
*Holiness the Nature and Design of the
Gospel of CHRIST.*

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A

S E R M O N,

PREACHED AT STOCKBRIDGE,

JUNE 24, 1779.

Before the LODGE of FREE and ACCEPTED MASONS,
of BERKSHIRE County, State of MASSACHUSETTS.

AND PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST.

BY JOHN RODGERS, D. D.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

TH E title page gives an account of the occasion of this discourse, and its publication. The reader will not think it was delivered to the Gentlemen only, at whose instance it was preached; for, however respectable their numbers, they made but a small part of the audience--and they too were considered and addressed, not as Masons, but as Professors, with others, of the Religion of JESUS CHRIST,

THAT depravity of manners, which is the just complaint and distress of all true Christians, of every denomination, in this day of degeneracy, was what first turned the author's thoughts to this subject; and his sincere and earnest desire to contribute his mite, in checking this growing malady, was his sole inducement to consent to the request of
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the Gentlemen of the Lodge, to give them a copy for the press, expressed in their polite vote on the occasion. The importance and seasonableness of the subject, are the only merit this plain discourse claims: And, should any object to its length, the objection is but too just. The copiousness of the subject, is the only excuse that can be made for it; and the Author assures his readers, it has cost him no small pains to reduce it to its present limits.

It only remains to add here, that the Address to the Lodge, that was *annexed* to the Sermon, when delivered from the pulpit, is, with some very inconsiderable alterations, *prefixed* to it from the press, for obvious reasons of propriety.

AMENIA, July 26, 1779.

S E T H D E A N E, Esq. Master,
and the other Members of the Lodge
of Free and Accepted M A S O N S, of
BERKSHIRE County, State of MASSA-
CHUSETTS.

G E N T L E M E N,

I *AM not a member of your Society----not initiated in your mysteries, and cannot therefore address you in the character and language of a Brother. This you will not expect. Your Society, however, is venerable for its antiquity, and has been respectable for its numbers, for several ages, and in different nations of the earth; and some of the first characters of my acquaintance, for genius, learning and piety, have been Free and Accepted Masons----and some of these have been my favourite friends, of all the sons of men. And you have, moreover, the honor of having the first character upon the Continent, and one of the greatest characters of the age, the ILLUSTRIOUS WASHINGTON, at the head of your Society, as your GRAND AMERICAN MASTER.' I take it for granted, therefore, there is nothing in your constitution unworthy the laws of society, or incompatible with the genius of the religion of our divine Master JESUS.*

You are not, however, insensible, that there are strong prejudices in the minds of many serious and worthy people, against your fraternity. These are generally charged to the unworthy lives of some of the society, and to the excesses
said

said to be committed at the meetings of many of their Lodges. These latter, I doubt not, have been greatly exaggerated, and may, for aught I know, be wholly without foundation. I would fain hope they are so, with respect to the brotherhood I now particularly address.

Your characters as Gentlemen, as Christians, and, I presume, as Masons, are powerful guards, and ought to be improved as such, against that intemperance and profaneness, but too common in this day of dissipation and depravity, among persons of all ranks and classes.

You are associated for the purposes of benevolence... Brotherly love is said to be your foundation principle -- but to be examples of sobriety, virtue and piety -- to be faithful in watching over each other, in an hour of temptation -- and to serve as guards to each other, against every species of impiety, are among the highest evidences you can give of true benevolence, and brotherly love... This is, indeed, to "love as brethren." -- And thus, I beseech you, "let brotherly love continue," always continue and manifest itself among you.

The cause of our country, in this day of public calamity, is another call upon your benevolence, and another opportunity for exercising this exalted virtue. Never were people engaged in a more noble, important, and interesting struggle. Our All is at stake. To be firm and active, therefore, in this great cause, is a high display of benevolence, to the present and every future generation. The liberties of thousands yet unborn are in our hands; but let wisdom guide this firmness, and prudence direct this activity.

The failure of public virtue, and the failure of our currency, are evils of the most alarming nature; and evils that have a mutual influence in begetting and promoting each other. -- and, at the same time, evils that demand the

most serious attention and vigorous exertions, of every friend of his country, to counteract and remedy---and they are evils too, that every one can do something in remedying.

This is neither the time nor place to discuss a subject so copious and interesting as this is---I shall, therefore, only suggest, at present, That œconomy in our expences; frugality in our mode of living; moderation in our apparel---A careful avoiding of purchasing any thing but what are the proper and immediate necessities of life---And, associations formed with judgment, and conducted with prudence, would, doubtless, go a great way, at least, in checking these evils, till the radical cure of a depreciated currency, taxation, assisted by proper loans to Congress, can have its full effect. Could these evils be but checked in their progress, it would be no small point gained, in the present state of things. And, alarming as the truth may be, checked they must be, or our cause is lost; for, I frankly confess, I see no way of supporting the liberties, the faith, or the honour of our country, but by retrieving and supporting the credit of its currency. Without this, how shall we support our armies? (O! what has that illustrious band of citizens already suffered from this fatal mischief, a depreciated currency!) Without this, thousands of the most worthy inhabitants of these States must be entirely ruined---And, what is still more shocking, if more shocking can be, our faith as a nation, pledged for the redemption of our bills of credit, would be utterly blasted, in the infancy of our empire, and blasted by the failure of our public virtue, and a defection from our great cause. A faithless nation! What character more detestable; but doubly so when originating from such a source.

And can there be, my brethren, a more illustrious display of true benevolence, than to endeavour to stop the fatal mischief,

miscbief, as it proceeds, and to call up all the vigour of exertion for saving a sinking country? Let every breast catch fire, and every individual among us exert his utmost influence, for the recovery of public virtue . . . for maintaining of good order, and the support of law and government . . . for the suppression of every species of vice and profaneness . . . and particularly, for the suppression and banishment of that avarice and extortion out of our land, so provoking to a righteous God, and so ruinous to our country. These evils have a natural as well as moral tendency, to effect our speedy ruin. What I here recommend, are capital branches of that righteousness, that exalteth a nation, while sin of any and every kind, is a reproach to any people; and while indulged profaneness, will assuredly, sooner or latter, prove their ruin.

A S E R M O N.

L U K E vi. 46.

*And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things
which I say?*

THE moral influence of the great doctrines of our holy religion, is generally and justly ranked by Divines, among the evidences of their divinity; for, in proportion as any doctrine is calculated in its nature, design and tendency to recover the guilty and depraved creature to his God, it evidently bears the marks of a divine original... This is the test to which our Lord himself appeals, with respect to his own doctrine, in the next verse but one that precedes our text... "Every tree is known by its fruit; for of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble-bush gather they grapes." The doctrines taught by our divine Master, are holy not only in their nature, but their efficacy--they renew the heart; which never fails to manifest itself in the life. He, therefore, adds in the next verse, "A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is evil; for of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." And from this nature and design, this tendency and efficacy of his doctrine, our Lord infers the obligations those are under who profess his name, to render an obedience to his authority; and
B farther

farther points, as to the futility, vanity and absurdity of making this profession, without a correspondent life and conversation... Both these he does in the words of our text---“ Why call ye me Lord, Lord, “ and do not the things which I say ?”

You will easily perceive, that by *calling our Saviour Lord, Lord*, I understand a professing his name--- those call him *Lord, Lord*, who call themselves Christians --they hereby profess to believe the doctrines he has taught, and to hold themselves bound by the laws he has enjoined.---And, *to do the things which Christ saith*, is to make conscience of obeying his authority. The man who pays a conscientious regard to his commands, his promises, his threatenings, and directions, for the conduct of his life, does, in the sense of our text, *the things which Christ saith*.---He thus studies to “ cleanse himself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, “ perfecting holiness, in the fear of the Lord *.”

My single purpose, my brethren, from the text, by the aids of the Spirit of Grace, is, *To point you to some of the many obligations to practical holiness, which originate from the religion of Jesus, and are, in a great measure, peculiar to it.*

AND then, when I have gone through these, shall conclude my discourse, by a few practical reflections on what may have been said.

You will please then to attend, while *I point you to some of the many obligations to practical holiness, which originate from the religion of Jesus, and are, in a great measure, peculiar to it.* And all that the limits to which I am necessarily confined admits of, at present, may be reduced to the two following heads, namely,
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* 2 COR. vii. 1.

*The tenor and benevolent design of the covenant of grace.---
And, the singular advantages which the religion of Jesus
puts us under, for perfecting holiness in the fear of the
Lord.*

I. LET us briefly consider the tenor and benevolent design of that covenant of grace, God has revealed through his Son Jesus Christ.

AND this may be considered in a threefold point of view, either as to *the gracious purposes of God in planning it---as to its execution---or, as to its divine requisitions.*

1. SHOULD we consider the gracious purposes of God, in laying and executing this plan of mercy, they are fruitful of the most powerful motives to holiness in heart and life. Not to insist here on the illustration of his own glory, GOD'S highest end in all his actions; and the recovery of sinners of our apostate race to himself, in intimate and gracious connection therewith, both of which bind us, in the strongest manner, to walk before God to all well-pleasing---- one of his principal ends, in this great business, is said, in the most express manner, to be the holiness of his people: Thus we hear the Apostle say, "Blessed
" be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
" who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in
" heavenly things, in Christ; according as he hath
" chosen us in him, before the foundation of the
" world, *that we should be holy and without blame be-
" fore him in love *.*" To this accords the following declaration, "We are bound to give thanks to God
" alway for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, *be-
" cause God hath from the beginning chosen you to salva-
" tion,*

• EPHES. i. 3, 4.

“*tion, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of
 “ the truth*.”* Agreeable to this, we read, that
 “*whom God did foreknow, he also did predestinate to
 “ be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be
 “ the first-born among many brethren †.*” Therefore we are said to be, “*his workmanship, created
 “ in Christ Jesus, unto good works, which God hath
 “ before ordained we should walk in them ‡.*” And do any of you, my dear brethren, hope, through the riches of free grace, you were given by the Father to the Son, in the eternal councils of peace; and given for this express purpose, “*that you should be holy, and
 “ without blame before him in love?*” And can you indulge to a spirit of sloth, or envy, hatred, malice, or revenge? Can you willingly mix with the profane, and give the sanction of your presence to their impieties? In a word, Can you *indulge* yourselves in the practice of any *known* sin? O! how absurd and preposterous! This hope, when true, never fails to be soul sanctifying; for, “*Every man that hath this hope in him,
 “ purifieth himself, even as he is pure §.*”

2. THE *execution* of this plan of grace, is equally fruitful of motives for perfecting holiness in the fear of the LORD --- I shall briefly consider this, in the two capital articles of *the incarnation and death of the Son of God*. And you will easily perceive that, so copious is the subject, I can but barely touch upon them.

As to his *incarnation*; one grand design of it was to deliver us, not only from the guilt, but the *depravity* of sin---- This is testified by the angel to Joseph, in the following words, “*And she shall bring forth
 “ a son,*

• 2 THESS. ii. 13. † ROM. viii. 29. ‡ EPHES. ii. 10.
 § 1 JOHN iii. 3.

“ a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus ; for he
 “ shall save his people from their sins *”.--Not only
 from the effects of their sins, but from their sins
 themselves. And St. John tells us, that “ for this
 “ purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he
 “ might destroy the works of the devil †”.--This is
 the great purpose for which he was manifested in the
 flesh, that he might destroy sin, that capital work of
 the devil, and deliver his people from it's power and
 remains, as well as its guilt. And surely that must
 have been an important end, that brought the Son
 of God from heaven to earth, and clothed Deity
 itself in human flesh.

THE *death of Christ* too, is also a fruitful source of
 motives to gospel obedience ; and that whether you
 consider its *nature* or *design* --It was in its nature,
 the most exquisitely tormenting, and ignominious
 death that ever was endured--And its design was,
 to make atonement to offended justice in our stead,
 and hereby open the way for our recovery to the fa-
 vour, the image and the enjoyment of God, in perfect
 consistency with the honors of his moral government.
 It was in this view, “ he bore our griefs and carried
 “ our sorrows”---thus, “ 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 †”---“ For Christ also
 “ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust,
 “ that he might bring us to God §”---He gave his
 “ life a ransom for many ||.” Nor was this all, for
 we read, that “ he gave himself for us, that *he might*
 “ *redeem*

* MATT. i. 21.

† 1 JOHN. iii. 8.

‡ ISAIA. liii. 4, 5.

§ 1 PET. ii. 18.

|| MATT. xx. 28.

“redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works §.”

O! WHAT a godlike display of Jehovah's infinite hatred to sin, shines in the cross of Christ! He was God's co-equal Son, though cloathed in our nature --- He was un sullied innocence, both in heart and life; and guilty only by the imputation of our sins to him. --- Yet God *spared not* this his own Son, when he stood in our law place---witness his bloody sweat in Gethsemane, under a heartfelt sense of his Father's wrath, and the tragic scene through which he passed, from thence to Mount Calvary---hark his groans when he cried, “O! my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me *”---See him standing accused of the blackest crimes, before the enraged Sanhedrim; and afterwards arraigned as a criminal, at the infamous Pilate's bar---He is mocked, insulted and despised by Herod Antipas, and his men of war---Nor was all this infamy enough---He is led back again to Pilate, and from him into the high priest's hall. Here he is arrayed in robes of mock majesty, blindfolded, crowned with thorns, derided and scourged by the licentious soldiery, and then led forth to be crucified with every circumstance of insult and cruelty!---and O! was ever sight like that! yonder he hangs on the accursed cross, under the hidings of his Father's face---He hangs, bleeding, writhing, groaning, dying as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of men! and were your sins, my brethren and sisters, among those that cost the Lord of glory so dear? and will any of you then venture on known sin? Surely, you would not thus willingly wound him afresh, and put him to open shame.

shame. Every consideration of duty and gratitude is called up by the cross of Christ, to engage us to guard against sin, and *do the things which he saith*---Yea and of fear too, “for if these things are done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry †?”

AND it deserves our notice, that wherever the cross of Christ, in its design and tendency, has its proper efficacy on the hearts and lives of men, its uniform effect is, their sanctification; “for the love of Christ
“constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one
“died for all, then were all dead; and that he died
“for all, *that they which live, should not henceforth live
“unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and
“rose again †.*”

I ONLY remark farther here, that those among you, who indulge yourselves in the habitual neglect of the known and great duties of religion, or in the practice of any known sin, of whatever nature, you are hereby defeating, to the utmost of your power, the important and benevolent designs of the incarnation and death of the Son of God, as to you---you are hereby practically declaring, you do not desire to have either lot or part in them.

3. THE *requisitions* of the covenant of grace are another fruitful source of obligations to holiness in heart and life. I shall detain you, at present, while I only barely repeat a few of them. “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 §.” “Therefore al-
“so

† LUKE xxiii. 31.

† 2 COR. v. 14, 15.

§ ISAI. lv. 7.

so now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with
 all your heart, and with fasting, and with weep-
 ing, and with mourning: and rent your heart and
 not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your
 God *." " Let every one that nameth the name
 of Christ depart from iniquity †." Wherefore,
 gird up the loins of your mind; be sober, and hope
 to the end, for the grace that is to be brought un-
 to you, at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obe-
 dient children, not fashioning yourselves accord-
 ing to the former lusts, in your ignorance; but as
 he who hath called you is holy; so be ye holy in
 all manner of conversation: because, it is written,
 be ye holy, for I am holy ‡." " Sanctify your-
 selves, therefore, and be ye holy, for I am the
 Lord your God §." " And besides this, giving all
 diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue,
 knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and
 to temperance, patience; and to patience, godli-
 ness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and
 to brotherly kindness, charity ||." Thus we are
 commanded, to " grow in grace, and in the know-
 ledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ¶." To
 all this accord the words of God to Abraham, " I
 am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be
 thou perfect **." But I forbear to repeat more of
 those divine precepts, so pointed to my purpose, and
 so numerous in the sacred oracles. These are suffi-
 cient to shew, that the authority of God has interposed
 in

* JOEL ii. 12, 13. † 2 TIM. ii. 19. ‡ 1 PET. i. 13 - 16.
 § LEV. xx. 7. ¶ 2 PET. i. 5 - 7. ¶ 2 PET. iii. 18.
 ** GEN. xvii. 1.

in this matter; and that we are bound, by all its solemn ties, to “do the things which Christ saith.”

BUT it is time I should proceed to shew you that;

II. *THE singular advantages which the religion of Jesus puts us under, for perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord, are fruitful of the most rational and powerful motives, to this great duty.*—And here too, so copious is my subject, I can but barely touch upon a few leading thoughts; lest I unduely protract my discourse. And,

I. WE are hereby taught a holy system, both of *doctrines* and *laws*—a complete rule both of faith and manners. There is nothing necessary for us to know, to do, or to be, to effect our holiness, or accomplish our happiness; but what is taught us, with sufficient clearness, in the sacred oracles. For this I appeal to the doctrines of scripture. They teach us the nature, perfections, character and government of the most high God—-and are not all these perfectly consonant to reason? They teach us the state in which God made man, and the original constitution he put him under—-his ruin by sin, and his recovery through the mediation of the Son of God—-the appointment, and offices of the holy Spirit—-the nature and necessity of holiness, together with our obligations thereto—-the nature and certainty of a general resurrection, and a future judgment, on finishing the mediatorial system: And that these will be followed, by a state of rewards and punishments, throughout an unwasting immortality. And who does not see that all these, and others in connection with them, compose a system of doctrine, indeed, *according to godliness*? This is their nature,

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ture,

ture, design, and tendency. Hence we hear our Lord praying for his people, through every age of his church, in the following language: "Sanctify them *through thy truth*; thy word is truth*."

NOR are the *laws of Christ*, that system of duty taught us in the sacred scriptures, less clear, or less full, as a rule of life, than the doctrines we have just referred to, are as a rule of faith. There is not a single duty we owe to God, our neighbour, or ourselves, in all the different relations we sustain to him, or to each other; but what is taught us, with the greatest precision, in the word of God.---He must indeed be a stranger to his Bible, who does not know this---with what care, in particular, are we taught the numerous and important duties of social life, in all their variety and extent---the nature and obligations of moral virtue, are here unfolded to us, in the fullest manner, and enforced upon us, by every availing motive---it is constituted by Christ himself, an essential branch of gospel holiness---"for the grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world †." And thus, "he hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ‡."

BUT you will easily perceive, my brethren, the advantages all this puts us under, for perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord; and consequently, infers the obligations we are under thereto.

2. THE

* JOHN xvii. 17. † TIT. ii. 11, 12. ‡ MICAH vi. 8.

2 THE *example of Christ, our Lord*, is another help to holy living.---His life, was a life of unstained purity: "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth*." "For such an high-priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners †." Thus he set us an example, that we should follow his steps. His humility and condescension, are particularly recommended to our imitation, in the following words: "Let *this mind* be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man ‡." Patience and resignation to the will of God, in a day of suffering, are strongly recommended by St. Peter, from the same illustrious example: "If when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God: for even hereunto are ye called; *because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps*---who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him who judgeth righteously §." And he himself commands us, to "take his yoke upon us, and *learn of him, because he is meek and lowly in heart ¶.*" And the inspired John considers and represents an imitation of Christ, as the test of our discipleship: "He that saith he abideth in him, *ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked**.*" Thus, while the holy life of the Saviour of men, shewed that the law of

* 1 PET. ii. 22. † HEB. vii. 26. ‡ PHIL. ii. 5.. 7.
§ 1 PET. ii. 20, 21, 23. ¶ MATT. xi. 29. ** 1 JOHN ii. 6:

of God was a practicable law, and therefore just--- while it thus constitutes an essential part of our justifying righteousness, in the sight of God, it is, at the same time, both a *guide* and *incentive* to the great duties of piety and morality. It strongly addresses every principle of gratitude and obedience--- has a constraining influence on the upright heart; and serves as no small help, to our walking before God, to all well-pleasing.

3. THE ordinances of Christ, such as the gospel ministry; the sabbath of the Lord; the holy sacraments, and the great duty of prayer, are advantages, and therefore ought to be improved by us, as arguments, for making progress in that practical holiness, designed, in our text, by *doing the things which Christ saith*--- This is the general view the apostle gives us of the gospel, and its ordinances, in his masterly defence of himself and his ministry, before king Agrippa: It is
 “ to open the eyes of sinners, and to turn them from
 “ darkness to light, and from the power of satan un-
 “ to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins,
 “ and *inheritance among them who are sanctified*, by
 “ faith that is in Christ*. The gospel ministry is the *ministry of reconciliation*, between an offended God and sinning man--- thus it is expressly stiled by this same apostle of the Gentiles: And the great business of gospel ministers, as ambassadors for Christ, is to beseech sinners to be reconciled to God†. Nor is this all; it is also designed and calculated to assist us, in the great business of making proficiency in the divine life, and acquiring conformity to God: For this end, our Lord “ gave some, apostles; and some,
 “ prophets:

* ACTS xxvi. 18.

† See 2 COR. v. 18.. 20.

“ prophets ; and some, evangelists ; and some, pas-
 “ tors and teachers ; *for the perfecting of the saints, for*
 “ the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the
 “ body of Christ: till we all come, in the unity of
 “ the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God,
 “ unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of
 “ the fulness of Christ*.”

Our time does not admit, that I should shew you
 here, *how* the sabbath, and the gospel sacraments,
 when properly improved, contribute to promote ho-
 liness in the hearts and lives of men, though it would
 greatly serve to illustrate my subject. It must suffice
 to observe, at present, that they are designed and cal-
 culated for this end--and the experience of God's
 people, in every age, witnesses that this is their effect.
 Hereby they grow into a meetness for the inheritance
 of the saints in light.

AND as to the duty of prayer ; few of the duties
 of our holy religion contribute more, when it is pro-
 perly attended, to the advancement of gospel holiness
 in us. It begets and promotes that spirit of devotion,
 which has an immediate and powerful efficacy for
 this purpose. It is too, in answer to prayer, we or-
 dinary obtain those divine influences, whereby we
 are enabled to “ die unto sin, and live unto righte-
 “ ousness.” None can tell, how numerous and
 great the blessings God bestows on his people, in this
 way. His command to us, however, is, “ Be care-
 “ ful for nothing ; but in every thing, by prayer and
 “ supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests
 “ be

* EPHES. IV. 11--13.

“ be made known unto God *.” And he elsewhere commands us to “ pray without ceasing †.”

I ONLY add here, that by means of these ordinances of the gospel, God holds a divine intercourse with his people, through the mediation of his Son; and it is in and through these same ordinances, that “ our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ ‡.”

4. THE *office and character of the holy Spirit, in the gospel plan of our salvation*, are singular advantages for our perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. His great business is to render us holy; and in this character he is promised and given to his church: “ A new heart 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 will give you an 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 §.” Agreeable to this, we are said, to be “ chosen to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth ¶.” And for our encouragement to ask this holy Spirit in prayer, in all the rich variety of his graces and influences, our Lord addresses his hearers in the following language: “ 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 ** ?”

IN this the religion of Jesus has the advantage of every other system of mythology or ethics, that ever assumed the name of religion, in antient or more modern

* PHIL. iv. 6.

† 1 THESS. v. 17.

‡ 1 JOHN i. 3.

§ EZEK. xxxvi. 26, 27. ¶ 2 THESS. ii. 13. ** LUKE xi. 13.

dern times. None of their founders have ever ventured to go farther, than publish their doctrines and their precepts, and enforce them by argument, by example, or by force of arms: But, while the Christian system infinitely surpasses all these, in clearness and sublimity of doctrine, in the reasonableness and perspicuity of its precepts, enforced by the most rational motives, it provides a divine Agent to counteract the depravity of human nature, and to render these doctrines and these precepts availing, for the great and benevolent purposes for which they are revealed and enjoined. Thus it is he renews us in the spirit of our minds, recovers us to the divine image, and trains us up in this life, to a proper temper for the enjoyment of a holy God, throughout an immortality of blessedness.

5. THE *severe and righteous threatenings* contained in God's word, are excellent guards against the commission of sin, and thus aids and advantages for the advancement of gospel holiness. Hence we read that "Wo unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him*." And "that the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God†." And, numerous are the particular threatenings, against particular sins; too numerous to be recited here. By these, and threatenings of the like kind, awful indeed in their nature, and certain in their execution on impenitent sinners, God addresses our fear; and calls up this busy and powerful passion, in aid to our watchfulness against sin, and our progress in the ways of holiness.

Their

* ISAIAH, iii. 11.

† PSALM, ix. 17.

Their language is, "Beware how you carry it to-
 "wards a holy God, and his law---Watch and pray
 "that ye enter not into temptation---Fear and sin
 "not." And, my brethren, it is no inconsiderable
 evidence of the divinity of the religion of Jesus, that
 it so powerfully addresses every faculty of the human
 mind, and so properly touches every spring of action,
 in all their various operations, on the great subjects
 of our holiness and our happiness. Surely, its Au-
 thor, can be none other than the Author of human
 nature. The propriety of this observation receives
 additional weight, from the consideration of,

6. *THOSE promises of a rich reward of grace, for all
 our services for God, so numerous in the sacred ora-
 cles, and which are a farther and powerful induce-
 ment, to do the things which Christ saith---of these pro-
 mises, and their design and tendency, we read in the
 following words: "Whereby are given to us, exceed-
 "ing great and precious promises; that by these you might
 "be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the
 "corruption that is in the world, through lust*."*
 And, did our time admit of considering here the na-
 ture, variety and importance of the blessings, which
 these promises contain and convey, they would in-
 deed appear to be exceeding great and precious pro-
 mises. Suffice it to say, they respect every thing that
 pertains to life and godliness---every thing that is ne-
 cessary for our comfort here, or our happiness hereaf-
 ter. Hereby we are encouraged and enabled to pur-
 sue the Christian life with steadiness and perseverance.
 But what I have particularly in view, at present, is
 that reward which God promises his people, in the sa-
 cred

ered oracles, for all their services for him---Yea, the plainest duties we owe to our God, our neighbour, or ourselves, are encouraged by a rich reward for them--- such is Jehovah's regard for holiness. Hence our Lord tells us, that "a cup of cold water, given to
 " a disciple, in the name of a disciple, shall in no
 " wise lose its reward*." "For God is not unrighteous to forget our work and labour of love, which
 " we have showed toward his name; in that we have
 " ministered to the saints, and do minister †." "Let
 " us not, therefore, be weary in well-doing, for in
 " due season we shall reap if we faint not ‡." "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast,
 " immovable, always abounding in the work of the
 " Lord, forasmuch as you know, that your labour is
 " not in vain in the Lord §." By these, and promises of the like kind, heaven and all its glories are set before us, as an encouragement and incentives to *do the things which Christ, our Lord, saith*. Not that we can hereby purchase those mansions of glory--- this is an honor due to the atonement of Christ alone. But God hereby encourages us to cultivate that temper, and live that life, prescribed by his law, and by which we are prepared for the enjoyment of himself, at last, as our supreme blessedness. This is the point of view in which the inspired apostle addresses us on this subject, in the following words: "Having
 " therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us
 " cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and
 " spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord ||."

C

Hereby

* MATH. X. 42.

† HEB. VI. 10.

‡ GAL. VI. 9.

§ 1 COR. XV. 58.

|| 2 COR. VII. 1.

Hereby God addresses that love of happiness, that ardent desire for it, so deeply implanted in the human breast, and calls up this powerful principle to proper exercise.

THUS, my brethren, you have some of the many obligations to practical holiness, which originate from the religion of Jesus, and are in a great measure peculiar to it.

It remains, that I conclude this discourse, with a few reflections on what has been said; and they must necessarily be both few and short. We are hereby taught,

I. THE sad and total depravity of human nature, that is proof against all these arguments and advantages, for our recovery to the divine image, and a life of obedience to the divine law. It is hereby sadly evident, that “having our understandings darkened, we are alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in us; because of the blindness and hardness of our hearts*.” That mind must be indeed darkened, that is blind to such divine glories, as the gospel of Christ contains and exhibits; and that heart must be indeed hard, that is insensible to all these powerful motives for living to God: But this is not all; the human heart is opposed both to the remedy and the manner of applying it, however desirous of sharing its benefits; “for the carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be †,” *i. e.* while under the power of this depraved temper. This is matter of deep humiliation, and thus ought to be improved by us.

2. THE

• EPHES. iv. 18.

† ROM. viii. 7.

2. THE vanity of that hope of happiness, through Christ, and the absurdity of that profession of his name, that are not vindicated by a holy life and conversation---“ Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say ?” Can any idea be more absurd, than to hope for the benefits of a religion, planned for the purposes of our recovery from sin and its consequences, while we persist in the wilful practice of those very sins, from which it is designed to recover us ? Can a man hope to be healthful and vigorous while he daily drinks poison ? But this is more rational, than for the wilful and profane sinner to hope for happiness through Christ, while he persists in the ways of sin. Or can there be a greater absurdity in nature, or solecism in language, than to talk of a drunken, fornicating Christian ! A lying, cheating, knavish Christian ! A Christian who makes no conscience of his word ! A cursing, swearing Christian ! My brethren, a cursed and wretched heaven, or a blessed hell, are not more absurd and incongruous ideas ! Are there then any among you, who *indulge* yourselves in the sins of drunkenness, uncleanness, cursing and profane swearing, sabbath breaking, injustice in your dealings, lying, hatred, malice, revenge, or indeed any other known sin, of any nature, either against God or man, be not deceived, God is not mocked---your hope of happiness is delusive, and so continuing, you must make your bed in hell, there be wrapt in sheets of liquid fire, and tossed on the billows of Jehovah’s indignation, throughout an endless eternity.

3. AND lastly, This subject teaches us the necessity of holiness, to fit us for the enjoyment of the Author
of

of this pure and holy religion---a holiness of heart as well as life---a holiness, whose foundation is laid in that change of heart, which our Lord means, by being *born again*; for, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the “kingdom of God*.” This is what the apostle means, by being “renewed in the spirit of our minds †,” and by being made “new creatures in “Christ Jesus ‡.” In this renovation of nature, all true holiness begins; but never fails to influence both the temper and the conduct of the man, through the whole of his after life.

I BESEECH you then, my brethren, by the mercies of God in Christ, that you carefully examine into the governing temper of your hearts, and attend to the prevailing conduct of your lives towards this God, his Christ, and his law; and that you do not rest in any thing short of that holiness, to which the religion of the Son of God is designed and calculated to form us; and, “without which, no man shall see the Lord.” And I farther beseech you, as you tender the honor of God, your own comfort, or your progress in the divine life, that you improve the account given through the whole of this discourse, of the nature and design of the religion of Jesus, into so many arguments and helps for walking with God, and for perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. Which may God of his infinite mercy grant, you may all be enabled to do, through the riches of free grace, in Christ our Saviour. Amen and Amen.

* JOHN iii. 3. † EPHES. iv. 23. ‡ 2 COR. v. 17.