unchangeable constitution of heaven, and it arises from the nature of things. There is an indissoluble connection between moral evil and punishment. The soul that sinneth must die. God can as soon deny himself, renounce his own holiness, as grant admission to an unholy creature into heaven. As the one is impossible, so also is the other. Sinners, while such, are absolutely incapacitated for the enjoyments and employments of the upper world. All the business there is holy, all the pleasures are holy, all the inhabitants are

Digitized by Google

holy, God and Christ, angels and other spirits; nothing reigns there but pure and perfect holiness. The graceless sinner has no taste or relish for such company, or for any of these things.— These are his chief aversion. It would be hell, instead of heaven, for him to be confined there. Therefore, sinners must be converted, in order to be at all capacitated for the fruition of the blessings of thatregion.

But the revealed constitution of God, places this matter beyond all controversy. The selections of the divine authorities, for the establishment of this purpose, shall be few. To quote the whole, would be to repeat a great part of the bible. God proclaims this constitution with an oath, and as he could swear by nothing higher, he swears by his own life: "As I live, saith "the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; "but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn "ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Is-"rael? If the wicked turn not, God will whet his sword, he hath "bent his bow, and made it ready. Turn ye to him from whom "the children of Israel hath deeply revolted. I will destroy my "people if they return not from their ways. O Israel return un-"to the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." Hearken to the voice of the blessed Jesus, "Verily, verily, I "say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little "children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. He "will banish from him all the workers of iniquity." But there would be no end of retailing the sacred pages, to prove that sinners must be converted, or they shall never enter into eternal life, but that they must perish, everlastingly perish.

I hasten,

Thirdly, To show how the word of God is instrumental in this change. "The law of the Lord is perfect converting the "soul." By the word of God, is not meant the mere sound of the gospel in the preaching of it, which can have no more efficacy abstractly as a sound than any other; but when the doctrines of

Digitized by Google

the gospel are accompanied with the special influences of the holy Spirit, then it becomes the power of God in the conversion of the sinner. Hence, the reading and preaching of the word is appointed by God, as the means by which he conveys light and truth, and divine communications to the heart. And it is probable, this efficacy of the Spirit attending the word, is the idea the Apostle would communicate, when he calls it the "sincere "milk" thereof. The word sets spiritual objects before the mind, and the Spirit in the word influences the heart to exercises and actions correspondent to these views. Thus it is abundantly affirmed in the sacred pages, that the word is instrumental or employed as a mean in this business. This is one reason why it is spread, and strict orders given why it should be preached to every creature. Besides the plain declaration in our text, we are informed, that christians are "born again, not of corruptible "seed, but of incorruptible by the word of God which liveth and "abideth forever." And elsewhere, "Of his own will begat he "us by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits "of his creatures." And our Saviour says, "Sanctify them by "thy truth, for thy word is truth." Thus it appears, in what manner the word is instrumental in the conversion and sanctification of the soul. Regeneration, when accurately and distinctly considered, is a spiritual principle—conversion is a spiritual motion, or this principle in exercise. In regeneration, a power to turn to God is given—in conversion, there is an actual turning to him.

But it is time I should close the subject with a few arguments or motives to induce us to become converted.

Arguments here may be drawn from every consideration of duty and interest, from heaven and hell, from compleat joy and perfect misery, from time and from eternity.

Those who have never attended to, or experienced this matter, if you thus continue, you know you must perish. Those who

Digitized by Google

turn not, eternal death must be their portion. The certainty of this issue you have heard demonstrated both from the nature of things, and the immutable constitution of heaven. Will you then, O sinners, venture upon foreseen destruction, and boldly leap into the burning furnace? Be entreated for God's sake to pause, and advise with yourselves upon an affair of such tremendous consequence. If you will proceed on against the light of your understandings, the convictions of your own judgments, and the warnings and remonstrances of heaven, will you not be altogether inexcusable? Must not your mouths be forever stopt? You must eternally take complaint upon yourselves, and in the depths of the keenest torment, acquit the throne of God.

Surely it is a great duty to turn from sin to God. Reason, revelation, and your own consciences, declare it to be your indispensable duty. And are you so determinately obstinate as to resist all this mighty force? Your interest, your highest interest; the interest, the salvation of your immortal souls, demand this of you. If you turn, if you become converted, you shall live, greatly live, in the blissful regions of eternal felicity. Remember what our Lord says in regard to the value of the never dying soul, "What is a man profited if he should gain the whole world "and lose his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for "his soul?"

The acquisition of heaven, and the avoidance of hell, are arguments of the weightiest consideration. But these have been so often urged upon you, that your minds are become quite callous, so that they pass away like the ship that furrows the ocean, and leaves not a trace behind. But remember, O my fellow mortals, however lightly you esteem them, they are awful realities. Remember that perfect and interminable joy attends your turning; and if you turn not, compleat, endless, and unremitting misery will be your destiny. Would you have real and substantial comfort in this life, supporting hope in death, and ever-

Digitized by Google

lasting felicity in a future state of existence, it is absolutely necessary you should become converted. The old adage is, you must turn or burn forever. All these motives ought to fall with a combined and irresistable force upon every mind? Will the most powerful addresses, and pressing exhortations, produce no effect?

Consider, my hearers, all heaven and hell are engaged about your souls. God, and Christ, and the holy Angels for the salvation of them; Belzebub, with all his infernal aids, for their destruction. And shall man, thoughtless man, the most deeply interested of any, be the most indifferent and unconcerned? O foolish and stupid man, when wilt thou awake to consideration? God is calling upon you by his word and by his providence;—Christ is standing at the door of your hearts crying, "Behold I "stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice, and "open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him and he "with me." The Holy Ghost is calling upon you, Angels are calling upon you, all the church in heaven, and all the church on earth, are calling upon you. "The Spirit and the bride say, "come, and let him that heareth say, come, and let him that is "a thirst come, and whoever will, let him take the water of life "freely." Must not the heart be harder than the nether millstone, that can resist all this tenderness, compassion, and love of heaven. The subject I leave with you, in this one commandment of the precious Saviour, "Awake thou that sleepest and "arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light."

Digitized by Google

SERMON XXV.

THE PUTTING OFF THE OLD MAN.

EPHESIANS IV. 22.

That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.

THE whole system of doctrine, taught us in the bible, taken in one collective view, appears perfectly calculated to promote holiness, and destroy sin; to advance the declarative glory of God, and reclaim a revolted world. It reveals the plan of consistency in the divine perfections, government and laws, in the recovery of lost man, his sanctification, pardon, justification, and restoration to the favor and enjoyment of his God. This is plainly manifested throughout the whole in every precept, direction, warning, rebuke, counsel and exhortation. It is without blemish or deficiency, all glorious, excellent, and perfect. Any one, unable to see the holy harmony and consistency of all the parts, may be assured, it arises from no imperfection in the oracles of eternal life, but from his own ignorance, the darkness of his understanding, the blindness of his mind, and the moral corruption of his heart. The whole is one perfectly regular and glorious scheme, exhibiting the infinite wisdom, mercy, and wonders of its author, so that every line is beautiful, and every text shines with a divine lustre.

Digitized by Google

Among the various distributions of the whole, this epistle displays peculiar splendor. The city Ephesus, the metropolis of the proconsular Asia, was remarkable for one of the wonders of the world, the place of the celebrated temple of Diana. The inhabitants, at this time, were famed throughout the world, for wisdom, learning and philosophy—yet their infamy for magical arts, lasciviousness and idolatry, was of equal extent. Yet, among a people of such a strange, unpromising, and inconsistent character, sovereign grace raised a church, by the ministry of our Apostle. After this, St. Paul became a prisoner at Rome, from whence he wrote this epistle to them, to warn them against backsliding into their former heathenish customs, to guard them against the infection of evil seducers, and to confirm them in the faith which he had preached, and they had received.

In this chapter, he exhorts to love, unity and concord, to purity of heart, and holiness of life, as the best adapted means for the conversion of the heathen, and to check the progress of the Gnosticks, a new fangled sect of christians, just sprung up, not to convert the Pagans, but pervert the christians from the doctrines and ordinances of the Apostles. The doctrine of these new teachers was, to relinquish the Apostles, the forms and principles taught by them, assume a new cloak, put on another profession, and become their followers. But our Apostle steadily exhorts the christians to seek after more converting grace, and to be diligent in making progress in holiness. Hence, does he say, in contravention of wicked men, and deluded proselyting christians, "Put off concerning the former conversation, the old "man which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts." As if he had said, return not to paganism, beware of these straggling, party making christians, but do you press after greater degrees of gospel purity, and greater measures of an holy conversation.

It may be here objected, as it undoubtedly was by the pagans and false christians, that this counsel was vain, impertinent, and inconsistent; had they not put off the old man, when they were

Digitized by Google

first converted? Had they not been renewed in the spirit of their minds, and put on the new man? Had not this same Apostle declared to the Collosian christians, "Ye *have* put off the old "man with his deeds." To this it may be easily answered: Though christianity has a beginning in the soul, yet at first it is not compleat, but must move forward and make progress, until it shall arrive at perfection. In regeneration, sin receives a mortal wound—but still there are many corruptions to subdue, and much of the old man to be put off. St. Peter, though a real convert, yet he was exhorted, "when he should be converted, he "should strengthen his brethren." The exercises of conversion are to be frequently revived in the soul, and he is habitually to be "putting off concerning the former conversation the old man, "which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and to be re- "newed in the spirit of their minds, and to put on the new man "which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

All professors, who do not feel this obligation, and sincerely endeavour to conform to it in practice, will surely meet with *final* condemnation. The indispensable duty of the christian is, to be perseveringly and habitually putting off the old man.

Our attention shall be to consider the figurative language of this text; and for this purpose, to show,

First, What is meant by the old man, which concerning the former conversation is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts.

Secondly, That all are under unchangeable obligations to reject it, or put it off.

First, We are to attempt a developement of the metaphor, the old man, which concerning the former conversation is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts.

If we carefully compare one passage of scripture with another respecting this phrase, we shall come to this decision, that by

Digitized by Google

"old man" is meant, the whole mass of moral corruption in its principles and fruits, which dwells in, and flows from the human heart, in its present state of degeneracy and imperfection. On the other hand, those new and spiritual principles which the soul receives in regeneration, illumination and conversion, and the fruits which they produce, are called the new man, the inner man, and the hidden man of the heart. St. Paul often personifies both sin and holiness. In figurative language, he represents sin as a person, and as a body—and particular acts of sin, as members of this person, and parts of this body. Hence he ascribes to sin, motion and action—life and death; and speaks of sin as if it were really another person distinct from himself.—Therefore, he says, "Sin taking occasion by the commandment, "wrought in me all manner of concupisence." Moreover he says, "Sin deceived him, wrought death in him, slew him," &c. Thus, by an usual figure, easily understood, he personifies sin, and holds it forth to view as an intelligent, designing, subtle and active agent. So he stiles the mass of depravity in human nature a body, "the body of sin, body of death, the body of the "sins of the flesh," &c. And as a body is constituted of members, so our Apostle conducts his figures by the most perfect rules of criticism and propriety. Hence, he proceeds, saying, "Mor-"tify your members which are upon the earth, fornication, un-"cleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupisence, and covet-"ousness which is idolatry." Here we see the person and body of sin, and its activities in all manner of iniquity. Thus, by old man, is intended sin, in its fountain, and in all its streams.

Let it be here observed, that by the old man, is not meant the natural powers and faculties of the soul, but in an abstract way, the moral corruption and depravity of these powers. It is no where prescribed as a person's duty, to put off, crucify, destroy, and slay his natural faculties; this could not be done without the demolition of his existence, which is placed far beyond his power. But the person and body of sin, the old man in our text, he is

Digitized by Google

to have no mercy upon, or compassion for, but to mortify, crucify, slay, and destroy to the utmost extent of his abilities. This is what he is to put off, and cast away with abhorrence, as an old and filthy garment.

This mass of defilement and pollution, is designated under the figure of an old man, and undoubtedly it is so described from its antiquity, as other old things are. It is as old as our existence. "We were shapen in sin, and brought forth in iniquity. That "which is born of the flesh is flesh," unclean and defiled.

It is old, not becasue it is co-eval with our natures, but because it existed long before we had a being; it is co-existent with our original progenitor, from whom we derived it, and by whom it was propagated with all his posterity, even to the present day.

This old man is said to be corrupt, and if not injured and wounded by divine grace, it proceeds from bad to worse, and its tendency is to perfect destruction. It is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, or according to the lustings of error and mistake, as the words might be rendered. This old man, according to its subtlety and corruption, this body of sin, according to the infusion of malignant evil into its members, hurries on the impetuous propensities to irretrievable ruin. It offers happiness, but the reward is misery; pleasure, but its compensation is pain; delight, but its issue is torment. It persuades to happiness and consolation, but its end is eternal woe.

This is the old man, the Apostle informs these Ephesian christians, discovered itself in their former conversation. It appeared in the evil imagination of their hearts, and in the wickedness of their practice: "Whilst their understandings were darkened, "being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance "that was in them." This manifested itself in their former conduct and conversation, displayed itself by its deceitful lusts, in its turpitude and pollution, and there is no truce, compromise, or peace to be made with it; it must be wholly abandoned, en-

Digitized by Google

tirely put off. This base old man, this body of sin and death, cannot be mended or made better—it is beyond all reformation—it must be slain and destroyed, or it will infallibly slay and utterly destroy the sinner. To lop off some of the members of this corrupted body, will not answer the purpose; it is not complying with gospel orders, while we save the body alive, we only deceive ourselves. It is the height of folly and madness to think of repairing that which is perfect corruption, or mending that which is nothing but sin. It is absolutely impossible to change the nature of sin—and the imagination is vain, to attempt to make it better. Dress it and alter its appearance into whatever form the deceivings of the heart can devise, it is sin still, and its tendency the same. Hence, to say, we must reform the old man, and not destroy it, is the same as to declare, we must not hurt the Amalekites, nor injure Agag their king; we must not comply with the precepts of the gospel, but follow our own deceitful imaginations. Those who argue against the old man, the body of sin, being destroyed, surely contradict the whole current of sacred direction, and proclaim open enmity against God and his institutions, which every where declare it must be mortified, put to death, slain, or put off. They are for preserving what God commands to be subdued, crucified and destroyed. "Mortify "your members which are upon the earth; crucify the flesh with "the affections and lusts; our old man is crucified with Christ, "that the body of sin might be destroyed. Put off concerning "the former conversation, the old man which is corrupt, accord-"ing to the deceitful lusts."

I proceed to show,

Secondly, That all are under unchangeable obligations to reject, or put off the old man, as above described.

This will appear from the natural relation creatures sustain to their Creator. Every possible consideration obliges them to love and serve the most High. Those who truly love God, comply

Digitized by Google

with the exhortation in the text. They have begun to put off the body of sin. The old man received a mortal wound, when this love was first kindled in their breasts. And as this love encreases, sin decays. They are faithfully giving their endeavor to mortify all its members. They are crucifying, slaying, and destroying the affections and lusts of the flesh. In them old things are passed and passing away, and all things are becoming new. As this is the case with the people of God, so it ought to be the case with all. Many are ready to suppose, because they do not make what is called a profession of religion, they may indulge themselves in sin, and yet escape with impunity. How vain will their delusive dreams appear, when they shall awake and find, by tormenting experience, "The wrath of God revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." God is an object infinitely worthy of the love and obedience of all intelligent creatures. He is transcendantly amiable—therefore, ought to be loved and admired. He is the supreme good—therefore, ought to be principally sought. That God is not loved with a perfect affection, arises from no blemish or defect in him, but from the corruption of the heart, and its deceitful lusts. The fault is wholly in the creature. It will remain an everlasting axiom, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and him only shalt thou serve."

All who hear the sound of the gospel, are under indispensable obligations to repent of sin, and believe in Jesus Christ. This is the high command of heaven. An epitome of the bible is, "Repent and believe the gospel. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." Those who will not listen to the declarations of the gospel, refuse to put off the old man, and to mortify their corruptions. Every believer in Christ, is crucified with him. And this crucifixion consists in the destruction of the old man with his lusts. Those who will not put off their former corrupt conversation, must be banished from the presence of God, and the glory of his

Digitized by Google

power. The vials of divine wrath will be eternally poured out upon them. They shall be shut up in darkness, thick darkness, that may be felt, where the smoke of their torment will ascend forever and ever.

None can be exempted from the obligation of being conformed to God in holiness. The command of heaven is, "Be ye holy as "I am holy." It is an affecting reflection, that even true christians are very imperfect, and are only sanctified in part. It is true, they ought to rejoice in the grace of God, yet they ought also daily to mourn over the residue of their corruptions. Though none are perfect in this life, yet perfection ought to be the object of the most vigorous pursuit of all.

The old man, the body of sin, with all its corrupt members and deceitful lusts, stand in force, in direct opposition to every thing that is holy and righteous; they cannot yield to God, or submit to his goverment; therefore, they will destroy, or they must be destroyed. All the friends of Jehovah, are under the highest possible obligations from the divine perfections, from the divine law and government, from the nature of things, from their duty and interest, from their baptismal vows, from their enjoyment of the light of the gospel, from all their immunities, priviledges and advantages, from their hopes in time and eternity, "To put "off the old man which is corrupt, according to the deceitful "lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of their minds, and to put "on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness "and true holiness."

A few observations, in the way of improvement, must close this discourse.

First, A plain observation offers itself to view from the preceding doctrine, that the heart of man is exceedingly depraved, and altogether disposed to evil. By reason of this inherent and dreadful sinfulness, all men are by nature the children of wrath. And it is this awful frame of mind, temper and disposition, to-

Digitized by Google

gether with the issues of the same, which constitute the old man, with all his concomitant corruptions. Thus every imagination of man's heart is only evil, and that continually. It is not said, some imaginations and thoughts are of this sort, but this is the character of each and every one of them. No good operations of mind, no good principles, no holy tempers in men by nature; all is evil and wrong; there is none that doth good, no, not one. Therefore, the apostolic counsels are of unchangeable verity. This guilty frame of heart, this base disposition of soul, this ungodly practice, must be relinquished and laid aside. "The old "man must be put off;" the old principles, the old tempers and biasses; the old enmity to God and his law; all these must be cast off as old and filthy garments. Other principles, frames, tempers, and practises must be assumed or put on, directly the reverse of the former. His conversation must be changed, his corruptions abandoned, and his lusts in all their tortuous deceivings, must be mortified and renounced. When this change takes place, he becomes a new creature.

Secondly, We observe upon this doctrine, that all the children of Adam must be regenerated, must be born again and converted, in order to be partakers of eternal felicity. Nothing that is unclean or defileth, can pass through the gates of the holy city, or enter into the new Jerusalem. Therefore, the old man, which is the unmixed mass of moral corruption, must be put off, and the new man put on, which is precisely the same idea with being converted and sanctified. Hence the whole of this alteration or renovation, is described in the verse succeeding our text, by "being renewed in the spirit of our minds." All who are thus altered in heart, conduct and conversation, are declared, "To "have put off the old man with his deeds, and to have put on the "new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of "him, that created him."

This change is so great and remarkable in its origin and effects,

Digitized by Google

that it may certainly be known. To affirm that the precise time, particular place, and beginning of it can be ascertained by all, has long been discarded by the church, as proving many times delusion and absurdity. Some instances of this kind may take place, as in the conversion of St. Paul, the jailor, and a few others. Yet this is never laid down in the scriptures as a mark or evidence by which christians are to examine themselves, or try the reality of their experiences; therefore, never ought to be employed as a standard for private or public purposes. Notwithstanding, this change may be known, as the tree is, by its fruits. When the old man is dethroned, and the new man elevated to his place, new and different effects will proceed therefrom. Hence we are commanded, "To give all diligence to make our calling and elec-"tion sure. Know you not your ownselves," says St. Paul to the Corinthians, "how that Christ Jesus is in you, except ye be "reprobates?"

Thirdly, We observe, that this subject ought to lead us into a serious examination of our hearts and lives. We should call our former and latter experiences with the habitual tenor of our conversation, to the test of divine truth. As by this we shall be judged, so by this we ought to try ourselves. Let us, in the presence of the heart searching God, ask ourselves, whether we have put off the old man, which concerning the former conversation is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts? Are we putting off the body of sin and death? Are we crucifying the flesh with the lusts and affections thereof? Have you put off the old enmity to God, his law, and government? discharged the old carnal mind, and forsaken your former conversation? Have we relinquished our former carelessness, indifference, coldness and backwardness to that which is good? Are we carrying on war against our deceitful lusts, corrupt affections, and perverse propensities? Are we putting on the new man, and striving after conformity to God? Is our path of righteousness, shining more and more to our consolation? Do we behold more of the glories of God,

Digitized by Google

the excellencies of Christ Jesus, and the beauties of holiness? Is the practice of prayer, the public worship, and the private duties of devotion more pleasing and delightful to us? Are we growing in knowledge, holy tenderness, affection, and every virtue and grace?

Those who can answer to these things in the affirmative, what reason have you for joy, and praise, and gratitude? While you rejoice in the wonders of divine and glorious grace, mourn daily over your failings, infirmities and remaining corruptions; press forward after greater measures of holy purity; seek higher attainments in experimental religion; and proceed on in every duty, and hasten along the narrow way which leads to eternal life.

Allow me to close the subject in a brief address to those who know they have not put off the old man, but are still under the power and dominion of sin, walking in your former conversation, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.—How long, O ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? When will the blessed time come, that ye will awake from your delusive slumbers? O that God would sound the awakening alarm in your ears, so that your souls might be filled with the solicitous concern, to know what you shall do to be saved.

Remember, if you will not now hear, the day is fast approaching when your fears will be aroused, and you will cry in tormenting anxiety, to the rocks and to the mountains to fall on you, and crush you out of existence, or hide you from the face of the Lamb. God is calling, but ye are refusing; he is stretching out the hand of mercy, but ye are not regarding it. O sinners, be persuaded to hear before it be too late. Seek God while he may be found. Let this text be written as with a point of a diamond upon your hearts. "Put ye off concerning the former conversation, the old man which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts."

Digitized by Google

SERMON XXVI.

EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE.

Acts xvii. 30.

And the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent.

REPENTANCE is a doctrine abundantly taught in the sacred oracles. It is ever exhibited as of the utmost importance. It is an absolutely necessary pre-requisite in every sinner, in order to his obtaining pardon and acceptance with God. Notwithstanding the atonement of Christ Jesus, the satisfaction he made by his obedience and sufferings to the law and justice of the great Supreme, by the constitution of the gospel, none can be saved, but in the way of repentance. The gospel offers no salvation for impenitent sinners more than the law. Two parties have been often affirming either implicitly or explicitly, that true penitents may be saved without an atonement, and impenitents by it.—Both these doctrines are unknown in the system of revelation, and irreconcileable with the nature of things. The former abhors a heavenly revelation, asserting that repentance is a proper and sufficient satisfaction for sin, and it would be unworthy of God to require or institute any thing besides. This is the fundamental principle of the best of all the deistic tribe. If penitents can arrive at happiness in this way, then the salvation of the gospel is

Digitized by Google

the fiction of priests; the humiliation and death of Christ, the absurdity of ignorant ages; and all the learning of the christian world is foolishness. For the scriptures grant, if such a plan could have been obtained, it would certainly have been established. "If there could have been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law, but "the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by "the faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." Christians and believers, deists and infidels, hold perfectly opposite creeds; the former is true—therefore, the latter, with its contrivers, sink into perdition.

Yet there is a great sect of christians, which is no small handle to the deists, who affirm that impenitents will be saved by the atonement. These believe in eternal justification, that they were selected and saved by an eternal decree. All terms and conditions are by them secluded from divine prescience, and their conversion consists of an impression on their minds of their eternal election; and this is the great source of their comfort, hope and joy. For perhaps no party of christians have more joy than the antinomians; and surely none, (delusion and error excepted) can have less reason for it. They rejoice upon fancy—the orthodox christian, on evidence. Many good people, their feelings, hopes, and wishes have run into this system, rather than their experiences and understanding. Hence an apology ought to be made for a thousand names, which have arrived at salvation, while their erroneous doctrine have been the means of plunging tens of thousands into eternal ruin. The plain doctrine of the gospel is, that an impenitent cannot be saved at all, in any way whatsoever; and that there can be no penitents, nor salvation for penitents, only on the system of grace and divine influences in the gospel. Now, if there can be salvation for penitents without an atonement, and salvation for impenitents by the atonement, both these schemes seem to set aside the system of divine revelation. I readily grant that the former does it openly and

Digitized by Google

compleatly, while the latter effects the same purpose, and arrives at the same end, in a more covert and clandestine way.—Would we be penitents and christians according to the scriptures, we must relinquish both the deistic and antinomian system, and bow in faith to the simple revelation of God. That without repentance, and faith in the atonement, and a compleat change of heart, life and manners, there is no rational foundation to hope for felicity, according to the scriptures. "Except ye repent, ye "must perish; except he believe, all that is contained in being "damned, must be your fate." Hence repentance, faith, conversion, and holy living is universally inculcated upon us in the bible, as absolutely necessary to eternal life. All these arguments plainly show, that pardon for a penitent without an atonement, and pardon for an impenitent by an atonement, are equally impossible for God, and in the nature of things. Hence, all must repent, be converted and reduced to gospel holiness, that their sins may be blotted out. Thus true penitents, real converts and holy livers, according to the gospel, can be heirs of eternal felicity. The whole gospel proceeds on this foundation, that without a perfect vindication of the divine perfections, and a full satisfaction to the divine law, to render all consistent and glorious, no possibility of salvation either for the penitent or impenitent. Can reason say that penitence can satisfy for offences against God, when the laws of all ages and nations have declared that it is no satisfaction for offences against men? Is man of greater dignity than his Maker; the laws of man of higher obligation than the laws of God? The traitor and the murderer, whatever his contrition, repentance, reformation, confession, and supplication for forgiveness may be, there is no mercy in the law or breast of a temporal judge—he must die. Yet the laws of heaven are easily superceded by the ignorant and foolish imaginations of silly and depraved man; and when he cannot resist the evidence of divine revelation, his blindness, madness, and corruption hurry him to an opposite and equally fatal extreme; that the mercy of God, in the atonement of Christ, is all and every

Digitized by Google

thing; and to believe this we are safe, without scripture, sense or reason, as one expresses it—without a regard to the law, or understanding the gospel, without repentance and without reformation, only maintain a strong faith in eternal justification; believe Christ is yours, and you are Christ's, that you are good, and you are good. God forbid, that my charity should be so contracted, as not to extend to many of the Antinomians. The errors of the head ought to be excused, where holiness of heart, and godliness of life, demonstrate a conformity to the precious gospel.

St. Paul, agreeably to his commission, goes to the Gentiles, to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, to preach to them repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, opens to these learned, infidel Athenians, a new and strange philosophy, the doctrine of evangelical repentance. A doctrine of which, in all the extent of their reading and study, they had never heard. Athens, at this time, was the college, or university of all the learning of the world. The Romans had only imbibed a few drops from this fountain. It was the grand seat of philosophy, literature, civil liberty, and theology. The Epicureans and Stoics, were the heads and leaders of two great sects. Each party had a multitude of followers. They heard a new teacher had come to their city, and his popularity had gained the attention of all parties. They rushed in crouds to hear this new philosopher; they cried in the way, some that he was a babler, and others that he was a setter forth of new Gods. A new God, among the Athenians, was then captivating—like a new religion among modern christians. When all the philosophers, senators, and crouds of ignorants, whom common fame had hurried round the Apostle, his great genius, by the Spirit of God, suggested a theme, which immediately commanded the attention of all orders. The theme had long been before them, and the explication of it had exceeded all the learning of their philosophers. Perhaps they had evaded the investigation of it by a

Digitized by Google

variety of flourishes, excuses and apologies, as multitudes of the *literati* in modern times do, when they would avoid labour and study, and perhaps some impertinence.

In this situation, our learned Apostle, to the astonishment of all around him, assumes this wonderful theme. He was now in the grandest assembly in the universe, in the great court of Areopagus, interrogated by the nobles of the nation, what was the meaning of his new doctrines, for he had brought strange things to their ears. Pause a moment, and behold the dignity, humility, meekness, and self-possession, and self-recollection of this great christian. He stood on an eminence on Mar's hill, and said, "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things, ye are "too superstitions. I passed by and beheld your devotions, and "found an alter with this inscription, *to the unknown God.*"— This object of your ignorant worship, I am well acquainted with, and it is the business and happiness of my life to preach him to mankind. Therefore, he taught these pedantic Athenians, the character of this unknown God; how he was the creator and preserver of all things—had made all nations of one blood, and therefore, all ought to love, worship and serve him. By quotations from their own writers, of distinguishing vogue among them, he proves that men were the offspring of God. Hence he infers, that the "Godhead is not like gold, or silver, or stone graven by art "or man's device." And the application of his doctrine he makes in the words of our text: "The times of this ignorance God "winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to re-"pent." It is not to be supposed by God's winking at the idolatry, superstition, and wickedness of the Athenians, that he did not notice their conduct as an evil and hateful thing, but only that his long suffering and patience had borne with their outrageous abominations, for which strict justice might have banished them to eternal misery. By his suffering with their iniquities, he illustrated his mercy and goodness, and his designs of salvation towards them. His winking at those times of ignorance, evi-

Digitized by Google

dently meant his bearing with them, and so far overlooking their crimes, that an opportunity might be granted for the gospel to be preached among them, and that they should be called to repentance. Wherefore, the glorious God, who gives life and breath to all, suspends his wrath, and gives them space for repentance, enjoins it by all his divine authority upon all the children of men to repent, change their minds and ways, and return to his favor and service by faith in Christ, of whom he hath given assurance to all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. The phrase *winked at*, is not a very serious and religious expression in our times, yet it was once a very sober and pious one. Indulge me in the declaration of this fact, in favor of the translators of our bible, that they never allowed themselves in the use of any terms either fanciful or ridiculous. Living languages are always changing; therefore, by this mutation, many phrases in the bible appear to the ignorant and unlearned, some base, some low and mean, and a few wearing the appearance of levity and ridiculousness. From these incidents, modern infidels, unacquainted with the original languages, and more unread in, and unpardonably ignorant of their own tongue two hundred years back, have been pouring forth their foolish collections upon the present and infatuated age. Were it not from the ignorance of christians, carried away by these torrents of folly, they should have been dropt, and passed by, in their native gulf of infidelity, to which they belong.

Repentance is a gospel doctrine, and to this the believers and friends of the christian revelation ought to attend. Repentance appears to be an essential article of this system; and if we wish for the salvation of the gospel, it must be of the highest consequence to us, to consider its nature, its exercises, evidences and effects. If we believe revelation, surely it is a cardinal doctrine therein.

There are three kinds of repentance often mentioned in the sacred oracles. A repentance ascribed to God; a repentance of

Digitized by Google

wicked men who remain unreformed; and a repentance which is said to be unto life, which is commonly stiled evangelical or saving repentance.

Repentance is often attributed to the Supreme Being in the scriptures. But this must be ever understood and explained in consistency with his infinite and immutable nature. Thus we read, "God repented that he had made man on the earth; he repented that he had made Saul king over his people." And thus repentance is ascribed to God in various places. And there is one expression of an extraordinary nature, "That he repented according to the multitude of his mercies." It is impossible when repentance is attributed to Jehovah, that any event should take place out of the reach of his prescience. To suppose any futurity not in his comprehension, is atheism. As good have no God, as not to feel and acknowledge a God, before whom all things past and future are not equally present with the momentary occurrences. The God in whom christians believe, is unchangeable; no additions can be made to his knowledge, nor can it be diminished. "He is the Lord, who changes not." Yet, notwithstanding all this, repentance is ascribed to him. All the passions of the human nature, all the feelings and various affections, all the members of the human body, eyes, ears, hands, feet, &c. are attributed to him. Yet all these matters are fully understood, even by the most feeble and ignorant christians, in perfect consistency with all the divine perfections. They know it expresses none of the regret, relentings, sorrows, or changings of mind, proper to mortals. The whole that is intended by all these things, is only a variation in the aspects of his providential dispensations towards his rational creatures, who are sinners.—He never repented towards angels or devils. All these strange declarations respect guilty man. And the whole must be understood in the view of the grand plan of the illustration of the Godhead, in the salvation of our fallen world. God never felt sorrow, anguish or distress, as man doth for sin. He changes the

Digitized by Google

goings of his providence towards them, his threatenings and promises; after declarations of mercy, he sends destruction upon them for their iniquities; upon their humiliation and reformation, instead of visitation of wrath, he grants them a reprieve and many blessings, as in the case of Nineveh and many others. Thus repentance ascribed to God, implies no grief or change in him, only a variation and alteration in his providential dispensations, towards his sinful creatures, according to their mutable conduct, all which were under his prescience and direction.

We also read of a repentance of wicked men, who remained unreformed. It is storied of Ahab, "that he did evil above all "before him. Did more to provoke the Lord than all the kings. "There was none like Ahab who did sell himself, to work wick-"edness in the sight of the Lord." Yet this man, superior in iniquity, "came to his house heavy and displeased. He humbled "himself before God." He relented, regretted, and repented his unhappy conduct. But all his sorrow and repentance, produced no real amendment either of heart or life. So Judas "re-"pented of what he had done;" but this repentance, instead of reformation, drove him to despair, and he went and hanged himself. This is what is usually termed *legal repentance*. Multitudes are the subjects of this repentance, who never become better. Most of people under the gospel, though they have some twinges of conscience, regret about their state, and remorse for their sins, never become truly reformed. They may amend for a while, like Pharaoh, Ahab and others, yet they relapse to hardness of heart, and to their former evil courses.

There is also another species of repentance, essentially different from this, stiled a repentance unto life, a repentance which stands connected with eternal salvation. If we can learn and experience this repentance, then we shall not perish, but be reinstated in the favor of God, and made the subjects of everlasting felicity. Were I to give a brief description of this repen-

Digitized by Google

ance, it may be done in some such words as these. "It is a true, "sincere, and sorrowful sense of our sins, in a view of the holi- "ness of God, the rectitude of his government and the perfec- "tion of his law." This repentance will always be accompanied with a cordial acquiescence in the gospel, and followed by an effectual reformation of life and manners. And by these marks it will be known and distinguished from all transient, temporary and legal repentances.

Saving repentance is a true, sincere, and sorrowful sense of our sins. We begin to see, and feel towards sin in some measure as we ought. The sinner views himself as loathsome, hateful, and hell deserving. He contemplates sin as the most odious and vile thing in the universe. Acknowledges himself unspeakably vile, and altogether to blame; he acquits the throne of God; justifies his justice; and vindicates the divine law as holy, perfect and good. In this view of sin, under apprehensions of the glory of God, and the transcendant amiableness of his moral government, he abhors himself, the baseness of his heart, and the disorders of his life, and repents in bitterness of soul. He is filled with regret and sorrow, bemoans himself, and mourns in secret places. As a man beholds his natural face in a glass, so the deformity, evil and turpitude of sin is discovered by the divine law; "For by the law is the knowledge of sin." Hence the sinner feels ashamed before God; ashamed not only for his gross acts of impiety; but also for the very temper, disposition and propensities of his heart. Therefore, "it is by the law that sin "becomes exceeding sinful." In this way the sinner is effectually emptied of all conceit of his own goodness and righteousness. He is disposed from the heart to renounce his iniquities, and discard all hopes of acceptance with God by any possible performances of his own. He now with Job, abhors himself; with the Psalmist, acknowledges that he is as a beast before God; with Augur, that he is more brutish than any man, and that he has not the understanding of a man; and his only cry is that of the Publican, "God be merciful to me as a sinner."

Digitized by Google

It is time to close this discourse at present, with a remark or two. It shall again be resumed, if divine Providence affords opportunity.

First, We remark, it must be presumptuous madness in sinners, to expect the remission of their sins, while they continue impenitent, and their hearts full of opposition to God, and disaffection to his law and government. The divine decree is, "He "that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth "and forsaketh them shall find mercy." While the soul is impenitent and hardened in iniquity, it feels no want of pardon.—He is safe and satisfied with himself. To offer him pardon for crimes, is to offer him insult, and awaken his resentment; therefore, the grace and forgivness of the gospel is universally rejected by impenitent sinners. Hence it comes to pass, that the gospel is generally considered as a light thing; to some it is foolishness, and to others a stumbling block. Such a weak and foolish presumption, that in impenitence we may be forgiven, contradicts reason and nature, as well as the most explicit declarations of heaven. Pardon is the consequence of evangelical repentance, but never precedes or takes place without it. Hence the commandment extends to all men every where to repent. "And ex-"cept we repent, we must all likewise perish."

Secondly, We remark, there are many things in the christian world, which bear the resemblance of repentance, in which there is no saving grace. Pharaoh repented often; Saul repented once and again; Esau repented and sought the blessing with tears and bitter lamentations. Felix trembled; and Simon Magus, filled with horror, besought the prayers of the Apostles. All these, and a thousand other similar cases, should direct us to a frequent examination of ourselves. We should often be reviewing our experiences, and enquiring into the nature of our repentance. Remember it is not a temporary and transient sorrow will prove it to be genuine. It must be founded in proper views of God, of his law, of sin and our own character. Many a sorrow-

Digitized by Google

ful tear has been shed, many a bitter feeling, and much anguish of heart experienced, through fear of punishment, and by reason of the dread and horror of the consequences of transgression, when there never were any views of the evil, odiousness, or awful nature of sin considered in itself. When we contemplate the deluge, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the death of the first born of the great nation of Egypt in a night, the perishing of Senacharib's mighty host, the sacking of Babylon, Jerusalem, &c. our souls start back upon themselves with horror; they mourn, they weep, but all this is no repentance.—Let us beware, lest our imaginary and penitential exercises be founded in the mere fears and horrors of punishment. This has been the case of multitudes, whose glooms of sorrow have passed off like the morning cloud, and their tears of distress have evaporated like the early dew. Take to yourselves and see that your repentance be that of God's people. Let it ever remain a deep and indeliable impression upon our minds, "That it is a "true, sincere, and sorrowful sense and feeling of our sins, in a "view of the holiness of God, the rectitude of his government, "and the perfection of his law, that lays the foundation, and "opens the source of true and evangelical repentance, or repent-"ance unto life."

Let the subject be closed in a short exhortation to those who have hope, that they have and do experience a gospel repentance. The counsel to you is, bring forth fruits meet for repentance. Herein God will be glorified, Christ honored, grace magnified, and your salvation sure. O let true penitents be careful to maintain works of righteousness, that the enemies of the gospel may have no cause to blaspheme, speak reproachfully of our holy religion, or harden themselves in their infidelity. Infidelity gains perhaps more from the ungodly lives of professed penitents, than from any other source. Her arguments would have little weight, did they not derive force from the wicked lives of christians. O let us watch and be sober, and all our conversation be as becometh christianity.

Digitized by Google

Finally, Those who feel in your own consequences, and are satisfied in your own sober judgment, that you are impenitent and under the condemnatory sentence of a broken law, be assured that your sins are unpardoned, that you are at present in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. Wherefore, the last call of heaven to you is, "Repent and be converted. Let the wicked "man forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, "and let him turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon "him; and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon." Repent and live. With regard to impenitents, reason and revelation declare their destruction.

Digitized by Google

SERMON XXVII.

THE DOCTRINE OF REPENTANCE FURTHER CONSIDERED.

LUKE XIII. 3.

I tell you nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

SUPERSTITION has in all ages, and among all denominations of men, pagans, jews and christians, a strange, and perhaps an unaccountable influence. Whether this originates from our nature, depravity, or some other cause, we shall not now tarry for a philosophical investigation. All people, of all religions, from the most ignorant to the most learned, have fallen into the opinion, that great calamities are sure tokens of atrocious wickedness. Thus, when St. Paul had escaped shipwreck and the dangers of the sea, and the hospitable barbarians had admitted them on their shore, and a fire was kindled for their comfort. Behold, an event of an extraordinary kind took place; a serpent flew from the burning sticks and fastened upon Paul's hand. The whole company was struck with horror and astonishment, and immediately united in the superstitious cry, "No doubt this man "is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet ven- "geance suffereth not to live." This was not a peculiar sentiment among these barbarous islanders, but it prevailed among the jews, and has been exceedingly predominant among christians.

Digitized by Google

Solomon, in ancient times, set himself to correct this superstition, and after pondering the matter in his mind, declares, "No man knoweth love and hatred by all that is before him: all "things come alike to all. There is one event to the righteous "and to the wicked, to the good and to the clean, and to the un- "clean; to him that sacrifiseth, and to him that sacrifiseth not; "This is an evil among all things under the sun; that there is "one event unto all."

This ought to have corrected this whole system, but still it remained in great vogue in our Saviour's time. Hence, some flew to him with the information, that an awful judgment had fallen upon certain Galileans. Perhaps, as he was a Galilean, they fondly imagined that he would take immediate vengeance for the lives of his countrymen. They seem to inform him in all the hurry of consternation, "That Pilate had mingled their blood with their "sacrifices;" that he had murdered them in the midst of their devotions. Behold the calmness and meekness of our Lord to all this clamor. "Jesus answering, said unto them, suppose ye "that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, be- "cause they suffered such things?" Seek not vengeance for the destruction of their persecutors, but rather amidst those direful events, attend to yourselves and your own salvation. These were not sinners above others, but only dreadful events arising into existence in the course of divine providence. Hence your duty and the improvement you should make of the awful calamity, should be a repentance of your sins, and a preparation for death, whether it comes suddenly and violently, or in the more usual and gradual way. "I tell you nay, but except ye repent, "ye shall all likewise perish."

In order to cure them of their ignorance of divine providence, and the folly of their superstitious notions in this matter, he produces another instance of unexpected and untimely death. An event in which wicked men had no hand, as in the case of the unhappy Galileans, therefore, in vain to seek for revenge. It

Digitized by Google

was perfectly an act of God. "Those eighteen on whom the "tower of Saloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were "sinners above all men that dwell in Jerusalem?" Our Lord declares both the one and the other, that which came by the instrumentality of persecuting men, and that which fell out by the immediate hand of heaven, was no evidence that the unhappy sufferers were distinguished sinners above their fellow men. Therefore, he repeats the same sentence, as an equal improvement to the living, of the latter as well as the former case. "I "tell you nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." This error, which Solomon and our Lord set themselves to correct, is still prevalent to this day. Sudden and dreadful calamities are still attributed by ignorant mortals and superstitious minds, to a supposition of superior iniquity. This is not a superstition incident to the lower grades of mankind, but you will often hear it bubbling from the ranks of better information.

Passing by these things, I proceed to lead your minds to a further attention to the important doctrine of evangelical repentance. You have heard a definition of it, and a concise delineation of the subject, as ascribed to God, to unreformed men, and to those to whom it will be finally beneficial.—Allow me to proceed in my description of evangelical or saving repentance, as it stands distinguished from all legal repentance in this world, and from all that takes place in the tormenting regret of the damned in hell, where repentance eternally reigns.

Repentance, according to the gospel, stands distinguished from all other exercises of that name in three things; its object —subject—and formal nature.

Evangelical or saving repentance, is essentially different from every thing that bears that name, in its object. The odiousness and dreadful nature of sin comes into view, under a discovery of the amiableness and excellency of God, and the holiness and perfection of the law. Here it may perhaps be said, three

Digitized by Google

objects are thrown into the view of the mind, God, and the law, and sin. But all these terminate in one. A man, beholding his face in a common mirror, may philosophically consider the glass, the opake body behind it, and a multitude of other things concurrent to the vision, but it is the reflection, his own picture is the great object. In nature he beholds it with pleasure or disgust, according to the trueness of the mirror and his own fancy.

The great object I would wish you to contemplate in the glass of the law and gospel, is your own hearts, and therein you will see no beauty, but deformity and odiousness, and hide your face from the view in the dark shades of shame, and under the black shrouds of mourning.

Evangelical repentance exalts itself in distinction, by the nature of its subject, from every thing that assumes and profanes the name. True repentance has its foundation in a renewed heart. This creates an essential difference between gospel and legal sorrow. It forms a specific difference between the exercises of the one and the other. The regret, relentings, and the feelings of the one are unto death; whereas the views, exercises and experiences of the other are life, and will issue in life eternal.

As the object and subject of evangelical repentance awakens views and exercises, different from many things of this description, so its formal nature draws a line of distinction of peculiar observation. The formal nature of gospel repentance consists in a heart felt sense of the odiousness and vileness of sin, its deformity and turpitude, so that the soul abhors itself, and repents in dust and ashes.

I shall now leave the more abstract considerations of this theme, and attend to the more common and experimental exercises of the concerned soul.

True repentance involves an hearty concern and distress of mind, and sorrow and anguish of heart, for transgressions of the

Digitized by Google

divine law, and a departure from God. It is not every concern that is repentance, nor every sorrow which is of godly sort. Many, by a few remonstrances of conscience, reflections of mind, some prayers and goings to church; Oh, what penitents they feel themselves; how reformed and exalted to the favor of God. And upon this flimsy ground, they hope they have passed through the whole process of conviction and conversion, while their exercises set them perhaps at a greater distance from true repentance, than when they began. These things may be stiled sorrow and mourning for sin, while they are only the anguish of a proud and unhumbled heart. A guilty conscience creates horror, pain and dreadful anxiety; but genuine repentance softens and melts the heart.

True repentance, passing by theoretic disquisitions, is an hearty concern and sorrow for sin as offensive to God, a transgression of the law, and ruinous to the soul. This, I conceive, a very simple description, reduced to the lowest experiences, and to the feeblest understanding. A minister, when he speaks plainly, must speak to the mind, experience, and conscience of the weak and unlearned; and surely the strong in mind, the learned and the self-sufficient great, where real ignorance of religion exceedingly abounds, dares not but understand.

Every one in these days of light, will readily acknowledge, it is not every concern, even on account of sin, that can denominate a person truly penitent, or constitute a penitential sorrow, which is, by divine constitution, connected with eternal life.—Poor proud mortals, ignorant, and the more ignorant pretenders to knowledge, if they have felt some small remonstrances of conscience, and a little remorse for having sinned, they directly conclude they have repented bitterly, are in favor with God, and none such penitents as they are. These unhappy and deluded creatures, will repent of their repentance, when death and eternity shall detect their fatal mistake. Be not deceived, my

Digitized by Google

brethrem; the mere apprehensions of a yawning gulf, with whatever terrors they may be accompanied, are not repentance. Crying Lord, Lord, when sinking to hell, can be of no avail.—What if your concern may be as deep as Cain's, as dreadful as Judas's, and as intolerable as Spira's, all this may be without gospel feelings and regret. Some, perhaps, may have experienced greater anguish, torment, terror and horror, than any thing true penitents can express. Lay down this as an axiom, delusive repentance is ever attended with pride, confidence and self-conceit; whereas the concomitants of a saving repentance are meekness, humility, and diffidence in regard to their experiences. Every general rule must admit exceptions. But your bold, forward, impudent and talking penitents, rarely turn out well—whereas your modest, diffident, backward and fearful penitents, often make good christians. The former are frequently plagues of the church, when the latter is its comfort, credit and joy. Therefore, the one may be called a genuine and secret mourning for sin; while the other is only a boasting show of horror, despair, and wild consolation.

The sorrow of true penitents is not confined to some acts of impiety, but extends to the very temper and spirit of their heart. He mourns for his disaffection to God, and his love of sin.—Seeming penitents, all their distress is for overt acts of transgression, and some external abominations. Alas! says the sincere penitent, has the blessed and glorious God been treated by me, a worm, a vile worm of the dust, with such unworthy neglect, and base contempt. Thus the exercise of true repentance are delineated in the scriptures: "They loath themselves, smite "upon the thigh, are ashamed, lift not up their faces, are con-"founded," &c.

Repentance involves in its nature, a new disposition to return to God, humbles himself in his presence, resigns himself into his hands, to be disposed of according to infinite wisdom, justice,

Digitized by Google

and goodness. However pungent the seeming sorrow may be for sin, if it does not imply such an alteration of mind, it is not genuine and evangelical. Real repentance is attended with an addictedness of spirit to please God and walk with him. It returns to God with fear and trembling, a relinquishment of all its past follies, and a resolution of heart to do no more so wickedly. A profession of religion is no more an external compliment or piece of solemn ceremony, but it is the expression of the internal feeling and sentiment of the heart. His language is, "O Lord, "I have sinned and rebelled against thee; I loath and abhor my- "self; but now I return to thee, bow down to thy will, and "I will in future make mention of thy name, and the remem- "brance of it forever."

The only things I can tarry to mark as evidences of gospel repentance, are these three. They have in a general measure been considered, and only a slight variation must suffice for the present. But even these will be a support and comfort to the attentive and recollecting christian.

In repentance, there opens a view of the wonders of God, mercy and grace; the holiness and beauty of the divine law and government, and the inexpressible deformity of sin. Once he viewed God as a dreadful, unjust and austere being. His mind, his conceptions are now altered, that every branch of the divine character is now reversed, that all God appears in a different light. He entertained before, a wrong and ill impression of God; had imbibed strong prejudices against his real character and his service. His feelings were that he was a tyrant, and his laws beyond the power of rational obedience. But repentance changes all his apprehensions of God and his whole administration. He is now all amiable and glorious; his laws the perfection of right government, and no threatened punishment is severe or unjust. Proper discoveries of God and his law, strike death into the soul. Under just convictions, it cries, "I am a dead man." Legal

Digitized by Google

repentance differs from evangelical, in its very essence; the latter is a turning from sin, under a discovery of the perfections of Jehovah, the holiness of his law, and the justice of its penalty; the former contains only some relentings for the dreadful consequences of sin.

The real penitent abhors sin, and forsakes it from a sense of its intrinsic evil and turpitude; the other, through fear and horror of its punitive evils and consequences. The former considers sin as the stain of his nature, the pollution and destruction of his immortal spirit; and breathings arise in his soul for victory over his corruptions, and to be restored to a conformity to God. Not so the false, deceived and partial penitent. His cry is, "Let me be delivered from hell and punishment; and O that "I may never lift up my eyes in torment."

The obvious characteristic difference between true and deceived penitents is, the one turns from sin, and abhors it because of its infinite vileness, and a respecful view of purity, righteousness and holiness; and the other, from a consideration of its tremendous and damning consequences. The plain fact is, the one hates sin—and the other, a dread is awakened in his mind, and fills his soul at the events.

Evangelical repentance dries not up the fountains of tears and distress, whereas legal repentance, like a land flood, soon runs by. The former is a flowing stream, arising from a source that lives—the other is without foundation, and whatever noise it may make, its bubbling is soon over. Real repentance is a spring of ingenuous sorrow, and nothing is heard but the strains, the tender strains of self condemnation. The bitterness of sin invigorates his grief, and fixes the resolution in his soul to maintain an everlasting war against sin.

The most learned lectures upon the nature, rebellion, ingratitude, and disaffection of sin, will never bring a sinner to true re-

Digitized by Google

pentance, reduce him to proper humiliation before God—but a spiritual illumination instantly fills him with shame and self-abhorrence. As the great commandment of the law is to love God with a supreme affection, so a sense of the vileness of disaffection to the divine character, in a peculiar manner, melts and dissolves the heart, into all the wailings of penetential woe.—Under a view of sin, in a loveliness of the divine perfections, St. Paul himself seems to be nonplussed for language to express the hatefulness, deformity and evil of sin. Hence, as nothing could be found in nature more odious than sin, all the universe can produce nothing more base, he is obliged to take his description from sin itself, and pronounce "sin to be exceeding sinful." All the modern phrases of vileness, odiousness, turpitude, and even the word infinite, which some appear fond of, in a new application, to exhibit its evil, the idea they give is feeble and weak in comparison of the Apostles. He derives his description from the nature of sin itself, that it is *exceeding*, or beyond all measure and conception *sinful*; it is such an hyperbolical evil, that all nature and language, in all their variant and exuberant illustrations, fail and sink into weakness in the description. How then can sinners sufficiently repent? All contrition and brokenness of heart is nothing. Some have supposed that if repentance could enter into heaven, eternity would be exhausted, before the sorrows of the saints could be expended.

Having given you a brief view of repentance, not as a matter of speculation, but of experience and practice, as a pre-requisite to the fruition of God, and eternal felicity. The reason of things, the nature of the relation between a sinful creature and its Creator, and the whole of divine revelation unite with irresistable force in the declaration of the absolute necessity of repentance, previous to their being participants of everlasting life.

The subject must conclude with a short examination of ourselves, interspersed with some suitable reflections and observations.

Digitized by Google

My dearly beloved brethren, and candidates for eternity, surely it can be no impertinent question from the sacred desk—Are we penitents before God, according to the gospel or not? Have we truly and sincerely repented of our sins? No man but has had some concern and reflections upon himself for pieces of misconduct; some twinges of conscience that gave him uneasy feelings. These and a thousand fears and anxieties may have taken place, and yet no true evangelical repentance. Your hearts may has been smitten, and perhaps, put beyond the enjoyment of yourselves for a time, but when this storm of convictions and distress have blown over, did you not find your dispositions, propensities and practises still the same? How many have suffered tormenting feelings of regret, and for the moment fancied they were real repentants, and yet, notwithstanding all they suffered, soon returned, like the sow that was washed, to their former courses? Some, in consequence of these fits of relenting, have had great comfort and extatic joy, that they were converted; but all their repentance, hopes and pleasure were like that of the stony ground hearers, it vanished away, and they were not changed.

The question, my brethren, is not whether you have been sorrowful for sin, or how deep it has been, but whether it has been such that a change of heart and manners have accompanied it; so that you have relinquished it with abhorrence, and have cordially returned to God, and submitted yourselves to his empire and government. By sin, we cast God out from all right and interest in us; by repentance, we surrender ourselves back to God again, and acknowledge his sovereignty over us, and propriety in us. Sin is a sacrilegious alienation from God; but repentance is returning to him in sorrow, contrition, humiliation and brokenness of heart. The reflection still comes back upon us, have we evangelically repented or not? If we have scriptural grounds to hope, these have been our sorrows, experiences and repentance, then we have a foundation for comfort and hope,

Digitized by Google

for God blots out our transgressions, and our sins will be remembered no more. How blessed the state of all true penitents? They are recovered to the mercies of God, reinstated in his favor, introduced into the covenant of grace, and are made partakers of the promises of eternal life. O penitents, rejoice in God, and live to his glory. Bring forth fruits meet for repentance.

But you who are still strangers to gospel repentance, and to all these experiences, what can be said unto you? While you live, our call must be unto you, "Repent and be converted, that "your sins may be blotted out." We beseech and pray you cease to do evil, and learn to do well; forsake folly and sin, and become reconciled to God.

Digitized by Google

SERMON XXVIII.

SAVING FAITH DESCRIBED.

HEBREWS xi. 1.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

GOD, in the wonders of his grace, has revealed a method of recovery from the ruin in which man had involved himself by the fall. Nothing more proper than that we should enquire into its nature, tenor, terms and conditions. Christ Jesus is exhibited as the Mediator between God and guilty man, as making satisfaction to all the divine prerogatives, and a compleat atonement for sin. But the great question recurs, how we are to be interested in this atonement, and made partakers of the purchased salvation. The holy scriptures inform us, by a thousand assurances, the only way in which we can be interested in, and become participants of this astonishing salvation, is by faith. Faith is a word of high import in the gospel. It is fixed as the term of eternal life. Being possessed of faith, is a divine insurance of everlasting felicity; and the destitution of it, notwithstanding all the displays of gospel mercy, the humiliation, death, and sufferings of the Redeemer, the unbeliever must perish. This being the term then, on which life and death, happiness and misery are suspended, surely it must be a matter of the utmost impor-

Digitized by Google

tance that we should understand, and know by experience what is comprehended in this great and solemn word. A great and solemn word it is; for he who hath it has life—and he who is destitute of it, is under condemnation and in death.

Hence the inspired author of this grand epistle to the Hebrews, takes such immense pains in describing its nature, and exemplifying its effects. He had exhorted these christians, "to believe "to the saving of their souls; to be stedfast in the faith, and "had assured them, that the just live by faith." Previous to his illustration, exemplification, and the infinite advantages of this virtue or grace, he gives an accurate definition, or perfect description of it in our text. "Now faith is the substance of "things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Various are the ideas and uses of the term faith in the scriptures and in common life.

It is frequently employed to express that trust, confidence and fidelity which one person places in another. He feels a persuasion in his mind of the honesty, truth, sincere intention and promise of his fellow creature, that he will fulfil his obligation; therefore, he trusts, confides, believes or puts faith in him.

Often in the scriptures it is taken not for the exercise, but the object of faith. Some had heard, that the persecutor Paul, "now preached the faith which once he destroyed." That is, he had become a preacher of the doctrines of the gospel. Thus also, the gospel is stiled, "The word of faith which we preach." And in many other places, the great contents of the gospel proposed as the objects of believing are put for faith itself.

Sometimes it is used for an external profession of christianity. "Do good unto all men, especially unto them, who are of the "household of faith." That is, who are professors of religion.

Digitized by Google

It is also used to express extraordinary things done in a miraculous manner, commonly called the "faith of miracles."—This faith is of a three-fold nature—one in the person performing the miracle, and the other two in the subjects or persons on whom it is performed. With regard to the former, he is endued with a supernatural or divine power for this purpose. Hence, says our Lord to his disciples, "If you have faith," that is, this power of working miracles, "as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall "say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place, and it "shall remove and nothing shall be impossible to you." The performance of miracles is surely easy with the Lord of universal nature, who by a word could speak worlds into existence, and with Jesus Christ who is God—but the communication of this power to feeble creatures is not so easily apprehended. And it is resolved into this principle, that with God all things are possible. And this wonderful power was not only granted to saints but sinners. Did Moses possess it? So did the magicians of Egypt in a certain degree. Had the holy Apostles this gift? So had Judas. And St. Paul fully intimates, that a man might have a miraculous faith, that he could remove mountains, and yet have no true religion.

With regard to the subjects of the faith of miracles, these have been inanimate, and animal beings, as also rational creatures of various descriptions. Miracles have been wrought on the sun, moon, seas, rivers and trees. Joshua commanded the sun and moon to stand still, and they obeyed. Moses ordered the red sea to open a way for the Israelites, and they passed through on dry land. The river Jordan ceased to flow once and again, and made bare its channel for the passage of Joshua and his host, and likewise for the prophet Elisha. The barren fig tree was cursed by our Lord, and it withered from the root.

Animals have in like manner, been the subjects on which miracles have been performed. Multitudes of reptiles and insects

Digitized by Google

were brought into, and dashed out of existence by Moses; an Ass opened her mouth and reproved the madness of the prophet; the mouths of lions were stopped, an herd of swine destroyed, &c.

But the principal subject of miracles was man; some by faith required in themselves; some by faith for other persons, and many without knowledge and without faith at all.

Our Lord often asked applicants for the cure of personal diseases, whether they believed, that is, in his power to heal them; upon their answering in the affirmative, they were immediately cured.

Application was frequently made to him for others; as a father for a dumb child; a nobleman for his son sick of a fever; a centurion for his servant; a ruler of a synagogue, (a very unlikely person to believe in Christ) for the restoration of his deceased daughter to life; the Canaanitish woman for her daughter, &c. All which requests, upon the faith of the applicant, were granted. And it does not appear, with regard to many others, that either faith, knowledge, or any other qualification, or even so much as the least acquaintance with the business was required, until they found themselves healed.—This faith of miracles ought to have a whole lecture bestowed upon it. But it is out of the contemplation of my present plan, in the process of these discourses.

I proceed to direct your attention to another kind of faith mentioned in the scriptures, common to good men, and bad men, and even to the devils themselves, "who believe and tremble." They believe there is a God, a Saviour of men, a future judgment, eternal torments, everlasting felicity, &c. There are no atheists or deists in hell, whatever they may have been on earth. They believe, and their faith creates horror, terror and amazement; but it neither brings forth the fruits of repentance, reformation, love to God, nor holy living. It is a dead faith, and must perish with the subjects of it.

Digitized by Google

There is also another faith in the scriptures, conspicuously distinguished from all these, and yet as little connected with salvation as any of the former. This is a faith the devils never have, though common to men who perish under the gospel. It is attended with a certain taste of heavenly things, an elevation of soul, gladness of heart, and many joyful and comfortable affections. Yet it has no holy root, arises not from an abiding principle in the soul, was not implanted in the heart by the Spirit of grace. It takes its origin from common motions of the Holy Ghost; from fanciful imagination; from ignorance, and wild and bewildered expectations; from the foolish direction of friends, and the weak counsels of ministers. All these things, with certain feelings of their own, combine together to awaken in them, what they falsely deem faith and hope, comfort and joy. This was the faith of John the Baptist's hearers, who rejoiced in his light for a season. Herod was full of this faith, when he heard John with gladness. This was the faith of the stony ground hearers, who were wonderfully pleased with Christ, and the salvation of the gospel for a season; but when troubles, persecutions, and the world interfered, the former faith, comfort and joy must be relinquished, in order to evade certain evils, and enjoy the pleasures of the latter.

And this, it is to be feared, is the case with many in all the ages of christianity; they have some sudden convictions, serious compunctions, and quickly their hearts are filled with joy and consolation, and they immediately conclude from their experiences and the advice of friends, that they are true believers and real converts. Hence these set forward in religion with great apparent fervor, zeal and haste. But, alas! their religion soon evaporates, their faith fails, and affections vanish, and they return with the dog to his vomit, and like the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. Some of these I have known sink down into orderly living, have remained useful members of society, though they relinquished their profession of religion;

Digitized by Google

others have gone off to wild and ranting sects, where they might have the indulgence of their pride, ambition, idleness and lusts, and under no obligations to govern themselves, or instruct their families and children. Others have abandoned the shadow of piety, and given themselves up to all the excesses of riot, turned debauchees, atheists and infidels, and run as near as possible to the semblance of incarnate devils.

But blessed be God, there is another species of faith essentially different from all these, and is stiled a divine, saving or justifying faith; and this is the faith delineated in our text. It is called divine, because God is its author, and it is wrought in the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost, who is a divine person. It is stiled saving, because the soul blessed with it, is placed in an inseperable connection with eternal salvation. It is also termed justifying faith, because it interests in the covenant of grace, unites to Christ, by whose merits or righteousness, the sinner is acquitted of his guilt before God, and justified in his sight. Thus the same idea is meant to be conveyed, and the same acts and exercises of heart intended, whether it be called divine, saving, or justifying faith. It is well defined in our shorter Catechism, by saying, "It is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon "Christ Jesus, as he is offered in the gospel."

The author of this grace, like all others, is the Spirit of God. "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, "it is the gift of God." Its formal nature consists in a cordial acquiescence in, and reception of the testimony of God; in receiving Christ Jesus in all his mediatorial offices with the whole heart, and in committing our souls to him, in perfect persuasion he will preserve the trust until the day of God. He beholds the beauty and wisdom of the plan of salvation in the gospel; he feels his absolute necessity of an interest in the Saviour therein exhibited; he sees the infinite fullness, all-sufficiency, ability and willingness of Christ for this important purpose. Hence,

Digitized by Google

with all his mind and heart, he entertains the report given of him in the gospel, lays hold upon, takes and receives him as the Lord his righteousness, trusting in and resting the salvation of his soul upon the merits of his precious and atoning blood. Thus, by the divine constitution, he becomes united to him, one with him, as he and the Father are one. He becomes a branch of the vine, a partaker of the sap of this divine stock. As the head and members of the body are one in nature, as the husband and wife are one in law, so Christ and the believer are one in the covenant of grace. The believer is his, and he is the believer's, with all his benefits. The objects opened to the view of the believing heart are infinitely beautiful and amiable; God and Christ, and all the glories and riches of the celestial world captivate his soul; he feels a full conviction of their reality; beholds in his believing mind their transcendant excellency, and he tastes as it were a substantiality in the things for which he hopes. Therefore, attend to this beautiful description of faith, here given by the inspired Apostle. "It is the substance of things hoped for, and "the evidence of things not seen." The two words in this definition of great import are, substance and evidence.——The former term hypostasis, which is here translated substance, is variously rendered in different places of the New Testament. It is translated *person*, *confidence*, *confident boasting*, and here, *substance*. All which show it to be a reality, a real and true subsistance. Its primary meaning signifies a *prop*, *support* or *foundation*. Faith is all this ground, foundation, support and substantiality to the the believer's hope of heavenly realities.

Things hoped for, are things that have no existence at present, but have a certain futurity; and their foundation is so sure, that faith anticipates their existence, and brings them forward to the view of the mind as present realities. Thus "Abraham believed "in hope, that he might become the father of many nations."—These nations, though they had no present existence, yet the

Digitized by Google

faith of the patriarch was so firm in the divine promise, that it gave them a subsistence and reality in the view of his mind. He doubted not of the existence of these great nations, which were to proceed from his loins, more than he did of the innumerable stars of heaven that he was then called upon to behold.

The Old Testament saints believed the Messiah would come, relieve the evils of mankind, and take away sin. Therefore, they substantiated him in his incarnation, humiliation, sufferings, death and resurrection, as if the whole tragedy of his crucifixion were passing in review before them. Any person who reads David and Isaiah, cannot evade the conviction of this truth.

Thus there are things hoped for by the christian believer, and they are as sure to his faith as if they had a present existence, and were in substance in his immediate possession; such as an entire freedom from sin, a perfection of holiness at the conclusion of this life, eternal glorification, full fruition of God, the resurrection of the body, a future and general judgment, the everlasting felicity of saints, and misery of the wicked, &c.— These things are as certain to his mind as his own existence, and that the world around him exists.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for; it substantiates eternal realities to the soul; causes it to feel in a measure as if they were present to the mind. The excellency, glory, sweetness and felicity of the heavenly world, the amiableness of all its inhabitants, faith in exercise brings them down to the believer, and gives them such a substance and existence in his heart as fills him with delight, joy, and glory unspeakable.— Yea, so strong has faith been in many of the martyrs, such has been their taste for, and sense of the things for which they hoped, that the torturing pains of burning faggots could scarcely discompose the serenity of their countenances. And how many common believers have passed through the pangs of death rejoicing? Hence, how emphatical and striking is the Apostle's

Digitized by Google

description of this grace? "Now faith is the substance of things "hoped for."

But I proceed to contemplate a second part of the definition contained in our text. "It is the evidence of things not "seen." The original word elengchos, is very strong, and forces the idea upon the mind. It is often translated *refute*, *convince*, *conviction*, &c. but no English word can perfectly express the original. It is such a conviction as affords irresistable evidence, and compleat demonstration of its object. This faith is not merely a conviction of the understanding and judgment, but gives such a discovery of invisible things to the heart, that an eye of sense cannot perceive, nor all the powers of reason investigate. This faith manifests divine and spiritual realities in such a peculiar, glorious and lovely manner, that by no other possible means could they be known. "The natural man receiveth not "the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto "him; neither can he know them because they are spiritually "discerned." This spiritual discernment arises from, and is ever attendant upon the lively actings of a saving faith. It is a kind of *mental sight*, whereby the soul beholds the beauty, and relishes the excellency of divine things. They appear to the believer's view, with a superior lustre, very different from what they do to natural men. These are represented as blind, having their minds darkened, living in darkness, &c. as persons naturally blind, perceive not the light of the sun, however gloriously it shines around them. Thus the spirituality of the light of the gospel cannot be discerned but by the eye of faith. Thus faith administers a full conviction of the glory and excellency of invisible things, or it "is the evidence of things not seen."

But it is time to end this lecture, with a few reflections.

First, How infinitely important is this grace of faith? It is often put for the whole of religion, because it is so radical and essential a part of it. Such is its consequence, that there is no

Digitized by Google

salvation for sinners without it. Salvation and damnation, by the decree of heaven, which is more irreversible and immutable than the statutes of Medes and Persians, is suspended on this single point. This is an immoveable principle of the gospel, and by which its whole administration is directed. When the Apostles received commission from their Lord, and ordered to go and preach the gospel to every creature, and a summary of their doctrines was delivered to them, it was in these grand and all-comprehensive terms ; " He that believeth and is baptised shall " be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." This is the great principle in the gospel system. Every man will be infallibly saved or damned, according to his being possessed of this virtue or grace, or being destitute of it. The believer cannot be condemned—but he that believeth not, is condemned already. And the particular ground of this condemnation is, " because " he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of " God." Our Lord proceeds with greater force and authority to impress this doctrine as the great principle of his kingdom : " He " that believeth in me hath life everlasting ; but he that believ- " eth not the son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abid- " eth on him. If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in " your sins."

Notwithstanding all the wonders of infinite love displayed in the gospel, the love of the eternal Trinity, the love of God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, the humiliation, dreadful sufferings and death of Christ, ahe agonies of Gethsemene, and the blood of Golgotha, all these will be of no avail, all these will not save us without faith. It is true that the Son of God died to become the author of salvation, but then it is only for those that believe. Notwithstanding all the power, wisdom, and goodness of heaven have been exerted to the utmost for the recovery of lost men, they must still perish, unless they believe.

Secondly, From the description of faith given us by the Apostle, and the illustration of it in this lecture, it is of the highest

Digitized by Google

moment we should enquire into our own views, exercises, and experiences in relation to it. If we are true believers in Christ, if we have that faith which purifies the heart, and its productions are the fruits of righteousness, by the unchangeable constitution of God, our salvation is sure ; if we are unbelievers, and continue destitute of saving faith, our everlasting perdition and eternal damnation is equally sure.

Let us, therefore, for once honestly enquire, whether we possess the faith of God's elect ? Have we ever been effectually convinced of sin ? Has sin been the bitterness of our souls ? Have we ever been changed in the temper of our hearts, and in the disposition of our minds ? Have we ever felt our perishing necessity, and seen the fullness and sufficiency of Christ ? Have you ever sought Jesus sorrowing ? Have you ever fled to him poor, and miserable, and wretched, and naked, renouncing yourselves, and committing your whole souls to him, and placing all your confidence, hope and salvation in his atonement ? Is he precious to, and the life of your souls ? Do you feel it death to be out of Christ ? Is he your joy and consolation ?

Some of you, my dearly beloved brethren, I doubt not have experienced, understood, and relish all these things. What can be said for your encouragement and comfort ? Is it not enough to fill your eyes with tears of gratitude, and your hearts with joy, that God is yours, Christ is yours, salvation, and heaven, and all its glories and felicities will be yours forever ? Always walk with your Redeemer, keep his commandments, and proceed on in your celestial course rejoicing. By and bye you will reap the full harvest of heaven, if you faint not. Your way will become brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. Remember, " they " that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength ; they shall " mount up with wings as eagles ; they shall run and not be wea- " ry ; and they shall walk and not faint."

Can I shut up this lecture without dropping a word to those who are conscious to themselves, they are still under the power

Digitized by Google

of unbelief. They have never felt their guilt, or seen the glory of the Saviour. It is not in the voice of man, or the power of angelic eloquence to awake or persuade you: "A Paul may plant, "and an Apollos water, but it is God who must give the en-"crease." Consider, O my fellow mortals, consider your dangerous case. Judge yourselves, that ye be not judged. God forbid, that I should enter upon the judgment or condemnation of any of my fellow creatures, that I should attempt to snatch from the divine hand the balance and the rod. But God, the holy scriptures, Jesus, the compassionate and bleeding Saviour, and your own consciences call you to consideration and self-reflection. Wherefore, cry mightily for mercy. Let your incessant cry be, "God "be merciful to us sinners."

Digitized by Google

SERMON XXIX.

SAVING KNOWLEDGE DISTINGUISHED AND EXPLAINED.

JEREMIAH IX. 24.

Let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving kindness and judgment, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight saith the Lord.

DIVINE knowledge is a matter of infinite moment to the salvation of a lost world. The whole of eternal life is sometimes expressed by it. "This is life eternal, that they might know "thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast "sent." Ignorance is every where reprobated in the sacred oracles. The workers of iniquity are declared to have no knowledge. A gracious knowledge of God and divine things is always represented as of the utmost consequence. This knowledge lies at the foundation and enters into the whole system of religion. Every virtue, every grace, and every duty towards God and man is impregnated with it. Without this there can be no act of righteousness, nor any holy exercise whatsoever.

In the preceding part of this chapter, the Prophet had been sharply reproving sin, and denouncing the judgments of heaven,

Digitized by Google

and in the melting language of lamentation, bitterly bewailing both. He pours out floods of tears for the calamities of Judah and Jerusalem, and in detestation of those sins which brought these awful miseries upon them. After all his weeping, preaching and counsel, they were still confident of their own wisdom, trusted in the prowess of their mighty armies for defence, and in the abundance of their riches to insure succes to the war. He calls them to drop themselves for a moment, and to hearken to the voice of God. "Thus saith the Lord, let not the wise man "glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his "might, let not the rich man glory in his riches." He wished them to put their confidence, boast, and hope in repentance, reformation, in true religion, in the spiritual and holy knowledge of God, that whatever might be their state in this world as a nation and individuals, they might secure to themselves, amidst the wreck and desolation of their country by the Chaldean hosts, a glorious immortality. "But let him that glorieth, glory in this, "that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, "which exercise loving kindness, judgment and righteousness in "the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord."— As if he had said, in all the convulsions of the world and revolutions of nations, let this be your glory and ground of rejoicing, that you have a proper understanding and holy knowledge of God; that you have a spiritual acquaintance with his tender mercies and loving kindness, then all the ways of his providence, his judgments and righteousness will appear glorious on the earth, for in these displays of his perfections, and in your spiritual apprehensions of them, is your happiness and his delight.

The present enquiry shall be into that knowledge of God and divine things, which is of a distinguishing and saving nature; as specifically different from all other kinds of knowledge, and surely lands the soul on the shores of eternal bliss, where all knowledge and science are exalted to perfection, and admit of no encrease but by the enlargment of the faculties.

Digitized by Google

Knowledge may be reduced to three kinds, natural, rational and spiritual or saving. This distinction originates from these three different sources, to wit, from animal sense, human reason, and faith in divine testimony; each of these shall be attended to in their order. Please to allow me here to make a previous observation. It is impossible to draw a perfect line of discrimination between these several parts of knowledge. They are reciprocally aiding to one another, yet entirely distinct. Every man beholds the different colours of the rainbow, but their exact lines of distinction between colour and colour no man can discern.

First, I shall consider knowledge as natural, as it comes to us through our bodily or animal senses. No man can describe the knowledge that flows in upon us from this source. Our natural senses you know are five, and they all unite as fellow labourers to convey an abundance of knowledge to the human mind. Each, it is true, has a distinct and separate province; in certain circumstances they become auxiliaries to one another—yet, in many respects, they maintain such peculiar prerogatives, that it is absolutely beyond the power of the one to supply the other's place. The eye cannot perform the office of hearing, neither can the ear do the duty of the eye. If one of the senses be lost, which is a common accident, the stream of knowledge, which should be communicated thereby, is dried up. A man, who is born blind, can never obtain the knowledge of the distinction of colours; neither can the deaf man understand sounds, or learn the melody of music. The person destitute of the sense of smelling, cannot be regaled by the sweetest odours. And when taste is lost, all things are alike to the palate. Yet the absence of any of these inlets to knowledge is rare, therefore an abundance flows through them into the human mind. By these we learn all the difference of foods, nourishing and poisonous, all the variation and harmony of sounds, all the beauties of nature, our relatives, friends, property, &c.

But all this knowledge which we receive from our senses, how-

Digitized by Google

ever great and useful, is of the lowest sort. It can raise man to its utmost extent, but a little above the herds of the field. If it were not early intermingled with some rational exercises, it could not exalt us above other animals; for the "ox knoweth his "owner, and the ass his master's crib." The beasts have much knowledge by an instinct of nature and from their senses, and some possess sagacities far superior to any thing among men.—Yet, in the

Second place, Reason, with which man is endued, affords another and more glorious source of knowledge. The knowledge acquired by reason is as much more noble than that acquired by sense, as rational nature is superior to irrational, or an intelligent and immortal spirit to a brute animal, which, with his expiring breath, sinks out of existence. How much knowledge a rational creature could obtain without the aid of animal senses, I pretend not to say—only that this is of a superior kind, more refined, exalted and pure, and affords a superior pleasure. The one is coarse, narrow and limited, while the other is large, extensive, and in a measure boundless. This rational knowledge, is distinguished from the other by certain powers of mind, whereby ideas are received from reflection, and a comparison of one thing with another. There is an ability in man of considering the mutual relations, connections and dependencies of things, and so reasoning and arguing about matters doubtful and obscure, from what is more known or evident, until conclusions arise, which encrease the stock of ideas; and this encrease of knowledge affords an encrease of pleasure. As two persons dealing together know not who is in the other's debt, but by a comparison of their books and a settlement of accounts, they arrive at the knowledge on whose side the balance lies. Whenever we wish to know whether one thing be longer or weightier than another, we take proper measures and weights, and quickly obtain the proper knowledge.

The pleasures arising from rational investigation, are exceed-

Digitized by Google

ing great. When the harmonious contexture of truths with truths, the apt co-incidence of coherent notions are discerned; when effects are traced to their causes, properties discerned in their native subjects, things examined to their principles, from hence a world of knowledge is poured into the rational understanding, and the gratification accruing herefrom sometimes exceeds the powers of language to illustrate. In this way the mathematician obtains his art, and the philosopher his profound skill. By this the astronomer informs us of the various distances, magnitudes, movements and rotations of the heavenly bodies, and can calculate with the most perfect accuracy the eclipses of the sun, moon and other planets, for thousands of years past, and for thousands of years to come. He who exercises his rational powers in searching into the *arcana* of nature in the vegetable and animal kingdoms, and who is unwearied in his experiments, wonderful indeed are the stores of knowledge which he acquires. How many have macerated their bodies, wasted their constitutions, sacrificed health and ease, for the acquisition of rational knowledge?—But there is a

Third kind of knowledge still more excellent than these, and to which our attention ought in an eminent manner to be directed; and this is what is stiled a spiritual or saving knowledge. It is as much superior to that obtained by reason, as that is to acquisitions of our senses. Yea, it is infinitely more so, both in its nature and use. The former kinds of knowledge have their advantages in this world, but the latter extends its blessings and pleasures into eternity. This, above all other knowledge, ought to be the object of our study, desire and pursuit. And this may be acquired by the low as well as the great, by the illiterate as well as the learned, by the peasant as well as the philosopher.—However great our advances may be in the former species of knowledge, unless we obtain the latter too, it will be of no avail to us when we shall appear before the bar of the Judge eternal. All the knowledge we may have acquired from reason, by the most

Digitized by Google

lengthy and assiduous application, cannot be a substitute for this, or recommend to the favor of the Supreme Jehovah. Though a person had all knowledge, that he could explain the dark *phenomena* of nature, could work miracles, and had the gift of prophecy, yet without this, he must perish forever. Our Lord represents to us, that many in the day of judgment will plead their great knowledge, gifts, power and marvelous works, and yet will be rejected as workers of iniquity, whom he never knew. We find an idolatrous Balaam endowed with the supernatural gift of prophecy; a wicked Saul also among the prophets; a Judas, a traitor, murderer, and son of perdition among the Apostles, no doubt preaching and working miracles—yet none of these had that which is of a spiritual and saving kind. Although a man had obtained a better understanding of divinity than any that ever went before him, could solve every difficulty in religion, could explain all the depths of christian theology, and was able to dispute error and schism out of the world, yet all this might be what St. Paul calls "a form of knowledge." This knowledge involves in it that charity of which the Apostle speaks, and what is declared respecting the one may be affirmed of the other. "Though I speak with tongues of men and of angels, "and have not charity, I am become a sounding brass or a tink-"ling cymbal. And although I have the gift of prophecy and "understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and though I have "all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not "charity, I am nothing." The Apostle here points out the transcendent excellency of charity or divine love, and how it is preferable to all knowledge; that is, all knowledge possible for a man to acquire or be the subject of, while in a natural or graceless state. Now if charity be of such high distinction in the christian character, saving or spiritual knowledge is equally so. For we must surely have some proper knowledge of an object in order to our loving it. Hence, say the scriptures, "Every one "that loveth knoweth God. I pray that your love may abound "more and more in knowledge and in all judgment. It is writ-

Digitized by Google

" ten in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God, every " man therefore that hath heard and learned of the Father com- " eth unto me. They that know thy name shall put their trust " in thee." All these things demonstrate the necessity of divine knowledge for the exercise of any grace, or the practice of any holy duty.

The devils no doubt have immense understandings, are furnished with knowledge beyond our conception, but they have none of this holy knowledge which arises from a divine principle. So many natural men have understandings large as the sea, and the ocean of their minds stored with wonders of knowledge, yet still remain destitute of that spiritual and saving knowledge contained in our text. Sinners, while continuing under the power of their lusts, cannot know God or divine things in an holy manner. Hence, says St. John, " Whosoever sinneth hath not " seen God, neither known him."

Allow me to descend to a few particulars constituting this superior science.

First, It consists in a discernment or sight of the peculiar glory and distinguishing beauty of divine things. That there is such a glory, splendor and beauty in spiritual realities, invisible to sense, and beyond the investigation of natural reason, the oracles of God abundantly teach. " If our gospel be hid it is " hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath " blinded the eyes of them that believe not, lest the light of the " glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God should " shine into them." Here is mentioned a light of the glorious gospel of Christ, which must be a discovery of a certain transcendant excellency in the matters of the gospel, that a blinded world is entirely unacquainted with. A blind man may learn much of philosophy and physics, may discourse and lecture upon them to the astonishment of those who can see; and the blinder he is, the more admiration is raised, and the more he is follow-

Digitized by Google

ed—yet there is a splendor and beauty in things to the visive eye with which forever to him is imperceivable. Therefore, the Apostle speaks to the converted Corinthians, that they had a knowledge communicated to them of a distinct and superior nature to any thing the world could afford. "God who command-"ed the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the "face of Jesus Christ." Here is a light of knowledge of glory, infused into the heart, far distinguished from the knowledge acquired by a blind world, which is darkness in comparison. The believer who has had his mind opened by a divine illumination to discern this light of glory, all his former knowledge is depreciated and rejected as inferior, drossy and feculent; and he is ready to say with the Apostle, "Though before, he knew all things after "the flesh, yet henceforth he will know them so no more."

Secondly, There is in this divine knowledge, a taste of the sweetness of holiness, that the carnal mind is perfectly ignorant of. "As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word "that they may grow thereby, if so be ye have tasted that the "Lord is gracious." Here is a certain taste of the graciousness of God, as peculiar to this knowledge, that the saints possess. All the acquisitions in the world cannot bring a man to have any proper understanding or just ideas hereof, without an experience of a relish of spiritual things arising from a divine taste. He who has tasted the sweetness of honey, knows much better the relish it affords, than the most learned lectures upon it can possibly give. "Therefore, we are commanded to taste and see that "the Lord is gracious." Hence this taste of holy things enters deeply into, and is an essential constituent of this divine knowledge.

Thirdly, A savour of spiritual matters is also a part of this holy knowledge. Attend to the scriptures: "Now thanks be "to God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ Jesus, "and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge in every place.

Digitized by Google

"Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as "ointment poured forth." The wicked are spoken of "as sa- "vouring not the things that be of God, but those things that "be of men."

Thus this saving knowledge consists in a discernment of the glory and beauty of divine things, tasting and savouring the sweetness of holiness. "Hereby they obtain an unction from "the holy one, that they know all things." Herein the excellency of the divine perfections are known, especially the beauty of his moral attributes; the glory, amiableness and all sufficiency of Jesus Christ; the preciousness of his blood, and the riches of that salvation revealed in the gospel. The bible, which was formerly a dark letter, in which there appeared little form or comliness, now discovers itself in a shining lustre, and brilliant excellency to the soul. Every part pleases, charms, and captivates his heart. He now cries out, precious bible, precious word of God.

This subject shall be now closed with a few practical uses.

First, It affords an use of lamentation, that great multitudes continue in darkness and ignorance, notwithstanding all the glory of divine light, which shines around them. Alas, for the stupidity, folly, and blindness of mankind! With propriety we might here take up the lamentation of the weeping prophet, and say, "Oh that our head were waters, and our eyes a fountain of "tears, that we might weep day and night," over the hosts of mankind who are perishing for the lack of this spiritual knowledge. Multitudes all they know is merely by their senses; strip them of the shape and figure of men, they would retain little to discriminate them from the beasts that perish. Oh how sordid and mean is it for rational creatures to be furnished with faculties for improvement, yet to suffer them to lie dormant or to run to waste. When will thoughtless man awake to seek af-

Digitized by Google

ter knowledge, especially that knowledge which is saving and divine? Hearken to the counsels of Solomon, "Know wisdom "and instruction, and perceive the words of understanding. "Get wisdom, get understanding. Bow down thine ear to the "words of the wise, and apply thine heart to my knowledge. "She is more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst "desire are not to be compared unto her."

Secondly, This doctrine affords us an use of examination. We should enquire both into our knowledge and the nature of it. We should often be searching and trying ourselves. "Know "ye not your ownselves?" saith the Apostle. Is our knowledge merely that arising from our senses, and from the exercise of natural powers in matters of speculation, or is our knowledge holy, spiritual and divine? Do we perceive and behold a peculiar glory and beauty in heavenly things? Have we a taste and relish for divine objects? Are they savoury, sweet, and precious to our souls? Does this knowledge form our hearts to holy exercises, our lives to a godly practice, and render our conversation such as becometh the gospel? If this be your knowlege, then happy are ye indeed. You have a saving knowledge of God, and Jesus Christ, and spiritual things which is eternal life. Proceed on to make greater acquisitions of this divine science. Then shall ye know more and more when ye follow on to know the Lord. "When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is "pleasant unto thy soul, discretion shall preserve thee, under- "standing shall keep thee, to deliver thee from the way of the "evil one. Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man "that getteth understanding. Her ways are ways of pleasant- "ness, and all her paths are peace."

Finally, Let us be exhorted to seek after this spiritual and saving knowledge. All other things are loss and nothing in comparison of it. Remember, "wisdom," or true religion, "ex- "celleth folly as far as light excelleth darkness. It cannot be "gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price

Digitized by Google

" thereof." I shall close this subject in the words of our text. " Let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth " and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving " kindness, and judgment and righteousness in the earth ; for in " these things I delight saith the Lord."

Digitized by Google

SERMON XXX.

JUSTIFICATION BY THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST.

ROMANS x. 4.

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

THE justification of a sinner before God, is a doctrine of high importance in the christian system. St. Paul attends to this subject in an especial manner in this epistle. For this purpose, he delineates the character of sinners, the inflexible justice of God, the holy and unchangeable nature of the divine law, the guilt of, and the punishment due to sin, and the fullness, utility and necessity of the atonement of Christ. He explains the nature of justification with great clearness, and enforces his exposition with much strength and beauty of argument. He shows that by the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified, and how this comes to pass solely by the righteousness of Christ, and that those alone are the subjects of it who believe. The Apostle introduces this chapter by a most tender, affectionate, and fervent prayer for the salvation of Israel. He bears record to the warmth and greatness of their zeal, but that it was a blind, mistaken and delusive zeal, it was not according to knowledge. He testifies against their

Digitized by Google

ignorance, and the pride and vanity of their mind, in looking for the favor of God by an imaginary righteousness of their own. "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness and going about "to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted them-"selves unto the righteousness of God." They understood not the strict justice of God, the evil of sin, nor the purity of the divine law. They saw no necessity for the righteousness of Christ, but fondly conceived that a few ceremonial observances were abundantly sufficient to justify them before the most High. He points out the design of Christ's coming into the world, and draws the character of those to whom his atonement and righteousness would be beneficial.

Allow me here to lay down a few propositions, which, I hope, will tend to shed light upon this whole subject of justification, and prepare the way for what may be said upon it.

First, The eternal Jehovah is immutable in his nature, his perfections, promises and threatenings, and in all his ways.—Whatever aspects may take place in the view of created minds, respecting apparent changes in his dispensations and providence, yet one thing ought to be fixed in the faith of all christians, "that "he is the Lord who changeth not." Amidst the constant variations passing before us in this world, it is not a matter easily and stedfastly to believe. We are too apt to think God somewhat like ourselves, changeable and variable. But if the scriptures be true, and if creation exist, however blind and changeable we poor fallen mortals may be, with God there is no variableness nor shadow of turning. This is a proposition necessary to be ingrafted on our minds, as a foundation to the whole business of the gospel justification of sinners.

Secondly, That the law in our text principally means the moral law, consisting in love to God and our neighbour, comprehending all the implications and deductions revealed in the scriptures. This law is holy, just and good; it cannot, in the na-

Digitized by Google

ture of things, be abrogated, relaxed or altered. That which is absolutely perfet in justice, holiness and goodness, cannot be changed more than the author of it. It is often said the law is a transcript of the divine attributes; if so, it must be as immutable and invariable as God himself. Hence the unchangeableness of the law must be held as an essential principle of the gospel plan of salvation.

Thirdly, It is impossible for any creature to be deemed and considered just with God, unless in some way he stands right in the view of the law. There are two methods in which this may take place; by a righteousness of his own, or by the righteousness of another in which he is interested, and which, by a divine constitution, is made his. By the former, angels are just before God, and in this way Adam and all his posterity would have been justified in the divine presence, had they maintained their innocence and original rectitude. But by this no sinner can possibly be justified. The law condemns him as a transgressor, and it is absolutely impossible he should ever be able to make satisfaction to it. The latter is by a sinners becoming interested in the righteousness of Christ, and by a divine constitution this righteousness made his, which can only be by free grace on the part of God, and evangelical faith on the part of the sinner.

A Fourth proposition is, none of the natural descendants of Adam, none of the guilty and sinful children of men, by any works, duties, and righteousness of their own, can justify themselves before God. For by the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified.

Fifthly, That Jesus Christ assumed the human nature into a personal union with his divine nature, and in this character performed perfect obedience to the law. That God executed upon him as the substitute of sinners, all the penalty of the law incurred by them; that the ends, purposes, and intents of the law might be fulfilled; that the glory of God and the dignity of his

Digitized by Google

government might be magnified; and that a righteousness infinitely worthy, and perfectly adequate to all the demands and penalties of the law, might be provided for a lost world.

Sixthly, That God has an independent and sovereign right to fix the terms or conditions, to devise and reveal the way in which fallen man shall become a partaker of this righteousness. And this is every where declared in the gospel to be by faith alone. Therefore, all who are united to Christ by faith, become one with him in the covenant of grace. They are one body; he is the head, and they are the members. Hence Christ is theirs, his righteousness and all his benefits are theirs, and they are Christ's.

These propositions are all plainly founded on the scriptures, tend to the explication of the doctrine of justification, and to the illustration of our text, "For Christ is the end of the law "for righteousness to every one that believeth." Christ, by his obedience and sufferings, by his perfect conformity to the precept, and enduring the penal sanction of the law, established a righteousness which is the end, fulfillment or accomplishment of the law. But this righteousness is only to them that believe. Final unbelievers will receive no more benefit from it, than if it never had an existence.

Justification is a gracious act of God, whereby he pardons and accepts of sinners only on account of the righteousness of Christ, which is received by faith. "Christ was delivered for our offen-"ces and raised again for our justification. The free gift is of "many offences unto justification. By the righteousness of one "the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."

The word *justify*, is used to express various and different ideas in the sacred oracles. It is used to designate a proud, boasting and self-glorious spirit. This was peculiarly characteristic of the Pharisees. Hence our Lord says to them, "Ye are they which "justify yourselves before men, but God knoweth your hearts

Digitized by Google

" for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in " the sight of God." It is employed to declare a legal or self-righteous temper. The Jews went about to establish their own righteousness. They sought righteousness and justification by the law. But it is abundantly taken in an evangelical sense, to express the mode of the sinner's acquittal from guilt and acceptance to divine favour. This is exhibited by a variety of phrases. Believers are said to be justified by Christ, by faith, by grace freely, &c. Thus St. Paul declares, " Knowing that a man is " not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus " Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might " be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the " law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. " Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that " is in Jesus Christ." We are said to be saved and justified by the righteousness of God. " But now the righteousness of God " without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and " the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith " of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe."

What shall be further said upon this subject to illustrate to us, " that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one " that believeth," shall be reduced to the few following observations.

First, We observe that a righteousness answerable to the nature and all the requisitions of the just and holy law of God, is absolutely and indispensably necessary for justification. The moral or divine law requires perfect innocence, perfect and perpetual obedience. Any person compleatly conformed to the law in the temper of his heart, and never deviated from it in his life, is justified upon the footing of his own innocence and personal righteousness. " If, saith God, thou dost well, shalt thou not " be accepted?" Thus speaks the Apostle in the verse succeeding our text. " For Moses describeth the righteousness which is " of the law, that the man which doeth these things shall live by

Digitized by Google

"them." Thus the innocent and the perfect personally righteous, shall surely be justified by the law. The nature, justice, and truth of God declare this. No danger of an innocent person, if such an one can be found; he will never suffer pain, sorrow, disease or death in this world, much less will he be liable to perish in a future. But this is not the case of any mere child of Adam. "There is none of them innocent or righteous, no not so much "as one; all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Where the government of God has been assaulted, and his laws transgressed, then there must not only be innocence, but a suffering of the penalty, in order to form a righteousness requisite to justification.

Secondly, Observe the righteousness of Christ Jesus is the only righteousness in this world, to which the preceding description can be applied. He was perfectly innocent, and compleatly suffered all that penalty which the justice and law of God required. Never was his life stained with the least blemish. Guile was never found in his mouth. He drunk up the full cup of divine wrath against sin; trod the winepress of his Father's indignation, and there were none with him.

He was God as well as man; in his human nature, he obeyed and suffered; but being only one person, that which was performed in one nature was attributed to the other, and derived value and importance from it. Hence the obedience and sufferings of the Mediator, the Godman Christ Jesus, were of infinite worth and merit. All that the Saviour did in this important business, were mere acts of grace. His whole humiliation was an act of grace. His assumption of human nature, subjection to the moral law, his obedience, death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession in heaven were and are the most free and sovereign acts of grace. He was under no natural obligation for the performance of any of these things. Therefore, all that Christ did, must necessarily have been on some other account, and not on his own.

Digitized by Google

Christ, in his original character, was God, and placed above all obligation; yet, in wonderful compassion, grace and love, condescended to a state of existence, that from the nature of it, subjected him to this obligation. If Jesus Christ had been originally subject to the law, and owed it obedience on his own account, then he could not have rendered it for others. But all the obedience and sufferings to which he submitted, he actually rendered for others. Hence it is declared, he was made under the law for this very purpose. "When the fullness of the time was "come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under "the law, to redeem those that were under the law, that we "might receive the adoption of sons." Thus saith God by the prophet Isaiah, "The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness "sake; he will magnify the law and make it honorable." And by Daniel it is said, "He shall bring in everlasting righteous-"ness." Now all that righteousness which Christ wrought out upon earth, in his obedience to the preceptive and penal requirements of the law, was not for himself or on his own account, but in the room and place, and on the account of sinners of mankind.

The obedience of Christ was of infinite moment and value; because it was of infinite dignity. The Godhead did not obey or suffer, but he who was very God did both. The iniquities of us all were laid upon him. He was made an offering for sin; made a curse. He was stricken, smitten and afflicted of God, despised and rejected of men, and became obedient unto death, even the painful and ignominious death of the cross. He died the just for the unjust. He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed.—It is with regard to the whole of his satisfaction in all the branches of it, he is affirmed to be the end of the law for righteousness. Thus Christ's fulfillment of the law formed an infinite fund of righteousness; whereby the whole debt due to the law by the sins of men, might have been cancelled, paid off,

Digitized by Google

or sunk at once, had the divine constitution authorised it, or the covenant of grace admitted of such a method of discharge.—Therefore, the sinner remains as much a debtor to the law, and as liable to punishment as ever, until he has a right and interest in this fund, and all the benefits of it are made his, agreeably to the constition of the gospel.

Thirdly, It must be observed, that the divine and constitutional method by which a sinner becomes entitled to the advantages and blessings of this fund, or interested in and partaker of this righteousness for justification before God, is by faith in the gospel or by faith in Christ. Saving or justifying faith, according to the covenant of grace, is the uniting act of the soul to Christ Jesus. This faith makes the believer and Christ one by the constitution of this precious covenant. The sins of the former are laid upon the latter, and the righteousness of the latter is attributed, accounted or imputed to the former.

A world of controversy has been raised about the word imputation, imputed sin and imputed righteousness. But one thing is certain, after all the modern theological wrangling about it, it was always in use among the best reformers, and still is where vital and evangelical religion prevails. Where true religion has failed and only the shadow of christianity left, there this term is discarded, together with the righteousness of Christ, justification by faith, and all that is dependant upon free and sovereign grace in the salvation of men. But where it is believed we must be saved by the atonement of Christ, interested in his righteousness, and be dependant upon, and beholden to him for the forgivness of sin and eternal life, there is no word in our language so adapted to express the mode of the participation of the benefits of his righteousness as this. Moreover, it is a term we frequently meet with in the sacred oracles, and it is used in two senses; the one to express the ascription of actions both good and evil to the doer of them. "Blood shall be imputed to that man, he hath "shed blood. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not

Digitized by Google

"impute sin." It is also employed to express the attributing of actions performed by one person to another, and in this sense it is always taken, when we speak of the righteousness of Christ imputed to believers. "For us also," says St. Paul, "to whom "it, to wit, righteousnes shall be imputed, if we believe on "him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. God im- "puteth righteousness without works." In these and many other places, the righteousness imputed cannot be a person's own works, and nothing can constitute a righteousness but good works, or acts of holy obedience—but this is most explicitly denied by the Apostle. Therefore, the imputed righteousness of which he treats, must be the righteousness of another—and it can be nothing else, but the works or acts of the holy and perfect obedience of Christ, or what is stiled his righteousness.—The Greek word every where used to express this idea, is *logezetai*, which is rendered, reckoned to, accounted, ascribed or imputed. But in whatever way we exhibit the matter of our justification, and the form of our becoming partakers of it or interested in it, one thing is absolutely certain, we are not justified before God by our own works or deeds of the law, but solely by the righteousness of the Redeemer. The sincere and pious man, who can submit to read Taylor on the Romans, and others of that class down to Whitby, will see the various exertions of great geniuses, and exuberant literature, to establish some other mode of justification variant from St. Paul, whom all parties lug into their service. But the simple, sincere, and even learned believer, will be more confirmed in this truth, that we are justified by the righteousness of Christ, and become participants of it, and interested in it by faith alone. And this faith is neither a bare perception of the mind, a simple assent of the understanding, nor is it struck into us like a clap of thunder, as a modern sect assert; neither is it blindly believing we are good men, nor persuading ourselves Christ is ours, and his benefits ours without scripture, sense or reason, as some have foolishly affirmed. But a gospel or justifying faith, is a sinner's cordial consent to take

Digitized by Google

Jesus Christ in all his mediatorial offices, as the Lord his righteousness, and to give and commit himself wholly to the free mercy of God in Christ, looking for the pardon of sin, and acceptance to eternal life, only through his merits. I know the cloud of objections against this doctrine, but time will not admit my attention to them. The pious man, and the man of experimental acquaintance with religion, will easily clear his way through the dark mist raised to obscure his path, and firmly hold his ground upon the righteousness of Christ received by faith, as the rock on which he builds all his hopes.

Fourthly, It ought to be observed, that this justifying faith, is not a dead faith. It is not a solitary exercise of the human mind, but it is a living operative principle, works by love, purifies the heart, and overcomes the world. It powerfully disposes the heart in devotion towards God, and in mercy, love, and righteousness towards men. The fruits of true faith are godliness, charity, honesty and all holy living.

But it is time, and more than time, I should close the subject; which shall be done in a few very brief deductions.

The First deduction from this subject is, that it is impossible for any of the children of men to be pardoned, justified, and accepted of God by any righteousness, works, duties or obedience of their own, however splendid, showy, and apparently good as to the matter of them. This was the ruin of the pharisees, many jews, and multitudes of professed christians. They depend upon themselves. The blindness of their mind, and pride of their heart, cannot bear such self-denial and self-renunciation. To be absolutely beholden to free grace and the righteousness of Christ, involves such a depreciation of, and sense of unworthiness in themselves, that unrenewed nature can neither conceive, believe, nor endure. The Apostolic conclusion is, "That a "man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. As ma-"ny as are of the works of the law are under the curse, for it is

Digitized by Google

" written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things
" that are written in the book of the law to do them."

A Second deduction is, that the doctrine of justification by the righteousness of Christ through faith, exhibits the exceeding greatness of the transcendant glory of the gospel. It glorifies the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead; it glorifies all the perfections of Jehovah; all the offices of the blessed Mediator; and it introduces to glory, all them that believe. O blessed gospel! O glorious righteousness!

Thirdly, We deduce from hence, the great blessedness of all who are justified. " Blessed is he whose transgression is for-
" given, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom
" the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose heart there is no
" guile." They are blessed with peace in God, with access to the throne of mercy, with hope which will not make ashamed, with the communications of the Holy Ghost, with deliverance from wrath, and with the well grounded expectation of eternal life. Yea, they are altogether blessed; blessed in this world, and they will be blessed in the world which is to come. " There-
" fore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through
" our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith
" into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the
" glory of God. Whom he did predestinate, them he also call-
" ed; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he
" justified, them he also glorified."

Lastly, We deduce from this doctrine, the strong obligations believers are under for gratitude, love and holy living. How should they be filled with gratitude, because of the blessedness, honor, and glory of justification; because also of its freeness, security and happiness? How should they love the Lord both for what he is in himself and for all his benefits? How holy, circumspect and godly ought they to be in all manner of conversation? " Give thanks always for all things unto God, and the Father

Digitized by Google

" in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Praise the Lord with " your whole heart. Let your tongue speak of his righteousness " and of his praise all the day long.—Take diligent heed to love " the Lord your God. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and " keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments. O love " the Lord all ye his saints."—Let believers prove their justification by holy living. If justified, they are dead to sin. "And " how shall we who are dead to sin, live any longer therein ?" Let us ever imitate the holy Apostle, who kept under his body, and was eminent in godly living. " He pressed forward to- " ward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ " Jesus."

Digitized by Google

SERMON XXXI.

ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD BY CHRIST'S OBEDIENCE TO THE LAW.

ISAIAH XLII. 21.

The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake; he will magnify the law and make it honorable.

THIS is a chapter of high importance, peculiarly descriptive of the character and advent of the Redeemer, and the future success of the gospel dispensation. The prophecy contained herein is particularly applied to Christ in the twelfth chapter of Matthew. In the first four verses our Lord is described in the meekness, tenderness, and gentleness of his character. From thence to the ninth verse, his call and power to undertake the marvelous work of redemption. Then to the fifteenth, the Gentiles are called upon to sing praises and give glory to God, partly for the gracious salvation procured by the Messiah, and partly for the destruction of his enemies. Then Jew and Gentile are charged with their stupidity, blindness and ignorance, and all their attention demanded to the salvation displayed in the gospel.—"Hear ye deaf, and look ye blind, that ye may see." The Gentiles who sat in darkness are exhorted to behold the brightness, and the Jews to open their ears to hear the glad tidings of sal-

Digitized by Google

vation. In the words of our text, are declared that God in the accomplishment of this salvation, which will astonish heaven and earth, the Messiah will exhibit the glory of all the divine perfections, support the dignity of his law and government, and he will have pleasure in all the manifestations and applications of his righteousness. "The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness "sake; he will magnify the law and make it honorable." Various expositions have been given of these words. Some have explained them as a menace of Jehovah, that he would take pleasure in glorifying his justice, by causing his vengeance to smoke against such a blind and stupid people, that he would shew forth the perfection of his law, and reflect an honorable lustre upon it by the punishment of the transgressors thereof. Others understand them of what he had done for his people in times past. He had distinguished them with his favours for the sake of his own righteousness, faithfulness and promises; he made them great and illustrious by the statutes and ordinances of divine revelation.

But as other parts of this chapter are applied to Christ, so these words will appear with greater propriety and beauty when referred to him. God declares the pleasure he has in the reconciliation of men to himself by the righteousness of him in whom his soul delighteth, because by him his law and government should be raised to great dignity and glory, and floodgates opened for mercy and grace to flow forth to a guilty and ruined world.

From the text understood in this construction, we may observe the following things.

First, That though mankind should remain blind and deaf, in carnality and security, yet God will not lose his glory, his throne will not be affected, nor his happiness disturbed; "Jehovah is "delighted or well pleased."

Secondly, That all of the human race who will relinquish their rebellion, and submit and become reconciled to their heavenly Sovereign, shall be restored to his favor and felicity, by the

Digitized by Google

righteousness of the Mediator, which he wrought out in his life and sufferings, by his obedience, in the fulfillment of all the requisitions of the divine law.

Thirdly, That when God pardons sinners and receives them into favour, it is only for the sake of the righteousness of Christ, whereby all the prerogatives and honors of divine government are magnified; upon this account he is well pleased with all who believe.

By the law is meant that original constitution, which lies at the foundation of God's government over his rational creatures. The original word translated law, is derived from a *root* that signifies a *foundation*. Hence law here intends the fundamental maxims on which God's moral government is erected. This is the moral law first revealed to Adam, afterwards published to Israel from mount Sinai, and briefly comprehended by our Saviour in love to God and our neighbour.

This law becomes exceeding honorable and illustrious by the obedience of Christ. When the plan for saving a lost world was devised in heaven, it was in such unsearchable wisdom, that all the divine laws were to acquire a magnified lustre and beauty therefrom, in the view of all intellectual beings. Had God shewn mercy and pardoned a rebel world by an arbitrary act of sovereignty, without any satisfaction to his law and justice, all wise intelligences would have begun to question the equity and propriety of his government. Would they not naturally say, surely the divine law was not perfectly right and good, otherwise transgressors could not have been forgiven and admitted to favor without some suitable satisfaction.

But in the humiliation of Christ, the divine law is exhibited to view, in all its perfect rectitude, holiness and goodness. It is here satisfied in all its penal and perceptive demands. He was perfectly innocent, and never deviated from an exact obedience to every precept, and suffered the extremity of the penalty by which it was enforced. Therefore, his obedience, in all its

Digitized by Google

branches, active and passive, being Immanuel, God with us, forms a righteousness of infinite value, to which there is nothing like it in heaven or earth, and this is well pleasing and delightful to God, for all who are united to Jesus by faith. It is an immoveable axiom in the gospel, "He that believeth, shall be "saved." The holy obedience of all the angels of heaven, the sufferings and torments of all the offenders in hell, could not shed such glory and honor upon the law, as the obedience and sufferings of the Son of God. His being obedient unto death, did more to render the law respectable, than the highest possible obedience and sufferings of all creatures. That which renders the blood of Jesus so available with God, for the justification of sinners, is his obedience.

The single point of instruction, to which your attention is invited on this subject at present, is this:

That the value, meritoriousness and acceptableness of Christ's righteousness in the sight of God, and that which renders it well pleasing to him, for the justification of sinners who believe, arises entirely from the virtue of his obedience to the law, manifested in the unstained rectitude of his life, and in the dreadful and humiliating circumstances of his death.

The grand enquiry is, how the obedience of Jesus Christ can be accepted with God for the sins of mankind, who for their base apostacy and unnatural revolt, deserved everlasting punishment from the presence of God and the glory of his power. This obedience became a substitute for all these evils solely from the character, rank and dignity of him who interposed in the infinite breach between God and man.—In this business three things claim our consideration.

First, That the obedience of Christ in his life, sufferings and death, conspicuously manifested that God was infinitely worthy of obedience.—The sin and rebellion of man openly implicated a charge against God, that a servile submission to his decrees was

Digitized by Google

a degradation to a rational being ; in every sin it is involved that God is unworthy of obedience. This was a leading feature in the first sin. Our first parents believed in God when he pronounced all creation very good ; and a restriction from eating of a certain tree conspicuously placed in the centre of the garden of happiness, between which and others, they could perceive no distinction only its superior beauty, and the transcendant desirableness of its fruit. The suggestions of their hearts, by satanical influence were, can God allow us inferior fruits, and prohibit us those of superior excellence both in beauty and fragrancy? This God is unworthy of obedience ; we relinquish his dominion. The nature of the first offence has entered into all the sins that have ever since taken place ; that is, that God is unworthy of obedience.—Is it not infinitely fit that the great Supreme should vindicate his reputation ? Surely it is of infinite moment to the whole extent of being, that God should keep up the respect due to his character. Therefore, it is reason in the highest degree, that God should have the implicit and universal obedience of all his rational creatures. This reason is founded in nature, and is immutable ; its force cannot be evaded, nor its right superseded. Any thing, therefore, which impeaches the character of God as unworthy the obedience of his creatures, must be highly dishonorable to him. It is an insult of his supreme prerogative, and on which rests all his rights of government. He never could claim the incessant obedience of his creatures, only because of his essential dignity and infinite excellency.

Disobedience or sin, is the highest possible reflection upon God, therefore, it is proper that his perfections should be vindicated from every aspersion, and all rational creatures throughout the whole extent of his dominions, be convinced of his worthiness of obedience by some notable demonstration. This we have in the obedience of his eternal Son. His submission to obey the law, though in perfect equality with the Father, exhibits in the clearest light God's worthiness of obedience ; not only for a per-

Digitized by Google

son of such dignity and independence to come into a state of duty and subjection, but voluntarily to become obedient unto death. In how strong a point of view, does this place the honor of the divine majesty and the dignity of the law, that so exalted a person as Christ Jesus, so perfect a judge of the rights of the Godhead, the merit of characters, and the decency of things, should descend to the rank of a subject, and in all matters be obedient. He himself declares, he always did the things which were pleasing to his Father; it was as his meat and drink to do his will.—There is herein a brighter display of God's worthiness of obedience, than the unfailing and perfect obedience of all intelligent beings besides. This arises from the dignity and excellency of Christ, and his perfect knowledge of the divine nature. If we depreciate the excellency and divinity of Christ, in proportion thereto, we depreciate the value of his obedience and death, and in this way is diminised the evil of sin, the infinite unworthiness of God, and sink the honors of divine law, so that it may be truly said of those who renounce the Godhead of Christ, "That they know "not what they do." But Christ is God.

Therefore, the glory of God and his government, is more eminently displayed by the obedience of Jesus, than if man had never sinned. This demonstrates the manifold wisdom of God, that he has so turned that evil, by which Satan intended to mar all his glory in this lower creation, so as more effectually to bring out to the view of all intelligences, the fullness of the perfections of Jehovah, and the excellencies of his law. Hence, says one, in language too daring, "Sin is a blessing to the uni-"verse; God and man is more glorified, than if it had never "happened." From these things it appears that the life, obedience, and sufferings of Christ, manifest the worthiness of God above all conception.

Secondly, The obedience of Christ is the highest possible proof, that the law of God is perfectly holy, just and right. In what a conspicous light does the obedience of Jesus of Nazareth

Digitized by Google

set the divine law? How transcendantly glorious and excellent must that rule be, to which the co-equal Son of the great eternal, thought it no indignity to subject himself and adjust his actions? How sacred is its authority, how holy and just are its demands? How is the law magnified and made honorable by the righteousness and obedience of Christ? Obedience to the law is glory; it is happiness. Disobedience or sin, is the highest possible reflection on the law, that it is too rigorous, and a compliance therewith is incompatible with the interest and felicity of the creature.—Its language is, it was never fit to have been given, much less to be continued in force as a rule of duty! but the obedience of Christ has wiped away all these reproaches from the holiness, goodness, and reasonableness of the law. The law stands firm upon this Apostolic foundation, "that it is holy, just, and good."

There is an irresistable force of evidence in the obedience of the Redeemer unto death, to give irrefragable conviction of this truth, that it is only in perfect consistency with the rights of the law, that any sinner can be recovered to everlasting life. The law must be fulfilled, and established as illustrious and honorable in the salvation of every transgressor. The obedience of Christ displays the law in a full blaze of glory, while the sinner, resting on the merit thereof, enters triumphantly into heaven. Thus justification by faith, is so far from abrogating or pouring contempt on the law, that it confirms and supports it in all its honors. Thus argues St. Paul, "Do we then make void the "law through faith? God forbid, yea, we establish the law."

Thirdly, Christ's sufferings and death in satisfaction of the law which man had broken, do serve in the most perfect manner, to declare the equity, propriety and justice of the penalty. God had annexed a sanction of infinite punishment to the law, as the just demerit of sin and transgression; Jesus, in his obedisnce, suffered a punishment of infinite value; this vindicates the law, from every appearance of severity, or disproportion of the penalty to the demerit of rebellion. The value of these sufferings arises

Digitized by Google

from his obedience. "The Lord is well pleased for his righte-
"ousness sake, he will magnify the law and make it honorable."

The value of his sufferings constitute his mediatorial righteousness, to which God has respect, and with which he has delight in the justification of the believer. The sufferings of Christ receive not their virtue from the extent of them or their intenseness, but from the infinitude of his person. Common sufferings of martyrs and others, may raise affections bursting out into floods of tears; but natural feelings and sympathy may be an abundant source of these appearances, and neither faith nor religious affections in them. In reading or hearing any tragical story, how will the heart dissolve, and eyes weep, without the least thought of God, Christ, sin or law. Sympathy and tears for injured and oppressed innocence, suffering and expiring under the hands of cruelty and injustice, are but natural effects from a natural cause.

To understand the value of Christ's sufferings and death, we must consider them in the representation of scripture in a twofold view. As a substitution in our place; and performed in obedience to the law of God.

First, As a substitution in our room and stead. What we justly deserved, but for this substitution, would have been our unhappy portion forever. Under this consideration the sufferings of Christ, as a satisfaction for the curse and penalty of the law, which sinners had incurred, is of infinite moment, it is all and every thing to them that believe.

Secondly, They were underwent in pure obedience to the law. This alone renders his sufferings propitiatory and meritorious, both as an atonement for guilt and a procurement of blessings. It was not mere sufferings themselves abstractly considered, that could create any worth or merit, but it was the divine obedience with which they were impregnated, that gave them all their va-

Digitized by Google

lue. Hence the obedience and righteousness of Christ is of infinite consequence, and is every way acceptable with God, as a substitution for the offences of them that believe. But how do the sufferings of Jesus contain in them such amazing qualities? For this purpose, consider to what they were opposed as a remedy, and the infinite rank and exaltation of the person who suffered.

First, Christ's sufferings were opposed to, and designed as a remedy for sin and rebellion. Obedience and disobedience are opposites in their nature. Man's disobedience, and the obedience of Christ, not only stand in a natural opposition, but the latter is intended to be a redress of the evil of the former. Sin is an infamous and malignant misrepresentation of God and his government. It is a declaration, he is unworthy of the duty and obedience of his creatures. Now to all this misrepresentation of God, and reproach cast upon him, Christ's obedience is opposed as an antidote and remedy. How it answers this end, and becomes of such immense valuation, appears,

Secondly, From the rank, quality, and infinite excellency of his character. He was God, co-equal with the Father in existence, substance and glory. He was independent in his nature, and under no obligation to submission or obedience. He possessed the most perfect knowledge of God, the worthiness of his character, the propriety of his laws, and the justice of his government. Now the subjection and obedience of such a preeminent personage as Jesus, expresses in the most striking manner, the venerable nature of his authority, the holiness and rectitude of his laws, and gives the strongest demonstration of the fitness and equity of the penal sanctions, whereby they are enforced. Thus is apparent the glory of the truth of Christ's declaration, "That he came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it; not to "do his own will, but the will of his Father that sent him."— Hence his perfect obedience is of infinite worth and value, exactly adapted to remedy all the evil of sin, and to restore to divine favor and acceptance every ungodly offender who believes

Digitized by Google

in him. And this obedience expressed in the life, humiliation, sufferings, and death of the Immanuel, is that whereby the law is magnified and made honorable, and forms that very righteousness whereby God is well pleased; and on account of which, he receives to favor and eternal life every soul that believes.—"Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one "that believeth."

A brief improvement shall now conclude this discourse.

First, We learn proper apprehensions of the obedience and mediation of Christ, are of the last importance in the christian life. An error in this point may be of the most dangerous consequence. Life eternal consists not only in knowing the true God, but also Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. The more we discern of the worthiness of God and the excellency of his law as manifested in the obedience of Christ, the more reason and encouragement we have to go to God through faith in him, and build our salvation and acceptance wholly upon him. It is an interesting fear to a person who sees his own heart, has a clear sense of God and the holiness of the law, lest it should not be consistent with the divine perfections and government to shew mercy to him. And until a person duly concerned about sin, and the friendship of Jehovah, comes to have some just discoveries of the intention and worthiness of the obedience of Christ, he can never obtain any true peace or comfort. But when brought to a real and spiritual understanding of the use and value of Christ's meritorious obedience, sees how God is well pleased on the account thereof, how it is consistent with all the laws, attributes and prerogatives of Godhead, to pardon sin and justify the ungodly for the sake of his atoning righteousness, this scatters his fears, fills him with hope and joy, and affords him a sure foundation to build his expectations upon for eternity.

Persons who have never been convinced of sin, and who have but mean apprehensions of the justice of God and the holiness of

Digitized by Google

his law, can easily take the consistency of the divine perfections with the forgivness of sin, for granted. How the honor of God and his law may be reconciled with the salvation of sinners, gives them no trouble. If they may be delivered from wrath and hell, whether it is in a way securing the glory of God or not, gives them not a thoughtful moment. But the soul under an awakening attention to these things, flies to the covert in the righteousness of Christ, as to a tower of safety, consolation and peace. He trusts in this way for justification and the pardon of all his transgressions. This method of salvation is exceeding precious to him. It is in the feelings of his heart, the wisdom of God, and the power of God.

Secondly, Let us all be exhorted, my brethren, to make ourselves acquainted with this glorious plan of acceptance with God, by the meritorious obedience and righteousness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Your salvation depends upon a right and spiritual understanding, and a cordial belief of this truth. If you are blind to this, you are ignorant of an essential branch of the gospel.

Believers must surely rejoice in that which gives pleasure to their God; they cannot but rejoice in this wonderful method of salvation by the obedience and righteousness of the Saviour. Rejoice not in yourselves, nor in your own works, but in Christ Jesus your Redeemer. How precious is the thought, "he is the "Lord our righteousness. Rejoice in him evermore; and again, "I say unto you, rejoice."

And to those who are in darkness respecting all these things, what can be said? Will you continue in blindness and derangement, still to go about to establish your own righteousness, and to set aside the righteousness of God? Allow me to recommend to your serious meditations, this Apostolic counsel, "Awake "thou that sleepest and arise from the dead, and Christ will give "you light."

Digitized by Google

SERMON XXXII.

ADOPTION.

I. JOHN III. 1.

Behold, what manner of love, the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.

ADOPTION is a doctrine of christianity frequently taught us in scripture. It appears in the Old Testament, like other shadows and figures of that dispensation; but in the new, its appearance is in all the splendor of glory and wonder. It is mentioned in the Old Testament, and explained in its nature, uses, and benefits in the new. And here it is introduced by the disciple, whom our Lord loved with a note of wonder and astonishment. The word *behold*, is introductive to various sentences of somewhat different signification in the bible. But it is chiefly employed to command attention to something extraordinary, and out of the usual course of nature; as "behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son," &c.

When the mind contemplates the wonders of divine love, in making children of enemies and rebels, it is lost in astonishment at its nature, manner and accomplishment. With open eyes of surprize, it cries out, "Behold what manner of love." This is the true subject of admiration among all intelligences. The

Digitized by Google

length, breadth, depth and height, is as incomprehensible as the great Supreme. Love, divine love, the ineffable gift or bestowment of God, transcends created conception. "Behold, what "manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us." The term Father, how endearing, tender, and affectionate the appellation? It involves in it every blessing of comfort, provision, and protection. "I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons "and daughters saith the Lord Almighty."

This relation into which men are brought to God in our text, is not a natural one, for by nature they are children of wrath; but it is stiled adoption, receiving, acknowledging and admitting them to relations, honors, immunities and blessings, to which they had no just, natural, or meritorious claim.

In directing your attention to the important doctrine in our text, we shall, by divine assistance, endeavor to consider the nature—properties—and blessings of adoption.

First, With regard to its nature.—It is no distinguishing characteristic of God, that he is the Father of all by creation. In this sense he is the Father of angels, devils and wicked men, of the heavens and earth, and of all creatures animate and inanimate.

Neither again is the exercise of his conferring power and providence, whereby he provides for, and sustains all things, the foundation of this relation. But we become the children of God in a twofold respect.

The term adoption, is borrowed from the civil laws ond usages of all nations. Persons of property, and especially those who have no children, wish to have heirs to their estates—hence, they select children of other families, educate them, sometimes confer upon them their own name, constitute them their own by act of law or testament, and ordain them successors to their inheritance. Thus Pharaoh's daughter adopted Moses to be her son, and Mordecai Esther to be his daughter. These human adoptions

Digitized by Google

proceed upon necessity, whimsical fancy, nearness of kin, and a thousand various motives, all which are very distinct from a divine adoption. But both these adoptions, human and divine, wear a similarity in some respects. They are acts of free pleasure and good will; they are not natives of, but strangers and foreigners to, the families into which they are brought; and they are both called sons, and entitled to certain priviledges.

But infinitely wide is the difference between them. The father of the one is soon enrolled in the bills of mortality; or he may change his mind and will, and appoint another; native heirs may arise and interpose; innumerable accidents may happen to disappoint the expectant; and at any rate the death of the adopter must be tarried for. None of these things can take place in a divine adoption. The Father never dies; never changes his mind, or alters his will; native heirs cannot come into existence or interpose; and the death of the adopter is not to be waited for.

Yet, as observed, there are two things which enter into, and constitute the very essence and nature of adoption, to wit, the act of the adopter, and the act of the adopted.

The act of the adopter is that operation on the heart of a sinner usually called regeneration; whereby he is born again and made a new creature in Christ Jesus. It is described in strong language by St. Peter, when he speaks of it, "as a participation "of the divine nature." Nature is propagated by nature; man begets man. Adam begat a son in his own image and likeness. So God regenerates his children in his own likeness, and after his own image. All the adoptions of men are weak and contemptible pictures, and cannot be stiled even shadows of this. The sun illuminates the world, but its solar nature it communicates not. The rains descend upon the earth, fill its fountains and cause their streams to flow, yet the earth is not made water, but the renovating influences which God gives, "become a well of

Digitized by Google

"water in the soul springing up into everlasting life." Thus God, by regeneration, begets creatures and makes them his children. Surely the new born ought to lift up their voices and proclaim, "What manner of love is this?"

In the important transaction of adoption, there is also the act of the creature. No one becomes a child of God against his own consent. Therefore, it is said, "Ye are all the children of "God by faith in Jesus Christ." Faith is the act of the creature, whereby it acquiesces in the gospel, accepts of Jesus as its Saviour, and returns to God as a prodigal to his Father. At the same time, that regeneration takes place in the soul by the powerful grace of God, the person is justified, and he is adopted by the most High; so also by faith he chearfully consents to be a child of God. He surrenders himself to him, to be instructed, directed, corrected and provided for by him, as a child by his father. Therefore, our Apostle rejoices in this consideration: "Beloved, we are now the sons of God, and it doth not yet ap- "pear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

The great distinction between regeneration and adoption is, the former may be considered as a change of nature; and the latter, as a change of relation, though both constitute a change of condition. Without regeneration, we cannot be made the children of God; and without faith, we cannot commence members of the divine family. But by the one, as the work of God—and by the other, as the exercise of our own hearts, this new and marvelous relation is constituted, which fills all heaven and earth with astonishment.

It is true, adoption and justification bear a similitude to each other in certain respects, as both of them are acts, and neither of them works of grace, strictly so called; yet there is a great distinction between pardon and approbation, acquittal and acceptancce; and between justification and an admission to the high

Digitized by Google

and glorious priviledges of the children of God. Priviledges, who can conceive? Eternity will be exhausted in the retail.

Having thus described the nature of adoption, allow me to lead your contemplations to a view of its properties; which was a

Second thing we proposed for your consideration.

The First property of this relation is, that it cost an immense price. Men, in certain states of society, have paid a great value for relations. Jacob gave fourteen years hard service for his wives. David risked his life and brought in the required foreskins of the Philistines for his. But who ever purchased sons, but the great eternal? And this he did at an infinite expence.—As they could be obtained by no inferior means, he gave the blood of his only begotten Son. It is generally esteemed a high favor for one person to adopt another, without any compensation; but first to pay an exceeding price, then to adopt and constitute an heir of an inheritance beyond all calculation, all that can be said is, this is marvelous in our eyes, and will be an object of wonder forever. "God so loved the world, that he sent "forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law, to re-"deem them that were under the law, that we might receive the "adoption of sons." Here is love for the recovery and adoption of sons, that cherubs cannot comprehend, nor the extensive understanding of Seraphs explain to all eternity. Angels stand amazed at the price paid for the adoption of rebel man. All heaven is filled with wonder, and earth and hell ought to be astonished. "Hear O heavens, and give ear, O earth, I have nour-"ished and brought up children." Remember, "he that spared "not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he "not freely with him give us all things." Here is encouragement for sinners, and consolation and joy for believers.

Secondly, Another property of this adoption is, that it is high and honorable beyond all conception. It is higher than heaven, what can we know? and the depths of hell can afford no concep-

Digitized by Google

tion of it. It hath no measure, nor can it be weighed in balances: "He who hath measured the waters in the hallow of his "hand, and meted out heaven as a span, can give knowledge of "the matter, and shew the way of understanding." A relation to kings and princes of the earth, is deemed a high exaltation. David, when called to enter into connection with the royal family, cried out, "What am I, that I should be thought worthy to "be son-in-law to the king?" Well then may christians exclaim, what are we, hell deserving wretches, that we should be the children of the king of kings, and Lord of Lords? Let us mention it with humility, with profound adoration and praise, what our Lord says, "Go to my brethren and say unto them, I "ascend unto my father and your father, and to my God and "your God." O what is the relation to which sinners are dignified? "Behold what manner of love is this, that we should be "called the sons of God."

A Third property of this relation is its freedom; perfectly free on the part of God and the creature. They are not fettered to each other with worse than chains of brass, as is the case in many relations among men. But God chose from the uninfluenced benevolence of his heart, whom his pleasure was to adopt and constitute his heirs. So they becoming his regenerated and believing children, cordially choose him for their Father, the supreme friend and only portion of their souls. "And they whom "Christ hath made free are free indeed."

Fourthly, A distinguishing property of this relation, is its permanency—it lasteth forever. No human adoption or relation can sustain this character. The longest that can be conceived, bears no proportion to it. All the years of Methusalah, could not constitute a moment. The drop of the bucket, the atom which plays in the sun beam, as they bear no proportion to the ocean and the universe, so there is no comparison of the duration of this relation. It is co-extended with the existence of Jehovah. The interminable nature of this relation makes the heart of

Digitized by Google

the believer to leap for joy. Behold, what manner of love is this which endureth forever.

I proceed to the

Third Head of this discourse, which was to direct your contemplations to the blessings granted to the children of God.—Their blessings are beyond the conception of a created mind; and the tongue of a Seraph could make but a feeble description of them. It is not a mere honorary change of name, like many of the empty titles among men, but this honor involves an infinitude of glory, riches and felicity. A compleat retail of those blessings eternity alone must set forth. All that heaven, in the plenitude of its power and beneficence could bestow, is comprehended herein. A feeble glimpse of these wonders is allowed to saints on earth.

First, One of the eminent blessings of this relation in scripture stile, is "The spirit of adoption." A strong, strange and extensive phrase. What can be its contained ideas? Must they not be something of the following nature: That they are in favor, peace, reconciliation and friendship with God as their Father; that they have an irrevocable interest in all the promises of the immutable covenant of grace; that they are in possession of the indwellings of the Holy Ghost; that they have access to God, and freedom to present their petitions and requests to him as to a Father; that they have a sure bulwark against all the infirmities of the flesh, the assaults of Satan, and the snares of the world. This spirit, feeling or temper, comprehends in it much sweetness, pleasure, consolation and joy. It affords a precious hope, and an undeceiving shore or support to faith; it dispels slavish fears, disperses doubts, quiets misgivings of heart, and diffuses over the soul some sprinklings of assurance; it nourishes and encreases grace, opens the glories of heaven, and fills the heart with anticipation of eternal felicity. I pause, for whose

Digitized by Google

pencil will adventure a description of the spirit of adoption? A Gabriel's stile could not give drapery to the portrait.

A Second blessing is comprised in the term Father itself.—— How replete with sweetness, support and goodness? It contains infinite stores of tenderness, compassion, benevolence, kindness and beneficence. A father is every thing; all provision, instruction, care, protection, direction and safety are expected from him. The love of our heavenly Father is an exuberant and ever flowing fountain of grace to all his children. Hearken to the declaration, the infusion of rapture: "I will be a Father unto "you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord "Almighty." What a field of contemplation opens to the view? God, a Father, able and ready to supply all wants, and gratify every desire, how should this silence every anxious thought, turn away every disturbing molestation, and compose the whole soul into all the tranquility of consolation? His children may firmly say, "The Lord is our helper, we will not fear what man can do "unto us." God, a Father, is a present help in every time of need. "He is a sun and shield, and no good thing will he with-"hold from them that walk uprightly." Let the child of God, ever have his counsel in remembrance, "Fear thou not for I am "with thee, be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will "strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee "with the right hand of my righteousness."

A Third blessing which the heavenly Father confers upon his children in the wilderness of this world, is the guardianship and service of the holy angels. Their guidance, protection and comfort in life, and the manner of wafting their departed souls to glory, are priviledges and favors beyond our ken. "He shall "give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways; "lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. They shall bear thee "up in their hands. Are they not all ministering spirits to them "that shall be heirs of glory?"

A Fourth blessing must be touched upon, comprehending more

Digitized by Google

than can be conceived, that is, their heirship to an eternal inheritance. Who can unfold this inheritance or their title to it? It is high as heaven, what can we say? Immense as God, and as durable as eternity. All things are theirs. They are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. In this blessing every idea is absorbed, and preacher and hearer must be lost together. Heirs of God, the inheritance infinite in every view. Co-heirs with the blessed Jesus, who has gone before like an elder brother to make preparation for their coming. Let the adopted children hear his precious words: "I go to prepare a place for you; I will come "again to receive you to myself, that where I am, there shall ye "be also." They shall dwell in the same region, favoured with the same company, partake of the same enjoyments, and be freed from every species of misery. "There shall be no more death, "neither sorrow nor pain;" no tears nor cause for them in that world; the former things shall be passed away. But who can attempt the description of the length and breadth, the heigth and depth of the inheritance of the children of God. Glory, and honor, and praise to him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever. "Behold, what manner of love is this, "the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called "the sons of God."

Two or three reflections shall conclude this lecture.

The First reflection is, if we turn our thoughts back upon the subject, every hint that has been given, must awaken thoughts of astonishing admiration in the breast of every member of the family of heaven. And those who fear they are not members, and such as wish they were placed in this family, must admire also. God had an eternal Son of his own, the darling co-equal of his bosom, and stood in no need of giving existence to creatures, either superior or inferior for this purpose, much less the reclaiming and renovating of degenerated and rebel subjects.—This fills heaven with wonder, and cannot fail to be marvelous

Digitized by Google

in our eyes. When God had an only begotten Son, did he adopt worms of the dust to be his children and co-heirs with him? Yea, he displayed his Godhead in an infinitely lower stoop than this, to snatch brands from hell, and constitute them heirs of glory. Be astonished, O ye heavens, and let surprising wonder fill the hearts of all the inhabitants of the earth. Behold the love, the ineffable and admirable love of God.

Secondly, We cannot avoid reflecting upon the greatness of the change of sinners. They are changed in nature, and changed in relations. All the faculties of their souls receive a moral reformation; their understandings spiritually illuminated; their wills renovated; their consciences, judgments and affections altered, and they are brought into an exalted state of new relations. God, their father and husband—Jesus, their brother and friend—Angels, their guardians and protectors—and all heaven their relatives. Happy believers, happy converts, happy children of the most High! Truly, blessed are the people, whose God is their Father!

Thirdly, We should reflect, what is becoming the dignified character of this divine relation? Are we put into the family and made the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, how circumspect, how pure, how holy ought we to be? Our deportment should be honest, just, righteous, charitable, devotional, and abundant in every good work, that others may be induced to become the children of God, and glorify our Father who is in heaven.

Let us all be exhorted to be followers of God as dear children. Let the impenitent, unbelieving, and unadopted consider the glorious priviledges and blessings of the gospel spread before them. Here is life, immortality, happiness, and all that heart could rationally wish, freely offered. Can any considerate mind desire more than the gospel proposes? Can they desire a more

Digitized by Google

compleat freedom from sin and its consequences; a more perfect introduction into the favour, peace, and friendship of God, than the overtures made to the world? Remember there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin. Wherefore, the sum of all exhortations is, "Repent and be converted, that your sins may "be blotted out," and that ye may be received as the sons or children of God, when the times of refreshment shall come.

Digitized by Google

SERMON XXXIII.

SANCTIFICATION.

THESSALONIANS IV. 3.

This is the will of God, even your sanctification.

SANCTIFICATION is a doctrine of high importance throughout the whole oracles of God. Without it no justification, no adoption, no works of righteousness, no salvation, no favor with God, or eternal life. Without it, all is lost in time and eternity; no real comfort in this world, or happiness in the next.

The word sanctification, or to sanctify, is employed to express various ideas. It is used in a strange construction, when creatures are said to sanctify God. He has been often sanctified by them in scripture phrase, especially his power, justice and judgment. The Lord declares against the blasphemies of the wicked, "That he will sanctify his name." He will clear up the glory of his character, in all the vengeance he had manifested against his professing people. At the waters of Meribah he was sanctified by rebels. They were reduced to acknowledge his omnipotence, glory and clemency. When Jehovah is praised, his Majesty acknowledged, and due worship paid unto him, then he is said to be sanctified by his creatures. "Sanctify the Lord of

Digitized by Google

"hosts himself, and let him be your fear." And he declares, "I will be sanctified in them that draw near unto me."

The word sanctify, is used for the separation and consecration of things and persons to holy or religious purposes. Thus the Sabbath is sanctified; the tabernacle, temple, priests, altars, sacrifices, garments, &c. were sanctified. So the water in baptism, and the elements in the Lord's supper are sanctified.—Thus christian churches are still so far sanctified as to be set apart from a common to a sacred use.

This word is taken to signify a deliverance from the curse brought upon all creatures by the fall, and under the weight of which all creation groans. This is the scriptural origin of graces at meals. Few christians understand the reason why they should say grace, or ask a blessing when they sit down to meat. The true reason is, we should wait upon God by prayer to remove the curse from the creatures, and instead thereof, through the mediation of Jesus, to confer his blessing upon them. Therefore, the scriptures inform us, "The creature is sanctified by the word of "God and prayer." The nature and ground of these graces have been little considered by religious writers; and christians in general are as far from understanding their use, as others who consider them a mere introduction to eating. Numerous strokes have been made upon persons, who have not religion enough to say grace at their victuals, but you have never had the grounds, reasons and utility of this duty explained, stated and urged upon you. It falls not into the course of my present lectures. But at the same time, I would wish to give a passing discourse upon it; because it would be novel, useful and important.

Another and distinguishing application of the term sanctification, and which, above all, should command our attention, is the cleansing and purifying a sinner from the turpitude, pollution and dominion of sin. Man is defiled, and his moral cleansing must be by sanctification. Hence, says the Apostle, "Such

Digitized by Google

" were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified." Sanctification is not a mere absolution from guilt, or a remission of sin, which is a partial description of justification, but it is a purification of the heart, and a conformity of the soul in a measure to the holy God. There was a ceremonial sanctification, to which the jewish church were under obligation to attend, such as washing their clothes, cleansing their bodies, and putting themselves in an exernal preparation for great displays of divine providence. The Lord said unto Moses, go unto the people and " sanctify them to-day and to-morrow, and let them wash their " cloaths and be ready against the third day," for the reception of the law. Again, " Sanctify yourselves against to-morrow, " and ye shall eat flesh. And sanctify yourselves, for to-mor- " row the Lord will do wonders among you," &c. But the use of the word sanctification in our text, is of the highest moment. This is wholly to be understood in a spiritual manner. Its reference is to the internal frame, temper and disposition of the heart. " For this is the will of God even your sanctification." That is, this is the divine pleasure, that you should be pure in spirit, devotional in the frame of your mind, and holy in all your conversation. That you should serve God from a pure heart, by faith and love unfeigned, and be his children in principle, temper and practice.

St. Paul, in his itineration for the promulgation of the gospel, entered into Thessilonica, a principal city of Macedonia, where he became the happy instrument of converting many souls, gathering and establishing a church, to which afterwards he wrote this epistle from Athens,' to confirm them in the faith which he had preached, and they had espoused. Hence it is filled with a great variety of counsels to godly living and holy walking, as the duty and ornaments of the christian character. He exhorts to chastity, purity, honesty, justice, brotherly love, a peaceable life, minding their own business, temperate and christian sorrow for the dead, &c. The whole sum of all his advice and

Digitized by Google

direction is contained in the words before. We have a full explication of the will of God in the preceding verses. "We beseech you brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as "you have received of us, how ye ought to walk and please God. "so ye would abound more and more, for ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the "will of God, even your sanctification." These things show us, the commandments given in the gospel are the will of God. Herein we are taught the nature, duties and qualities which constitute santification. In leading your attention to this subject, we shall endeavour to enquire,

First, What is sanctification, or what it is to be sanctified.

Secondly, Why the people of God should cultivate all the graces, and practise all the virtues comprehended herein.

As to the

First, The obvious meaning of the word sanctification, in a gospel sense, and in usual christian construction, is, being made, or becoming holy. Therefore, it supposes in it an holy principle, and the effects, excercises and progression of this principle, till the work arrives at perfection. Sanctification is a progressive work. It is a growing in grace, an advancement in godly living, an encrease of conformity to God by works of righteousness. It is carried on in the exercises of faith and love, by the aid and influences of the Holy Spirit. In this business, the soul is active and persevering.

I shall endeavor to explain the nature of sanctification, in the following particulars:

First, It consists in a real and actual dedication of ourselves to God. Thus it is recorded of the Macedonian converts, "They "first gave their ownselves unto the Lord." And to this, in a special manner, St. Paul exhorts the Roman christians; "I be-"seech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye

Digitized by Google

"present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to "God, which is your reasonable service." This dedication is not a mere external service, or ceremonial performance; not a public owning our baptismal obligations, nor an outward assent to any *formula* of the covenant of grace. But it is a solemn internal transaction of the soul with God, to which none can be conscious but the person himself. This is an exercise common to all real christians. Some may have more comfort and pleasure in this transaction than others, yet all, whatever may be their fears and doubts about themselves, sincerely perform it; as all who are true christians believe, whether they have the sensible consolations of grace or not. The language of the soul in this surrender is, "Lord, I dedicate myself, my life, my all to thy "use and service, and my determination is to obey and submit to "thy will, and to be forever thine."

This dedication is not a mere transport of blind passion, but it is a sober act of understanding and judgment also. Hence the Apostle stiles it a reasonable service. It is sustained by the reason and fitness of things. It proceeds upon the firmest grounds. What can be more rational and proper, than that a creature should be wholly devoted to the use and service of his creator?

This dedication is usually accompanied with deep penitential feelings of heart. What regret, what remorse, relentings and self accusations attend the soul in its returning itself to God? It remembers its long alienation, its robbing God of his due, and its manifold and aggravated transgressions. Therefore, he returns blushing, and ashamed to lift up his face to God, and the surrender is often made in floods of tears.

Yet this dedication, though made in meltings of heart, is done with vigour, with spirit and life. It is not performed with coldness and indifference. It is a vital exertion; the whole soul is in it. The divine requisition is, "Yield yourselves to God, as "those who are alive from the dead." You all know with what

Digitized by Google

earnestness and vivacity you perform a piece of service for a friend whom you delight to please. So many a christian has said, had he a thousand souls, he would cheerfully surrender them all to God and his precious Redeemer. But he not only dedicates himself, but his all, his life, his household, his children, these tender fibres of his heart, are consecrated to the eternal Jehovah, to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

You are not to consider this dedication as a single act of the christian life; it is a common employment, and an usual course of exercise. The more he is engaged in the work of sanctification, the more he is in this business of dedication. I apprehend the christian must be in a declining and backsliding state, who is not practising it more or less every day. It is not a periodical service to be performed at baptism or on other sacramental occasions. It ought to be a habitual part of religion, would you comply with the will of God, even your sanctification.

Secondly, Sanctification consists in a diligent mortification of sin. Mortification is a duty much inculcated on christians in the holy scriptures. It was taught and exemplified by Christ, and abundantly preached by the Apostles, and strongly exhibited to the world in the lives of the martyrs and primitive christians.

With regard to mortification, which is an important constituent of sanctification, it consists not in torturing or lascerating our bodies, going on pilgrimages, or sacrificing our property at the altars of shines, bowing the knee at the tombs of the dead, or offering hecatomes of wealth to idolatrous images and idols. It consists not in denying ourselves rational and scriptural gratifications. But mortification is more mortifying to the human heart, than any of these things. It consists in denying ourselves, warring against our corruptions, watchfulness of our heart and conduct, striving against sin, overcoming the world, fighting the good fight of faith, walking humbly with God, and following the example of Christ Jesus. The instructions upon this branch

Digitized by Google

of sanctification are, "If any man will be my disciple, let him "deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. If thy hand "or thy foot offend thee, cut them off and cast them from you, "it is better for thee to enter into life, halt or maimed, rather "than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting "fire. If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from "thee, it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather "than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire. Mortify your "members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, "inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, "which is idolatry. If ye through the spirit do mortify the "deeds of the body, ye shall live." These selected authorities, to which many more might be easily added, teach us the whole doctrine of mortification, that it lies not in inhuman severities, but only in disallowing ourselves in carnal and prohibited indulgencies; avoiding sin, resisting Satan, endeavoring to live above the world, and cultivating the virtues of purity, chastity, honesty and righteousness. These things are of the highest moment to christians, would they progress in sanctification, or be observent of, or obedient to the will of God. It is renouncing the works of the flesh, striving against the selfish propensities, avoiding the occasions of sin, keeping as far as possible from the ways and places of temptation, and faithfully endeavouring to be watchful in all their business and conversation.

A life of self-denial, is the life of sanctification. And this self-denial consists wholly in a non-compliance with the dictates of depravity, and a gracious and sincere endeavour for a reduction to the will of God. It is enough, and generally more than the christian can do, to deny himself according to the gospel. He need not turn *anchorite*, go a pilgrimaging, and cast all his fortune at the foot of a shine. This has been done a thousand times in pride, ignorance and custom, without the smallest spice of sanctification. The whole of mortification is a mere non-compliance with those things which the gospel prohibit. And he who

Digitized by Google

carries on this opposition to his fleshly inclinations, is sanctifying himself, and conforming to the will of God in our text.——But a

Third thing constituting this commanded sanctification, is what systematic writers stile *vivification*: that is, living to the glory of God, alive in duty and in all practical holiness. The scriptures teach a dying unto sin, and a living unto righteousness. The former is mortification, and the latter vivification. This branch of sanctification is of essential consequence in the christian life. It exhibits itself in good works, or in the works of righteousness. Vivification consists in the positive practice of gospel duties, and in holy living. Three things are necessary to good works, or the cultivation of gospel virtues. They must originate from a renewed and good heart. Make the tree good, and then the fruit will be good. A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruits, neither can a heart of depravity produce works acceptable to God. The works of righteousness always flow from a believing mind; for without faith, it is impossible to please God. They must be performed with a view to the glory of God. The gospel commandment on this head is, "Whatsoever ye do, whether ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God." This exalted end must have a habitual influence upon the tenor of the christian's deportment, conduct, conversation and practice. Not that it is explicitly recollected in every act, but this ought to be the virtual, general, and ultimate scope of all our duties and works. "Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit which are God's." Good works must ever be in conformity to the divine law, and in obedience to the will of God. This is an absolutely necessary quality in them. "I delight in thy law," says St. Paul, "after the inward man. Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you. As many as walk according to this rule, peace be unto them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."

Digitized by Google

Thus I have given you a brief description of the nature of sanctification, the great constituent articles of which are self dedication, self denial, and living to God in holy duty, obeying his commandments, keeping his statutes, and observing his ordinances.

I proceed to the

Second head of this discourse, which was to consider why the people of God should cultivate all the graces, and practise all the virtues comprehended in the term sanctification.

First, It is for the honor of Jehovah, for the honor of every person in the adorable Trinity, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. For the honor of the Father, because he hath chosen us to be holy "through sanctification of the Spirit." This is the aim of his gospel, and design of all his providences, both prosperous and adverse, that we may be partakers of his holiness.—It is for the honor of the Son, our Saviour. This was a leading purpose of redemption; that he might sanctify us, and present us to God without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.—It is for the honor of the Holy Ghost; hence he is often stiled our sanctifier. He fashions all the vessels of glory, and decks the spouse with the jewels of the covenant. He dwells in the saints, forming them to be temples of holiness. Therefore, be ye holy in all manner of conversation as your Maker, Redeemer, and Sanctifier are holy.

Secondly, We should sanctify ourselves, because of the hopes to which we are called, and the happiness to which our expectations are raised. These cannot be obtained unless we become holy. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Oftentimes the word saints, is confined to those who are departed; but we must be saints here, or we will never be saints hereafter. What could they do in heaven, who are not saints? Could they enjoy God, who are destitute of a pure heart? All that region is

Digitized by Google

holiness; all the business, and employments, and pleasures there are holy; therefore, it can be no place of felicity to unsanctified souls. Hence they who entertain hopes, and are expectants of heaven, must be diligent in the work of sanctification. They must be purifying themselves, as all that world is pure.

Thirdly, Sanctification is both our duty and our interest. The whole duty of man is to keep the commandments of God. To seek God and serve him, ought to be his principal business. Duty and interest are wisely and inseperably connected by the divine constitution; hence, their combined force, ought to influence us to cultivate all the graces, and carefully and perseveringly practise all the virtues contained in the term sanctification.

Fourthly, This is the command of the supreme Jehovah:— "This is the will of God, even your sanctification. Be ye holy, "for I the Lord your God, am holy. Ye shall sanctify your- "selves, and ye shall be holy for I am holy." There would be no end in retailing the authorities to this purpose. The whole bible is intended for our sanctification.

A brief application, must conclude this discourse.

First, This doctrine exhibits a terrible aspect upon the graceless and ungodly. The portion of the Lord is an holy portion, but these have no lot nor interest in the matter. Unless they speedily commence the work of sanctification, they will be eternally undone. In vain are all pretensions to the favour of God, futile are all hopes of heaven, while we remain destitute of sanctification. "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall "the ungodly and the sinner appear? The wicked shall be turn- "ed into hell, and all the nations that forget God." O that impenitent sinners would awake to consideration. Would to God this principle could be impressed upon their consciences, that without sanctification, they must bear the excruciating pains of eternal wrath, and dwell in a lake of fire and brimstone forever

Digitized by Google

and ever. Let the ungodly fear and tremble, for the day of vengeance is hastening on.

Secondly, This doctrine administers a strong hint of caution to all the professors of christianity. Beware you do not deceive yourselves in this all important business. Take heed you be not beguiled with shadows for substance, with appearances for realities. There are many things that wear a resemblance of sanctification. Such as formality, restraining grace, orderly living, attendance upon sacraments, performing the external duties which we owe to our families, to society and to the church, a freedom from gross outrageous immoralities, &c. By all these things, our foolish and selfish hearts are carried to an improper dependance, and a fallacious hope. Let us walk softly, cautiously and circumspectly. Let us take heed unto our ways.

Thirdly, We should apply this subject in the examination of ourselves. Have we entered upon the work of sanctification, according to the gospel? Have we begun to sanctify? Have we made a sincere and unreserved surrender and consecration of ourselves, soul and body, household and children, and all to God? Are we keeping our bodies under, mortifying the flesh, denying all ungodliness and every worldly lust? Are we dying to sin, and living to righteousness? Are we conscientiously practising those duties from faith and love, which enter into the living nature of sanctification? In one word, is it the prevailing bent of our hearts, the habitual tendency of our desires, and the ardent breathings of our souls after sanctification? All who can answer in the affirmative to those few comprehensive queries, let them rejoice in the Lord, and magnify his grace. Proceed on in this holy work. Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Proceed from grace to grace, from virtue to virtue, and from duty to duty, until you shall appear perfect in Zion. Run, strive, wrestle, fight, and you shall come off conquerors, and more than conquerors, through him that

Digitized by Google

loved you and died for you; who suffered without the gate, that his people might be sanctified with his own blood. O that we might all advance towards heaven, progress in religion, and ever wait upon the Lord. "They that wait upon the Lord shall re-"new their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; "they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not "faint."

Digitized by Google

SERMON XXXIV.

THE NATURE AND NECESSITY OF HOLINESS.

HEBREWS XII. 14.

Follow holiness, without which, no man shall see the Lord.

MAY I be allowed to introduce this subject as the most solemn and important, that can be brought into the view of christians. This comprehends the whole extent of the christian character for time and eternity. If we are holy, we are happy—the reverse is eternal misery. This single article determines the destiny of all the children of men; hence, it ought to be a matter of the highest attention. If holy, happiness is its inseperable consequence—a different character stands connected with inexpressible misery. No person then can wonder at the Apostle's affirmation, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."—This holiness, in putting on the new man, which is created in righteousness. It is what St. Peter terms, "a participation of "the divine nature." St. Paul stiles it, "Christ formed within "us." The sanctified soul is the scriptural temple of God:—"Ye are the temples of God, as God hath said, I dwell in them "and walk in them," Holiness is a ray from the sun of righteousness, a beam from the Father of lights. All the glories of nature opened to the mind of the philosopher, are as shadows on

Digitized by Google

his glass, compared with the transcendent beauty of holiness.—The highest glory a creature can receive, "is to be holy, as God "is holy." Holiness brings an intelligence into the nearest possible resemblance of the great Supreme.

It would be impertinent to spend a moment on the phrase of *seeing God*; every christian knows it involves the whole possession of the most perfect felicity. Therefore, the idea in the text is fully comprehended in this expression, "Without holiness, no "happiness." Crowns and sceptres, the riches of Crœsus, and the worlds of Alexander, are pleasures of a moment. They vanish previous to enjoyment. "What is a man profited, if he "should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul, or what "can he give in exchange for his soul?" Happiness is the eager pursuit of the whole world, yet no object is more missed, or less obtained. Let us contemplate the practice of man; their language is, "let us take our pleasure, acquire wealth, eat drink and be merry, for these contain the essence of felicity." But whatever a dark world think or say, an infinitely wise God has fixed the whole matter, "holiness is happiness." This is its nature, fruits and effects. Professions, external appearances, and a model of performances answer not the purpose. We may proclaim with a loud voice, "We are not as other men are, we are no extor-"tioners, adulterers or unjust persons, we pray much, fast often, "and pay all our dues to church and state." Yet, alas! how remote is this from gospel holiness? There are many who are pure in their own eyes, and yet not washed from their filthiness. Some are whited sepulchres, that appear beautiful outwardly, but within are full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness.

Some display themselves in apparent holiness, like meteors of the night, and make an ineffectual noise, like crackling of thorns under a pot. These external shows are mere resemblances, and far from realities.

In the constitution of gospel holiness, three ingredients are of essential consequence: a holy nature, a holy frame of mind, and a holy walk and conversation.

Digitized by Google

An holy disposition lies at the foundation of all this business. This is the fundamental constituent of its nature. "He is not a "jew, who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which "is outward in the flesh; but he is a jew who is one inwardly, "and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in "the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." Hearken to our Lord, when he lays the foundation of this holiness:— "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, "he cannot see the kingdom of God." That is, he must be so changed as to have an holy nature and disposition, before an actual conformity to God can take place. He must be made a new creature, created a new in Christ Jesus, &c. This ground work of holiness, however inexplicable to us in an abstracted view, however marvelous the operation may be, yet nothing can be more real or certain. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, "and thou hearest the sound thereof, and canst not tell whence "it cometh, and whether it goeth; so is every one that is born "of the Spirit." We know that our food, in a manner hidden from us, diffuseth itself through the whole body, by certain functions adapted to the purpose; so here this is termed the "hidden "man of the heart; a life hid with Christ in God." We know not how our souls and bodies become united, and how they reciprocally operate upon each other. The most illiterate man is acquainted with the fact; but all the studies of philosophic science have never explained. Although perhaps we shall remain forever ignorant of the *modus* of the introduction of this principle, as we are of the principle of life, the principle of breathing, which we experience every moment, yet it is as substantial a certainty as life and breath. An *idealist* may renounce the one, and a *physiologist* the other, yet the christian will ever firmly believe in these renovating influences of the Spirit of God.

That holiness which has its origin in this fountain, and manifests itself by its issues, we shall endeavour to consider under the following particulars, a certain illumination of the mind—an

Digitized by Google

election of the soul of new objects—and from both these arise new affections, and a practice to which the gospel gives the style of holiness.

These things will forever remain as wonderful and incredible to the dark mind, as the doctrine of the new birth to Nicodemus, who was afterwards known by the denomination of the *night disciple*.

The first thing originating from regeneration, and as a radical sonstituent of holiness, is what is commonly stiled an illumination of the mind. This illumination is in experience a very extensive phrase. It sheds its light and influence over every branch of religion, both in experience and practice. No procedure in the business of life without light, so this will appear to be the case in this spiritual illumination. This whole business, the renovation of man, and forming him unto holiness, rendering him acceptable to God and meet for heaven, is with great propriety and accuracy, described in our Shorter Catechism, in answer to the question of effectual calling, by saying, "It is a work of God's "Spirit, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our "minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he "doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, as freely "offered in the gospel." The first thing created in the natural world was light, so in the new creation, the source of all holiness is light. When in the beginnings the Spirit moved upon the dark chaotic mass, and God said, "Let there be light and there "was light." So in this matter of holiness, "God who com-"manded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our "hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in "the face of Jesus Christ." Formerly, "They had their un-"derstandings darkened, being alienated from the life of God, "through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness "of their minds." Here the line of distinction is formed between the ungodly and souls that have entered upon holiness. The former are in darkness, which cannot be described but by saying it is

Digitized by Google

darkness itself. "Those who believe not their eyes are blinded," but he who once makes a dedication of himself to God, what light, glory, and splendor, unveil all the paths of duty, and point with sun beams, his way to God and felicity? "They with "open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are "changed into the same image, from glory to glory," that is, from holiness to greater degrees of holiness, "even as by the "Spirit of God." This illumination poured upon the visive eye of regeneration, has an indescribable efficacy, directing the soul to new apprehensions of God, to humiliating discoveries of sin, and to the wonders of salvation by Jesus Christ. All is astonishing in his view, and overcoming to his heart.

New discoveries of God cause him to mantle his face in dust, and cry out, "Lord I have heard of thee by the hearing of the "ear, but now mine eye seeth thee." O how does this enlightened sight, humble the heart, fill it with relentings for all its sins, and introduce floods of unutterable joy to the soul. Rejoice, O illuminated minds, in holiness—and again rejoice. You believe, you see and know God and Jesus Christ; and this is life to your souls, it is life eternal. This illumination is a light which will never be extinguished. It is life from the dead; even life everlasting. You behold the glory of the only begotten of the Father. This vision is your holy life; and the life of this life, is your precious Saviour. He bursts in effulgency upon your mind, he appears to your souls, "the chief among ten thousand." He charms, he captivates and overwhelms the soul; and this is the beginning of holiness. The rays of spiritual light irradiating the darkened mind; the discovery made by Archemides of the deceit in the weight of Hieroin's crown, or Herchel's new planet thrown into his glass, afforded no pleasure equal to this. These were momentary flashes of rapture; but this is a rising, continual, encreasing and eternal light. The sun will be extinguished, and moon and stars will become dim with age, but this will flourish in unfading glory. "Christ is made of God, wisdom, and

Digitized by Google

"righteousness, and sanctification and redemption." The soul under the radiancy of this divine light, exclaims, "Who is this "that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, "this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness "of his strength?" The transporting answer to the illuminated mind is, "I that speak in righteousness and mighty to save." How transcendently glorious is the whole plan of salvation to the enlightened soul, by the mediatorial offices of Jesus, and a return "to God in the way of holiness. "The people of God shall be "willing in the day of his power in all the beauties of holiness." They live and exhibit holy actions from new principles. "Where-"as in time past, they walked according to the course of this "world, and according to the prince of the power of the air, the "spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience; but now "are they washed, sanctified and justified in the name of the "Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Under this blessed view of divine realities, the whole soul goes forth in breathings after holiness. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, "so doeth the renewed soul for God, the living God." The brightness of this illumination at seasons fills the heart with extacy, and causes it to cry out, "Whom have I heaven but thee, "and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee?" His soul longs and faints for the courts of God, and his heart and flesh crieth out for the living God. The soul in this branch of holiness, comparitively, delights in no other object but God and the Saviour, and all his pleasure, comfort and happiness is in his duty, obedience to the divine commandments, and in attendance upon divine ordinances. "He feels it his meat and drink to do "the will of his heavenly Father." His conscience is made tender, and becomes the centinel of the soul. His language is, "herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void "of offence toward God and toward man." A watch is stationed upon the door of the lips, and a covenant is the covert and direction of his eyes, and thus he is employed in holiness. The

Digitized by Google

man thus engaged is a new creature. "Old things are passed "away, and all things are become new."

The Second thing contained in the nature of holiness, is an holy frame of mind. This is so much comprehended in the spirit of illumination, that my observations here will be few. Without a godly temper, no holiness can exist. "For to be carnally "minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." This holy frame may be considered as habitual, or in active exercise. None can be saved without the former; and there is little comfort, pleasure, or hope without the latter. Those who have not holy habits, may undoubtedly conclude they have not holy natures. This was the frame which caused Joseph to resist the temptation of his mistress, and gave him boldness to say, "How can I commit this great wickedness and sin against God?" This habitual frame is a constant caution against sin, and a prevailing excitement to the performance of duty. This influenced the Psalmist to say, "O God thou art my God, early will I seek "thee, and because thy loving kindness is better than life, my "lips shall praise thee." At times this holy frame is in sweet and actual exercise. Then the soul is elevated; its views strong, and its pleasures joyful. His thoughts are exalted in the reverence of God; he feels himself as nothing in his presence; and the transcendent excellencies of Jehovah, swallow up his whole powers; and overwhelmed in admiration, all he utters is, "my Lord "and my God." It was an extacy of this frame made St. Paul "declare, He knew not whether he was in the body or out of the "body." This frame awakens all the tender passions of the soul, carries it beyond itself, raises to heaven, and places terrene things beneath its feet; gives life in duty, and all his purposes are marked with zeal to promote the divine glory. These elevated frames are usually transitory in the present life. It is best they should be so; perhaps their continuance would unfit us for our present station. They are rapture while they last, and joy and pleasure are in their train.

Digitized by Google

The Third thing mentioned as a necessary constituent of holiness, and which exceeds all the rest, and affords evidence and proof to the preceding, is an holy walk and conversation. The foolish and impertinent language of modern times is, when every thing external witnesses a reprobate life, where no virtue, order or morality is exhibited to view, then the carnal world applies to invisibles, and pronounces "he has a good heart." But if the life and conversation be not virtuous, holy, and good, it is a reproach upon goodness to speak of a good heart. "Be not de-"ceived," saith the Apostle, "God is not mocked, for whatsoe-"ver a man soweth, that shall he also reap." We can impose upon each other, and delude one another to perdition, but Omniscience admits not of deceit or imposition. The life is the character, and if this be wicked and unrighteous, all pretences and professions will fail. The heavenly decree is, "Be ye holy in "all manner of conversation." We may pretend to holy illuminations, holy views and exercises as much as we please, and to all the invisibilities of religion, if time be allowed for an holy practice, the latter according to scripture, and reason is the only demonstration of the former. Our text is an aphorism not to be disputed or changed, "Without holiness, no man shall see the "Lord." The blessing of heaven is settled upon the holy, and none else: "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that "they may have right unto the tree of life, and may enter in "through the gates into the city." No religious fits, however pompous, extravagant or showy, will prove a reality of holiness, without a sober, temperate and godly conversation. All real godliness will prove itself by a mind illuminated and taught in experimental and practical religion; by the sweet experiences of holy views, exercises and frames; and the whole must be testified and proved by a decent, orderly and holy conversation.—These things will prove to the church, to the world, and our consciences, that we have entered into the ways of holiness. And if found in these ways, we have the promise of a faithful God;

Digitized by Google

through prosperity, and adversity, we shall be guided and directed to eternal glory.

More uses than can be attended to, ought to be the improvement of this subject—It embraces the whole system of religion in doctrine, faith and practice, therefore, a selection for application must be easy.

First, We are here taught that holiness is of essential consequence to happiness. Without the one, the other is inattainable. All wish for happiness, but few, very few, seek it in the way of holiness. A wicked Balaam desired "to die the death of the "righteous, and that his latter end might be as his." But it would have been of infinitely greater moment, to have been living the life of the righteous, or breathing out our souls with the spouse, "O thou whom my soul loveth, tell me where thou "makest thy flocks to feed, where thou dwellest, that there I "may be and dwell also." A voice from heaven declaring us the favorites of God, could not create felicity equal to this. The coming of an angel, as he did to Mary, "pronouncing her highly "favoured of the Lord," yet an holy nature in our souls would be ineffably preferable. Had we a discovery of God, as Moses in the clift of the rock, yet true holiness of heart would be far better. Fear the Lord, and serve him with integrity of soul. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the last "end of that man is peace. Give unto the Lord the glory due "unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."

Secondly, This doctrine recommends and enjoins with the highest sanctions, both of promises and threatenings, our cultivation of, and progression in holiness. The promise is, "The "path of the righteous shall shine more and more unto the perfect "day." The joints, bands, and ligaments of the new man in Christ, "having nourishment ministered and knit together, in-"creaseth with the increase of God. The divine power hath "given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness,

Digitized by Google

"through the knowledge of him who hath called us to glory and "virtue: whereby we have exceeding great and precious pro- "mises." And besides these, all that is requisite in this life for holiness, and a compleat preparation for the life to come, is fully comprehended in this counsel, "Giving all diligence, add to your "faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge tem- "perance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godli- "ness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly "kindness, charity. For if these things be in you and abound, "you will neither be barren nor unfruitful in this world;" nor will you miss of an eternity of glory and felicity in the next.—Happy are all the souls, who have begun a course of holiness.

Thirdly, This doctrine should direct every one, minister and hearer, into a serious consideration of himself, his disposition, temper and practice. At present, the application shall be made to simple feelings and experience. Have we ever beheld the beauty and excellency of divine objects, sheding new and strange feelings into our souls? The discovery has irradiated the understanding, subdued the will, reformed the choice, and captivated the affections, and all before it is God. The transcendent holy beauty and amiableness of the Father and the Saviour, awakens pantings of heart to be transformed into that similitude, and the enjoyment of the object is all its desire and all its wish. These views open a spring in the soul, whose streams are eternal life. David had this blessing, when he said, "As the hart panteth for "the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My "soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." No man ever equalled these feelings but St. Paul, when he exclaimed, "For "me to live is Christ, and to die is gain," the more common employment of the Apostle, and shows the experience of every christian is expressed in these words: "I press towards the mark "for the high prize of the calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Let our reflections at present be limited to these three ques-

Digitized by Google

tions. Have we ever seen divine things in the light of the gospel? Is holiness our greatest desire, and sin our greatest abhorrence? Have we ever seen ourselves in the glass of the law, and has the deformed object caused us to loath ourselves and repent in dust and ashes? Are we making the glory of God the habitual end of our conduct? Is it our daily prayer to know our duty, and to have grace to perform it? Are we maintaining communion with God, living by faith on Christ Jesus, and making religion our business?

Let us all be exhorted to be pursuing after holiness. It is spiritual life, and the soul of eternal felicity. Let us never forget, "That without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. Godliness "is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that "now is, and of that which is to come."

Digitized by Google

SERMON XXXV.

LOVE TO GOD THE GREAT COMMANDMENT.

MARK XII, 80.

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment.

AMONG all the teachers of religion who have appeared in our world, Moses and Christ have been pre-eminent. The former was the first writer on the origin of the world, the state of man, and the nature and advantages of religion. The latter explained his inspiration, established his principles, and perfected all his sacrifical and ceremonial appointments, and opened the way to the favor of God and eternal felicity, in a way and manner the most simple, plain and easy. The humiliation of Christ Jesus, his ignominious sufferings on the cross as a fulfilment of the law and an atonement for sin, has ever been, and will be an object of contempt to a blind and deluded world till the day of judgment, when God, in all the fullness of deity, perfection and glory, will be unfolded to the utmost conception of angels and men. This event will fill the universe with all the feelings and passions of creation. The present language of mortals dare not attempt the scene. Its horrors on the left hand, and its blessing on the right, must be refered to the falling curtain.

Digitized by Google

The religion promulgated by Christ, was preferable to that of Moses. This was burthened with rites and ceremonies ; and the other was cloathed with a simplicity adapted to the feeblest understanding, yet the essential articles of religion were still the same : " Love to God and man."

Moses had established this principle by a revelation from heaven, that love to God was the foundation of happiness to the whole intellectual universe. And the essential ingredients of this love, are sincerity, supremacy and perseverance. Hence the strong, periphrastic and irresistable language of our text is employed, " Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, " and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy " strength. This is the first commandment." The enumeration here of the distinguished faculties of man, is intended to impress our souls with the infinite importance of the intenseness, sublimity and purity of the affection due to God. It ought to hold such a sway and dominion over all the powers of the mind, as to exclude all idols, and to banish all other competitors from the supreme seat of the heart. Hence heart, soul, mind and strength, are here by our Lord collected into one groupe, to teach us that every power, faculty and passion in man, should be devoted in love to God.

It would not comport with my intended brevity in these lectures, to enter into the philosophy of the human passions and affections, either in describing their nature as essential constituents of every intellectual being, and how they distinctly operate and influence man, who is a compounded creature. Man stands as a singular instance of creation, entirely different from all the other works of God. He is material and immaterial, which is characteristic of no other beings. Moralists have divided the human passions into original and their consequents, into simple and mixed. With regard to simple and radical passions, they have been much divided ; but amidst all the variety of their enumera-

Digitized by Google

tion on this head, they have all agreed, that love is one of the first, simple and original passions of the soul of man. And this is the passion, as it respects God, to which our attention shall be directed at this time. Relative love, or love to our neighbour, shall be matter of future consideration.

Love to God, reason and scripture declare to be a fundamental article of religion. Therefore, to understand its nature, to experience its operation, and to be acquainted with its effects, is of the highest consequence to all the children of men.

Our business at present shall be,

First, To enquire into its nature.

Secondly, How it operates and manifests itself.

First, As to the nature of holy or divine love, two things must be pre-supposed as its foundation. An amiableness in the object, and some just apprehensions or conceptions thereof.

That God is infinitely amiable, transcendently excellent, supremely worthy, and inconceivably beautiful in all his perfections, none who believe his existence, will venture to deny. If this be the case, then all created intelligences ought to esteem, respect, and regard him above all other objects. All the beauties of creation, scattered through the starry worlds, and spread over the animal and vegetable kingdoms in this, are only drops of the bucket compared with him, the source and ocean of glory.—Hence, God is the sum of all amiableness, excellency and beauty, whether he be perceived or understood, and esteemed as such or not. This is a maxim. He is thus in himself. Excellency, perfection, and incomparable glory, all which express incomprehensible amiableness, are every where attributed to him in the sacred oracles. "Shall not his excellency make you afraid? "How excellent in all the earth is his name? Your Father in "heaven is perfect. Great is the glory of the Lord. He has

Digitized by Google

"set his glory above the heavens." Yea, he is perfectly, eternally and immutably glorious; hence he is altogether amiable and worthy of the most exalted love of all his intelligent creatures throughout the unbounded extension of his dominions.

The next thing, as the ground of divine love, is proper apprehensions, and just conceptions of this transcendent amiableness and holy beauty. These the angels have, according to their various capacities, from the highest archangel down to the lowest grade; these all the spirits of just men made perfect have; the devils and wicked men, however they may believe, and fear and tremble, have not, neither can they have these conceptions. No such ideas ever did, or ever will enter into hell. And in this world, they are peculiar to the regenerated and spiritually illuminated. Spiritual beauties and glories, can only be discerned by spiritual minds.

The origin of this love, in every true believer, arises from beholding God infinitely excellent, transcendently glorious, and altogether lovely. Real and deluded christians, both love God; the one is true and sincere, the other false and hypocritical.—The one takes its rise from views of the amiableness of God, and the beauty of all his glorious perfections; the other from mistaken apprehensions that God loves them, will do them good, and make them happy forever. The one is a genuine, and the other a spurious passion. The one a benevolent, and the other a selfish affection. The one arises from perceiving God altogether excellent, the other from beholding himself as highly favoured. Hence, the language of the latter always is, "We thank God, "we are not as other men." Whereas the habitual breathings of the former, in the valley of humility and self-abasement, are, "Behold we are vile, God be merciful to us sinners."

Now a genuine or evangelical love to God, is to have the soul attracted to him under conceptions of the glories of his excellencies; an inclination of the whole heart to be near him and like

Digitized by Google

him; and supreme desires to be obedient, and submitted to all his pleasure. He is, in the view of the soul, "The chief among "ten thousand and one altogether lovely. Beholding as in a "glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image "from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." This amiableness, being superior to all things, therefore, the soul loves him above all, more than the world and the things of the world, more than father or mother, or any other possible enjoyment.

The soul is also drawn to God, from the wonderful displays of his mercy and grace in the gospel. He has made such discoveries of the beauty of all his perfections in the admirable scheme of redemption, and has caused all his glory to shine in the face of Jesus Christ, that the soul is hereby captivated, charmed and delighted. He longs to be near him and like him, and to have communion with him, an open intercourse and perfect intimacy; or, in one word, to see him as he is.

The formal nature of this love seems to be not so much a single affection, as the general bent, inclination, and prevailing tendency of all the affections and powers of the soul towards God: Therefore, to love God, is as much as possible to have the whole heart elevated and directed towards him, and to exercise all the faculties on him as its chief object. Hence the words of the precept are, "Thou shalt love with all thy heart, and with all thy "soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." That is, with the united and combined force of all thy powers. But the beauty and excellency of this state of mind, or this love, is best seen in its operation and effects. The scriptures dwell little upon its nature, but they are abundant in the descriptions of its fruits and manifestations. Which leads me to the

Second head of this discourse, which was to consider how it operates or manifests itself. The definition which St. John gives of this affection, is very remarkable. "This is love, that we walk

Digitized by Google

"after his commandments." The Apostle does not say, that walking after the commandments of God is a proof or evidence of love, but he declares it is love itself. We are never to understand, that an observance of the divine precepts is one thing, and love another. They are inseparably the same, and mutually involve each other. To keep the commandments of God, not only intends a well adjusted external conduct, but also, that this conduct originates from love, and that love is diffused throughout the whole. Love is often affirmed in the scriptures, "To be the "fulfillment of the law." Love is the grace or virtue flowing through and seasoning all our duties and obedience, which give the same acceptance with God. In want of this, all a person can or may do is nothing. He may give his body to the flames, be crowned with the honors of martyrdom, and bestow all his goods to feed the poor, yet all this will not admit him to heaven, or entitle him to any divine reward.

Let us reduce this matter to a few particulars.

First, Divine love will awaken in the soul thoughts highly honorable of God. It cannot allow us to think meanly, much less injuriously of its object. It is a contradiction to the very existence of love, to indulge any thought of God that is dishonorable to him. The soul in the proper exercise of love can conceive nothing wrong in the divine character, judgments, punishments or Providential dispensations. In the most gloomy and dreadful scenes, the soul cries out, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." Not all the reasoning and arguments in the world will produce this temper without love. But love will exalt and vindicate God in all his ways. This is its native exercise, its free and genuine operation.

Secondly, Love will manifest itself in rendering due homage, reverence and worship to God. It will acknowledge with all the heart his greatness, goodness, dominion and authority. It will make a person extol God, and be pleased when he is extolled.

Digitized by Google

It fills the soul with grief when it beholds him dishonored and contemned. It goes to our heart when one we sincerely love is abused or insulted. Thus love will operate when God is neglected or treated with contempt. Thus saith David, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes because men keep not thy law."

Thirdly, Love will dispose to all acts of obedience to God. This is the unfailing and efficacious spring of all that obedience which is gracious or saving. Love is the very essence of Gospel obedience. It is as absurd to suppose obedience, without love, as day without light or night without darkness. Obedience flows from love as streams from a fountain. And as the water in the stream is the same with that in the source, so this love diffuses itself thro' the whole system of obedience. Thus where love is, due obedience will be practised.

Fourthly, Divine love will display itself in thanksgiving and praise to God for his mercies and favours. The language of the heart is, "What shall I render to the Lord, for all his benefits?" The disposition to render praise and gratitude to the most High, is always as the degree of love, and respect to him. The more love, the more is the soul employed in blessing, prayer, and thanksgiving. All ingratitude originates from a destitution of love. We have little feeling of favors conferred upon us by persons for whom we have no respect. But benefits received from those that we highly esteem, awaken the tender sensibilities of the heart. We feel our obligation to them in another manner, than to those for whom we have no such regard. That we should praise God, and give thanks unto his name, seems to be a kind of universal scripture precept, but we see there can be no acts or performances of this sort without love. Hence love essentially forms the nature of all to thanksgiving and praise.

Fifthly, Love will exercise itself in resignation and submission to the disposing will of heaven. It will banish all hard thoughts

Digitized by Google

of, all murmering and repining against the Sovereign of the Universe. Love will exhibit a subjection to, a satisfaction and contentment with the allotments of Divine Providence. This will dispose us to choose rather to be at the disposal of God, under all circumstances, than to be at our direction independent of his will. If our circumstances be low in the world, and our tables covered with the coarsest fare, yet if the love of God be present in the heart, we shall have more pleasure than the wicked who fare sumptuously every day. Therefore says Solomon, "Bet-"ter is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox with ha-"tred therewith." If we are on beds of sickness and pain, love will be as a divine lenitive or a relieving medicine. It will create patience in the soul, and cause it sweetly to resign to the will of its heavenly Father, saying, "Not my will but thine be done."

Lastly, Love will effectually dispose every person to walk with God. He will choose to have holy intercourse and communion with him. He will be much and fervent in prayer. The sabbath will be his delight—He will have pleasure in all the public and private offices of religion. The participation of the holy sacraments fills his heart with consolation. How comes it so few attend the table of the Lord throughout all our churches? Is not the neglect of this ordinance owing to the want of love? Was there more love the holy table would be better filled with guests. Where love induces us to wait upon God thro' the medium of this institution, and we behold Jesus symbolically represented before us, how do our hearts receive him with a pleasing rapture, crying, "This is our beloved and this is our friend." But time would fail me to glance upon all the operations and manifestations of divine love. It is the soul of all religion; diffuses itself thro' every grace; is the life of every duty; and the beauty of every virtue." Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, "and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy "strength: This is the first commandment?

A few reflections must terminate this pleasing theme.

Digitized by Google

First, It herein appears that love is essential to peace of conscience and to the favor and enjoyment of God. Love is the great source of all piety and goodness. All the acceptable worship, honor and adoration of God flows from love; all holy obedience is the exercise of love; all evangelical sorrow for sin is impregnated with love. They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness as one that is in bitterness for his first born. They shall behold him amiable and desirable whom they have pierced by their sins, as a first born child, tho' dead, is lovely in the eyes of the weeping parents, and they shall mourn for their transgressions and repent in dust and ashes. All confidence, hope, submission, patience and every grace derive their virtue from love, Hence the grand conclusion follows that divine love is the fouudation and essence of all true religion. How often does St. Paul declare, "Without love or charity all is nothing."

Secondly, We infer from this discourse, that the reason why men do not render all duty and respect to God, is because their hearts are destitute of love to him. This is the ground of their disobedience to his law, not walking after his commandments, nor performing the things that please him. Where there is no love, there is no respect to God; his government is renounced, and his precious gospel is despised. And all the failings, imperfections, and deficiences of the saints on earth, is owing to the imperfection and defectiveness of their love.

Thirdly, It is evident from this doctrine, however humiliating and afflicting the truth, that there is more enmity and hatred towards God in the world than love. The ground of this conclusion is, there is vastly more disrespect, neglect of, and opposition to God, than there is duty and obedience. There are multitudes walking contrary to God, and a few only walking with him. This, my brethren, is an awful and lamentable fact. O how should it go to our hearts, that there is such a want of love

Digitized by Google

to God and Jesus Christ, and that the law and gospel are treated with so much contempt in our world. Let us be wise, and hearken to the voice of the compassionate Redeemer. "Enter "ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the "way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go "in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, "which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

Wherefore, now, my dearly beloved brethren, let us be exhorted to stir up our hearts to love the Lord our God. He is surely infinitely worthy of our highest esteem and respect; therefore, let us devote our whole souls to him in the warmest love, in the most sincere, ardent, and exalted affection. O christians, love the Lord more, and let his commandments, precepts, statutes and ordinances, your precious Saviour, and the glorious gospel, be your delight.

As for those of you, my unhappy fellow mortals, who are still by the profanity and wickedness of your lives, carrying on war against heaven; still maintaining your enmity against the Almighty, how long will it be e'er you cease from your hatred, and the unavailing contest? O that you could be persuaded to lay down the weapons of your rebellion, relinquish your evil practices, and turn unto the Lord, that ye may live and not die. "A fire "is kindled in mine anger, saith the Lord, and shall burn unto "the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her encrease, "and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. I will heap "mischief upon them. I will render vengeance to mine enemies, "and will reward them that hate me, saith God."

Digitized by Google

SERMON XXXVI.

LOVE TO OUR NEIGHBOUR EXPLAINED.

GALLATIONS v. 14.

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

THE epistles of Paul have all of them something which exhibits him as a person of a very superior mind. There is a peculiar reach of thought, arrangement of ideas, and force of argument discernable by every attentive reader. One thing is very observable in most of his letters. The first part of them is appropriated to stating, explaining, and establishing some important doctrines of christianity; the latter, in an improvement of these doctrines, by a deduction from them of the practical duties of religion, and an enforcement of the same upon the conscience, by the most powerful exhortations. This shows us the Apostle's method of preaching, and no doubt a very proper model for all ordinary ministers. He inferred the practice of christianity from its doctrines. The one was the foundation; and the other, to wit, the duties of religion, the superstructure.

In this epistle to the Gallatian christians, who by their own itching ears, and the countenance they had given to false teachers, had greatly swerved from the christian faith; he reproves

Digitized by Google

them for wishing to return to circumcision, and other jewish rites and ceremonies, and opens and establishes the great doctrines of the gospel, especially justification by faith, and salvation by free grace without the deeds of the law. Then he proceeds to impress upon their minds, the absolute necessity of the practical parts of religion; among which, he mentions love to our neighbour, as one of the highest importance. Hence, he makes use of the strong language in our text, "For all the law is fulfilled in one "word, even in this: thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." By the word law, here is intended the moral law, and the term *all*, is employed as a usual figure, where the whole is expressed for a part; hence our Apostle's meaning is evidently the same with our Lord's, when he comprehends the whole second table of the law in these very words: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as "thyself. Now, by the observation of this precept, we give testimony to the world that we are the followers of Christ. "By "this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love "one to another.

In an explication of this subject, three enquiries present themselves to our contemplation.

First, Who is meant by our neighbour.

Secondly, What we are to understand by this love to him.

Thirdly, What is intended by the measure or degree of this love, loving him as ourselves.

First, Who is meant by our neighbour?—It may be here observed, that the jews, like most other people, esteemed only those their neighbours who were of their own nation and religion, and comprehended in their own narrow circle. They had no dealings with the Samaritans. "Yea, they would not so much as keep "company with one of another nation." Our Lord, in the plainest manner, teaches who is intended by our neighbour, in answer to an inquisitive Pharisee, about the great commandment of the

Digitized by Google

law. He informs him the second commandment of the law is, to love our neighbour as ourselves. Upon this the Pharisee pertly asks, "Who is my neighbour?" To which he replies in a beautiful and instructive parable. There was, says he, a certain Jew travelled in the great road from Jerusalem to Jericho, and unhappily fell among thieves, who wounded, stripped him and left him half dead. There passed by two unkind persons of his own nation and religion, the one a priest, and the other a levite, but they afforded him no assistance or relief. After some time a person of another nation, which the Jews perfectly hated, a certain Samaritan, came where the injured man was and had compassion on him, and afforded him the most benevolent and charitable aid; bound up his wounds, set him on his beast, carried him to an inn, defrayed his expences, and gave strict orders to the inn-keeper, to take care of him. Our Lord now appeals to the narrow and hardened bosom of the Pharisee, enquiring, "Which of these three, the Priest, Levite or abhorred Samaritan, "thinkest thou was neighbour to him who fell among thieves?" Which of them, according to common sense, and the common feelings of humanity, ought to be stiled neighbour to the wretch in distress? This was such a home application, that all the bigotry of a Jew, and contracted prejudices of a Pharisee, could not prevent the bubblings of reason. Hence this reply, with great reluctance, is extracted from him, "He that shewed mercy on "him." The compassionate Saviour passes over all notice of the unfeeling and obdurate heart, and only says, "Go thou and "do likewise." As if he had breathed forth this wish, "O that "thou couldst be a neighbour, or feel the heart of a neighbour!"

Now this parable proves to us various things respecting the settlement of who is our neighbour. He is not merely one of our own denomination in religion; he is not of our town, village or congregation. All these are granted to be our neighbours, even in the most selfish sense of the term. Christ extends the idea, far beyond nation, tribe or religion; and in the extension, cities and

Digitized by Google

countries are lost; relations, friends and acquaintance hold *only* their particular station; his parabolical representation embraces the whole family of mankind. The Jew hated the Samaritan, hated his religion, and all that pertained to him, and even it was improper to bestow upon him a cup of cold water. Therefore, a poor wicked woman of Samaria, when our Saviour asked of her only a little water to quench his thirst, answered with surprise, "How is it that thou being a jew, askest drink of me, "which am a woman of Samaria?" By this parable, all who partake of humanity are or ought to be neighbours—those who do us good, and those who do us hurt. An enemy is our neighbour who assists and relieves our miseries, and performs for us the common offices of humanity. This is perfectly correspondent to what our Saviour elsewhere enjoins, "Love your enemies, "bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, pray "for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." Thus by neighbour, is meant the whole human race; but as every one is confined to a small circle of mankind, he is only to act as a neighbour within the same, or do good as he has opportunity.

A Second enquiry is, what we are to understand by this love to our neighbour.—As love to God consists in walking after his commandments, so love to our neighbour consists in the performance of all those duties, which reason and revelation direct. It implies a benevolent and a charitable frame of mind towards all mankind; we should pray for all, and wish the happiness of all. And this is the whole of this love in this extended consideration; but in a particular and special view, it is a summary or comprehensive expression of the duties of the second table of the law. Thus our Apostle elegantly expounds it in another epistle. "Owe no "man any thing, but to love one another; for he that loveth "another hath fulfilled the law. For this, thou shalt not commit "adultery; thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt "not be a false witness; thou shalt not covet; and if there be "any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this

Digitized by Google

"saying, namely, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love "worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling "of the law." Thus, according to this infallible exposition, we must habitually maintain such a regard to our neighbour, as not wilfully or knowingly to injure him in person, property, or character. We must do him no injustice, nor harbour in our breasts any ill towards him.

"To love our neighbour, involves in it all that reverence and respect, which is due to the various relations and stations which we sustain, according to the fifth commandment; that we exert every lawful endeavour to preserve our own, and the lives of others, according to the sixth; that we guard our neighbour's chastity as our own, according to the seventh; that we will promote the furtherence of his wealth, according to the eighth; maintain his name and reputation, according to the ninth; and suppress all avarice, according to the tenth.

This is love to our neighbour; this is the fulfillment of the law. But it may be useful to descend to greater particularity upon this important subject.

First, This love will dispose a person to act honestly and justly towards his neighbour. Nothing more easy and natural than to be just and honest to those we love. One disposed to wrong or injure his neighbor, all common feeling declares he is destitute of love to him. To wilfully hurt another is the contradiction of love. It is self evident, that love to our neighbour will admit of taking no advantages of his ignorance or necessity, but to perform to him all the offices of justice, equity and righteousness.

Secondly, This love secures truth, and sincerity and integrity among men. It excludes falsehood, chicanery and every knavish trick. It causes candour, fairness and propriety in all our business and conversation with others. All shuffeling deceit in its thousand avenues is shut out. It gloriously triumphs over all

Digitized by Google

fraud, in heart, speech and behaviour. The allowance of any thing that wears the appearance of deceitfulness and falsehood is its abhorrence. Falsehood and deceit is always an operation of enmity, and where fairness and integrity hold not their station among men, there is no love to their neighbour.

Thirdly, This love disposes to acts of charity and mercy towards our neighbour. Misery is the object of commpassion; poverty, affliction and distress, the objects of charity. Reason estimates the circumstances, and love proportions to the same according to our opportunities and abilities. Of this we have a strong picture drawn by St. John in perfect shades and lights. "He "that loveth not his brother, abideth in death. Whosoever "hateth his brother is a murderer. Whoso hath this world's "goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shuteth up his bowels of compassion from him; how dwelleth the love of God in "him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in "tongue, but in deed and in truth."

Fourthly, This love, in opposition of selfishness, will awaken desires for, and pleasure at the prosperity of others. As we ought to be far from hurting the advantage of our neighbour, so his promotion in wealth and honor, will afford us satisfaction and delight. Those we love, we naturally wish their advancement in every respect, in things temporal and spiritual. Our desires are, that they may enjoy all the felicity that time and eternity can bestow upon them.

Fifthly, Love disposes the to a tranquil contentment with all the stations and honors of our neighbour. It is the suppression of covetous, envying and grudging tempers. It gives the soul comfort and a pleasing satisfaction in all the circumstances of his neighbour's dignity, exaltation and fame.

Sixthly, This love always influences to esteem and honor others, as our hearts have this bearing, to esteem and respect our-

Digitized by Google

selves. Christian love will in some cases dispose us to think of others superior to ourselves, and hold them in greater veneration and esteem. Attend to the gospel counsels on this head:— "Honor all men. In lowliness of mind, let each esteem another "better than himself. Be kindly affectioned one towards another; in honor preferring one another."

Seventhly, This love will render men peaceable towards each other. It will incline as far as possible to live peaceably with all men. It will prevent broils, feuds, animosities and quarrels. Where this governs, there will be no fightings nor duels. It will suppress all passions, gendering these effects. Whisperings, tale-bearing, tattling, backbiting, envying and malice will be banished. It will dispose to forbearance, patience, and forgiveness of injuries. We will not outrage and abuse those we love. "Hatred stireth up strife; but love covereth all sins."

It would be endless to mention how love to our neighbour promotes meekness, gentleness, and goodness to others; establishes and supports good government in church and state; makes quiet citizens, and comfortable rulers; faithful pastors and a fruitful people; kind husbands, affectionate wives, tender parents and dutiful children; just masters, and faithful servants. In one word, love will dispose us to do to others, as we would desire others to do to us. To do to others in all circumstances, is nothing more than to love them in sincerity, or to love them as ourselves. "This is that love that suffereth long and is kind, "that envieth not, that is not puffed up, that thinketh no evil, "but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all "things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

I proceed to the

Third enquiry, which was to consider what is intended by the measure or degree of this love, loving our neighbours as ourselves.—It is here taken for granted, that it is our duty to love

Digitized by Google

ourselves. "No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourish-
"eth and cherisheth it." It is constituted the rule and standard of our love to others. As love to ourselves ought to be adjusted according to the exact statutes of the gospel, so ought our love to our neighbour. We must maintain in our hearts benevolence or good will to him, to his soul, body, reputation and all that pertains to him; do him no injustice, as we would not injure or wrong ourselves; be ready to throw a mantle over his infirmities and imperfections, as over our own; be pleased with his prosperity, and feel for his adversity. "We must rejoice with them "that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep."

This love by no means supposes that we are to labour for our neighbour as for ourselves, or work for his family as for our own. Such a construction of this divine precept, would render it both impossible and absurd. It only requires that we should have a proper degree of affection to our neighbour; that we should love him with an undissembled sincerity, should be free from all malice, rancour, and ill-will against him, as against ourselves; that we should make allowances for his mistakes, errors and failings, as for our own, and be more ready to declare his worthiness and excellency than our own. This was the love of some of the primitive christians, "who were ready to lay down their lives for "the brethren." Thus Priscilla and Aquila received the thanks of the churches, for exposing themselves to some eminent danger to save St. Paul from death. What was the risk they run we are not informed; but he tells us, "For my life, they laid "down their own necks."

A few reflections will now close this discourse.

First, We are here taught the indispensible obligations christianity lays us under to observe this commandment. No principle of religion is more clearly stated, or more strongly urged on practice than this. "Abound in love one towards another, and to-"wards all men." The absence of this love is marked as the evi-

Digitized by Google

dence of a graceless condition. "He that loveth not his brother "abideth in death. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his "brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother, whom "he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?" The love of God and Christ is set before us, as a forcible motive to this affection. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also "to love one another; be kind one to another; tender hearted, "forgiving one another; as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven "us." No precept in the bible is more repeatedly inculcated than this. Not less than seven or eight times is the commandment given, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." And the same sentiment is conveyed to us, in different phrases, in innumerable places. Now a thing obligatory upon us by nature and reason, by law and gospel, by God and Christ, by life and death, ought to be felt as an irresistable influence by every conscience. "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole "duty of man."

Secondly, We are here taught the deep depravity of human nature; for instead of obedience to this holy precept, which is both our duty and interest, instead of loving our neighbour as ourselves, we have no love to spare to any but ourselves:— Whence proceeds all the injustice, oppression, falsehood, fraud, and cruelty, which overflow our guilty world, but from neglect of this gospel rule? Whence come wars, fightings, tumults and rivers of blood? Whence backbiting, slandering, tattling, reviling and censoriousness? Whence malice, hatred, rancour and envy? Whence all the broils, unhappiness, and disturbances in families, neighbourhoods, towns and congregations? All originate from this fatal source, men love not, but hate one another. Oh, how hath man fallen! How degenerate hath he become! He who can number the stars, or count the sands upon the ebbing shore, let him describe the corruption of man.

Thirdly, This subject brings up to view a truth, which ought to melt our hearts into tears of lamentation, that few there are

Digitized by Google

who live like christians in the world, few love one another, few love their neighbour. O what occasion is there for mourning and sorrow, that there is such a destitution of brotherly and neighbourly love in our world; and instead of the absence of this affection, how many are biting and devouring one another? Was the weeping prophet present in this generation, his eyes would dissolve in their sockets.

Fourthly, We here learn the exceeding great evil of sin. It has introduced into, and entailed incalculable calamities upon our wretched world. It wastes societies, ruins families, dissolves nations, depopulates kingdoms, breaks churches, murders brethren, and holds the whole earth in turmoil, tumult, and confusion.

Fifthly, We are here taught all the mischief and injury men do to one another, originate from the want of love. If they had a proper heart, or a right temper towards each other, the whole world would be a theatre of harmony, peace, kindness, and goodness. Yea, had we this love, heaven would be upon earth.

Let this lecture conclude in a brief address to two sorts of persons, to the many and the few, to those who hate and those who love one another. To the former, O remember, my unhappy fellow creatures, your delusive imagination is that you love yourselves, but the reverse is the fact. You love your lusts, corruptions and follies, and those things which by the blindness of your minds and satanical influence, are hoodwinking you to eternal destruction. O fools, your souls will soon be required of you. My prayer is, as an aged minister hovering on the verge of eternity, that your blood may not be found in my skirts. My last advice is, awake to love God with all your hearts, and your neighbour as yourselves.

Those of you, my dear brethren, who by the grace of the gospel, hope you love God and your neighbour, be cultivating this

Digitized by Google

sweet spirit of love more and more. This will create your pleasure in life, your support in death, and your eternal felicity. Let it be engraven upon your minds, as with the point of a diamond, "All the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, thou "shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Digitized by Google

SERMON XXXVII.

LOVE THE GREAT PRINCIPLE OF ALL RELIGION.

I. CORINTHIANS XIII. 2.

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have no charity, I am nothing.

BY the word charity in this chapter, and throughout the whole New Testament, is meant love. When our translation of the scriptures was made, charity was a term in use to express a gracious benevolence, a holy affection, or a proper love to God and man. But it is now confined in a great measure to two ideas: a forbearance towards others differing from us in religious opinions, and to almsgiving. Living languages are always in change:—But charity, in the scripture sense, never expresses either forbearance or almsgiving, as employed in modern speech.

In the beginning of this chapter, the great Apostle evidently makes a comparison between all gifts and attainments persons may possess, both ordinary and extraordinary, and charity or divine love. And the result is, that all accomplishments, even such as are supernatural, that do not imply love in them, are nothing. The person who is favoured with them is nothing in the

Digitized by Google

estimation of heaven; they have no saving value in them without love. This is manifestly the instruction to us in our text. "Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity I am nothing." The meaning is plain, all those gifts will be of no avail to recommend us to God. Without love, we are destitute of every thing of a gracious and saving nature.

Thus all gifts, acquirements, performances, exercises and duties are nothing, which are destitute of christian love. Our attention here shall be directed to two things.

First, In what respects a man's accomplishments, works and experiences are of no avail, nor have any acceptance with God in the want of charity or love.

Secondly, Consider on what grounds this Apostolic doctrine depends.

As to the first, To be nothing, as used by the Apostle in this passage, is emphatically strong and expressive. To understand the spirit and force of it, we must reflect on the character of which it is spoken; a character greatly and ornamentally distinguished, by the most eminent qualifications both natural and supernatural. Some of them are beyond the powers of nature to acquire, and must be the effect of a supernatural communication, such as the gifts of prophecy, understanding mysteries and the power of miracles. Such a character is formed for extensive usefulness, and to make a most brilliant figure in the world. The person supposed to possess these endowments, does not hide his talents in a napkin, but he exerts those wonderful powers for promoting the purposes to which they serve. These things show in what respects he cannot be said to be nothing. He has valuable gifts, and is exceedingly useful to his generation. But without love to God and

Digitized by Google

man, he has no true religion, no spiritual or saving goodness; and continuing thus, with all his attainments, he must perish forever.

Let us consider a little more particularly, wherein such a distinguished character is nothing.

First, Without love, his profession of religion is nothing:—The profession of such a person must surely appear to the highest advantage. The brilliancy and lustre of such gifts and performances, must stamp authenticity on his profession; but without love, all is tinsel and show, a sounding brass, a tinkling cymbal. The profession is only hypocrisy in the sight of God.

Secondly, All his experiences in religion are nothing, while destitute of love. Love is the life and soul of every thing of this kind. What exercises, terrors or comforts, sorrows or joys he may have had, without this he will be lost forever.

Thirdly, All his works are nothing, his prophesyings, his prayers, praises, almsgivings, charities and sufferings, will procure him no acceptance with God. His services, however arduous, illustrious or beneficial, will procure him no future reward. If this were not the case, it could not be said, that a person who gave all his goods to feed the poor, and his body to be burned, in witness of the truth of his religion, was still nothing.

Fourthly, His hopes and expectations of salvation are nothing without love. His expectations are delusive, and his hopes will perish when God takes away his soul. In one word, let his accomplishments, endowments, works and experiences, his good offices, sufferings, and trials be what they may, without love the person will be nothing at last.——I proceed,

Secondly, To consider on what grounds this Apostolic doctrine depends. This rests upon two general principles.

First, That holy love is the christian spirit of every act, duty,

Digitized by Google

work or service, that is of a gracious or virtuous nature. This is an invisible principle which renders any performance, exercise, or duty, virtuous and well pleasing to God. Every commanded act is holy or otherwise, as it originates from this principle of divine love, or from some other source. If it flows from another fountain, however specious in appearance in the eyes of men, it is spurious and odious in the all penetrating eyes of Jehovah. Love is the salt which seasons every acceptable sacrifice. If this be so, nothing more plain, that whatever a person may be as to priviledges, advantages, gifts, exercises or works, all is nothing without love. There is no virtue or grace in all his actions, and where these are absent, all is absent that is acceptable to God, or gives any title to divine favour. Persons and actions are in God's sight, as the principles which give them complexion or accuate them. If these be evil or wrong, all is nothing in the divine view and estimation.

Secondly, Another ground of this doctrine is, that without love, all a person's services and duties in religion are insincere, and only seeming virtues. Surely mere seeming virtue, or insincere religion, cannot profit any man. Whatever sums of seeming gold a man hath cannot enrich him. A small quantity of that which is real, is of more use than chests full of that which is only apparent. So a small measure of true grace, is of more value than a world of hypocrisy. Therefore, whatever abundance of apparent goodness or seeming religion a man hath, he is nothing.

Where there is no love to God or man, there can be no genuine respect to either. Respect is the first effect or operation of love. And where love is wanting, there is no true respect, for no effect can exist without its cause. And the degree of real respect is uniformly as the degree of love—neither more nor less. Hence, where no respect is, there can be no sincerity in all the services we render, however pompous, expensive and showy they may be. The performance of religious duties, supposes respect to God;

Digitized by Google

and where this is not, the former must surely be hypocritical or delusive. Can that be a sincere duty where there is no love? If so, a person may sincerely serve God without any regard to him. And this amounts to the same as saying, a man be gracious without any grace. To be a little more particular on this subject.

As to worship, homage, praise and adoration, of what profit can they be unless seasoned with love? Worship is, or ought to be, respect of a creature to its creator; but there can be no expression or exercise of that which is not in the heart. We are informed upon this point, "They are the true worshippers, who "worship in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to "worship him." All other homage is of no esteem in the divine sight. The very pagans love the idols they adore. And is it possible that christian praise, prayer and adoration, can have any virtue in it which is not offered in love?

Sometimes men, under the light and preaching of the gospel, take fits of reformation; yet however specious and observable this reformation and amendment of life and manners may be; and however useful to families, comfortable to connections, or beneficial to neighbourhoods; what religion can be in it, or what avail is it of, in the view of the heart searching God, where it neither arises from, nor involves any respect or love? It wears a good face and appearance, but the fatal worm of selfishness, pride and hypocrisy lies at the root.

Faith is the mighty grace of the gospel. He that hath it shall be saved, and without it we must perish. But we read of a dead faith, a faith which is alone, &c. These kinds of faith are ever represented as having no virtue or saving efficacy in them. What is it that makes their solitariness and death? Nothing but their want of love. Had they love in them, they would be justifying, efficacious, saving and pleasing to God. But a destitution of this inscribes death on their nature and all their operations.

Digitized by Google

Justifying and saving faith is an act of the soul, whereby it falls into the line of the covenant of grace, and becomes united to Christ Jesus and one with him in the constitution of saving sinners. A thousand unions are formed in the animal and vegetable worlds, and it would be very improper for me to introduce into the pulpit, the radical principles of what is stiled natural philosophy.—But this I will venture, among natural, moral and christian philosophers, that love is the union in the whole spiritual kingdom of intelligences. The union of angels from the highest to the lowest grades is love; and the union of sinners with them, by a mediator, is the same affection. The union of all intelligences is love. Hence this conclusion, all faith of whatever complexion, temporary, historical or miraculous, is nothing without it is impregnated with love. All that is stiled faith in the scriptures destitute of this quality, it can only assume the name and put on the garb, it is destitute of life and virtue, without this divine infusion. Attend to the apostolic assertion in our text, though I have all faith, all sorts and kinds of faith in their highest degrees and measures, so that by the opening of my mouth, I could remove mountains, what are all these wonderful and miraculous powers, "Without charity, they are nothing?" If we are blessed with saving and justifying faith, love forms its virtue and acceptableness. This is the intention of the sacred oracles when they speak of receiving the truth in the love of it." A taste for gospel truth is the real ground of its reception. When this taste is wanting love cannot be present, hence every quality and thing which lays the foundation in the heart of the sinner, is placed at an infinite remove. Without faith, and this faith seasoned with charity, all is nothing.

All pretentions of obedience to the law, or subjection to the gospel, are nothing without love. The sincerity of submission to both, consists in love; without it all is show and pretence, and without it, all is insincerity and hypocrisy. Hence all that is

Digitized by Google

termed obedience, only wears the appearance, therefore there can be no value or saving virtue in it.

It is readily granted, the external conduct, as well as internal feelings, must go to constitute the nature of gospel faith or christian obedience. Every thing of this nature must be free and unconstrained. Constraint or violence is the destruction of virtue, hence freedom, willingness, and ready obedience enters into all the faith and duty of the gospel.—Hence all conduct and behaviour, exercises and experiences, however well adjusted and handsomely expressed, can be of no value with God, without charity or love. All seeming religion hath no goodness in it. "Tho' "I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and "all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could re- "move mountains, and have no charity, I am nothing."

O that love to God, Christ Jesus, and our fellow men might be so inwrought in our souls by the power of almighty grace, that every feeling and exercise of the mind; every duty and the whole tenor of our conversation may be impregnated therewith, directed thereby, and offer up a sweet and acceptable savour to the nostrils of the Most High. Let us admit the sentiments of heaven, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and "have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling "cymbal."

Many are ready to think, if the laws of God are materially and externally complied with, obedience is performed. It is true the material and external part of obedience is of absolute necessity, but the internal and invisible part of the performance is of equal importance, which consists in an holy respect to God, and if this be absent, there is no obedience in the divine sight. Moreover all acceptable obedience is a free and cheerful offering, but if due affection be wanting, all appearances of this complexion originate from some species of force and constraint, and can possibly have no virtue or holy goodness in them. Thus all appearances

Digitized by Google

of religion, all behaviour and deportment, which pass under this profession, however orderly and decent, have no sincerity in them, and therefore will be counted as nothing. Without charity all is nothing.

The origin, and life, and virtue of all religion is love. No substitution is admissible in this case. And this divine love is something perfectly distinct in its nature from every thing which passes under this denomination in the world. Love may be earthly, sensual and devilish. There is a self love, a love of society, a relative love in all its divisions of husbands, wives, parents, children, friends, &c. there is what is stiled patriotism, or the love of one's country. But all these may be exerted in the highest degree, and displayed in the most brilliant manner, and yet no love to God. This divine love constituting the essence of all piety towards God and righteousness towards man, is a holy principle, implanted in the heart by the effectual influences of the holy Ghost. Hence all the subjects of it are represented, "as being "made partakers of a divine nature." "It is frequently termed "The love of God; Christ's love dwelling in us; the love of God "shed abroad in the heart &c."—Therefore it is that the whole of religion is comprehended in this phrase. It is the same in kind in all good or holy beings, in God, Christ, angels and men, in saints in heaven and saints on earth. It shows itself in various exercises, towards different objects, in all the variety of circumstances in which they occur. This variety of circumstances gives occasion to all the different names by which it is called, as desire, delight, joy, gratitude, hope, patience, meekness, mercy, compassion, &c. All which are only different modifications of love varied to different objects, under different circumstances.

Now let this subject be closed with a brief improvement. Its whole improvement would comprehend all religion in its exercises, experiences, virtues, graces and duties. But this is a field far beyond our survey at present.

Digitized by Google

First, We are here taught that divine love is the chief of all the christian graces and virtues. It is the root, the life and spirit of all real religion—all the experiences, works and performances, which constitute the divine life, or the life of God in the soul of man, are the productions, flowers and fruits of this celestial plant. This is the principle that diffuses an holy virtue through all the operations of the heart, and gives acceptance to all the good actions of the life. All the laws and ordinances of God, become hereby sweet to the soul, as the honey and the honey comb to the taste.

Secondly, That the moral law and the gospel are the same in their nature and essence. They are only varied in certain circumstances by the various conditions of man. The substance of both is love. They do not aim at different purposes, but both are fulfilled in love. Love was the duty of man before the fall, and the design of the gospel is to recover him to love again. Therefore every representation of the law and gospel as being at odds, exhibiting the one as cruel and the other kind, the one harsh and severe, and the other merciful and compassionate, are not pictures drawn from the great original of love to God and man. Religion is the same at all times and in all worlds, in heaven and in earth, in its nature and essence, to wit, divine love.

Thirdly, We here learn that love is the grand bond of union among intellectual beings. It is in the spiritual, like gravitation in the natural world, holding all to one common centre. Time will not admit of the illustration of a grand description of the wicked and revolted spirits by St. Jude, when he stiles them "wandering stars," or in philosophic language *comets*, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness. A beautiful discourse might be formed upon this idea of the apostle, between wandering stars or comets that return and such as never return, and sinners who return, and they who return not. Passing this little digression, Love makes universal harmony. Universal love is nothing but an universal union of hearts and affections. From hence arises

Digitized by Google

universal felicity. And nothing can create this felicity but universal harmony. Where the latter exists, so will the other. As far as love prevails, happiness prevails; Love is perfect in heaven, so is happiness. Love is mixed and imperfect in this world, so is felicity. To shew the agreements, and combinations of passions, which afford the little comfort that is in it, lies out of my present line. In hell, whatever agreement devil with devil damned may hold, a ray of love never entered these regions.

This subject would direct us, my brethren, naturally to the most solemn searchings of heart. And the great enquiry should be, do we love God or not? Are we the subjects of christian love, and is our heart and conduct formed on this blessed principle?

Those who hope they love God and man, love them more and more.

Those who do not, change your hearts, repent, turn from unprofitable objects, and consecrate your whole souls in love to your Maker and Redeemer. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and "and him only shalt thou serve."

Digitized by Google

SERMON XXXVIII.

ASSURANCE OF GRACE ESTABLISHED.

II. PETER I. 10.

Wherefore the rather brethren, give all diligence to make your calling and election sure.

ASSURANCE of grace is one of the benefits flowing from conversion, faith and love. A comfortable reflection arising from scriptural evidence, that we are in favour with God, and interested in the merits of Christ Jesus, can only be expressed by an eternity of praise and gratitude. However great and super-eminent this blessing may be, glory to God, we find it a priviledge christians may obtain in this life. The complacential love of God, is the highest pleasure and satisfaction man or angel can enjoy, and a prevailing hope of this is the chief happiness on earth. Hence we have this pathetic exhortation in our text, to make this acquisition, "Give all diligence to make your calling and "election sure." This is here stated before us, as an object of most careful attention and sedulous pursuit. This text at once affirms the possibility of the attainment of assurance, and our duty to make the acquisition.

It may be proper here to make a few introductory observations upon the character inspired to administer this counsel. It was

Digitized by Google

Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, who was remarkable and distinguished for three things: his great temptations, his gross falls, and surprising recoveries.

His temptations were great, and he was ensnared by them. His pride, vanity and corruptions, aided by satanical influence, moved him to assume the station of a reprover of our Lord. No saint ever dared the astonishing office but Peter. Our Saviour had declared, he must go up to Jerusalem, and suffer many and dreadful things there; the petulence and self-conceit of this forward disciple, burst out in the following arrogance: "Let these "things be far from you;" and as if he had the command of heaven and earth, he proceeds to affirm, "These things shall not be "unto thee." This brought upon him a severe rebuke; a rebuke that no christian ever received its equal. "Get thee behind me "Satan, thou art an offence unto me." As if he had said, thou art a devil, take the rear of all my disciples, thou art an offence to mine eyes, depart from me. This, one would think, should have forever cured the insolence of this man. Yet soon after he comes forward in strong boastings, implicitly declaring himself superior to all the other disciples in firmness, faith and love. "If "all should forsake you, yet will not I."

Yet how great and gross was his fall? In the same night, in a few hours, after these mighty brags, he denies his Lord, and swears to the falsehood, "that he knew not the man." Thus lying and profane cursing and swearing are vices often united in the same person. After all these gross iniquities, we find this man making divisions among the christians at Antioch. He was afraid lest certain Jews who came with James, would report at Jerusalem, that he eat with the Gentiles. A mean love to his reputation among the Jews, tempted him to form a truckling separation from the Gentile converts, for which St. Paul withstood him to the face, because he was to blame.

His surprising recovery from these abominable falls, serves to

Digitized by Google

show us the power of divine grace, and the efficacy of the intercession of Christ Jesus. He prayed for Peter that his faith might not fail. And this was effectual for his recovery from these backsliding enormities.

Moreover, Peter had great experience of sorrow and genuine repentance, so that he was hereby fitted in a special manner to encourage weak christians, and preach the doctrine of pressing after assurance. He had received this in commandment from his master, "That when he should be converted," that is recovered from his falls, "he should strengthen his brethren."

The persons to whom the Apostle gives this exhortation, were not graceless or unconverted sinners, but they were such who were in favour with God and united to Christ. They are characterized thus in the verses preceding our text. They had obtained "like precious faith, had a saving knowledge; they had a "divine power in all things pertaining to life and godliness; they "had exceeding great and precious promises, were partakers of "a divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the "world through lust." From all these considerations, he deduces this conclusion, "Wherefore the rather brethren, give all dili-"gence to make your calling and election sure." He addresses them by the tender appellation of brethren, because many of them, being Jews, were his brethren according to the flesh, and all of them were brethren in the common salvation as children of the same heavenly Father, and heirs of the same inheritance:— "Give all diligence," that is, be earnest, sincere, sedulous, faithful and persevering to accomplish this important purpose. By the word *calling*, here is meant effectual calling, or conversion, grace and sanctification. By *election* is intended the chosen and favourites of God. These things we are to make sure. We are to endeavour after scriptural evidences of grace in our souls, and this is the only way in which we can obtain the comfortable hope that we are the elect of God.

Digitized by Google

Various observations from these words might be usefully considered, but the single one to which your attention is invited at present, is this,

That assurance of grace, or a satisfying and comfortable hope that we are in peace and friendship with God, united to Christ Jesus by faith, and interested in the promises of eternal life, is attainable by christians in this world.

All the measure of time that a pulpit discoure will admit, can be nothing more than

First, To make a few remarks for the explanation of the doctrine of assurance; and

Secondly, Produce some of the arguments in favour of its confirmation.

First, We are to make some remarks explanatory, and illustrative of this doctrine.

The First remark is, That a gospel assurance cannot be acquired by any Christless or unconverted sinner, while continuing such. Graceless persons may arrive at strange things in religion. This has been the case of wild enthusiasts in modern, and pharisees in ancient times. All these have enjoyed the highest assurance, but by our Lord's doctrine, were farther from the kingdom of heaven than harlots and sinners. To have a persuasion of being the the distinguished favourites of heaven without any foundation, is the worst state in the world. View his account of the Pharisees, stony ground hearers, Laodicean church, &c. they had assurance, but it was all delusion. All impulses, fancies, and unscriptural persuasions will only usher their unhappy possessors into ruin. A gospel assurance always arises from reason, light and evidence. No person can receive comfort, hope and satisfaction, only from proper evidence. As far as his pleasures deviate from this, they are unfounded. It is impossible, in the nature of things, for any person to believe any matter or fact farther than he has just evi-

Digitized by Google

dence thereof. I know our wishes, desires, and passions hurry us into the delusive belief of many things, of which we are afterwards ashamed. All these things are comprehended by scripture phrase, in a false hope, which will perish, with the subject of it. As no unbeliever can be saved, therefore, no assurance, not founded in faith and love, can yield the consolation which God affords his people.

Secondly, We remark, that though assurance is a peculiarity appropriated solely to the children of God; yet all those who are converted and sanctified, do not enjoy it. As there are persons of several ranks, orders and degrees in the world, so there are of several ages, from the infant of the day, to the man loaded with years bending into the grave. Thus, in the church, there are fathers, young men, children and babes. All have true faith, yet all have not equal evidences of grace. It is true the promises of the covenant are sure to all who have faith, and they are not confined to the evidences of it. Those who have grace, though destitute of assurance, eternal life is as certain to them as to any others, However certain their state may be in reality, yet without evidence of grace, they can have no sweet consolation.—We remark,

Thirdly, When we speak of assurance in a gracious state, we do not mean an absolute perfect assurance, or an assurance that can admit of no further evidence. This is the sole property of heaven. Perfect creatures have perfect assurances, but imperfect creatures must submit to those measures of satisfaction, hope and comfort, of which the various degrees of their imperfection admit. Assurance, like all other graces and virtues in this life, is imperfect, yet the christian may arrive at much joy, peace and consolation in believing.

Fourthly, By assurance is not meant exemption from all manner of doubts and fears. These may and do take place in this embodied state in a way not easily accounted for. Suppose a person

Digitized by Google

not used to such an elevation, to have ascended into the high tower of a lofty steeple, within the banisterades, and feels assurance he cannot fall, yet looking over the battlements fills him with fear and doubt, and he falls back from the sight. While he looks to the sky, no terrors trouble him ; but when he casts his eyes over the railing, and views his distance from the ground, his heart trembles, his face gathers paleness, and he flies from the view. Thus it is with the christian, while he looks to heaven, and the eye of faith is fixed on things invisible and eternal, his hope, his expectation, his comforts are strong ; but when he turns his eyes downwards and contemplates the abyss of destruction, notwithstanding all the securities of the covenant of grace, and the firm banisterade of all the promises, his heart misgives him, and fears and doubts arise in his soul.

Fifthly, Let it be remarked, that it is proper and christian assurance, which usually and habitually prevails over diffidence, desponding doubts, and irrational fears. Where two scales of a ballance, the one having only an ounce weight more than the other, yet the one descends and is as really the heaviest, as if weighed down by an hundred weight. Thus it is with holy and gracious souls. If they have so much grace as raises them above irrationable fears and doubts, and affords them a prevailing hope, they may be said to have a measure of assurance ; the greater their increase of grace, the greater will be their satisfaction, and the stronger their hopes. Those who experience much faith and love, their hearts will be filled with joy and comfort, that they are the children of God. In order to assurance, it is necessary to keep up an holy frame, and maintain a savoury conversation and a godly practice. When the christian becomes cold, formal, neglects his watch, and deviates from the path of duty, what can be expected but that his hopes must languish, his comforts vanish, and fears and doubts arise. David, when he went off into evil courses, " the terros of the Lord made him distracted." So our Apostle, after having given way to temptation, " he went out

Digitized by Google

"and wept bitterly." God has wisely ordered things, that when we depart from him, we should lose our comfort; and while we walk with him, we may go on our way rejoiceing.

These things being said, explaining the nature of assurance, we are lead to the

Second thing, to wit, To evince the truth of the doctrine, that assurance of grace is attainable by all true believers in this life.

This is established from the whole current of the sacred oracles. All the scripture saints, of whose experiences we have any particular retail were favoured with this grace, though not at all times. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, &c. had no doubt of their being in peace with God. David declares this matter in the most positive terms. "Bless the Lord, O my "soul, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who redeemeth thy life "from destruction." This supposes, he had obtained satisfaction on this head.

Job in all his calamities, and in the face of the cruel assertions of his friends, is an eminent instance hereof. "I know says he, my "Redeemer liveth, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes "shall behold and not another." The blessed Jesus often administers this consolation to his disciples. "These things have I "spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that "your joy might be full. These things have I spoken unto you, "that in me ye might have peace; in the world, ye shall have tri-"bulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Thus it appears there is abundant provision made for the consolation of all the friends of Jesus. St. Paul declares his consolation throughout all his letters to the churches. "I know in whom I "have believed, and am persuaded, that he is able to keep that "which I have committed to him, against that day. Christ liv-"eth in me, and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith "of the Son of God. For me to live is Christ, but to die is gain.

Digitized by Google

"I have fought the good fight; I have finished my course, I "have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown "of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge will give "me at that day." These, with innumerable other authorities, confirm our doctrine.

These things are all involved in the covenant of grace, "which "is well ordered and sure." The promises of God to his people cannot fail, for he hath established them by an oath, that believers might have both hope and consolation. "Where-"fore God willing more abundantly, to shew to the heirs "of promise, the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it with "an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible "for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled "for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before us." All these oaths and promises of consolation and hope, to what purpose can they serve, if a knowledge of their interest in them was not attainable. This doctrine is so certain, that the apostle expostulates with the Corinthian professors, why they had not obtained it; "Prove "yourselves, know ye not your ownselves, how that Christ Jesus "is in you, except ye be reprobates?" These christians he rebukes sharply, for their straggling, wicked, and profane way of the celebration of the Lords supper. Their conduct admitted not of comfort, peace of conscience or hope. But notwithstanding all these gross and abominable deviations of some christians, the declarations of heaven are sure. "Hereby we know that we are in him, "and shall assure our hearts before him. We know that he a-"bideth in us, by the spirit, that he hath given us."

All these things shew to us to demonstration that assurance of grace has been attained by the children of God at all times, and may still be attained, if we are not failing in ourselves. Every christian who has not assurance, or a comfortable hope, the blame is on himself. Yet, let not the lambs of Christ's flock, or the feeble wishers to be christians, under this high doctrine, be dis-

Digitized by Google

saura ged or sink into despondency, only be exhorted to consecrate yourselves to God, and seek and serve him in the way of duty, and the comforts of your love, faith and repentance, will return upon you with full floods of pleasure, joy and sweet assurance. Let it ever remain as indelibly stamped upon the souls of all christians, if they enjoy not assurance, they are wholly to blame. The indispensable duty of all is, "to give diligence to make their calling and election sure."

A few inferences must now close this important subject:—

A First inference is, the folly, ignorance and absurdity of those who suppose that a comfortable assurance is not attainable by christians in this life. The ungodly profess it not, and as a feeble prop to themselves, they propagate it all around them, that no such blessing can be obtained, in this world; and too many dark and indolent professions unite with them in the unscriptural cry. The alarm raised against it is, that it is destructive of holiness, and tends to licentious living. Let no other judicature be appealed to, but the lives of the one and the other. See how the one conduct themselves, careless, thoughtless and easy; they enjoy themselves without hope, and too many professors are assimilated to this character; hence multitudes unite in the condemnation and rejection of the sweet and precious doctrine of assurance. The scriptures declare, "Every one who hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure." That is, every one who hath a comfortable confidence that he is in a state of grace, is strong after greater degrees of holiness, and conformity to God. The gracious soul desires not felicity without holiness, but his whole heart is to be holy as God is holy, and perfect as he is perfect. The more assurance, the greater diligence in duty, the stronger breathings after heaven, and the more ardent desires to be assimilated to God. The nature of assurance is not to make christians remiss, but prayerful and industrious in the exercises and practice of religion. It quickens their zeal, in pressing for-

Digitized by Google

ward towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. This is the tendency of that assurance, which can bring true comfort and substantial hope to the soul.

Secondly, This doctrine affords a solemn use of examination. Can we be careless and slothful in a matter of such infinite moment? Shall we be diligent to secure our estates, our property, and make sure every thing, but our spiritual and everlasting salvation? Is it nothing to neglect our souls and commanded duty? Will the man of the world rise early, and sit up late to obtain and secure the fading vanities of time, and the professors of religion carry themselves in a cold lukewarm indifference in respect to the concerns of eternity? O drowsy christian, will your conscience never awake? Will you dose on till the flames of destruction by the hand of the king of terrors flash upon you? How long will it be ere you cease from saying, "A little sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep? Awake; for eternity, for heaven and hell is opening upon you. Soon you will enter upon the enjoyments of the one, or sink into the torments of the other. Awake, awake, for the deciding day is at hand.

Are there any so far attentive as to be anxiously enquiring how they may acquire this grace of assurance. The answer hereto, and the directions relative to this matter are easy.—First, obtain grace in your hearts.—Secondly, settle some distinguishing marks of true religion from the word of God.—Thirdly, command your consciences to this application, and compare your experiences, your life and conduct, and the operations of your own hearts thereto.—Fourthly, press after higher measures of grace and holiness. And in a diligent attention to these rules, you will arrive at the assurance of faith. Set the example of St. Paul before you for imitation, "Brethren, I count not myself to have appre- "hended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things that are "behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

Digitized by Google

"I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of "God in Christ Jesus." Thus grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Saviour; and in this way you will obtain peace and comfort, and acquire all the blessings of a gracious and joyful assurance.

Remember, assurance is desirable; it gives a relish to every mercy; lightens every burden, alleviates every sorrow; makes rich in poverty, and affords a sweet solace in affliction. It is the best cordial in sickness, and is the most sovereign remedy against the fears of death. Wherefore let the council in our text, be inscribed upon the hearts of all, "give all diligence to make your "calling and election sure."

Digitized by Google

SERMON XXXIX.

THE TESTIMONY OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE.

II. Corinthians i. 12.

For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you ward.

THE grace of our Lord Jesus Christ bringeth salvation; and this salvation comprehends all blessings of this life, and that which is to come. The blessings of this life, beside temporal favours which come alike to all, are not only conversion, faith, repentance, justification, sanctification, &c. but many and great advantages and consolations originating from these radical graces. Among these secondary blessings flowing from love to God, and a comfortable assurance of his favour, here is one delineated with great beauty in our text, to wit, a good conscience and the testimony of the same.

This second epistle which the Apostle wrote to the church of opulent Corinth, was occasioned by incidents of high importance, such as the restoration to communion the incestuous person, who had ignorantly and wickedly seduced his step-mother, and had been broken down by repentance, and raised to reformation; their amendment in the celebration of the Lord's supper, and a recom-

Digitized by Google

mendation that they should contribute for the poor Jerusalem christians, who were either in or flying from the destruction of that unhappy city.

There are a multitude of weighty things in this epistle, which cannot at present be retailed—the Apostle's labours and sufferings, the comparison made between the old and new testament dispensation; the motives and encouragements to christians to endure with patience all their persecutions; and his grand vindication of himself and brethren from the reproaches and opprobrious insinuations of false and wandering teachers.

In this first chapter, he states his troubles, the goodness of God, his afflictions and his sincerity, honesty, faithfulness and integrity. This latter he exhibits in all the language of just propriety in our text. This wears not a tincture of boasting or vain glory.

He looks inward, amidst all the clouds of reproach, thickened by slanderous tongues around him, and feels the approbation of his own mind. He makes a solemn appeal to the deputy appointed by God in his soul. To the voice of conscience, and in the midsts of all the calumnies cast upon him, he rejoices in the testimony thereof. That he and his brethren had not their conversation in guile, deceit or craft, but in open candour, fairness, simplicity and godly sincerity. They employed no low cunning, or the carnal wisdom of the word, no political manœuvres, but their whole conduct was formed on the grace of God, "and more "abundantly to you ward;" that is, in a special and distinguishing manner, for your spiritual and everlasting benefit. "For "our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that "in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but "by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the "world, and more abundantly to you ward."—In an attention to this subject, we shall endeavour,

Digitized by Google

First, To enquire into the nature of conscience, and its testimony.

Secondly, Show the foundations, on which it gives witness in our favour.

Thirdly, The grounds such a testimony lays for rejoicing in all circumstances.

First, As to the nature of conscience, I will not follow the philosophers into their many and various disquisitions on this head. Nor with them will I dispute, whether it is an act, habit or faculty of the soul. It is enough for my purpose to say, "It "is the exercise of reflective reason in determining the nature of "moral actions, whether they be good or evil." I will not detain you with descriptions of the various species of conscience, with which philosophers have amused the world. Such as a natural and enlightened conscience; an erroneous, doubting and scrupulous conscience; an ignorant and probable conscience, &c. Conscience is a word in common use, and the learned and unlearned have a better idea of it from reflection upon the feelings of their own minds, than by all the laboured discourses of the great masters of science. Consciousness, or an inward perception of our own tempers, thoughts, words and actions, will afford us a better understanding of the term conscience, than any possible definitions or abstract essays.

All the actions of moral agents must have a reference to some law, arising from the light of nature or divine revelation. Of this law there must be some apprehensions of what it recommends and prohibits. And under these apprehensions, the approbation or disapprobation of our thoughts, words and conduct, is what is strictly stiled conscience. And from this feeling of pleasure or displeasure with our actions, it is often called a moral sense. The standard of this moral sense among christians, is the holy scriptures. By these it acquits or condemns. Its approbation is

Digitized by Google

called a good testimony, and the answer of a good conscience towards God.

To constitute this good testimony, three things are necessary. Some understanding of the will of God; some knowledge of ourselves; and some perception of the agreement of our hearts and lives with the great rules prescribed. And this inward feeling of the moral sense, is what is meant by the testimony of conscience. And this conscience is good, when it is void of offence towards God and man; when it accuses not of any wilful offence against either. It is a pure conscience, purged from dead works.

There is an evil conscience, defiled with vicious habits; and a conscience seared as with an hot iron. This is an obdurate, hardened conscience, which is past feeling, and on which no impressions can be made. But a good conscience is such as is enlightened, well informed, is tender and testifies in a person's favour, and affords him internal peace and comfort.

Secondly, We are to show the foundation, on which it gives witness in our favour.

The First foundation is, to have our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience by the blood of Christ. Naturally our souls have no esteem of, nor regard for God. Who enquires, where is God his Maker, who hath formed him wiser than the fowls of heaven? How many can spend their days in stupid ease, in pleasure and business, and God enters not into all their thoughts? This evinces a deep degeneracy of nature, which must be cured by Almighty grace. In order to enjoy this precious testimony, it is necessary that the tempers of our spirits should be renewed; that we apply by faith to the blood of Jesus, to have our consciences cleansed from dead works, and purified to serve the living God.

Secondly, Simplicity of heart is another foundation requisite for this purpose; an uprightness of intention, and purity of de-

Digitized by Google

sign. This our Lord recommends in the phrase of a single eye. "The light of the body is the eye, if therefore thine eye be single, "thy whole body shall be full of light." What the eye is to the body, that the intention is to our words and actions. Hence, if the eye, the aim and design of the soul, be single, the whole life and conversation will be full of holy light. It will be decent, undisguised, and uniform. This simplicity consists in a reference of ourselves in all our views and plan of conduct to the will and wisdom of God. It implies in it a steady and single intention of mind, to honor God, and approve ourselves to him in well doing.

Thirdly, Godly sincerity is another ground for the testimony of of a good conscience. The distinction between simplicity and sincerity may be considered in this way. Simplicity regards the design or intention itself—sincerity the execution of it. Where simplicity and godly sincerity habitually prevail in the heart, the actions will flow in an uniform stream to the glory of God, and the life will move as it were, in a strait line towards him. The conversation is not governed or directed by fleshly wisdom. It takes not its rise from carnal motives, nor is it supremely pointed to carnal ends. Actions may be unexceptionably or materially good in themselves, yet be faulty from sinister motives, and because not well referred. Such actions will never produce the testimony of a good conscience. The noble spirit of christianity abhors meanness, all tricking, double dealing and chicanery. It detests insincerity, hypocrisy, disguise, dissimulation and intrigue. The genius of true religion is firmness, openess, candour, integrity and uprightness, and from these arise the honorable testimony of a good conscience.

Fourthly, It is necessary for this purpose, that by the grace of God, we have our conversation in the world. We need the grace of God to support us under trials, succour us in temptations, assist us in duty, restrain us from sin, comfort us in sorrows, and be our staff and stay in death. We are to feel our dependence upon di-

Digitized by Google

vine grace, to bear us through this evil world; to work in us both to will and to do according to the good pleasure of heaven. Our hearts must be pure, and our eye single, aiming at the glory of God. Thus we must maintain a gospel conversation, and pass the days of our pilgrimage in this world. We must remember our dependence upon Christ and the communications of his Spirit; that all things are of God, and if we are enabled to do any thing with success and acceptance, it is through Immanuel strengthening us. We must always bear upon our minds, that we are debtors to the grace of God, and absolute dependents upon his bounty and fulness. These are the foundations on which the testimony of a good conscience rest. They are the pillars of consolation, peace and joy to the christian in his passage through life.

I proceed to consider,

Thirdly, The grounds such a testimony lays for rejoicing in all circumstances. That it performs this important part is self-evident, and a fact that cannot be disputed. There is an inexpressible pleasure in the very endeavour to keep a conscience void of offence toward God and man. The trial to walk in all good conscience before him, yields a sacred satisfaction, preferable to all the joys a person whose conscience is defiled, is capable of tasting in any thing he possesses. If the mere endeavour to maintain a good conscience affords real pleasure, how far must the experience of the joy of having done so, exceed it? Though we can pretend to nothing higher in our conversation than sincerity and simplicity, yet how sweet are the reflections of a well instructed conscience relative hereto? When our hearts reproach us not, we are conscious of no base designs, nor decline the all penetrating eye of our heavenly Father, but are ready to submit ourselves to his search in our daily actions and wonted course; and appeal to him as the Psalmist did, saying, "Judge me, O "Lord, for I have walked in mine integrity; I have trusted also "in the Lord; therefore, I shall not slide. Examine me, O

Digitized by Google

"Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart. Search me, "O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts, "and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the "way everlasting." Must not such a temper, such simplicity and sincerity, create delight; give joy unspeakable and full of glory? In distress and affliction what can be greater support, or afford a more sovereign consolation? If this be wanting in the day of calamity, and we are forced to say with Joseph's brethren, "verily we are guilty," this gives a twinging accent to all our troubles. And unless we get a better conscience, or light and relief therein, we must faint and sink under the tormenting weight; in this situation, there is no other resource.

When storms arise, and clouds of perplexity surround us, then to have the testimony of our consciences, that we are in peace with God, sprinkled by the blood of Jesus, and have our conversation in truth and righteousness, here is a sweet ground of rejoicing, of calmness and composure, in the midst of calamities, in the pains of death, or being chained to the stake, and beholding the faggots in flames to blaze us to glory.

The person who has the testimony of a good conscience, enters into an humble imitation of God; finding his works in some measure good, and God by a gracious indulgence accepts them through the atoning merits of Christ, he enjoys a sabbath of pleasing and peaceful rest in his own soul. All the horrors of earth and hell cannot sap his consolation, or sweep away the ground of his rejoicing. This is a joy flowing from the light of God's countenance, and the approbation of his own mind, that strangers intermeddle not with, neither can the world take away. O my brethren, how should we study and labour to possess such a conscience? How precarious and fleeting all the little pleasures of this mortal life? They are meteors of a moment, more adapted to lead us astray, and plunge us into real sorrows, than grant us substantial comfort. They desert us in the hour of necessity, but a good

Digitized by Google

conscience is a friend in all circumstances. In the enjoyment of this friend, with what holy boldness may the soul apply to God as to a gracious Father in every time of need. What affiance, trust, hope and confidence in God? In every season of perplexity, fear and distress, it can apply to the Most High, as good Hezekiah did, saying, "Remember now O Lord, I beseech thee, "how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, "and have done that which was good in thy sight." How sweet, comfortable, and transporting must such a reference of ourselves be to the bosom of him who carries the lambs in his arms, and gently leads those who are with young? Blessed and happy is the person, who has this testimony. Surely the felicity contained herein, ought to awaken the laudable ambition of every professor of christianity. Are you waiting, O dying creatures, for the stroke of death? A little while and the king of terrors will seize you in his cold embrace—then resolve you will seek after this testimony, that you will faithfully endeavour to live in all good conscience before God till death.

An inference or two, and a brief application, shall terminate this lecture.

First, It is inferred, that it is impossible in the nature of things, that persons who are careless and indifferent about the word and will of God, inattentive to the tempers and operations of their own minds, and negligent and loose in their conversation, can, upon scriptual grounds, form any favourable conclusion. If they consider, reflect, or think at all about religion, all their ideas will rise to their condemnation. How can it be otherwise? They attend not to the rule, they apply not their hearts and lives to it; hence, if their consciences testify in their favour, their minds must be impregnated with dark enthusiasm, pharisaical pride, or extreme ignorance, all which exclude them from the favour of God, and the consolations of divine grace.

Secondly, We infer a good conscience has a due respect to

Digitized by Google

principles and actions, both in their matter and form. The matter, end, and rule of conduct must be good. The matter must be such as God requires, the end his glory, and the rule his word. In the absence of any of these, the conscience will fail of being good.

Thirdly, We infer how transcendent a blessing, the testimony of a good conscience would be to every individual. It would be a support to him amidst all the vicissitudes and adversities of life, it would be a comfort and stay to him in death. It would waft him in a composed and pleasing tranquility over the rough and tumultuous billows of this world, and safely land him by the grace which is in Christ Jesus, upon the celestial shores.

Now, my dear fellow mortals, shall I make application of this discourse to induce you to acquire, maintain, and support a good conscience? Surely the testimony of our consciences, that we are in favour and peace with God, that we are sincere penitents for our sins, true believers in the Saviour, and with integrity and uprightness, walking in all the commandments of God, must rise far above every other consideration.

Wherefore, the sum of the exhortation must be, let our hearts be sprinkled from an evil conscience, by the soul purifying blood of Jesus. Let us quickly betake ourselves to that fountain opened in the house of David for sin and uncleanness. Fly to the blessed Redeemer, that he may thoroughly wash you from all your iniquities, purge your consciences from guilt, and form you for the service of the living God.

Such of you, who hope you have received this eminent blessing, the testimony of an enlightened and good conscience, study all that holy practice, and godly conversation, which will render your passage through this weary world comfortable, and finally through the riches of free grace, introduce you to eternal felicity.

Digitized by Google

O that every soul in this congregation, would understandingly make self-application of the text : " Our rejoicing is this, the " testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sin- " cerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we " have had our conversation in the world."

Digitized by Google

SERMON XL.

A GOSPEL HOPE.

I. JOHN III. 3.

And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

HOPE is one of the great blessings flowing from our conversion and union to Christ by faith. Hope is a great support and encouragement to the christian in this life. Hope enters into the essence of assurance, and is one of its blessed constituents. May we not say, without a mixture of assurance, there can be no hope, and without hope no assurance can exist. Hope may be considered as a natural principle, or a gospel grace. In the former case, it is a support to the wicked in their most forlorn circumstances. Among the heathen, who generally communicate their ideas in an admirable boldness of figurative language, when every good had forsaken, and every evil burst forth upon this wretched world, the ancients retained hope in a fanciful Pandora's box. When hope forsakes the heart, nothing succeeds but the most absolute despair. Christian hope is a steady expectation of the certain fulfillment of all the promises of heaven, stipulated to the people of God in the covenant of grace. A christian hope is founded on the character and atonement of Christ, and if understandingly placed there, it will never disappoint the expectants.

Digitized by Google

The hope from the world, and the hope from Christ, are two distinct, and in some instances, very opposite things. A worldly hope terminates on things uncertain and vanishing. Carnal hopes of eternal blessings—the best description can be given of them, is, they are inspirations of an ignorant imagination, passing wind, and more delusive than satanical influence.

Hope is employed in the scriptures, to express various ideas; sometimes the object of hope, as the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the "hope of Israel." Sometimes the blessings of expectation, which are the end of hope. Hence it is stiled, "Looking for "that blessed hope." And God is sometimes called the hope of his people. He is their support in trouble, their consolation in sorrow, their stay in sickness, their staff, leaning on which, they walk through the valley and shadow of death. Hope is used for the grave and the resurrection. "My flesh," says the Psalmist, "shall rest in hope." That is, my body shall be pure in the grave, and be placed there under a sure and certain promise of being raised to immortality and endless glory.

The captives in Babylon, were placed there in the character of prisoners of hope. Whether their hopes were weak or strong, according to their various characters, deliverance was to be the issue. Some hoped to stay where they were; some hoped to return to their country; and among the whole captivated tribes, there were few hopes of a spiritual and saving nature.

In the verses preceding our text, the beloved disciple had been speaking of the love of the Father to his precious children begotten in his Son. The whole history is joy, pleasure, and felicity that cannot now be dwelt upon. O that my limits could allow me to indulge a moment on their happiness. A sweet and transcendent description opens to my view. If animation should be left, to awaken the pictures in the preceding lines, they would certainly chain the eye of the believing, and immoveably fix the whole attention of the christian world. "Behold the love of

Digitized by Google

"God bestowed upon his sons." The world can have no conception of this love, and it is probable, eternity will be exhausted before angels obtain the comprehension of it. But our feeble attention must be reduced to our text. "Every man that hath "this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure." That is, every one that has a hope, that he is converted, and a child of God, is honestly and faithfully endeavouring after holiness, and a conformity to the blessed Jesus. These things prescribe to every christian's observation, three considerations of great importance.

First, The nature of this hope.

Secondly, Some false experiences respecting it.

Thirdly, Its reality, advantages and benefits.

First, We are to consider the nature of a christian hope.—However it may be described, it bears in its very existence, a comfortable expectation. Its nature is, an expectation of happiness in the glories of heaven. It is beautifully expressed in the verses preceding our text. It should inspire every pious soul with raptures of joy. Hearken to the extatic description. "Now "we are the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we "shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be "like him, for we shall see him as he is." Strange it may seem, but St. Paul attributes assurance to hope, as well as to faith. "We desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to "the full assurance of hope unto the end." The eminent distinction between assurance and hope, lies in this, according to my present apprehension—assurance is on the confines, if not in the possession of enjoyment; but hope stands at a reverent distance, tasting the sweets of expectation. Faith seems in the scriptures to be laid as the foundation of both these graces. "Faith is the "substance of things hoped for." Faith gives an assurance to our expectations. These graces, however distinct, are apt to flourish and fade together. Where the one is weak, the other is

Digitized by Google

feeble; where the one is in good condition, you will frequently find the other luxuriant.

The hope in our text never supposes a blush on the faith of its subjects. A grand characteristic of this hope is, "It maketh "not ashamed."

This hope is not of a common kind, which a thousand unforseen accidents may disappoint. It is not of the complexion of Abraham's, a hope against hope.

This hope is the fruit of experience. "Tribulation worketh "patience, and patience experience, and experience hope. And "if we hope for that we see not, we do with patience wait for it." Its existence in the soul originates from the grace and promises of God. Hear the experience of the Psalmist: "My soul hath "waited, and I have trusted in his word, O Lord I have waited "for thee."

This hope will manifest itself in a variety of ways, of which my limits prohibit a retail. Serious thoughts are evidences of their going forth to the promised land. What we earnestly hope for, will be often in our minds. Can a person feelingly hope for an object which is not frequently in his thoughts? Let a beggar expect a crown, and it is always in his view. Can we expect eternal glories, and can the contemplation be obscured from our sight? Can all the world of glory be stated to our expectation, Christ upon his throne, and cherubic hosts surrounding him, and we not fervently wish to join the glorious society? The worldly heart says, "pull down the barns and build greater, to-day and "to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a "year, and buy and sell, and get gain." We will go to and fro, and make fortunes. O that a christian heart had half the spirit of a carnal one; how would it grow and increase in grace, and how flourish as a watered garden in every virtue?

Groans, sighings, and longings are high evidences of their

Digitized by Google

having hope in their souls. The hope in our text, is a hope that we are the children of God. A hope that extends its blessings and privileges beyond present mortal conception. This hope is swallowed up and lost in wonders. The reflection and belief that we are the sons and daughters of God, his children, friends and favourites; when we look back upon ourselves, it surpasses credibility—when forward, this hope engrosses the soul, and faints under the prospect. Yet these strange and overcoming expectations, are accompanied with an indescribable pleasure and sweetness, which generate a joy, that the Apostle expresses in a language not easily expounded: "A rejoicing under a hope of the "glory, and though you see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." The nature of this hope, that we are the children of God, and sincere expectants of eternal life, may be further illustrated, under the

Second head, Of some false experiences concerning it.

My dear brethren, the hopes under the gospel are so numerous and various, I feel an abhorrence of a discrimination. But my observations shall be reduced to the bounds of a few remarks, brought down to the lowest tender feelings. The infant just born in Christ, is worth a thousand worlds. A repenting soul gives joy to heaven; this exceeds all that sun, moon, and stars ever performed. But, alas! how many hope under the gospel, whose hopes are vain. It is a melancholy thought. Their hopes are neither founded, directed, nor supported by the oracles of truth. "There is a generation who are sure in their own eyes, "and yet is not washed from their iniquity." Observe, it is not one or two who have fallen under this fatality, but a whole generation. Let our prayers ascend in all the fervour of supplication to heaven, that we may not be the unhappy generation.

The false experiences of some, are founded upon their multitude of duties. What a sweet morsel is a multiplicity of duties to the deluded and hypocritical soul? The glory of his hope is,

Digitized by Google

"I fast twice in the week, I give a tenth of all I possess." What modern christian can dare to intrude upon the confines of such a profession? But Tekel is their inscription. Let the christian place himself in the balance, and with Christ it descends and is held down, and all the powers of hell cannot raise it.

Some indulge a hope, that they are good men, in judging themselves by the law, while they are wholly blind to its spiritual meaning and extent. This was Paul's hope, previous to his conversion. He fancied himself an eminent saint and favourite of heaven. His hopes were raised upon a strange foundation, which he himself afterwards acknowledged and lamented as the greatest wickedness of his life, his persecuting the church of God. But when his mind was enlightened to see the law, what was his declaration? "I was alive without the law once; but when the com-"mandment came, sin revived and I died." Alas! what multitudes imagine themselves walking in the law, and feel lively hopes, while they are perfectly ignorant of its nature.

Another false experience which deceives many, is one of the most unlikely grounds in the world to raise a hope of goodness upon, yet the deceivings of the human heart have such a fatality in them, and satanical influence is of such subtlety, that contradictions to reason, scripture and common sense, often form foundations for delusive hopes. And one of the most unaccountable delusions to which professors yield themselves is this. They imbibe a censorious and rash judging spirit. They pronounce such an one a christian, and such an one to be not a christian. Such a sermon to be excellent, and such a sermon to be a weak, feeble performance. Such a minister, the most distinguished preacher they ever heard, and another is a poor creature, unworthy of attention or notice. When these people collect impudence and folly enough to be hurried away with such a spirit of self-conceit, they enjoy flourishing hopes, far beyond what the sincere and humble christian can make any pretensions.

Digitized by Google

These people are easily observed by four characteristics—forwardness, impertinence, vanity and ignorance. Let christians be exhorted to pity the pride of nature, the foolishness of self-conceited professors, and never be provoked to arise from the valley of humility and prayer.

To open all the sources of false hopes would be impossible. Such as a relinquishment of some sins, a performance of some duties, a partial reformation, a restraint from some vices, the approbation of friends, the flattery of christians, the tender feelings of compassionate ministers, their attendance on ordinances, their never having a troubled day, nor a disturbed conscience, their sorrows, joys, repentance, &c. He who can enumerate the stars, and count the sands that bank the ocean, let him retail the infinite variety of false and deceitful hopes.

The certain criterion of a false and true hope, is here laid in our text. A true hope is not of an extraneous nature, "It is "within a man." Its operations and effects are, it sanctifies the soul, subdues the corruptions, mortifies the lusts, conforms to Christ, and elevates the heart to God. "He that hath this hope "in him, purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure."

Thirdly, We are to consider its effects, advantages and benefits.—Trees are known and distinguished by their fruits. So every one may learn the nature of his hopes, whether they are of a saving or delusive kind.

True hopes fasten upon the promises of the covenant of grace, and they who lay hold on the promises are pressing after holiness; hearken to the apostolic counsel. "Having therefore "these promises dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all "filthiness of the flesh and spirit."

When a person once hopes, he has obtained an interest in Christ, then his cry is, "What have I any more to do with idols?" His answer to every temptation is, "I am not mine own,

Digitized by Google

"I am bought with a price." If our hopes have not a purifying and sanctifying influence upon our hearts and lives, we ought to be jealous of them, as dangerous and delusive. Can any one rationally entertain expectations of heaven, and not study holiness?

Gospel hopes awaken in the soul fervent breathings for communion and fellowship with God and the Saviour. Their earnest wish will often be, "Tell me O thou, whom my soul loveth, "where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flocks to rest at "noon." The Psalmist after declaring God was his hope, immediately subjoins, "Early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth af- "ter thee as the panting heart for the water brook."

A genuine hope, when it loses sweet communion with Christ, will feel like weeping Mary and say, "They have taken away "my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him."

This hope raises in the soul the most exalted ideas of the dear Redeemer. "His beloved, is more than another's beloved; he "is the chief among ten thousand. As the apple tree among the "trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons."

This hope is ever accompanied with humility. It places the christian, under a view of the glories presented to his expectation, in the deepest dust. Jacob when his hopes were strong, cries out, "That he was less than the least of all the creatures of God." Hoping and humble Paul declares, "I am the chief of sinners, "less than the least of all saints."

Another fruit of true hope, it causeth pleasure and delight in duty. Prayer and praise are the joy and comfort of his heart. His language is, "I will keep the commandments of my God. I "delight to do thy will, O my God."

There would be no end of retailing the fruits, effects, blessings,

Digitized by Google

and advantages of this hope. An use or two must close the subject.

First, It affords an important use of gratitude and praise. The language of every heart, which enjoys this precious hope must be, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?" "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who "hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in "Christ."

Secondly, It affords a serious use of self examination. To be often trying ourselves by almost every doctrine, and every duty is of great importance, in order to the knowledge of ourselves, for humiliation, reproof, repentance; to awaken us to greater circumspection in life, and more engagedness in religion. Self application of truth and self examination are duties too much neglected by christians. And with regard to the nature of their hope, they are often afraid to examine it. Yet in respect to the operations of the human mind, few call for a more serious and accurate attention. All men have hope. They hope for better circumstances in this world, and for happiness in the next. The exceptions from this axiom are few, and rarities of wonder, destraction, lunacy and dispair.

Now seeing hope is universal, and few are possessed of it as a saving grace, for few shall be saved; hence it becomes all to enter into their own hearts, and judge their exercises, experiences and conduct, especially the nature, grounds and reasons of their hope by the oracles of truth.

Our text is a certain criterion for distinguishing a false from a true hope. A false hope allows its possessor to proceed on in life in carelessness, hypocrisy, security and sin; permits him to live in the neglect of prayer, the duties of religion, and in the indulgence

Digitized by Google

of a multitude of vices. If his conscience reprove him for his wickedness, or inform him that he is not a good man, his false hopes comfort him, that he will repent, reform and become good, or that God is merciful, will not damn his creatures for trifling neglects, and little natural deviations from the rules of propriety. Thus they are lulled on in the lap of folly to eternal ruin.

A true, genuine and gospel hope, a hope begotten by the spirit of God, is the perfect reverse of all the strange hopes that buoy up the human mind. It aims at the holiness of Christ, and to purify and conform to his example.—It disposes the happy possessor to deny every ungodly propensity, to cultivate every grace, to practise every gospel duty, to live in the love and fear of God, and to perform all righteousness, truth and charity towards men. This is a christian's hope, and by this we ought to try ourseleves. "Examine yourselves, try yourselves, know you not your own-"selves how this hope is in you," except you should be disapproved of God.

Let all who hope they have this hope, praise and bless the Lord, for the wonders of his grace and mercy. "Rejoice in hope of the "glory of God. Be of good courage and he shall strengthen your "heart, all ye that hope in the Lord." Bear in mind, O christian, your hope will soon be swallowed up in fruition.

What can be said to the many who are supported by hopes, which it seems nothing but death and eternity, and the invisible judgment can correct. However incorrigible these fatal flatteries and delusive hopes may be, my duty as a minister of Christ, is to leave with their judgments and consciences, the declarations of God. "The hope of the hypocrite shall perish. The eyes of the wicked "shall fail, their hope shall be as the giving up the ghost." The last text I leave you is, and may divine grace impress it on every heart. "When a wicked man dieth his expectation shall perish, and the

Digitized by Google

"hope of unjust men perisheth." O my brethren, let us try ourselves, before the heart searching God in respect to our hopes. And if in sincerity of soul, in faith and love, we are building all our hopes for glory, on Christ Jesus and him crucified, we have the most perfect assurance, they will not be disappointed.

Digitized by Google

SERMON XLI.

GROWTH IN GRACE.

II. Peter iii. 18.

But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

AN advancement in piety and religion is one of the benefits flowing from justification and sanctification. To be making progress in the christian life, is of high consequence to our peace, comfort, usefulness and hope in the world, and it raises the growing soul to greater degrees of felicity in the future state. To be possessed of saving grace, reconciled to God, interested in Christ, and washed in any measure from our sinful pollutions, is such mercy as cannot be expressed, but by an eternity of gratitude. Yet glory to the Most High, this pre-eminent favour is conferred upon some of our guilty race. This acquisition all ought to give diligence to make, and when acquired, it must not only be maintained, but care must be taken to progress therein; a direct counsel on this point is admininistered to us in the words of our text. "Grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord "and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Allow me here to introduce one observation in support of divine revelation; that no book but the bible, recommends and establishes every virtue, from the lowest to the highest, that

Digitized by Google

reason can pronounce. Did I say every virtue? I say every decency, from the lowest grade to the most exalted heights of the love of God. From neatness in our persons, cleanliness in our dwellings, and propriety in our deportment, to all the glories of eternity, through natural, common, relative, civil and religious life, are stated before us in the scriptures. There is not, among the millions of books in existence, there never was, and never will be, such another book as the bible. Hence this extraordinary book comprehending all things in a compendious view, economical, political, philosophical, and pious towards God and man, must surely be supernatural, and of divine inspiration.

Passing this, let us attend to the exhortation in our text. The recommendation is to grow in grace and christian knowledge. The plain intention of which is, that we should advance in holy exercises, godly experiences, and to a greater acquaintance with divine things.

All that shall detain your attention at present, will be only,

First, To some observations and remarks respecting this spiritual growth.

Secondly, To some reasons or motives why we should feel the force of this precept, and strive after the holy advances here required.

First, In regard to observations and remarks on this spiritual growth.

We observe

First, In respect to this spiritual growth, or progress in religion. It is a matter that requires time and reflection to judge of the advancement. Conversion may take place in a short space, like that of St. Paul and the jailor. The former made a distinguishing figure in the christian world, and the latter we never heard of, only in the occurences of a single night. But to judge

Digitized by Google

of progression, some portion of time seems to be necessary. It is not to be discerned by single acts and particular exercises, so much as by habits and a tenor of conduct. We cannot so easily decide how we grow by every prayer and every sermon, as by taking a considerable portion of time to examine the bias of our souls.

Secondly, Let it be remarked in the growth of saints there is much difference. All the plants in the garden of Christ, are not equally flourishing. Some have five talents, and others two or one. It is recorded of the Thessilonian christians, that their "faith "grew exceedingly." And others are represented as weak and slow in the production of fruits. "We all, as St, Paul affirms, "grow according to the measure of a part." "To every one of "us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." No one expects a finger to grow to the magnitude of an arm. All the members of the body grow, but not equally; thus it is with all the members of Christ's mystical body. Our Lord requires all his disciples to improve the talents entrusted to them, but he no where requires of them to whom he hath given two, to gain ten. His demands are ever of the most rational kind. And his requisitions are only in proportion to his gifts. Where only one talent is conferred, all that is required is an improvement and encrease of the same.

Thirdly, Observe, an encrease of grace is ever accompanied with progress in christian knowledge. The injunction is, "we "should follow on to know the Lord." The first request of Moses to God was, "tell me thy name," yet afterwards his desires of knowledge so encreased, his prayer was "shew me thy "glory." The christian, however various his feelings may be, though he sometimes takes backward steps, yet upon the whole he progresses in virtue, and goodness. He becomes more meek, humble, heavenly minded; more diffident of himself, harmless and uniform in his conversation. They see and know more of

Digitized by Google

God, of themselves and divine things. The apostolic benediction on christians is, "grace and peace be multiplied unto you, through "the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord." Young converts sometimes feel a new light break in upon their minds; with this new light satanical influence often enters, and infuses and blows up a spiritual pride, that in a few days they conceive themselves to be the foremost christians in the world. Nothing more common than smatterers in sciences to suppose themselves superior to their instructors. Where there is sincere grace, this is soon corrected; where delusion and hypocrisy become the substitutes of religion, these people become the plague of the church, and the nuisances of society, and after a while, like other meteors, they go out into stench and darkness. But true grace is an encreasing light; its light "shineth more and more." The real christian grows in the knowledge of God, of Christ, and of himself. He sees more the vanity of the world, the odiousness of sin, the corruption and deceitfulness of his own heart. Hereby he grows in love, humility, meekness, goodness, charity and every grace.

Of all the graces we should principally make advances in love, faith, humility, and charity are the chief. These are a comprehension of the gospel virtues. These are the things in which we are commanded to make progress. And when we are required to advance in one, all are comprehended. Hence the gospel prayer is, "Lord encrease our faith; Lord, I believe, help mine unbe-"lief." The evidences of this growth in grace are, becoming more sober, judicious, humble, self-denied, and diligent in duty; our hearts more elevated to the glory of God, and the enjoyment of more of a spirit of devotion. The true christian resists sin from the feelings of love to God, and a respect to purity and holiness. He has an abhorrence of his moral corruptions, with which none but God can be acquainted. A Botanist contemplates a garden, in its flowers, roots, and beauties and utility; so a christian views all the glories of the gospel in their utmost

Digitized by Google

extent, as transcendently amiable, and of the highest usefulness to himself, and comprising every blessing to the children of men. Cultivating humility and self-denial, is a distinguished way of growing in grace. It is an observation of one of the ancients upon the students at Athens; that when they had been there a little while, they felt themselves exceeding wise; after some time, they supposed themselves only lovers of wisdom; and last of all after spending studious years, they looked upon themselves as rude and ignorant and knowing nothing. In all sciences the knowables increase much faster than acquisition. Thus the new entrants upon religion are too apt to suppose they have obtained a world of piety; when they have been under its direction for years, their pride, folly and vanity are in a measure subdued. They see more of God, of their vileness and sinfulness; their spiritual knowledge is encreased and the tenderness of their consciences; hence you will often hear old and eminent christians say, "We "are poor creatures, less than the least of all saints; if we should "get to heaven, we will be wonders there and miracles of grace." Thus a progression in humility evidences an advancement in every grace, virtue, and duty, and in a meetness for the abodes of the blessed. "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and "Saviour Jesus Christ."

Secondly, We are to bring forward some reasons to promote in our souls a feeling of this precept, and that we should strive after the holy advances here required.

Now where life is, there will be growth. Where grace is, it must encrease. A painted flower is still the same; a painted child is as little an hundred years hence, as the day it was drawn. Hypocrisy and enthusiasm never make advances only in pride and heat, in vice and impudence. But true grace flourishes in sweetness, charms like luxuriant plants, and captivates the heart like tender infants. "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree, he "shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that are planted in "the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.

Digitized by Google

"As new born babes, they desire the sincere milk of the word, "that they may grow thereby." The holy commandment is, "Let us go on to perfection." Waste and consumption are the sure attendants of the non-improvement of grace. We are either going forward or backwards, there is no stay in religion. The active nature of man is always growing worse or better. To rest in present attainments, is a dangerous condition. St. Paul left the things which were behind, and pressed after those that were before. All the angels on Jacob's ladder, were either ascending or descending. Spiritual things are not like sensual; they cloy not in the enjoyment. He who hath tasted and experienced the power of special grace, hungers and thirsts after more. Every degree of holiness encreases the desire of a greater measure.

Again an advancement in grace ought to be sought after; because there can be no such thing here as an overgrown estate. You cannot acquire too much divine knowledge, too much love to God, faith in Christ, or sorrow for sin. You cannot cultivate too holy, humble, and righteous a temper. The Apostolic affirmation is, "We must give all diligence, that an abundant en- "trance may be administered unto us into the everlasting king- "dom of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." O that it could feelingly be impressed upon the heart of every christian, that spiritual things cannot exceed measure.

To this Solomon's maxim will be objected, "Be not righte- "ous overmuch." Hardly any scriptural assertion has been less understood, or more perverted than this. The licentious profligate, the gross debauchee, and the careless and formal liver, if he could not repeat another text in the bible, will be stunning you with this. The obvious meaning, which reason, scripture, religion and common sense place upon it, is this: "Be not too good "in thine own opinion, too righteous in thine own conceit; be "not foolish in thy zeal, or self-willed, hasty and censorious in "thy decisions. Be as thou thinkest righteousness requires, and "attend to thine own spirit, temper and practice, more than to

Digitized by Google

"others." If this explication be just and accurate, then the text is a condemnation of spiritual pride, self-righteousness, and every vain imagination that stands in opposition to a humble and christian heart. The disciples were righteous over-much, when they called for fire from heaven to consume the unkind Samaritans.

Moreover, those who grow in grace, God hath provided for them a more ample reward. According to the measures of grace they imbibe and exercise, so will their measures of glory be.—They who have much to them, much will be given. "He that "soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly, and he that soweth boun-"tifully shall reap bountifully."

The state of true converts is illustrated by an increasing light. "The path of the just is as a shining light, which shineth more "and more unto the perfect day." This doctrine was afterwards given in an injunction by the Apostle. "We beseech you "brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as you have "received of us how you ought to walk and to please God, so you "would abound more and more." Remember, O christian, you can never exhaust the treasures of grace, or bankrupt the exchequer of heaven. Christ is infinitely sufficient, and the Holy Ghost is a rich and unfailing effusion, and with the eternal Jehovah there is no lessening or expending his goodnes.

To grow in grace is not only our duty, but it is also an expression of grateful acknowledgment. If we would wish for mercy to be multiplied unto us, we should be careful that peace and love be encreased in our souls. The divine prayer, wish, and precept is: "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the "knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ; and besides this, give "all diligence; add to your faith virtue, and to your virtue "knowledge; and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance "patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly "kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these

Digitized by Google

"things be in you and abound, they make you, that you shall "neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord "Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things, is blind and "cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from "his old sins." Our blessed Saviour grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. Thus christians ought to progress in every moral virtue, holy qualification, and pious duty, till they grow up to the stature of men in Christ Jesus. Had christians half the disposition for encreasing their spiritual, which carnal men possess for the advancement of their temporal interest, how blessed and happy would be their condition. They join house to house, and field to field, and are never satisfied—so christians ought to be filled with insatiable desires. They ought to add virtue to virtue, obedience to faith, and one degree of grace to another, until they shall be filled with all the fulness of God. The covetous man maketh the encrease of his wealth the main business of his life. He rises early, sits up late, and eats the bread of vexation, to gather white and yellow dust; so the acquisition of religion and heavenly riches ought to command the main attention of our lives. The carnal man's desires become more eager as the world flows in upon him; thus the fervent desires of the christian ought to be, to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

A word or two of reflection and counsel, shall finish this discourse.

First, We ought to lift up our hearts in sentiments of praise and gratitude to heaven, that such an astonishing provision is made for fitting and preparing the renewed souls, and rendering them meet for eternal felicity; that they should not only be sanctified, but that their sanctification should grow up to perfection. The length, breadth, height and depth of the wisdom of God in the salvation of man, will be the theme of joy, thanksgiving and praise to the saints forever and ever. The ambition in heaven

Digitized by Google

will be, if any such thing as is termed ambition can enter there, whose heart is most filled with gratitude, and whose tongues can express the highest *Hallelujahs*. But pause, methinks I hear the growing christian say, "Instead of growing better, I grow worse "and worse. O my corruptions, my passions and perverse tem- "pers." You all know something of the disposition of the worldling, either by experience or hearsay. As he encreases in riches, he feels poor; and you will hear him daily declaring him- self a poor man, when every body sees the world filling his cof- fers with every tide. Still he cries he is poor, he fears a writ of bankruptcy, and at present, he has nothing to give to any reli- gious, charitable or public use. This affords a shadow of illustra- tion for the comfort of the poor growing christian. His corrup- tions dispose him to cry, "I am a poor creature, I thought years ago, I had some religion; I cannot yet give up all hope, from past feelings in the change of my temper, from the views of divine glories, and from past experiences, from the abhorrence of sin, and the abasement of myself, I often hang trembling on the beam containing the weights of hope and despair. I have no oil in my vessel to share to foolish virgins." Remember this thought, O christian, the poorer you feel in grace, the richer you grow. I cannot enlarge upon this idea. It is a precious and experimental one. The more you grow in the sense of your corruptions, ig- norance and lusts, and in a disesteem and abhorrence of your- selves, you rise higher in the favour of God. The prayer and praise of the true convert is, "Open thou my lips, and my mouth "shall shew forth thy praise. Praise ye the Lord, and give "thanks unto the Lord for he is good, for his mercy endureth "forever. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus "Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in hea- "venly places in Christ." Let christians believe, and proceed in their heavenly course rejoicing. Be not afraid, Christ is sufficient for you; hope against hope; and grow in grace to the end.

Secondly, We should honestly reflect upon, and enquire into

Digitized by Google

our advances in religion. The great question here should be, do we grow in grace, make progress in spiritual knowledge? Do we abhor sin more, love God more, cleave to Christ more?

Let us be fervent in prayer for an abundance of the riches and sweetness of grace to be poured into our souls. Let those who have fallen backward, awake to repentance, prayer and amendment. Let such as have never entered upon religion, begin the divine life. And may this life begin, and grow in us all, to all eternity.

Digitized by Google

SERMON XLII.

THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS PROVED.

ROMANS VIII. 38, 39.

For I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

SUCH another collection of terms can scarcely be produced from sacred or profane history, to enforce and establish a sentiment, as these before us. Surely a sentiment must be of high importance in the christian system, which can call forth such strong language from the pen of inspiration for its establishment. This great sentiment is, "That nothing can separate believers "from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Is the love of God to his people, bestowed through Christ, of such a permanent nature, that it is absolutely indissoluble? This is evidently the affirmation in the text. That this love of God, whether objectively or subjectively considered, is absolutely inextinguishable; and the whole foundation and medium of it is Jesus Christ. The assertion is certainly the strongest that was ever brought forth to view. That the love of God to believers, and their love to him, is indissolvable; and that the reciprocity of this love is founded in a Mediator, who hath infinite power with God, and effectual influence with men. Hence this love,

Digitized by Google

granted or received, through this medium, is or can by no means be destroyed. God is infinite, the Mediator is infinite, therefore, this love or grace must be permanent; hence believers are so connected with God through Jesus Christ, by the constitution of the covenant of grace, that they can never totally or finally be separated from him. As this is the obvious idea here communicated, then the perseverance of the saints in grace to eternal life, is absolutely certain. This is the sentiment, the strongest images in nature are produced to establish. They are introduced as negatives to give the affirmation the more irresistable force.

The words of the text are a kind of deduction from what the Apostle had been previously declaring, that neither "Tribulation, "distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril or sword," could separate saints from Christ Jesus. "Nay, in all these things, says he, "we are not only conquerors, but we are more than "conquerors, through him that loved us." Yea, he rises in his argument, "For I am persuaded," that is fully satisfied and assured, "that neither death nor life;" to wit, neither the awful horrors of the one, in its most terrific forms, nor the allurements of the other, in all its captivating and enticeing prospects, can break the bond of this unchangeable love. Where once it exists, it continues forever. He proceeds in his group of imagery:— "Nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers." That is, let all the angels in heaven, the principalities of hell, and powers of earth, if possible, form a combination, to destroy this love, or violate the connection between God and the believer, the effort will be vain.

Yea, further, "Neither things present, nor things to come," can accomplish the fatal purpose. By this sentence may be understood, all the corruptions in which the christian is inveloped, all the afflictions, crosses and trials laid upon him, and all the temptations with which he is assaulted; and every future thing of this nature, with all imaginable and aggravated accumulations, cannot effect the purpose of a separation.

Digitized by Google

He still adds, " Neither height nor depth," can break this indissoluble tie. Neither the height of honor, nor depth of ignominy. Let the christian be exalted to the highest throne, and crowned the emperor of the world, or despised with Lazarus, thrown into the open street, covered with sores, and forsaken of the whole human species, and left to the licking friendship of dogs, yet these extended extremes of prosperity and adversity, cannot create the separation.

And as if the Apostle had finished the whole extension of imagery, and exhausted all the powers of language, he closes this induction with this universal clause, " Nor any other creature." Compress all creation in heaven, earth and hell, angels, men and devils, their united power is incapable of this dissolution. How strong the union between God and believers, established by the mediation of Jesus Christ!

The simple doctrine for which this text was selected, was to prove the perseverance of the saints. We firmly believe that true and real christians, or those who become the objects of the special love of God, and are regenerated and united to Christ by a new and living faith, can neither totally or finally fall away from that saving grace which they once received. We believe that good men, and saints who are now in heaven, have entertained different opinions upon this subject.—Some have believed, that they who were the subjects of special grace might lose it, and finally perish. The contenders for this opinion have been few. But the advocates for a total, though not a final falling away, have been many.

I confess the latter have much plausibility in favour of their opinion—the former nothing of weight, yet I think both will fail by the testimony of divine revelation.

This doctrine wholly depends upon our construction of divine revelation, and this shall be the sole rule of the present enquiry.

Digitized by Google

First, The scriptural arguments for the perseverance of the saints shall be produced.

Secondly, The grounds on which this doctrine is founded.

Thirdly, Attend to some of the perplexities, difficulties, or objections in which this doctrine is involved.

First, The scriptural assertions in support of the doctrine of the saint's perseverance in grace are these. I hope I shall be excused from diffuse paraphrase, being confined to the narrow limits of a pulpit discourse.

The first authority always produced in support of this doctrine, is Jesus Christ. He makes this strong assertion to the cavilling Pharisees, respecting his sheep, or all true believers, past, present and to come: "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall ne-"ver perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hands."—Consider the import of this declaration. *Eternal life* is given by Christ to his people; the amplifications are, *they shall never perish*, or be lost. Neither shall *any* in heaven, earth or hell, pluck them out of his hands. Can stronger language be produced in favour of the safety of the saints, than what is here uttered by truth itself, the Almighty Saviour.

Christ often represents himself under the image of bread, and other provisions which sustain this mortal life—but these are represented as everlasting in their effects. Hearken to his own declarations. "I am the bread of life, whereof, if a man eat, he "shall never die. I am the living bread which came down from "heaven; if a man eat of this bread, he shall live forever:— "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal "life, and I will raise him up at the last day. He that eateth "me shall live by me; he that eateth of this bread shall live "forever," &c. Time would fail to quote the assertions of our Lord, in favour of the peresverance of all, who are united to him by faith, unto eternal life.

Digitized by Google

The current testimony both of the old and new testament, unite in the support of this doctrine. Hence Isaiah, speaking of special grace says, "It is a spring of water, whose waters fail "not." Job declares, "My Redeemer liveth, whom I shall see "for myself and not another." The Psalmist expresses the most perfect assurance of perseverance. "Thou shalt guide me by thy "counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory. The righteous "go from strength to srength, every one of them in Zion ap- "peareth before God."

The new Testament pronounces grace, "An incorruptible "seed, a seed that remaineth in him; they are the temple of the "living God, in them he dwells and walks. He will be their "God, and they *shall* be his people. He that believeth *shall be* "saved. The word of God abideth in them." The passages to this purpose are innumerable. All which hold forth this doctrine, that the connection between true faith, regeneration, and the love of God to believers, is absolutely indissoluble.

Let us consider,

Secondly, The grounds on which this wonderful doctrine is founded.

It is not founded on the inadmissibility of grace in the creature. This would be a feeble foundation indeed. It would be like building a castle on the stalk of a tulip. The holiness of angels failed, the perfect holiness of Adam perished. Wherefore, the perseverance of believers in grace must have a very different foundation from any thing found in themselves. It is one thing to affirm the perseverance of the saints—and another to say, that grace in its nature is absolutely unloseable. This world will never again be destroyed by a deluge; surely it is as capable now of this destruction as formerly; but the declaration of God has given a more infallible security against it, than the bow in the clouds.

Digitized by Google

Neither does this perseverance of the saints, depend upon their renewed will, or any sufficiency of grace granted unto them. If these things could have been of any avail, Adam would not have fallen. He was holy in his will, and perfect in all the powers of his mind. His fatal example demonstrates that holiness is neither absolutely unloseable in its own nature, nor can the most perfect free will be a security against such a loss. But the saint's continuance in grace is not of themselves; they are built upon a better foundation, even the rock of ages, a rock which fails not.

The grounds on which the believer's perseverance is founded, are these: the everlasting nature of the covenant of grace, the effectual intercession of Christ, and the promises of God.

The covenant of grace is such, that it cannot be changed or broken. It is well ordered in all things and sure; and it is often stiled an everlasting covenant. And the sum of the engagements on the part of God to his people is, "I will not turn away from "them to do them good." On this immutable foundation their safety and salvation rests.

The all prevalent intercession of Christ, is another pillar which supports this doctrine. He is a Saviour of infinite power, all his addresses are ever available with the Father, and he continually intercedes on the behalf of his people. He lives forever, and is the Mediator in this everlasting covenant of grace. "There-"fore, he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto "God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for "them." The intercession of Christ can never intermit or fail, and the Father heareth him always. Hence the salvation of believers resteth sure, so that the gates of hell shall never prevail against it. His effectual intercessory addresses always are, "that "they may be where he is, that they may be kept from evil, and "that their faith fail not." Therefore, they will assuredly be kept through faith by the almighty power and prevalent intercession of Christ, unto eternal life.

Digitized by Google

The promises of God are also a firm foundation on which the perseverance of the saints is founded. These are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus. God is truth itself, he cannot lie, neither can his promises be as waters that fail. Is pardon of sin promised believers? Then it is in these ample terms, "I will remember their "sins no more." Is purifying grace promised? It is in the like ampletude of phrase: "They shall fear me forever, and they shall "not depart from me." The promise of resurrection to eternal life is certain. For he has engaged he will change our vile bodies, which have been putrefying in the dust of the earth, and make them like to his own glorious body. Yea, God hath promised to his people, never to leave them nor forsake them.— "He will be their God, and they shall be his people. For the "mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kind- "ness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of "my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee." Is God infinite in power, truth, and faithfulness? The perseverance of the saints is secured by all these perfections. And it would seem from the scriptures, the former must fail, as soon as the latter.

Yet, with all the stability, this doctrine appears, from the corruptions, blindness and scruples of men, it is covered in doubt by some, and denied by others, which leads me to the

Third thing proposed, to wit, To attend to some of the difficulties, perplexities, and objections with which this doctrine is surrounded.

Those who doubt upon this subject, readily enquire, "Did "not Noah, David, Solomon, Peter, &c. fall from grace?"

These difficulties are easily removed by the after rising of these people to be the peculiar favourites of heaven by repentance. Noah, though he fell foully into drunkenness, yet he did not continue therein, but was afterwards reckoned by the prophet

Digitized by Google

Ezekiel with Daniel and Job, as the three holiest men upon earth. David and Peter, the evidences of their repentance and recovery, none can deny. Solomon's case is left in more perplexity, that others may fear and tremble at backsliding. Yet his whole book of Ecclesiastes witnesses the sense to which he was brought of the vanity, folly and evil of his departures from God, and proves his repentance and restoration to divine favour.

The question is not how far a saint may fall, for it is readily granted he may fall into the grossest iniquities which can be named, into incest, murder, and idolatry; yet saints who fell into these sins, are now triumphing in heaven, and singing the praises of free and sovereign grace.

It is said of others, that they never recovered from their apostacy, such as Joash, Hymeneus, Alexander, Demas and others. They who raise this difficulty ought to prove that these ever were saints, or any thing but hypocrites and deluded professors. Joash supported a good character, while Jehoiada the pious high priest lived. No sooner was this godly man dead, than he exhibited all the corruption and baseness, which had always been in his heart; Jehu once in a fit of religion shewed much zeal for the Lord, but no one ever supposed him to be a saint.

With regard to Demas, little can be said of him, St. Paul, in one place calls him "a fellow labourer," and in another, he says, "he forsook him because of this world." Surely his being once a minister, cannot prove him to be a good man, more than the traiterous Judas can be proved to be a sincere disciple.

As to Hymeneus and Alexander, "who put away a good conscience and made shipwreck of the faith; St. Paul delivered "them to satan, that they might learn not to blaspheme." As these shipwrecked their holy profession, and their consciences were never sanctified by divine grace, so as it is elsewhere said by another apostle, "They went out from us, but they were

Digitized by Google

"not of us; had they been of us, they would no doubt have "continued with us."

Many texts are brought up as a cloud to destroy the comfort of christains, and overwhelm this doctrine. The first class of texts are such as speak "of righteous persons turning away from "their righteousness." The explanation of these are easy. All the world acknowledge a difference between appearances and reality; between an external show and sincerity of heart. The former may perish, while the latter endures forever. Seeming religion, and apparent righteousness will surely fail, but can this assume the appearance of argument, that real grace, sincerity and truth must fail also? Blushing should cover the face, and silence seal the mouths of all who would wish to avail themselves of this feeble objection.

It is further said, "It is impossible to renew them to repentance "who have apostatised, after they have been enlightened, tasted "of the heavenly gift, and been made partakers of the Holy "Ghost," &c. This text falls as heavy on the adversaries of the doctrine of perseverance to explain, as upon its friends. Their difficulty is always in a bungling manner removed. Ours is obvious and of the plainest kind. Impossibilities are often supposed in the apostolic writings, as that a good angel might deacend from heaven, and preach a gospel contradictory to the apostle, or that Christ is not risen from the dead, &c. As these are suppositions impossible, so a man who has tasted the celestial gift, and been made partaker of the Holy Ghost, he cannot be left of God to fall away, either totally or finally, more than a good angel, can be left to preach a false gospel, or that the resurrection of Christ is not an existing event. Other explications of this extraordinary passage might be easily quoted, but let this at present suffice.

It is further said, the perseverance of the saints is placed upon conditionalities in the gospel, such as, "If you continue in my

Digitized by Google

"word, if you continue in the faith; he that endureth to the "end," &c. Nothing can be argued from these hypothetical assertions, only that the saints obtain the salvation of their souls, in the way of watchfulness and holy living. These texts imply no uncertainty of the event, but are a strong admonition to goodness in all manner of conversation.

The last difficulty, I can attend to in my narrow limits, is, relinquishing scripture, a dreadful cry is raised, "That this doctrine "tends to, and promotes licentiousness." This is immediately answered, by requiring an instance of this kind. None such has ever existed or can be produced. So far is it from such an abhorred consequence, that we constantly affirm where true grace is, it is an excitement to holiness, "Works by love, purifies the "heart, and overcomes the world."

However different the opinions of christians may be on this subject, there is an agreement in general sentiment, "That it is "the holy and persevering saint, who arrives at life eternal." O that God might keep us all in true faith and holiness unto compleat salvation!

Your patience cannot allow me more than a very brief conclusion of this subject.

First, We are here taught the distinction between true religion, and all its appearances. The morning cloud will vanish, and all dew be evaporated by the rising sun. Land floods fail, and even the flood of Noah was dried up. But true religion fails not. It is a spring of water springing up unto everlasting life. These "streams fail not, supplied by a fountain which never runs "dry. Heaven and earth may pass away, yet the seed of God re-"mains. "He that hath begun a good work will certainly carry "it on to the end."

Secondly, This doctrine teaches that none can receive the consolations of grace, only those who are exercised unto godliness.

Digitized by Google

No comfort or hope can arise from perseverance, only by holy living. Those who wish to be, or fancy they are converted, that they may live in carnal pleasure or sin, ought to fear and be at present assured that they are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.

Thirdly, This doctrine affords strong consolation to those who have scriptural evidences that they are in Christ. You have the assurance that there is no condemnation to them, who are in Christ Jesus. It is God who justifieth, who is he that condemneth? When in darkness, O christian, remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. When tempted, consider him who is able to succour them that are tempted. The desire of God's heart is, that his people even in this world, in faith and duty should be a comfortable people. This is the commandment of God to his prophet, and in him to all future *ministers of the gospel*, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God" Let those who hold the doctrine of the saints perseverance, evidence it, by denying all ungodliness and every worldly lust, and by living soberly, righteously and godly in this world. Those who live ungodly lives, however they may have the doctrine of perseverance in their mouths, they will perish with an everlasting destruction. All agree in this sentiment, "That without holiness, no "man can see the Lord."

Lastly, This doctrine speaks awful terror to all those who persevere in wickedness. There is no hope from any doctrine to the finally impenitent and unbelieving. Whatever your belief may be, you must die in your sins. Wherefore consider this all ye who forget God. O that all would believe, and turn from sin to righteousness. Hearken to the voice of the great Eternal. "As I live saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death "of the wicked, but that the wicked should turn from his way "and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye

Digitized by Google

"die. The spirit and the bride say come; and let him that com-
"eth say come; and let him that is athirst come, and whosoever
"will let him take the water of life freely."

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

Digitized by Google