

SHORT SERMONS

FOR

THE PEOPLE.

BY

REV. WM. S. PLUMER, D.D.



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SERMON I.

A CALL TO PIETY.

Unto you, O men, I call.—Prov. viii. 4.

WILL you now listen to some plain words? They shall be kind. They shall be true. They relate to the most weighty things. They concern your well-being now, and for ever.

1. There is a God. All nature says so. The heavens declare his glory. The earth is full of his goodness. In him we live, and move, and have our being. God is one. He is almighty and all-wise. He alone is good. There is none with him. There is none like him. There is none beside him.

2. This God is holy and just. He is a ruler among the nations. He is a great King. He cannot deny himself. He hates sin. It is not certain that he hates anything else. But it is certain that he hates sin with all his heart. To him sin is horrible and abom-

inable. With him is no iniquity. Just and right is he in all his ways, and in all his works.

3. This God has given to us a law. This law, like himself, is holy, just, and good. Its precepts require that our thoughts, words, and deeds should be holy. They forbid all sin. They require all righteousness. We can neither think, nor say, nor do anything, which is not either right or wrong in the eye of this law, which never changes, and which is the rule of conduct to angels as well as men.

4. The penalty of this law is death. He who breaks it is under the displeasure of God; and it is right he should be. The death threatened to the sinner includes all penal evil, whether in this world or the next. "The soul that sinneth it shall die." It deserves to die. For one sin many angels were hurled from heaven down to hell. For one sin our first parents were driven out of Eden. For one murder many a man has been hanged. For one lie Gehazi became a leper as white as snow. For one unadvised speech God would not permit Moses to enter the land of Canaan. In the punishment it inflicts God's law is as righteous as in the duties it enjoins and the sins it forbids.

5. You have a soul—a soul that will live for ever in happiness or in misery. And you have but *one*

soul. You have two ears ; though one of them be stopped you may hear with the other. You have two eyes : in one of them you may be blind, yet with the other you may see very well. Yet you have but one soul. If you lose that, all is lost.

6. That soul is worth saving. It shall exist as long as there is a heaven or a hell ; as long as there are men, or angels, or a God. That soul may be very happy—as happy as an angel ; and it may be very miserable—as miserable as a devil. It can rise high, and shine gloriously in the presence of God. It can sink to low vices, to deep ruin, yea, to the lowest hell. It is worth so much that no man can tell its value. One may be worth tens of millions of dollars, and you can tell exactly how much would buy him out ; but if the whole earth were solid gold, one soul would be worth a thousand times more than it all.

7. Your poor soul needs to be saved. It is now lost. It is dead in trespasses and sins. By nature you were without Christ, an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, a stranger from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. Without divine grace, no man loves God, fears God, trusts God, obeys God, or lives unto God. God's word says you need salvation. Your conscience says you need salvation. Your best friends know

that you need salvation. And you need salvation more than you need anything else. You may be weary and need rest; you may be poor and need money; you may be sick and need medicine; you may be hungry and need food; you may be cold and need fire and clothing: but you need salvation more than you need any or all of these things.

8. It is possible for you to be saved. Salvation is provided. It is offered to you by the Lord. Other sinners are entering the kingdom of heaven. Men, once as lost as you are, have sought and found mercy. Many, who are still upon earth, were once in the bond of iniquity and in the gall of bitterness; but God called them, and they ran after him. O you may be saved! This cannot be said of the angels that fell. This cannot be said of men who have died in their sins. But it can be said of you. You may be old, and have the sins of fifty, sixty, or seventy years resting upon you. And yet if you will turn unto God, he will save you. You may be young and rash and foolish and thoughtless; but if you will break off your sins, you shall obtain mercy. UNTO YOU, O MEN, I CALL, says God. He calls on you all. He calls loudly. He calls tenderly. He invites. He warns. He threatens. He reasons. He persuades. He lifts his awful hand to heaven, and swears, "As

I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked ; but that the wicked turn from his way, and live : turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways ; for why will ye die, O house of Israel ?” Ezek. xxxiii. 11. You may be saved. Oh that in your heart you believed it ! God has set before you an open door. Oh that you would enter in !

9. There is a time set for saving your soul, for doing the great work of life. That time is now. There is a right time for doing everything that is lawful. There is a time to eat, a time to sleep, a time to sow and a time to reap, a time to laugh and a time to weep, a time to get and a time to lose, a time to be born and a time to die, a time to save your soul, and, alas ! there is a time to lose your soul.

“Life is the time to serve the Lord,
The time to insure the great reward.”

There was a time when Hannibal could have taken Rome, and he would not. Then there came a time when he would have taken Rome, but he could not. There was a time when Jerusalem might have known the things which belonged to her peace ; but at last they were hid from her eyes.

No amount of sails will carry a vessel onward, unless the wind blows. All our efforts will be in

vain, unless we make them in the strength of God, and with the aid of his Spirit. Oh that men knew the worth of time, the value of their present opportunity. There is a great price put into their hands to get wisdom. Yet how many waste it all, and deliver themselves over to sin and folly. "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins. He shall die without instruction; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray," Prov. v. 22, 23. Live no longer in sin, lest "thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, and say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me," Prov. v. 11—13.

10. There is but one method of salvation. This is so good a way there is no need of another. It suits all. To the poor it brings unsearchable riches. To the meek it insures the kingdom of heaven. To the sad it brings joy unspeakable and full of glory. To the guilty it proffers peace and pardon through atoning blood. To the vile it offers the cleansing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. It opens the blind eyes of the soul that they may see the glory of God. It unstops the deaf ears that they may hear the voice of mercy. It gives a voice to the dumb that

they may praise the Lord. This way of salvation is by Jesus Christ, and by none other. As there is one God, so also there is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. Himself says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me," John xiv. 6. If you neglect this salvation you are undone for ever. No man can continue to despise Jesus Christ and escape damnation. So teach many scriptures.

REMARKS.

1. What say you to these things? Are they not true? Are they not urgent? Can anything be more important? Does not your conscience say they are worthy of your earnest and immediate attention? Let not your own heart deceive you. Let not the world ensnare you. Let not the wicked beguile you. Let not Satan tempt you. Be a man. Dare to obey your conscience. Dare to obey God.

2. Let the goodness of God lead you to repentance. He has long borne with your evil manners. He has many a time heard the cry of your distress, and sent you relief. He is constantly granting you great favours. Jesus Christ is standing at the door of your heart, and knocking for admittance. He has stood

there until his locks are wet with the dew of the night. The Holy Spirit often strives with you. The ministers of the gospel bring salvation to your very doors. Christian friends pray for you. There would be joy in heaven if you would repent.

3. This may be God's last call to you. I pray it may not be. But the last call will soon come. The longest life is short. And much of your life is gone. Awake to righteousness, and Christ shall give you life. Awake now, *now*, NOW, NOW!

SERMON II.

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.—ROM. xv. 4.

THE apostle is here speaking of the things that are written in the Bible. He says God gave us that holy book to teach and comfort us, to make us firm, and to fill us with hope. Let us look a little at the word of God, and see how excellent it is.

1. The Bible tells us all we need to know about

God, his nature, his will, and how to please him. It tells us that he is holy, just, good, true, kind, wise, strong, and glorious. His will is made known to us in his law, and in his gospel, in all the Scriptures. What he forbids we may not do. What he requires we must do. And because he is a Spirit, we must worship him in spirit and in truth. His first and great demand of us is the heart. Without that nothing pleases him.

2. The same blessed book tells us how we sinners may be saved. It points out one way of life, and but one. It holds forth Jesus Christ as the only door of access to God; as the only sacrifice for sin; as the only Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world; as the way, the truth, and the life. It expressly says that no man cometh to the Father but by Christ alone. On these points it leaves no doubt. There is hope for sinners in no other way. He who attempts to climb up to heaven in some other way, will be regarded and treated as a thief and a robber, John x. 1. "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?" 1 John ii. 22. All the prophets and apostles, all the types and shadows, point to Christ. Would you be saved? look to Jesus. It is only by faith in Him that you can enter into rest. "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," Psa. ii. 12.

3. The Bible tells us how we may be made pure and holy, and it helps on that work. "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth," John xvii. 17. It speaks of being born of the Spirit, and renewed by the Holy Ghost. He is the ointment that consecrates the soul to God. He is the well of water springing up into everlasting life within us. Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance are all "the fruit of the Spirit," Gal. v. 22, 23. Without him we have no really good desires, or thoughts, or plans. He takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto us. He is the author of all saving graces and of all edifying gifts. It was the Spirit of the Lord God that anointed the Lord Jesus "to preach good tidings unto the meek; to bind up the broken-hearted; to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness," Isa. lxi. 1—3; Luke iv. 16—21. Nor let any man forget that this

blessed Holy Spirit may be found by prayer. Christ himself says : “ If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children : how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him,” Luke xi. 13.

4. Then there are some things very remarkably borne out by all the Scriptures. They bear one testimony. They bring out the same great and glorious truths. They often teach and never deny that men are by nature lost—dead in trespasses and sins ; that salvation is wholly of God’s free, sovereign mercy ; that without holiness no man shall see the Lord ; and that without faith it is impossible to please God. They say that no sinner ever turned to God with hearty sorrow for sin, and was rejected. They give no case of that sort. They teach the very opposite. Jesus himself says : “ Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out,” John vi. 37. They fully set before us the blessed truth that none ever humbly trusted in God, and was left to confusion. They declare that Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd never gives one of his sheep or lambs to the wolves. The Bible makes it plain that no true servant of God was ever finally forsaken. Nor has any promise of God to believers ever been broken or set aside. To this day each one is in full force. It

is greatly to the comfort of all who think and feel aright, that God as truly loves weak Christians as strong ones ; and that the weak brother shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand, Rom. xiv. 4. If mercy was offered only to the good, the wise, and the strong, who could be saved? But the Bible gives every encouragement to the simple, the feeble, and the sinful to hope in God through Jesus Christ. What more can they need? Nor can any outward state of things make void the grace of God. There may be war, famine, and pestilence ; the earth may reel and stagger like a drunken man ; the blue heavens may wither, and the green mountains become hoary, and all nature may change or stand aghast ; but God has given his word and his oath to all that have fled to Jesus, that his grace shall save them, and that he will never leave them, nor forsake them. Nor can greater trials and cruelties befall God's people, than those through which many saints have been carried. Nor can the world and the devil ever have things their own way to a greater extent than they have already had them. Nor can the Church of God ever be in so low a state as she has been, when in all the earth there were but eight members, and they tossed on the billows of the deluge, or when her great Head lay cold and dead in the sepulchre of

Joseph. And when the word of God bids us look into the future, it tells us wondrous things. It says to all the saints, that the days of their mourning shall soon be ended. It says that having loved his own, Jesus will love them to the end. It says 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," Rom. viii. 38, 39. The Bible also opens to us, so far as we need, the visions of future glory. It speaks of words which it is not lawful for a man to utter. It says there awaits all the saints an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. It assures all the saints that they shall be ever with the Lord. To them all beyond this life is sure and glorious.

Surely then the people of God may have *hope*. They can ask nothing more to assure their faith. Need what they may, it is provided by the Lord, and promised in his word. There is no danger of their trusting God too much. The fear is that they will not believe all that his word allows them to believe. Nor do they need brighter examples of piety and courage than the Bible gives them. For through faith God's people have subdued kingdoms, wrought

righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again ; and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection ; and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment : they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword : they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented ; (of whom the world was not worthy :) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. Heb. xi. 33—38. Let us then hold fast our confidence which hath great recompense of reward. Let us hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto us at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

But if God's word is to give us hope and comfort, we must know it. If we would know it, we should hear it, read it, hide it in our hearts, not forget it, nor slight it, nor lightly esteem it. Think of it, muse on it, talk of it, study it, lay fast hold of all its truths. Earnestly seek to find out the meaning of all God has said. Seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He

can make the darkest things plain. He pours floods of light on the sacred page, and teaches us the mind of God so as no man or angel can do.

And in all our ways we must have *patience*, or constancy as the word means. We must not flinch from duty, or from labour, or from study, or from peril, or from suffering. "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger," Job xvii. 9. Let all our trials increase our patience. It is sad to see a professed child of God trembling like a leaf. Be not a reed shaken with the wind. He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea.

Thus shall we have *comfort of the Scriptures*. Let the word of God dwell in you richly in all wisdom. Then you will not be given over to folly and sorrow. God's word will cure a thousand fancies and fears that you may now have. His word will be such a stay to you that you will seek no support from dreams and the conceits of men. Hold fast God's word, and let all else go.

SERMON III

THE GOOD ANGELS.

Ye are come . . . to an innumerable company of angels.
HEB. xii. 22.

THE word angel means a messenger. Angels were created before men ; but how long before men we do not know. After they were created, they were put upon trial, and some of them fell into sin and became devils. The rest were true to God and to their duty. These are the holy angels. It is of these the text speaks. Let us consider—

I. *The nature of angels.* They are pure spirits. They have not bodies such as men have. The Bible says that God “maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire,” Heb. i. 7. Their power is very great. They “excel in strength,” Ps. ciii. 20. In a night one of them slew all the first-born of Egypt. In a night one of them slew a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in Sennacherib’s army. They are called “mighty angels.” They are very glorious. John saw one, who came down to this world, and his

glory lighted the earth. They are pure, holy, mighty and glorious spirits.

II. *The number of angels is very great.* We know not how many there are, but they are so many that we are more likely to think the number too small than too great. David says: "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels," Ps. lxxviii. 17. Christ said that if he were to ask it, his Father would instantly send "twelve legions of angels" to deliver him from his foes. There are so many of them that they conduct the souls of dying believers from this world to glory. They will be "reapers" at the end of the world to gather together the whole race of man. The text says that there is an "innumerable company" of them. It is not a wild conjecture that there are more angels than men.

III. *There are orders or ranks among angels.* Among them are thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers. There are cherubs and seraphs. There are angels and archangels. More than one text of Scripture would lead us to think that they are formed into hosts or armies. Some of them are princes and heads. Exactly how these orders are arranged we know not, and we never shall know in this life. Nor would it do us any good to learn more on this matter now. God has told us all that he thought it best for us to know.

IV. *The home of angels is heaven itself.* They go far off on errands of love or justice, as God sends them. But their home is in the New Jerusalem. They are called the "angels in heaven," and it is said "in heaven they do always behold the face of God." Their presence in the temple not made with hands adds much to its glory and the grandeur of its worship. Jacob saw a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, and the angels of God ascending and descending thereon. But when they ascended they went home. They are all the angels of God, and are often so called. They are the angels of heaven.

V. *Though angels are old, they do not look old, nor are they infirm.* They are not young in years, nor in wisdom; but they are young in freshness and vigour. When the pious women went to anoint the body of their Lord, they entered the sepulchre, and "saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment, and they were affrighted," Mark xvi. 5. This was an angel, and he was more than four thousand years old, yet he looked like a young man. In no sense are the angels of God subject to decay. The Scriptures teach us that they never die. If they were subject to decay, it might go so far as to produce death.

VI. *Angels know a great deal.* They had fine

minds, as they came from the hand of God. They have always loved knowledge. They have travelled a great deal. They have thought much and studied much. Probably they have seen other worlds besides ours come into existence. They sang together and shouted for joy when this world was made. They have watched the course of things in all its history. They saw how men lived and acted before the flood and ever since. They do not know all things, but they know vastly more than we suppose.

VII. *Great as the angels are, they are not haughty, nor bitter, nor fierce, but gentle and loving.* One of them was sent to bury Moses, and the devil came and contended with him. But the angel did not dare to rail at the devil, but said, "The Lord rebuke thee," Jude 9. They never quarrel, they never envy, they never hate. They are so gentle and kind that day and night they love to do good. Not one of them ever said or did anything cruel or malignant. No nurse or mother is more tender or pitiful than they are.

VIII. *The employment of angels is to obey God's will.* So far as we can learn they do these four things. 1. They aid very much in conducting the worship of heaven. This is often mentioned in Scripture. They join in this service and take a leading

part in it. 2. They are God's messengers to go to any part of the creation to which he may send them. 3. They are sometimes God's servants to bring wrath on the wicked. They were at the destruction of Sodom, and brought the pestilence on Israel for David's sin of numbering the people. 4. But their great business is to care for the saints of God.

“Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” Heb. i. 14. They guard the people of God from a thousand ills. They are very fit for this work. All their powers suit them to it. We know very little of the way in which they do this work; but we know they do it well. “The angel of the Lord encampeth round about the dwelling of the just.” It is very probable that they sometimes give us warning against evil to come. This they may do in dreams. “For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then he openeth the ears of men and sealeth their instruction, that he may withdraw man from his purpose and hide pride from man. He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword,” Job xxxiii. 14—18.

Angels repelled the assault of the wicked from

the house of Lot, Gen. xix. 11. An angel appeared unto Christ in his agony "strengthening him," Luke xxii. 43. Angels often help good men to die. While they live, "they bear them up in their hands lest at any time they dash their foot against a stone." And when the saints leave this world, angels carry them to Abraham's bosom. The reason we do not feel thankful to *them* for all their services is that what they do, they do at the bidding of God, and not merely as our friends, much less our servants. Our thanks for their ministry are due to God.

IX. *Although angels are not saved by Jesus Christ, but stand before God on the ground of their own works, yet Christ is Lord of angels.* And they stand wonderfully related to him. Paul says, that Christ came "that he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even in him," Eph. i. 10.

1. They give the highest honours to Christ. "When he bringeth the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him," Heb. i. 6. They do this in heaven above, Rev. vii. 11, 12. 2. They minister to Christ and do his will. This is implied in their worshipping him. They often attended him in his visits to this world before he was born in Bethlehem and afterwards also.

3. They feel an intense interest in his honour and kingdom. "They desire to look into" everything respecting him, 1 Pet. i. 12. They bend down and stoop over as the cherubim did over the mercy-seat. They are very humble when they study this great matter. Sometimes they are said to have four wings; but when the glory of Christ is before them, they are said to have six wings. "With twain they cover their faces, and with twain they cover their feet, and with twain they do fly, and cry, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory," Isa. vi. 2, 3. It must strike them as very wonderful that redeeming love passed by fallen angels, and came to fallen men. The plan of salvation they must look upon as they look upon nothing else. In the progress of Christ's kingdom they are often made very glad. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

X. *In the next world saints shall be like unto the angels.* In one place, it is said they shall be equal unto the angels, Luke xx. 36. In one sense they shall excel the angels. They shall be nearer to Christ, who took not on him the nature of angels, but took on him the seed of Abraham.

CONCLUSION.

There are great wonders in the universe, both in heaven and in earth. Creation teems with wonders. Heaven is full of them. God is at no loss for servants to serve him. The universe is not a vast solitude. It is well peopled. When all men and angels shall be gathered together in the last day, we shall see myriads on myriads of loving, adoring ones. Shall we not so live that we may be of that blessed company?

It is easy to know whether we are now on our way to heaven, if we but know whether we take Jesus to be our Lord and Master. All turns on that.

SERMON IV.

WE ALL BELONG TO GOD.

Behold, all souls are mine.—EZEK. xviii. 4.

IN these days there is much said about rights. We read and hear of the rights of man, of the rights of woman, of the rights of children, of the rights of aliens, of the rights of labour, and the rights of kings.

This may all be well. Blessed is that people whose rights are preserved to them. But why does it not occur to men that God has rights? This world and all it contains belong to him. The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. In particular God claims his right to our souls. Our minds with all their powers, our hearts with all their affections, belong to him. "Behold, all souls are mine." The object of this discourse is to show that we all belong to God.

I. *God made us, and so we are his.* He is the Maker of our bodies and the Father of our spirits. We are no less the creatures of God than was Adam, who came into existence without earthly parents. The poor savage in the wilderness knows that to make his simple bow and arrows gives him an entire and exclusive right to them. All his tribe admit that they are his. "The Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also. The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land," Ps. xcv. 3—5. "Ah Lord God, behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched-out arm," Jer. xxxii. 17. God has made all nations. He has made all men. Shall the thing formed lift itself up against him that formed it? When the artist has made a fine statue of a man,

we all say it is his. If he could give it life, and the power of motion, it would still be his. If he could give it mind, and will, and sense, and reason, it would still be his. Now God has made us and not we ourselves. He has put life and breath in us. He has made us men and not stocks, nor brutes. He has given us wills, hearts, minds, and consciences. We are capable of loving, fearing, serving, and obeying him. And we ought to do these things. He is our Creator.

II. *We belong to God because he has always held us in his hand, had us in possession.* He has never given up his right to us, or his control over us. He has never set us free from his power or dominion. And though we have often said, "Who is the Lord, that we should obey him?" yet he has still held on to us, and made our wrath to praise him, or he has restrained it. Now when one has always had possession of a thing, it is surely his. And when he made a thing, never sold it, and never gave it away, it is beyond a doubt his. Many a man sells himself to do evil. But God never sold one of his creatures, so that he was owned by another. Many a man gives himself over to serve the devil, but the Lord counts all such conduct folly and iniquity, and will surely punish it.

III. *God is the preserver of all men, and so they*

are his. But for him we should all long since have been dead. If he should take away his hand from supporting us, we should exist no more. Let us own him as our Lord; "For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand," Ps. xcv. 7. We are very frail and need just such care and protection as God gives us. Then he takes such good care of us. He keeps us as in the hollow of his hand, and as the apple of his eye. This is the meaning of the Scripture when it says, that God is the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe, 1 Tim. iv. 10. That is, God keeps all men, and gives them all the comforts they have. In him they live, and move, and have their being.

IV. *We all belong to God because he is our benefactor.* He has done us more good than all our other friends. What hast thou that thou hast not received? Life and breath and all things come from him. He gave us our health and strength, our joys and hopes, our food and raiment, our friends and guides, and all for nothing. Yea more, he made to us an unspeakable gift. He "so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Merchants sometimes talk about debts of honour. No doubt we sometimes make debts in such a way that

it would be peculiarly base in us not to pay them. But every debt we owe to God is a debt of honour. We sometimes hear of debts of gratitude. But for the love God has shown us we owe him everything we have and are and hope to be. There never was such a friend as God, so kind, so full of pity, so patient, so ready to forgive. He seems amazed that we are not won by his kindness : "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth : for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me," Isa. i. 2. "If then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts," Mal. i. 6.

V. *We all belong to God by vows, promises, and engagements.* You have been sick, perhaps thought you would not live long. You then vowed to the Lord that if he would raise you up, you would lead a different life. You were in distress. The clouds gathered thick around you. All looked dark. You seemed to be shut up and could not come forth. Sorrow filled your heart. Then you said, O if the Lord would but hear and help me ! If he would bring me out into a large place, I would not live as I have lived ; I would change my course. He heard you, he pitied you, he helped you. And how have you kept your vows ? Sometimes an awful sense of guilt has

come over you. Your sins have risen up before you like a thick cloud. Innumerable evils compassed you about: your iniquities took hold upon you so that you were not able to look up; your sins were more than the hairs of your head: therefore your heart failed you. You saw and you said that your past life had been wrong. You asked the Lord not to cut you down in your sins. You begged him not to enter into judgment with you. You saw that in his sight you could not be justified. You vowed and you began to try to break off your sins. But when your peace of mind was but little restored, did you not forget all these things? Are you now walking before him unto all pleasing, or have you lied unto God?

VI. *We belong to God because he is a fit one to own us.* He has wisdom to know what is best, and how things may best be done. He is strong. He is so strong that he does his will in the armies of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of the earth. He is almighty. And then he is good, infinitely good. He is the only being that has original and exhaustless goodness. Such a Being is fit to own and govern us. He does own us, whether we say so or not. He does rule us, whether we are willing or not. God has a right to us, a perfect right. He never will give us over to another, unless it be for punishment.

And we are all his, entirely his. Our reason is his; and we ought to use it for his glory. Our memory is his; and it is a great sin in us to forget God. Our passions are his; and we ought to love and fear and hope in him. We have no power of body or mind to which God has not a perfect right. "Behold, all souls are mine."

In like manner, all our talents and riches and honours and influence are his. He gave them to us as gifts. We ought to lay them all at his feet. The earth is his, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.

And God will enforce his right to us. He is the final Judge. He is a jealous God, and his glory will he not give to another. "The soul that sinneth it shall die."

REMARKS.

1. This subject shows us the nature of sin. It is revolt. It is rebellion. It is robbery. It is an attempt to defraud God. It denies his rights. It deserves all the curses God has denounced against it.

2. The more gifts we have received at God's hand, the greater is our sin if we obey him not. Have we not sinned against light and knowledge, against warnings and mercies, against his Spirit and his grace? When we have known God, we have not

glorified him as God. If we die in our sins, we shall sink to the lowest hell.

3. When men preach, their great business ought to be to assert God's rights, and to maintain his claims on men. Ministers are not sent to plead man's cause against God, but God's cause against the wicked.

4. A man may be very just and kind to his fellow-men, and yet be very sinful in the sight of God. He who does not love God supremely and serve him with a willing mind, may be called moral; but he is a thief and a robber. Love to Christ is the fountain of all unspotted morals. John Sergeant says, "The only morality that is clear in its source, pure in its precepts, and efficacious in its influence, is the morality of the gospel. All else, at last, is but idolatry—the worship of something of man's creation—a thing imperfect and feeble like himself, and wholly insufficient to give him support and strength."

5. Christians, you see what you are, and what you ought to be. The Lord deserves your warmest love and your highest praise. Give him all. Keep back no part of the price. Live for him. Plead for him. Suffer for him. Die for him. Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price—an infinite price—a price far above your value.

SERMON V.

ARE WE WHAT THE LAW OF GOD
REQUIRES ?

Thy commandment is exceeding broad.—PSAL. cxix. 96.

IN the text God's commandment means God's law, that holy, just, and good law, which he gave on Mount Sinai. It is more fully explained in other parts of Scripture. The text says that this commandment is broad. The meaning is that it covers a great deal of ground. It covers our whole case.

1. It enjoins all duties—all duties which we owe to God, to our neighbour, or to ourselves. It claims to control our thoughts, our feelings, our desires, our words, and our acts. No thought can pass in our minds, no wish spring up in our hearts, no word escape our lips, but this law notices it and pronounces it good or evil.

2. It forbids all sins. Men have been very cunning in finding out ways of doing wickedly, but they have found out no way of sinning that is not forbidden by the law of God. We have something

like a hundred words in our language to denote wicked conduct. But the law comprehends all these forms of sinning. It is absolutely universal. Men make laws to govern a state. They pile statute upon statute. When a law works badly, they repeal it or try to amend it, and then they amend the amendment. But here is a law which in ten short precepts does in spirit forbid all sin and require all duty.

3. God's law is one, and not many. It is a chain. If you break any link in it, you break the chain. He that offends in one point is guilty of all. The whole law is fulfilled in one word; and that word is LOVE.

4. This law is unbending. It can be broken, but it cannot be bent. It will not conform to us. We must conform to it.

5. It requires obedience to be rendered to God. We are not to keep it merely from accident, or for convenience, or for a reward of merit, or from a spirit of servility. Our obedience must be hearty, cheerful, affectionate. God's law must be within us. We must delight to do his will. His statutes must be the rejoicings of our hearts. If we could be as precise as Pharisees, it would do us no good. We must love God supremely and our neighbour as ourselves.

6. In this obedience we must persevere. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them," Gal. iii. 10. Past obedience was due; present obedience is due; and future obedience will be due for ever. This is right. A man may keep all the laws for fifty years. If he then commits murder, he is justly punished. A man may steal but once, yet that one act makes him a thief.

7. The law requires prompt, unhesitating obedience. When God commands and we know what he means, we must not linger, but go right forward. When Abraham was required to sacrifice Isaac, and knew what God's will was, he arose very early the next morning, and started on the commanded journey. David says, "I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments," Ps. cxix. 60. Some children and servants, when required to do a thing and know what their duty is, ask questions, find fault, and even murmur. Their conduct is wicked. It is still more wicked to stand finding fault with God.

8. The obedience we owe to God is supreme. We must put his will above our own or that of any man or number of men. We owe great honour to our father and mother; but if they call on us to do anything contrary to the law of God, we may not do

it. Sometimes States and Kings make wicked laws, contrary to the known will of the Most High. In all such cases we must obey God rather than men. Sometimes churches make wicked rules, and wickedly enforce them. In such cases, we must bear expulsion from the church rather than sin against God. We owe him all. He is in all and through all and above all and over all.

9. God's law requires obedience perfect in all respects. The least failure is a sin; and against every sin God sets his face. He says, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." And he is right, and has a right to require all this. To give a license to sin once, or in the least, would be bringing sin into the world. It was for one sin that angels were hurled out of heaven. It was for one sin that Adam was driven from Paradise.

If these things are so, how stands your case with God? Do you take him to be the only living and true God, and your God? Do you love anything more than you love God? Are you more distressed when God is dishonoured than when you are reproached? Do you put anything above God's favour? Do you tempt God? Are you lukewarm or dead in the things of God? Do you make any man or set of men the lords of your faith and con-

science? Do you slight the Saviour? Do you resist or grieve God's Spirit? Do you delight yourself in the Lord? Do you worship God with a pure heart? Do you pay your vows? Do you honour God with your lips when your heart is far from him? Do you speak of God's name, or word, or worship in a vain or profane manner? Do you ever jest with sacred things? Do you ever oppose God's truth or grace or ways? Do you love the Sabbath-day and keep it holy? Or are you weary of its duties? Do you omit any honour or love due to your parents, teachers, guardians, or rulers? Do you indulge envy, scorn, or malice towards them? Do you pray for them? Are you careful of your own life and the life of others? Do you indulge excessive passions and needless cares? Do you strike, or wound, or quarrel, or oppress? Are you cruel to brutes? Do you cherish all chaste and pure thoughts, looks, and words? Is your behaviour light or impudent? Are you guilty of excess in eating, drinking, or sleeping? Have you made a covenant with your eyes and your ears? Do you steal from rich or poor? Do you beg when you might earn your bread? Do you borrow when you could do without the things borrowed? Do you always speak the truth in your heart? As far as you can, do you speak well of all men? Do you hate

lying, slander, backbiting, talebearing, whispering, flattery, scoffing, reviling, vain boasting? Do you listen to false reports? Do you patiently hear a just defence? Are you not sometimes silent when you ought to speak? Do you not sometimes speak when you ought to be silent? Are you a brawler? Do you keep your word? Is your promise as good as your bond? Are you contented with your lot? Do you envy your more prosperous neighbour? Are you glad when others have good success? Can you truly say, I hate every false way, but I love thy law, O God?

REMARKS.

1. How many kinds of sins there are! Some are secret, and some are open. Some are on the spur of the moment, and some have long been thought over before they are committed. Some are against ourselves, some against our neighbours, and all against God. If God would contend with us, we cannot answer him for one of a thousand of our sins, Job ix. 3. All good men count their sins by the thousand, or else say that they are like a thick cloud, that they are innumerable, that they are like the great mountains.

2. How vain is the pretence of men to sinless

perfection. The Bible is clear that "there is no man that liveth and sinneth not," 1 Kings viii. 46; 2 Chron. vi. 36. Yea more, "there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not," Ecc. vii. 20. The whole verse from which the text is taken reads: "I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad."

3. It is very foolish in us to expect to be justified by the deeds of the law. The law justifies only sinless creatures, and we are all sinful creatures. By the law is the knowledge of sin, not the pardon of sin. The law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, not to bring us to God. Christ must bring us before his holy majesty. The law pours only curses on sinners. It has no mercy, because it is law, and unbending.

4. How kind and glorious is the gospel. It brings help to the needy, mercy to the guilty, salvation to the lost. One of my friends, with a company of travellers, was crossing the Alps, when there came up a great snow-storm. The clouds were very heavy. The paths soon became covered. The snow fell fast. They could see but a little way before them. By-and-by their guide sadly said to them, "I know not where we are." It was very cold. The prospect before them was very dismal. The guide

went a little way to the one side, and there he found one of the guide-boards, which were in the shape of a cross ; and he returned with great joy in his countenance, shouting, "The cross, the cross !" Their hearts were indeed glad. They soon took the road, and went on their way rejoicing. So we are all lost. We are out of the way. We know not how to come before the Almighty. We are in a perishing condition. Our only hope is the cross of Christ—not the wood on which he hung, nor an image of it ; but Christ's death which he there suffered, Christ's blood which he there shed. Will you not say,—

" My faith would lay her hand
On that dear head of thine ;
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin."

No man needs any sacrifice but that of Calvary, any atonement but that of Christ. His work is perfect. His death is all-sufficient. O look to him—to him alone.

SERMON VI.

UNCONVERTED MEN HATE GOD.

The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.—ROM. viii. 7.

SIN is no trifle. It is not an honest mistake. It is wickedness. It is wholly contrary to all that is lovely in the character of God. If it breaks not forth in crimes to be punished by the judges, yet the carnal mind, the unregenerate heart of man, is enmity against God. "The friendship of the world is enmity with God." All that is of the flesh and of the world is opposed to God. The words of the text are very strong. They do not say that the natural heart of man has some shyness towards God; but that it is a foe to God, it hates God, his will, his law, his nature. Nothing is more contrary to any other thing than is the carnal heart to the Most High. It is not subject to the law of God. It does not consent to the law that it is good; it does not serve the law; it does not delight in the law; it does not submit to the law. The will of the carnal mind is hostile to the will of

God. It is not subject to his law, *neither indeed can be*. Sin cannot be pleased with holiness. A vile heart perverts or opposes all that is pure. Love obeys God. Hatred denies him, and resists him, and rejects him. Let us think of these things.

I. Men prove their hatred to God by their dislike of sound knowledge concerning him. At two periods in the history of this world, once in the family of Adam and once in the family of Noah, every man on earth had the true knowledge of the true God. But men did not like to retain God in their knowledge. When they knew God they glorified him not as God. For thousands of years God has raised up great numbers of able and faithful men, who have with zeal told the truth, and made known God's word and will. Yet many, even in Christian lands, have not the saving knowledge of God. This great fact cannot be explained, if men do not hate God.

II. Men show their hatred to God by the way in which they treat his name. They often take it in vain. They mingle it up with profane oaths and horrid curses, with their ribaldry, their prejudices, and their religious errors. They use it in jests, and in vile songs, and in mockery. The name of no pest of society is so often lightly spoken of, as is the name of God. No scourge of his race, who involved his

native land in civil war, or led his people into ruinous foreign war, is ever named with such hatred as the wicked express toward God. In every city and town and land more slanders are spoken against God than against all others. I have often been struck, on entering a strange place, with the fact that the very first word I heard uttered was something expressive of contempt towards God. I have sometimes remained an hour or a day in such a place, and heard not one word uttered against any but the name of God only.

III. Men prove their hatred to God, because they are unwilling to see his glory advanced. When Joseph's brethren saw that their father tenderly loved him, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him, Gen. xxxvii. 4. And when his prophetic dreams told of his coming greatness, they hated him yet the more for his dreams and for his words; and they envied him, Gen. xxxvii. 8, 11. The higher he rose, the higher rose their malice. So sinners are grieved when God is honoured. "When the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that Jesus did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David, they were sore displeased," Matt. xxi. 15. Why was this? Not because he had taught any error, nor slandered any one, nor wronged any one; but because they hated him with a cruel hatred.

Had they loved him, they would have been glad to see others honour him.

IV. Men show their enmity to God by their hatred to his law and his government. They will not have him to reign over them. Every man on earth, if he is without the grace of God, does daily, willingly, and allowedly break the spirit of the moral law and every precept thereof. Where is the unrenewed man that loves the Sabbath, as a day of sacred rest holy unto the Lord? Where is the carnal mind that does not covet whatever it fancies? Not one in a thousand of wicked men do seriously profess any love to the law of God, or declare that they daily aim to meet its demands, or express sorrow when they fail to obey it. Men, not under grace, do cast away from them the cords of divine restraint.

V. If men did not hate God, they would not hate his people as they do. A child of God knows that he has passed from death unto life, because he loves the brethren. But from the days of Cain to this hour, the people of God have been hated, hunted, hounded, slandered, reviled, misjudged, and murdered, till the earth almost everywhere is ready to disclose their blood. The path of every saint has been soaked with his tears for the wickedness of the wicked. Since Christ went up to heaven, more than fifty millions of

human beings have suffered violent deaths for their professed subjection to the Saviour. If men loved God, they would not hate his people.

VI. Men prove that they hate God by hating his character, and especially the mild and merciful attributes of his nature. Everywhere the pious exult in God's almightiness, omniscience, and omnipresence. But the wicked have no hallelujahs for such perfections. The cry of the carnal heart is, "Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us," Isa. xiii. 11. And when God displays his rich mercy and saving grace in rescuing many sinners and bringing them to hope in his Son, the fleshly mind (unless divinely restrained) rises up in great wrath. How vile must be the heart, that hates a pure revival of gospel holiness. Yet even one sound conversion sometimes stirs up frightful malice. I have known a minister well received by a family when he went to preach a sermon at the death of a godless youth; but coldly repulsed when he went to tell his conscience-stricken sister what she must do to be saved.

VII. The ingratitude of men for God's great and numerous mercies shows their hatred of him. These mercies are both temporal and spiritual. They relate to soul and body, to mind and heart, to health and friends, to life and all things. They cannot be counted

up. The best of them cost the life of the Saviour. All of them are the fruits of his bounty. Yet many daily sit down to a table loaded with comforts and never even in words give thanks to God; and many more give thanks in words, but by their wicked lives clearly show that they have no real love to God.

VIII. But on this solemn matter God's word is full and clear. Nathan, Asaph, David, and Paul speak of the haters of the Lord, Ps. lxxxi. 15; of the haters of God, Rom. i. 30; of the enemies of the Lord, 2 Sam. xii. 14; and of the enemies of the King, Ps. xlv. 5. There are many other texts that teach the same thing. "He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death," Ps. viii. 36. Again, "Whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God," Jas. iv. 4. Paul states it as beyond dispute that before their conversion Jews and Gentiles were enemies, Rom. v. 10. Our Lord himself charged the unconverted of his day with the same enmity: "They have both seen and hated both me and my Father. He that hateth me, hateth my Father also," John xv. 23, 24.

This enmity against God is very stout, untiring, pure, and unmixed. It is mortal. It had rather die than love God. If it could, it would dethrone the Almighty.

REMARKS.

1. We see the nature of sin. It is war with God. It is dreadful wickedness.

2. It will be just in God to punish those who thus hate him. Not a curse does he denounce against the ungodly beyond what equity demands.

3. It is evident that men must be born again or perish. They are in their minds and by wicked works enemies to God. They never can see his face in peace unless they are renewed in the temper of their minds, their enmity slain and love planted in their hearts. How could God's foes assure their hearts before him if they could not submit to him on earth? Could they delight in him in heaven? Baptism, seeing sights and visions, hearing sounds and voices, shouting and professing flaming love, will save no soul. Nothing short of a real, great, inward, mighty, thorough, spiritual change will meet the case of any man. That change must take place soon. Ere long it will be said: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still," Rev. xxii. 11.

4. We are not saved by finite power. Sinners "are like the deaf adder, that stoppeth her ear; which will nor hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely," Ps. lviii. 4, 5. It requires more

than sweet music to raise the dead. An arm of flesh is not strong enough to save a soul. God must do the whole work, or it will not be done.

5. Truly God is love. No king ever had so bitter enemies. Yet no king ever made to his best friends such gracious offers as God is making to his worst enemies on earth. He actually gives us food, raiment, shelter, and friends as if we were not wholly undeserving. In providing a Saviour, his goodness surpasses all names of love. "For a good man some would even dare to die; but God commendeth his love to us in that while we were yet enemies, Christ died for the ungodly." And how long he continues his offers of pardon and mercy. Verily, he endures with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. O sinner, sinner, turn and live.

SERMON VII.

THE HEART OF MAN IS ALL WRONG.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.—JER. xvii. 9.

THE heart here spoken of is the heart of man before he is born of God. The truth here stated is

startling. Many sinners confess that in their words and actions they err, but they contend that their hearts are good. Others say their hearts are not exactly right, but they deny that they are base, and vile, and guilty. Others freely say they are sinners, but think they are not very bad. The text says that the heart of man is not only wrong, but very wrong.

I. IT IS DECEITFUL. It is very deceitful; it is deceitful above all things. It attempts to deceive God, and if he could not search it and try it, he would not know it. It often deceives our shrewdest neighbours. Worst of all, it deceives ourselves. It betrays men into the worst errors, follies, and sins. A fox is cunning and deceives the hounds; but the heart deceives others and itself too—itself more than others. It makes the foolish think they are wise; the vile, that they are good enough; sinners, that they are righteous. It makes men blind with self-conceit.

II. IT IS DESPERATELY WICKED. You are invited to fix your minds chiefly on this truth. The heart of man without the grace of God is wicked. It is a wicked thing to be a sinner. Sin is not of a trivial nature. The heart is all wrong, desperately wicked. In proof look at these things.

Every sin, even the least, is committed against the goodness, kindness, holiness, authority, and excellent law of God. Every sin is against the only perfect law

ever made, a law which is holy, just, and good in all its parts. If there is any truth in speaking of great and little sins, it is only this, that some sins are greater than others; for no sin is in itself really small. All sin is against the great Jehovah. "There is no little God for us to sin against."

Then some sins are solely and directly against God. This makes them very vile. "If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?" 1 Sam. ii. 25. This makes acts of glaring hypocrisy so hateful to God. That which made the sin of Ananias so heinous, was, not that he had lied "unto men, but unto God," Acts v. 4. It is this which makes broken vows and promises so very sinful. Men "lie unto the Holy Ghost." The greatness of the sin of unbelief arises from the fact that it is directly against God. "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar," 1 John v. 10. You can insult no man more than by saying he does not speak the truth. He who does not believe God, does what he can to destroy confidence in his veracity. So also hatred to God proves the heart to be desperately wicked. Men cry, "Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us," Isa. xxx. 11. Men hate God with a mortal hatred, and would kill him if they could. They did

kill his Son, who was his express image. Then all ingratitude for Divine mercies is directly against God. So in all impenitence we despise the riches of his goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering. In rejecting the Lord Jesus, we show proud contempt of God's wisdom and mercy in forming the plan of salvation, of Christ's love and pity in dying for us, and of the Spirit's grace and kindness in calling us to faith and holiness. All these sins are directly against God, and prove the heart desperately wicked.

Men prove their hearts to be desperately wicked by sinning with great deliberation. They devise mischief. They plot iniquity. They think it all over. Men intend to have things as they are. They are warned, and called, and exhorted, and threatened; but they sin on.

Some sins are very impudent. Such is every sin directed immediately against God. Of some God says, "Were they ashamed, when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush; therefore they shall fall among them that fall," Jer. vi. 15. Some even "glory in their shame." All impudence in sinning shows that the heart is desperately wicked.

The wicked also sin with the full consent of their own wills. Their "hearts are fully set in them to do

evil," Eccl. viii. 11. If one does wrong by mistake, some allowance must be made, but all who reject Christ do so of choice. Jesus said, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life." If men repent not, or hold fast the world, or turn away from God, they do so of choice. When the heart chooses these wicked ways, it must be desperately wicked.

Diligence in sinning is proof of a very corrupt heart. And all the wicked are busy in evil. "They sleep not except they have done some mischief;" "They weary themselves to commit iniquity;" "The imaginations of the thoughts of their hearts are only evil, and that continually." In an unholy heart sin is a stream that never goes dry.

Then men prove their hearts to be desperately wicked by the delight they take in sin. They "rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked," Prov. ii. 14. Sinners do not hate evil, nor look on Satan as a hard master. Some seem to have great pleasure even in the sins of others. Are not the hearts of such desperately wicked?

Again, many sins against man and all sins against God are wanton and unprovoked. "God tempteth no man." He never provokes any one to sin. God hates sin, and warns us against it, and gives good reasons why we should not commit it, and says, Do

not that abominable thing which I hate. To sin wantonly shows a desperately wicked heart.

Another thing, that gives a deeper dye, is that the very nature of sin is to involve others with us in like ruin and corruption. The child easily follows the bad example of the parent. One child leads another into wickedness. Those, whose age, talents, office, or profession give them a claim to respect or honour, have a great deal to answer for. A man cannot lead a wicked life without corrupting others and leading them to sin.

Then there are times when any heart not desperately wicked would break off from sin. Here is a solemn meeting. Kind calls and tender persuasions are used. God says, "Will ye steal and murder, and come and stand before me in this house?" Jer. vii. 9, 10. Often does God come very nigh to men in their families, and melts down their natural affections by some death or affliction, but they sin on, and will not give up their evil ways. The great guilt of the sin of Pharaoh was that he was made no better, but rather worse, by all the plagues that came upon him.

The desperately wicked heart of some men is also often stout against God, even when others yield to his calls of mercy. The conversion of one sinner is

a loud call to others to turn and live. Jesus proved the great wickedness of some when he said, "The publicans and the harlots believed John: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterwards that ye might believe him," Matt. xxi. 32. A conversion is a great event. The conversion of known sinners is a loud call to all around them. When men will not hear that, their hearts must be desperately wicked.

If you are now in your sins, you must have resisted many warnings, and some of them very solemn. I have known a man, who was warned by three of his dying children to quit his open wickedness, but he sinned on. How many Christians and ministers have warned you! How many sudden deaths have warned you! How many who have shown a serious concern for your soul, have gone to eternity! And are you walking in the way they pointed out?

Another thing that proves men's hearts to be desperately wicked is that if they continue in sin a little longer, their doom will be for ever sealed. If sin is not pardoned and forsaken very soon, it will ere long be for ever too late. This shows the great folly and sin of now so acting as to make damnation certain. If you misspend this life, the next will come, and you will be wholly unprepared for it. Eternity is near. The Judge standeth before the

door. The day of grace will soon all be gone. Can any but a heart desperately wicked delay to make a choice of that which is good ?

To crown all, every man in this land, who continues in sin, knows that he is doing wrong. Man's duty is plain. Before us all God has set life and death. His word and his providence have clearly pointed out the right way. Now "to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin," Jas. iv. 17. "That servant, who knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes," Luke xii. 47. It is a frightful thing to go on in sin with the light of truth flashing in our faces all the way. Where there is no law, there is no transgression. But where there are both law and transgression, the case is sad indeed.

REMARKS.

1. It is a dreadful thing to come short of heaven under any circumstances ; but to lose one's soul when there is no need of it is in the extreme dreadful. Lost men may call on the slighted Saviour, and will receive for reply,

"Ye knew your duty, but ye did it not." If you lose your souls, and look into your own hearts for

comfort, they will cry, "Ye knew your duty, but ye did it not." When shut up in darkness and despair, time ended, the day of grace closed and the hope of eternal life gone for ever, you will still hear the words, "Ye knew your duty, but ye did it not."

2. It is as clear as day that without a change of heart no man can be saved. There is in every natural heart a wickedness that is more or less desperate. In some cases it has gone frightful lengths. But in every case it is wholly opposed to God and holiness. "Ye must be born again." Eternal life cannot be enjoyed with a mind and heart estranged from God. There is no way of escaping eternal sorrow, unless we can be cured of the disease of sin. This can be done only in regeneration.

SERMON VIII.

SIN WILL COME TO LIGHT.

Be sure your sin will find you out.—NUM. xxxii. 23.

MEN, when they commit sin, wish to think that they are done with the thing for ever. Few succeed

in convincing themselves of this huge error; but some do think that the Most High doth not regard, and will never call them to account. Others think that the day of God's dealing with them will not come till by some means, not sanctioned by Scripture, not approved by sound reason, they will make all right. In many ways sinners practise deceit on themselves and harden themselves in iniquity. Men are not done with sin when they have committed it. After sin comes a dread account. *Be sure your sin will find you out.*

I. God certainly shows his purpose to punish sin by the way he causes woe to come on some sinners here. The drunkard, the glutton, and the cheat, the liar and the lewd; are not the only examples. Most frauds are exposed. Nearly all murders are brought to light. Men may plot very secretly, and think their crimes are hid. But Providence calls on stones and beams of timber, on tracks and pieces of paper, to be witnesses of the crime. Some, indeed escape conviction, and a few escape detection. Moral evidence often puts the brand on men who escaped punishment by legal evidence. Then all that class of sins which are not punishable by human laws, God often punishes with a loss of respect, esteem, or confidence. After twenty-

four years of concealment Joseph's brethren are brought to feel and say that God had found out their iniquity. Ibycus, a famous Grecian poet, was going to Corinth. Robbers attacked and murdered him. As he was falling and dying, he looked around to see if there were no witnesses or avengers. All he could see was a flock of cranes high in the air. He called on them to avenge his blood. You may think that was an idle call. The robbers thought so. They got their prey and came to Corinth. They went to the open theatre. As they sat there, they looked up and saw above them a flight of cranes, and one scoffingly said, "Lo, there are the avengers of Ibycus." The words were heard by some one near them. Already fears of the poet's safety began to be common. The gang, on being questioned, betrayed themselves, and *The Cranes of Ibycus* became a proverb, like that we have in English, *Murder will out*. Many a man, who has too much passion to abstain from crime, has too much conscience to conceal it. The advocate and the judge have both been known to leave their place in the court, and take their stand in the prisoner's box, and confess themselves culprits.

II. Men might be sure that their sin will find them out by the sore judgments which God sometimes sends on men for their sins. On this matter

we should exercise candour, caution, and charity, and not call that an angry judgment which is but a dark doing of love. Still there are on earth sore and marked judgments. Look at the history of Achan, of Korah, of Nadab and Abihu, of Saul, of Absalom, and many others mentioned in the Old Testament. Read the history of the crimes, and cruelties, and pride of Herod the Great, Herod Antipas, and Herod Agrippa, and see the unhappy end of their lives ; and you can hardly avoid the conviction that "verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth." Of thirty Roman Emperors, Proconsuls, and high officials who distinguished themselves by their zeal and rage against the early Christians, it is recorded that one became speedily deranged after an act of great cruelty ; one was slain by his own son ; one became blind ; the eyes of one started out of his head ; one was drowned ; one was strangled ; one died in a miserable captivity ; one fell dead in a manner that will not bear to be told ; one died of so loathsome a disease that several of his physicians were put to death, because they could not abide the stench that filled his room ; two committed suicide ; a third attempted it, but had to call for help to finish the bloody work ; five were assassinated by their own servants or people ; five others died the most horrible deaths, having many and strange

diseases ; and eight were killed in battle, or after being taken prisoners. " Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days." In more modern times you might find many cases like these already given in the death of tyrants, infidels, criminals, and vicious men. A man swearing falsely was seen to grow pale, stagger, and expire. A profane man called on God to damn his eyes. Soon after his eyes burst and left their sockets empty. There is a Judge in all the earth. Men have more to do with sin than to commit it. Be sure your sin will find you out. " When the judgments of God are abroad in the earth, let the inhabitants learn righteousness." O wicked man, stand in awe and sin not.

III. One may escape detection and strange judgments, and still his sin may find him out in the fears, clamours, and remorse of conscience. Seldom does one kill a man in a duel without turning coward, or desperado. If he lives, he is afraid of the dark, he is afraid of being alone. A great man in our own country, a sinner though not a murderer, often exclaimed in his sleep, " I am dead and damned." Another often waked all who were near him by screaming out the name of one he had greatly injured. Remorse is remorseless. Like fire, it burns all around it. Conscience keeps the spirit of the

guilty in the state of a volcanic mountain—the fire rages within, the heated elements boil, and swell, and mutter angry sounds. Nor will an eruption put out the fire. No man can protect himself against his sins flashing him in the face at any moment. The Bible, preaching, singing, praying, a marriage, a trial in court, the sight of the man he has injured, or of one that looks like him, or anything, may arouse his conscience into fury at the most inconvenient time.

IV. But even if one escape all these things, yet if he dies unpardoned, his sins will find him out in the next world. “For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed, and hid, that shall not be known,” Luke xii. 2. These were the words of Jesus, rebuking the deep hypocrisy of his times. “Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after,” 1 Tim. v. 24. But whether they go before or after, they will find you out despite all your efforts to conceal them. God knows all about your acts, and has written them in his book. Solomon says, “Curse not the king, no, not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bed-chamber; for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter,” Eccl. x. 20. But the King of

kings needs no bird and no messenger to tell him what man thinks, or says, or does.

Why do not men admit the force of these truths, and act accordingly? The reasons are very clear.

1. Some think their sins will not find them out because God has not yet called them to an account. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil," Eccl. viii. 11. Such men forget that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day; that the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; and that the only reason why they are not now undergoing punishment is that God is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, 2 Pet. iii. 8—10.

2. In this world sinners often forget their sins, and think God has also forgotten them. Many are so stupid that in an hour after using profane language they remember it not. But God forgets nothing. That which occurred fifty years ago is before his mind as clearly as if it occurred this hour. It is not the righteous but the wicked that has said in his heart: "God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see it," Ps. x. 11.

3. Some think their sin will not find them out because they doubt whether God is holy and just, and

whether he takes notice of human actions. The Bible tells us of such: "They break in pieces thy people, O Lord, and afflict thine heritage. They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. Yet they say, The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it," Ps. xciv. 5—7. But that is practical atheism. "For the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good," Prov. xv. 3. And "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil," Eccl. xii. 14.

4. Some think their sin will not find them out because God is merciful. Now in a sense, and in his appointed way, God's mercy is high as heaven, deep as the ocean, longer than the earth, and broader than the sea. But mercy slighted and rejected can save no man. All the cooling fountains can do no good to him who does not drink them. The light of the sun is not strong enough to make the blind see. Bread will not save from starvation unless it be eaten. Even God's mercy will not save from hell unless it be accepted.

O sinner, sinner, be sure your sin will find you out. You may now live in ease and in error. You may now harden your heart in pride. But you must meet your sins at God's tribunal. Remember that. O be wise, be wise unto salvation.

SERMON IX.

SIN WILL SURELY BE PUNISHED.

The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.—PSALM. ix. 17.

“FORGETFULNESS of God is the cause of all the wickedness of the wicked.” To forget God is itself wickedness. All the wicked do forget God ; and all that forget God are wicked.

The numbers of the wicked will not save them from ruin. Those who have gone with a multitude to do evil, shall go with a multitude to suffer punishment. “Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished,” Prov. xi. 21. Though *all nations* should forget God, it would not make it safe to forget him. Numbers cannot save. Nay, the more engage in sin, the more is God provoked.

To *be turned into hell* is to be banished from God, shut out from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power, left in utter darkness and despair, and made to endure the wrath of God for ever. That this dreadful doom awaits all who die in sin is very clear.

1. Every wicked man daily adjudges himself to hell. This he does by laying down, for the government of others, rules which he does not regard in his conduct towards God. When one wrongs him in his good name, or invades any of his rights, he expects acknowledgment and reparation. But does he confess and even try to repair the wrongs he has done to God? The wicked also lay down rules for the government of Christians, which they do not themselves observe. These rules are often good and Scriptural. But the wicked man does not conform to them. He enjoins on others to be meek and humble; but he is proud and self-righteous. He requires respect from others, but he is rude to God. He expects others to be tender of his honour, but he cares not for God's good name and honour in the world. He condemns ingratitude in one to whom he had done one small favour; but he does not condemn himself for the basest ingratitude to God for countless favours, each of them beyond all price. All God will need to say to such will be, "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant," Luke xix. 22.

2. Every man virtually dooms himself to hell, when he rejects the Gospel. The cup of its blessings is held to his lips, but he puts it far from him. When one says, I do not desire to have Christ for my

Saviour, he virtually says, I consign myself to death ; for there is life in none else. He that believeth not shall be damned. When the Jews at Antioch rejected Christ, Paul and Barnabas said, " Seeing ye put it far from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles," Acts xiii. 46. All the eternal Judge need do in the case of such will be to confirm the sentence, which the sinner passes on himself, and turn away all his mercies from him, and he will be in hell.

3. The wicked love and seek all that which makes hell to be so dreadful to a holy mind. In that world of woe sin abounds. Well, here the wicked draw iniquity with a cart-rope. They are greedy after it. The sinner hates God, in hell all hate and none love him. Here unbelief reigns, in hell no one relies on Christ in any degree. Here the wicked cherishes hardness of heart, in hell is no true penitence. Here the wicked shuns the society of saints, and seeks the company of the enemies of God, in hell are no pious people, whose presence can annoy any one. All there are of one mind. Here even the songs of Zion are not to the taste of the wicked, in hell the song of Moses and the Lamb is never sung. So that the wicked are fit for hell, and they are not fit for any other place. A good and wise God will treat them accordingly.

Every man will go to "his own place"—the place he is fit for. Every man will go to heaven, who is fit for heaven. Every man will be turned into hell, who is fit for that place. The vessels of mercy are prepared unto glory. The vessels of wrath are fitted to destruction, Rom. ix. 22.

4. Such is the dreadful nature of sin, and such are its dreadful effects on man, that nothing can be done with the wicked but to turn them into hell. God has given us a whole chapter in one of the prophets on this awful subject. "And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, what is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest? Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon? Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel; the fire devoureth both the ends of it, and the midst of it is burned. Is it meet for any work? Behold, when it was whole, it was meet for no work: how much less shall it be meet yet for any work, when the fire hath devoured it, and it is burned! Therefore thus saith the Lord God; As the vine tree among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so will I give the inhabitants of Jerusalem," Ezek. xv. 1—6. The reasoning is this. If a vine does not bring forth good fruit, it is of no

use but to make a fire with. And if sinners die in their sins, they cannot glorify God's grace, for they have rejected it. The only use that can be made of them is to turn them into hell. Their "end is to be burned," Heb. vi. 8

5. He who takes all the steps necessary to bring about any result, may surely expect to see it. He who is lazy enough, and careless enough, and wasteful enough, will surely become poor. So the wicked are blind enough, careless enough, unthankful enough, sinful enough, and hardened enough to be for ever undone. The sinner takes no better care of his poor soul than the drunkard does of his poor body. He who follows down the Mississippi will surely fall into the Gulf of Mexico. No less certain is it that he who is borne along by the current of his depravity will find himself in the gulf of despair. The broad road *leadeth* to destruction, and nowhere else. Sin, when it is finished, naturally and invariably brings forth death. "He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption." If the wicked in a future world get the fruit of their doing, it must be ill with them.

6. How can it be otherwise? The kinder God is, the viler the wicked are. They pervert everything. Are they not receiving all their good things here?

When God gives them health, they abuse it to practical atheism. If he sends them prosperity, they say they shall never be moved. Thus "the prosperity of fools shall destroy them," Prov. i. 32. "Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things," will be the just and awful answer to many a man, who now lives in ease and forgets God. Present success often argues a dreadful doom coming. "When the wicked spring as the grass, and all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever," Ps. xcii. 7.

7. This dreadful end might be avoided, if the wicked did not refuse to be warned, or amended. But they are so stubborn, that afflictions only convert them into murmurers. Sermons leave them with greater guilt on their souls. They slight every call of the Holy Spirit. They refuse every offer of saving help from God. He invited them to reason with him, but they would not listen. When Jesus Christ was set forth evidently crucified before them, they would not with broken hearts eat a little bread and drink a little wine in honour of him. God, and man, and their own necessities called on them to pray; but they never in true faith called on the name of the Lord Jesus. What course is left to God but to cut down those who cumber the ground; to cast off those

who have fully and finally rejected him ; to pass sentence on those who have judged themselves unworthy of eternal life ?

8. The peace, good order, and safety of holy men and angels require that the wicked be shut up in prison. Here they tempt, allure, vex, and torment the Church of God. They have laid snares for the godly, and when they have caught them with their wiles, they have shouted for joy. They have slaughtered them by the million. It is right that wrongdoers should not be allowed always to roam at large. A good and strong government will bring peace and safety to the virtuous at last, cost what it may. If the wicked will not honour God willingly, they shall do so reluctantly. "The Lord hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil," Prov. xvi. 4. All the malice, and cunning, and power of the ungodly shall perish, and the righteous shall all be safe.

REMARKS.

1. The longer men continue in sin and resist God's calls, the greater is the danger that they will be for ever undone. Good influences are losing their power, and evil influences are growing stronger and stronger, every day that men resist God's Spirit and

grace. The more one sins, the easier it is to sin, the greater is the force of evil habit, and the heavier are the chains of guilt upon the soul. The longer one lives in sin, the less time has he to repēnt and prepare for eternity. If you are twenty years of age and are still in love with sin, you have five whole years of time less to prepare to meet God than you had at fifteen, and you have five years more of sinning to repent of. You have a greater work to do and less time to do it in.

2. The only wise thing for you to do is to make peace with God at once. This can be done through Jesus Christ, who is our Peace. Every one that flies to Christ for refuge shall have it. Vengeance shall not overtake him. Eternal mercy will take him to her bosom, and lavish her riches upon him. Oh, if he that provides not for his own household is worse than an infidel, what shall we think of him that provides not for his own soul?

Lord Jesus, save us perishing sinners.

SERMON X.

THE WICKED ARE NOT TO BE ENVIED.

Let not thine heart envy sinners.—PROV. xxiii. 17.

YONDER goes a crowd of people. Men and boys with here and there a coarse woman, are eagerly pressing on. In the middle of the crowd goes a cart. In it is a man, with his arms tied behind him. A few months ago he was going at large like other men. But he killed a good man that he might get his money. He was soon suspected. He fled, but was caught and brought back. In a few months he was tried. The evidence against him was full and clear. He was found guilty. He was sentenced to be hanged. He is now about to die a painful and shameful death. In a few minutes the awful scene will be closed on earth, and his soul will return to God, to be judged by him, who makes no mistakes, and always judges righteously. No man envies this poor wretch in his present condition. Even the most wicked say, 'Let me not come to such an end. I would not be in that man's place for all this world.'

But all sinners are not in so awful a condition. Indeed, many of them are very prosperous. They have much that pleases them and pleases the carnal heart. They are full of life and mirth. These are they whom fools envy. Men praise them, court them, and flatter them. Many wish they could have as large a share of temporal good. Let us inquire—

I. WHAT IS IT IN SINNERS THAT WE ARE APT TO ENVY? This is a grave question. Let us weigh it well.

1. Many sinners have much money. So little does God think of riches that he often gives much of them to his enemies. True, money is a good thing, if we use it aright, and do not set our hearts on it. But riches are not necessary to any man. Many of the best and greatest men the world ever saw have lived and died poor. Still human nature is so weak and so corrupt that but few men can look at others rolling in wealth without envying them. They seem to have such an easy time. They are not bowed down with poverty. Their eyes stand out with fatness. They have more than heart could wish. They are proud, and their eyes are lofty. Men call them happy and envy them.

2. Sometimes the wicked seem to have a great deal of pleasure. They are not in trouble as other

men ; neither are they plagued like other men. They laugh and shout when others sigh and mourn. Their joys seem to be sparkling. They boast a great deal of their pleasures. Take their word for it, and no people are so happy. They have a fine time. They praise each other. They do not willingly indulge any fears about the future. They say "To-morrow shall be as this day, and more abundant." They avoid all thoughts about dying. Nothing but decency leads them to the house of mourning. Their laughter is loud and is mad. They call themselves men of pleasure. One of their number in the last century was called "The Happy Rake." Those who have not health, or money, or time thus to live in ease, are very apt to envy these lovers of pleasure.

3. Some sinners seem to get many of the honours of this life. Men praise them. Perhaps they have learned the tricks of securing public favour. They know what springs to touch and what wires to pull. A little flattery here and a little bribery there bring them the offices they seek. The higher they rise, the higher they seek to rise. Men call them great or wise. Fools gape at them in wonder. They seek the honour that cometh from man, and they have their reward. To them the praise of man is sweeter than the praise of God. If they can have things their way, they

care not for others. Silly people stand off and admire and envy.

4. Others envy the wicked for their apparent freedom from restraint. The law of God does not bind them any further than suits themselves. They follow their desires and their vile affections. In morals they are hardly a law to themselves. They say and do what is right in their own eyes. Speak to them about God, and they say, "Who is the Lord that I should obey him? My tongue is my own, my mind is my own, I will do as I please." To a carnal mind, this looks as if it was a fine way of getting through the world, and the foolish envy these lawless ones.

5. Sometimes sinners seem to be, and for a long time are, free from afflictions, which so much distress the righteous. A good man often has more trouble with his wicked heart alone, than the sinner has with all his affairs. All the concern which the pious have about the Church never troubles the wicked. Often God seems to give double trials to his people, and few or none to his foes. These things and many more like them often stir up in men a desire to be like the wicked. But after all—

II. THERE IS NO GOOD GROUND FOR PREFERRING THE STATE OF SINNERS. There is really no Divine

blessing permanently resting on the wicked, as there is on the righteous. "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked." "Whereas evil shall slay the wicked, and the righteous shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him : lo, this is the man that made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness," Psal. xxxvii. 16 ; lii. 6, 7. "Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great riches and trouble therewith," Prov. xv. 16. O yes, it is God's blessing that maketh rich, or happy, or truly honourable.

There is also a sad amount of alloy mixed up with all that sinners have. Much as they have, they wish for more. Then there is always some painful drawback. If the king honours Haman, still there is an old Mordecai that will not cringe and truckle to a tyrant. If Ahab has much, still there is a Naboth who has too much conscience to part with his portion in Israel. If Joseph's brethren sell him to Egypt, the famine compels them to go after him for bread. If Herod will live in shameful sin, there is a John the Baptist to tell him of his baseness.

Then the passions of sinners are at war with each other and with mankind. The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth ; the

wicked watcheth the righteous and seeketh to slay him, Psal. xxxvii. 12, 32. One vile passion in the heart is enough to make any man unhappy.

The devices of the wicked will ruin them. They are spreading snares all the time for the feet of others ; but they are all the time sinking down in the pit that they made : in the net which they hid is their own foot taken. Pharaoh was at the head of the greatest empire in the world. He thought he saw how everything should be done. But the end of him is that he perishes in the Red Sea.

Nor are the wicked without conscience. The " Happy Rake," seeing a dog pass through his room, wished that he was that dog. To the guilty, the shaking of a leaf may be a terror. " A dreadful sound is in his ears," Job xv. 20. The Emperor Caligula confessed to the Roman Senate that he suffered the pains of death every day. If a man would have health, he must be on good terms with his stomach ; if he would have domestic quiet, he must be on good terms with his wife ; if he would not lead the life of a wretch, he must be on good terms with his conscience.

Moreover, all nature is armed against the wicked. The stars fought against Sisera. Against sinners " the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it," Habakkuk ii. 11. The

plagues of Egypt are sometimes renewed in our day on many a wicked man, though seldom at once on a whole people.

Then all those seeming advantages of the wicked cannot last long, "For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. For yet a little while and the wicked shall not be; yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be," Ps. xxxvii. 2, 10, 35, 36. Sometimes it looks as if a man would ruin his neighborhood, his country, or the world. But God says, "Thus far shalt thou go and no farther."

However long the wicked may live, and however high they may rise, their course must end in everlasting darkness. The case of that poor man on his way to the gallows for murder is sad indeed; but it is no more sad than that of a poor sinner on his way to perdition. All that believe not in Jesus Christ shall lie down in sorrow. Nor can any sinner tell until he enters eternity whether his doom shall be more or less dreadful than that of the vilest criminal. The greatest sinners in many cases are those who frequent the house of God, but love not the Saviour.

REMARKS.

1. Instead, therefore, of envying sinners, let us

pity them, pray for them, and labour for their conversion. In this work let us be fearless and faithful. It is a shame and a sin that we should not warn men of their great danger. A little faithfulness might save many a man who is now ready to sink into ruin. There is a great lack of true, heavenly zeal.

2. Let the righteous show that they are pleased with the choice which they have made. God has given them to drink of the water of life. Let them not try to quench their thirst with the dirty puddles of earth. He has given them bread from heaven. Let them not beg the world for a slice from its loaf. The great practical error of Christians is that their souls do not always follow hard after God. If we would make more of our religion, our religion would do more for us. Psal. lxxxi. 13—16. Heaven is no hive for drones, for laggards. O! let us stir ourselves up to take hold upon God.

SERMON XI.

THE SAVIOUR IS A WONDER.

His name shall be called Wonderful.--ISA. ix. 6.

JESUS CHRIST is the Author and Finisher of faith, the first and the last in salvation. Well, therefore, do the Scriptures say much of him. If we would know God, we must know Jesus Christ whom he has sent. No man can come to the Father but by the Son. It is a great matter to view Christ aright. He is called by many and various names. He is said to be the Door, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He is the Shepherd, Husband, Saviour, and Mediator. The text says, His name shall be called Wonderful, or a Wonder. Let us dwell a little on this aspect of his character. It is wonderful. Before entering at length into this matter it may be stated that the aid of the Holy Spirit is necessary to enable any man rightly to see the wonders in Christ's character. If the Holy Ghost gives us not spiritual vision, Christ will be to us as a root out of dry ground. Jesus Christ, then, is Wonderful :

I. He has, by his Sonship with God, all the perfections which we ascribe to the Father or the Spirit. He is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. He is everywhere present. He searches the heart. He is the Almighty. He has life in himself. He knows all things. He is called God, the true God, the mighty God, the Lord, the King of kings. By his own power he opened the blind eyes, unstopped the deaf ears, healed the lepers, raised the dead. The greatest wonder in the universe is God himself. Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh. Even Thomas, with all his unbelief, at last cried out, My Lord and my God. Christ, then, is Wonderful, as he is God.

II. Christ is also a man, a real man, with a true body and a reasonable soul. Of all the works of God on earth none have been considered more worthy of study than man, in his frame, in his mind, and in his heart. Some have thought the human body alone worth the careful study of years. In mind, man is but a little lower than the angels. Christ was born without the taint of original sin. He was not represented in our first father. Adam came into the world without father or mother. In a sense Eve derived her existence from Adam, though she was not his

daughter. Most men have both father and mother. Jesus Christ had only a mother. Christ's soul and body were closely united as our souls and bodies are. The bond between them could be dissolved. It was dissolved in his death. He had our entire nature, sin only excepted. Jesus Christ proved that he was a man by walking, eating, sleeping, having flesh and bones, being glad and sorry, feeling pain and pleasure, just like other men. He was the only real man that never sinned, in thought, word, or deed. His whole human nature and life were Wonderful.

III. In the union of Christ's two natures, the Divine and human, into one person, we see enough to make it right for us to call him Wonderful. The Mediator is both God and man. It is more than curious that a created spirit, a human soul, should be united to a material body, thus forming entire manhood. But in Christ this entire manhood is taken into personal and perpetual union with the Divine nature of our Lord. This union is very close. But Christ's natures are distinct, not mixed. Thus he, whom the heaven of heavens could not contain, dwelt in a vessel of clay. Thus the finite and the infinite, the human and Divine, the Creator and the creature, unite and form one person for ever. Here we might stop, and admire, and adore to endless

ages. The Son of God stooped to take our nature with all its innocent infirmities. The Maker of all things became the babe of Bethlehem. Both grandeur and humiliation united in his birth. He, who had made swaddling bands for the sea, was himself wrapped in swaddling clothes. He, who had cradled creation in its dawn, was himself laid in a manger. Marvellous that God with us should be found in so low an estate.

IV. And it is wonderful that Immanuel should meet with no better reception in the world he came to bless and save. When he was born, he was born in a stable. He was hardly born till "the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers took counsel against the Lord, and against his Anointed," Ps. ii. 2. He 'was a sign everywhere spoken against. He came to his own, and his own received him not. His birth troubled Herod and all Jerusalem with him. It is wonderful that the infant of a poor woman, and he born in a stable, should produce such dismay amongst the great. At once a deep and hellish plot was formed for slaying him. His flight into Egypt was necessary. In his life and sermons there was so much love, kindness, and truth that we wonder how men could longer retain their venom. His doctrine and example were such that men must either renounce

their sins, or be utterly stupid, or rise up in defence of their lives and their lusts. He broke no law. He meddled in no strife. He spoke evil of no man. Yet even when dying his enemies seem not to have had one pang of remorse. None ever had so many and so violent opposers as Jesus. Earth and hell united their forces against him. None was ever tempted of the devil as he was, and yet devils were subject unto him. He was a wonderful sufferer.

Nor was his public teaching less admirable. Never man spake as this man. He had the Spirit of God, but not by measure. He preached to men in the last stages of moral corruption, with their passions heated by their sad social and political state. He warned men against pride, and error, and wickedness of every kind. Earth has never seen such a preacher as Jesus, so plain, so benign, so mighty in word as well as in deed. Though possessed of miraculous power, he never used it to bring evil to any. "When reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not." By practice as well as by precept, he taught the best lessons of meekness, humility, love to God, love to man, and forgiveness to foes.

V. The glory of Christ is wonderful. Angels announced his birth. On the day of his baptism, the

Holy Ghost descended in the form of a dove, and a voice came from the excellent glory, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. The same words were repeated on the Mount of Transfiguration. When Saul of Tarsus first met him, his brightness was above the brightness of the sun. When in vision John saw him, "his head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead," Rev. i. 14—17. Christ's ascension to heaven and his sitting at the right hand of God are also very glorious. So shall be his coming to judge the world.

VI. Christ is wonderful in his work as Mediator. In his offices of Prophet, Priest, and King, there is none like him. In them all he is perfect. He never fails. His blood takes away all sin. His teaching surely guides into the way of life. His rule over men has no parallel. And all these wonders in Christ are growing for ever. Some seas have never been sounded. The heavens have never been mea-

sured. The love and glory of Christ have never been gauged, and never will be. There is no danger that we shall ever exhaust the wonders found in Christ. They will be more and more amazing as eternity rolls on.

EMARKS.

1. The Bible gives us much matter for modest, humble, and pious thought and inquiry. It is the delight of the child of God to look into these great and glorious matters. Among them all none possesses greater attractions than the person and work of Jesus Christ. Let us think much upon his name. He is the Wonderful.

2. One element of true religion is pleasant and holy wonder. God has held forth wondrous things to us that we may wonder at them. Let us therefore "consider the wonderful works of the Lord," and "talk of all his wondrous works," and think of his "marvellous loving-kindness." A part of the exercises in heaven consists in holy wonder.

3. Let us not reject the Bible because it has in it things far beyond what we find in nature, or are able to comprehend. Is it wise to deny the glory of the sun because we cannot tell how vast he is, or how he shines? It is still more foolish to deny the glory of

the Sun of Righteousness, because there are in his character and glory things beyond our grasp. Let us adoringly say, "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory," 1 Tim. iii. 16.

4. If these things be so, why do not all men receive Christ? How can they reject him? If anything about him is more wonderful than anything else, it is his love and pity. True, he offers not present ease, or repose, or favour with men. But he promises crowns and kingdoms to all who accept his salvation. O let us receive him in all his fulness and in all his wonders. "If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us," 2 Tim. ii. 11, 21.

SERMON XII.

THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures.—
1 COR. XV. 3.

CHRIST'S death was not the beginning of his sufferings. It was the end of them. Without his death his work would not have been finished. It was a great crowning event. Much is said of it in the word of God. We ought to think much of it. Let us briefly look at a few things respecting it.

I. *Christ's death was real.* Some have contended that it was only apparent and shadowy. But if Jesus Christ did not actually die, no man ever died. His enemies said he was dead. The soldiers around his cross were so sure that he was dead, that they brake not his legs. His friends and disciples so firmly believed that he was dead, that they were cast into the deepest gloom. Christ really died.

II. *His death was anticipated by himself.* In fact he himself foretold it. He knew it by his own omniscience. He well understood the prophets, and they

said he must die. He "died for our sins according to the scriptures"—it means, the Old Testament scriptures. He so fully anticipated his own death and the manner of it, that it cast a pall of sadness over his whole life. Himself says, "I have a baptism to be baptized with ; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished," Luke xii. 50. From men the time and manner of their death is concealed. They may commonly hope that it will not be in such torment as that our Lord endured. But he knew the time and manner. He died his death, as it were, a thousand times.

III. *His death was voluntary.* This was a great point. Had Christ died unwillingly, his blood would have availed nothing for us. On this point the Scriptures are very clear. In one of the Messianic prophecies Christ, speaking on the subject of the great sacrifice he was to offer, says, "I delight to do thy will, O my God," Psal. xl. 8. And during his stay on earth he repeatedly said, that if he chose he could avoid dying. When Pilate said, "Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee?" Jesus answered, "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above," John xix. 11. Even before that he had said, "I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me,

but I lay it down of myself," John x. 17, 18. Still later he said, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" Matt. xxvi. 53. Nothing is more clear than that our Saviour died voluntarily.

· IV. *Yet he died a violent death.* In fact it was exceedingly violent. He was put to death in a manner expressive of the greatest hatred by his enemies. On the day of Pentecost Peter proved that he had been murdered: "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain," Acts ii. 23. Christ had full power over his own life; but he permitted his foes to crucify him.

V. *Christ's death was shameful.* Hanging has always been a death of ignominy. And the death of the cross has always been the most shameful. No citizen, nor even a liberated slave, could be crucified in the Roman empire. That kind of death was for servile criminals alone. This kind of death was continued till Constantine abolished it in honour of our Lord's death. Every mark of shame attended our Saviour's death. His raiment was taken from him. He was put to death between two thieves, one of whom confessed that they deserved death. No mark of respect

was shown him. All was cold contempt. But he "endured the cross, despising the shame."

VI. *The death of our Saviour was accursed.* Indeed he was "made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree," Gal. iii. 13. It was only in this way that he could redeem us from the curse of the law. It rested on us till he bore it in our room. We may never know the half, or the thousandth part of what is meant by his being *made a curse*. In many respects his sufferings were the most mysterious ever witnessed. That awful wrath of God, which was due to us, fell on him.

VII. *Christ's death was inconceivably painful.* The theory of death by crucifixion was to torture men to death by nervous distress. Some blood indeed was shed, but not enough to take life. If ever there was such a thing as dying by inches, it was when men hung upon the cross. There was no change of posture in that death. It was slow and lingering. There was never any death like it.

VIII. *Christ's death was solitary.* His friend John, his mother and some other women, were there looking at the awful spectacle, but they were filled with grief and dismay. Not one of them seems to have said a word to cheer or comfort him. He saw, what Simeon had foretold, "a sword piercing the soul" of

his mother. Everything like solace was withheld. Commonly, at least often, through life he had enjoyed the life of his Father's face; but in his agony even that was taken from him, and he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Neither man, nor woman, nor angel, nor God stood by him. He trod the winepress alone.

IX. *His death was without comforts.* We have seen how he was forsaken. When he said, "I thirst," they gave him vinegar mingled with gall, a potion suited to increase his torment. After a while they offered him a stupefying dose, but he declined it. Commonly the dying are left to die quietly; but his murderers taunted him, and the soldiers who executed him went to gambling at the foot of his cross. All was coarse brutality in his foes.

X. *The pain of our Saviour's body was but a small part of his sufferings.* His agony was chiefly in his soul. "The sufferings of his soul were the soul of his sufferings." Before the kiss of betrayal, before his arrest or trial, he said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." Jehovah had said, "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow," Zech. xiii. 7. Oh that death! None but the Saviour, who died it, and God who inflicted it, know what it was.

XI. *Christ's death was not for himself, but for others.* It was vicarious. It was expiatory. The texts says, he *died for our sins*. He had no sins of his own. He never displeased God. His soul was holy. But he took our place under the law, which we had broken. The Bible is explicit: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed," Isa. liii. 5, 6. Blessed be God! The wine-press has been trodden. The work of expiation is finished. Justice is satisfied. The law is magnified. God is glorified.

REMARKS.

1. The Scriptures are true. The prophecies and histories of our Lord so fully agree, the types and the anti-type so perfectly correspond, that if we had no proof, of the Divine origin of the Bible but that furnished by the prophecies and life of our Lord, the argument would be clear and full. There are so many things of this sort and of so marked a kind, that we know we have God's word when we read the Bible.

2. How light are all our crosses! What are they

all compared with the sufferings of Christ? If we believe in Jesus, there is not a drop of wrath in any cup of bitterness ever put into our hands. Whatever may come upon us, it is not fit to be spoken of on the same day on which we speak of our Saviour's death.

3. The death of Christ is a great argument against sin. If it is of so malignant a nature as to bring on our Surety and Substitute such dreadful agonies, surely we ought to crucify it. "How shall we, who are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" We need not accuse the Jews, or Pilate, or the Romans. It was our sins that caused the death of Christ. O let us hate them, and put them all to death.

4. Want of faith in Christ is a great sin. After all he has done and suffered for us, to doubt his love and willingness to save, or to reject his grace, is a wickedness that has few equals. If Christ has not proved his love and pity for men, it cannot be proven that there is such a thing as love or pity.

5. We can have and we need no fairer argument for love to our brethren, than is drawn from Christ's love in dying for us. It is conclusive. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren," 1 John iii. 16. See also John xiii. 34; xv. 12; and Rom. xvi. 3, 4.

6. The confidence and composure of believers in Christ is well founded. Conscience, as well as Scripture, says that without the shedding of blood there is no remission. And conscience, as well as Scripture, says that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. The destroying angel never entered a house in Egypt where the blood of the paschal lamb was sprinkled on the lintels of the door. The scarlet thread in Rahab's house protected her from all harm at the fall of Jericho. So all the prisoners go forth by the blood of the covenant. In it, and in him who shed it, we may have the most abundant joy. All is safe where the blood of remission is applied. We need no more atonement than we find in the great sacrifice of Calvary. No wonder that he who believeth in Jesus, and sees anything of the fulness of his grace and mercy, seeks no other Saviour, desires no other Intercessor, but Christ alone.

SERMON XIII.

OUR GUILT AND CHRIST'S
RIGHTEOUSNESS.

We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.—ISA. lxiv. 6.

This is the name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.—JER. xxiii. 6.

It deeply concerns us to know and understand the meaning of the word Righteousness. The general idea in it is conformity to right. When one's heart and life perfectly agree with the law of God, he is perfectly righteous. This is true of angels. It was true of Adam before he fell. It was true of Christ all his life. But no mere man in this life has this spotless righteousness; though converted men hunger and thirst after it. This perfect righteousness secured acceptance before God, and was the ground on which one was justified in the sight of his Maker. But man is a sinner, and so his works before God are not perfect, and he cannot be saved by them. The righteousness which saves a sinner is the merit of Christ.

He is the LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. If we had never sinned, we should not have needed Christ as a Saviour. He came to redeem the perishing. Lost angels will never be saved in any way. Holy angels need no righteousness but their own innocence, which is without a stain or a spot. Two things claim our notice at this time.

I. *Our good works cannot give us a good standing before God—they cannot be our righteousness.* The reason is obvious—*we are all as an unclean thing.* We are all sinners—enemies to God by wicked works. Our best doings *are as filthy rags*, defiled with sin, and failing of perfection. God's law is entirely perfect. It demands neither too much nor too little. To change it would be to mar it. To suspend it would be to license iniquity. To repeal it would be to throw the reins loose on the neck of wicked men. This law requires perfect, sinless obedience to every precept on pain of death. All men have sinned. The law extends to our hearts and thoughts. It demands that our motives shall be pure and our affections holy. No man can safely say that he has loved God with all his heart, and soul, and strength, and mind, even for a day. All good men penitently confess that they come short. Their best deeds are as *rags* and cannot hide their nakedness. They are *filthy rags*, and so if

they could cover it, it would but be with loathsomeness. "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight." Words could not be more clear or plain.

Therefore he who comes to the law for life goes away under a curse. The law pours blessings on those who have always perfectly kept it; but it pours wrath and curses on those who have once broken it. To teach this truth is no small part of the work of the Spirit in man's conversion. Almost every one at first flies to the works of the law, and tries to do something for which God will be bound to save him. All he can do is due to God. But if God intends to save him, he will show him how this way to heaven is closed up. How can a poor guilty sinner be saved by his own works?

II. *The merits of Christ are the grounds of our acceptance before God.* He is THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. All he did and all he suffered in his humiliation was in our stead, and to the end that we might be saved. His doings and sufferings were not due to God for himself. He was the Lawgiver. He was not subject to the precept or the penalty of the law for himself. Yet God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law. To this end he was holy and kept all the law perfectly. In like manner

he suffered, was hungry, was tempted, rejected, spit upon, scourged, nailed to the cross, endured the wrath of God, and died. He was a sacrifice for us. He bore our sins in his own body on the tree. By his death he redeemed us from the curse of the law, and saved us from hell. By his life we have acceptance with God. All he did and all he bore make up his merits or his righteousness. When by faith we rest on him alone, his righteousness becomes ours in the eye of the law. He is then the Lord our Righteousness. Then we are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. God hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. This is clear and precious truth. It is life to us in our sad estate. Our demerit was laid on Christ. His merit is so given to us that through him we are fully pardoned and accepted. We are in no sense saved by our own works, but by his mercy. In Christ we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. "In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and his name shall be called The Lord our Righteousness." Paul could pray for nothing better than that he might "be found in Him, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is

through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." This is what we all need.

Christ becomes the Lord our Righteousness by faith—a faith which is of the operation of God, a faith which puts its penitent hand on the head of this Lamb of God. Faith looks to Christ as its atoning sacrifice. It receives him and rests on him alone. The sinner by faith comes to Christ, and lays hold of him, and embraces him alone as the Saviour. In Christ the sinner, who believes, is complete. Christ's righteousness is the wedding garment, which we all need. It is chosen by God, and by him appointed for all sinners to wear at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Those who will not put it on will be shut out. Yes, O yes, this is the linen, white and clean, of which John speaks, and which he says is the righteousness of the saints. So that Paul is right when he says, "We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." The righteousness of Christ in this sense is the righteousness of his people. Faith makes that ours, for salvation, which is his by doing and suffering. It is his as he wrought it out. It is ours as God freely gives it to us and we receive it by faith. It is ours to all the ends of pardon and acceptance. It is ours in the eye of the law and in the eye of God. He reckons it to us, and then regards and treats us as if we

were righteous. We have the benefits of the life and death of Christ. Christ has the glory of his own life and death in his everlasting honour and exaltation at God's right hand. We have the fruit of his undertaking in our own eternal happiness. It was after looking at this glorious matter in many of its bearings that Paul cried out, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." This is the true way of life. In it all the pious from righteous Abel unto this hour have walked. When the good Duke of Argyle was on the scaffold he said, "Many look on my condition as a suffering condition, but I bless the Lord, that he hath gone before me, hath trodden the wine-press of his Father's wrath, by whose sufferings I hope that my sufferings will not be eternal. I bless him that hath taken away the sting of my sufferings." And Zuingle justly says, "Christ is the only way of salvation to all who have ever lived, are living now, or ever shall live." Blessed be God, there are not two or more ways whereby a sinner must be saved. There is but one way, and we need not lose time in finding out which way is best. There is but one, and that suits us exactly.

REMARKS.

1. And now what does each one of you think of himself? Are you as an unclean thing? Do you blush to look up? Do you cry, Enter not into judgment with thy servant? Do you confess that your sins are many, and that you cannot answer for one of a thousand of them? Is your heart like a cage of unclean birds? Is it a bitter fountain? Are your best works, your righteousnesses, as filthy rags? Do you, like Job, say, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes"? Is your cry, like that of the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner"? If you so think of yourself, it is because you are taugth of God's Spirit. No man ever sees his sinfulness, and guilt, and misery, and helplessness, till God opens his eyes, and shows him the truth. It is a great thing for God to let any one see his need of Christ.

2. Blessed be God that there is a Christ to go to—a Saviour in whom we may safely put all our confidence. If ever there were love and pity beyond a name, they are found in Christ. If ever there was grace sufficient for the worst and the vilest, it is found in the Lord Jesus, and it is found in him alone. "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance,

that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom," says Paul, "I am chief." No wonder angels desire to look into the plan of salvation. No wonder the humble, the penitent, and the believing all gather around the cross of Christ. It is the last and only hope of a dying world.

SERMON XIV.

FAITH IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.—
ACTS XVI. 31.

THE Bible says much of faith. The want of it is the great sin of men in every age. If a man truly believes, he is sure to feel aright, and to live aright. Without faith it is impossible to please God.

True faith believes all God's word; but it has a chief reference to Jesus Christ. The reason is that Jesus Christ is set forth by God as the Son of God, and the only Saviour of lost men. Many texts in the Bible speak of faith in the Lord Jesus as necessary to salvation, and as making sure eternal life. True liv-

ing faith in Christ is the gift of God. It is the fruit of the Spirit. It is a saving grace. He who accepts the Lord Jesus is accepted of God.

I. WHAT IS IT THEN TO BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST? God's word gives us many statements, and all to make it plain.

1. Sometimes God explains faith to us by our sense of feeling. So Paul at Mars' Hill said to the Athenians, "that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him," Acts xvii. 27. Men are in the dark. They are blind, and like poor Bartimeus they should grope their way along, by faith feeling their way to the blessed Saviour.

2. Sometimes the Scriptures explain faith by our sense of taste. Thus says David, "O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him," Ps. xxxiv. 8. There is nothing like experience. A taste of the good things of God and of the precious things of salvation will do more to cure the love of sin than all the proud reasonings of men.

3. Sometimes faith is explained by the sense of hearing. Thus says God by an old prophet, "Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live," Isa. lv. 3. Our Lord says of the good Shepherd, that "his sheep hear his voice." Often faith is expressed in the same language. And

there is great fitness in it. For the word of God calls to men, and if they do not hear they cannot live. He who stops his ears against the calls of mercy shuts himself out from salvation. On the other hand, he who hears the voice of God with a glad heart, and obeys it with a willing mind, shall be saved.

4. One of the oldest ways of explaining faith in Christ is by the sense of seeing. * This was probably borrowed from looking to the brazen serpent, which Moses lifted up on a pole, that he who was bitten by the fiery serpent might look to it and live. Christ says that serpent was a type of himself: "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," John iii. 14, 15. This way of explaining faith is found in both the Old and New Testaments. Long before Christ came, by one of his prophets he said, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else," Isa. xlv. 22. So when Paul would tell us how to win the heavenly race, he says we must lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, "looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith," Heb. xii. 2. The child looks to his father for help. The sick man looks to the physician to be cured. Yet father

and physician may both fail to do us any good. But he who looks to Jesus shall be saved.

5. Sometimes faith is said to be a receiving of Christ, John i. 12. Thus when Christ went to Jericho and found Zaccheus on the sycamore tree, he said to him, I must abide at thy house to-day. And Zaccheus made haste, and came down, and *received* him joyfully. His outward conduct corresponded to his inward feeling. His heart led him thus to welcome Christ. The sinful treatment Christ received from the mass of his nation was that he came to his own, and his own *received him not*. We must have such a state of mind that were the Lord Jesus Christ here upon earth, and waiting at our door, we would gladly take him in.

6. At least once in Scripture, faith is explained by the kiss of love: "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," Psal. ii. 12. In Eastern countries, and in some Western nations, when men have been at variance, and friends come forward and settle the difficulties, the parties show their acceptance of the terms by embracing and kissing each other. So we poor sinners have been at war with the Lamb. We have been unjust and unkind to him. We have not

treated him as we should have done. He asks us to give up our hatred, and to prove it by giving him the kiss of love.

7. When Jesus Christ was on earth, and men wanted anything at his hand, they used to come to him for it. He himself often invited all sorts of persons thus to approach him : "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matt. xi. 28. From that day to this faith in Christ has often been explained by this act of coming. When a man truly believes in the Lord Jesus, he has such a state of heart and mind, that if the Saviour were bodily anywhere near him, he would actually come to him for life and salvation.

So that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is a hearty persuasion that he is the Son of God, the Saviour of men, the only hope of lost sinners, and one every way fit to take our souls into his hands, and keep us from the evil that is in the world. "The seat of faith is not in the brain, but in the heart." For, says Paul, "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." In genuine faith the mind does indeed assent to the truth, but the heart consents to it. When we truly believe in Jesus, we heartily rely on him, and on him alone, for salvation.

II. HE, WHO THUS EMBRACES CHRIST, RECEIVES

HIM, AND RELIES ON HIM SHALL BE SAVED. So say the Scriptures in many places. "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." "The just shall live by faith." Our text says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." It is only by faith that we can become members of God's family. "Ye are all the sons of God by faith in Jesus Christ." All who thus receive the Saviour have been born again. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." Such a faith will purify the heart, will cure the love of sin, and destroy the habit of sinning. This is a great work to accomplish in the case of fallen men. This faith in Christ warms up the cold heart of man. It works by love. It takes away the hatred of the natural heart to holy things. It makes Christ precious to the soul, so that millions have gladly died for him. It also quenches all the fiery darts of the wicked one. When temptations fall thick and fast on one who has lively faith, they have no power to hurt him. By faith also we gain the victory over the world. It strips the world of its gaudy dress. It shows us how vain are all merely earthly things. It opens to our view the unseen world, and shows us glories beyond this life—the only glories worth setting our hearts upon.

He who believes shall thus be saved from the guilt of sin. He takes Christ as his bleeding Lamb, as his

great sacrifice for sin, as his Surety to answer for him to God. He shall also be saved from the power of sin. Faith crucifies the flesh with its affections and lusts. Every day it puts sin to death. And he shall be saved from misery. It is only by faith that we enter into rest. Nor shall death have power to destroy one who relies on Jesus. He that believeth shall never die—never die as the wicked die. To him death has no sting. Over him the grave gains no victory. Heaven is his house not made with hands.

The reason of all this is that “a man,” the man Christ Jesus, is to every one that believes in him, “as a 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,” Isa. xxxii. 2. The fact is, that to the child of God Christ is everything. He is all and in all. His blood is the fountain where the soul washes and is clean. He is the chief Corner-stone on which all good hopes for eternity are built. He is the only Priest whose offering ever really took away sin. He is the only King who can subdue our iniquities under us. If we are taught of him, we shall never fail of heaven. If he is our Guide, we shall make no fatal mistakes. If he is our Light, the darkest dungeon will not be gloomy. If he is our Shepherd, we shall not want. If he is our Husband, we shall not be desolate.

And now, will you not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Come to him, confessing that you deserve death, and that you deserve no good thing. Simply take him at his word. Look to him alone. Rely on him alone. From this time forth let him be all your desire and all your salvation. If Satan tempts you to forsake Christ, cling to him more closely than ever. If wicked men laugh at you, remember there is a day coming when God will hold them in derision. Fight on. Fight bravely. Be strong in the Lord. Earnestly ask God to increase your faith. Even a weak faith shall save the soul; but the stronger faith is the better. "Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief."

SERMON XV.

THE PRISONERS OF HOPE.

Turn you to the strong-hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee.—
ZECH. ix. 12.

CHRIST and his salvation were to the prophets such welcome themes that they often speak of them without any previous notice. They break forth at once into words of gladness and praise. The text is

one of many proofs of this. The prophet had been speaking of very different subjects, when all of a sudden he dropped them, and said, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee." And so he goes on with like words till he utters the text, in which we have the blessed gospel.

I. MEN ARE PRISONERS. Many boast of their freedom and say they are not in bondage at all. The greatest slaves of sin and Satan are often the loudest in telling how free they are. But all this boasting is vain.

1. *By nature men are prisoners to ignorance.* They know not God, nor Jesus Christ whom he has sent. They know not the true nature and intent of the law. They see not the real spirit and aim of the gospel. Their understanding is darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them. "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," 1 Cor. ii. 14. A thick veil is over the unregenerate heart. Men have eyes, but they see not. Clouds of smoke and darkness have risen up from the bottomless pit and settled over their souls.

2. *Men are prisoners to justice.* The law which

they have broken is holy, just, and good in all it requires, and in all it inflicts. Its righteous penalty is death. We are all sinners, criminals. We have not done what we ought to have done, and we have done that which we ought not to have done. Our aims have not been holy. We have not laid out our strength to serve and please God. Hence justice is against us. We are fairly bound by its chains, and may at any time be punished. Nor can we escape by any acts or doings of our own. Tears cannot wash away our sins. Anguish of heart cannot burst our chains.

3. *We are by nature prisoners to sin.* The world, the flesh, and the devil fearfully have us in their power. We are led captive by the devil at his will. We are the servants of sin. The world easily overcomes us. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life are our masters. That is a sad account of the state of a bad man, "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins," Prov. v. 22. History tells us of a bloody warrior, who at last was overcome, and his captors put him in an iron cage, and set food and drink around him, but at such a distance that he could not reach them with the tip of his finger; and so they let him die of hunger and

thirst with a plenty right before him. This is like the case of poor sinners, to whom the bread and water of life are freely offered, set right before them, but they are in a cage—not of iron indeed, but of pride, unbelief, and ingratitude. They perish with the Saviour full in view.

4. *Men are prisoners to misery.* They are separated from God. An arm cut off from the body might as well be expected to live and be strong as a soul cut off from God. All the wicked feed on husks and vanities. They have no solid good. Sin's promises are fair enough, but it belies all its promises. The immortal mind cannot be satisfied with a lie. The poor aching heart cannot feed on wind. Then the vile passions are unsubdued. Hatred, envy, malice, pride, vanity, discontent, and all the brood of hateful feelings torment the man. Then conscience with her dreadful power scourges the soul. Her whip is a whip of scorpions. Nor can any man tell at what moment she may come forward, and tear his soul as a lion teareth his prey. Herod was a Sadducee. He believed in neither angel nor spirit. He said there was no resurrection. Yet when Christ began to do his mighty works, some said he was Elias; some, that he was one of the prophets. But Herod, in defiance of all his principles, said "that

John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him," Mark vi. 14. The ghost of the murdered Baptist followed him. Nor could he get rid of the haunting. Well does the prophet speak of poor sinners as in a "pit wherein is no water," Zech. ix. 11.

II. BUT PRISONERS AS MEN ARE, THOSE WHO STILL HEAR THE GOSPEL MAY BE CALLED PRISONERS OF HOPE. The day of grace lasts. The door of mercy is not shut. God calls. Jesus invites. Words of love are spoken to the prisoners. Kinder offers were never made. The Spirit calls. His voice is not loud and noisy, but small and gentle. Oh how he draws men. And Christ is able and willing to save—to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him. And every day sinners are turning to God. Some, who are bound in affliction and iron, and have long had a sad time of it, call on his name, and come forth from their prison-house. The mercy they receive is freely offered to others. You are not yet a prisoner of despair. There is hope for you, if you will now repent and live.

III. DO YOU ASK WHITHER YOU SHOULD TURN? The text says, *Turn you to the strong-hold.* We read a good deal in the Scriptures about holds and strong-holds. The cave of Adullam was a strong-hold to David

and his friends in their flight from Saul. Any high rock, where one might defend himself against many enemies, is called a strong-hold. Our strong-hold is Jesus Christ, the Rock of ages. The prisoners can come out of the pit only "by the blood of the covenant," Zech. ix. 11. That blood was shed by Jesus. The gates of hell shall never prevail against him. He is "mighty to save." He is "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is at the right hand of God." "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," 1 John i. 9. We need no other strong-hold.

IV. BUT IF WE WOULD HAVE CHRIST FOR OUR STRONG-HOLD, WE MUST TURN TO HIM. We must hide ourselves in him. We must flee to him for refuge. The brazen serpent was the type of Christ. Lifting it up on a pole saved no Israelite from the poison of the fiery serpent, unless he turned his dying eyes towards the image on that pole. If you wish Christ to save you, you must look to him. He says so himself: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else," Isa. xlv. 22.

V. IF YOU WILL THUS TURN TO HIM, HE WILL RENDER DOUBLE UNTO YOU. Yes, he will do so to each one of

you. You that have been darkness shall become light in the Lord. You that are now so guilty shall be graciously forgiven. "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," Isa. lv. 7. He will render you *double* for all your sins. Come, pleading, not that you have sinned little, but much. Like the Psalmist cry, "Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great." In like manner he will set you free from the bondage of corruption. He is stronger than the strong man armed. He can bind the tyrant sin and set you free. The leprosy was a striking type of sin, incurable by human power; yet Jesus healed ten lepers at a word. And he will give you double for all your misery—riches unsearchable—honours immortal—pleasures evermore. All true penitents find God more gracious than they dared to hope. It is a more blessed thing to be a Christian than any one supposes.

VI. THIS MATTER MUST BE ATTENDED TO TO-DAY. God himself says so: "Even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee." He may not do it hereafter. To-morrow is not yours. Ere it comes you may be in the eternal world. Now is your time. Oh that you may be wise and take the offered grace, and lay hold on eternal life. You may be old. Then you

must die soon. Are you ready to give up your account? It will be horrible to go to the judgment bar with the sins of fifty or sixty years resting on your poor soul. Hear God's offer: "Even down to old age I am he; and to hoar hairs will I carry thee." If any sight might fitly melt a heart of stone, it is that of an old man going into eternity with all his sins upon him. Perhaps you are in middle life, and full of cares and toils. You have a great deal to do to support your family. But your greatest work is that of saving your soul. What will it profit you if you gain ever so much, and come short of heaven? The best thing you can do for yourself and your family is to make peace with God through Jesus Christ. The best portion you can leave to others is a holy example and a life of prayer. Or perhaps you are young. Your heart is not yet hardened by a half-century of sinning. At times you are tender and almost persuaded to be a Christian. To-day turn to your strong-hold. Jesus says, "I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me." Why will you wage this unequal war with God, and give yourself up to sins of which you must repent for ever? Most of those who ever become true Christians in a land where the gospel has long been preached, flee to Christ early in life. "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto God, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?" Jer. iii. 4.

SERMON XVI.

THE NEW BIRTH.

Ye must be born again.—JOHN iii. 7.

THAT is a very clear and solemn statement. Every man ought to remember it, and see to it that he fails not here. This is a vital matter. If a man comes short here, he is undone. There is no hope of salvation without the New Birth. In the space of four verses Jesus thrice insists upon it: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;" "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;" "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." It is therefore clear that a great change must take place in us, or we cannot be saved. Let us think of this matter.

I. LET US LOOK AT SOME THINGS WHICH ARE NOT THE NEW BIRTH. Men will do anything rather than obey the truth. They have sought out many ways of evading the truth. Their devices are almost endless.

It is sad, but it is necessary to notice their errors and their folly.

Some say that baptism is the New Birth. But Christ teaches that the change he insists on is saving. Yet we know baptism saves no man. Simon Magus was baptized, yet he continued a bad man. After his baptism Peter told him plainly, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. . . . I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity," Acts viii. 21, 23. The change Christ insists upon is by his own statement in every case essential to salvation. Yet the penitent thief was never baptized, though we know he was saved.

Others think that if we partake of the Lord's Supper, that will secure our salvation. But Judas Iscariot, as some think, partook of the Lord's Supper; and if he did not, he partook of the passover with Christ, and that was a solemn ordinance of God. And all over our land, and many other lands, are profane and openly wicked men, who have been at the Lord's table. Thus they prove that it is not a saving ordinance.

Nor will any exact observances of rites and ceremonies in religion, whether arranged by men or appointed by God, save the soul. In Christ's day the most exact of all the sects was by Christ himself pro-

nounced a generation of vipers. They were very great as to tithing mint, and anise, and cummin, but as to faith, justice, mercy, and the love of God, they were nothing at all.

Nor will dropping one sin, while we love another, save any man. Some men give up drunkenness, and practise pride and covetousness. They forsake the sins of brutes to cherish the sins of devils. Vice may be dropped, and sin loved more than ever. No mere outward reformation of manners, without a new heart, can take the place of the New Birth.

Nor can convictions of sin, accompanied by a belief in the truth of religion, save the soul. King Saul had such convictions of sin as made him confess his wickedness with tears in the presence of his army. Felix was so convicted that he trembled before his prisoner. Men may have a fearful looking for of judgment, and yet go to judgment unprepared. Neither Felix nor Saul was really changed at heart.

Nor are any spiritual gifts saving. One may sing like a nightingale, pray to the delight of many, preach with great power, exhort very tenderly, and talk ever so piously, and yet be self-deceived—having at heart no saving knowledge of Christ. I have known an eminent Christian lady, who received her first religious impressions under the prayers of a man that afterwards lived and died an infidel.

Some hope well of themselves because they have changed their opinions and churches one or more times. But what good will it do to change our belief unless our belief changes us? I have read of one in England, who changed sides in religion as often as the moon changed. But he never seemed to be any better or any wiser.

Nor is disgust with the world the needed change of heart. Ahithophel became so disgusted with the world that he saddled his ass, and went home to his house, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, 2 Sam. xvii. 23. Judas was filled with such a loathing of filthy lucre, that, though he was an old and hardened thief, he threw down his wicked bribe, and went and hanged himself. Disgust with the world is not repentance.

Nor will any speculative opinions, right or wrong, save any man's soul. Many hold the truth, but hold it in unrighteousness. They hear the truth, they profess it, but they do not practise it. Of course their views never save them.

Nor will a hot and fiery zeal, made up of pride and bitterness, do good to any man. If it is on the side of truth, it is no more pleasing to God than if it were on the side of error. Jehu was as truly on the side of sin as was Saul of Tarsus. Neither loved God, nor sought his glory.

Some hope to be saved by dreams and visions, by strange sights and sounds. But a sight of heaven or hell will save no man. Nor will all the dreams a man can have make him what he ought to be. Religion is a matter that calls on men to be wide awake, and not in a dreamy state.

Nor will any man be saved because he had a pious father or mother. The rich man in hell had Abraham to his father. Aaron, and Eli, and David, were all men who feared and loved God, yet they had wicked sons, who came to sad ends. If one has pious parents and does not walk with God, it will be all the worse for him.

II. WHAT IS THE NEW BIRTH? This is a great question. It greatly calls for our close and honest attention. In Scripture the New Birth is called by various names, such as creation, a new creation, a passing from death unto life, a translation, a resurrection. All of these names would lead us to regard it as something very great. In this life no man undergoes so great a change as when he is born again, or created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. It is true that this change gives one no new faculty of mind, but it sets right the faculties we have. It is an inward change. It gives us a saving knowledge of God and of Christ. It opens our blind eyes. It shows

us the true nature of sin and of holiness. No man knows God aright till he undergoes this great change. A man born blind was asked what idea he had of scarlet colour. He said he thought it was very much like the sound of a drum. A poor sinner in his natural blindness has no better view of spiritual things. He is so blind that he sees no beauty in Jesus Christ, and he is the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. When a man is born again, things appear so new and so plain, and so wonderful, that he wonders he never saw them so before. He often thinks he can state the thing so that all will see as he does.

When God does so much for him, he also gives him faith to believe all the word of God, and to be fully and heartily persuaded of the truth. He is afraid of God's threatenings. He embraces the promises. He believes the doctrines of scripture. He relies on the Lord Jesus Christ, and on him alone, for salvation. He looks upon all the duties enjoined in Scripture as right. He honestly loves them and tries to do them.

Of course in this state he hates and repents of all sin. He sets no wicked thing before him. He approves of nothing that God condemns. He is sorry that he ever sinned against God. Every view of his

past life humbles his soul and exalts his ideas of the goodness of God.

So also his love to God, to Christ Jesus, to the Bible, and to God's service and people, is strong and habitual. He loves holy things because they are holy. He sees a great beauty in sacred things. He desires holiness because it is excellent.

Hope—a good hope through grace—springs up in his mind. This hope is lively, and is an anchor to the soul. His peace too is like a river. It is the peace of God that passeth all understanding. His joy is in God, and it is his strength. It brings him at length to rejoice in tribulation. His fear of God is a holy filial reverence. His fear of sin leads him to shun it as he would a serpent. His will is made submissive to the will of God. And his life and practice are changed also. His speech is holy and his conduct is holy. He savours the things of God.

III. THIS GREAT CHANGE IS BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY GHOST. Flesh and blood cannot reveal such beauties to men, as they see in the things of God. So God himself says, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you : and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my

statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them," Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. Indeed our Lord himself says, we must be born of the Spirit. It is true we know not how the Spirit works, any more than we know how the wind blows. Yet by the effects produced we may know the fact that the wind blows, and that the Spirit works. A holy life is always in man a fruit of the New Birth.

REMARKS.

1. Have you been born again? Have you passed from death unto life? Are you at heart a Christian by faith in Jesus Christ? Does your life prove that you are a new man and have a new heart?

2. If you are born again, give all the glory to God. Praise not yourself nor any man for the change. None but God could raise to life one who was dead in trespasses and sins. Give God the glory.

3. If you have not been born again, it is time you were seeking the Lord with all your heart. There is no hope and no heaven for him who lives and dies in sin. **YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN.**

SERMON XVII.

COUNTING THE COST.

Which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.—LUKE xiv. 28—30.

WHEN Christ was on earth, it sometimes seemed as if all the people would be converted. His miracles and his preaching drew many after him. It was so when he spoke the words of the text. "Great multitudes" were going after him. But Jesus knew that many of them had no love for him. Their hearts were not in the matter at all. He never deceived any one. He never gave any one cause for deceiving himself. He was always fair, and open, and candid. He asked men to think and to count the cost before they said they would follow him. It is a great thing to serve God. He, who lightly begins a religious life, will soon turn to folly. In looking further at this matter let us—

I. COUNT THE COST OF FOLLOWING CHRIST. In doing so let us not shut our eyes to any truth. Honesty is the best policy. . Nothing lasts and wears like truth.

1. If one would be a real Christian, he must be in earnest about it. If a man should take pains in anything, surely he ought not to be careless about his soul. The real child of God fights battle after battle till he enters heaven. As soon as he ceases to resist the wicked one, and his own sinful heart and a vain world, he is in danger. When one begins to think himself wise, or holy, or strong, or safe, he is a fool and in peril.

2. If you would be a real Christian, you must devote time to it. At least evening and morning time must be taken to worship God in secret, and in your family too, if you have one. You cannot take journeys of pleasure or of business on the Lord's day. You are not at liberty to make bargains, or form plans, or think your own thoughts on the holy Sabbath. If you would save your soul, you must take time to do it. And you must not rob God of any of his time. The Sabbath is the Lord's.

3. If you would be a genuine Christian, you must sacrifice all worldly good that duty requires. If you have cheated any man, or stolen anything, you

must restore it all, or the worth of it, to the owner or his heirs. Then you must give up all tricks in trade, all lying and deceits in making bargains, all desire to buy a thing for less than it is worth, or to sell it for more than it is worth. It is wicked to cheat rich or poor. In some things we may not trade at all, as where men sell strong drink to a man, when they know he will abuse it to drunkenness, and to the damage of his family, Hab. ii. 9—16. Then a Christian must be kind to the poor, must do his part towards supporting and spreading the gospel. He must not forget that Jesus has said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

4. A real Christian must sacrifice his sinful feelings. He must mortify the flesh with the affections and lusts. He must crucify his envy, and pride, and vanity, and revenge, and self-will, and love of money. He must die unto sin and live unto God. If he has stolen, he must steal no more. If he has lied, he must lie no more. He must speak the truth. He must break off his sins, not only some of them, but all of them. Some sins are very pleasant. But the Bible warns us against such. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou,

that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment," Eccl. xi. 9. He who will not give up the pleasures of sin must endure the punishment of sin. "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth."

5. He who would be Christ's disciple must agree to lose many friends. Just before the text our Saviour says, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple," Luke xiv. 26. I have known more than one child for his love to Christ cruelly treated by his father. Malice against holiness has not yet left the world. All they who will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution. When Ignatius, the martyr, came in sight of the wild beasts which were to devour him, he said, "Now I begin to be a Christian." Only those who suffer with Christ shall reign with him. If there is no suffering, there is no salvation. "No cross, no crown." If any man supposes that the world has ceased to hate goodness, he is wholly mistaken.

6. A true Christian renounces self-righteousness. He confesses that he has no merits of his own. He knows that if he is ever saved it must be by unbought love, undeserved kindness. His plea before God,

therefore, is not for justice, but for mercy. He knows that if he ever wears a crown in heaven, he will be bound to cast it at the feet of Jesus, and for ever say, "What I am, I am by the grace of God."

7. In short the true Christian gives up everything that he knows will hinder his heavenly life. This is necessary. Jesus himself says, "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple," Luke xiv. 33. This is right. No man can serve two masters. Every sincere friend of God is glad to give up everything that can offend God, or hinder his own salvation. Why should not one be willing to part even with an earthly crown, if he can wear a crown of righteousness? Nor is it unwise thus to act.

All the sufferings of the Christian, and all the joys of the wicked, are very short. All the things of time, good and bad, will soon pass away for ever. What the Christian gives up can yield no comfort when comfort is most needed. Some years ago, a steamer was bringing home many men with bags of gold from California. In a gale she became very leaky, and it was evident she must sink. Then what were bags of gold worth? They were lying about like so much trash. So it will not be long till all the good things of earth will be of no account in the eyes of any man.

Blessed is he who finds it out in time and acts accordingly. Even in this world, earthly things greatly disquiet the mind. The hotter our pursuit of them, the more do they torment us. Men are like the little fly of the evening, that sees the blaze of the candle, darts through it, and is scorched. Or they are like the boy in the garden, who, seeing the beautiful butterfly, pursues it with great eagerness, until grasping it vigorously, he opens his hand and finds there a vile worm mashed. The advantages of the wicked are rather apparent than real. If it were 'the whole of life to live,' then indeed they might seem to be wise. But death, judgment, heaven, and hell must be brought into the account, if we would know the whole truth.

II. WHY SHOULD WE COUNT THE COST? We should count it, 1. Because wise men count the cost about everything. No man of sense builds a house, or takes a journey, or plants a crop, or does anything, without trying to find out whether he can finish what he begins, and whether it will be best for him to make the effort. 2. In religion our principles will all be tried. They will be tried severely. Sin is deceitful. The world is seductive. Satan is cunning. We are weak. If we set out in the way to Zion and at every step meet with hindrances which we have not looked for, we shall be apt to turn back.

3. Even in temporal things, it is a disgrace so to act as to allow others to say, "This man began to build, but was not able to finish. He said he was going to do some great thing, but he did not do it." Much more is it a disgrace for one to put his hands to the gospel plough and look back. Men, who begin a religious life and turn away from it, will be the laughing-stock of the wicked for ever. 4. He who counts the cost knows what he has to do, and prepares to do it; and so insures success.

REMARKS.

1. Have you counted the cost of the course you are now pursuing? If you are in sin, you are living at a dreadful cost. You are losing precious time, blessed opportunities. If you go on as you are now living, you will lose your poor soul, and will lose it for ever. Does your conscience say you are doing right? In your most solemn moments do you approve the choice you have made? What will you think of your present conduct when you come to die? Do you believe that there is a good man in heaven, or a lost man in hell, who thinks your course right, or safe, or wise? Above all, does God approve your life? He is to be the final Judge.

2. Will you serve God on the terms which he

offers you? Will you consent to a life of piety? Will you deny yourself all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world? Will you love and keep the commandments? Will you give up all unjust gains? Will you trust in Christ alone, and consent that he shall have all the glory of your salvation? Will you trample on your pride? Will you hate every false way? Will you count it a pleasure to serve God at all times, in all companies, and at all costs?

3. It will be but a little time till every man will wish he had been pious—pious after the strictest rule—the rule of the Bible. When the wicked man leaves this world and enters on the awful realities of the next, he must see that sin is folly and madness, and that piety is the only wisdom. How soon you may be called into eternity none but God knows. But you know it cannot be long, for the time is short, even if one lives to be a hundred years old.

SERMON XVIII.

GOD WILL NOT FORGET HIS SERVANTS.

If any man serve me, him will my Father honour.—JOHN xii. 26.

IN monarchies many are anxious to serve the king. They think it an honour. They hope to be made rich thereby. The smiles of a king are very pleasing. His words are very cheering. So men gather around him, and court him, and do all in their power to please him. This is true of kings, who are but men, who will soon die, and who can do no good to us when we are dying. But how slow are men to serve him “on whose vesture and on whose thigh is a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.” Yet this is and ought to be the great business of our life; and we shall all so think at last. Let us inquire—

I. WHAT IS IT TO SERVE CHRIST? We must take heed that we mistake not here. If we serve ourselves or the world or the devil, and think we are serving Christ, we shall perish at last. Be not deceived. God is not mocked. Christ will not allow

himself to be cheated with vain words and hollow pretences. To serve Christ is—

1. *To take him as our Mediator, in all his offices.*

We must accept him as our Prophet, to teach us by his word and Spirit and example. We must find no fault with any lessons he gives us. We must own him as our High Priest, who shed his most precious blood for us, and “gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour,” Eph. v. 2. It is he who must pray for us in the courts above. He ever liveth to make intercession for us. Him the Father heareth always. And we must take him as our King to rule in us and over us, by his laws, his precepts, his example, and his authority. We must murmur at nothing which he does.

2. *We must serve Christ to the exclusion of all others.* He is our one Lord, our one Master, our one Mediator. He is the stone which was set at nought by the builders and is become the head of the corner. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,” Acts iv. 11, 12. “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ,” 1 Cor. iii. 10. We have no more right to believe in many mediators than we have to believe in many gods, 1 Tim. ii. 5. This is a vital matter.

3. *We must serve Christ supremely.* We must put none above him, none beside him, none with him. The reason is, there is none like him. The Father hath "committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honour-eth not the Father which hath sent him," John v. 22, 23. His name is above every name, to the very end that "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father," Phil. ii. 10, 11.

4. *The service we render to Christ must be out of love to him.* If we do not give him our hearts, his service will be drudgery. No Israelite, under an Egyptian taskmaster, gave a more unwilling service than does the poor man who has never been born again, nor had the love of God shed abroad in his heart. But when the heart is all aglow with love to Christ, his service is easy and delightful. If that love was perfect, as it shall be in heaven, the follower of Christ would have a continual feast. This love to the Lord Jesus relates to his person, his work, and his doctrine. There is a whole book in Scripture given to show the love between Christ and his people. Other books contain much on the subject.

5. *The service we render to Christ must be constant and persevering.* “Be thou faithful unto death,” says he, “and I will give thee a crown of life,” Rev. ii. 10. “He that endureth to the end shall be saved,” Matt. x. 22. We cannot serve Christ by fits and starts. There is no sadder history than that which tells how some men followed him for a while, and then were offended in him.

II. HIM, WHO THUS SERVES CHRIST, WILL THE FATHER HONOUR. There is no jealousy between the persons of the Trinity. We cannot serve one without honouring the others. The Father is greatly pleased that we should serve the Son. And it is only by the Holy Ghost that we can call Christ Lord. The text says, “If any man serve me, him will my Father honour.” This is true.

1. *God gives titles of honour to all who serve his Son.* He calls them his chosen, his sons, his daughters, his heirs, his friends, his jewels, his peculiar treasure. The Church is Christ's spouse. He calls her by pet names—“my love, my dove, my undefiled.” All saints are the sheep of the Lord's pasture. They are a fountain sealed, a garden enclosed, and the Lord's heritage for ever.

2. *The Lord puts his Spirit upon all them that serve his Son.* David was highly honoured when Samuel came and anointed him—a lad—to be king

of Israel. But no anointing is so precious as the unction that abideth—the Spirit who teacheth us all things. He is the Author of the new birth, of the inner life, of all grace, and all purity. When he is in the heart he is a well of water springing up into everlasting life. One of the most marked honours God bestowed on his Son, when on earth, was when he opened the heavens and the Spirit of God descended like a dove and lighted upon him. And prophecy said nothing more glorious of his person than this : that the Spirit of the Lord God should be upon him, and anoint him to preach good tidings unto the meek, etc., Isa. lxi. 1—3.

3. *In the arrangements of Providence God honours those that serve his Son.* Some of them indeed, yes, millions of them, have worn a crown of martyrdom ; and many have confessed and denied not that God was with them. God says to his beloved, “I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.” “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.” Of all the redeemed in heaven not one has any fault to find with the course of Providence on earth. So striking is God’s care of his people, even in their lowest estate, that the wicked themselves have spoken of it. When the Jews were bondmen in the kingdom of Artaxerxes, this was so striking that even Haman’s wife and wise

men said to him, "If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him," Esth. vi. 13.

4. *Then God honours the servants of Christ by giving them great promises.* These are so many, so rich, so plain, so sure, that they are all we want. Let a good man mention anything that he would desire God's promise to embrace, and it can be shown to be already in the Bible, or something a great deal better.

5. *God honours Christ's servants at all times, in all circumstances, and for ever.* He honours them at death, often in a very gracious manner. Oh what precious testimonies dying believers bear to the faithfulness of God. He makes all their bed in their sickness, and puts underneath them the everlasting arms. He makes the feeble among them like David, who was not afraid of the giant; and he makes the house of David like the angel of God. At the resurrection, he will raise them up with a body brighter than the sun—a body like to that of the Lord Jesus Christ, in glory, in power, and in incorruption—a spiritual body, by the Holy Ghost fitted to be the immortal companion of the undying soul. And in the day of judgment he will bestow such honours on the humblest of his servants as no earthly

monarch ever received or gave : “ Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,” Matt. xxv. 34. Moreover, to all eternity, millions of ages after moons shall cease to wax and wane, after suns shall cease to rise and set, God will still be the God of his people ; Jesus Christ will still be their elder Brother ; the Holy Ghost will still be the well of water springing up to everlasting life.

REMARKS.

1. Let not the saints be cast down by the trials of the way, by the scorn of men, by the insults of the wicked. The honour that comes to them from God is enough to set aside all the slights, and scoffs, and gibes of the ungodly.

2. Let the wicked remember that their time is coming. “ He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh : the Lord shall have them in derision,” Psal. ii. 4. They shall not always have it their own way.

3. The gospel offer is perfectly free. It is to *any man*. “ If any man serve me, him will my Father honour.” He may be a poor man, a blind man, a deaf and dumb man, a half-witted man, a sick man, a friendless man, a very sinful man ; or he may be rich, and healthy, and honourable, and sound in body

and mind, and be a great sinner, and yet if he will serve Christ, God will honour him.

4. Whatever you do, you must do quickly, or it will be too late. One was rich, he was sick, he was sad, he looked back over fifty years of pleasure and ease. He had loved dear friends, and they were dead. He had cherished great hopes, and they were not at all realized ; still his life seemed more than usually happy. But he had lived for self, and not for Christ. All looked blank, and he said, " Is this all of life ? " An aged Christian was passing away, and said, " I am just beginning to live. This life is not all of life. It is only the first step." Reader, are you serving Christ ?

SERMON XIX.

WHO IS A CHRISTIAN ?

And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.
—ACTS xi. 26.

IN Scripture two places are called Antioch. One was a city in Pisidia. Paul and Barnabas preached the gospel there. The other Antioch was the capital

of Syria. Some think that in the Old Testament it is called Riblah ; but in the New, Antioch. This name was given to it by a son of Antiochus, the persecutor. It lay near the river Orontes. In our day it is little more than a heap of ruins. This is the city mentioned in the text. It was the first place where a Church was composed both of the Jews and Gentiles. The gospel had great success there. Acts xi. 19—21.

The word Christian occurs in two other Bible passages ; in Acts xxvi. 28, and 1 Pet. iv. 16. At first Christians were called disciples, believers, or brethren. Their enemies gave them two names in reproach—Galileans and Nazarenes. But in Antioch was first felt the need of a name which should suit both Jewish and Gentile converts, and which should briefly set forth their religious belief. Some think the name Christian was given in reproach ; but this is hardly so. It is not likely that the Church would at once have assumed a name given in derision. There were inspired men ministering in that Church, who may have been Divinely directed to give the name. There was great need of a new name, to embrace all the converts. Some think this is according to that prophecy in Isa. lxii. 2, that the people of God, under the gospel, should “ be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord should name.” It early became a form

of professing love to the Lord Jesus to say, "I am a Christian."

The name Christian was given about eight years after the death of Christ. In our day it is given to many who have no claim to it, except that they are not heathen or Mohammedans. Men, who are "Deists in theory, Pagans in inclination, and Atheists in practice," are often called Christians. But their lives show that they have no love to the Son of God. Our present inquiry is,

WHO IS A GENUINE CHRISTIAN ? What makes a man a Christian ? What sort of person is a real Christian ?

The word Christ, like the word Messiah, means anointed. Jesus is called Christ because he was anointed with the Holy Ghost—the oil of gladness—above all our race. The Spirit of the Lord rested upon him without measure. The very first thing to be sought in forming the Christian character is the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul expresses great reliance on "the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ," Phil. i. 19. This is a vital matter. No man can be born again but by the Spirit of God. No man can say that Jesus Christ is Lord, except by the Holy Ghost. No man can lead a godly life but by the aid of the Holy Spirit. He is the anointing that abideth

and that teacheth us all things. Jesus became Christ by having the Spirit not by measure. Men become Christians by having the Spirit in measure. A Christian is one that has this Divine anointing. No other man is a Christian.

The special work of the Spirit produces genuine conviction of sin, a true spiritual discernment of Divine things, and a saving change of heart, and plants and strengthens all the Christian graces. Everything really good in man is the fruit of the Spirit.

To be without the Spirit of God is everywhere in Scripture set forth as a mark of wickedness and ruin. When God was about to sweep away the old world he said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." The apostle Jude describes a class of very bad men as "sensual, having not the Spirit." And Paul says, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his," Rom. viii. 9. Again, through Christ "we have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God," Eph. ii. 18, 19. Thus he asserts that all who are without the Spirit are strangers and foreigners to God's house. As a body without a soul is dead, so the soul of man without the Holy Spirit is dead also, dead in trespasses and sins. It is the Spirit that quickeneth.

Often, in Scripture, the true people of God are said to differ from others by having the Spirit. Paul says, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" "By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body," 1 Cor. iii. 16; vi. 19; xii. 13. "Because we are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts," Gal. iv. 6. "By this we know that he abideth in us, by his Spirit that he hath given us," 1 John iii. 24. On this point the Scriptures lay the greatest stress. They speak with much plainness, in strong terms, and harmoniously. To the Romans Paul says, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be the Spirit of Christ dwelleth in you." The great difference between the two houses that Solomon built was, that God dwelt in one, and the king of Israel in the other. And the great difference between a saint and a sinner is, that God's Spirit dwells in the former, and an unclean spirit in the latter. The Holy Ghost is the author of all saving grace in the human soul. Christ promised that he should guide his people into all truth. The gospel dispensation is the "ministration of the Spirit."

The Spirit shows us the true nature of sin, reveals to us the hatefulness of pride and unbelief, and all the brood of evils in the human soul. By him men are translated out of darkness into the kingdom of God's

dear Son. As many as love God are born of the Spirit. Thus they are made new creatures in Christ Jesus. He calls with a tender, holy, effectual calling. Then the soul hears and obeys and runs to Christ.

Nor is this all. Having begun a good work in his people, they are changed into the image of Christ, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. He first kindles the flame of love in the heart, and then feeds and preserves it afterwards, lest it be put out by sin and temptation. No man has any Christian grace except by the Holy Ghost. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," Gal. v. 22, 23.

By the Spirit a man is turned from sin to holiness. So says God, "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." All false religions come short in the matter of holiness. Not one of them puts honour upon the Holy Ghost, as he is "the Spirit of holiness." "The end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned," 1 Tim. i. 5.

God does by his Spirit greatly sustain his people in their trials, and make them conquerors, and more than conquerors. A frowning world and a frowning Providence sometimes seem to give the tempter a fair

opportunity to ply his arts. The child of God sits down in sadness. Some think he is about to give up in despair. But he is strengthened with all might by the Spirit in the inward man. Out of weakness he is made strong. He triumphs mightily, and says, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him."

In nothing is the aid of the Spirit more desirable or necessary than in the matter of prayer. He stirs up right desires, he shows us our spiritual wants, he warms our cold hearts. "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities : for we know not what we should pray for as we ought : but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered," Rom. viii. 26. The Holy Ghost "spiritualizes our natural affections, and fixes them on proper objects, and enlarges and enlightens their natural activity. When sin is recollected, he awakens anger, shame, and sorrow." Thus he carries on the blessed work in the soul of man. Prayer indited by the Spirit will never be denied by the Father.

THUS, BY THE HOLY SPIRIT WE ARE ANOINTED AND MADE CHRISTIANS. By him our vital union with Christ is formed. He does it all. He gives us our new nature. "The first day's work of both creations is the greatest." It was more wonderful that Lazarus should rise from the dead, than, that having

risen, he should walk about. "Believe, and you shall love; believe much, and you shall love much." Inquire rather whether you are a Christian than when you became so. Never be ashamed of Christ's name. "He which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God," 2 Cor. i. 21. "Christ made himself like us, that he might make us like himself."

Our great error is in trying to do without the aid of the Holy Spirit. He is our guide; without him we err always. He is our light; without him we are in darkness. He is our strength; without him we are as weak as water. He is our sanctifier; without him we are wholly polluted. He applies to us the word of God for comfort, and for warning, and for cleansing, and for complete salvation. As he garnishes the heavens, so he beautifies the soul, and adorns it with the richest graces. To all who receive him he is a fountain of joy, and life, and peace, and purity.

SERMON XX.

SIGNS OF COMING DESTRUCTION.

I know that God hath determined to destroy thee.—2 CHRON. xxv. 16.

THESE are the words of a prophet to Amaziah, a guilty prince, when he showed that his heart was fully set in him to do evil. They were completely fulfilled. The very people whom he had made his tools in iniquity conspired against him, sent to Lachish after him, and slew him there. The text brings two great truths before our minds.

I. THERE IS SUCH A THING AS DESTRUCTION. Another name for it is death. It may be temporal. It may be spiritual. It may be eternal. It may be all three of these. The destruction with which God threatens the wicked, and which shall surely come on those who will not mend their ways, is,

1. *Near.* It is close at hand. "The time is short." Even when Jacob was a hundred and thirty years old, he said, "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto

the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage," Gen. xlv. 9. What is your life? It is a vapour, a shadow, a handbreath, a tale that is told. Whether you are a saint or a sinner, a friend or an enemy of God, your earthly life will soon be over. If you shall die in your sins, your destruction is very near.

2. *This destruction approaches all the wicked very rapidly.* The Bible compares it to a whirlwind and desolation, Prov. i. 27. Nothing is more rapid than the flight of time; and when their time is all gone, then the incurably wicked are destroyed.

3. *The destruction of the wicked is sudden and surprising.* They do not look for it. "When they cry, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape," 1 Thess. v. 3. It cannot be otherwise. The wicked will not be warned. They will not fear when they have the best cause for fear. They will not be warned when God himself warns them. It was so at the flood. For a hundred and twenty years God waited on the old world, and yet they would not repent, till the flood came and they perished. It was so at Jerusalem. Its inhabitants were told how God would sweep them with the besom of destruction, if they went on in their sins.

But they heeded him not till such woes came upon them as never befell any other city since the world began.

4. *The destruction of the incorrigibly wicked is certain.* It belongs to them, Job xxxi. 3. They are *fitted* for it, Rom. ix. 22. They are *reserved* for it, Job xxi. 30. It is the natural and necessary result of sin: "Destruction and misery are in their ways," Rom. iii. 16. The wide gate and the broad way *lead to destruction*, and nowhere else, Matt. vii. 13. It is *certain*, because God has threatened it, and he cannot lie. It is *certain*, because he has already destroyed many—many who were just as confident that they would escape all evil as any man now can be.

5. *The destruction of the wicked is total.* It is called a "mighty destruction." It is called an "utter destruction." They are said to be "drowned in destruction and perdition." It is a destruction of all their fond hopes and all their pleasing prospects. It is the destruction of soul, body, and spirit. It leaves nothing but gloom, and death, and despair, and the worm that never dies, and the torments of the damned.

6. *This destruction is everlasting.* It has no end. It will never be over. Its ruins will never be repaired. The Bible is clear: "They shall be punished with

everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power," 2 Thess. i. 9.

II. WE MAY SOMETIMES KNOW, BEFORE MEN DIE, THAT GOD HAS DETERMINED TO DESTROY THEM. We should be very careful not to abuse this doctrine, nor to judge harshly of others. We should chiefly apply this awful doctrine to our own cases. Yet the signs are sometimes infallible.

1. *Where pride prevails and is incurable, we know a man must die.* The Bible says so: "The Lord will destroy the house of the proud," Prov. xv. 25. "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall," Prov. xvi. 18. "Before destruction the heart of man is haughty; and before honour is humility," Prov. xviii. 12. God has given us some awful examples on this point. When Uzziah "was strong, his heart was lifted up to destruction," 2 Chron. xxvi. 16. When Herod made a great speech, and the people shouted, and said, "It is the voice of a god," he drank it all in; and "immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost," Acts xii. 23.

2. *Vaulting ambition is another sign of coming destruction.* "Seekest thou great things to thyself? Seek them not." He that is busy seeking great honours from men, has no time or heart to seek the honour that

comes from God only. The Scriptures leave no doubt on this matter. "He that exalteth his gate, seeketh destruction," Prov. xvii. 19. See how God has set Sennacherib as a beacon upon the mountains, to warn the aspiring and the daringly ambitious.

3. *The lawless use of the tongue shows that destruction is coming.* How many say, My tongue is my own, and I will say what I please ; or, I think so and so, and I may as well say it ; and thus blurt it out, and cover themselves with reproach, and fill their friends with sorrow, and dishonour God. Let such listen to the Scripture : "He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life ; but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction," Prov. xiii. 3. "A fool's mouth is his destruction ; and his lips are the snare of his soul," Prov. xviii. 7. "Thou lovest all devouring words, O thou deceitful tongue. God shall likewise destroy thee for ever, he shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling-place, and root thee out of the land of the living," Ps. lii. 4, 5. In particular does the Bible settle the destiny of impenitent liars. "Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing : the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man," Ps. v. 6. "All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone," Rev. xxi. 8.

4. *Those men who willingly, wickedly, and habitually*

pervert Scripture, whether to error, or to jest, or to any unrighteousness, are on the road to ruin. Luther well said, "When God would destroy a man, he gives him up to pervert Scripture." It is a fearful thing for men to be false teachers, and privily bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them. Such "bring upon themselves swift destruction," 2 Pet. ii. 1. They that are unlearned and unstable wrest many Scriptures "to their own destruction," 2 Pet. iii. 16.

5. *When men are incurably covetous, they are undone.* "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition," 1 Tim. vi. 9.

6. When men, from conscience, or decency, or interest, or any such cause, are restrained from wicked courses, and yet *have pleasure in those that pursue them*, it is a dark sign, Rom. i. 32. This is a gratuitous kind of wickedness. It is delighting in the thing for its own sake. It shows that the heart is wholly wanton. Oh with what greed some men recount or listen to the vile deeds of others, deeds which the perpetrators themselves would blush to speak of.

7. *When men cherish habitual and strong hatred to good men, they are in the way of destruction.* So long as one respects piety, admits that the Christian is right,

and wishes that he was one himself, there would seem to be some hope. But when he gives himself up to malignity against all goodness, his case is very alarming.

8. *When a man will not listen to reproof, and makes his neck stiff and his heart hard, then he is on the brink of ruin.* “He that being often reprovèd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy,” Prov. xxix. 1. “Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed,” Prov. xiii. 13. This was the sign that settled the mind of the prophet in the case of Amaziah. That prince insolently said to the minister of God, “Art thou made of the king’s counsel? forbear; why shouldest thou be smitten? Then the prophet forbore, and said, I know that God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened unto my counsel.”

9. *All these tokens of coming wrath are increased when men are not improved by afflictions.* See an awful passage on this subject in Amos iv. 6—12. Elsewhere the Lord says, “Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more,” Isa. i. 5. Woe to such a people, especially if they are given up to uninterrupted prosperity, and flourish as the grass, for “the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them,” Prov. i. 32.

REMARKS.

1. For all who yet hear the gospel there is still a way of escape through Jesus Christ. It is sure. It is near. It is every way suitable. Enter it and walk in it.

2. If you will flee from the wrath to come, your escape must be speedy, earnest, persevering, for life. There must be no turning back. You must haste to the mountain. It is a case of life and death.

SERMON XXI.

THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.

I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.—JOHN xiii. 15.

WE learn a great deal by seeing what others do. Teaching by example has three great advantages. 1. It clearly shows what the duty is. 2. It proves that it can be done. 3. It appeals to the spirit of imitation. It is an old saying, Words teach, examples draw. But the example of Christ is better than that of all others. 1. It comprehends all the virtues in

due proportion. 2. It is always perfect in degree as well as in kind. 3. It is therefore a rule, a law to us, and we need not debate it, or ask if it is safe.

It is true we may not follow him in anything which he did as God or as Mediator. As a prophet, priest, and king, there is none with him, and there can be none like him. It is only in those things which he did as a man that we may follow him. Nor need we be discouraged because he set us a perfect pattern. In learning to speak, it is well to hear those who speak well. In learning to write, it is best to have a good copy before us. In learning to make a garment, it is best to have one as teacher who has skill in the business. Let us then inquire—

IN WHAT MAY WE IMITATE CHRIST?

1. *We may imitate him in his humility.* He was lowly in spirit. He washed his disciples' feet. Some have thought we ought to wash each other's feet. And so we ought, if it was any kindness to do so. But people cover their feet now, and it is no longer an act of hospitality. Washing feet is not a religious ordinance. What Christ taught us by washing the feet of his disciples was, that we should do the humblest acts of kindness to one another. We should not be proud, nor above any service that will do good to others.

2. *We should be like Christ in meekness.* We should not be easily made angry or excited. When Jesus "was reviled, he reviled not again." When he was smitten, he did not smite back again. When he was spit upon, he did not resent it. "When he suffered, he threatened not." When he was in the hands of those who mocked him and treated him basely, he never fell into a passion. "He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth," Isa. liii. 7. Even when he was hanging on the cross, and his enemies were wagging their heads and taunting him, he prayed, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do."

3. *We may imitate Christ in his habits of devotion.* Though he did not pray to be seen of men, yet he would not decline to pray for fear he should be seen of men. Having spent the day in teaching and preaching, and walking over the dusty plains of Judea, he would at night retire to a fit place of prayer, and spend much time in communion with God. Oh that we had the like spirit! "It is necessary not that we should read much, but that we should pray much." "Neither men, nor company, nor my own industry, but thou, O Lord, hast taught me."

4. *We may be like Christ in deadness to the world.*

He had not where to lay his head. In his public life he lived very much on the charity of some poor and humble people. Yet he never murmured. When he was a young man, setting out in life, he was greatly tempted on this very point. But the prince of this world had nothing in him. The devil took him into an exceeding high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; and said to him, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." But the Saviour instantly replied, "Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Oh that all young men, and old ones too, would follow this good example.

5. *We should follow Christ in his untiring zeal.*

He went about doing good. Even at the marriage in Cana of Galilee he would not fail to improve the time for the good of those assembled. When wearied he sat at Jacob's well, he saw a poor, wicked woman, and pitied her, and taught her the way of life, and brought her to a sense of her sins, and gave her his blessing. He spared no pains to lead poor sinners into the right way.

6. *Like Christ, we should honestly do the whole will of God.* When he came to be a man, John was

preaching and baptizing ; and Jesus came and was baptized too, thus “fulfilling all righteousness.” Nor did he ever break any law of God. It was his meat and his drink to do the whole will of God. His motto was, “I must work the works of him that sent me.”

7. *Like Christ, we should never discourage the poorest or the vilest in trying to do better.* Oh how kind and gentle he was, even to publicans and harlots ! He so pitied the guilty that at least one man thought that he could not be a prophet, or he would not have allowed a woman who was known to be a sinner to wash his feet with tears, and wipe them with her hair, and kiss them, and anoint them. But Jesus said, “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven. To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.” That woman loved much, for much was forgiven her. His tender voice said, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” He sent away none, however vile, who came to him asking for mercy.

8. *We should follow Christ in his unflinching fidelity in reproofing sin and in warning men to flee from it.* Even when Peter spoke wrong, Christ said, “Get behind me, Satan ; for thou savourest not the tidings that be of God, but the things which be of men.” To

others of his disciples in error he said, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." Christ never took sides with the sins of men. He came to seek and to save that which was lost; but he came to save men *from* their sins, not *in* their sins.

9. *We should follow Christ's example in his submission to the will of God.* He never found any fault with anything God did. Even when he was sore amazed at what he saw before him, he said, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will but thine be done," Luke xxii. 42. He did not come into the world to please himself, but to please the Father who sent him. If God's will was done and suffered, that was enough for him.

REMARKS.

How kind is God to have given us this perfect pattern. We greatly needed one in whose footsteps we might safely walk. We have no such pattern anywhere else. The best of mere men have always been but men at the best. If any man would know the way to the kingdom of God, let him walk as Christ walked. His example is right. There is no flaw in it. By following it you will do most good to men. By walking as he walked, we shall best honour God. "It is the sum of religion to imitate him whom we

worship." Nor are we at liberty to follow men, except as they follow Christ.

2. If Christ's life is the rule, what sinners we all are! How little are we like him! This is our fault. It ought to be our shame and our grief. In many things we all offend. We cannot answer for one of a thousand of our failures. We come short in all things. Even when we know God, we do not give him all our hearts. Vain thoughts lodge within us. Trifles engage us. We walk in a vain show, or admire those who do.

3. How blessed the state of the redeemed in glory! There they are without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. They are in their measure wholly like Christ. They sin no more. They are tempted no more. They walk in the light of Christ's countenance. They wear his image. They are for ever done with all that can distress their souls.

4. In this life our great folly is that we do not make it our business to live what we learn, to practise what we know. Where is the man that does not know better than he does? We read, we hear, we think, we promise, we resolve. Our folly is that we do not live up to what we know.

PRAYER.

Our Father, who art in heaven, have mercy on us;

pity, and bless, and save us. We are poor sinners ; grant us thy rich grace. We are lost sheep, out in the wilderness ; O seek us and find us. Make us like thy dear Son, Jesus Christ. Give us thy Holy Spirit, to take away our evil natures. Purely purge away our dross, and take away our tin. Let not any sin reign in us. Take away all our iniquities. Give us new hearts, and put right spirits within us. Cause us to walk, yea, to run in the way of thy commandments. Put thy law within us. Write it on the fleshy tables of our hearts. Make us meek and lowly, humble and forgiving. Make us spiritually-minded, and so give us life and peace. Keep alive in us the true spirit of prayer and praise. Make us thankful. Give us great ardour in thy service. Let none of us trust in ourselves that we are righteous, and despise others. Make us tender to the fallen. Give us grace cheerfully to say at all times, The will of the Lord be done. We ask all these things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

SERMON XXII.

THE WORST SINNERS ON EARTH MAY
BE SAVED.

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord : though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.—ISA. i. 18.

THESE are strong and striking words. Some think the main idea is taken from bloody crimes, because blood is red, and because just before the text God says, “Your hands are full of blood.” Others think that as scarlet and crimson are glaring colours, so God here says, “Though your sins are as obvious and striking as robes of red, yet come and be saved.” Others think that these words refer to the deep stain made by scarlet and crimson ; and it is true that the ancients knew no way of taking off stains of this kind. So sin makes a deep and lasting stain upon the soul. Tears, and sighs, and snow-water, and even reformation will not take it away. It is not certain which of these explanations is the best. They may all be true. The text teaches—

I. That some sinners are more wicked than others, and that the same man may become more wicked than he has been. These truths are taught all through the Scriptures. Our Lord himself admitted the first, when he said, "That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom men have committed much, of him will they ask the more," Luke xii. 47, 48. Jeremiah and Paul clearly assert the second: "They proceed from evil to evil." "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse," Jer. ix. 3; 2 Tim. iii. 13.

II. The worst men may be saved. This is taught in the text, however you may explain its figurative language. Other Scriptures teach the same thing. Indeed they are full of proofs on this subject.

III. The greatest sinners may be saved as readily as others. We are led thus to believe because of many things stated in God's word.

1. The fact that Christ became man would lead us to expect that he meant to do some great thing. His errand into this world was not for some slight

cause. When we see him taking our nature upon him, we need not be surprised at any great mercy after that. We may wonder to see the king marry the poorest girl in the realm ; but after he has done that, we are not surprised that he should richly endow her.

2. In all the Scriptures there is no offer of mercy made to sinners on condition that they have sinned but little. Where is there such an offer? It is not found. If it was in the Bible it would blast all our hopes.

3. Many offers of mercy to sinners are general and indiscriminate. The Bible abounds in such. The commission which Christ gave to his disciples says, "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved," Mark xvi. 16. It matters not whether one sinned much or little, true faith in Christ shall save him. All the Scriptures speak the same way. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money ; come ye, buy, and eat." "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." "If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him." "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely," Isa. lv. 1 ; John vi. 37 ; Rev. iii. 20 ; xxii. 17.

4. There are many special offers to the worst of

men. The text itself is such. God says that the people he addresses are very corrupt; that their religious meetings and services are *iniquity*, a *trouble* to him, and that he is *weary to bear* them. "When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear." And yet, instead of passing final sentence, he says, "Come now," and makes them the kindest offers. He does the same by the weeping prophet. See Jer. iii. 1.

5. God's treatment of wicked men may well lead us to hope that he will show mercy to the vilest sinners. Adam sinned against law and love. In his sin were pride, ambition, discontent, unbelief, crediting the devil, and almost everything that could heighten iniquity. Yet it seems to be generally thought that he was saved. We know that mercy was offered him by the Lord. Then Abraham, the father of believers, was once a Syrian, ready to perish. To the Jews, Joshua said, "Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods," Josh. xxiv. 2. So that Abraham himself was called out of a nation and family steeped in idolatry. Christ himself began to preach among a people which sat in darkness, and

in the region and shadow of death, Matt. iv. 16. Sailors and fishermen, in all ages notorious for their profaneness, were among the first to hear gracious words from his sacred lips. Afterwards he saved a woman out of whom he cast seven devils. The harlots fled to him for mercy. He went all the way to Jericho, it would seem, chiefly to carry salvation to the chief of the publicans. When he was on the cross, the only persons, so far as we know, who received mercy at his hands were the centurion who commanded the Roman guard and one of the thieves who hung at his side. In Christ's last days most of his disciples behaved badly. The Shepherd was smitten and the sheep were scattered. All seem to have hid their faces from him except John, while Peter in a very wicked manner denied him. Yet when Christ was risen, he sent word to them all, to Peter in particular, to meet him in Galilee. And when he did meet them, he had not one bitter or harsh word to say. Even when poor, unbelieving Thomas would not receive him as Christ, unless he could put his finger into the print of the nails, Jesus so loved him as to bring him to cry, "My Lord and my God!" By Christ's command his disciples began their work in Jerusalem, then the wickedest city in the world. And under the first Gospel sermon

three thousand of his murderers were converted and saved. Not very long after a persecution arose. It was bitter and bloody. Among its chief actors was a young Roman citizen, of fine talents, liberal education, and prodigious genius. He murdered the saints with an awful greed; yet Jesus had mercy on him, and by miracle brought him to embrace the Gospel. Well might that man in his old age write, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief," 1 Tim. i. 15.

Ay, and God has mercy for old sinners too! There was Manasseh, the son of good, pious Hezekiah, well instructed in his youth, and raised to be a king, his very office aggravating his sins. He defiled the temple of God. He restored idolatry. He was a horrid murderer, "filling Jerusalem with much innocent blood, from one end thereof to the other." He formed a league with Satan, and by example and authority led others to sin. He was very obstinate, and would not hear reproof. He became king at twelve years of age, and lived to be sixty-seven years old; yet when he had sinned for fifty years, God pitied him, afflicted him, converted and pardoned him.

Nor are such cases single and rare. Even if they were, what God has done once he could do again.

He is as rich in mercy to-day as he ever was. But these are not single and rare cases. The famous church at Corinth consisted in part of converted "fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, and revilers," 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. And to the whole church at Ephesus Paul says, "Ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." It requires infinite love, infinite grace, infinite mercy, infinite power, and infinite wisdom to save him who has sinned the least; and it requires but infinite love, and grace, and mercy, and power, and wisdom, to save any lost soul.

REMARKS.

1. Unbelief is a great sin. It rejects the remedy God has provided for us in our lost estate. It makes God a liar.

2. There is no room for despair. Christ does not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. He has many a time put his foot upon the neck of haughty tyrants, and trodden them to hell. But he never yet trampled on a broken heart. He never will send away without a blessing any penitent soul.

3. We must accept God's mercy in Christ. We must believe with the heart. We must look to Jesus.

We must come to him that we may have life. Without faith in the Redeemer, we must perish. Out of Christ, God is a consuming fire. Let us not go to Mount Sinai. Let us flee to Calvary, and to the blood of sprinkling.

4. And let us accept the Saviour at once. The door is now open. To-morrow it may be for ever shut against you. Let us, who yet have life, play the fool no longer. We have the Gospel. Let us embrace it with all our hearts. The offer of life made us by the Lord is sincere. God mocks not any of his creatures. Will you not this day lay hold on life and be saved? If you will, you shall be for ever blessed.

SERMON XXIII.

THE VARIOUS RECEPTION OF THE GOSPEL.

And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.—Acts xxviii. 24.

THE success of the Gospel is various. Men do not all treat Christ alike. It has always been so. Often the first are last, and the last are first. The publicans and the harlots enter the kingdom of God

before the scribes and Pharisees. Many a man comes near to the gate of heaven, but never enters it; while others, who seem to be far off, enter in with little apparent difficulty.

Some ascribe all this to the sovereignty of God. And it is true, that he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy; and whom he will he hardeneth. But God does not exercise his sovereignty capriciously. He has good cause for all he does. It is sin that shuts men out of heaven. The text says, Some believed, and some believed not. It is so still. Let us consider—

I. WHAT SORT OF MEN ARE SURE NOT TO BELIEVE. This is a large class. They are found wherever God's word is preached. Some of them are rich, and some are poor; some are learned, and some are ignorant; some are old, and some are young; some are great, and some are obscure. But among them you will find—

1. *The unthinking.* If God saves us, he will not save us as blocks and stones. He often calls on us to consider our ways, Deut. xxxii. 29; Hag. i. 5. David tells us how he was brought to accept salvation: "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments," Psal. cxix. 56, 60. If a man

will not think, he must die in his sins. Some men have a plenty of vain and wicked thoughts; but they will not turn their minds to religion. It would require a miracle to save such men. Then we have—

2. *Those who will not ask the way.* They know it not, but they will not inquire for it. They go along ignorantly. It would be a wonder if such should come to believe. As soon as the three thousand were brought under deep concern on the day of Pentecost, they said, "Men and brethren, what must we do?" The jailer said to Paul and Silas, "What must I do to be saved?" Saul of Tarsus cried, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" If you do not know, you must ask those who do know. Then there are—

3. *The prejudiced.* Many people have taken up a great dislike to certain books, or truths, or preachers of God's word, and are armed against them at every point. Thus wicked Ahab said, "There is yet one man, Micaiah, the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the Lord; but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil," 1 Kings xxii. 8. There is no greater hindrance to one's conversion than prejudice. And many, like those of old, say, "Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits," Isa. xxx. 10. Many lose their souls because—

4. *They are passionate.* They control not their tempers. Anger, wrath, and malice keep them in a fret. The form in which the Holy Spirit came down visibly on Christ was that of a dove, and a dove is the very emblem of peace and gentleness. It is never found in scenes of strife. Hear Paul: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another," Eph. iv. 30—32.

5. *Some are ambitious, and so reject the Gospel.* This is true of not a few who never rise to high places. Jesus Christ spoke of such when he said, "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only," John v. 44. "Whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God," Jas. iv. 4. This world is wicked. It hates God. If you would have God's favour, you must break with the wicked. Then we have—

6. *The lovers of pleasure.* They are dead while they live. Their god is their ease, or their appetite. They live to eat, and drink, and be merry. They look on time spent in honest toil or in solemn thought

as dull or disgusting. They are wanton. They kick against God. They will none of his reproofs. To them the Gospel yoke is galling. Then we have also—

7. *The lovers of money.* If their gains are in danger, they will howl for hours, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians,” Acts xix. 24. Oh how some men worship gold! For it they sacrifice ease, and honour, and health, and life, and conscience, and their souls. How can such men believe? Then we have—

8. *The self-willed and the self-righteous.* These may well be classed together. Every one that has a high opinion of his own worth cannot say to God, Thy will be done. And every one who says in his own strength, I will have my way and do as I please, is never willing to unite with the penitent, and say, “All our righteousnesses are filthy rags.” One of Christ’s first commands is, that we renounce our own will and our own merit. Why should he seek mercy who is good enough? Why should he ask guidance of God who is determined to have his own way?

II. BUT WHAT SORT OF MEN ARE LIKELY TO BELIEVE? It is not necessary to state all that marks their character, but only a few leading traits. These clearly point them out.

1. *They are candid.* They carp not and cavil not at the truth. When they see a truth, they admit it

not in words only, but in their hearts. They love not a lie. They hold not fast error because it pleases their carnal nature, or flatters their pride, or excuses their sins. Such ask for no more than a simple statement of the truth, and the grounds of it, and with meekness they receive the engrafted word. They love not to be deceived. They love the truth. Such are also—

2. *Humble men.* The pride of their heart does not deceive them. When God's word condemns them their own hearts condemn them also. They know a low place becomes them, and they take it. They admit that they are unholy and unclean, vile and guilty, not deserving any good thing, needing every mercy offered in the Gospel, and entirely dependent on the grace of God for everything. Their pride is abased. They are meek and lowly before God. Such—

3. *Confess their sins and their indebtedness to God.* They deny not any truth, though it condemns them. They hide not their sins, but humbly confess them and beg for mercy. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy," Prov. xxviii. 13. This was the history of David's experience: "I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord;

and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin," Ps. xxxii.

5. The same has been the experience of millions. Such men will also—

4. *Be devout.* They will pray. They will plead for pardon and grace. They will call upon God out of a sincere and broken heart. What blessings came to that devout woman Lydia, and to that devout man Cornelius! Acts xvi. 14, 15; x. 44—46. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you," Matt. vii. 7. Men must pray or perish. If their hearts do not call down mercies, their sins will call down vengeance on them. Such will—

5. *Renounce and forsake their sins.* They will not spare the guilty things. They will break off their sins by righteousness. They will hate every false way. They will not plead for any sinful indulgence. Zaccheus will give up his covetous practices. The jailer will wash the stripes of his prisoners. The persecutor will throw away his whips and his implements of torture. Such a man forsakes every known sin. He renounces it for ever. Such will also—

6. *Do every known duty.* As fast as he learns the truth he will from the heart obey it. The duty to which he is called may be new or difficult, but he will honestly try to do it. Thus he will get the bene-

fit of that promise of our Lord, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself," John vii. 17. If a man will practise what he does know, God will teach him what he does not know, and thus he will become wise unto salvation.

No wonder such men believe. They are ready to welcome every truth. To them it is easy to take God at his word. No precept is too strict for them. No commandment is grievous to them. All truth is agreeable to them, as soon as they know it to be truth. And all Gospel truth is to them glad tidings of great joy. They receive it into their hearts.

REMARKS.

1. The reason why the wicked cannot save their souls is, that they wish to spare their sins. If men will hold fast the world and iniquity, they must let go Christ and heaven. Either sin must die or the soul must die. Both cannot live. "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin," Ezek. xviii. 30.

2. If men are lost, they will be the authors of their own ruin, and their blood will be upon themselves. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself." Self-murder is justly esteemed a shocking folly and sin,

even when we think of the body only. But what shall we say of him who murders his own soul? Truly his crime is as great as his folly, and over his prison door will be written for ever in letters of fire—Suicide, *Suicide*, SUICIDE, SUICIDE!

3. He that believes the Gospel shall be saved. God hath said so by the mouth of his Son, and of many of his servants. And God cannot lie.

SERMON XXIV.

“COME THOU WITH US.”

And Moses said unto Hobab, the son of Raguel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you : come thou with us, and we will do thee good : for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel. And he said unto him, I will not go ; but I will depart to mine own land, and to my kindred. And he said, Leave us not, I pray thee ; forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes. And it shall be, if thou go with us, yea, it shall be, that what goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee.—NUM. x. 29—32.

WHEN Moses forsook the court of Egypt he fled

into Midian, and there he married the daughter of a man who is variously called Jethro, Raguel, and Reuel. This is a more probable opinion than that Jethro was the father of Raguel. Jethro was a worshipper of the true God. Exod. xviii. 10—12. Some think he was a descendant of Abraham through Midian. Gen. xxv. 2. This is probable, but not certain. He had two children, Hobab, a son, and Zipporah, a daughter. Hobab was therefore Moses' brother-in-law. It is not certain whether he remained in the camp when his father left Moses, or whether he came afterwards. True, God was guiding the Israelites in a remarkable manner. Still, it would be a great thing to them to have a man who knew all the country over which they were to pass. Moses asked Hobab to cast in his lot with the Israelites, saying, "Thou mayest be to us instead of eyes." This was an appeal to his kindness. Moses also promised him a full share of the benefits that might accrue to the Israelites. It seems probable that Hobab, like his father, was a wise and good man, and worshipped Jehovah.

The journeyings of Israel strongly set forth the pilgrimage of the Church. Canaan in Syria was a type of the heavenly country. The people Israel were the visible Church of that day. This passage of Scripture suggests many useful lessons.

I. We learn from it that in advancing the interests of God's dear Church, it is proper that our social relations should awaken and quicken our zeal. God has bound us together in life in such a way as mercifully compels us to share in the joys and sorrows of others. Strong friendships do, in God's providence, bind together many of the elements of society. This is always so where men are not very vicious or sordid. Were it not so, we could hardly live in this world. But these ties of love may be used to advance religion. Moses had probably formed a strong attachment to his brother-in-law, not only because he was a good man, but because he was a kinsman. This was all right. Moses allowed his natural affection to quicken his appeal and make it urgent. There have been many cases like this.

In the days of the judges in Israel, a great famine arose. To escape its dreadful effects, Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and their two sons went into the land of Moab. There Elimelech died. His sons married women of Moab. But soon the young men died also. Thus were left these three helpless widows. Naomi, hearing that the famine in Israel had ceased, made up her mind to go to her own land. Her two daughters-in-law arose to go with her a short distance. At length the mother said, “Go, return each of you to

your mother's house." One of them kissed Naomi and bade her farewell. The other, Ruth, said, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, I will die, and there will I be buried." Though this act of Ruth was the fruit of her faith, yet no doubt the friendship she bore to her mother-in-law mightily strengthened her purpose. She was led by God's hand. But the cord by which he led her was natural affection. She was brought into the land of Israel, and there became one of those from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came.

This natural affection mightily influenced Paul. He was more persecuted by the Jews than by all the world beside. Yet his love for their souls rose above all these things; and he says, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart." "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved," Rom. ix. 1, 2; x. 1. Who can read the affecting story of Monica, the mother of Augustine, and not see to what good account natural affection may be turned?

II. While we ought to be very solicitous for the salvation of all, we may lawfully feel peculiar concern that persons whose talents and characters fit them to be very useful, should not only be saved, but do the most good in their power. We do not always think enough of this. Blessed is he who is allowed to render any good service to the Church of God. The desire of many pious parents to have sons who should be useful ministers, may sometimes have been a sinful ambition, but more frequently it is to be hoped God sees in it a sincere desire for the glory of his name. Moses was unwilling that the fine talents and character of Hobab should be lost to the Church of God.

III. In trying to advance religion, we may lawfully have and show a regard to the rewards of godliness. It is a truth that obedience to our heavenly Father's will is followed by blessed consequences. Paul says that Moses himself had regard to the recompense of the reward. And he urged his suit with Hobab by pointing him to the advantages of sticking to the people of God. The Scriptures make it clear that it is as wise as it is safe to be truly religious. “Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.” One great exercise of faith is to look at things unseen and eternal, and learn how far they

outweigh things seen and temporal. All wise men take heaven and hell into their account.

IV. Our first efforts to do good to the souls of men often prove failures ; but by persevering we frequently have good success. Moses was earnest even in his first application to Hobab ; and though this seemed to do no good, Moses held on, renewed his persuasions, and Hobab's purpose and conduct were both changed. We read of his descendants among the Israelites in later times. Judg. i. 16 ; iv. 11. So in the Gospel we read of one who said to his father, "I go not," but afterwards he repented and went. One of the great obstacles to religious effort is found in the dulness and obstinacy of those to whom we would be useful. What a model teacher was Jesus ! He says, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly." It is as if he had said, "I will teach you the same lesson over and over again ; I will not upbraid you for your dulness, I will be patient with you." If God bears with the wicked, why should not we ? They insult and provoke him much more than they do us. Let us not despond in doing good to men's souls.

V. Those who do in truth serve God, though now in a state of sorrow and trial, like that of the Israelites in the wilderness, yet have good prospects before

them. The good things in reserve for the righteous are by God's grace sufficient to determine a pious soul for God. Hobab was not a descendant of Jacob. To go with Moses and his people would require the giving up of his own early prejudices and habits of life. He must forsake his father and his father's family. He would identify himself with a strange people, and could expect no more of his father's estate. Yet the promises of God as urged by Moses led him to forego all these things, that he might establish himself and his children in the promised possession of the visible Church of God.

VI. Let us imitate the example of Moses, and invite all we love to come, and go with us to the good land whither we go in to possess it. The Lord hath spoken good concerning all his people. There are some thoughts which one would think sufficient to decide any one for God and for religion. If there be no God, if the Bible is not true, if death is an eternal sleep, if saints and sinners fare alike for ever, still the righteous suffer no loss worth naming. And they certainly do have a peace of mind to which men of the world are strangers.

But if there is a God, if the Bible is true, if death is not an eternal sleep, if saints and sinners fare very differently in the next world, then the righteous only

are wise, and all the wicked are fools. Another thing is very worthy of notice. The more a life of sin and a life of piety are tried, the more clearly does it appear that sin is wrong and ruinous, and that piety is safe and wise. Then even here a need is often felt for something better than this world. The wicked themselves not unfrequently turn away filled with loathing of the things after which they have been most eager. When their principles are tried as they are in death, many wicked men say that they have played the fool; while all the righteous approve the course they have pursued, except that they regret that they have served God so poorly. The testimonies of dying believers to the truth and grace of God, form a great bulwark around the Church. Many an aged minister testifies that he has never known a consistent Christian to die an undesirable death. Then beyond the Jordan lies the Canaan of our brightest hopes. There is the New Jerusalem whither all the tribes of the redeemed go up. Many are there already. Many are going thither daily. There are the holy angels. There is the glorified person of Jesus Christ ready to receive every ransomed spirit. OH! COME AND GO WITH US.

SERMON XXV.

THE CONVERSION OF ZACCHEUS.

And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zaccheus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was ; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore-tree to see him ; for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zaccheus, make haste, and come down : for to-day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, that he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the Lord : Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor : and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. —LUKE xix. 1—10.

THE word Zaccheus means pure, just, clean. If this man ever deserved so good a name, it was not till grace changed his heart. Before that he was anything but pure. Many a man has a name to which he is a

disgrace. Zaccheus was a head man among the publicans. A Grecian poet was asked which was the most cruel of all beasts. He said, "Among the beasts of the wilderness, the bear and the lion; among the beasts of the city, the publican and the parasite." The lowest order of publicans were no better thought of than thieves and pickpockets. Cicero says that among the Romans some of the revenue officers were honourable men. But in Judea, where many thought it was not lawful to pay taxes to a foreign power, the Jewish publicans who collected the tribute were always odious. A Jew who undertook to collect tribute for the Romans was looked upon as a heathen. Matt. xviii. 17. Some say they were not allowed to enter the temple or even a synagogue. Such was Zaccheus, a man despised both for his calling and his cruelties.

But this man, wicked as he was, still had curiosity. "He sought to see Jesus, who he was." That is, he wished to see how he looked. But he "could not for the press." And he was a small man. The crowd would not give way to him. So he "ran before and climbed up into a sycamore-tree." It is sometimes very inconvenient to be small, and sometimes it is very inconvenient to be large. God settles these matters. All we have to do is to submit to him. The sycamore-tree of the Bible is not like that which

grows in America. It is a kind of fig-tree, or some think it is more like a mulberry. Like our apple-tree, it puts out branches a little above the ground. Into such a tree Zaccheus climbed. And when Jesus came to the spot, "he looked up and saw him." His eye had been upon him for good all along. He said unto him, "Zaccheus!" The good Shepherd calleth his own sheep by name, and they hear his voice. Christ said, "Make haste and come down: for to-day I must abide at thy house." It must have surprised Zaccheus very much to have so great a person as Christ to notice him. But "he made haste and came down, and received him joyfully." That is the way to receive Christ. To do otherwise is to reject him.

Such an event made a great talk. There were people there who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others, and all the people despised the publicans. So they found fault and "murmured, saying that he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner." But Zaccheus felt very differently. His heart was touched with Christ's kindness. A great change had come over him. And when he reached his house, he said to Jesus, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor." He did not say, I have always been giving to the poor, but he said, I do it now. He was a new man, and now

began to lead a new life. But why did he not give all, instead of merely giving half? The answer is, that he had no right to give it. It was not his to give. It belonged to other people whom he had wronged and robbed by false accusation. So he kept that to restore it to others, from whom he had wickedly taken it. He not only gave back what he had taken, but, according to the law of Moses, he gave back four times as much.

The Lord Jesus knew his heart, saw that he was sincere, and that he was bringing forth good fruits, and said, "This day is salvation come to this house." Up to that time that family had lived in sin. But now there was a change for the better. Zaccheus was a Jew, and this change in him made him a true son of Abraham. And Christ justifies himself in what he did for Zaccheus, by saying, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." Almost everybody agreed that Zaccheus was lost. He himself saw that he had been lost. It is the lost sheep that needs to be sought and found. It is the lost child for which people go through the streets ringing the bell. This piece of history teaches us many

LESSONS.

1. It is well to be in the way of 'getting good, and

of meeting Christ in his ordinances. It is a pity that everybody does not go to the house of God. A woman said she would not go, for fear it would make her worse. But did it not make her worse to stay at home and be at ease in her sins? Often during his life, and often since he ascended to heaven, has Christ said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Zaccheus, led by curiosity, went where Jesus was to pass, and behold, he was saved! Whitefield tells us of a very bad man, who went to church "to pick a hole in the preacher's coat, and the Holy Ghost picked a hole in his conscience." Persuade the people everywhere to come and hear the gospel.

II. True earnestness, whether natural or gracious, is not easily discouraged. Zaccheus was the head of a family, and a man somewhat advanced in years; but because he was intent on seeing Christ he did a boyish act and climbed a tree. Many sufferers had to pass through great obstacles to reach Christ's help. If men would be saved they must be in good earnest—they must be in dead earnest. He that is turned aside from his purpose by trifles, or even by great hindrances, will never be saved.

III. When we know our duty, it is wicked to hesitate. Christ said to Zaccheus, "make haste, and come down;" and he made haste and came down.

That is the way David was converted. "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments," Psal. cxix. 59, 60. Don't linger.

IV. It is a great thing to know our time. Zaccheus knew his. Probably he had never seen Christ before. So far as we know, Christ was never in Jericho again. We must "take time by the forelock." Among some of the ancients the emblem for time was a human head with one long lock of hair in front; but all the rest was bald. This taught that as you met an opportunity you might grasp it and hold it fast; but when it was past there was no hind lock to seize. Oh! that men knew their time. "Hell is the truth seen too late."

V. We must yield ourselves to God without reserve and without condition. Zaccheus did not say to Jesus, If thou wilt do thus and so, I will give my goods to the poor, and so on. Oh no! We must give up all hopes, all plans, all thoughts which are opposed to Christ, and fall into his hands, saying,

Here, Lord, I give myself away,
'Tis all that I can do.

A Latin writer tells us of a prisoner of war set up in Rome to be sold as a slave. One said to him,

“Wilt thou be faithful if I buy thee?” His noble answer was, “I will be faithful whether thou buy me or not.” So we must give all to Christ, as our Lord and Master, come what will.

VI. Regeneration makes a great change in any man. In some this change appears greater than in others. But in all cases it is marked and decisive. This is very much so in regard to master sins. The besetting sin of Zaccheus was the love of money. As soon as he was converted he gave up all that. If our piety does not subdue our worst sins it is not genuine.

VII. Poor wretched sinners may be saved. Zaccheus was a *lost* man, but Jesus saved him. Zaccheus lived in a city which God had long before delivered up to destruction, and he was thought to be one of the worst men in it, and yet he obtained mercy. Christ's mission into this world was to seek and to save that which was lost.

VIII. It makes a great change in a house when salvation comes into it. Even for one of the children to believe in Jesus is a blessed thing. But when the head of a family turns to the Lord, then, as it were, salvation comes in at the front door. It is a fearful thing for a man to stand as some do at the very entrance of their dwellings, and shut out the Lord

Jesus, and all the blessings of eternal life, from their children and all who live under their influence. If a man will go to hell, he had better go alone, than drag others along with him. If a man will not go to heaven, let him not lift a finger to hinder others. There is no happier sight on earth than when a whole house with one accord embrace Jesus Christ.

IX. The real cause of the change in Zaccheus was the grace of God ; but the thought which seems to have overcome him was the kindness of Christ in noticing a man so commonly hated. Love conquers, when terror merely hardens. If we are ever led to repentance it must be by the goodness of God. His right over us is perfect, but our vile hearts resist all till he gains the victory of love. The love shown in the cross of Christ is even greater than that shown in his visit to Zaccheus. He must be a bad man with a wicked heart who does not love the Lord Jesus Christ.

SERMON XXVI.

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day : and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table : moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom : the rich man also died, and was buried : and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue : for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things : but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed : so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot ; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee, therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house : for I have five brethren ; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets ; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham : but

if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. —LUKE xvi. 19—31.

IN these words we have an account of two men very different in heart, in life, and in their last end.

I. One of them was a beggar. His name was Lazarus. This word means the *Help of God*. And God was the only help he had. He had no money, no home, no friends, no helper. Some persons, we know not who, *laid* him at the entrance to the house of the rich man. But he was helpless himself, and *full of sores*. What was the nature or the cause of his disease we know not, further than that it made him a loathing to himself and others. He seems to have been but little cared for. *The dogs came and licked his sores*. He seems to have been a modest man. He desired to be fed with the portion that is commonly given to the dogs, *the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table*. Whether he got even so much we do not know. How long he was sick, and sore, and lying at the gate, we know not. He may have had many a dark night and many a dismal day. But to the righteous there comes at last an end of pain. So it is added, *the beggar died*. It is probable no man saw him die; but the angels were about, and God was with him. We are not even

told that he was buried. Possibly some one had kindness enough to dig a grave, and lay away his poor body. But all was well with his soul. He *was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom*. What must have been his feelings as he bade farewell to this cold and cruel world! Cold and nakedness, hunger and thirst, pains and sickness, languor and frightful dreams, all gone for ever! How bright and glorious, how kind and brotherly, his new companions! They carried him on and on till he reached Abraham's bosom, and at the feast above he took his seat next that great believer, now glorified in heaven. He seems to have been a great saint. He had borne and had had patience in very great trials, perhaps not a whit less than those of the father of the faithful. He had come out of the furnace like gold seven times purified.

II. The other of these two men was rich—how rich we know not, except that he had clothing commonly worn by kings and princes. He *was clothed in purple and fine linen*. And he kept a fine table. He *fared sumptuously every day*. He doubtless had his friends around him. He believed in good eating and good drinking. Those who were fond of his dainties no doubt praised him much. They praised him to each other. They called him a good fellow. How long he lived in this way we know not, but he outlived

Lazarus. At length, it is said, *The rich man also died.* Whether he died suddenly or lingered long in pain, whether in his last hours his mind was calm or troubled, rational or delirious, we know not. But we are told that he *was buried.* It is probable there was a great funeral. Perhaps some one made an oration, and told of his many good qualities. Perhaps there were many lies uttered over him.

But while these things were going on in this world the rich man was very differently occupied in another world. He *lifted up his eyes in hell being in torments.* On earth he had been heedless of eternal things, but at last he *lifted up his eyes*; he began to pay attention—to look at things as they really were. He was *in hell, in torments.* The first thing he saw was *Abraham afar of, and Lazarus in his bosom.* How changed was his state—but not more so than that of Lazarus! He was a Jew, and cried, “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.” God had hid his face from him. Prayer to the Most High was too late. He felt it and could lift his voice no higher than to a creature. His prayer itself was desperate. He talked of putting out the flames of hell with a drop of water. Abraham told him that he had seen his good day, and

Lazarus his evil days ; but that now justice required that things should be changed. He also said that the will of God would not permit any such thing—that men could neither go from heaven to hell, nor from hell to heaven.

The rich man then asked that Lazarus might come back to earth, and be a witness for the truth to the five brethren of the rich man. But Abraham said, “They have Moses and the prophets.” If they would not hear them, they would not be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

This subject is full of instruction. It teaches these

LESSONS.

1. The rich man was not lost because he was rich, but because he loved riches, trusted in them, and was satisfied with them. His god was gold. It is not wicked to be rich, but “if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

2. Lazarus was not saved because he was poor, but because he was poor in spirit. Some who are poor, steal and take the name of God in vain. Some expect great riches hereafter, because they are so poor in this world ; but if they live and die in sin, they will be poorer in the next world than they are in this.

3. The doctrine of the universal salvation of men

is not true. Lazarus is in Abraham's bosom. The rich man is in hell, in torments. Oh, surely there is a difference in the future states of men. All the Scriptures teach the same thing. Daniel says, "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall wake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt," Dan. xii. 2. There will be an eternal difference between the states of saints and sinners. Jesus Christ teaches the same. The wicked "shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal," Matt. xxv. 46.

4. The question is sometimes asked, Is there really fire in hell? The Bible seems to teach that there is. But whether there is or not, every wicked man has in his own bosom enough to make a hell, as soon as God leaves him to himself. There is the memory. It will bring up before the mind the good books once read, the good meetings once attended, the good instructions once received, the sermons once heard, the sacraments once witnessed. It will remind men of revivals of religion, of striking and solemn warnings, of all their sins and the aggravations of them. It will show them what they lost. It will remind them of time misspent, of Sabbaths profaned, of the Holy Ghost resisted, and of the Saviour slighted. The imagination, too, will be put to work. It

will look far into the future, and see worse things coming. Miserable as was the rich man in hell, he feared that in future his five brethren might come there. All the elements of damnation are already in a sinful soul ; and one drop of God's wrath would set them on fire as in a moment.

5. You may refuse to cry for mercy now, but the time is coming when the most careless man on earth will call for mercy as loudly as this rich man. Blessed is he who now asks and obtains mercy.

6. The rich man did not intend to lose his soul, and yet he lost it. You may not intend to lose your soul, and yet you may lose it. Live on in sin, be careless, let all good opportunities pass away, and death will do the rest.

7. Balaam said, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Don't you say the same? No man can put too high a value on a safe death. But are not some willing to die a Christian's death, who are not willing to lead a Christian's life? Are you one of that sort?

8. Men will never have any more proof of the truth of religion than they have now. God will work no miracle to save any man. If you will not give your heart to Christ, he will not come back to earth to die again for you.

9. The next life will make plain much that was dark and mysterious here. Lazarus may have wondered that he was left to beg for food. But that is all plain enough now. One kind of carpet is made with the ragged side towards the weavers. The handsome figures are on the other side. Two pious men, who understood weaving, were talking of the dark events of providence. At last one said, "Wait, my friend, till the Lord turns the carpet. We shall see beautiful figures then." Oh yes, to the righteous all will be well then.

10. What we do here takes hold on the next world. The thoughts and acts of to-day will affect our destiny millions of ages hence. Every man is drawing on his soul a picture that will meet him in heaven or hell. We are all painting for eternity.

SERMON XXVII.

DOES OUR RELIGION MAKE US BETTER
THAN OTHERS?

What do ye more than others?—MATT. v. 47.

THERE is an old book called "The Non-such Professor." It was written a long time ago by a

good man in England. It is founded on the text of this sermon. I saw a copy of it in 1854; but more than twenty years before that, the plan of this sermon was formed. The book contains all that is in this sermon, and a great deal more. I wish it was reprinted. The text inquires of us, What do ye more than others? And this leads to the thought that Christians ought to do more than others, because—

I. *God has done much more for them than he has done for others.* He has loved them with an everlasting love, Jer. xxxi. 3. He has sent his Son to die for them, and has given them to Christ, John x. 15; xvii. 12. He has put his Spirit within them, changed their hearts, given them a new spirit, and one heart, Jer. xxxi. 33; xxxii. 39; Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. He has made an everlasting covenant with them that he will not turn away from them, to do them good; and he has put his fear in their hearts, and he rejoices over them to do them good, Jer. xxxii. 40, 41. He has taken them into his family, and has called them sons of God, giving them the adoption of children, and with it the Spirit of adoption, Rom. viii. 15; 1 John iii. 1. The secret of the Lord is with them, and he has showed them his covenant, Psal. xxv. 14.

II. *Christians have promised more than others.* They have pledged themselves to keep all the commandments, to obey the Gospel, to love one another, to be just, and true, and kind to all men, to pity the miserable, to forgive their enemies. In short, they have promised to walk as Jesus Christ walked, and by the rules laid down in his blessed word. They have promised all this solemnly. They have vowed it unto the Lord. That vow is as solemn as an oath. Psal. cxix. 106. They cannot make light of these promises without awful sin against God. Christians must be men of their word. They must hate every false way. They must not be found liars.

III. *Christians expect much more than others.* God allows them to do so. Each of them expects a crown of righteousness; a kingdom that cannot be moved; and an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. They expect to sit down with Christ in his throne, as he also sat down with his Father in his throne. They expect to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God, and to eat of the hidden manna, and to receive the white stone with a new name written in it, and to have written in their foreheads the name of God and the name of the city of God. They expect to inherit all things. Indeed, their hopes know no

bounds. They extend to all the fulness of God, and to all the days of eternity.

IV. *The world watches Christians more than others, and expects more from them.* Every eye is upon them. They are a city set on a hill, that cannot be hid. They are a spectacle to men and to angels. Many watch for their halting, and would delight to see them stumble and fall. No hawk watches a sparrow with more intent malignity. As a roaring lion Satan goes about seeking whom he may devour. He and his minions are full of all craft, malice, and murder. When a good man goes astray, the enemies speak reproachfully. They say, "Aha, aha! So would we have it." No wicked man would be surprised in a public conveyance to find an infidel or a worldling fretful, impatient, ill-natured, or even profane. But the wicked themselves expect something very different from Christians.

V. *It is only by Christians doing more than others that true religion is kept alive in the world.* Take away the bright example of good men, and real piety will soon die out in the world. Men can acquire great stores of religious knowledge. They can become learned in the Scriptures. They can be great sticklers for orthodoxy. They can be loud and earnest professors. They can closely follow their own tenets,

and closely adhere to their own sect. They can vaunt their own liberality. They can talk mournfully about indwelling sin. They can counterfeit a great deal that pertains to a religious profession. But they cannot practise humility, forgiveness, meekness, self-denial, silence, charity. It is only by outdoing them in these and like things that the difference between a saint and a sinner appears. Jannes and Jambres made quite a show of having miraculous power. But their folly was at last manifest. Demas went through a persecution, and sent salutations to the churches; but the love of the world at last overcame him. Herod heard John gladly, and did many things; but he would not give up his darling sin. Ezekiel's hearers admired his preaching, and behaved well in the house of God; they heard his words, but they would not do them, Ezek. xxxiii. 30—33.

VI. *The names given to Christians show that they ought to do more than others.* They are God's *husbandry* or *plantation*. Surely God's farm should not be covered with weeds, and thorns, and briers. They are God's *workmanship*. Surely, then, they should be very different from the children of the wicked one. The vessels which he makes ought to be unto honour and glory. They are the *light of the world*. If that light is put out men must stumble and fall. They

are the *salt of the earth*. If the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall the earth be salted? They are the *friends* of God. If they behave like his enemies, who can tell them apart? They are *trees of righteousness*. Shall they bear the fruit of wickedness? They are a *royal priesthood*. Shall they behave like mean, vulgar outcasts? They are God's *witnesses*. Shall they turn liars, and perjure themselves, and betray their Master's cause? They are called *saints*, or holy ones. Shall they, like the sow, wallow in the mire? They bear the honoured title of *Christians*, or Christ's men. Shall they behave like men of Belial?

VII. *The sins of good men are in many ways greatly aggravated.* Their example, if bad, is very bad and very mischievous. If they are truly good men, their anguish for their own sins is dreadful. David seems never in his lifetime to have gotten over the sadness of his great fall. Their sins, when known, bring great affliction on their brethren. In a thoughtless moment one may do an act which will embitter his whole life on earth, impair his usefulness as long as he lives, and cause the Church to blush when they think of his vile deeds, even after they hope he has truly repented.

APPLICATION.

1. And now what do ye more than others in the matter of love? "If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others?" Pilate and Herod made friends over their common hatred to Christ. Do you love your enemies? Do you forgive all who revile you, and slander you, and injure you? Do you forgive them from the heart? Do you forgive them every one? Are your prayers sincere, earnest, fervent, importunate? Do you know what it is to pray without ceasing? Do you love to pray in secret? Is your heart truly engaged in any act of devotion? When you give alms, is it that you may have praise of men? Do you give to those who are so poor that you know they cannot pay you back? Do you give alms secretly or ostentatiously? Are you a pattern of honesty in paying your debts, in keeping your word, and in meeting your promises? Do you let the sun go down on the hire of the labourer withheld? Do you grind the faces of the poor? Are you keen and hard at a bargain? Even when men do wrong, are you harsh, putting the worst face possible upon their conduct? Are you vain and flaunt-

ing in your ideas, gait, and dress? Do you eat to live, or do you live to eat? Are you worldly-minded, or does your heart go out after God? When you hear the Gospel, do you hear like a critic or like a criminal? Do you sit as a judge or as a learner? Is your speech seasoned with salt? Does it minister grace to the hearers? When you have done your best, are you humble, crying, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." Is it your full belief that after you have done all you are able to do, you deserve nothing, and are less than the least of all God's mercies?

2. If you do no more than men who do not love Christ, then you do not love Christ. He who acts no better than a hypocrite or an unbeliever is not a child of God, whatever else he may be. It is not charity, it is the blind leading the blind, to tell men that they can be saved without a change of heart, which results in a change of life. We know that we shall be judged by God's word in the last day, and that word is clear on these points.

3. If these truths take away our hope of eternal life, let our hope of eternal life go. It is not founded on God's word. It is not a good hope through grace. The only way that some men can ever save their souls

is by giving up all their present plans and hopes of obtaining God's favour. Oh, hug not your delusions. They will become chains to bind you down in everlasting sorrow.

SERMON XXVIII.

A PRAYER THAT SUITS US ALL.

Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.—PSALM cxix. 133.

DOMINION is rule, power, mastery. It is for the time the supreme power—the law of binding force. It may be lawful, as that of a parent over his child, as that of God over all his creatures. Or it may be unlawful, as that of a usurper, as that of Satan.

There are three classes of moral accountable beings: 1. Some are in no sense or degree under the dominion of sin. Such are holy angels and the spirits of just men made perfect in heaven. 2. Others are fully or wholly under the power of sin. Such are fallen angels. Such are wicked men, whether living or dead. 3. Some men, who were once the slaves of sin, have

cast off its authority, and war against it. At times it gains an advantage over them; but they shall finally and completely conquer it. Now they hate it, resist it, and would be happy to be free from it. Through weakness, or fear, or sudden temptation, they may go astray. But they are not under its reigning power. For they do not consent to serve sin. They love holiness. Nor is it their habit to serve sin. Iniquity is dying out in them. Grace is increasing. God has set them free. In them are fulfilled the promises, "He will subdue our iniquities;" "Sin shall not have dominion over you," Mic. vii. 19; Rom. vi. 14. God's word cannot fail. If Christ is in our hearts, he is there as a conqueror. If, then, sin is not the perfect master of good men here, and shall at last in every case be put down, why should we pray, Let not any iniquity have dominion over me? This is a fair question. In reply it may be said,

1. Prayer against sin in every form and degree is a very fit mode of expressing our hatred of it. He who has no heart thus to pray, has no just sense either of his own weakness or blindness, or of the real nature of sin. He knows not how evil and bitter a thing it is to forsake the Lord.

2. Prayer against all sin is one of the best preservatives against every sin. Right prayer implies

some degree of godly fear ; and without that there is no piety. Prayer implies self-distrust ; and he who is full of self-confidence is all wrong. Right prayer shows that we know God ; and that he is able to help us. And how shall we better gain his aid than in humble, fervent prayer ?

3. He who does not watch and pray has not been born again, and has no evidence that he is a new creature. A hope of salvation, which is not shaken by sin or carelessness in sinning, is all a delusion. "A man can never leave a sin thoroughly, till he loathes it heartily." He who does not hate all sin does not really hate any sin.

4. So weak is man, so many and mighty are his enemies, that without new and vast supplies of grace the best would soon fall into the deepest guilt and misery. He who thinks it safe to lean on his own strength, and to dally with sin, is already half-ruined. The best men need the daily sprinkling of the blood of Christ, and daily supplies of grace to hold them up. For these let us pray.

5. He who truly prays that sin may not have dominion over him really desires to be set free from all sin. His wish is that Satan may gain no advantage over him ; that temptation may never succeed against him, and that no iniquity may be pleasant to his heart.

Such a prayer is fit for us all, for one sin leads to another. Actual sin powerfully tends to produce habits of sinning. One denial of Christ led Peter to two other denials of his Saviour. Then prevention is better than cure. This is true of diseases of the body. It is no less true of maladies of the soul. Besides, sin is only and terribly evil in its nature. Left to itself it works death and nothing else. It is the chief element of hell. It is the only thing that dishonours God, or makes men bold in rebelling against him.

“Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.” This form of prayer suits us all. He who truly hates any sin, really hates every sin. Deceit lies in generals. It is well to come down to particulars. If a man allowedly breaks any one commandment, he virtually breaks all the commandments. One spark of fire may blow up a magazine. One leak will sink any ship. One sin reigning in a man will damn his soul. We must hate all sin. Tears, terrors, vows, solemn professions of sorrow are no sure signs of a right state of heart. If these things be so, then it follows :

1. That all who prefer anything above God, are under the dominion of sin. They who choose wealth, fame, ease, strife, and pleasure, choose sin. It is their master. All pious men take the Lord to be their God. They desire the things which please him. Their hearts and wills go out strongly after that which is

good. The wicked are not so. God is not in all their thoughts. They do not love him. They love anything more than him. One goes to his farm, one to his trade, one to his cups, one to his schemes of ambition, and all with eagerness. They love these things. Their hearts are set on them. Custom, conscience, or respect for others may lead them to the house of God, or to some form of devotion. But their hearts are not in these things. Their God is the world. They love it. They prefer it. They serve it. They are under the dominion of some sin.

2. Those who are not led to holy living by the mercies of God are under the dominion of sin. Some living men are more thankful for a cup of cold water or a crust of bread than others are for an estate or a kingdom. Indeed, some men are not really thankful to God for anything. They love the gift but not the Giver. They pervert God's blessings to purposes of pride, luxury, covetousness, and hardness of heart. They do not really thank God for the gift of his Son ; for they reject his mercy and trample on his laws. It is simply the truth, that a man who does not love Jesus Christ is a bad man.

3. He who is not made better by the afflictions which God sends on him has sin for his master. Here is a man whose way God has hedged up. The

Lord has bereft him of loved ones, taken away his wealth, is threatening him with disease, or is trying him in some way. The right use of these trials is to humble him, withdraw him from the world, and break off his hot pursuit of earthly things. But they have no such effect. He is as proud, as hardened, as spiteful, as unbelieving, as averse to prayer, as ever he was. Surely he is under the dominion of sin.

4. To some the commands and prohibitions of God's law are irksome and grievous. Surely they are under the power of sin. Some think that they love the law of God because they do not grossly and outwardly break some of the commandments. They forget that the love of money is idolatry; that lewd desires are adultery; that hatred is murder; that borrowing without a fair prospect of repaying is theft. They never love the Lord their God with all their heart and mind and soul and strength. They never love their neighbours as themselves.

5. All who hate the humbling doctrines of the Gospel are under the power of sin. God's word says that man is blind, ignorant, guilty, polluted, naked, and helpless. It says we are justly condemned, both for original and actual sin. It says if any man is ever pardoned and saved it must be by favour which he does not deserve—by merits not his own, and in a

way that will give all the glory to God. When one's heart rebels against such truths, or carps at them, or dislikes them, then is he under the power of sin.

6. Nor can we safely think better of those who were once impressed with eternal things, but are now careless. They once began to flee from Sodom, but they turned back. They once put their hands to the plough, but now they look back. They have returned with the dog to his vomit, and with the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. Alas! how many partial and temporary reformations there are! How many good resolutions are made only to be broken! The road to hell is paved with them. Some men never keep a single promise they make to God. All such are under the dominion of sin.

CONCLUSION.

1. But if Christ be found in us the hope of glory; if we have taken him to be our Prophet, Priest, and King; if his name is to us as ointment poured forth; if he is precious to our souls; if we esteem his reproach greater riches than the treasures of earth; if we had rather suffer than sin; if we rest the whole weight of our salvation on his righteousness; if we delight in his ordinances; if we esteem all his precepts concerning all things to be right; if we count his ser-

vice a privilege ; if we faint for the longing we have for his grace and presence ; if we hate all iniquity, even the thought of foolishness ; if we strive to perfect holiness in the fear of God ; if we weep over our shortcomings ; if we greatly long to be made like Christ ; then we are Christ's servants and friends, and we shall be finally and for ever saved.

SERMON XXIX.

AVOID SIN IN EVERY FORM AND SHAPE.

Abstain from all appearance of evil.—1 THESS. v. 22.

THE word here translated *appearance* is in other places *shape*, Luke iii. 22 ; John v. 37 ; also *fashion*, Luke ix. 29 ; and *sight*, 2 Cor. v. 7. The meaning of the text is, that we should abstain from sin whenever it appears, in whatever shape it presents itself, whatever is the form or fashion it assumes. The bare sight of it should make us stand aloof.

To abstain from evil is to keep from it, to avoid it, and of course to hate it. We cannot sin safely, even ever so little. A man may and must eat, and

drink, and sleep. He should do these things in moderation. But there is no such thing as sinning in moderation. All wilful sin is lawlessness and intemperance.

WHY SHOULD WE ABSTAIN FROM ALL APPEARANCE OF EVIL? This is a grave question. It can be answered. There are good reasons for keeping far from evil.

1. Sin in every shape, form, and fashion is evil. It may be secret. It may be pleasant. It may be popular. It may be gainful. But none of these things change its nature. Sin is evil, only evil, and that continually. It is of the nature of fire to burn, and of poison to kill. So it is of the nature of sin to bring wrath and ruin. Left to work out its own fair and proper results, sin never did any good, but only evil.

2. Sin comes before us in so many ways, and tempts us by means so unexpected, that we must be constantly on the watch, lest we be led astray. Some form of sin is pleasing to every carnal heart. At times it comes before us in ways we never looked for. It was Job's wife that called on him to "curse God and die." It was Peter who said, "That be far from thee, Lord," and received the rebuke, "Get thee behind me, Satan : for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men," Matt. xvi. 23.

3. Sometimes one might innocently do a thing if he alone were concerned ; but because others who have weak consciences are present, or will know his practice, he cannot go on without sin. Even a good man may abuse his liberty, and walk uncharitably. In all this he may break no law but the law of love and pity to a weak brother, who is wrong in his views, but who is yet honest in his conscience. Paul was right when he said, "If eating meat cause my brother to offend, I will eat no meat while the world stands."

4. "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?" Prov. vi. 27, 28. So neither can a man in any way meddle with sin and not be hurt thereby. Men have gone into a burning fiery furnace, and have come out without having their hair singed, or the smell of fire to pass upon them. But no man ever lay down with a sin in his bosom, and arose without a stain on his soul. One cannot touch pitch without some defilement.

5. We should abstain from all appearance of evil, because sin is in its nature and in its effects so dreadful. It wrings from the soul every sigh sent up from earth or hell. It has dug every grave and built every prison and every tomb. It has filled earth and hell with woes and wailings. It makes war on God. If

it could, it would dethrone him. It casts off his bonds and cuts his cords asunder. It is the real cause of all disorder, violence, and confusion in the rational creation. It is easy for men to think too much of the evil of poverty or sickness; but no man thinks sin worse than it is.

6. If a man does not abstain from all appearance of evil, it clearly proves that he is in league with sin, and that his heart goes out after it. The sow proves her swinish nature by loving to wallow in the mire. There never was a wolf that did not love blood. It is the wicked that will do wickedly.

7. He who parleys with sin must have an unhappy life. There are some men who seem to be always sinning and repenting. Of course their repentance is not genuine, or they would cease to commit such folly. It is sad to see husband and wife pouting and quarrelling one hour, however loving they may be the next. It is just so with some men. Their conscience and their life are constantly at war. They have no settled peace. Their prospects are dark and gloomy.

8. Only they who abstain from all appearance of evil prove themselves to be real Christians. Joseph could have kept out of Pharaoh's dungeon, but he had a conscience. Jeremiah might have been a favour-

ite with the people, but his conscience forced him to tell the truth. Jesus Christ might have been a temporal prince. Indeed, the people wished to make him a king. But when he said his kingdom was not of this world, they put him to death. Religious principle is worth nothing except when it is unbending. Then it is worth more than all gems and all riches. When a man fairly proves himself to be a Christian, he has established his title to the kingdom of God.

9. By abstaining from all appearance of evil one promotes his own sanctification, proves himself blameless, and secures the help of God in every trial. The verses next after the text say this. "Abstain from all appearance of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." These are great things. To be made pure, upright, and blameless, and have the aid of God in all our spiritual warfare, is a great matter indeed.

These views are sound. It is a matter of history that when miracles ceased, nothing had such power over the world as the holy lives of Christians. Men asked what is this new doctrine that makes good men out of bad men? How comes it that the peasant,

the female, and even the child do and suffer even beyond famous heroes? This is a prodigious power. Nor could anything better prove the Bible to be from God, than the fact that it leads the soul to God. Andrew Fuller tells us of two great infidels, who were scholars and had fine minds. They used to talk much against the Christian religion in the presence of a plain, pious man. After a while one of the infidels was converted. He was then concerned lest he should have shaken the faith of his unlearned countryman. He said, "Did not our conversation make you doubt the truth of religion?" "By no means," said the plain man; "it never made the least impression upon me." "How is that?" said the other. "The answer was, 'I knew your manner of living. I knew that to maintain such a course of conduct, you found it *necessary* to renounce Christianity.'" A wicked life often makes a man a heretic or an infidel.

It is not strange that these things are so. Pride and humility cannot live and reign in the same bosom. Selfishness and benevolence are never striking features of the same character. Ambition is utterly opposed to contentment; and contentment is no less opposed to ambition. If passion reigns, meekness must be shut out. If meekness prevails, passion must be subdued. God has made a great variety of creatures;

but he has never made one that had the nature both of the lion and the lamb. Saints and sinners are different. The less the righteous are like the wicked, and the more they are like Christ, the more do they glorify God. Holiness is as excellent as it is necessary. Unspotted holiness is the law of heaven, and the secret of the bliss of paradise.

It is not necessary that men should be outrageously wicked in order to bring ruin on themselves. There is a smooth as well as a rough way to hell. Men often perish amidst the decencies of life. I have just read of one who began life very poor. He had neither friends, nor influence, nor money. But he resolved to make his mark. He worked hard. He saved all he could. He owed no man anything. He was strictly upright. He stood high in public esteem. He freely gave to the poor and to good institutions. At fifty years of age he was the richest man in his State. Men thought him happy. Fools thought him safe. Sickness came. He was ill. Physicians could do nothing. Their medicines were powerless. A friend candidly told him that he could not live a day. Filled with dismay, he said, "It cannot be; I shall be up to-morrow." But he grew weaker. Seconds, minutes, and hours flew rapidly. Before the sun set his hour came. Turning to the wall in agony, he

cried, "*My life has been a failure.*" And then his spirit returned to God who gave it. Yet he was decent, moral, honoured, and trusted. But he thought the rule of the text too strict. He hated not all sin.

One who lived not far from him took Christ for her Saviour, and his life for her pattern. She abhorred that which is evil. She loved holiness. The sorrows of widowhood came down upon her. She looked to God and taught her fatherless children to do so too. Earthly treasures she had few or none. Her hope was on high. Tried as she was, nothing seemed to afflict her so much as sin. Her faith failed not. She considered it much worse to do wrong than to suffer wrong. At length her hour came. She was calm. She spoke sweetly of Jesus and the resurrection, and breathed out her soul into the hands of God. Then no one thought that she had loved God too much, or served him too ardently, or walked too strictly. All felt that she had made sure of the one thing needful.

SERMON XXX.

DARK SIGNS IN A RELIGIOUS
PROFESSION.

What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?—1 SAM. xv. 14.

SAUL had been sent against the Amalekites, to punish that people for their sins. He was ordered to spare nothing, neither an ox, nor a sheep, nor a camel, nor an ass. He made haste to obey. With an army of two hundred and ten thousand men he invaded their country. He was fully successful. But he spared the wicked king and the best of the sheep, of the oxen, of the fatlings, of the lambs, and all that was good. He just destroyed the refuse and the vile. Of course God knew this error, and sent Samuel to him. As the prophet approached, Saul said, "Blessed be thou of the Lord. I have performed the commandment of the Lord." And Samuel said, "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" Like other hypocrites, Saul could put in some sort of a plea. He said he had

found the sheep and oxen very fine, and thought he would save some of them to sacrifice to the Lord. But Samuel said, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king."

Thus we see that one may make solemn professions of obedience to God, and may in some things obey him, while he is setting at nought his clear commands. Saul was not the last who did such a thing. Some dark sign hangs over many a religious profession. It is not idle to ask,

I. HOW DOES IT COME TO PASS THAT MEN CAN LIVE IN SIN, AND YET TALK SMOOTHLY AND PROMISE FAIRLY? Why was not Saul convicted by the very sight of the sheep and oxen? How could David avoid seeing his sin even before Nathan came to him? How can sin rest on the conscience and men not see it? This is a fair question. It can be answered.

1. One reason why many are so quiet in sin is because they know not God's law, at least they do not think of it as they should. They forget the commandment, and so condemn not themselves. But few men have a constant sense of the truth that God's eye is upon them, and that his law binds them by day

and by night, at home and abroad. They are not in the fear of the Lord all the day long. Their minds are not turned to the Most High. They think, speak, and act carelessly, because "God is not in all their thoughts." "He that hath slight thoughts of sin, never had great thoughts of God." A just sense of God's presence and of the binding force of his law would put it out of our power to sin, in the careless manner so common now-a-days. Many seem to look on God's law as mere advice, which they can take or not, just as they please; whereas it is an unbending rule. If in any matter God reveals his will, we are as truly bound in the smallest as in the greatest matters. He has not put us to make or to amend his laws. We are not judges, but servants. Our simple duty is to obey. Many choose how far they will keep the commandments. Like Saul, they kill the refuse and the vile, but they save that which seems to them good.

2. Some live quietly in sin because they see others going on in a course of guilt. Saul was a king and had full command of the army; yet he laid his sins in part on others. He says, "I feared the people, and obeyed their voice." The countenance which one sinner gives another has great power. Many a man has no safer rule than this, "It is the fashion, it is the custom." But if all men forsake their duty, that

will not excuse us. Bad company is no doubt a great source of temptation. But it cannot make wrong right. The presence of Samuel made Saul talk very piously. His mouth was full of good words. The absence of Samuel and the presence of wicked men made him careless about sinning.

3. Others are kept quiet in sin by a vain hope or a vague intention of future repentance. Wise men never buy or sell lands, take journeys, or do anything in the hope and with the purpose of being sorry for it. But thousands of men would be wretched if they thought the time would never come when they would weep for what they are now doing. Perhaps they think they will be able to repent at any moment. But repentance is a gift of God. And they know not how very hard their hearts now are. Saul said, "I have sinned," but he never truly repented.

4. Some are stupid in their sins, because they think it will be easy to obtain pardon by-and-by. This is tempting God. It is relying on the Divine mercy when there is no warrant for it. God says expressly, If any man "hear the words of this curse and bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst, the Lord will not spare him; but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall

smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him," Deut. xxix. 19, 20. God is indeed a God of mercy; but he is no less a God of justice. "God is not mocked." He will not allow himself to be trifled with. Though God is merciful, despisers wonder and perish.

5. So vile is the heart of man, that it perverts all the mercies of God to support a false quiet. Long life, firm health, and much prosperity are abused to the worst ends. Men say, "We shall never be moved. To-morrow shall be as this day, and more abundant." Often nothing can shake this blind confidence until it is too late. The man who will not cry for mercy when all is going on well, will not plead in faith for grace in the day of distress.

II. IT IS THEREFORE KIND IN GOD TO HOLD US BACK FROM REBELLING AGAINST HIM. Some restraints are common to good and bad men, and some are peculiar to good men. God is able to put his hand on the heart of any of his creatures. Even Satan can go no farther than God permits. If God put no restraints on bad men, they would be much worse than they are. If he did not hold back good men, they would go astray all the time. David was very glad when God held him back from shedding the blood of Nabal, 1 Sam. xxv. 32, 33. God sometimes restrains

us by the counsel of others. Sometimes he gives great power to the conscience, and makes her a terror to evil-doing. The sting of death is sin. Some have such sorrow and anguish for past sins, that they dare not repeat them. Then the law comes with great power and stands with a drawn sword, as the angel did in the path of the mad prophet.

Sometimes God withholds the means of acting out the evil that is in us. Some would be proud and luxurious ; in mercy God keeps them poor. Some would be drunken ; but God, by disease, takes away the love of strong drink. Men would be slothful ; but God compels them to exert themselves. Men are bent on one thing, and God gives them a call in another direction. Saul was just ready to pounce upon David, and here comes the news that he must hasten away against the Philistines.

In other ways also God restrains his *people*. He puts a godly fear within them. He leads them to hate sin. He subdues their iniquities under them. He stirs them up to fervent prayer. The Holy Spirit is a Sanctifier as well as a Comforter. So that no renewed man makes a trade of sin. He hates vain thoughts. He delights in the law of God after the inner man. When tempted, he says, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

REMARKS.

1. All high conceits of our own strength or holiness are vain and false. They have no truth for their basis. They are wicked, because they deny the truth of God. Better men than any of us claim to be, when left to themselves, have gone quite out of the way. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." In other things he may be wise, but in this he is a fool. "When pride cometh, then cometh shame."

2. Let every man look into his own state, search his life and speech and heart, and see if there be no dark sign. Saul said he had performed the commandment of the Lord; but the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen all around showed his guilt. "He is no true believer to whom sin is not the greatest burden, sorrow, and trouble." Do you love Christ? Does your life prove it? Is your speech sound, seasoned with grace? Are you just? Are you kind? Why are you not a better Christian?

3. "As far as men are under the power of sin, they are under the power of madness." You have a great work to do, and but little time to do it in. "The guilt of one sin is a greater misery than the burden of a thousand crosses." What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, and call upon God.

SERMON XXXI.

SECRET SINS.

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.—PSAL. cxxxix. 23, 24.

THE true Christian may plainly be known from all others by three things :

1. He does really rejoice in all the attributes of God. He adores his justice, he loves his mercy, he confides in his power, he bows to his wisdom, he is glad that he knows all things. No man with a wicked heart could really ask God to search him through and through.

2. Every real child of God is anxious to know the worst of his case. He is candid with himself. He greatly desires that his aims, his heart, and his motives should be right. He abhors deceit in any, most of all in himself. He fears the treachery of his own heart.

3. The true Christian hates *all* sin, wars against it, loathes it, and never will be satisfied till he is rid

of it. He would not follow *any wicked way*. He would do nothing contrary to the law of God.

No sin is hidden from the Almighty. "The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings," Prov. v. 21. "The darkness and the light are both alike to him." No sin is secret in the sense of being hidden from God. He knows a *wicked way in us*, as well as our overt acts. A sin is said to be secret when it is not known to our neighbour or to ourselves. The ordinary motive for hiding our faults from men is the fear of losing their esteem. The motive for hiding our sins from our own eyes is, that we dread a sense of guilt. It is sad indeed that we often put light for darkness, and bitter for sweet, and call evil good in matters that pass in our own bosoms. A tumour which tends inwardly is more dangerous than one on the surface. So sin, reigning in the heart, may and will as surely work death as if it led to the greatest excesses. When men in their hearts love what they dare not speak, and desire what they would not openly avow, they forget that as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.

No man keeps too close an eye on himself, nor too earnestly asks God to search and know him. What God regards as most important is so indeed. "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward part," Psal. li.

6. All appearances which do not express the truth are hateful to God. If open sin is rebellion, secret sin is treason. The one is the plague with the spot on the forehead. The other is the plague preying on the vitals.

Another great danger of secret sins is that we are most deceived by them. So long as men accuse us not we are apt to think well of ourselves. But when they know our conduct is bad they think our hearts must be bad too. To kill a man outright would in the eyes of most be a great crime. Yet many bear grudges and carry old hatred for years, and never suspect that they are murderers. The study of many is simply to avoid exposure. They think stolen waters are sweet; but, like the ancient Spartans, they are afraid of being caught. Sins that work in secret do their work most effectually. Lust, when it is conceived, brings forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death. It is the nature of secret sins to work their way outward, just as it is the nature of seeds first to sprout in darkness, and then to seek the light and air. For awhile no one may suspect us of our worst faults; but they will either come to light here or meet us in the judgment. David tried it, and for awhile all seemed smooth and fair. At length the prophet of God said, "Thou art the man," and his

shame stood revealed before Israel and in the light of the sun.

Sin and holiness are utterly opposite in their nature. Light and darkness are not more contrary to each other. It must be that he who is born again hates iniquity and loves righteousness. Indeed, nothing more marks the child of God than this. He greatly desires to be made holy. He knows that none but the pure in heart shall see God. He knows the plague to be in the heart. Every true Christian is to no small extent busy with his own case: "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." It may often happen that for a season a heartless professor makes a better show than a converted man. The reason is, the former is all the time white-washing the sepulchre, while the latter is intent on putting all right within. He is right. An enemy within is worse than an enemy without. A thief living in a house has many advantages for carrying on his trade.

This is not all. The very worst sins are those of the heart. The great parent of all sin is unbelief. Connected with it are pride, vanity, hatred, malice, a hard heart, a blind mind, a false peace, vile affections, and polluted thoughts. Christ well said, "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications,

murders, thefts, covetousness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride ; all these evil things come from within, and defile the man," Mark vii. 21—23. Man is full of wickedness till God's grace gives him a heart to love holiness. When a man often deceives himself, it is not strange that he should sometimes deceive others. When the Israelites entered Canaan they did not root out all the heathen of the land, but even made a covenant with some, and so were plagued and tempted by them. So when a man is born again he is not all at once made perfectly holy. Sin lurks in his heart. He is often ensnared. He makes narrow escapes ; and, like David, fears that he will one day perish by the hand of his enemy. If led astray, he abhors himself and repents in dust and ashes. Yet he perhaps doubts whether he hates sin at all. And so he looks to God for help in this conflict. He asks God to search him and try him, and cast out all his sins, and lead him in a way that is good.

If a man loves such thoughts, and books, and preaching as send him groaning and weeping to his closet over all his known sins, then God is leading him in the way everlasting. No man ever lost his soul who lived and died fighting against sin. His prayers shall be heard, for he does not regard iniquity in his heart. He has the priceless jewel of godly sincerity.

He is a better man than most men think. He is a far better man than he dare think himself to be. To burn up his dross he may often be cast into the furnace, but his gold will be purified thereby. God is a witness of his real desires, and will send him succour in the day of battle ; yea, he will show him mercy in the day of judgment. Let him therefore take fast hold of the covenant, and look to Jesus, and never rest till he has slain his last foe.

This advice is necessary. In such a man sin is by infirmity, not by the love of iniquity. This proves that he is a Christian. But sins of infirmity are sins to be repented of, and warred against with constancy. Secret sins—heart sins—are the worst enemies of God, and also of our own souls. The old Romans said of a certain enemy, “ Whether he is a captive or a captor he is alike dangerous.” So they slew him. We must spare no sin, but follow it up till it is dead.

That we may deal aright with our secret sins let us—

1. Think much of the all-seeing purity of God. His holiness is a flaming fire. In his sight the heavens are not clean. The darkness hideth not from him.

2. Let us often compare our acts, and words, and hearts with the perfect law of God. It is exceeding broad. The commandments are spiritual. If you have

wrong views of the law you cannot have right views of sin, and so you may lose your soul.

3. Hide no sin from your own eyes, and refuse not to confess it before God. He that confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall find mercy.

4. Be careful not to subject your principles to needless trial. Daily cry, "Lead me not into temptation." Yet if tempted, resist the devil. Some one says, "We cannot hinder the birds from flying over our heads, but we must not let them light and build nests in our hair."

5. Set a double guard against those sins to which you are very liable. Are you easily made angry? Then avoid men who are apt to provoke you. Are you inclined to undue sadness? Then study the promises and seek the society of cheerful Christians. Are you fond of high living? Rather shun than seek convivial gatherings, and for conscience' sake provide frugal meals. A Jew was forbidden by law to eat leavened bread during the Passover. Lest he should be tempted to eat it, he was not allowed to have it in the house. Yea, more, lest he should be tempted to make it, he was forbidden to have any leaven in his house.

6. Remember that there is no danger of your hating sin too much, or of your being too watchful against it. If you are inclined to be selfish, find

out some way of mortifying so base a feeling. Are your children your idols? Remember they may be cut down in a moment.

7. Cease to hew out broken cisterns which can hold no water. Cease to rely on human wisdom, power, or goodness. Cast your care on him who careth for you. Often commit your soul to Christ.

8. When you have done your best, remember that you may be mistaken. Earnestly offer the prayer, "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 EVER-LASTING."

SERMON XXXII.

WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH OUR
BURDENS?

Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee.—
PSAL. lv. 22.

EVERY one has his own burdens. Some are very heavy. Even strong men bow down under them. They are too grievous to be borne by mere human strength.

Trials have broken the heart of many a man. They have carried him to his grave in sorrow. He felt as if a mountain was pressing him down. In his sadness he gave up the ghost. Let us look at some of these burdens.

I. *Some are burdened with poor health.* This casts a sadness over all their lives. In some cases men know not what ails them. Perhaps their nervous system is all deranged. From some people such get no sympathy. Perhaps they are so distressed and so ashamed of their own weakness that they hardly ask others to pity them. Shattered nerves cause as much pain as men can well endure. Indeed, they bring on many of the worst kinds of disease. They often end in insanity. Some who thus suffer have their eyes held waking much of every night. The ticking of a clock or watch, or the chirping of a cricket, startles them. Sometimes even a pleasing event, as the unexpected coming of a loved one, quite upsets them. Then others are born with feeble constitutions. It looks to them as if they were appointed to an early death. And many know that they must die soon. You will hear all these saying that they would give all they have for good health. Wearisome days and nights of vanity are theirs. At night they wish it was morning ; in the morning they wish it was night. Their bed does not comfort them. The sun does not cheer them. To them nature is

never gay. Like the man with a ball and chain to his leg, they drag themselves along.

II. *Others have a burden of worldly care.* They are in constant straits. They are poor and perplexed. Their wants are beyond their means. They are not lazy, but they are not thrifty. Their crops fail, or their plans of relief do not succeed. They rise early. They sit up late. Still they eat the bread of sorrow. Sometimes through a rash act, and often by some act of God, they find themselves in debt. There are millions who have no shares in the stocks, no skill in trade, no means of doing better. "The poverty of the poor is his destruction." "Where no oxen are, the crib is clean." Oxen eat a great deal of corn, but they make more. Yet many a man has no oxen, no land, no crib. Perhaps he falls into the hands of cruel creditors. There are still in the world men who pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek; yes, they will sell the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes, Amos ii. 6. The number of kind and merciful creditors is not large. When men are very poor their trials are very great. There is danger that they will take some wrong step and do something contrary to honour, or lose all heart and cease to make right efforts to help themselves. In not a few cases such die for want of comforts.

III. *Others are heavily burdened with the state of*

the world and of the Church. Rivers of waters run down their eyes because men keep not God's law. Their constant cry is, Oh that the wickedness of the wicked were come to an end. Perhaps tumult and strife fill the land. In that state the tender, weeping prophet cried, "I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is spoiled. How long shall I see the standard, and hear the sound of the trumpet? My people are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge," Jer. iv. 19—22. It is sad when by any judgment God makes the fruitful place a wilderness; when he permits the wicked to riot and the cruel to rule; when the mean are allowed to govern the honourable; when base men glitter in gold, and good men are clothed in rags. That state of wicked conduct which brings down God's curse is no less afflicting to a pious man. In every age there are godly souls who wish that their heads were waters, and their eyes a fountain of tears, that they might weep day and night over the pride, profanity, and general ungodliness of their times.

This is still more true if those who by their sins are insulting God are our friends or kindred. Wicked husbands are breaking the hearts of many good

women. Wicked children are planting daggers in the heart of parental love. Oh, such burdens as these! The pure and honourable often weep over children who are drunken, or have been justly put in prison, or justly put to death.

IV. *Others carry a heavy burden of grief for their own religious state.* They are in darkness. They have little or no light. They are much cast down. Their spirits are sore vexed. They look for comfort, but they find it not. They had hoped ere this to be set free from all their worst sins. They do hate sin in every shape. It is a loathing to them. They watch and pray against it. But when they least expect it, vile thoughts or evil tempers gain an advantage over them. They have a strong sense of the evil of sin, and many fears that it will prevail against them. They love God's law, but find themselves poorly conformed to it. They love God, but he seems to hide his face from them. They long for communion with him, but he seems like a wayfaring man, that turns aside but for a night. When they would do good evil is present with them. Sometimes day and night God's hand is heavy upon them; their moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Out of the depths they cry unto the Lord. Their heart within them is desolate. They think of other days, but are not com-

forted. They seek for light and hope, but gloom and clouds still settle over them. They are often at their wits' end. They fear they will come short at last; and the very thought pierces them with grief. They cannot go to the world for joy, for they have found it a liar. They cannot yield their hearts up to stony hardness, for they are really alive unto God. What is best to do they know not. At all events they have decided to suffer on till they can see some way clear before them. Their hearts are fixed in this, that if God will help them, they will never cease to war against sin till they have conquered it.

Other persons have other burdens. Some of them are peculiar, and very great. Many a man thinks there is no sorrow like unto his sorrow. But time would fail us to describe in full every case. What, then, shall we do with our burdens? The text says,

Cast them upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee.
You cannot carry them alone. Roll them over on the arm of God. This is to be done by faith—faith in God's word—faith in God's Son. Faith in the Lord Jesus is the only sovereign cure of heart troubles. By faith in the Lord Jesus all the guilt of sin is taken away, its sting removed, and its power destroyed. This faith must be exercised in prayer. Call upon the Lord in the day of trouble, and he will deliver you, and you shall glorify

him. Millions of times have the poor and needy cried for help, and they have gotten all they asked.

One of our great practical errors is, that when our burdens do not seem to be very heavy we try to carry them ourselves. John Newton tells of one who seemed to do right when a great affliction came upon him, but lost his temper when a careless servant broke a piece of crockery. I have seen one who seemed to have a sweet temper when God took away a dear child, but spoke unadvisedly when his merchant charged too much for a quire of paper. Cast *all* your burdens on the Lord. Any one of them will be too much for you if God leaves you to yourself. Your strength is weakness. You cannot sustain yourself. You have no might to do good. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint," Isa. xl. 30, 31.

The text says he *shall sustain thee*. It does not say he shall take away the burden; but he shall sustain his people in all their trials. So God's people have found it in every age. David says, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." Micah says, "When I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light

unto me." Jesus says, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." "Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered."

Augustine once said, "God had one Son on earth without sin, but never one without affliction." Case said, "God may cast down, but he will never cast off true believers." Dyer said, "Afflictions are blessings to us when we can bless God for afflictions." Bunyan said, "In times of affliction we commonly meet with the sweetest experiences of the love of God." Manton said, "If we have the kingdom of God at last it is no great matter what we suffer by the way." And Philip Henry said, "That is always best for us which is best for our souls." Glory be to God in the highest.

SERMON XXXIII.

THE DUTIES OF HUSBANDS AND WIVES.

Marriage is honourable in all.—HEB. xiii. 4.

WHEN for his sins God drove man out of paradise, he allowed him to take with him two institutions, the

Sabbath and marriage. No man can tell which of these is the greater blessing to the world. Since time began God has put honour on marriage. It is generally agreed that both men and women are bad in proportion as they are unfit to be good husbands or good wives.

Marriage is both a civil and a sacred institution. Every state that is wisely governed has good laws respecting marriage. But we are now to think of it as it is regulated by God's word. There we learn that marriage is a solemn and perpetual covenant between one man and one woman to live together in the most endearing state. It is a solemn covenant. Nor is it a bargain for a day, but for life. Nothing but death or some great crime can dissolve it. Nor is either man or woman at liberty to marry another while the first is still living. This relation is before all others. A man is to forsake father and mother and cleave to his wife. Of course the wife is to forsake her family and cleave to her husband. God says they are one flesh. The law of the land says the same thing.

None but bad men ever speak or write against marriage. The text says, It "is honourable in all." The meaning is, it is honourable in all persons of suitable age and condition. Some would forbid ministers of the Gospel to marry. But the Bible

says, "A bishop must be the husband of one wife," 1 Tim. iii. 2, thus teaching that it is lawful for ministers to marry. The text says, "Marriage is honourable in ALL."

Marriage is a great blessing to the husband. It secures him sympathy. God himself says, "It is not good that *man* should be alone; I will make *him* a help meet for *him*," Gen. ii. 18. Then the woman needs a strong arm to lean on. She is too feeble to bear comfortably the burdens of life alone. When marriage is properly regarded and managed it is a great blessing to the Church. It secures a good, religious education to children. It is also a blessing to the State. It prevents much crime. It promotes thrift and good order. Seeing these things are so,

WHAT ARE THE DUTIES OF HUSBANDS AND WIVES? This is a great question. It should be well considered.

1. Husbands and wives ought to love each other. This love ought to be sincere, tender, strong, and constant. It must have its root in solid esteem. There is nothing that can take the place of love. On this point the Scriptures are clear and plain: "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them; husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; so ought men to love their wives as their own bodies," Col. iii. 19;

Eph. v. 25, 28. If a man fails here, he cannot possibly live joyfully with his wife all the days of the life of his vanity. Paul exhorts Titus so to teach and train the Church that the aged women may teach the younger women to "love their husbands, and to love their children," Titus ii. 4. Whatever, therefore, diminishes the love of husbands to their wives, or the love of wives to their husbands, is wrong, and should be put away. He who would wean the heart of husband or wife from each other is an enemy to both.

2. Husbands and wives owe to each other honour in their respective stations. No churl can be a good husband, and no shrew can be a good wife, 1 Sam. xxv. 17; Prov. xxi. 19; xxv. 24. When honour ceases, love and peace depart. Both are commanded to give honour to each other.

3. Husbands and wives should endeavour in all lawful ways to please each other. Paul mentions as a mark of a good husband and a good wife, that they try to please each other, 1 Cór. vii. 33, 34. If they do not try to serve and please each other they must be unhappy indeed.

4. So they should try to carry each other's burdens. The cares of life are very crushing. They have been too heavy for many a strong spirit. If a

husband cannot get help from his wife, or a wife from her husband, who shall care for either of them?

5. Husbands and wives should tenderly sympathize with each other, and plead for each other, 1 Sam. i. 8; xxv. 18—28. It is noble for a husband or wife to cling to that one who has been chosen as the dearest of earthly friends.

6. Again, husbands and wives must be faithful to each other. They have promised to be so. It is vile to break their vows. When a man prefers the society of another to that of his wife he is already half ruined. When a woman prefers the company of another to that of her husband she is on the road to infamy.

The husband, as the stronger, owes to his wife protection in her person, reputation, health, and comfort. He is not a good husband who leaves his wife to buffet the billows of sorrow alone. The wife, as the weaker vessel, owes to her husband respect and obedience. She does not owe the obedience of a servant, nor even of a child, but of a friend and companion. The Bible is clear: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife," Eph. v. 22, 23. "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord," Col. iii. 18. Yet

a good husband will love rather to suggest than to command. Husbands have no right to be tyrants. Nothing is more cruel than for a husband to use his power to make the life of his wife unhappy.

There are in the world good and bad husbands, and good and bad wives. Let us look at the character of

A BAD HUSBAND.

Some think him a fine fellow, but his wife knows him to be mean and suspicious. He lords it over her. He loves to make her feel his power. He thinks his own fireside dull, and goes elsewhere for pleasure. Outwardly all is smooth to strangers, but to his wife he is greatly lacking in tenderness. With an air of graciousness he is still rough to her. He does not love her society above that of others. He wishes her to toil and labour for the family, but he freely indulges himself. He tells his wife nothing about his affairs, and is such a son of Belial that she is afraid to speak to him. He bears no part of domestic cares. He neither weeps nor rejoices with her. He seems blind to his own faults, but has a keen eye for those of his wife. Sometimes he comes home grum, and sometimes in a rage. If his wife helps the poor, he is not pleased. When she would do good, he has no

heart to help her. If she wishes to go to the house of God, perhaps he wishes her to stay and provide him a feast. When she is timid and nervous, he laughs at her fears and makes a jest of her sorrows. If she is really sick, he says nothing tender, and perhaps says there is nothing the matter with her. If she dies before him, perhaps a regard to public opinion makes him appear to mourn. But in his heart he is really not sorry, except as he has lost one who might minister to his pleasure. Let us now look at the character of

A BAD WIFE.

She is fair and has honeyed words, but it is not safe to trust in her. She looks on her husband as very useful to her as long as he lets her live in ease and in luxury. She is lazy, and sleeps late when her duties require her to rise early. She spends money, but she never makes any, nor saves what her husband makes. She may give something to the poor to get rid of them, but she is never truly kind to them. She has many excuses for the discomforts of home, but they still remain. Her husband is known by his careworn look. He seldom ventures to ask a friend to his house. Or, if he does, he is sure to be mortified. When she talks, she talks foolishly. If she

has children, they are neglected, or ignorant, or rude. Nobody is really the better for her being in the neighbourhood. When her husband is sick, she shows no tact in nursing him or providing for him comforts. When she dies, not many are really sad. If she is left a widow with children, the whole family is likely to become a public charge. She knows not how to pray; she is not a widow that trusts in God. She has no resources in herself, and she has no help from on high.

Very few husbands or wives have all these bad qualities, but some have many of them. One or two of them may make the married life very wretched.

But there are good husbands and good wives, and not a few of them. They fear God. They study his law. They keep his commandments. They look to Jesus. They love prayer. They love the house of God. They love one another. They honestly do their duty. They are happy in each other. They delight in serving each other. If they have good health, they give their strength to God. If one is sick, the other watches and mourns. Each wishes the other to enjoy as much as possible. If they have children, they are a joint care. In company, they are not unkind to each other, but in private they are full of tenderness. When one dies, the other mourns sore like the dove,

and feels that a lasting wound is made. If they have lived together long, the death of one is often soon followed by the death of the other. Surviving relatives cherish their memories, rise up, and call them blessed. They may have been poor, but they have left a rich legacy to their heirs. Such a union as long subsisted between them was blest indeed. **MARRIAGE IS HONOURABLE IN ALL.**

SERMON XXXIV.

EARLY PIETY.

I love them that love me : and those that seek me early shall find me.—PROV. viii. 17.

THE words of the text are the words of Jesus Christ. He is our best friend. He will be our final judge. He makes no mistakes. He gives no bad advice. His words are words of love and truth. By his very kindness we shall all be won to him. “I love them that love me : and those that seek me early shall find me.” He thus commends early piety, and enjoins it upon us. This is most reasonable.

1. Men have souls and minds capable of being very good or very bad, of enjoying much and suffering much. In youth the affections are warm, hopes are high, fears are strong, the memory is easily impressed, bad habits are few, and prejudices are feeble. Is it not important that a right direction be given early in life to man's whole nature, and that it be not set on fire of hell? Let the hopes be fixed on God. Let the fears be salutary. Let the memory be stored with useful and Divine knowledge. Let the habits of the entire man be chaste, holy, and regular; not wild, vicious, and damning. All this can be secured in no way but by living, hearty piety.

2. Early piety will have a good effect in directing us to a right calling in life, and to a choice of suitable companions and associates. "What man is he that feareth the Lord? him shall He teach in the way that he shall choose," Prov. xxv. 12. And in the chapter where the text is found, Jesus says, "Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength." One wrong step in early life may plant a thorn in your pillow which will pierce you even to a dying hour. Now, "if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth liberally and upbraideth not," Jas. i. 5.

3. Early piety alone can surely protect us from

dashing on those rocks where so many have made shipwreck, both for this world and the next. Here is a youth, raw, hasty, imprudent, full of hope, with a deceitful heart within him and a treacherous world around him. Who but God can save him from courses which must ruin him? Many plunge not only themselves but their parents into the deepest anguish by the crimes of their youth. Many a father has, like David, wept over the untimely death of a wicked son, and said, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" 2 Sam. xviii. 33. Nothing but early piety can surely save us from such an end.

4. If we do not become pious in youth it is very uncertain whether we ever shall become so at all. Even of those who live to old age not many become pious after they cease to be young. It seems to be God's plan that men should glorify him here as well as enjoy him hereafter. When men grow old their hearts become harder, their wills more stubborn, and their sound conversion less probable. But this is not all. A very large number of the human race die before the period of youth has passed. This is as true of the polite as of the rude. Your memory or your graveyard will tell you how many die while yet in tender youth. It is not very long since a young man

died, saying, "Oh, that I had never been brought out of the womb; oh, that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen me; oh, that I had been carried from the womb to the grave. God hath set me as a mark—he hath bent his bow—he hath made ready his arrows. Oh, hell, if thou canst cover me, take me." Very different is it with the soul that has fled to Jesus. Christ is with his dying people, and "death is a servant sent to take God's children home from school to their Father's house above."

5. Should you live through youth, and pass on to the cares, hopes, toils, and sorrows of middle age without a new heart, the same evil may come upon you as upon those who are younger, but your guilt and misery will be much greater. How can any one bear the heavy burdens of middle life without the grace of God?

Or, should you weather all the storms of youth and middle age, and arrive at gray hairs with a fair name among men, still early piety is important. If every man was sure that he would live to be seventy years old, and have a sound mind at that age, it is still right and wise early to embrace Christ. For on the aged come trials and infirmities which make them need all the help they can get. The light is sweet, and the young see beauty almost everywhere. When

David proposed to Barzillai to go up with him to Jerusalem, that man said, "I am this day fourscore years old : and can I discern between good and evil ? Can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink ? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women ? Wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden to my Lord the king ? Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and of my mother," 2 Sam. xix. 35—37. The senses of the very aged are blunted. Their vision is lost, or is dim. Their hearing is dull, or confused. Their strength is gone. Their step is unsteady. Their heads and hands begin to tremble. Their digestion is imperfect. Like Barzillai, they stay at home and hug the chimney corner. Fears are in their way. The almond-tree flourishes. Gray hairs are on their heads. Old and tried friends are gone, and they cease to form plans. Even desire fails. Nothing but hearty piety can sustain one at such an age. But the grace of God is sufficient to do it. In his old age, David said, "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth, and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works ; now also when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not," Psal. xvii. 18. Thanks be to God, he will not forsake his aged servants. He is with them to the last. He girds them with might.

But if one comes to old age with all its infirmities and has not the grace of God in him, how sad his condition, how cheerless his prospects. Can anything be more dismal than the end of an old man who has lived three or four score years in a Gospel land and has not made peace with God?

“Behold, the aged sinner goes,
Laden with guilt and heavy woes,
Down to the regions of the dead,
With endless curses on his head!”

He goes to his *long home*. The dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns unto God who gave it.

Let us turn away from this sad view, and suppose that it is the aged believer who has died. He is gathered as a shock of corn fully ripe. He rests from his labours, his works follow him. Before he leaves the world, he says, “Thou art my hope, O Lord God: thou art my trust from my youth. Thou art my strong refuge. I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only. Thou, which hast showed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth,” Psal. lxxi. 5, 16, 20. “Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me into glory. My flesh and

my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever," Psal. lxxiii. 24, 25.

In middle life, too, the believer may die, but he finds God's grace sufficient for him. Even the tender, loving mother has often kissed her babe, committed it to God, bade farewell to earth, and died in triumph.

And even the young believer, as yet but a babe in Christ, is not forsaken in his last hours. Of this something has before been said, but let us not forget the words of the text, "I love them that love me: and those that seek me early shall find me." What more can any one need?

CONCLUSION.

Are you young? Be not wise in your own conceit. Count not surely on a long life. Let not the thoughts of an early death dishearten you. Play the man. Be firm. Be true to yourself, to your friends, and to God. Aim at the best things. Live unto him who has bought you with his blood. Set a noble example of devotion to Christ. Live by faith on the Son of God. Let your prayers be frequent and fervent. Be not over-anxious about anything earthly. Lay up your treasure in heaven. Walk as Jesus walked, and leave all results with God.

Are you in middle life? Is the burden of cares

heavy? Cast it upon the Lord. Be of good courage. Trust in the Lord, and do good. Be not faithless, but believing. Expect the fulfilment of every promise according to its real tenor. Be not shaken at the stern realities of life. Rise above low and carnal views of things. Stand in your lot. Do your duty unflinchingly. Glorify Christ in your body and in your spirit which are his.

Are you aged? Give yourself much to devotion. Remember Zion, and pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Set an example of sweet submission to the will of God. Be not moved from your steadfastness. Honour Christ in your soul, body, and spirit, both living and dying. Be not gloomy, nor fretful, but charitable and contented. Let a grateful and cheerful spirit, with wise and kindly counsels, make your presence welcome and helpful to those around you. The nearer you draw to heaven, the more let its light and peace shine in your face, cheer your heart, and make your life a blessing to others.

SERMON XXXV.

LET SOMETHING BE SETTLED.

Choose you this day whom ye will serve.—JOSH. xxiv. 15.

ALL men serve something. Some worship idols of wood and stone, of silver and gold. Some serve sin and Satan by lying, stealing, robbing, and cheating. Some are given over to pride, or luxury, or ambition, or lewdness. In courses of evil many are 'terribly decided. They seem never to waver in the least.

But others have no mind of their own. At times they bid fair to be Christians. Then something bewitches them. One day they promise well. The next day they forget it all. They vow, but they do not pay. They say, We will serve God, but when temptation comes they yield to it. They are unstable as water. They are carried hither and thither by every wind. With them nothing is settled. Their face is not set as a flint. Their heart is not fixed. Let such heed the voice of warning. Let them wholly change their course. There are good reasons why they should.

1. *This indecision is unnecessary.* All things are

now ready. All the truths of Scripture are clear and settled. God's will is known. All the facts, motives, and arguments for a right course are already given us. We cannot expect God to reveal his mind any more clearly. He has told us all we shall know till we stand before him to be judged. If by delay we could better learn what we ought to do there might be some show of reason in putting off these matters. But God's word reveals his whole mind and will concerning us and our duty.

2. *It is very painful to be unsettled in our minds.* This is very true when the matter is of great weight. It is, above all, true in matters of religion. Conscience is on the side of God and of right, and she makes her demands in clear and deep tones. Nothing can hinder us from obeying her but strong and evil desires. Men's hearts are vile, and that is the reason why their lives are wicked. They know better than they do. Of course they are unhappy. "The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked," Isa. lvii. 20, 21. On earth no scourges are like the scourgings of a guilty conscience. It holds men's eyes waking. It has often made cowards of the bravest. It converts all sweets into gall and wormwood.

3. *It is unwise to remain in doubt when we have all the facts before us.* That is so respecting our duty to God. There will never be any change in the terms of salvation. No man expects any. There will never be any other Saviour than the Lord Jesus Christ. There could be none better suited to our case, more kind, more tender, more mighty to save. When I was a lad, I read of a fool who came to a river, and sat down. Some one found him, and asked him what he was doing. He said he was waiting till all the water ran by. Are you playing the fool in the same way? The hindrances to your salvation are not less or fewer the longer you wait. On the contrary, they are increasing every day. You have nothing to gain and all to lose by delay.

4. *It is wicked not to decide at once.* God's will is known. Your duty is speedily and heartily to obey. His command is clear: "My son, give me thy heart." You rebel against God till you give him your heart. When you tell a child to do something, and he sits still, and you call him to an account, is it enough for him to say, "I was thinking about it"? You did not tell him to think about it. You told him to do it. All that comes short of obedience is wicked disobedience to God. All God's offers, warnings, mercies, and invitations are sinned against when you put off the call to life.

5. *In matters of religion it is very dangerous to be unsettled.* No man knows what a day may bring forth. To a great man a paper was handed, saying it required his serious attention. He put it away, saying, "Serious things to-morrow." The next day he was slain, because he heeded not that paper. It is human nature to be more set in good or evil ways the longer we walk in them. Custom and habit are powerful. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil," Jer. xiii. 23. Every time metal is melted and allowed to grow cold it becomes a little harder. Every time the heart is melted and yields not to God's demands it becomes harder. Every time the will refuses good it is a little more stubborn.

6. *If you remain in doubt a little longer, your indecision will be ruinous.* A young lady heard a preacher say that some of his hearers might be hearing the last call of mercy. As she walked out of church she said she had often heard the same thing. At sunrise next morning she was a corpse. No man has any but a wicked cause for not being a firm and decided Christian. All such conduct is caused by pride, or sloth, or contempt, or unbelief, or ingratitude; and all these things, if they reign in us, are ruinous.

7. *The great secret of success is prompt and hearty*

action. When the blind man heard that Jesus of Nazareth passed by, he knew that now was his time, and he cried aloud, and nothing could restrain him, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." He was healed and saved. Till Noah's ark was shut up, any poor, penitent sinner might have entered it. After that it was too late. Blessed is he who knows his time, and uses it to salvation.

REMARKS.

1. In religion it is not enough to know the truth. We must love, accept, and practise it. We must from the heart obey God's will as made known in his word. The sin of many is, that they know their duty and never do it. The misery of many lost souls is, that when on earth they knew their duty but they did it not. Unless we obey the truth, our knowledge of it will but make us the more guilty. "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

2. Nor will it save us to make a faltering resolution, or any resolution that is not kept. Many are great at promising. They say, "We will serve the Lord." But they make promises in their own strength, and they are soon forgotten. They vow, and break their vows. They say, "I go, sir," but they never go. They act like a bankrupt government, that calls in its

old bonds, to pay them off with others no less worthless.

3. Nor does a public profession of religion save any soul where the heart is not in it. Such a profession is nothing but a public vowing, to be publicly sinned against.

4. Therefore, no man is safe until he gives his heart to God, renounces all sin, casts his soul on Jesus Christ, and accepts eternal life as the gift of God through the Redeemer.

5. And now, poor dying sinner, will you not turn to the Lord? While you live in sin you are gathering fuel to consume your own soul. You are toiling hard to be miserable for ever. A living preacher once said, "A certain tyrant sent for one of his subjects, and said to him, 'What is your employment?' He said, 'I am a blacksmith.' 'Go home,' said he, 'and make me a chain of such a length.' He went home; it occupied him several months, and he had no wages all the time he was making it. Then he brought it to the monarch, and he said, 'Go, and make it twice as long.' He gave him nothing to do it with, but sent him away. Again he worked on, and made it twice as long. Each time he brought it there was nothing but the command to make it still longer. And when he brought it up at last, the tyrant said, 'Take it, and

bind him hand and foot with it, and cast him into a furnace of fire.' These were the wages of making the chain. Here is a meditation for you, ye servants of the devil. Your master, the devil, is telling you to make a chain. Some have been fifty years welding the links of the chain, and he says, 'Go, and make it longer still.' Next Sabbath morning you will open that shop of yours and put another link on; next Sabbath you will be drunk, and put another link on; next Monday you will do a dishonest action; and so you will keep on making fresh links to this chain; and when you have lived twenty more years, the devil will say, 'More links on still!' And then at last it will be, 'Take him, and bind him hand and foot, and cast him into a furnace of fire.' For the wages of sin is death. There is a subject for your meditation. I do not think it will be sweet, but if God makes it profitable it will do you good. You must have strong medicine sometimes, when the disease is bad. God apply it to your hearts." There is no folly like the folly of serving sin and Satan. There is no madness like the madness of men over their idols and iniquities. Lord, have mercy on us all.

THE END.

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