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PRACTICAL DISCOURSES  
ON THE  
LEADING TRUTHS  
OF THE  
G O S P E L.

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C.C.



TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE,  
ALEXANDER EARL OF LEVEN,

THE FOLLOWING SERMONS,

AS A TESTIMONY OF THE MOST  
SINCERE ESTEEM AND VENE-  
RATION,

ARE HUMBLY INSCRIBED

BY

HIS LORDSHIP'S

MOST OBEDIENT AND

MOST HUMBLE SERVANT,

JOHN WITHERSPOON.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

**T**HE following Sermons, though first preached on particular occasions, have been selected in order to form a little system of the truths of the gospel, to point out their relation to one another, and their influence on practice. There appears to me the greater necessity of this, that evangelical principles have for some time past been falling greatly into disrepute; which I take to be the true, and the single reason, why religion is at present in so very weak and languishing a state. The attempt ought not to be considered as arising from a thirst of fame; for a man must judge very ill who should expect to increase his reputation by espousing this despised cause. I must also observe, that these discourses are not published as containing any thing better than many practical writings of the last age; but as an endeavour to perpetuate the knowledge of the same truths, and to supply the place of those which, through the antiquity of style and manner, seem to be falling into forgetfulness. If there is any thing particular in them, it is an attempt to illustrate the scripture-doctrine by experience, and observations on human life. It hath long been my opinion, that an impartial view of the course of Providence, and of the characters and ways of men, would greatly contribute to establish us in the belief of the truths of the gospel; and that the very opposition given to them by worldly men, serves at once to accomplish and confirm them.

There

*There will be found, in many of the sermons, expressions of reference to the time of their being first preached, particularly to the administration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper. It had been easy to have altered the sentences in which express mention is made of that ordinance; but as there is often a peculiarity or propriety of language through the whole of a discourse, which is best understood when we know the time and circumstances of its first composition, I chose to let them stand as they were. Another reason inclined me to the same thing: The choice of the subjects for publication was made in such a manner as to give a pretty full view of the revelation of divine mercy in the gospel, and by that means to illustrate and support the truth. - But as there is a great danger of running too much into controversy and speculation, the best way to avoid this seemed to be, to let the sermons retain every thing particular and practical, intended for the instruction, reproof, or consolation, of the audience, when they were first delivered. With these few remarks, I commit them to the candour of the public, with very little concern as to the judgement of those who read only to pass sentence upon the ability of the writer, but earnestly praying, that God may make them instrumental in turning sinners from the error of their ways, and promoting the sanctification and peace of those who have known the truth as it is in Jesus.*

J. W..

Paisley, May 16. 1768.

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# PRACTICAL DISCOURSES

O N T H E

LEADING TRUTHS of the GOSPEL.



## S E R M O N I.

All mankind by nature under sin.

ROMANS iii. 23.

*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*

**T**HE whole revelation of the will of God to mankind, both in the Old Testament and the New, proceeds upon the supposition that they are sinners; that is to say, transgressors of his law, and liable to the stroke of his justice. This only can give meaning to the doctrine of *redemption*. None can understand, at least none can relish or embrace it, unless they believe, and are persuaded of this preliminary truth.

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What I have now said, appears from many express passages of the holy scriptures; and is particularly evident from the general strain, and from the very structure of the epistle to the Romans. In it the apostle, who had never been at Rome, gives a full and particular account of the doctrine of Christ; and he lays the foundation for this by a distinct and laboured proof, that all mankind, both Jews and Gentiles, are *under sin*. In imitation of his example, I intend to begin my discourses on practical religion, by endeavouring to impress your minds with a sense of the same truth. This must lead the way to the saving knowledge of the Redeemer; and as he only can build securely, who takes care that every part of the superstructure rest immediately or ultimately upon the foundation, it is as necessary to be remembered by saints, as to be received by sinners.

It may perhaps, on a slight view, appear to be superfluous. 'All mankind,' some will say, 'are ready to acknowledge that they are sinners; and there is great reason to believe they are sincere in this confession.' But, my brethren, a little reflection may convince you, that this general acknowledgement is either very insincere, or very imperfect and defective. It is plainly a light sense of sin that enables the multitude to sleep in security. It is plainly a light sense of sin that

that betrays men into the commission of it, and emboldens them to continue in it. It is plainly a light sense of sin that blunts the edge of all the threatenings in the word of God, and the admonitions of his providence. Is it not from a light sense of sin, that when the preaching of the gospel is not wholly deserted, its inestimable truths are received without thankfulness, and heard without profit?

For these reasons, I propose, through the assistance of divine grace, to discourse a little on the words of the apostle now read: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God:" And, in so doing, shall

1. Endeavour to confirm the truth contained in them, That all mankind are sinners, or transgressors of the law of God, and liable to his righteous judgement. And,

2. Shall make a practical improvement of the subject.

I. IN the *first* place, then, let us endeavour to confirm the truth contained in the text, That all mankind are sinners, or transgressors of the law of God, and liable to his righteous judgement. And here, my brethren, it puts me a little to a stand, in what manner to handle this important subject; whether in the way of reason or affection; whether in the way of cool and conclusive arguments directed to the judgement, or pointed

A 2                      interrogatories

interrogatories directed to the conscience. Many, nay, innumerable, are the cavils that have been brought by men of corrupt minds against this fundamental truth. The father of lies, indeed, seems to consider it, and justly, as the corner-stone of true religion, which, if he is able to weaken or undermine, it must end in the fall and ruin of the whole fabric. If there be any among you, as possibly there are, infected with the poison of infidelity, all exhortation and warning will be treated by such with disdain; while their objections, however weak, have not been brought into view. On the other hand, there are multitudes of sinners borne away by lust and passion, who are incapable of understanding the force of speculative reasoning, and who have an unhappy tendency to overlook, as what does not concern them, every thing that is treated in that way. I shall be obliged, therefore, to have an eye to both: and oh! that it may please God to enable me so to propose to the judgement, and so to press upon the conscience, this necessary truth, as that some careless persons may be awakened, and brought to an attention to the one thing needful; and that if any have hitherto taken up with imperfect notions of religion, and built their hope upon the sand, they may be persuaded in time to distrust that dangerous situation, and to found it upon *the rock of ages*.

For

For the reason above assigned, it is difficult to determine, what use is to be made of scripture-testimony on such a subject. The charge of guilt upon the sinner, seems to be only preparatory to, and must, as it were, pave the way for the reception of scripture-truths. If the testimony of God in scripture is to be rested on, this one passage is sufficient; but the unbelieving heart is ready to challenge and call in question every such scripture-declaration. I find the worthy author of a well-known catechism, commonly used in the instruction of children, joins together scripture and experience, in the answer to that question, "How do you know, that you are born in a state of sin and misery?" Ans. "God's word tells me so. Besides, I find my heart naturally backward to that which is good, and prone to that which is evil." After this example, and considering, that by the law is the knowledge of sin, we shall not separate them; the rather, that God is able to make his own word, even in the bare repetition of it, quick and *powerful*, Heb. iv. 12. In the further illustration of this head, therefore, I shall, *first*, briefly lay before you some of the scripture-declarations on this subject; and, *2dly*, confirm them from experience, the visible state of the world, and the testimony of our own hearts.

*First,* Allow me to lay before you some of the scripture-declarations on this subject. And that I may avoid handling the subject systematically, and tediously, I join together original and actual sin. Every one who is able to understand what I say, is concerned in both; and indeed they are inseparable the one from the other. The deplorable wickedness in which the world in general is overwhelmed, hath flowed in a continued stream from the first sin of Adam; and the sinfulness of every person's practice has the corruption of his nature as its fruitful source. See the account given of the old world, Gen. vi. 5. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." This you may compare with Gen. viii. 21. "And the Lord said, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth."

See also the confession of David, Psal. li. 5. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." In this the Psalmist plainly and clearly teaches the original and universal corruption of our nature. What he asserts concerning himself, must be equally true of all the human race; otherwise, instead of making a proper part of his confession, it would be an excuse or extenuation of

of his sin. Nothing can more plainly show the force of this text, than the awkward endeavours used by some to evade or misinterpret it. For example, how mean a subterfuge is it, to pretend, that David declared, he was shapen in iniquity, and conceived by his mother in sin; because he was the issue of some criminal commerce between his father and a maid-servant, or between the wife of Jesse and another man? This is plainly a profane invention, offered without any manner of proof, or the least insinuation in the history of that great prince. Besides, it is evidently beside his purpose in the psalm referred to, where he is confessing his own sinful nature, and not the sinful deeds of his parents. If there be meaning in words, his intention is, to humble himself before God, not only for his adultery and murder in the matter of Uriah, but as a *transgressor from the womb*.

To this you may add the testimony of a greater than David, *viz.* our blessed Lord and Saviour himself, John iii. 6. "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit." For understanding the proof drawn from this text, you may observe, that though the word *flesh* has various significations in scripture; sometimes, for example, signifying the weakness of our mortal nature, unable to support itself, and liable to a variety of changes,

ges, which must at last end in dissolution; yet here it evidently signifies our nature as corrupted by sin. This appears from the opposition of the two clauses: for it is certain, that those who are regenerated, are still liable to all the weakness of mortality. It must therefore bear the same meaning in this place as in Rom. viii. 8. "So then they that are in the flesh, cannot please God." It is with a view to this great truth that Job, who pleads with so much warmth his general integrity, yet says, Job xiv. 3. 4. "And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one, and bringest me into judgement with thee? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one."

With this agree many other scripture-declarations, some of which I shall mention. Psal. xiv. 2. 3. "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men; to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doth good, no not one." Psal. lviii. 3. "The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies." Isa. xlviii. 8. "Yea, thou heardst not, yea, thou knewest not, yea, from that time that thine ear was not opened: for I knew that thou wouldst deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb." Rom. iii. 9. 10. 11. 12. "What

“ What then ? are we better than they ? No,  
 “ in no wise : for we have before proved both  
 “ Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under  
 “ sin ; as it is written, There is none righ-  
 “ teous, no not one : There is none that un-  
 “ derstandeth, there is none that seeketh af-  
 “ ter God. They are all gone out of the  
 “ way, they are together become unpro-  
 “ fitable, there is none that doth good, no  
 “ not one.” To these, I only add that clear  
 and strong passage, Eph. ii. 1. 2. 3. “ And  
 “ you hath he quickened who were dead in  
 “ trespasses and sins, wherein in time past ye  
 “ walked according to the course of this world,  
 “ according to the prince of the power of the  
 “ air, the spirit that now worketh in the chil-  
 “ dren of disobedience. Among whom also  
 “ we all had our conversation in times past,  
 “ in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the de-  
 “ fires of the flesh, and of the mind ; and  
 “ were by nature the children of wrath, even  
 “ as others.”

In this summary view of the declarations of  
 scripture upon this subject, I have confined  
 myself to such passages as have an aspect up-  
 on the state of our nature in general. And  
 indeed, as conclusive a proof of its being the  
 doctrine of scripture, may be drawn conse-  
 quentially as directly. With this view, not  
 to mention many other arguments, I beg  
 your attention to the two following: 1. The  
 tenor

tenor of the gospel-message, particularly the extent of the commission, and the language used through the whole: Mark xvi. 15. "Go, ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." John iii. 16. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." Examine the import of this truth. Whom did the Father love? or to whom did he send the Saviour? To the world, and to every creature. For what end did he love them, and for what purpose did the Redeemer come? To save them from perishing. But why were they in danger of perishing? Doubtless, because they were in sin. In vain, then, do men exercise their ingenuity in explaining away particular passages. This truth does not rest upon an expression or two, the meaning of which must be ascertained by critical skill, but upon the whole of the gospel. If we do not throw aside the Bible altogether, Christ Jesus came into the world to obtain forgiveness for the guilty, to save the miserable, and to redeem the slave.

The other argument is drawn from the seals of the covenant of peace; and particularly the initiating seal, both under the Old Testament and the New, of which infants were admitted to be partakers. If they received these seals before the commission of actual guilt, it cannot

cannot be but the nature itself must be defiled; especially as baptism is expressly called *the baptism of repentance, for the remission of sins*, Mark i. 4.

Thus I have laid before you what the scripture teaches us on the sinfulness of our nature, including all the posterity of Adam, without exception. I beseech you, therefore, my beloved hearers, to consider the concern you have in it, as a part of the whole. If you have any belief of the truth of the scriptures as the word of God, attempt not to warp or pervert them when speaking contrary to your fond prejudices. Desire not that ministers should speak unto you smooth things, and prophesy deceit; but receive with humility and fear the divine will, however heavy a sentence of condemnation it may carry against yourselves, *viz.* that you are sinners by nature; that your hearts are estranged and alienated from the love of God; and that, if you die in that condition, you shall not see his face in mercy.

I now proceed to the *second* branch of this head; which was, To confirm the account given in scripture from experience, that is to say, from the visible state of the world, and the testimony of our own hearts.

Let us then see what evidence is afforded us from the visible state of the world, *that all have sinned, &c.* And here, my brethren, what

an instructive lesson, but at the same time what a humbling and melancholy prospect, opens to our view! There are many remarks which might be profitably made on the state of the world in every age, to shew how much sin hath reigned in the hearts of men, and what desolation it hath wrought in the place of their abode. The great difficulty is, to range them in proper order, and propose them in a simple and perspicuous manner, that ordinary hearers may understand and profit by them. For this purpose, let us first take a view of mankind in a public or national, and then in a private or personal, capacity.

1. Let us consider mankind in a public or national capacity. In this view, what is the history of past ages but the history of human guilt? If, instead of taking up with the idle and visionary hypotheses of philosophers, we only attend to what men have been in fact, we shall be obliged to say, with the Spirit of God, that "the imagination of the heart of man is only evil from his youth." It is not proper here to omit, or rather it is highly necessary to mention, the impiety and idolatry of the several nations of the world. Excepting the small number of Abraham's family, who were *the election of God*, and, by a peculiar disposition of Providence, the depositaries of his truths, every other nation upon the face of the globe, not only deserted the worship  
of

of the true God, but fell headlong into the most stupid and sottish idolatry. This was not peculiar to those nations who continued in ignorance, and whom the more improved and polished thought proper to distinguish by the name of *barbarians*, but was at least equally true of those who were most highly civilized. Of the wisest nations, as well as the wisest men, the apostle very justly says in this epistle, ch. i. 22. 23. "Professing themselves  
" to be wise, they became fools; and changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into  
" an image made like to corruptible man, and  
" to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things."

I must make even a farther observation, and intreat your attention to it, That the wisest in profession seem to have become the greatest fools. It seems to have been designed in Providence, as a standing and indelible mark of the vanity of human wisdom, that those very nations who were most early in their application to, and most successful in their cultivation of the liberal arts, were the most extravagant and senseless in their theological opinions, and religious rites. I mean, particularly, the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans; worshipping bulls and calfs, serpents and insects, the most stupid of four-footed beasts, and creeping things of the most shocking form. This every one may satisfy him-

self of, who will look into the histories of these celebrated nations, as they have been transmitted to us by themselves.

Consider, my brethren, the unnatural cruelty of the religious rites of many nations. It was frequent and general with them, to offer up human sacrifices, and make their children pass through the fire; the very reflection on which is sufficient to fill a considerate person with horror. Consider also the scandalous impurity of some of their ceremonies, and the obscene history of the objects of their worship. Strange to think of indeed! yet so it is, that most of the eminent writers of antiquity are employed in describing the drinking and merriment, the scolding and quarrels, the tricks and robberies, and the amorous intrigues of their gods and goddesses.

If we think in a serious manner on these undoubted facts, can we help saying, Oh! the ingratitude of those wretches among us who call themselves freethinkers, who have been taught by revelation only to form rational and consistent notions of the first cause and creator of all things, and yet reject revelation entirely, and pretend to found them upon human reason! I am sensible there are some who do not think that the idolatry of the heathen world ought to be reckoned among their crimes; but if you will consult the Old Testament, you will find it considered there

as the first and most atrocious crime which solicited the vengeance of an offended God. If you consult this epistle to the Romans, you will find it leads the way in the account given of human apostasy. The first of all the ten commands, which were given as a sum of the moral law, is, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." And indeed, if the first duty of natural religion be a confession and acknowledgement of God our creator, the first of all sins must be, a contempt of his name, or a profanation of his worship.

But idolatry was not alone. From this, as a fruitful source, flowed every other human vice. What a terrible detail is given us by the historians of every age ! On what is it that all the great transactions of the world have still turned ? Has it not been on the ambition, cruelty, injustice, oppression, and raging lust and impurity, of men. Whatever number of virtuous persons was among them, they seem to have either lain concealed, or fallen a sacrifice to the envy and malice of others. Since the first murder, of Abel, by his brother Cain, what terrible havock has been made of man by man ! We are so habituated to this, that it makes little impression. We can even peruse, with attention and delight, the narratives of stratagems of war, ferocity in combat, devastation and bloodshed. Who are the persons

sons who have acquired the greatest renown in the present or preceding ages? Who are the persons who have been the greatest objects of human admiration? Have they not been the most active, and the most successful, destroyers of their fellow-creatures? This circumstance indeed communicates the guilt of individuals to the whole; shows that it belongs to mankind in general; and that the description given by the apostle is not more shocking than true, ch. i. 28. 29. 30. 31. 32. "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient: being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who knowing the judgement of God, (that they which commit such things are worthy of death), not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."

There are to be found upon record instances of such dreadful and aggravated guilt, as it were to be wished they had been, or could have been buried in oblivion. For this reason,

son,

son, I shall neither mention their names, nor cite the examples; but observe, that the extent and prevalence of wickedness should be considered as a strong proof of the corruption of the whole race; and the particular signal instances of astonishing or monstrous crimes, as a proof of the excessive depravation of our nature, and what man in his present state is capable of. I know it is pleasing and gratifying to human pride, to talk of the dignity of human nature, and the beauty of moral virtue: and if it be done in such a manner as to make us esteem the only mean of recovering our lost integrity and original glory, I have no objection to it. But if it be spoken of man as he now is without regenerating grace, I am certain it is more agreeable to reason and experience to say, that, from the lengths to which some have proceeded when placed in circumstances of temptation, it is owing to the power of restraining providence, that others have been comparatively somewhat better.

I have seen it observed, with great apparent justice, that probably one end which God had in view when he shortened the period of human life after the deluge, was, to set bounds to the progress of human guilt. As it is the nature of vice, to strengthen by habit, and increase by time; a race of wicked men living many hundreds of years, would degenerate and harden to a degree not easily

conceived. And indeed, if we examine into the true causes of any little degree of order and peace which we now enjoy, we shall see abundant reason to adore the wisdom of divine Providence, but very little to ascribe much goodness to the human heart.

The most truly excellent characters which are to be found in history, and the most illustrious deeds which those heroes have performed, have for their very foundation the corruption of the human race. In this remark I have in view the sages and legislators of antiquity, who acquired so much renown by establishing systems of policy and government for different states. What was this else, and indeed what was it called, but taming the savage, and restraining the profligate part of their fellow-creatures? It seems plainly to be the point in view in every human law, to bridle the fury of human inclination, and hinder one man from making a prey of another. This is well described by the apostle Paul, 1 Tim. i. 9. 10. "Knowing this, that the  
 " law is not made for a righteous man, but  
 " for the lawless and disobedient, for the un-  
 " godly and for sinners, for unholy and  
 " profane, for murderers of fathers and mur-  
 " derers of mothers, for man-slayers, for  
 " whoremongers, for them that defile them-  
 " selves with mankind, for men-stealers, for  
 " liars, for perjured persons, and if there be  
 " any

“ any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.” We have indeed the testimony of men against themselves in this case. It has been found to hold, without any exception, that the longer men live, they have the greater suspicion of those with whom they live; the greater experience they have of the world, they have the harder thoughts of men in general. In particular, those who have been most conversant in public life, and have obtained most of what is called a knowledge of the world, have always the worst opinion of human nature.

2. Let us now, from a general, come to a particular and personal view of our present state. You may be apt to suppose, that tho' the sinfulness of human nature is too general, yet it is not universal; that though vice and wickedness has appeared conspicuously, and though perhaps wicked men may have obtained the ascendancy in every nation, this will not serve to found a sentence against every man. We might upon this part of the subject observe, that the truth illustrated above will receive confirmation from our most intimate knowledge of one another. Human nature will gain nothing by a close inspection. Take it either in general or particular, its best appearance is when viewed at a distance. The greatest and best characters, when closely examined, have always such blemishes and imperfections

perfections attending them, as greatly diminish their lustre. This indeed has grown into a proverb, That much familiarity breeds contempt. On this account, we may safely say, that if such is the state of our nature, that no man is able to justify himself, or obtain the entire approbation of his fellow-sinners, much more must "every mouth be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God," Rom. iii. 19.

But the chief illustration of this part of the subject must be from the testimony which conscience constrains every man to bear against himself. Examine, therefore, my brethren, what reason you have to be satisfied, that you yourselves, unless your natures have been renewed by the Holy Ghost, are under the dominion of sin; nay, that even such as have been "brought again from the dead" do still feel "a law in their members warring against the law of God in their minds." Remember then that you have to do with him "who seeth in secret," and "who searcheth Jerusalem as with candles." It was necessary formerly to take notice of the enormous effects of sin in this life; we must now search a little deeper, and consider the beginning and source of these in the disposition of the heart. It is true, there are probably many here who are justly chargeable with the grossest crimes; such as, impiety, lying, injustice, or uncleanness:

ness : and oh ! that it may please God, that their sins may find them out, and his word may be quick and powerful to their conviction. But what I have now in view is, to maintain the universal conclusion in the text, not only that many men have been profligates, but that every man is a sinner.

For this purpose, it is of the utmost moment to put you in mind what sin properly is. There are two ways of defence, you know, upon any trial : the one is, to deny the fact ; the other, to maintain it is no crime. It is of necessity, therefore, in the *first* place, to ascertain the charge, by an account of the nature of sin. Of this, I do not think there can be produced a juster account than we have in our shorter catechism : “Sin is any want of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God :” Which is nothing else but a brief illustration of the words of scripture, *Sin is the transgression of the law.* Let the conscience, then, of every hearer answer to the charge. Have you kept, or have you broken the law of God ? Have you been obedient subjects to the King of kings ? Have you done your own will, or the will of him that made you ? However unwilling you may be to put this question home at present, no person shall be able to decline the tribunal, or evade the answer in the day of judgement.

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We have one great difficulty to struggle with in the attempt of bringing the guilty to confession, that sin hath blinded the understanding, and perverted the judgement; so that after we have said, that sin is the transgression of the law, there will remain another question, What is the law, and how far doth it extend? Upon this we must have recourse to the remaining traces that are left upon the conscience; and I see nothing more proper, than to press home that summary which God hath given of his own right and our duty, in the first and great commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind;" Matth. xxii. 37. Are you your own? Have you no lord over you? Can you plead any exception to this command? Is not your maker infinitely perfect, and infinitely amiable? Is he not worthy of your supreme love? If he is not, who is it, or what is it, that you have reason to prefer, or that can produce a better title? Can there be any thing more just than the sentiment expressed by the pious Psalmist, Psal. lxxiii. 25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." Is there excellence or sweetness in the creature, and is there none or less in the creator, from whom every inferior nature derives its very existence,

existence, and on whom it depends every moment for its preservation ?

May I not hope to have some hold of sinners here, in pleading the rights of their maker ? Are your hearts then naturally, and have they been habitually and supremely set upon God ? Has it been your first and leading care, to know him, and to serve him, to inquire into his will, that you might do what was acceptable to him ? Do you believe, that in his favour only is life, and therefore do you seek your happiness and your comfort in him ? Many are apt greatly to mistake upon this subject ; nay, it seems to be the leading deception of sinners, to think nothing evil or punishable, but such gross crimes as are disorderly in human society, and obnoxious to human laws. It is scarce possible to make them sensible, how much guilt there is in a total forgetfulness of God ; and yet this is the very source of human depravity. The chief thing blameable in our attachment to other things, is their filling the room that is due to God, their being employed in a manner that is dishonourable to God, or, in other words, their being instruments of rebellion against the will of God.

Are there any of you, my brethren, who, by the kindness of Providence, have been kept free from gross, visible, and scandalous offences ; who, from a natural coolness of  
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temperament, have been chaste or sober; who, from a principle of honour, have been just or generous; who, from the dictates of prudence, have been regular and decent; but have been unmindful of your duty to God, have been unwilling to think of him, or strangers to delight in him? and are you not sinners in his presence? Have you been preserved by his power, and yet never considered the obligation? Have you been living daily upon his bounty, and yet seldom or never given him thanks, except in the most indifferent and formal manner, and such worship, as is a much more proper occasion for repentance than ground of confidence? How, then, shall you be able to stand in the judgement? “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”

II. I come now to make some practical improvement of what has been said on this subject. And,

1. From what has been said, you may learn how deeply and surely the foundation of the gospel is laid. It is laid in the actual state of the world, and in that depravity of our nature, which it is impossible to conceal, and which nothing but the greatest obstinacy and perversion of mind can have the courage to deny. I am sensible, that nothing but an  
inward

inward and personal conviction of guilt and misery wrought by the Spirit of the living God, will bring the sinner to embrace the gospel; yet the necessity of salvation may be evinced in the clearest and most satisfactory manner, by reason and observation. As the visible creation, when attentively viewed, serves to discover the wisdom and omnipotence of God, and is, as it were, an open volume, which men of every tongue may read and admire; so the state of the moral world, as it is called, plainly points out the guilt and apostasy of man, and loudly calls for the interposition of the Saviour. This it is our duty to attend to, not only to stop the mouths of gain-sayers, but to establish the faith of God's children, that it may not be overthrown or unsettled by the cavils and objections of those who lie in wait to deceive.

2. From what has been said, you may see with what sentiments we should look upon the state of the world, or peruse the history of providence, and what profit we may reap from it. When we see, as at present, in our own age and country, what profanity and neglect of God, what contempt or desertion of his worship, prevails among many of every rank; what pride and luxury, what riot and sensuality, what uncleanness and debauchery, what lying, fraud, and perjury; and when we observe how one race of sinners

has succeeded another in every age, and that true religion has been generally, as it is still, in a struggling or persecuted state, we ought to be humbled for the sin of our nature, and the share which each of us has contributed to the general guilt. Instead of finding fault with Providence for the permission of sin, we ought to be filled with a holy indignation against ourselves and others, for the perpetration of it. We ought to admire that wisdom and power by which the King of kings sets restraining bounds to the violence of men. Neither ought we to omit adoring his holiness in the awful visitations with which he sometimes overtakes and overwhelms the wicked in their wickedness. When he sends out his sore judgements of war, famine, and pestilence; or when he looks to the earth, and it trembles, as unable to bear all the guilt that is laid upon it; when thunder, lightning, and tempest, seem to threaten the immediate dissolution of the whole fabric; we ought to consider all these as the just punishment of sin, and look forward with fear to that time, when he shall render to every man according to his works, and deserved vengeance shall not be partial, but universal; when it shall not be occasional and temporary, but final, unchangeable, and eternal.

3. You may learn, from what has been said, the state and danger of those who are chargeable

**Ser. 1.** *All mankind by nature under sin.* 27

able with sins of a heinous and aggravated nature. If all without exception are "under sin; if every mouth must be stopped," &c. what shall be the condition of those who have the shameful pre-eminence of being sinners of the first order, who have done more than others to provoke the Lord to anger! If those who have lived to themselves, and not to God, shall not be able to stand in the judgement; what shall become of those who have sold themselves to work iniquity, and whose abominable practices are a reproach to reason, as well as a scandal to religion? I may even say further, in the words of the apostle Peter, "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" 1 Pet. iv. 18. I do the rather beg your attention to this, that we always find loose livers the warmest advocates for libertine principles. It is the drunkard, the swearer, the impure fornicator, who are so ready to produce in conversation their pretended arguments against the corruption of human nature. I speak to all such within hearing. What benefit will you reap by denying original corruption, when you are justly chargeable with so many actual transgressions? If there are, or ever were, any persons in the world without sin, surely you cannot pretend that you are so yourselves. You are ashamed to reveal your hidden scenes to your fellow-sinners, but how shall

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you conceal them from the searcher of all hearts? If you cannot bear to be told your faults by your fellow-creatures, with what speechless confusion shall you stand at last before the judgement-seat of Christ! Let me therefore address you in the words of your maker by the psalmist, Psal. l. 21. 22.

“ These things thou hast done, and I kept  
 “ silence: thou thoughtest that I was altoge-  
 “ ther such a one as thyself: but I will re-  
 “ prove thee, and set them in order before  
 “ thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that  
 “ forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and  
 “ there be none to deliver.” May it please  
 God effectually to convince you of your sin  
 and danger, and to lead you to his mercy, as re-  
 vealed in the gospel, for your forgiveness. I con-  
 clude with the advice of the psalmist, Psal. ii.  
 12. “ Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye  
 “ perish from the way, when his wrath is kin-  
 “ dled but a little: blessed are all they that  
 “ put their trust in him.”

S E R-

## S E R M O N II.

The sinner without excuse before God.

P S A L M CXXX: 3.

*If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord,  
who shall stand?*

**J**USTICE and mercy are the perfections of the divine nature, in which we as sinners have a peculiar concern. Our world is the great theatre, and the human race the great, or, so far as we know, the only objects of their united exercise. Clear and just apprehensions, therefore, of those attributes, must lie at the foundation of all religion. It is easy to see, that a discovery, both of justice and mercy, is necessary to bring the sinner to repentance. He must see the guilt and misery in which he is involved, and the way by which he may certainly, and by which he can only obtain a recovery. The same views are equally necessary to every Christian, during his continuance in this imperfect state. They are necessary to that self-denial which ought to be his habitual character, and to that humiliation

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and penitence which ought to be his frequent employment.

I must, however, observe, that though there are few of the attributes of God more frequently spoken of, perhaps there are few less distinctly understood. Men have either an imperfect knowledge, or weak persuasion of the justice of God, and thence despise his mercy. On the other hand, they are apt to take presumptuous views of his general mercy, and thence despise his justice and severity. This is not peculiar to those, who, upon the whole, are under the dominion of sin. Even the children of God themselves are ready, either to lose their views of the majesty and holiness of God, which should incline them to serve him with reverence and godly fear; or, on the other hand, by neglecting his mercy, to fall into that state of slavish bondage and illiberal fear, which is equally injurious to the honour of God, and hurtful to their own peace.

On these accounts I have chosen to insist a little on this passage of the psalmist David, in which we have an united view of divine justice and mercy; "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee; that thou mayst be feared." It is thought by some, that this psalm was composed in that memorable period of his life, when he was plunged

plunged in the deepest guilt, by his adultery and murder in the matter of Uriah; but more commonly, that it was in the time of his persecution, when the imminent dangers to which he was so often exposed, brought his sins strongly to remembrance. Reserving what is here said of the mercy of God to another opportunity, let us now consider the view given us of his justice, in this passage, "If thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" For this purpose I shall,

1. Endeavour to ascertain and explain the meaning of the psalmist's assertion.

2. Support and confirm it from scripture and experience.

3. In the *last* place, I shall make a practical improvement of what may be said upon it.

I. LET us then, *first*, endeavour to ascertain and explain the meaning of the psalmist's expression, "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" These words evidently carry in them the deepest sense of sin, a strong and inward conviction of the impossibility of justifying himself before a pure and holy God, if he should deal with him as in justice he might: "If thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" God is an omniscient being, every where present, to whom all our thoughts

thoughts and ways, and consequently all our sins, are and must be perfectly known. The expression, then, cannot mean, that there are any sins unregarded, or not observed of God; because this is impossible. The marking of iniquities here, seems to be an allusion to what passes in human courts, where the judges set down, or put upon record all that is brought against the criminal, in order to found a sentence of condemnation. In this view, the meaning must be, if God should so mark iniquities, as to proceed to punish us for all of which we were really guilty, there could be no possibility of standing such an impartial trial.

I need not tell you, that the putting the words in the form of a question, "O Lord, who shall stand?" does not imply, that there is any uncertainty in the matter, or that any can be found pure enough to endure such a scrutiny, but rather serves to deny it in the strongest manner. Again, we are not to suppose, that the psalmist, by putting the question thus in general, "Who shall stand?" designed to turn the accusation from himself, or to extenuate his own sins, by bringing in others equally guilty. This is indeed the practice of many in the world, who seem to think the numbers of those who are chargeable with any sin, an excuse or palliation of the guilt of particular offenders. But the true spirit of  
repentance.

repentance leads to very different sentiments : it makes the sinner fix upon his own faults, and point at the sins and plagues of his own heart, without thinking upon the sins of others, unless as they may be an occasion of discovering to him more of the depravation and wickedness of his own nature. So that the genuine import of the psalmist's expression seems to be, If thou, Lord, shouldst execute the decrees of justice, and punish every thing that is done amiss, the holiest man on earth would not be able to abide the trial; how much less would such a sinner as I be able to stand ?

II. I proceed now to support and confirm this truth from scripture and experience. And you will be pleased to observe, that it is the constant doctrine of the holy scriptures; it is the uniform language of humility and penitence there. Thus the psalmist, Pf. cxliii. 2. " Enter not into judgement with thy servant : " for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." To the same purpose, see the language of Job, ch. ix. 2. 3. 4. " I know it is so " of a truth : but how should man be just with " God ? If he will contend with him, he " cannot answer him one of a thousand. He " is wise in heart, and mighty in strength : " who hath hardened himself against him, " and hath prospered ?" A clear discovery  
of

34 *The sinner without excuse before God. Ser. 2.*

of the infinite majesty of God, the unspotted holiness of his nature, the extent, the purity, and spirituality of his law, will immediately carry home a conviction of this truth, and make us sensible what impure and wretched creatures we are : it will make every one of us cry out with Job, after a discovery of the divine glory and perfection, ch. xl. 4. 5. " Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee ? " I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. " Once have I spoken, but I will not answer : yea, twice, but I will proceed no further." And again, ch. xlii. 5. 6. " I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear : but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Every true penitent will say, with the psalmist, Ps. xix. 12. " Who can understand his errors ? cleanse thou me from secret faults." Nay, he will consider his daily preservation as an evidence of the divine patience, in the suspension of his sentence, as in Lam. iii. 22. 23. " It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning : great is thy faithfulness."

These, my brethren, are examples of the sentiments and language of the scripture-saints ; and if we look a little into their characters, as set before us in the inspired writings, we shall see, that self-abasement is one of

of the most certain proofs of true religion; that the more any person has made real improvement in holiness, he will think and speak in so much the humbler manner; will more clearly see the evil of sin, and more readily confess its power and influence over his own heart. I know this is very contrary to the spirit that prevails in the world; and particularly opposite to the reigning temper of the present age. I know also, that there are many objections raised against this fundamental truth. But instead of wrangling controversy, in which our understandings are often lost, and our passions irritated, rather than subdued; for further enforcing the above truth, I shall only urge every hearer to a serious and impartial reflection upon his own conduct. This, I am persuaded, will, by the blessing of God, be the most effectual mean of silencing the reasonings of the carnal mind, and forcing the conscience to a confession, both of the equity of the law, and the guilt of disobedience.

For attaining this end, I shall just propose three general subjects of examination; and beg that you may shew fidelity to your own souls, in bringing them to the trial. 1. How many duties have you omitted, which you must be sensible you ought to have performed? 2. How often have you been guilty of express transgressions of the law of God? 3. How  
**many**

many blemishes and imperfections cleave to those very duties which you endeavour to perform in obedience to his will ?

1. then, How many duties have you omitted, which you must be sensible you ought to have performed ? In charging you with neglect of duty, I must begin with unthankfulness and forgetfulness of God. Let the conscience be ever so much biased by partiality, or perverted by wrong principles, is it possible to deny the obligation of every creature to acknowledge his dependence upon the author of his being, the preserver of his life, and the source of his mercies ? But have you, my brethren, been sensible of this ? How unmindful have you been of the rock that begat you, and the God that formed you ? This is the first of all sins, and the fruitful parent of every particular transgression. It was a heavy charge brought against a great prince by the prophet Daniel, ch. v. 23. last clause, “ And the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified.” Say, ye men of the world, have you indeed acknowledged God, on whom you depend for every breath that you draw, for every moment that you continue in existence ? I have often thought, that it was one of the greatest evidences of the depravity of human nature, that an abundant and opulent state on earth should

should so generally lead to neglect of God. What is this, when interpreted, if I may speak so, but that the greater our maker's goodness is to us, commonly the less is our gratitude to him ?

But I would speak to those whose consciences are more enlightened, and who have not wholly forgotten the Lord. Are not you also chargeable with manifold omissions ? What sense of gratitude have you retained, and expressed, for innumerable mercies, spiritual and temporal, to yourselves, and to your families ? How unequal the payment of gratitude to the debt of obligation ! What use have you made of them in God's service ? What advantage have you reaped, for your own sanctification, from the bounty of Providence, from the strokes of Providence, from the ordinances of divine institution, from the truths of the everlasting gospel, from seasons of instruction, and opportunities of worship, from edifying examples, from faithful admonitions ? What have you done for the good of others ? How often have you relieved the necessitous, comforted the distressed, instructed the ignorant, admonished the negligent, punished or restrained the profane ? I hope I speak to many who have not been wholly negligent in improving their time and talents ; yet surely there is just ground of humiliation to the best, that, even under a conviction of duty, they have so imperfectly discharged it ; and probably the very persons who have done most, will

be most sincerely grieved that they have not done more.

Alas ! my brethren, it is a great mistake to think light of sins of omission. How much do I pity the condition of those thoughtless persons, who, forgetting that they were made to serve God, seem to live for no other purpose than to enjoy themselves ! And oh the miserable delusion of those sinners who set their minds at ease by the silly excuse, That they do harm to none but themselves ! Let them hear and tremble at the tenor of the sentence in the great day, Matth. xxv. 30. "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness : there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." It is the first duty of natural religion, "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name ;" and it is the sum of all the duties of the gospel, 1 Cor. vi. 19. 20. "Ye are not your own ; for ye are bought with a price : therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

2. Consider in how many instances you have been guilty of express transgressions of the law of God, his law written upon your hearts, and repeated in his own word. If you know any thing at all of the law of God in its spirituality and extent, you must be deeply convinced of your innumerable transgressions, in thought, in word, and in deed. (1.) How many are the sins of your thoughts ? Sin is seated in the heart : it hath its throne and dominion there. Every enormity in the life takes its rise from the impurity

impurity of the heart. None will think light of sins of the heart, who have any acquaintance with the word of God. Let them but reflect upon the account given of the guilt of the old world, Gen. vi. 5. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Let them reflect upon the saying of the wise man, Prov. iv. 23. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life;" or on the distinguishing character of God, Jer. xvii. 10. "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings."

How many thoughts are there in your hearts admitted and entertained, dishonourable to God, unthankful for his mercies, impatient under his providence? How many thoughts, envious, malicious, spiteful, towards your neighbour? How many wanton lascivious thoughts, and irregular desires? How many covetous, worldly, vain, ambitious thoughts? Let me beseech you also to consider, that these are not sins that we fall into seldom, or by occasional temptation, but multitudes break in upon us every day, and in a manner every hour. What an infinite number, then, must we be chargeable with in twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty years! If so many are the sins of a single day, what must be the guilt of a whole life? What reason to

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cry out, with the prophet to Jerusalem, "How long shall vain thoughts lodge within us?"

(2.) Let me beseech you to consider the sins of the tongue. Here I shall not insist much on the grosser sins of the tongue, lying, slandering, backbiting; of these, though few will be sensible they are guilty themselves, all are abundantly ready to complain, as reigning in the world in general. Neither shall I insist on impure conversation, filthy and lascivious expressions, or allusions to obscenity; though I am afraid many here present are far from being innocent of the charge. But besides these, the sins of the tongue are so many, that the most watchful Christian cannot say he is guiltless. Even the meek Moses was provoked to speak "unadvisedly with his lips." The apostle James has given us a very strong description, both of the general prevalence, and mischievous influence, of the sins of the tongue, James iii. 2. — 8. "For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth. And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity :

“ iniquity : so is the tongue amongst our mem-  
“ bers, that it defileth the whole body, and set-  
“ teth on fire the course of nature ; and it is  
“ set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts,  
“ and of birds, and of serpents, and things in  
“ the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of  
“ mankind : but the tongue can no man tame ;  
“ it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.”

And that none may presume, after all, to think  
these sins of the tongue inconsiderable, let us  
remember what our Saviour tells us, Matth. xii.  
36. 37. “ But I say unto you, that every idle  
“ word that men shall speak, they shall give  
“ account thereof in the day of judgement.  
“ For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and  
“ by thy words thou shalt be condemned.”

(3.) Now, to these sins of heart and conversa-  
tion, let us add the consideration of all the sins  
of our actions, by which we either offend God  
ourselves, or are the means, by a doubtful or  
suspicious example, of inducing others to offend  
him : all the acts of infobriety and intempe-  
rance with regard to ourselves ; of injustice,  
treachery, or oppression, with regard to others.  
Let us consider those sins to which we are led  
by our respective callings and employments, or  
by our respective ages or tempers, or by our si-  
tuation, and the society with which we stand  
connected. The lightness and frothiness of  
some, the sourness and moroseness of others,  
the inconsiderateness and folly of youth, the  
plotting and ambitious projects of riper years,  
the peevishness and covetousness of old age,

and the vanity and selfishness we carry with us through the several stages and periods of life. These things are most, if not all of them, sins in themselves, and do infallibly betray us into a great number of others. If we consider all this with any measure of attention, can we refuse to adopt the language of the holy scripture, that our sins are more in number than the hairs upon our heads, or than the sand that is upon the sea-shore? In fine, if we consider the sins we are guilty of, according to our conditions and relations in the world, as husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, magistrates and subjects, ministers and people, we shall find the account so prodigiously swelled, that we shall have more than reason to cry out, with the psalmist, "Lord, if thou shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who should stand?"

3. Consider the sins that cleave even to your religious duties, and every thing you do in obedience to the will of God. The purest worshipper on earth must ask forgiveness for the sins even of his holy things. I am not here to insist upon the hypocritical performances of many professing Christians, done merely, or chiefly, to be seen of men, or spread, as a covering, over their hidden and shameful deeds; nor am I to mention that religious zeal which arises from strife, contention, and vain-glory, and which chiefly aims at the support of party-names; because these are directly and eminently sinful: they are an abomination in the sight of  
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of God. But, my brethren, even in those performances which you go about with some measure of sincerity, how many defects are to be found? Oh! how much negligence, coldness, and formality, in worship! how many wandering, vain, idle, and worldly thoughts, in your hearts, when your bodies are in the house of God! Consider only the infinite glory and majesty of God, in whose sight the heavens themselves are not clean, and who charges his angels with folly; and say, whether you have ever prayed at all with becoming reverence of spirit. Consider only the unspeakable condescension of that God to his creatures, and the unsearchable riches of his grace to the sinner; and say, whether your hearts have ever been suitably affected with his love.

It is our duty, my brethren, to consider, how far we have been from preaching the word of God with proper impressions of the majesty of him in whose name we speak; how far we have done it with simplicity and dignity, neither fearing the censure, nor courting the applause, of our fellow-sinners; how far we have done it with that tenderness and affection, with that holy fervour and importunity, which the value of those precious souls to whom we speak manifestly demands. And is it not your business to consider, how seldom you hear with that attention, reverence, humility, and love, with which the sacred and important truths of the everlasting gospel ought to be received; how many hear much more as judges than as learners, as critics  
rather

rather than as sinners; and content themselves with marking the weakness of an indifferent, or praising the abilities of an animated speaker? And how many run with itching ears from one congregation to another, or even from one party or profession to another, not that they may be edified, but that curiosity and fancy may be gratified? How many lost ordinances, how many mis-spent sabbaths, have we to lament before God?

When we come to the second table of the law, how many sinful motives mix their influence in the duties we perform to our neighbours? how many acts of justice owe their being, in part at least, to fear of reproach? how many works of charity owe their splendor to a desire of applause, as well as to a better principle? I should never have done, were I to go through all the great duties of the Christian life, and observe the sinful defects that cleave to them. I believe I may say with great truth, that would we but deal faithfully, there would be no more necessary to our humiliation, than a strict examination of our duties themselves. This would oblige us to confess, that "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags before God;" that we must not plead for reward, but forgiveness; that no merit of our own, but infinite mercy alone, must be the foundation of our hope.

III. I come now to make some practical application of the subject, for your instruction and direction. And, 1. How great is the deceitfulness

ness of sin ! how astonishing the blindness of sinners ! How easy and obvious is the consideration of our sins, in the order in which I have endeavoured to set them before you ! Sins of omission, on the one hand, and of commission, on the other ; and duties faulty in both respects, *viz.* by essential qualities neglected, and sins mixed with the performance : sins in thought, in word, and in deed, against God, our neighbour, and ourselves. Yet, alas ! how many are there in a great measure ignorant of the sins they are chargeable with, and therefore sleeping in security ! Think, my beloved hearers, on your condition. To know your danger, is the first step to deliverance. Is not the law of obedience clear, written upon all the creator's works ? Is it not engraven upon the conscience ? and is it not often repeated and enforced by the dispensations of providence ? Would there be so much of divine judgement, if there was no offence ? Every natural evil proclaims the sin of man. An inclement season, an injurious world, and a frail dying body, conspire in pointing out our sinful state. And yet, after all, how blind is the sinner to the discovery, how deaf to the friendly warning, how regardless of the approaching trial ! Awake, I beseech you, while there may be peace, and look upon your danger, while there is yet given you time and opportunity to fly from it.

2. If the holiest cannot stand before God, if no flesh living can be justified in his sight, how fearful must be the state of those who are lying

lying under the guilt of atrocious, aggravated, and repeated crimes ! Though great profligates often desert the ordinances of God, that they may sin at greater ease, and meet with less resistance ; yet, in so numerous an assembly as this, there is reason to suppose there are not a few of the *chief of sinners* ; the rather, that while some desert the ordinances, that they may have ease from within, others attend them as a cover ; that they may blind their neighbours, and meet with less suspicion or disturbance from without. How, then, can murderers, fornicators, swearers, drunkards, thieves, and retainers of unjust gain, hear what hath been said on this subject without trembling for themselves ! Hear for your souls sake ; hear for eternity's sake ; hear, I beseech you, for Christ's sake. O that the Spirit of God may carry home the truth, and make it " quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword," Heb. iv. {12. It is an easy thing for you now to dissemble the sins which men would punish, and even to boast of the sins which men must tolerate ; but hear and remember the two following passages : Heb. iv. 13. " All things are naked, and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do ;" and, Heb. x. 31. " It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

3. In the *last* place, If any Christian desires to keep his conscience tender and faithful, to have a deep growing and humbling sense of his own sinfulness ; if he would bar the gate against the entrance of pride, or banish it after it has obtained admission ; if he desires to walk humbly and

and watchfully,—let him live as in the presence of God, let him often sift himself at his awful tribunal. It is easy to justify ourselves before men, who have so little to require, and from whom so much may be concealed. The truth is, it is not a great matter to be able to set the world at defiance. But to look up to that God who sitteth upon the throne of his holiness, is of infinitely greater moment, and of infinitely greater difficulty. He trieth the reins and the heart. He abhorreth evil. You see how Job defended himself against the accusations of his friends, held fast his integrity, and would not let it go; but no sooner did God speak to him in the greatness of his power, than he confessed his vileness, and laid his hand upon his mouth. In the same manner, he that would guard against the impositions of a deceitful heart, that would not be abused by flattering friends, or led astray by a mistaken world; that would rather walk in the path of penitence than security; let him live as in the presence of God. And happy, happy they, who take confusion of face to themselves now, and seek for mercy through the blood of the atonement, in comparison of those who justify themselves now, but shall stand at last with unutterable confusion before the supreme judge, ready to pronounce the irreversible sentence.

S E R -

## S E R M O N III.

Hope of forgiveness with God.

P S A L M CXXX. 4.

*But there is forgiveness with thee; that thou mayst be feared.*

**A**fter considering our own miserable and guilty state, and how little any plea which we can offer will avail before the holiness and justice of God, it is proper to turn our eyes to his mercy, as the only foundation of our hope and peace. This is of the utmost necessity to every penitent. When a sense of sin hath truly taken hold of the conscience, it is so intolerable, that no man can continue long in that condition. When the waves and billows of divine wrath are going over him, he must either fasten upon some ground of hope, or suffer shipwreck upon the rocks of despair. There are indeed, alas that we should be so liable to delusion! many ways of weakening the force of conviction, and obtaining a temporary, imperfect, or false peace. But the only safe and stable ground of hope is the divine mercy. And happy the sinner who obtains such discoveries of its extent and efficacy, as to make him cleave to it with undivided affection, and rest upon it as the anchor of his soul, from which he is resolved never to depart.

Believe

Believe it, Christians, the more the sinner looks into his own state, the more real and thorough his acquaintance with his own heart is, the more he finds, that not the least ray of hope can arise from that quarter. This is precisely the import of the psalmist's declaration in this passage, taking the one branch of it in connection with the other ; as if he had said, When I consider how great and multiplied my transgressions have been, I must stand speechless, and without excuse, before thy holy tribunal, and justify thee, although thou shouldst condemn me. But Lord, thou art a God of infinite mercy. This I fix upon as the foundation of my hope. I see nothing in myself to plead. Thy law accuses me. My own conscience passes sentence upon me. I am not able to support the view of thy justice and holiness. Whither can I fly, but to thy mercy? Here I desire to take refuge, and to my unspeakable consolation there is forgiveness with thee ; so that thou mayst and oughtest to be feared. In discoursing further on this subject, which I intend to do in a manner entirely practical, I propose, in a dependence on divine grace, to follow this method.

1. I shall give a brief view of the discoveries which God hath made of his mercy, as the foundation of the sinner's hope ; or, in other words, show what reason we have to believe, that there is forgiveness with him.

2. I shall point out the connection between the mercy of God and his fear ; or explain the

import of this expression, "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayst be feared."

3. I shall make some practical improvement of the subject.

I. FIRST, then, let us attempt to give a brief view of the discoveries which God hath made of his mercy, as the foundation of the sinner's hope; or, in other words, shew what reason we have to believe, that there is forgiveness with him. For this purpose I observe, first of all, that the patience and forbearance of God towards sinners, in the course of his providence, is the effect of his mercy. Even this affords some faint hope, that there may be forgiveness with him. See the reasoning or the expostulation of Jonah on the respite of the destruction of Nineveh, Jonah iv. 2. "And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil." The sentence being suspended, there is time given to apply for pardon, and space for the exercise of repentance, with a peradventure, or who can tell, whether he may not be gracious. We may add to this, his continual benignity and kindness to all his creatures, not excepting the evil, the unthankful, and the unholy. The native tendency of both these is to lead the guilty to repentance, as we are told Rom. ii. 4. "Or despisest thou  
" the

“ the riches of his goodness and forbearance,  
 “ and long-suffering, not knowing that the  
 “ goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?  
 But though this ought to be mentioned, I am  
 very sensible, how insufficient it is of itself to  
 give consolation to a wounded spirit. Taking  
 in the whole plan of providence, there are so  
 many tokens of our creator’s displeasure, so much  
 to be seen of the justice and holiness, as well as of  
 the goodness of God, that it must leave the sin-  
 ner still under a dreadful uncertainty in a mat-  
 ter of such infinite concern. Torn by the su-  
 spicion which is inseparable from guilt, he is  
 full of restless anxiety; and knowing that he  
 must shortly appear before God in an unembod-  
 ied state, he is often putting this question to  
 himself, Wherewith shall I come before the  
 Lord? How shall I be able to stand in the  
 judgement? And therefore,

2. God hath revealed himself in his word,  
 as merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and  
 slow to anger. This was the great truth on which  
 the sinner’s hope depended ever since the apostasy  
 of our first parents. Never since that time could  
 any man produce his title to divine favour in his  
 own obedience: and therefore the mercy of God  
 early intimated in the first promise, continued to  
 make, if I may speak so, the leading part of  
 the divine character in all the discoveries he  
 made of himself. Thus, at the giving of the law,  
 Exod. xxxiv. 5. 6. 7. “ And the Lord descend-  
 “ ed in the cloud, and stood with him there,  
 “ and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And

“ the Lord passed by before him, and pro-  
 “ claimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merci-  
 “ full and gracious, long-suffering, and abun-  
 “ dant in goodness and truth. Keeping mer-  
 “ cy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and  
 “ transgression and sin, and that will by no  
 “ means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity  
 “ of the fathers upon the children, and upon  
 “ the childrens children, unto the third and  
 “ to the fourth generation.” To the same pur-  
 pose the psalmist David, Psal. ciii. 8. “ The  
 “ Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to an-  
 “ ger, and plenteous in mercy.” Hear also the  
 prophet Micah; Micah vii. 18. “ Who is a  
 “ God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity;  
 “ and passeth by the transgression of the rem-  
 “ nant of his heritage? He retaineth not his  
 “ anger for ever, because he delighteth in mer-  
 “ cy.”

I do not here stay to consider what hints were  
 given in the ancient dispensation, of the atone-  
 ment which was afterwards to be made by the  
 incarnation of the Saviour. Doubtless there  
 was some respect to this in the very first pro-  
 mise of the *seed of the woman*, and also in the  
 promise to Abraham, that in his *seed* all nations  
 of the earth should be blessed. The same thing  
 was prefigured by the sacrifices, and shadowed  
 out by many different rites of the Mosaic œco-  
 nomy. It must, however, be allowed, that the  
 faithful in those ages saw it only obscurely, and  
 of consequence understood it very imperfectly.  
 But it was on the revealed mercy of God, which  
 they

they were obliged to seek in the way appointed by himself, that they placed their entire dependence.

I cannot help observing to you, how very encouraging the assurances of pardon are through many passages of the Old Testament; how very gracious the invitations to the sinner, as if they had been contrived on purpose to remove the jealousy which the guilty are too apt to entertain; Is. i. 18. "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." Is. xliii. 25. "I, even I am he  
 " that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine  
 " own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Is. xlv. 22. "I have blotted out as a thick  
 " cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud, thy  
 " sins: return unto me, for I have redeemed  
 " thee." Is. lv. 1. "Ho, every one that  
 " thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and  
 " he that hath no money; come ye, buy and  
 " eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without  
 " money, and without price." Is this the word of God? Are these passages written for our benefit? Is there any thing more plain, than that God is merciful and gracious; nay that he delighteth in mercy? How great encouragement is this to the exercise of repentance? In this very view, indeed, it is urged by the prophet in the 6th and 7th verses of the last cited chapter, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be  
 " found, call ye upon him while he is near.

“ Let the wicked forsake his way, and the un-  
 “ righteous man his thoughts; and let him re-  
 “ turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy  
 “ upon him, and to our God, for he will a-  
 “ bundantly pardon.”

I shall only add, that as the scripture every where bears testimony to the readiness of God to pardon returning sinners, so there are also many passages in which he declares his readiness to pardon the failings which continue to cleave to his own people, and treat them with the utmost tenderness and grace: Psal. ciii. 13. “ Like  
 “ a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pi-  
 “ tieth them that fear him.” Is. xl. 11. “ He  
 “ shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall  
 “ gather the lambs with his arm, and carry  
 “ them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those  
 “ that are with young.” Mal. iii. 17. “ And  
 “ they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts,  
 “ in that day when I make up my jewels, and I  
 “ will spare them as a man spareth his own son  
 “ that serveth him.”

3. But that nothing may be wanting for the complete illustration of this truth, observe, that it appears in the clearest manner, from the gospel of Christ, that there is forgiveness with God. In the fulness of time, God sent his own son in our nature, to be a victim and sacrifice for our offences, to bear our sins in his own body on the tree. In this astonishing event, indeed, the love and mercy of God shines with the brightest lustre: John iii. 16. “ God so lo-  
 “ ved the world, that he gave his only begotten  
 “ Son,

“ Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.” In this great transaction, we have not only an assurance of obtaining, but see the price paid for the purchase of our pardon: 1 Pet. i. 18. “ For ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers.” Instead of finding the justice of God stand in the way of our reconciliation and peace, justice being fully satisfied, seals the pardon, and adds to the comfort of the sinner. In the infinite value of this atonement, we may see the extent of the divine mercy. In the infinite power of this Saviour, we may see the perfect security of those who put their trust in him. Salvation, in all its parts, is offered to the chief of sinners: so that, as the apostle expresses it, Heb. vi. 18. “ That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.”

II. I proceed now to the second thing proposed; which was, to point out the connection between the mercy of God and his fear, or explain the import of this expression, “ There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayst be feared.” The import of this expression must be a little different, as we understand the word *fear*, which is sometimes taken in a larger, and sometimes in a more limited sense. Sometimes, as being so eminent a part, it is made use of to signify

signify the whole of religion ; sometimes it signifies that awe and veneration of the sacred majesty of God with which every one of his servants ought to be habitually possessed. I shall briefly consider it in both these views, there not being the least opposition between them, and both carrying in them the most important and salutary instruction.

If we take the fear of God in the text to signify the whole of that duty and obedience we owe to him, then the connection between forgiveness with God and his being feared, appears from these two considerations.

1. A discovery of the mercy of God is absolutely necessary to his being loved and served by those who have once been sinners. Despair of mercy drives the sinner from God, presents him only as the object of terror and aversion ; and, instead of having the least influence in bringing us to obedience, confirms the guilty in his rebellious opposition to his maker. This must be manifest to every hearer. There can be no religion at all, either in inclination or performance, if there be no forgiveness with God. How should any so much as attempt what they believe to be an unprofitable labour ?

Though this is a truth which none will deny, I am afraid it is a truth not sufficiently attended to, either in its certainty or influence. It tends greatly to illustrate the whole plan of salvation, by the riches of divine grace, or the free, unmerited, unsolicited, love of God. How much does it add to the beauty and meaning of several

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ral passages of scripture ! as 1 John iv. 10. " Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Rom. v. 8. " But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." And the 10th verse of the same chapter, " If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son ; much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Guilt is of a suspicious nature. It is even observed in offences committed by one man against another, that he who hath done the injury is always hardest to be reconciled. The same thing appears very plainly in the disposition of sinners towards God. A gloomy fear, a despondent terror, greatly hinders their return to him ; nor can they ever take one step towards him, till, by the display of his mercy, this insuperable obstruction is removed.

2. As a discovery of the mercy of God is absolutely necessary to our serving him at all, so it is perhaps of all others the most powerful motive to induce us to serve him in sincerity. Nothing whatever more illustrates the divine glory. It presents him as the proper object of worship, of confidence, and of love. When a sinner is once burdened with a sense of guilt, sees the demerit of his transgressions, and feels the justice of his own sentence, what an inconceivable relief must it give him to see the divine mercy ! and how infinitely amiable must this God of mercy appear in his eyes ! Others may

may reason at their ease upon the subject, he is transported with unspeakable joy on the prospect. His heart is immediately taken captive: he feels its constraining power, and yields himself willingly to every demand of duty and gratitude. See, to this purpose, the expressions of the prophet Hosea, ch. xi. 4. "I drew them  
 " with cords of a man, with bands of love,  
 " and I was to them as they that take off the  
 " yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto  
 " them." The same thing is every where in the New Testament represented as the great commanding principle of obedience, 2 Cor. v. 14. "For the love of Christ constraineth us,  
 " because we thus judge, that if one died for  
 " all, then were all dead." 1 John iv. 16.  
 " And we have known and believed the love  
 " that God hath to us. God is love; and he  
 " that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and  
 " God in him." And verse 19. of the same chapter, "We love him, because he first loved  
 " us."

But further, even taking fear in a more limited sense, as signifying a holy reverence and dread of the power and majesty of God, there being forgiveness with him, is so far from weakening, that it strengthens this fear; and that on the two following accounts.

1. The infinite obligations we lie under to divine mercy, must serve to improve our sense of the evil of sin, as committed against so good and so gracious a God, and to increase our abhorrence

horrence of it. The mercy of God to the guilty, at the same time that it brings unspeakable consolation, as delivering them from the wrath to come, serves to humble them, by a view of their own unworthy and undutiful conduct. When an awakened convinced soul, under the apprehension of eternity approaching, begins to contemplate the mercy of God as the ground of forgiveness, he immediately thinks upon this mercy, as having all along spared him in the midst of his provocations. What a wonder of mercy is it, does he say to himself, that I was not immediately cut off in my wickedness, at such a time, or at such a time, which now return full upon his memory! He cannot easily separate the remembrance of past crimes from the mercy that withheld immediate vengeance. And surely nothing will serve more to make the sinner tremble and stand astonished at his own guilt, than reflection on that forbearance of a patient God, which did not doom him to instant and deserved destruction; but spared him to hear the glad tidings of peace.

Thus the unspeakable grace of God in the gospel opens the springs of penitential sorrow, and makes them flow more sweetly indeed, but more freely, and more copiously, than before. You may observe the strong picture of penitence and love, which is drawn with inimitable beauty by the evangelist Luke, ch. vii. 37. 38. "And behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at  
" meat

“ meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an al-  
 “ baster-box of ointment, and stood at his feet  
 “ behind him weeping, and began to wash his  
 “ feet with tears, and did wipe them with the  
 “ hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and a-  
 “ nointed them with the ointment.” Was it  
 not in grace and mercy that the suffering Sa-  
 viour looked upon Peter, which immediately  
 confounded him? Luke xxii. 61. 62. “ And  
 “ the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter;  
 “ and Peter remembered the word of the Lord,  
 “ how he had said unto him, Before the cock  
 “ crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter  
 “ went out, and wept bitterly.” What is it else  
 that is represented by the prophet as having so  
 strong an effect upon the believer in producing  
 penitential sorrow, but the love of our Redeem-  
 er? Zech. xii. 10. “ And I will pour upon the  
 “ house of David, and upon the inhabitants of  
 “ Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplica-  
 “ tions, and they shall look upon me whom  
 “ they have pierced, and they shall mourn for  
 “ him, as one mourneth for his only son, and  
 “ shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is  
 “ in bitterness for his first-born.”

2. Forgiveness with God tends to increase  
 our fear and reverence of him, from the man-  
 ner in which, and the condition on which it is  
 bestowed. Every circumstance in this dispensa-  
 tion of divine mercy is calculated to abase the  
 sinner, and leave him nothing whereof to glory  
 before God. Forgiveness is always declared to  
 be an act of sovereign grace, Is. xliiii. 25. “ I,  
 “ even

“ even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.” We are many times cautioned against imputing to ourselves, or our own merit, what is merely the effect of divine mercy. If the scripture is read with care, there will be observed many passages which carry this instruction in them, to beware of taking merit to ourselves from the divine goodness, or any effect or expression of it: Deut. ix. 4. 5. “ Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the Lord thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord doth drive them out from before thee. Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” Ezek xxxvi. 21. 22. “ But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went. Therefore say unto the house of Israel; Thus saith the Lord God, I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name’s sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went.”

It is probably also with this view, if we may presume to offer an opinion on so deep a subject,

ject, that the objects of special mercy are sometimes chosen from among the most criminal, even the chief of sinners. Does not this forbid, in the strongest terms, every man to harbour the least thought, as if by his own righteousness, or being comparatively less wicked than others, he had been intitled to the divine favour : Rom. ix. 15. — 18. “ For he saith  
 “ to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will  
 “ have mercy, and I will have compassion on  
 “ whom I will have compassion. So then it is  
 “ not of him that willeth, nor of him that run-  
 “ neth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For  
 “ the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for  
 “ this same purpose have I raised thee up, that  
 “ I might shew my power in thee, and that my  
 “ name might be declared throughout all the  
 “ earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom  
 “ he will have mercy, and whom he will he  
 “ hardeneth.”

But the circumstance on which we are called chiefly to fix our attention, is, that forgiveness is bestowed only through the blood of Christ. It is freely and graciously bestowed upon the sinner, but was dearly and hardly purchased by the surety. This is no new or unusual subject in this congregation. But Oh ! my brethren, that we could in some measure apprehend its infinite importance. Think, I beseech you, on the holiness and justice of God, as they shine in the sufferings and cross of Christ ; that a righteous God required full satisfaction for sin ; that “ the Lord laid on him the iniquities of us  
 “ all ;

“ all ;” that “ it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief.” Are not the majesty and purity of God set forth in this transaction, in the most clear and legible, nay in the most awful and terrible, characters? for they are written in blood. Is the Lord to be praised for his mercy? and is he not also to be feared for his justice? May we not, or rather must we not, say, “ If such things were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?” If God saw it necessary to lay such a load of wrath upon the Holy One, when standing in the room of sinners, what shall be the condition of the impenitent transgressors, who shall lie under it for ever? We may well adopt the words of Moses to the children of Israel, Deut. xxviii. 58. 59. “ If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayst fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD; then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance.”

Do you not now, my brethren, see much propriety, as well as instruction, in this language, “ But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayst be feared?” The expression indeed is not singular in the holy scripture, even in the sense now illustrated. It is certainly on the same subject the psalmist is speaking, when he says, Ps. xl. iii. “ And he hath put a new song in my

“ mouth, even praise unto our God : many  
 “ shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the  
 “ Lord.” As also the prophet Hosea, ch. iii. 5.  
 “ Afterward shall the children of Israel return,  
 “ and seek the Lord their God, and David  
 “ their king, and shall fear the Lord, and his  
 “ goodness in the latter days.”

III. I proceed now to make some practical improvement of what hath been said. And,

1. From what hath been said, you may learn, that none can understand, embrace, or esteem the mercy of God, but those who are convinced of their sin and misery. Mercy can be of benefit only to the guilty; mercy can be bestowed only on the guilty; and therefore all that can be said in illustration of the divine mercy, all that can be said in commendation of the divine mercy, will be esteemed as idle tales by those who do not know themselves to be guilty. Hence the negligence and inconsideration with which the gospel is received. Very many of those to whom it is addressed are insensible of their danger. The employments of the world ingross their time; the enjoyments of the world possess their affections: an eternal unchangeable state is supposed at too great a distance to require their attention. I beseech you, my brethren, to consider, that the time of your trial is wasting apace. Let the commencement of another season \* put you in mind of its speedy passage, and persuade you to look forward to the day of death or judge-

\* Preached at the beginning of the year.

ment,

ment, when all offers of mercy, and exhortations to repentance, shall cease, and when, though there may be forgiveness with God to all the proper objects of it in his extensive dominion, yet there shall be no forgiveness for you.

2. From what hath been said you may observe, that the publication of divine mercy, that the illustration of the riches of divine grace in the gospel, hath not the least tendency to lessen our sense of the evil of sin, or the obligation we lie under to obedience : on the contrary, it serves greatly to improve both the one and the other. When we endeavour to bring consolation to the broken in heart ; when we set before them the tender mercies of our God, and the infinite compassion of the Saviour ; when we press them to hearken to the invitations of the gospel ; when we encourage them to rest their salvation upon it, and to be at peace ; this only serves to excite their indignation against sin, and persuade them to fly from it, to bring them to the obedience of children, and shed abroad the love of God in their hearts.

3. From what hath been said, you may see the difference between a real and scriptural discovery of forgiveness with God, and that careless security which arises from a presumptuous reliance on his general mercy. The one prevents conviction, the other produces it. The general and common plea of God's mercy, keeps the sinner at ease as he is ; but a real and scriptural discovery of forgiveness with God, heals the broken in heart, and at the same time

increases their sense of the evil of sin, and their abhorrence of every approach to it.

Presumption, and such views of God's mercy as are taken by the secure, arise entirely from the extenuation of sin. The language of their hearts is, 'Surely this is not so great a matter, but God's mercy will forgive it.' If you will either seriously examine yourselves, or observe, with some attention, the discourse of careless worldly persons, you will perceive this very clearly. They comfort themselves with the thoughts of their little comparative guilt, rather than of the certainty and greatness of divine mercy. 'I may perhaps,' says one of them, 'have been guilty of such or such sins; but I am sure I never did so or so,' or perhaps as some others who immediately occur to their minds as greater sinners than themselves. I cannot help mentioning to you the saying of a prince of our own country, towards the close of life, who had been a remarkable libertine in his younger years: 'I cannot think,' says he \*, 'that God will be so hard as to damn a man for taking a little pleasure out of the common road.'

In opposition to this, the true penitent sees more than ever his inexcusable guilt as a sinner, but hopes for forgiveness from God, as the effect of his own infinite grace, and the accomplishment of his promise in the gospel. He gives the whole glory of it to him; and ne-

\* K. Charles II. to Bishop Burnet.

ver thinks of diminishing the lustre of his transcendent mercy, by covering or extenuating the offence. Hence secure persons are easily satisfied, while true penitents make supplication with strong crying and tears. They are often reconsidering the promise, and frequently questioning the ground on which their dependence has been placed. Hence also secure persons seek ease to themselves from the remonstrances of conscience, by stifling conviction, and offering excuses; but true penitents, by giving full force to the accusation, and pleading the benefit of the remission. To say all in a word, the one struggles hard to be found innocent, the other to obtain mercy.

4. From what hath been said, you may see of how much moment it is to the Christian to keep clear views of the mercy of God, as well as of his own interest in it. The moment he loses the comfortable sense of peace with God, his chariot-wheels are troubled, and he drives heavily. It makes his duty burdensome, and his trials insupportable. And no wonder, since he is not so far left of God as to return to the security of sinners; and at the same time the source of his inward consolation is like *a spring shut up, and a fountain sealed*. For what end are the promises of God contained in scripture? why are they put into your hands? why are they repeated in your ears? Why, but for preserving you in that peace which the world cannot give, and which, blessed be God, it cannot take away. Hear what your Saviour says,

John

John xvi. 33 "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

5. In the last place, You may see from what hath been said, in what way you may most effectually, and most certainly, preserve your peace with God, *viz.* By the frequent exercise of penitence and confession. This will shew you the necessity of forgiveness from God, This will constrain you daily to seek for forgiveness from God. Beware of seeking or preserving peace by the extenuation of sin, or by stifling conviction. This may well lead you to sloth and security for a season, which lays the foundation of the bitterest repentance of all; but will never give you the comfort of God's children. He that shutteth his eyes upon his own sins, shall never see the glory of divine mercy. Serious, voluntary, deliberate humiliation, is the true way of promoting both that steadiness in duty, and that peace with God, which ought to be the Christian's supreme desire. Whatever destroys self-sufficiency promotes the growth of true piety. The gospel is particularly directed to those that see their necessity. It brings comfort to the mourner, help to the miserable, and mercy to the guilty. It is a great mistake to think, that the contrition and penitence of the children of God is hurtful to their comfort, for it is the very foundation of it; according to that refreshing promise, with which I shall conclude, *Is. lxi. 1. 2. 3.* "The spirit of the Lord  
" God

“ God is upon me, because the Lord hath appointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek, he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, 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, and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all that mourn : to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.”

S E R .

## S E R M O N    I V.

The nature of Faith.

1 JOHN iii. 23.

*And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.*

*Action Sermon.*

**W**E propose, in a little, to draw near to God in the most solemn act of Christian worship. With what humble solicitude ought we to inquire, whether we are truly intitled to this great privilege, or may hope for acceptance in this important duty. It is the most explicit, and the most public profession we can make of faith in the Redeemer's blood; and therefore none can do it in a proper manner but those who have indeed believed in the Redeemer's name.

Faith in Christ is the great foundation of our peace with God. It is the great principle of our sanctification. It is the great distinction between the heirs of glory and the heirs of hell: "For he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." And therefore no subject can be of  
more

more importance in general, or more suited to our present employment, than what is presented to us in the words of the text: *This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.*

In the context, the apostle is speaking of the Christian's confidence or persuasion of his relation to God, ver. 20. 21. 22. "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him; because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."

Having thus mentioned the commandments he points out in the words now read, the great commandments of the gospel, in their order, *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.* My purpose at this time is, to confine myself to the first of these; and open, in as comprehensive and practical a manner as I am able, what it is to believe on the name of Jesus Christ the Son of God; and having done so, to make some practical improvement of the subject; particularly, by pressing every hearer, in the most earnest manner, to obey this commandment of God

I. In the *first* place, then, I am to explain what it is to believe on the name of Jesus Christ the Son of God. Many have been the controversies

versies raised and agitated on this subject, most of them unprofitable, and some of them very hurtful, as tending to disquiet and perplex the minds of serious persons, and sometimes even to furnish an objection to the enemies of the gospel. I shall therefore avoid every thing of this kind, as in general undesirable, and at this time highly unseasonable; and endeavour to lay it down in such a manner as I hope may be understood by the meanest real Christian, and may afford to every exercised soul inward consolation, and peace with God.

For this purpose, I hope it will be sufficient to observe, that faith may be considered in two views; its object, and its actings: 1st, *The object of faith*; that is to say, the truths to be believed: 2dly, *The actings of faith*; or what it is to believe these to the saving of the soul. As to the object of faith, it is thus expressed in our text, *This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ. Christ Jesus, the Saviour*, then, is the object of faith. This, in its full extent, includes every thing that is revealed in the holy scriptures, with respect to his person, character, and work. It may indeed be said to include the whole revealed will of God; because every part of this will has a more remote or immediate reference to him. Christ Jesus is "the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the ending," of the will of God as revealed for our salvation. But as every thing else was only introductory and preparatory to his atone-  
ment,

ment, or consequent upon it, I shall chiefly direct your attention to him as a saviour from guilt and pollution. This the name of Jesus immediately imports: Matth. i. 21. "And thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins." In this view, I think the object of faith may be summed up in the following particulars:

1. That we are, by nature, in a state of sin, alienated in heart from God, transgressors of his law, and liable to his wrath. If this were not the case, a *saviour* would not be necessary; *salvation* would be a word without force, and even without meaning. It is accordingly found in experience, that till there be a conviction of this truth upon the conscience, the tidings of a saviour are always treated with neglect or disdain. Nothing can be stronger than the language of scripture on this subject in many passages; particularly, Matth. xviii. 11. "For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost." Luke v. 31. 32. "And Jesus answering, said unto them, They that are whole, need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." I shall also read to you the account of our natural state, and the end of Christ's coming, given by the apostle Paul, Eph. ii. 1.—5. "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. Among whom also we all  
G " had

“ had our conversation in times past, in the  
“ lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the  
“ flesh, and of the mind ; and were by nature  
“ the children of wrath. even as others. But  
“ God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love  
“ wherewith he loved us, even when we were  
“ dead in sins hath quickned us together with  
“ Christ, (by grace ye are saved).” I forbear  
to mention the proof of this from the history  
of the world, from the marks of God’s displea-  
sure against sin in the course of providence, and  
from the testimony of conscience, as I have  
illustrated them at considerable length in other  
discourses. Let it suffice at present to say, that  
the first truth which is the object of faith, is  
the guilt and misery of our nature.

2. The next part of the object of faith is,  
that there is no way of recovery from this state  
but by Christ: Acts iv. 12. “ Neither is there  
“ salvation in any other : for there is none o-  
“ ther name under heaven given among men  
“ whereby we must be saved.” If there were  
any other, it would not be the command of God  
that we should believe in the name of his Son  
Jesus Christ. After men are in some measure  
sensible that they are guilty, it is often difficult  
to convince them that they are helpless. There  
is something so mortifying in this consideration,  
and so humbling to our pride, that it is with  
great unwillingness we yield to it. Nay, after  
we have seemed to confess it, we are often  
ready to retract it. The sinner has always a  
proneness to seek some resource in himself.

Hence

Hence the disposition to extenuate his guilt; and if he cannot plead absolute, to place some dependence upon comparative innocence. Hence the disposition to magnify human merit, as if, by the value of some good deeds, we could balance or cancel the guilt of our disobedience. Hence the endless variety of human inventions, of costly sacrifices and voluntary penance: Micah vi. 6. 7. “Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” The truth is, till the sinner is stripped of every plea, and found to be without excuse, he will still refuse to be indebted to the grace of his Redeemer. But hear ye the Spirit of God, Rev. iii. 17. 18. “Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.”

3. This leads me to the third part of the object of faith, *viz.* That the pardon of sin, and peace with an offended God, is freely offer-

ed to the chief of sinners through Christ. The two preceding truths are preparatory to this, and serve to point out its necessity and moment. This is the gracious message which was brought into the world by the gospel; and from which it derives its name, importing glad tidings. What we are particularly to attend to here is, (1.) that Christ Jesus was substituted in the room of sinners, and suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God; that the holiness and justice of God required an expiation of sin, which was made by this immaculate victim: *Is. liii. 5. 6.* "But 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. All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." *Rom. iii. 25.* "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." (2.) Another thing also to be observed, is the constitution of the sufferer's person. It was no less than the eternal and only begotten Son of God. This is a circumstance of the utmost moment, and on which the greatest stress is manifestly laid in scripture. It is included in the words of the text: "This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his son Jesus Christ." It is also constantly found in the early Confessions of Faith: *John i. 49.* "Nathaniel answered and said

“ said unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of  
 “ God, thou art the King of Israel.” Matth.  
 xvi. 16. “ And Simon Peter answered and said,  
 “ Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.”  
 Acts viii. 37. “ And Philip said, If thou be-  
 “ lievest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And  
 “ he answered and said, I believe that Jesus  
 “ Christ is the Son of God.” Unless this is at-  
 tended to, we shall neither be sufficiently sen-  
 sible of the evil of sin, which required such an  
 atonement, nor of the love of God which pro-  
 vided it, nor of the power of the Saviour to  
 execute it; nor can we have such encourage-  
 ment to put our trust in it.

From these two circumstances you may be di-  
 rected to contemplate the leading and principal  
 object of faith, *viz.* the only begotten Son of  
 God dying in our room, and purchasing our  
 pardon. Jesus, the mediator of the new cove-  
 nant, having finished his work, invites weary  
 and heavy-laden sinners to come unto him; and  
 assures them, that the highest demands of the  
 law are answered, that their debt is fully paid,  
 and nothing is now to be laid to their charge :  
 Rom. viii. 33. 34. “ Who shall lay any thing  
 “ to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that  
 “ justifieth : Who is he that condemneth? It is  
 “ Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen a-  
 “ gain, who is even at the right hand of God,  
 “ who also maketh intercession for us.” Rev.  
 xxii. 17. “ And the Spirit and the bride say,  
 “ Come. And let him that heareth, say, Come.  
 “ And let him that is athirst, come : and who-

“foever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

4. In the last place, The object of faith is the power of Christ to renew our natures, to deliver us from the bondage of corruption, and bring us into the glorious liberty of God's children. We must never separate the Redeemer's merit and his power. Conviction is imperfect unless we see our slavery, as well as misery, and unfeignedly desire deliverance from both. Neither do we properly apprehend the extent of Christ's undertaking, unless we view him exalted as a prince and a saviour to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins. There are two things equally essential to the gospel upon this particular. (1.) The necessity of being sanctified. Salvation in sin is not promised; salvation or happiness in sin is not possible; and therefore all who hope for salvation through Christ, must be renewed in the spirit of their minds. Thenceforth they must not serve sin: 2 Cor. v. 17. “If any man  
“be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things  
“are passed away, behold, all things are become  
“new.” If the wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness of men, it must still abide on the children of disobedience. (2.) The other thing to be observed is, that the sanctification of the believer is the purchase of Christ's blood, and the work of his Spirit. This is plain through the whole of the scriptures both of the Old Testament and the New: Ezek. xxxvi. 25. 26. 27. “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your  
“filthiness,

“ filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse  
 “ you. 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 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.” John xv. 4. 5.  
 “ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch  
 “ cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in  
 “ the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in  
 “ me. I am the vine, ye are the branches:  
 “ he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same  
 “ bringeth forth much fruit: for without me  
 “ ye can do nothing.” Nothing can be stronger  
 “ than the language used on this subject: “ His  
 “ grace is sufficient for us; his strength is made  
 “ perfect in weakness.” “ By the grace of  
 “ God,” says the Apostle, “ I am what I am.”  
 And again, “ Not I, but the grace of God  
 “ which was with me.” Nay, he is said “ to  
 “ work in us both to will and to do of his good  
 “ pleasure.” All this shows, that there is no  
 room left for the sinner to glory; but that the  
 whole of his loss by the fall, both his integrity  
 and his happiness, may be recovered, and  
 can only be recovered, through Christ. This is  
 the sum of evangelical truth, this is the source  
 of evangelical holiness: Gal. ii. 16.—20.  
 “ Knowing that a man is not justified by the  
 “ works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus  
 “ Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ;  
 “ that we might be justified by the faith of  
 “ Christ,

“ Christ, and not by the works of the law : for  
 “ by the works of the law shall no flesh be justi-  
 “ fied. But if while we seek to be justified by  
 “ Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is  
 “ therefore Christ the minister of sin? God  
 “ forbid. For if I build again the things which  
 “ I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.  
 “ For I through the law am dead to the law,  
 “ that I might live unto God. I am crucified  
 “ with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I,  
 “ but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I  
 “ now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the  
 “ Son of God, who loved me, and gave him-  
 “ self for me.”

I proceed now, in the *second* place, to  
 consider the actings of faith, or what is implied  
 in believing these truths to the saving of the  
 soul. And I cannot help observing to you, that  
 it is but in compliance with common custom, or  
 at least with the present state of things, that I  
 say much upon this part of the subject. I am  
 persuaded it is of much more consequence, and  
 much more proper, to direct you to the object of  
 faith in God's revealed will, to explain it in all  
 its extent, and to press it with all the evidence  
 that attends it, than to examine curiously into,  
 and distinguish nicely upon the nature of faith,  
 as it is an act of the human mind. I do not  
 find, that the scripture says much upon the *act*  
 of believing; but it is in a manner wholly em-  
 ployed in telling us *what* we ought to believe, both  
 with regard to our apostasy and recovery. We  
 do indeed read in scripture of believing with all  
 the

the heart. We read also of a temporary faith in the stony-ground hearers; and of the strength and weakness of faith. But all this seems, at least chiefly, to relate to the firmness or uncertainty of our persuasion of, or assent to the truths which are addressed to us in the name of God. The simplest view of faith seems to be receiving "the record which God hath given us of his Son." Agreeably to this, the reverse of faith in scripture is doubting: Matth. xiv. 31. "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Matth. xxi. 21. "Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig-tree, but also, if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done."

But, my brethren, since there have been questions upon this subject, and since it is certain from experience that there is a deceitfulness in the human heart, and a supposed faith, which yet is vain and fruitless, I shall observe, that the actings of faith may be resolved into the three following particulars, or that the faith of God's elect will discover itself by the three following effects.

1. A firm assent of the understanding to what is revealed of Christ in scripture; particularly as summed up in the preceding part of this discourse: That you believe the lost and helpless state of man by nature and practice: That Christ is able to save to the uttermost; and that he  
hath

bath made effectual provision, both for expiating your guilt and purifying your hearts. Perhaps you will think this is easy, and be ready to say, that you have from your youth given, and that you do at this moment give, entire credit to the whole. But, my brethren, there is more here than you are aware of: there is a great difference between a common and traditional belief, which was never tried, and that inward and personal conviction which dwells in the heart, and therefore will govern the life. If any man believe, that all the posterity of Adam are in a state of guilt and misery, one would think it unavoidable that he must perceive his own danger as a part of the whole; and yet I am persuaded, it is usually a personal conviction of guilt and danger by the law upon the conscience that first opens the sinner's eyes upon the general truth; and then his own interest makes it bulk in his apprehension, and raises in him an earnest solicitude, both to examine into the cause of the disease, and to ask after the method of cure.

There is another way of considering the assent of the understanding to divine truth. The testimony of faith is opposed to the testimony of sense. Faith tells us, that our only happiness is in the favour of God, and that this can only be obtained through Christ; that eternity is coming on; and that there is no time to be lost. Sense, on the other hand, tells us, that the world is good, that its delights are pleasant, and that our comfort is here; not forgetting to  
represent

represent the service of God as a burden and drudgery. In the mean time, the corrupt principle within, assents to the delusion, and assists in blinding the mind; adding, that whatever may be in religion, the danger may be warded off by a late repentance. It is not enough then to give a cold and general assent to the truths of religion when they are not contradicted, but to believe the testimony of faith, in opposition to the suggestions of sense; or, in other words, *to walk by faith, and not by sight*. That this may be brought to the test, I observe,

2. That faith implies the consent and approbation of the heart to every truth with regard to Christ's person and character, and salvation thro' his blood. To every believer, the plan of redemption by the Mediator of the new covenant, appears not only true, but wise, reasonable, gracious, and necessary. This, my brethren, particularly distinguishes true faith, not only from unbelief and security, but from an empty and barren profession. The careless despise the truth, the believer adores it; the half Christian is ashamed of it, the believer glories in it: "God forbid," says the apostle, Gal. vi. 14. "that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Pet. ii. 7. "Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner."

I believe indeed it is usually a deep and heartfelt

felt conviction of danger, which first persuades the sinner of the truth, and makes the trembling penitent a willing believer. But because there may be sometimes a belief of that truth, which we do not esteem, nay, even a jealousy and suspicion of the truth of what we inwardly hate, I have added, that faith implies the consent and approbation of the heart. The whole doctrine of redemption appears to the believer most admirably calculated to promote the glory of God, and secure the salvation of sinners. Even what bears hardest upon man, taking away the foundation of self-righteousness and self-dependence, appears to him perfectly reasonable: he not only submits to it, but embraces and closes with it. He sees the law to be holy; he confesses the threatening to be just; and he is not only content, but thankful, that his present deliverance and future security depend, not on himself, but on the Redeemer. He is willing to be only and eternally indebted to the unmerited mercy and sovereign grace of God in Christ Jesus.

Thus you see the doctrine of salvation is represented in scripture under the form of a blessing to be received, as well as a truth to be believed: *Is. lv. 1. 2. 3.* “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come  
“ ye to the waters, and he that hath no money;  
“ come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine  
“ and milk without money, and without price.  
“ Wherefore do ye spend money for that which  
“ is not bread? and your labour for that which  
“ satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me,  
“ and eat ye that which is good, and let your  
“ soul

“ soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear,  
 “ and come unto me ; hear, and your soul shall  
 “ live, and I will make an everlasting covenant  
 “ with you, even the sure mercies of David.”  
 Matth. xi. 28. “ Come unto me, all ye that la-  
 “ bour, and are heavy laden, and I will give  
 “ you rest.” And indeed the inspired writers  
 always speak of it in such terms as shew them-  
 selves not only satisfied of the truth, but deeply  
 penetrated with a sense of the greatness of the  
 mercy : Eph. iii. 17. 18. 19. “ That Christ may  
 “ dwell in your hearts by faith ; that ye being  
 “ rooted and grounded in love, may be able to  
 “ comprehend with all saints, what is the  
 “ breadth, and length, and depth, and height ;  
 “ and to know the love of Christ, which passeth  
 “ knowledge, that ye might be filled with all  
 “ the fulness of God.”

3. In the last place, faith implies such a per-  
 sonal application of the truths of the gospel as  
 produceth repose of conscience, dependence and  
 reliance on the Saviour. This, my brethren,  
 is the point first in view, and the termination  
 of the whole ; and I cannot help thinking,  
 that it is so essential to faith, that faith  
 and trust are often put reciprocally for one  
 another in the New Testament ; as in Eph.  
 i. 12. 13. “ That we should be to the praise of  
 “ his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In  
 “ whom ye also trusted after that ye heard the  
 “ word of truth, the gospel of your salvation :  
 “ in whom also after that ye believed, ye were  
 “ sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.”

I do not mean to say, that divine faith is a belief that Christ died for me in particular. I know the strong objections which lie against that form of expression. The object of faith is, that Christ died for lost sinners of the race of Adam. But as it can hardly be supposed, that any give their assent to this truth till they are convinced that they themselves are sinners, so, if they believe that there is no salvation in any other, and that he is able to save to the uttermost, it seems to follow of necessity, that they will rest and rely "upon him alone for salvation as he is offered in the gospel." This is certainly the view given us of the matter in the holy scripture: Rom. v. 1. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ," Heb. vi. 18. "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." Faith and despair are inconsistent, Faith and hope are inseparable. The glory of the Redeemer's person, the perfection of his atonement, and his ability to save, are all set before us in the gospel; and if we cannot rely upon him, if we cannot trust our salvation in his hands, it certainly arises from some doubt or disapprobation of these interesting truths. If you doubt of the truth, it is no wonder that you distrust the promise; but if you are truly and inwardly satisfied of Christ's power and mercy, you will close with him, as your Saviour,  
and

and say unto him, in the words of Thomas, when his doubts were removed, "My Lord, and my God." — Thus I have shortly given you a view of the actings of faith : which may all be reduced to what I have endeavoured to illustrate ; the assent of the understanding, the approbation of the heart, and these jointly producing repose of conscience and peace with God.

II. I proceed now, in the *last* place, to make some practical improvement of what hath been said on this important subject. And, in the

*1<sup>st</sup>* place, Hence learn the absolute necessity of self-denial, and how much it ought to prevail in the temper of a Christian. In explaining to you the object of faith, I have endeavoured to lay before you the nature of the gospel-message, and the substance of the truth as it is in Jesus, *viz.* the lost and helpless state of man by nature, forgiveness through the blood of Christ, and sanctification as the work of his Spirit. If this view is just, then religion must be begun, preserved, improved, and perfected, by union with Christ. If this view is just, then all self-righteousness and self-dependence is a denial of Christ. And indeed, such is the life of a believer, if the conduct of the great apostle of the Gentiles may be taken for an example : Phil. iv. 13. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

2. Hence also learn the necessity of a new nature, in order to a new life. If the old nature is indeed in ruins, it will be lost labour to begin to

build without a new foundation. And if the foundation is ill laid, however beautiful the superstructure, the fabric cannot be lasting. The not attending to this is visibly the cause of many miscarriages. Men often resolve upon some amendment of life, from prudence, conveniency, or even from imperfect convictions, and some apprehension of eternity itself. But though these resolutions are formed with seeming sincerity, inherent corruption soon becomes too strong for such feeble opposition. Remember therefore our Saviour's caution, "Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt." If you desire to live a life of holiness or virtue, apply to God through Christ, for the pardon of your sins, and peace with him. Intreat of him also, in the same prevailing name, that by his grace he would implant in you "a new heart, and a new spirit, that you may walk in his ways, and observe his judgments to do them."

3. Learn also how injurious they are to the doctrine of salvation by faith in Christ, who slander it as unfriendly to holiness of life. So far from being unfavourable to holiness, it makes the most effectual provision for it. Obedience to the whole law of God, is embraced by every believer as his choice, and promised as his duty: only he expects to derive strength from his Redeemer to enable him to discharge it. I desire to bear witness, and so will every faithful minister of the New Testament, that Christ came not to destroy

destroy the law, but to fulfil it. He hath not only left it in its full force upon the conscience, but he hath added to its obligation. The awful sanction of the law shall take place upon every impenitent sinner. It is well represented by the flying roll, in the prophecies of Zechariah, chap. v. 3. 4. "Then said he unto me, This is  
" the curse that goeth forth over the face of the  
" whole earth : for every one that stealeth,  
" shall be cut off as on this side, according to  
" it ; and every one that sweareth, shall be cut  
" off as on that side, according to it. I will  
" bring it forth, saith the Lord of hosts, and  
" it shall enter into the house of the thief, and  
" into the house of him that sweareth falsely by  
" my name ; and it shall remain in the midst of  
" his house, and shall consume it, with the tim-  
" ber thereof, and the stones thereof." See also the superadded sanction of the gospel, Heb. x. 28. 29. "He that despised Moses law,  
" died without mercy, under two or three wit-  
" nesses : of how much sorer punishment,  
" suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who  
" hath trodden under foot the Son of God,  
" and hath counted the blood of the covenant,  
" wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing,  
" and hath done despite unto the Spirit of  
" grace?" Hear it, my brethren, hear it for your souls sake, any known sin allowed in the heart or conversation, is as inconsistent with salvation under the covenant of grace as under the covenant of works ; or rather, to speak more properly, as many as continue in the prac-

tice of sin are *condemned already*, and remain under the power of that *ministration of death*. To delight in the law of the Lord after the inward man, is the fruit of faith, the character of the new nature, and necessary to fit you for the divine presence.

4. Suffer me to say a few words, for the reproof and conviction of those who are living in contempt of the gospel. Alas! how many are there who turn a deaf ear to the most earnest and pressing invitations addressed to them in the word of God, and enforced by his providence! There are two sorts of despisers of the gospel: (1.) Those who are open and avowed enemies to the doctrine of the gospel, who desert it, despise it, or slander it. Too many there are of this character in the present age, to whom the cross of Christ is foolishness. O! how deplorable is their folly! and how aggravated their guilt! If this is the divine commandment, That we should believe in the name of the Son of God; and if there is truth in the divine word, "That there is no salvation in any other;" miserable indeed must be the state of those who are found thus fighting against God. Will it be a light thing to be found despisers of all that grace and love manifested in the gospel? How heavy is the threatening, in our Saviour's own words, against those who despise the *precious corner stone*, and *tried foundation*, which is laid in Zion, Matth. xxi. 44. "And whosoever shall fall on this stone, shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him  
" to

“ to powder.” (2.) They are despisers of the gospel who, professing belief in the doctrine of Christ, continue to live in unrighteousness. He came to turn you from all your transgressions, as well as to deliver you from condemnation. His power is particularly illustrated in bringing sinners “ from darkness to light, and “ from the power of Satan unto God.” The end of his coming is lost as to all those who continue in sin. If they are called by his name, they are a scandal to it ; if they form any hopes from his sufferings, they will be disappointed ; if they advance any claim to his mercy, it will be rejected ; if they plead relation to him, he will openly renounce them : Matth. vii. 21. 22. 23. “ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, “ Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven : but he that doth the will of my Father “ which is in heaven. Many will say to me in “ that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name ? and in thy name have “ cast out devils ? and in thy name done many “ wonderful works ? And then will I profess “ unto them, I never knew you : depart from “ me ye that work iniquity.”

5. In the *last* place, Suffer me, in the most earnest manner, to beseech every sinner in this assembly, to believe in the name of the Son of God. I say, every sinner, because those only who are sensible that they are sinners, will be obedient to the call. Are you not therefore sensible of your guilt and danger ? Are your understandings so blinded ? Is natural conscience itself

self so seared, that you do not see how much you stand in need of a saviour? Remember, that if there be any truth in the whole compass of natural and revealed religion that cannot be spoken against, it is this, That God "is of purer eyes than that he can behold iniquity;" and that, for this reason, "he will render to every man according to his works." It is a truth engraven upon the conscience, and ratified by the course of providence; the Heathens discovered it through the thickest darkness; and the guilty confess it by their daily fears. What a harvest of converts would I bring in even in this assembly, if I could but lead to the Saviour every one that believes, in some measure, in a judgement to come! What an astonishing disorder is brought into our nature by sin! What a marvellous delusion is upon the mind, and what inconsistency is there in the conduct of sinners! It is hard to say, which of the two is most amazing; their backwardness to receive the truth, or their unwillingness to obey it; their inattention to evidence, on the one hand, or their forgetfulness of what they do believe, upon the other. Is there any person within these walls, who doubts that he is to die; or who does not believe, that he must be judged after death? Are you then ready for the trial? Have you served your Maker? Have you loved him above all? Have you lived to his glory? Have you sought and placed your happiness in his favour? Or are you sensible that iniquities have prevailed against you? Have they now  
taken

taken hold upon you, so that you cannot lift your eyes? Behold, I preach peace to you by Jesus Christ. Believe in his name and merits for your pardon; rely on his grace and Spirit for your reformation; and return to God, through him, as your unchangeable portion. This is the tenor of the gospel: Luke xxiv. 46. 47. “ Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ  
“ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third  
“ day: and that repentance and remission of  
“ sins should be preached in his name, among  
“ all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

S E R.

## S E R M O N V.

Christ's death a proper atonement for sin.

1 JOHN ii. 2.

*And he is the propitiation for our sins : and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*

*Action Sermon.*

**M**Y brethren, To as many as have any belief of eternity, it must be a matter of unspeakable moment to know, how they may have confidence towards God. This inquiry becomes, if possible, still more serious, when we consider man as in a lapsed and corrupt state by nature, as guilty, and obnoxious to his Maker's righteous judgement. Then it becomes necessary, not only to preserve the favour, not only to avoid the displeasure, but to seek for some shelter or covering from the wrath of God.

This is the account given us of our condition in scripture ; which, as it is a truth of the utmost importance, lying at the foundation of all religion, I have often endeavoured both to explain and inforce. And happy, happy they who have heard with application ; happy they whose eyes have been opened on their danger as sinners ; who have seen and felt the evil of sin, as a departure from, and rebellion against a most  
 holy,

holy, righteous, and gracious God. Happy they, who, rejecting the vain reasonings of the carnal mind, and the cobweb-defences of the short-sighted creature, have been laid prostrate as guilty and helpless, before the sovereign and almighty Creator. All mankind, in the several ages of the world, have in general discovered such a jealousy of their condition, and have so far felt the reproof and condemnation of natural conscience, that their attempts and inventions have been innumerable to appease the offended Deity,

But blessed be the name of God, we are not left to any uncertainty as to this important question, We may cheerfully apply our minds to it, and receive unspeakable consolation “through  
 “ the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-  
 “ spring from on high hath visited us.” The way to life and peace is fully explained in the glorious gospel of the Son of God. We are indeed, by nature, guilty sinners, enemies to God in our minds, and by wicked works; but there is a gracious provision made for our recovery in the mediation of Christ. This is the strong hold and refuge of the sinner; it is the foundation-stone and confidence of the believer. In the 8th and 9th verses of the preceding chapter, the apostle John says, “ If we say that we have  
 “ no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is  
 “ not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to  
 “ cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” And in the verse preceding the text, “ My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye  
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“ sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” He then teaches the Christian to live by faith in the Saviour’s blood: *And he is the propitiation for our sins.* And that he might further illustrate the extent and efficacy of the great atonement, he adds, *and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.* In further discoursing on this subject, I propose, through the assistance of divine grace,

1. To consider Christ as the propitiation for sin, or what is implied in his being so called.

2. To consider the extent of this propitiation, or its being for the sins of the whole world.  
And,

3. To make some practical improvement of the subject.

I. FIRST, then, *Let us consider Christ as the propitiation for sin, or what is implied in his being so called.* We find our Saviour designed as a propitiation in several other passages of scripture; as in this epistle, chap. iv. 10. “ Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins;” and Rom. iii. 25. “ Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.” It is the opinion of many learned men, that Christ is called *a propitiation, or the propitiation,* in allusion to the mercy-seat above the ark, which was set up at first in the tabernacle, and afterwards in the temple in the most holy place. To confirm this,  
it



“ grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.” It was from the mercy-seat that God spake to his people by the intervention of the high-priest, and by Urim and Thummim; so it is by his Son that God now speaks to us, and shews us the way of salvation: Matth. xvii. 5. “ This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.”

But the true and proper meaning of Christ's being a propitiation, is to be taken from the sacrifices in general, and particularly points at his undertaking the office of mediator or peacemaker between God and man, and in that capacity suffering the wrath of God in the room of sinners. By this he appeaseth him, rendereth him propitious or gracious to us, and purchaseth our pardon: Rom. iii. 25. “ Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, thro' faith in his blood.” Remember how intimately it is connected with *redemption*, another expression which runs through the whole of the New Testament, and is considered as equivalent to the forgiveness of sins: Eph. i. 7. “ In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” Now, redemption certainly signifies purchasing or buying with a price.

The sacrifices under the Mosaic œconomy did all of them imply a substitution in room of something that had been forfeited, or was due. It is observed by one eminent for his knowledge of Jewish antiquities, that besides what was done  
when

when any particular person presented a sin-offering, at the continual burnt-offering there were certain men appointed to represent the whole congregation of Israel. Their office was, to lay their hands upon the head of the lamb, and thus as it were transfer the guilt from the people to the victim. On this account they were called *stationary men*, because they attended continually for this end. And as the very purpose of the sacrifices under the law was, to typify the sacrifice of Christ, they are a standing evidence of the early and original reference to him, as the ground of divine mercy.

Nothing is more undeniably true, than that the offering of sacrifices was both early and universal in every nation under heaven; and it is no less certain, that those who used them did consider them as expiatory, or propitiatory, to render the offended Deity placable, and obtain his mercy. This was at once a confession of guilt, and a declaration, that they apprehended the necessity and propriety of an atonement. Neither is it possible to account for the universal prevalence of sacrifices in any tolerable manner, but by supposing, that they were the remains of what had been taught in the ages immediately after the fall, by divine appointment.

I apprehend it is also undeniably evident, that this is the light in which the sacrifice of Christ is represented in the holy scriptures. How many passages might be adduced to this purpose? In ancient prophecy, this part of his work is set forth in the following manner.

If. liii. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. " Surely he hath born our  
 " griefs, and carried our sorrows : yet we did  
 " esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and  
 " afflicted. But he was wounded for our trans-  
 " gressions, he was bruised for our iniquities :  
 " the chastisement of our peace was upon him,  
 " and with his stripes we are healed. All we  
 " like sheep have gone astray : we have turn-  
 " ed every one to his own way, and the Lord  
 " hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. 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. He was taken from prison and from  
 " judgement : and who shall declare his gene-  
 " ration ? for he was cut off out of the land of  
 " the living : for the transgression of my people  
 " was he stricken." Dan. ix. 24. " Seventy  
 " weeks are determined upon thy people, and  
 " upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression,  
 " and to make an end of sins, and to make re-  
 " conciliation for iniquity, and to bring in ever-  
 " lasting righteousness, and to seal up the vi-  
 " sion and prophecy, and to anoint the most  
 " Holy."

In the New Testament, he tells us, he was to lay down his life for his people : John x. 11. " I  
 " am the good shepherd : the good shepherd  
 " giveth his life for the sheep." The same  
 thing he plainly says in the institution of the sa-  
 crament of the Lord's supper, Matth. xxvi. 26.  
 27. 28. " And as they were eating, Jesus took  
 " bread,

" bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave  
 " it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat ; this is  
 " my body. And he took the cup, and gave  
 " thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink  
 " ye all of it : for this is my blood of the new  
 " testament, which is shed for many for the re-  
 " mission of sins." That his body broken and  
 blood shed for his people, was to be understood  
 of his being made a sin-offering, is plainly testi-  
 fied in the apostolic writings : 2 Cor. v. 21.  
 " For he hath made him to be sin for us, who  
 " knew no sin ; that we might be made the righ-  
 " teousness of God in him." Gal. iii. 13.  
 " Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of  
 " the law, being made a curse for us : for it is  
 " written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on  
 " a tree." Heb. ix. 26. 27. 28. " But now  
 " once in the end of the world, hath he appear-  
 " ed to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.  
 " And as it is appointed unto men once to die,  
 " but after this the judgement : so Christ was  
 " once offered to bear the sins of many ; and  
 " unto them that look for him, shall he appear  
 " the second time, without sin, unto salvation."  
 See also the assertion of the apostle Peter,  
 1 Pet. iii. 18. " Christ also hath once suffered  
 " for sins, the just for the unjust, (that he might  
 " bring us to God), being put to death in the  
 " flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." It is e-  
 vidently also on this account, that he is called  
 the Lamb of God, and we are called to attend  
 to him in that capacity : John i. 29. " Behold

“ the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin  
“ of the world.”

It is lamentable to think, that there should be any who call themselves Christians, and yet refuse to acknowledge this truth, which is woven, if I may so speak, through the whole con-texture, both of the law and gospel. It brings to my mind the story of an ancient artist; who, being employed to build a magnificent and elegant temple, had the ingenuity to inscribe upon it his own name, and so to incorporate it both with the ornaments and body of the structure, that it was impossible afterwards to efface the name, without at the same time destroying the fabrick. In the same manner, Christ dying for sin is engraven in such characters through the whole revealed will of God, that it is impossible to take it away without overturning the whole system. For this end Christ came into the world; for this end he bore the name of *Jesus*, or the *Saviour*; and for this end he became the high priest of our profession, that he might, *by one offering, for ever perfect them that are sanctified.*

This then is the scripture-view of Christ as our propitiation, that our guilt is taken away, and we are reconciled to God through the sacrifice which he hath offered without spot or blemish. And notwithstanding all that has been thrown out against it by the pride of self-righteousness, there is nothing that can be justly opposed to it on the part of unprejudiced reason. God is merciful, but he is also just. And as  
there

there is nothing more inseparable from the idea of sin, and an accusing conscience, than merited punishment; so there is nothing more essential to the idea of justice in God, than a disposition to inflict it. This the scripture every where declares; and the conscience of the guilty, who dreads his maker's presence, ratifies the truth.

Now, if God shews mercy to the sinner, is it so abhorrent from reason, that this should be by a mediator, if one can be found fit to step in between the parties, and "lay his hand upon them both?" Is not this necessary to manifest the righteousness and severity of the law, as well as the tenderness and compassion of the judge? Is not this precisely the reason assigned for it in scripture? Rom. iii. 25. "To declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." It is trifling to say, that there is nothing of the passion of anger in God that should need to be appeased. Such expressions are only figurative, but they convey their meaning very clearly. It is not anger or revenge, as they appear in our disordered frame, that accepts of an atonement. These furious passions fly directly at the offending person, and reject all intercession. But justice, in calm and regular government, requires satisfaction, that the malignity and demerit of the offence may be preserved, while mercy is extended to the criminal. We ought to consider, that one great and general end of the dispensations of providence is, to illustrate the glory of the true God in all his real perfections. This is best done by a purchased pardon, by a wise and awful

ful mixture of impartial justice with unmerited mercy. How can you hear the word *mercy* so often without perceiving this? It is not mercy at all, unless it is bestowed on those who have deserved to suffer; and therefore why may not a voluntary surety be admitted to suffer in their place? The truth is, such are the impressions that are usually made on the awakened conscience, of the infinite holiness and purity, and the tremendous majesty of God, that nothing less will satisfy it than a sufficient atonement, or a clear view how he may be "just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth on Jesus."

But, my brethren, it is one thing, to know, to profess, or even to support the truth; and another, but of unspeakably more moment, to feel, and to apply it. It is one thing, to have a rational conviction, from critical inquiry, that this is taught in the holy scriptures; and another, to cleave to it with esteem and affection, as *the gospel of our salvation*, as the great foundation of our hope and peace. Therefore, in what remains of this branch of the subject, I would consider myself as speaking, not to the wrangling disputer, but to the convinced sinner; not to the self-righteous boaster, but to the broken in spirit. The chief circumstances in the propitiation which Christ hath made, to be taken notice of in this view, are these two: 1. Its absolute necessity. 2. Its perfect sufficiency.

1. Consider the *absolute necessity* of this atonement. There is no other way by which the sinner can be restored to the favour of God. Nothing can be clearer from the holy scriptures.

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It is indeed the tacit inference that may be drawn from the whole. Why is this love and mercy of God celebrated in such exalted strains by the inspired writers, and felt with so much gratitude by the redeemed, but that they were under condemnation, and must have perished, but for the help of this Saviour? Rom. viii. 1.

“ There is therefore now no condemnation to  
“ them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk  
“ not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” And  
the same chapter, ver. 33. “ Who shall lay any  
“ thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is  
“ God that justifieth.” John iii. 16. “ God  
“ so loved the world, that he gave his only be-  
“ gotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him,  
“ should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

As “ without shedding of blood there is no re-  
“ mission,” so we have the same infallible testi-  
mony, Heb. x. 4. that “ it is not possible that  
“ the blood of bulls and of goats should take a-  
“ way sins.” Nay, that the thing might be  
put beyond all possibility of doubt, see the de-  
claration of Peter and John, Acts iv. 12. “ Nei-  
“ ther is there salvation in any other : for there  
“ is none other name under heaven given a-  
“ mong men whereby we must be saved.” And  
what other sense can be put upon these words  
of our Saviour himself? John xiv. 6. “ Jesus  
“ saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth,  
“ and the life : no man cometh unto the Fa-  
“ ther but by me.” In vain then do we found  
our hopes upon any thing else : The holiness of  
the divine nature, the purity of the divine law,  
and

and the greatness of divine power, conspire in blasting every hope of the sinner but what is centered in Christ.

2. Consider the *perfect sufficiency* of this atonement. It is sufficient to answer all the demands of law and justice. It is sufficient to vindicate the honour of the divine government, and to illustrate the holiness and justice of God in the forgiveness of sin. It is sufficient to purchase a full and complete remission to the greatest sinner. Whoever reflects upon the infinite wisdom of God, must be sensible that it is not without reason that so much is said on this subject in scripture; that so much pains is taken to set forth the glory and greatness of the Saviour of sinners. The greatness of his person, and dignity of his character, are set before us in the most striking light. He is "the eternal and  
" only begotten Son of God; the brightness  
" of the Father's glory, and the express image  
" of his person." And Phil. ii. 6. "Who being  
" in the form of God, thought it not robbery to  
" be equal with God." If. ix. 6. "For unto us  
" a child is born, unto us a son is given, and  
" the government shall be upon his shoulder:  
" and his name shall be called, Wonderful,  
" Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlast-  
" ing Father, The Prince of peace."

It is not easy indeed to enumerate the magnificent titles with which he is adorned in scripture: *The Alpha and Omega,—The first and the last,—The Prince of the kings of the earth,—The King of kings, and Lord of lords,—The King of glory,*

glory,—and *The King of saints*. What mighty works are ascribed to him in creation and providence ! We are told, “ He shall reign till all “ enemies are brought under his feet.” The propriety of his sacrifice as the Son of man, and the purity of his sacrifice as the Holy one of God, are taken notice of in scripture : Heb. ii. 17. “ Wherefore in all things it behoved him “ to be made like unto his brethren ; that he “ might be a merciful and faithful high-priest, “ in things pertaining to God, to make recon- “ ciliation for the sins of the people.” Heb. ix. 13. 14. “ For if the blood of bulls, and of “ goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling “ the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of “ the flesh ; how much more shall the blood “ of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit, “ offered himself without spot to God, purge “ your conscience from dead works to serve the “ living God ?” To this you may add the con- tinued fulness that dwells in him : John i. 16. “ And of his fulness have all we received, and “ grace for grace.” Col. i. 19. “ For it plea- “ sed the Father, that in him should all fulness “ dwell.” What is this, my brethren, but to encourage and embolden sinners to put their trust in him, and to carry home with power this truth, which I shall give you in the words of the Holy Ghost ? Heb. vii. 25. “ Wherefore he “ is able also to save them to the uttermost, “ that come unto God by him, seeing he ever “ liveth to make intercession for them.”

II. I proceed now to the second thing proposed, which was, to consider the extent of this propitiation, founded on the last clause of the text: "And not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." In general, when we remember that this epistle was written chiefly to the converts of the circumcision, it may convince us, that in all probability this expression was intended against the great and national prejudice of the Jews, of which we see very frequent notice taken in the New Testament. As they had the oracles of God committed to them, as for the wise purposes of his providence he had separated them from other nations, and the Messiah was to descend from them according to the flesh, they apprehended that all the blessings of his reign were to be confined to themselves: therefore they are often given to understand, that the purpose of mercy was far more extensive, and that Christ came with a view to fulfil that promise made to the father of the faithful, Gen. xxii. 18. "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." The expression in the text then undoubtedly implies, that redemption through the blood of Christ was to be preached to sinners of the Gentiles; that as he had been the Saviour of all ages by the efficacy of that sacrifice which he was to offer in the fulness of time, so that the virtue of it was not to be confined to the house of Israel, but to belong to sinners of every nation under heaven.

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I am sensible, my brethren, that very great controversies have been raised in another view, as to the extent of Christ's death; and the import of this and other such general expressions in the holy scriptures. In this, as in most other debates, matters have been carried a far greater length than the interest of truth and piety requires; and, as is also usual, they have arisen from an improper and unskilful mixture of what belongs to the secret counsels of the Most High with his revealed will, which is the invariable rule of our duty. Without entering, therefore, into these debates, which are unsuitable to our present employment, or rather giving my judgement, that they are for the most part unnecessary, unprofitable, or hurtful, I shall lay down three propositions on this subject, which I think can hardly be called in question, and which are a sufficient foundation for our faith and practice.

I. The obedience and death of Christ is of value sufficient to expiate the guilt of all the sins of every individual that ever lived or ever shall live on earth. This cannot be denied, since the subjects to be redeemed are finite; the price paid for their redemption is infinite. He suffered in the human nature, but that nature intimately and personally united to the divine; so that Christ the mediator, the gift of God for the redemption of sinners, is often called his own and his eternal Son: Rom. viii. 32. "He that spared not his own Son, but

" delivered him up for us all, how shall he not

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“with him also freely give us all things?” Such was the union of the divine and human nature in Christ, that the blood which was the purchase of our redemption is expressly called the blood of God, Acts xx. 28. “To feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” This is the great mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh, in which all our thoughts are lost and swallowed up.

2. Notwithstanding this, every individual of the human race is not in fact partaker of the blessings of his purchase; but many die in their sins, and perish for ever. This will as little admit of any doubt. Multitudes have died, who never heard of the name of Christ, or salvation through him; many have lived and died blaspheming his person, and despising his undertaking; many have died in unbelief and impenitence, serving divers lusts and passions; and if the scripture is true, he will at last render unto them according to their works. So that if we admit, that the works of God are known to him from the beginning of the world, it can never be true, that, in his eternal counsels, Christ died to save those, who, after all that he hath done, shall be miserable for ever. “He is a rock, his work is perfect.” His design never could be frustrated; but, as the apostle Paul expresses it, Rom. xi. 7. “The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.” But,

3. There is in the death of Christ a sufficient

cient foundation laid for preaching the gospel indefinitely to all without exception. It is the command of God, that this should be done: Mark xvi. 15. "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." The effect of this is, that the misery of the unbelieving and impenitent shall lie entirely at their own door; and they shall not only die in their sins, but shall suffer to eternity for this most heinous of all sins, despising the remedy, and refusing to hear the Son of God: Heb. x. 26. 27. "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgement, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." Let us neither refuse our assent to any part of the revealed will of God, nor foolishly imagine an opposition between one part of it and another. All the obscurity arises from, and may be resolved into the weakness of our understandings; but let God be true, and every man a liar. That there is a sense in which Christ died for all men, and even for those who perish, is plain from the very words of scripture: 1 Tim. iv. 10. "For therefore we both labour, and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe." 1 Cor. viii. 11. "And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?" Thus it appears, that both in a national and

personal view, Christ is "the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

III. I PROCEED now, in the *last* place, to make some practical improvement of the subject for your instruction and direction. And,

1. From what hath been said, let us be induced to give praise to God for his mercy to lost sinners revealed in the gospel. Let us particularly give him praise for Christ Jesus, his unspeakable gift: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his Son to be the propitiation for us."

While we remember, with abasement of soul, the holiness and justice of God, which required satisfaction for sin, let us also remember his infinite compassion, who was pleased himself to provide "a lamb for the burnt-offering." Let us at the same time give praise to the tender-hearted Saviour, who gave his life as an offering "of a sweet-smelling favour" to God. Redeeming grace shall be the theme of eternal gratitude and praise in heaven. After all our trials and dangers are over, we shall then, with unspeakable delight, ascribe the honour of our victory to him, saying, Rev. v. 12. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." Why should we not also attempt to give him praise in his church on earth? for he, having finished his own work, and entered into his glory, hath given

given us an assured prospect, that we also shall overcome in his strength; that he will come again, and “ receive us to himself; that where “ he is, there we may be also.”

2. You may see from what hath been said, that such as are yet unrelated to this Saviour are in a state of sin, and liable to divine wrath. Hear and receive this truth, however unwelcome to the secure, however distasteful to the carnal mind. If it were not so, this propitiation which God hath set forth would have been altogether unnecessary. Let us beg of him who hath ascended up on high, to send down, according to his promise, his Spirit to convince the world of sin. How many affecting and striking proofs have we of this, both in our character and state! and yet how difficult to make us sensible of it! What is to be seen in the world at present, or what do we read in the history of past ages, but one melancholy scene of disorder, misery, and bloodshed, succeeding another? Is not this the effect of human guilt? And do we not, by mutual injuries, at once demonstrate our own corruption, and execute the just judgement of God upon one another? May not every person discover the latent source of these flagrant crimes, in the pollution of his own heart, his aversion to what is good, and his proneness and inclination to what is evil? And yet, alas! how difficult a matter is it to make the heart humble itself, and plead guilty before God; to make us sensible, that we are transgressors from the womb, and inexcusable in

this transgression; that the threatening of the law is most just, "Curfed is every one that  
 "continueth not in all things written in the  
 "book of the law to do them;" and that it is of the infinite mercy of God, that the execution is fufpended, or any hope given us of being able to avert it?

Yet this, my brethren, I will repeat it, and I befeech you to attend to it, is certainly the cafe by nature, with every perfon in this affembly. Every one who now hears me is in a ftate of condemnation, and liable to everlasting mifery, excepting that happy number who have  
 "fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope fet be-  
 "fore them." All infenfible perfons, living in a carelefs fecure forgetfulnefs of God; all who indulge themfelves habitually in the lufts of the flefh; drunkards, fwearers, profane and lafcivious jefters, liars, unjust perfons, lovers of the prefent world, are aliens from the commonwealth of Ifrael, and ftangers to the covenant of promife. Oh that it were poffible for me to awaken you to a fenfe of your danger, while there is yet a poffibility of efcaping! Oh the importance to you of the unknown time from this day of your merciful vifitation to the day of your death! What would thofe who are now referved in chains to the judgement of the great day, give for the precious opportunity you are now defpifing! In a little time I know that you yourfelves will repent; oh that it may not be when it is too late to reform! But all words muft fink under fuch a fubject. No picture that I  
 could

could draw of the despairing horror of a sinner on his deathbed, or the blaspheming rage of those who are tormented in hell-fire, could possibly give any of you a just apprehension of what it is to fall into the hands of the living God, unless it please himself to wound the conscience with the arrows of conviction, that he may afterwards pour in the healing balm of peace and consolation. And oh that it might stand with the will of God that none here present should escape !

3. Learn from what has been said, that there is no sacrifice for sin, but the one offering of our Redeemer on the cross ; no hope of mercy for any child of Adam, but through his blood. The typical sacrifices under the Old Testament, were but shadows, the substance is Christ. In vain will any go about to establish their own righteousness, and refuse to submit to the righteousness of God. Think not, my brethren, by attempts of reformation, by faulty defective duties, to be able to cancel any part of that guilt to which you are, adding every day. How great is the folly and presumption of self-righteousness ! What a profane contempt of the riches of divine grace ! Hath God seen it necessary to set forth Christ as a propitiation through faith in his blood ? and will you say, that it is unnecessary, and spurn the offered mercy ? How much ignorance is in self-righteousness ! What imperfect views must they have of the law of God, and how little knowledge of themselves, and their own hearts, who  
admire

admire or trust in human virtue! Above all, what is the foundation and corner-stone of self-righteousness? It is pride, that sin of all others most odious and abominable in the sight of God. Is it not a matter of daily experience, that those persons who are evidently most loose and careless in their own practice, and who, one would think, should have least of that kind to rely upon, are most prone to a self-righteous plan, and most ready to despise the doctrine of justification through the imputed righteousness of Christ. Are you sometimes surprised at this, Christians? The thing is easily explained. They know little either of the law of God or their own hearts. They seldom study the one, or reflect upon the other. If they did, they would soon be ashamed of such a pretence. Those who apply themselves with the greatest diligence to the study of holiness in heart and life, do always most sensibly feel, and most willingly confess, that all their righteousnesses are as filthy rags before God.

4. In Christ Jesus, and the blood of the everlasting covenant, there is abundant provision made for the pardon of all our sins, and peace with an offended God. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" Behold the Lamb which God himself hath ordained, and set apart for this important work, and which he will certainly accept! "Deliver them," saith he, "from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom." Behold the immaculate and spotless victim in the purity of his human, and the glory of his divine nature! There is no sin so atrocious but his blood is sufficient

ficient to wash away the guilt. Is there any sinner in this assembly burdened with a sense of guilt, arrested by an accusing conscience, terrified by the thunders of the law, ready to cry out, "Who can stand before this holy Lord? God! My flesh trembleth because of thee; I am afraid of thy judgements." Let such an one know, that help is laid on him that is "mighty to save." Let your guilt be what it will, who can so far derogate from the Redeemer's glory as to suspect that his blood cannot purge it away? Give no heed to unbelieving thoughts, or discouraging suggestions; but be "strong in faith, giving glory to God;" and attend to the Saviour's own words: "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

5. In the *last* place, Let all the children of God, whose hope hath still been in the divine mercy through a crucified Saviour, embrace the opportunity now given them of professing, exercising, and strengthening their faith in the great atonement. Plead your relation to God through Christ, and encourage yourselves in his all-sufficiency and merit. Look upon his sufferings for humbling you under a sense of the evil of sin, which made such an expiation necessary. Nothing serves more to abase and level human pride, than to see our nature on the cross, tho' personally united to the divine. Look upon him in his agony, for mortifying and crucifying sin in you. There is a purifying virtue, and sanctifying efficacy, in the blood of Christ. It not only speaks peace to the wounded conscience, but purges the conscience from dead works.

works to serve the living God. I am not against the introduction of every argument from scripture or reason against sin, or in support of duty; but let them never supplant the great, the leading, the constraining argument, which is drawn from the cross of Christ. Believe it, my brethren, nothing so much reconciles the heart to duty, nothing so kindles a holy indignation against sin, as a believing view of the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This gives the Spirit of adoption a child-like fear, and a child-like love. This fills the Christian with comfort, this inspires the Christian with zeal. To seek our comfort in a separate way, or in the first instance from our duties, is to make that comfort feeble and variable as the duties are defective; but to enliven our duties by the comforts of the gospel, is to follow the order of the covenant of grace, by which we at once promote the glory of God, and most effectually secure our own comfort and peace. This is the Spirit breathed by the apostle Paul, with whose words, Gal. ii. 19. 20. I shall conclude: "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

S E R.

## S E R M O N VI.

The love of Christ in redemption.

R E V. i. 5.

*Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.*

*Action Sermon.*

**T**HE bare repetition of these words is sufficient to convince every hearer how well they are suited to the design of our present meeting. Redeeming love is certainly the most delightful of all themes to every real Christian. It is the immediate and direct object of our contemplation in the Lord's supper. This ordinance was instituted to keep up the remembrance of the sufferings and death of Christ, which was the great and finishing proof of his love. How then can you attend on it in a more becoming and dutiful, a more pleasant and desirable, or a more happy and useful frame of spirit, than when your hearts are filled with a sense of the love of Christ, and you find yourselves disposed to join, with a mixture of joy and wonder, in the doxology of the apostle John, in the text, *Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood?*

The author of this book is sometimes styled  
*the*

*the disciple whom Jesus loved.* Since, therefore, it pleased his master to distinguish him by the tenderness of particular friendship, it is no wonder that we find so much of the delightful affection of love in his writings. In the beginning of this chapter, he gives an account of the general subject and design of the book of Revelation, the manner in which the discoveries contained in it were made to him, and his fidelity in testifying them to others. Then follows the apostolic salutation to the seven churches in Asia, which is a solemn benediction, in name of all the persons of the adorable Trinity: "Grace  
 " be to you, and peace, from him which is, and  
 " which was, and which is to come;" (that is, from God the Father, the ancient of days, immutable and eternal); "and from the seven  
 " spirits which are before his throne;" (not to detain you with a critical account of this phrase, it means the Holy Ghost, single in his person, but multiplied in his gifts; the variety, fullness, and perfection of which, are denoted by this form of expression); "and from Jesus  
 " Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the  
 " first-begotten from the dead, and the prince  
 " of the kings of the earth." To him you see he gives three illustrious characters.

1. *The faithful witness*, who came from above, and revealed the whole will of God for our salvation; who being the eternal truth, might be absolutely depended on in the account he was by the apostle to communicate, of the great events of Providence towards his church  
 and

and people. 2. *The first-begotten from the dead*, declared to be the Son of God with power, by his glorious resurrection and triumph over the king of terrors. And, 3. *The Prince of the kings of the earth*; that is, the Lord of nature, to whom every prince and potentate must be subject, and to the ends of whose providence, and the increase of whose kingdom, all their schemes of policy and conquest shall at last be subservient. He then, with great propriety, having mentioned the name, and given a short view of the character of his blessed Lord, lays hold of the opportunity to express his own and every other sinner's obligation to him in this sublime ascription, *Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.*

To enter upon the consideration of the love of Christ in its full extent, in its source, its expressions, and its effects, even those that are suggested in the text, would far exceed the bounds of a single discourse. What I propose, therefore, at this time, in order to prepare your minds, and my own, for the solemn action before us, is only to collect into one view some of the great and general characters of the love of Christ, which are most proper to excite our gratitude and praise; and then to make some practical improvement of it, for your instruction and direction.

I. FIRST, then, let us endeavour to point out some of the great and general characters of the love of Christ. In this I shall take care to

confine myself to such views as are given of it in the holy scriptures. And every character given of it there, we are both intitled and obliged to attend to, and improve.

1. First of all, then, you may observe, that it is an *everlasting* love. It took its rise in the eternal counsels of Heaven. This is a character given of the love of God to his people, Jer. xxxi. 3. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love : therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." This expression is often used with a double view, to shew, on the one hand, its early, its original source, and on the other, its perpetual stability, and endless duration. Ps. ciii. 17. "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him ; and his righteousness unto childrens children." Is. liv. 7. 8. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee, for a moment ; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." Having cited these passages of the Old Testament, I must justify the application of them, by observing, that all the covenant-mercies of God to man, in our present fallen state, are to be referred to the love of Christ, as their price, their source, and their sum. This is plain from innumerable passages of scripture : Eph. i. 4. 5. "According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him

“ him in love : having predestinated us unto  
 “ the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to  
 “ himself, according to the good pleasure of his  
 “ will.” Eph. iii. 11. “ According to the eter-  
 “ nal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus  
 “ our Lord.” For this reason it is, amongst  
 others, that Christ is called, Rev. xiii. 8. “ the  
 “ Lamb slain from the foundation of the  
 “ world.”

I confess, my brethren, we are but ill able  
 to understand, or at least to measure, the im-  
 port of this truth, That the love of Christ to  
 sinners, or of God in him, was from eternity.  
 All our conceptions are soon lost, and swallow-  
 ed up, in what is infinite and boundless. But  
 surely it affords matter for the deepest and  
 humblest adoration, as well as for the highest  
 gratitude and joy. Does it not afford matter  
 for adoring wonder, that the plan for redeem-  
 ing lost sinners, and restoring them to the obe-  
 dience and enjoyment of God, was the object  
 of the divine purpose from eternity? It appears  
 to be a very conspicuous part, or rather perhaps  
 we are warranted to say, from the scripture-  
 revelation, that it is the chief part of our cre-  
 ator’s will, to which every other part of his pro-  
 vidence is subordinate and subservient. Accord-  
 ingly, in the very passage where my text lies,  
 the Redeemer says, ver. 8. “ I am Alpha and  
 “ Omega, the beginning and the ending, faith-  
 “ the Lord, which is, and which was, and  
 “ which is to come, the Almighty.” Does not  
 this lead us to contemplate the glory of an in-

finite God, as it shines in this everlasting love ? Does it not also afford matter of gratitude to the believing soul, while he considers every vessel of mercy as concerned in this eternal purpose ?

I am sensible, my brethren, there may be an abuse and perversion of the doctrine of election, if we think of it as independent of its fruits, and apply it so as to produce either security or despair. But I despise the wisdom of those persons who would conceal this truth as dangerous, which it hath pleased God distinctly to reveal. It is the root which produceth the plant ; but it is the plant which discovers the root. It is the fountain which produceth the streams ; but the streams lead us to the fountain. Must not the sinner who by faith has laid hold on a crucified Saviour, and given credit to the word of God in a preached gospel, consider, with admiration, his name written in *the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world* ? What delight will it give him ! What honour does it reflect upon him, at the same time that it destroys the very foundation of arrogance and pride ! This is the first, and yet it is but one of many parts of the doctrine of salvation, which at once exalts and abases us ; raises our hopes, and forbids us to glory ; clothes us with infinite honour, and yet discovers us to be less than nothing : so that we may say with the apostle Paul, after a view of the same subject, Rom. xi. 33. “ O the depth of the riches both of the  
“ wisdom and knowledge of God ! how un-  
“ searchable

“searchable are his judgements, and his ways  
“past finding out!” This leads me to observe,

2: That the love of Christ is *free and unmerited* love. This is a circumstance that is scarcely ever separated from the account given of the love of Christ in scripture. It may be founded: even on the infinite disproportion between uncreated excellence and created weakness: Ps. vii. 4. “What is man, that thou art mindful  
“of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” Ps. cxliv. 3. “Lord, what is  
“man, that thou takest knowledge of him?  
“or the son of man, that thou makest account  
“of him?” Nay, as if this were a truth of the utmost moment, we have it repeated a third time in almost the same words; Job vii. 17.  
“What is man, that thou shouldst magnify  
“him? and that thou shouldst set thine heart  
“upon him?” But this is not all, nor indeed the main thing to be attended to; for the love of Christ hath for its object those who were in actual rebellion against God, transgressors of his holy law, and liable to the stroke of his justice. It was not only to exalt those who were low, or to supply those who were needy, that Christ came, but to deliver those who were appointed to death: John iii. 16. “God so loved  
“the world, that he gave his only begotten  
“Son, that whosoever believeth on him, should  
“not perish, but have everlasting life.” Rom. v. 8. “But God commendeth his love towards  
“us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ  
“died for us.” Eph. ii. 4. 5. “But God,

“ who is rich in mercy, for his great love  
 “ wherewith he loved us, even when we were  
 “ dead in sins, hath quickened us together with  
 “ Christ, (by grace ye are saved.)” The same  
 thing indeed is clearly intimated in the words of  
 our text, *Unto him that loved us, and washed us  
 from our sins in his own blood.* It is on this ac-  
 count in particular that salvation, according to  
 the gospel, is said to be free, and of grace, that  
 is to say, an act of unmerited and voluntary  
 kindness, which the sinner had no title to de-  
 mand: Rom. iii. 23. 24. 25. “ For all have  
 “ sinned, and come short of the glory of God ;  
 “ being justified freely by his grace, thro’ the re-  
 “ demption that is in Jesus Christ : whom God  
 “ hath set forth to be a propitiation through  
 “ faith in his blood, to declare his righteous-  
 “ ness for the remission of sins that are past,  
 “ through the forbearance of God.”

Believe it, Christians, this is the proper exer-  
 cise of mercy; and here the divine mercy shines  
 and reigns. Without this, it is not obscured  
 only, but annihilated or destroyed. But, oh !  
 what a view does this give us of the love of  
 Christ ! What an impression will his love make  
 on all those who are truly convinced of their  
 guilt and wretchedness ! This is the very hinge  
 upon which the whole doctrine of salvation  
 turns. I hope you are not disposed to make a-  
 ny opposition to it. But, alas ! it is not sufficient  
 to have learned it as a science, to have been taught  
 it as making a part of the Christian faith ; it is  
 another matter to have a real and personal con-  
 viction of it upon the heart. Why is the love  
 of

of Christ so cold a subject to the generality of the world, but because they have no sense of their guilt and misery? I am even afraid, that many of the zealous advocates for this truth, have but little experience of its power, and live but little under the influence of it in their practice. Where indeed is the person to be found; who does full justice to the Saviour, and considers his love as wholly unmerited and free? The most evangelical expressions do often consist with the most legal and self-righteous affections. Let me try, however; before I leave this particular, if I can make you understand it, even though you should not feel it. Suppose any of you were upon the most deliberate and composed reflection, upon the most particular and close examination, sensible that you justly deserved to be banished from the divine presence, and cast into everlasting fire; and that your blessed Saviour, when there was no other way to prevent it, did save you by the sacrifice of himself; tell me, what would you not owe to him? what words would you find to express your love to him, or your sense of his love to you? There have been some convinced sinners so rivetted, if I may speak so, to this circumstance, that they could find little other way of measuring the love of Christ, but by looking into themselves; and to whom indeed it has been enough to illustrate the greatness of his mercy that they were not consumed. To this add,

3. The love of Christ is *unsolicited* love. It took its rise, not from those who stood in need of it, but from him who bestowed it. It was  
not

not the effect of our earnest importunity, but of his own infinite mercy. This is a circumstance which we ought by no means to omit, as we find it particularly taken notice of in scripture: 1 John iv. 10. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins;" and in the same chapter, verse 19. "We love him, because he first loved us." It is natural to expect, that those who are in misery should implore the assistance of those who are able to relieve them, or that those who have been in the offence should humble themselves before those who have it in their power to punish, or to forgive them. But it was quite otherwise here. The love of Christ discovered itself, when we were in open rebellion against him; or, in the words of the apostle Paul, Rom. v. 10. "While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son."

This affords us at once an illustration of the love of Christ, and a moving picture of our own deplorable and guilty state. There is something infinitely more noble and generous in extending mercy to the miserable without waiting for their request, than when it is hardly procured, or as it were extorted, by importunity and solicitation. And does it not present us with a melancholy prospect of our natural state, that we are not only unworthy to receive, but unwilling to ask for mercy? I desire, my brethren, that you may not consider this as only relating to mankind in general, and the voluntary purpose.

pose of grace and mercy from above in their favour, but as what makes a part of the experience of every particular convert. As the offer of mercy is made to him-freely, so he will and must be sensible how cold and unthankful a reception he hath often given to the proposal. He will be sensible what resistance he hath often made to the design of the gospel ; what exception he hath taken at the terms of it ; and with how much difficulty he was at last induced to comply with it. I am persuaded there are few circumstances in the love of Christ that are more affecting to a believer, than to remember his own obstinacy, when a sinner, and his backwardness to accept of the invitations of the Saviour. After he hath rested his hope on the divine mercy, after he hath been made willing in a day of divine power, and hath obtained some comfortable evidence of the divine favour, how does he tremble at the thoughts of his former resistance ! how does he wonder at the patience of God, and adore that victorious love, which stormed his heart, as well as paid the price of his redemption !

We find this particularly the case with those who having been for a season remarkably profligate, are saved as brands from the burning. They cannot help recollecting their former condition, their profane madness ; and wondering, with a mixture of gratitude and fear, that they were not cut off in their wickedness, and made monuments of divine vengeance. Far from desiring a share in the love of Christ, they were perhaps doing their utmost in contempt of his name,

name, and in opposition to his interest. Yet, Rom. x. 20. "was he found of them that sought him not, and made manifest to them that asked not after him:" they were powerfully though sweetly constrained to return to God through him.

4. The love of Christ is a *distinguishing* love; which must necessarily and greatly enhance the obligation of those who are the objects of it. When one person is passed by, and another is chosen, either to be delivered from impending danger, or to be made partaker of extraordinary blessings, the loss or suffering of the one, seems to set off the superior happiness of, or the favour bestowed upon the other. To apply this to the subject we are now upon, there is a double distinction pointed out in scripture; one of our nature, in opposition to the fallen angels; and the other, of particular persons, as the vessels of mercy.

(1.) There is an evident distinction between our nature and that of the fallen angels: Heb. ii. 16. "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; he took on him the seed of Abraham." 2 Pet. ii. 4. "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgement." I am sensible, that upon this subject we may be sometimes in danger of speaking with impropriety, especially if we pretend to assign the reasons of God's procedure any further than he hath been pleased himself explicitly to reveal them.

them. There can be no doubt that the Lord of all, God infinitely wise, had the best reasons for his conduct, the most noble and excellent purposes in view in every thing that he ordained; but they are not discovered to us, and perhaps they are above our comprehension. The single point we are called to attend to, is the distinction infinitely gracious which is made in our favour. A Saviour is provided for us, a mercy infinite in itself, and the more highly to be prized, that (Jude, vers. 6.) the angels, our fellow-creatures, "who kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgement of the great day." If we should attempt a comparison between ourselves and these spirits of higher order, we could find no ground of preference in our own favour; perhaps we should find many things that might seem to operate a contrary way; but it is safest, in humility and gratitude to say with the psalmist, Psa. cxv. 3. "Our God is in the heavens, he hath done whatsoever he pleased."

(2.) But this is not all; there is also a distinction of particular persons as the vessels of mercy. Since I am introducing this subject, to prevent mistakes, I must observe, that every sinner of the race of Adam who shall perish eternally, shall also perish most justly; his blood shall lie at his own door, and he shall be found guilty of rejecting the counsel of God against himself. At the same time, all who are effectually

tually brought to the saving knowledge of God through Christ, shall be obliged to confess, that they were brought in by almighty power, or, in the language of the Holy Ghost, 1 Pet. i. 2. that they are “elect according to the foreknow-  
 “ledge of God the Father, through sanctifica-  
 “tion of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprink-  
 “ling of the blood of Jesus Christ.”

On this, as on the former branch of this head, it may be observed, that we must not presume to penetrate into the unsearchable depth of the divine counsels; but at the same time it must be remembered, that we are not permitted, and cannot pretend, to find the reasons of preference in ourselves; for no flesh may glory in his presence. God in many passages asserts his own sovereignty and perfect liberty in the distribution of his grace: Rom. ix. 15. 16. “For he  
 “faith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom  
 “I will have mercy, and I will have compassion  
 “on whom I will have compassion. So then  
 “it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that  
 “runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.”  
 And again, in the 18th verse, “Therefore hath  
 “he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and  
 “whom he will he hardeneth.” Nothing can be harder, indeed, than for the proud and carnal mind to bow before the sovereignty of God; yet nothing is more evident, than that the destination of the vessels of mercy doth not proceed upon the ordinary grounds of human estimation. Nay, there seems to be an express design to stain the pride of all human glory:  
 1 Cor.

1 Cor. i. 26. 27. " For you see your calling,  
" brethren, how that not many wise men after  
" the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble  
" are called. But God hath chosen the foolish  
" things of the world, to confound the wise ;  
" and God hath chosen the weak things of the  
" world, to confound the things which are  
" mighty." Experience daily illustrates this ;  
for while we see some brought to an entire sub-  
mission to the gospel, and an obedient conformi-  
ty to the will of God, we see many of equal, or of  
greater rank, of equal or of greater ability and  
endowments of mind, and favoured with equal or  
superior advantages and opportunities of instruc-  
tion, who yet continue to bear the marks of  
reprobation. The same mercies dispose one to  
thankfulness, and inspire another with pride.  
The same trials will soften one heart, and hard-  
en another. All this our Redeemer makes the  
subject of a solemn thanksgiving to God, Luke  
x. 21. " In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit,  
" and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of  
" heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these  
" things from the wise and prudent, and hast  
" revealed them unto babes : even so, Father,  
" for so it seemed good in thy sight." Who  
that believes, in this assembly, will presume to  
take the least part of the honour of it to him-  
self, or will refuse to adore the distinguishing  
love of God ? And how often must those who  
bear the message of peace be obliged to seek the  
cause of an unsuccessful gospel in the counsels  
of the Most High ? 2 Cor. iv. 3. " But if our  
VOL. I. M " gospel

“ gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost :  
 “ in whom the god of this world hath blinded  
 “ the minds of them which believe not, lest the  
 “ light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who  
 “ is the image of God, should shine unto  
 “ them.”

5. The love of Christ was an *expensive* love. So great a deliverance would have called for the most humble and thankful acknowledgement, though it had been as much *without price* to the Saviour as to the sinner. But oh! my brethren, how far was it otherwise! and what shall we think or say of the love of Christ, when we consider how much it cost him to procure salvation for us! when we consider the depth of his humiliation, the variety, the continuance, and the greatness of his sufferings! You cannot but be sensible how frequent mention is made of this in scripture, or rather how seldom it is omitted when the love of Christ is introduced at all. It is the circumstance particularly pointed at in the text, *Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.* The same thing appears from the other doxologies, or acts of worship to the Saviour, which are contained in this book, as Rev. v. 9.  
 “ And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art  
 “ worthy to take the book, and to open the  
 “ seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast  
 “ redeemed us to God by thy blood.” It appears also, from the frequent mention of the cross of Christ, on which his sufferings were completed. Nay, of so much moment was this,  
 that

that it seems to have made the sum of the gospel, as preached by the apostles: 1 Cor. ii. 2. "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

The sufferings of Christ, then, ought to be ever present to the mind of the believer. The necessity and importance of this is plain from both the seals of the covenant of grace. The water in baptism represents the blood of Christ; and we are told, Rom. vi. 3. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death." The institution of the Lord's supper also had the remembrance of Christ's sufferings as its direct and immediate intention: 1 Cor. xi. 24. 25. 26. "And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." Remember, then, Christians, how he left the throne of his glory, and took upon him the form of a servant. Remember him despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. His life indeed was one continued scene of sorrow, from the cradle to the grave.

I hope the particulars of his sufferings are not

strangers to your meditations: may the Lord enable you to contemplate them with faith and love. Remember his agony in the garden, when he suffered from his Father's hand: For "it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief." Think, O Christian, what it was to redeem a lost world, when you hear him saying, as in John xii. 27. "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour." Remember him seized by the treachery of one of his own disciples; accused and arraigned as a felon; dragged to the tribunal of an unrighteous judge; clothed with a purple robe, and crowned with thorns in derision of his kingly office; severely scourged; blindfolded, buffeted, and spit upon; and the whole indeed so conducted by the righteous permission and unseen direction of divine providence, that hardly any expression, either of cruelty or contumely, was omitted. Cease to wonder, my dear friends, that profane wretches deride the signs of his sufferings, when you remember, that the blinded rabble attending the important trial were permitted to insult him, saying, "Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee."

Remember him going forth without the camp, bearing his reproach. Remember that spotless victim, the Lamb of God, stretched upon a cross, and nailed to the accursed tree, while he suffered all that the extremity of bodily pain, and the most unutterable anguish of spirit, could possibly

possibly inflict upon an innocent creature. No wonder that the earth did shake, that the rocks were rent, and the natural sun refused to give his light, when the Sun of Righteousness was under so great an eclipse. Did the Saviour then willingly submit to all this pain and ignominy for our sakes? Was not this the most expensive love; and can we refuse to say with the multitude of the heavenly host, Rev. v. 12. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing?"

6. The love of Christ was the most generous and *disinterested* love. The supposition or suspicion of any interested views in what one person does for another, nay, even the possibility of his serving any purpose of his own at the same time, greatly abates the value of any favour, and lessens the sense of obligation. But nothing of this kind can be so much as imagined here. It was giving to those from whom he could receive nothing, and emptying himself of that glory to which the whole creation could not make any addition. The truth is, we ought to consider in the same light every other mercy of God, as well as the love of Christ his Son, which was the source of them all: Job xxii. 2. 3. 4. "Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect? Will he re-

M 3.

"prove:

“ prove thee for fear of thee? will he enter  
 “ with thee into judgement?” And to the  
 “ same purpose, Job xxxv. 5. 6. 7. 8. “ Look  
 “ unto the heavens, and see, and behold the  
 “ clouds, which are higher than thou. If  
 “ thou sinnest, what dost thou against him?  
 “ or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what  
 “ dost thou unto him? If thou be righteous,  
 “ what givest thou him? or what receiveth he  
 “ of thine hand? Thy wickedness may hurt a  
 “ man as thou art, and thy righteousness may  
 “ profit the son of man.” The essential glory  
 and happiness of the Deity, and consequently of  
 the *Eternal Word*, can receive no addition, nor  
 suffer the smallest diminution, from the state of  
 any, or of all his creatures. He was infinitely  
 happy in himself from all eternity, before there  
 was man or angel to serve him, and would  
 have continued so though they had never been.  
 How infinitely then are we indebted to this ge-  
 nerous Saviour! with what gratitude ought we  
 to celebrate his pure and disinterested love, who  
 graciously interposed in our behalf, and deli-  
 vered us from the wrath of God, by bearing it  
 in our room!

7. In the last place, the love of Christ was a  
 most *fruitful, active, and beneficent* love. The  
 effects of it are unspeakably great; the blessings  
 which we reap from it are not only infinite in  
 number, but inestimable in value. They are  
 indeed almost as valuable as their price was  
 costly. It was not to be supposed, that so great  
 a person would be employed upon a trivial  
 work,

work; or an infinite price paid for an inconsiderable purchase. But how, my brethren, shall we form any adequate conception of the benefits that flow from our Redeemer's death? All that is necessary for us, all that is desirable to us, all that is truly precious in itself, is effectually made ours: Rom. viii. 32. "He that  
 " spared not his own Son, but delivered him  
 " up for us all, how shall he not with him also  
 " freely give us all things?" 1 Cor. i. 30.  
 " But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of  
 " God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness,  
 " and sanctification, and redemption."

(1.) We are through Christ delivered from condemnation: Rom. viii. 1. " There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are  
 " in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh,  
 " but after the Spirit." Do you know any thing of a sense of guilt? Does your creator's power and greatness ever make you afraid? Have you trembled at the approach of the king of terrors? or of that day of righteous judgement, when God shall render to every man according to his works? Christ our Saviour hath delivered us " from the wrath to come." This is the first ground of the apostle's ascription in the text: *Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.* Hear also the apostle's triumphant assurance, Rom. viii. 33. 34. " Who  
 " shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that  
 " condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the  
 " right

“right hand of God, who also maketh inter-  
“cession for us.”

(2.) Through Christ the believer is assured, that he shall receive every thing that is necessary for him in his passage through the world. The Spirit is purchased and bestowed to lead him into all truth, and to sanctify him wholly. Christ did not satisfy himself with cancelling our guilt, but made effectual provision for the renovation of our nature. The Spirit is also given as a spirit of consolation. He is styled *the Comforter*, who shall *abide with us for ever*. Without enlarging at this time on the comforts of the gospel, they are sufficiently commended in the following words of the apostle, Phil. iv. 7. “And  
“the peace of God which passeth all under-  
“standing, shall keep your hearts and minds  
“through Christ Jesus.” To these add a sanctified providence. As many as are reconciled to God through Christ, may rest satisfied that all things shall work together for their good. The most opposite events, prosperity and adversity, health and sickness, honour and reproach, nay, every thing without exception, shall be subservient to their interest: 1 Cor. iii. 21. 22. 23.  
“For all things are yours: whether Paul, or  
“Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life,  
“or death, or things present, or things to come;  
“all are yours; and ye are Christ’s; and Christ  
“is God’s.”

(3.) Through Christ the believer is intitled to everlasting glory and happiness in the enjoyment of God to all eternity. This was among the last things

things he told his disciples before he left the world : John xiv. 2. 3. " In my Father's house  
 " are many mansions ; if it were not so, I would  
 " have told you : I go to prepare a place for you.  
 " And if I go and prepare a place for you, I  
 " will come again, and receive you unto myself,  
 " that where I am, there ye may be also."

You are this day to commemorate your Redeemer, who died once upon a cross, but who has now been many ages upon a throne : Rev. i. 18. " I am he that liveth, and was dead ; and  
 " behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen ; and  
 " have the keys of hell and death." He is able to make his faithful disciples more than conquerors over all their spiritual enemies ; or, as it is expressed in the passage where the text lies, he will make them *kings and priests to God and his Father*. In the passage immediately preceding the text, he is called the first begotten from the dead ; and elsewhere we are told, that the order of the resurrection is, " Christ the first fruits,  
 " and afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming." It shall both finish and illustrate his love when he shall raise them that sleep in the dust ; when he " shall change their vile bodies,  
 " that they may be fashioned like unto his own  
 " glorious body, according to the working  
 " whereby he is able to subdue all things unto  
 " himself." At present, how imperfect are our discoveries ! how weak and feeble our conceptions ! how cold and languid our affections ! Now we " see through a glass darkly, but then  
 " face to face." O how joyful to every believer the

the deliverance from a state of suffering temptation and sin, and the possession of perfect holiness and unchangeable happiness! And O how great the opposition of the future to the present state! No more struggling with the evils of life: No more perplexity or anxious care for food and raiment; no more distress from sickness or pain; no prisons nor oppressors there; no liars nor slanderers there; no complaints of an evil heart there, but the most perfect security of state, and most unremitted vigour of affection. How shall the ransomed of the Lord then sing their Redeemer's praise! Rev. i. 5. 6. "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

II. I proceed now to make some practical improvement of what hath been said. And,

1. Let me intreat every person in this house to make the following obvious reflection: If so great are the obligations of believers to the love of Christ, how dreadful must be the condition of those who die in their sins! The one of these explains and illustrates the other. The believer can owe but little, if the deliverance is not great. I have been lately speaking of the happiness of the elect of God, in being freed from the miseries of the present state; but, oh! unhappy they who shall depart from this life unreconciled to God: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; but he that believeth not

“not on the Son, shall not see life, but the  
 “wrath of God abideth on him.” When the  
 heirs of glory “sit down with Abraham, Isaac,  
 “and Jacob, in the kingdom of their Father,”  
 the unbelieving and impenitent shall be cast in-  
 to the lake of fire, “where the smoke of their  
 “torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.” I  
 desire to put you in mind of this, under the  
 impression of this important truth, That nothing  
 but the sovereign grace of God can make the  
 warning effectual; and therefore beseeching  
 him to accompany it with the powerful opera-  
 tion of his Holy Spirit. At the same time, I  
 assure you, that if you reject the counsel of  
 God against yourselves, your blood shall be  
 upon your own heads. Do not pretend to say,  
 “If it depends upon election, and almighty  
 “grace is necessary, all our endeavours will be  
 “vain.” Secret things belong only to God.  
 His purpose is not more unchangeable than his  
 promise is faithful. Nay, though you may not  
 be able to see it, nor I to explain it, they are  
 perfectly consistent the one with the other. He  
 will be *just when he speaketh, and clear when he*  
*judgeth*; and therefore give heed to the exhor-  
 tation, not in my words, but in the words of  
 the Holy Ghost, Phil. ii. 12. 13. “Work out  
 “your own salvation with fear and trembling.  
 “For it is God which worketh in you, both to  
 “will and to do of his good pleasure.”

Know, I beseech you, your own mercy.  
 The necessity is urgent, and the time is uncer-  
 tain. With what propriety may the words of  
 the

the apostle be addressed to every person in every situation, and in every age ! 2 Cor. vi. 1. 2.

“ We then as workers together with him, beseech you also, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain : for he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee ; behold, now is the accepted time ; behold, now is the day of salvation.” Happy they who still hear the joyful sound ! Happy the sinner who is not yet gone to his own place ! Flee, flee to your strong hold, ye prisoners of hope. Consider the aggravated guilt and seven-fold condemnation of despisers of the gospel. All that you have heard of the love of Christ serves to shew the danger of his enemies. Read the words immediately following the ascription of which the text is a part, (ver. 7.) : “ Behold, he cometh with clouds ; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him : and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.” Read also this awful description, Rev. vi. 14. 15. 16. 17. “ And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together ; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places : and the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond-man, and every free-man, hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains ; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from

“ from the wrath of the Lamb : for the great  
 “ day of his wrath is come ; and who shall be  
 “ able to stand ? ” Mark this extraordinary ex-  
 pression, *the wrath of the Lamb*, that meek-  
 est and gentlest of all creatures ; teaching us,  
 that his former meekness, and patience, and  
 suffering, shall inflame and exasperate his fu-  
 ture vengeance. Could I conduct you to the  
 gates of the infernal prison, I am persuaded  
 you would hear Judas Iscariot, and all other  
 treacherous disciples, crying out, ‘ O that  
 ‘ Christ had never come in the flesh ! The  
 ‘ thunders of Sinai would have been less ter-  
 ‘ rible. The frowns of Jesus of Nazareth are  
 ‘ insupportable. O the dreadful, painful, and  
 ‘ uncommon wrath of a Saviour on the judge-  
 ‘ ment-seat ! ’ — The Lord speak consolation to  
 his own people, and pierce the hearts of his e-  
 nemies, that they may be brought to repent-  
 ance.

2. You may learn from what has been said,  
 that the great and leading motive to obedience  
 under the gospel is a deep and grateful sense of  
 redeeming love. This runs through the whole  
 writings of the New Testament. It binds the  
 believer to his duty ; it animates him to dili-  
 gence ; it fills him with comfort : 2 Cor. v. 14.  
 15. “ 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 hence-  
 “ forth live unto themselves, but unto him  
 “ which died for them, and rose again.” Gal. ii.

19. 20. " For I through the law am dead to the  
 " law, that I might live unto God. I am cru-  
 " cified with Christ : nevertheless I live ; yet  
 " not I, but Christ liveth in me : and the life  
 " which I now live in the flesh, I live by the  
 " faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and  
 " gave himself for me." That this motive will  
 have the most powerful influence on the believer's  
 conduct, is evident both from reason and expe-  
 rience. No principle takes a faster hold of the  
 human heart than gratitude for favours recei-  
 ved. If the mercies be cordially accepted, and  
 highly esteemed, which is certainly the case  
 here, nothing can withstand its influence. It  
 reconciles the heart to the most difficult duties ;  
 nay, it even disposes the believer to court the  
 opportunity of making some signal sacrifice, in  
 testimony of his attachment. Love sincere and  
 fervent overcomes all difficulties ; or rather in-  
 deed it changes their nature, and makes labour  
 and suffering a source of delight and satisfaction.  
 Let but the Saviour's interest or honour seem  
 to be concerned, and the believer, who feels  
 how much he is indebted to him, will chearful-  
 ly embrace the call, and set no bounds to his  
 compliance. This shows how much beauty and  
 force there is in our Lord's manner of recom-  
 mending love and compassion to our fellow-  
 creatures, Matth. xxv. 40. " And the King  
 " shall answer, and say unto them, Verily I say  
 " unto you, In as much as ye have done it un-  
 " to one of the least of these my brethren, ye  
 " have done it unto me." But to what pur-  
 pose

pose do I dwell upon this subject? for a sense of redeeming love is not only the most powerful motive to every other duty, but is itself the possession and exercise of the first duty of the moral law, as well as the sum and substance of evangelical holiness, *viz.* the love of God. The first sin, by which our nature fell, was a distrust of and departure from God; and the malignity of every sin we continue to commit, consists in giving that room in the heart to something else, which is due only to God. A sense of redeeming love, therefore, expels the enemy, and makes up the breach, as thereby *the love of God is sbed abroad in our hearts.*

3. You may see, from what has been said, the necessity of a particular application of the truths of the gospel to ourselves, and the reliance of every believer upon them as the foundation of his own hope. I have sometimes had occasion to observe to you, that it is very doubtful, whether any person can so much as approve in his judgement the truths of the gospel, till he perceive his own interest in them, and their necessity to his peace. Certain it is, the world that lieth in wickedness generally despises them. However, I shall admit as a thing possible, that a bad man may, either by imitation, or the power of outward evidence, embrace the gospel as a system of truth. But surely the love of Christ can neither be a source of comfort, nor a principle of obedience, unless he consider it as terminating upon himself. Without this, the whole is general, cold,

and uninteresting. But when he considers, not only the certainty of the truth, but the extent of the invitation, and can say, with Thomas, *My Lord, and my God*, then indeed the ties are laid upon him; then indeed he begins to feel their constraining power; then he not only contemplates the glory of God in the grace of redemption, but cheerfully and unfeignedly consecrates himself to the service of his Redeemer. This leads me, in the

4th and last place, to invite every sinner in this assembly to accept of Christ as his Saviour, and to rely upon him as he is offered in the gospel. To the secure and insensible, I know it is in vain to speak. But if you see your own danger, what should hinder your belief and reliance on the Saviour? If you either need or desire deliverance, what with-holds your acceptance of it, when it is not only freely offered to you, but earnestly urged upon you? Can you doubt the testimony of *the Amen, the faithful and true witness*? The blessings of his purchase belong not to one people or family, but to *every nation under heaven*. The commission of those who bear his message is unlimited: Mark xvi. 15. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." They are offered, not only to the virtuous, the decent, and regular, but to the *chief of sinners*: 1 Tim. i. 15. "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." Whoever heareth these glad tidings, he dishonoureth

noureth God, he poureth contempt on his Saviour's love, and he wrongeth his own soul, if he does not receive consolation from them. Be not hindered by what you see in yourselves, unless you are in love with sin, and afraid of being divorced from it. The gospel is preached to sinners. It does not expect to find them, but it is intended to make them, holy. A deep and inward sense of your own unworthiness, unless it is prevented by the deceiver, should only make you more highly esteem the grace of the gospel, and more willingly depend on your Redeemer's love.

I conclude with the invitation which he himself gives to the weary sinner, Matth. xi. 28. 29. 30. "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

## S E R M O N VII.

Redemption the subject of admiration to the angels.

I P E T E R i. 12. last clause.

*Which things the angels desire to look into.*

*Ælion Sermon.*

**M**Y brethren, A serious and attentive mind, on perusing the sacred volume, can hardly help being often struck both with the sentiments and language of the inspired writers on the subject of redemption. With what a deep veneration of soul, with what warmth of affection, with what transports of adoring thankfulness do they speak of the plan laid by divine wisdom, for the salvation of lost sinners, by the cross of Christ! A person possessed only of understanding and taste, may admire these sallies of holy fervour, for the elevation of thought, and boldness of expression, which a man's being in good earnest on an interesting subject doth naturally inspire. But happy, happy, and only happy, that soul who from an inward approbation can receive, relish, and apply those glorious things that are spoken of the name, character, and undertaking of the Saviour of sinners.

You may observe, that there are two different subjects, in general, on which the writers  
of

of the New Testament are apt to break out, and enlarge, when they are considering or commending the mystery of redemption. One is, the glory of God, as it appears in it; the lustre of divine power, wisdom, and grace, which reigns through the whole. The second is, the unspeakable interest which we have in it, from the danger escaped on the one hand, and the exalted hopes to which we are raised by it, on the other. I cannot help putting you in mind, that these two things are so inseparably joined, that none can forget or be insensible of any one of them, without in reality despising both. And as a view of the divine glory seems most immediately calculated to assist and continue a proper worshipping frame, I intend, that this shall lead the way in our meditations on this occasion. The sacrament of the Lord's supper is called the *Eucharist*, or sacrifice of praise; and therefore very fit for adoring contemplation.

The words which I have read are the conclusion of the apostle Peter's account of the gradual unfolding of this great design of Providence; and they contain a striking and extraordinary sentiment, That the angels themselves are filled with a holy curiosity to search into the mystery of redemption. Few commentators have failed to observe, that the word here translated *to look into*, properly signifies, *to stoop or bend down, and examine with the strictest attention*. This, my brethren, gives us a very exalted view of the scheme of redemption, as a leading design in the government of God, that these pure and exalted spirits,

Spirits, not only adore it as a part of their creator's will, but that they are lost and swallowed up in the contemplation of it, and see such a series of wonders, as they are not able to comprehend. If this is so, let us no longer postpone the following reflection: How much more are we, the interested parties, called to adore and dwell on this mystery of love, on which our salvation from deserved wrath, and possession of infinite felicity to all eternity is suspended! I cannot find a more proper subject for an introduction to the sacred and solemn service of this day; and therefore I beg your attention, while I endeavour, in dependence on divine grace, to illustrate the assertion in the text, by mentioning some particulars in the mystery of redemption, which are probably the subject of adoring inquiry, and perhaps holy astonishment, to those celestial spirits. Having done this, I will conclude with some improvement of the subject, for assisting you in your present duty.

I. FIRST, then, we are to mention these circumstances in the mystery of redemption which are probably the subject of adoring inquiry, or perhaps holy astonishment, to the angels of God. The angels, though they are exalted creatures, are yet plainly of limited capacity. There are many things of which they are ignorant: Matth. xxiv. 36. "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." And as their employment is to be messengers and ministers of God, with some inferior agency, in the conduct  
of

of his providence ; fo it is not to be doubted that much of their happiness consists in the contemplation of the nature and glory of God, as discovered in his works. They are represented in the book of Job as joyful witnesses of the creation and birth of this lower world : Job xxxviii. 6. 7. “ Whereupon are the  
 “ foundations thereof fastened ? or who laid  
 “ the corner-stone thereof ? when the morn-  
 “ ing-stars sang together, and all the sons of  
 “ God shouted for joy.” The state of the church is also represented as discovering to them the divine wisdom : Eph. iii. 10. “ To the in-  
 “ tent that now unto the principalities and  
 “ powers in heavenly places might be known by  
 “ the church the manifold wisdom of God.”

Let us therefore consider what circumstances in the mystery of redemption may be supposed to strike them most with astonishment and wonder. This we cannot do without finding ourselves greatly interested, and called to the deepest humility, and at the same time the highest exercise of gratitude and love. And,

1. The first thing I shall mention is the incarnation of the Son of God ; the union of the divine and human nature, by the Word's being made flesh. This is indeed the first thing to be considered, both in order and in rank. O wonderful union indeed ! Well might the apostle say, 1 Tim. iii. 16. “ Without contro-  
 “ versy, great is the mystery of godliness : God  
 “ was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit,  
 “ seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles,  
 “ believed

“believed on in the world, received up into glory.” But what view must the angels have of this event? those glorious and active beings, who are thus described, Psal. civ. 4. “Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire.” Their knowledge of the nature of God, as a pure and immaculate spirit, as the eternal, uncreated, self-existent Father of spirits, and of the Son, as one with the Father, who “thought it no robbery to be equal with God,” must deeply astonish them at this marvellous humiliation; that he should become one person with a creature, and that with a creature lower than themselves; for it is expressly said, that “he was made a little lower than the angels.” How astonishing, that he who is the Lord of angels, and whose distance from the highest of all created spirits is not great only, but infinite, should become a man, by taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul!

It is more than probable from our text, especially when compared with the context, and other passages of scripture, that this discovery was made to the angels only gradually, as it was to men. They could not but have intimations of God’s purpose of mercy, which was begun and carried on immediately after the fall; this however was done in a manner comparatively dark and obscure. There have been indeed some who seem to me to have gone a little beyond their depth; and who have supposed, that God discovered to the angels, even before the creation of man, the fall, which he foresaw, and the method by which

which he proposed to recover a chosen remnant, *viz.* the incarnation of his own Son; that the superior honour done to an inferior creature, stirred up the pride and envy of Lucifer, and his associates; and that in this consisted their guilt and apostasy, for which they were punished with an immediate banishment from the abodes of bliss, and are now reserved in chains under darkness to the day of judgement.

This at best is but mere conjecture. It seems much more probable, that they learned the several parts of this great design of mercy in their gradual accomplishment. It cannot indeed be doubted, that the angels who were concerned in the ministry of providence, must have known early of the intended redemption, and the redeemer. Yet when they are said, as in the text, to look into the things preached in the gospel, it gives reason to conclude, that the incarnation and sufferings of Christ was, with regard to them, as well as us, a mystery hid from ages and generations. Now, how could those holy angels who retained their integrity, but be filled with amazement at the depth of divine councils, when they saw themselves obliged to worship a man, to worship a feeble infant, born in a stable, and lying in a manger? when they found themselves charged with publishing the glad tidings? as in Luke ii. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14.

“ And the angel said unto them, Fear not:  
“ for behold, I bring you good tidings of great  
“ joy, which shall be to all people. For unto  
“ you is born this day, in the city of David, a  
“ Saviour,

“ Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this  
 “ shall be a sign unto you ; Ye shall find the  
 “ babe wrapped in swaddling-cloaths, lying in  
 “ a manger. And suddenly there was with the  
 “ angel a multitude of the heavenly host, prai-  
 “ sing God, and saying, Glory to God in the  
 “ highest, and on earth peace, good-will to-  
 “ wards men.”

There is one circumstance in the incarnation it-  
 self, which ought not to be omitted, because it  
 is mentioned in scripture, and is certainly as a-  
 stonishing as any, That he was not only made  
 flesh, but sent *in the likeness of sinful flesh*. What  
 so opposite to the nature of God as sin ? And  
 what so surprising, as that the Son of God, tho'  
 without sin, yet should in all respects outwardly  
 be like to sinners ? that he should be born of  
 a sinner, taken for a sinner, treated as a sinner,  
 and at last crucified with the utmost ignominy,  
 as a more than ordinary sinner ? I doubt not,  
 but those angels who looked with wonder on him  
 in the manger, looked with still greater wonder  
 on him on the cross ; that the whole host of them  
 are considering this with holy wonder still ;  
 and that it shall be the theme of eternal wonder  
 to the innumerable company about the throne.  
 This leads me to observe,

2. That another circumstance which must af-  
 ford matter for adoring inquiry to the celestial  
 spirits, is the substitution of an innocent person  
 in the room of the guilty, and his suffering from  
 the hand of God. When man's apostasy was  
 first known, I reckon we may affirm with suffi-  
 cient

cient certainty, that it could not enter into any created mind, that his recovery was possible. Many are even of opinion, that some passages of scripture carry in them an intimation, that it had been proposed, and as it were a trial made, in the councils of heaven, among assembled angels, whether any remedy could be found for the guilt and apostasy of man; and that none was found either able or willing to stand in his room; as in that of the Psalmist, cited by the apostle to the Hebrews, chap. x. 5. 6. 7. "Wherefore  
 " when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sa-  
 " crifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a bo-  
 " dy hast thou prepared me: In burnt-offerings  
 " and sacrifices for sin, thou hast had no plea-  
 " sure: Then said I, Lo, I come (in the vo-  
 " lume of thy book it is written of me) to do  
 " thy will, O God." And in the prophecies of  
 Isaiah, chap. lix. 16. "And he saw that there  
 " was no man, and wondered that there was no  
 " intercessor; therefore his arm brought salva-  
 " tion unto him, and his righteousness, it suf-  
 " fered him." I will not take upon me to af-  
 firm this interpretation of these passages; but  
 the first of them, which is applied by the a-  
 postle to Christ, certainly implies, that he under-  
 took the redemption of sinners when other sa-  
 crifices were found ineffectual.

Now, my brethren, let us prosecute the re-  
 flection pointed out by the text. The angels  
 had always hitherto seen innocence and holiness  
 attended with peace and felicity, and they had  
 seen the apostate spirits laid under an irreversible

sentence of condemnation. It is probable they looked upon it as manifestly founded on the nature of God, that he could not punish the innocent, and that he could not but punish the guilty. What astonishment then must it have given them, what new views of the boundless sovereignty and unsearchable wisdom of the Most High must it have opened to them, when they heard him saying, "Deliver him from going down into the pit, I have found a ransom!" How must they with wonder dwell on this part of the providence of a wise, holy, just, and gracious God, that the pure and innocent Jesus, the beloved of the Father, should make his appearance in this lower world, the abode of guilty creatures, under manifest tokens of their Creator's displeasure! that he should not only enter on the scene in the weakness of infancy, but with every circumstance of meanness and baseness! How often must they have been put to a stand, what to think of the severity and persecution, the contempt and opposition which he met with from those very sinners whom he came to save!

But above all, how must they have been at a loss to comprehend his being exposed, not only to the contempt of man, but to the wrath of God! For "it pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put him to grief." What must have been the surprise of that minister of providence, who was sent "from heaven to strengthen" him, when he found him under an inexpressible agony of suffering, making supplication with strong crying

crying and tears, saying, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!" And what created spirit is able to reach the unfathomable meaning of his complaint upon the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" In the sufferings of an innocent person in the room of the guilty, in the sufferings of the well-beloved Son of God from his Father's hand, there is such an unsearchable depth, as no finite understanding is able to comprehend. At first view it seems to contradict the rectitude and holiness of the divine nature; but on a nearer inspection, there is such a striking discovery of wisdom, holiness, justice, and mercy, that angels desire with a holy curiosity to contemplate and adore it.

3. As immediately founded upon the former, another circumstance in the plan of redemption through Christ, which will afford matter of wonder to the celestial spirits, is the free justification of sinners, and their acceptance with God, thro' the imputed righteousness of Christ. If it appears astonishing, that God, who distributes favour and punishment with the most perfect equity, should punish the innocent, it appears equally so, that he should shew favour to the guilty; that he should forgive their sins, accept their persons, and visit them with his loving-kindness, and all this for the merit and obedience of another. What! (may it be said), is he not unchangeably holy? Is he not of purer eyes than to behold iniquity? Are we not assured that evil can-

not dwell with him, nor sinners stand in his presence? How shall he receive into his favour these offending rebels? how shall he take into his bosom such polluted wretches? And what can be the meaning of imputation? Can personal worth be transferred? Can he commit so great an error, as to view them with complacency for the merit of another?

Must not this appear a new and extraordinary plan to the angels, who, by personal and perfect obedience, retain the favour of their Creator, and who had been hitherto strangers to the influence and intercession of a mediator? who had seen no such thing take place when their brethren sinned? Heb. ii. 16. "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." The holy angels, not inclined to say, as more presumptuous men too often do, "Let us continue in sin, that grace may abound," will rather say, "Let us step aside, and see this great sight." They will then see, that there is no way more proper for maintaining the dignity of the divine government; nay, that it is the only way by which those who have been sinners can be received into favour. They will see and confess, that there is no circumstance whatever that tends more to level the pride of the sinner's heart, and bring him to universal submission, and absolute subjection to the sovereignty of God. I am persuaded indeed, that even angels who never sinned, have more of submission to the divine sovereignty, and dependence on the absolute grace of their Crea-

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tor, than many are apt to imagine; yet surely our world is the great theatre of divine grace. The same infinite benignity which shews itself in heaven in favour to the worthy, is displayed on earth, to the astonishment of heaven itself, in mercy to the guilty.

Suffer me, my brethren, to embrace this opportunity of observing, that nothing is more groundless than the accusation of men of corrupt minds, against the doctrine of divine grace, as encouraging to sin. It hath the very contrary effect, and that on these two accounts.

(1.) It is so mortifying to human pride, that the power of sin must be broken at least, before it can be truly and cordially received. There is not so difficult a duty in the whole compass of the moral law, as an unfeigned denial of our own righteousness and strength, and being willing to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. To receive forgiveness as mere mercy to those who had deserved to perish, without any complaint either against the strictness of the law, or the severity of the sanction, is not so easy as many seem to imagine, and what no man is brought to but by the Holy Ghost.

(2) As the sinner must be really subjected to God the Creator, before he can lay hold of his mercy through Christ the Redeemer; so it is plain, that the most effectual measures are taken to continue and perpetuate this subjection. It is plain, that the infinite unmerited love of God to his soul, is the most powerful and operative

principle of obedience that can dwell in the human heart : 2 Cor. v. 14. 15. " 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 which died for them, and rose again." Such confidence has the same apostle in the strength of this principle, he bids defiance to all trials and opposition : Rom. viii. 35. " Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" And again, ver. 38. 39. " For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." These great principles of sanctification are new to the angels. When therefore they see the holiness of God shining in the free justification of sinners through Christ, it will add new force and new meaning to that song of praise which they are represented as singing, Rev. iv. 8. " And they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."

4. In the *last* place, Another circumstance in the mystery of the gospel which will be matter of wonder to the angels, is the application of redemption, or the manner and means of translating sinners " from darkness to light," and  
" from

“from the power of Satan unto God.” Before the plan of divine grace with regard to fallen man was opened to them, they had seen no examples of sinners but the fallen angels. From their irreverfible fentence, and blaſpheming rage in their torment, thoſe who remained in their happy ſtate, would be apt to conclude, that there could be no recovery for a creature who had once departed from his integrity at all. But when they learned ſomething of the divine purpoſe for the ſalvation of fallen man, eſpecially the amazing and unſpeakable grace that appeared in the appointment of the Mediator, and the univerfal unlimited offer of ſalvation in his name, what would be the effect? I dare ſay they would certainly conclude, that it would be received with the higheſt tranſports of joy, by all thoſe unhappy criminals who were lying under the curſe of a broken law. Accordingly the angel, in his meſſage to the ſhepherds, calls it good tidings of great joy to all people.

What then muſt have been their additional ſurpriſe, when they heard the prophet ſaying, *Iſ. liii. 1.* “Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” when they ſaw that this gracious Saviour was “deſpiſed and rejected of men?” when they obſerved ſo many turn a deaf ear to the moſt importunate calls of the goſpel? when they found them cavilling themſelves out of eternal happineſs, and advancing their own blinded and bewildered reaſon in contempt of the infinite wiſdom of God? What muſt thoſe holy angels, who

are

are filled with gratitude for creating goodness, think of those heirs of hell, who pour contempt upon redeeming love? I cannot touch upon every thing that rises here to our view, but I am persuaded that the administration of the covenant of grace is as full of mystery to the celestial spirits, as any part of the plan. Instead of every sinner humbly imploring reconciliation with an offended God, our Redeemer, as a Sovereign Lord, as the Prince of Peace, first conquers those as enemies, whom he afterwards cherishes as friends. He is endued with all power for this great work; and the Psalmist gives a beautiful description of its influence and effect, Psal. xlv. 3. 4. 5. "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, "O most mighty; with thy glory and thy majesty: and in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies, whereby the people fall under thee." He hath sent forth his Holy Spirit as an almighty agent, to reconcile sinners unto God. Is there not also a depth of divine sovereignty to be seen in the choice of the vessels of mercy? The apostle Paul in the midst of the fury of persecuting zeal, Mary Magdalene from the midst of the flames of unclean lust, Zaccheus from the heart-hardening crimes of covetousness and oppression, and many others of the chief of sinners, have been made the trophies of divine grace, and may say, in the words of their great example the apostle Paul, 1 Tim. i.

15. " This is a faithful saying, and worthy of  
" all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the  
" world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

It deserves also particular notice, that faith itself is said to be the operation and the gift of God: Eph. ii. 8. " For by grace are ye saved, " through faith; and that not of yourselves: it " is the gift of God." And indeed the change in general which constitutes the new nature, is considered as a birth or creation from above: John i. 13. " Which were born, not of blood, " nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of " man, but of God." It appears plainly, from many express declarations of scripture, from the power necessary to overcome their obstinacy, and from the seat of the disease itself, which lies in the will, that sinners, while they continue so, instead of desiring, resist their recovery. What a subject of contemplation presents itself to the angels here! What an unknown view is given them of the infinite evil and malignity of sin! What a humbling sense of created weakness! What a lesson of caution for their after-conduct! It hath been conjectured, not without apparent reason, and some countenance from scripture, that the great purpose which the human system is intended to serve in the universal kingdom of God, is to be an everlasting monument, that a rational creature who has once departed from its innocence, and obedience to its Creator, never can again return to the same state, but by his own almighty power and sovereign grace. Upon the whole,

whole, from this faint view of the plan of redemption, as lying open to the attention of principalities and powers, we may say with the apostle Paul, Rom. ii. 33. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past finding out!"

I proceed now to conclude the subject, by some practical improvement of what has been said.  
And,

1. What you have heard will contribute, I hope, by the divine blessing, to shew the guilt of those who despise the gospel, and serve to remove the offence of the cross. It required no small measure of fortitude in the apostle Paul, to declare that he was not "ashamed of the cross of Christ," which at its first publication was "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness." The doctrine of the cross, in its simplicity and purity, has been matter of offence in every succeeding age, to men of proud and worldly minds. God knows, there are not wanting many at this time, who treat the doctrine of the cross, and salvation by grace, with as much contempt and insolence as they dare. Nor is it at all impossible, that there may be some among you who are infected with these poisonous and destructive principles. Be persuaded, O deluded soul! that "the weakness of God is stronger than man," and "that the wisdom of man is foolishness with God." This  
glorious

glorious and gracious plan hath the approbation and admiration of angels, though it hath the contempt of sinners. It astonished the angels, therefore no wonder though it should astonish us. You will perhaps say, It is indeed astonishing above measure; it teaches me to believe an *incarnate God, a suffering Saviour, the innocent punished, and the guilty forgiven.* It is attended with so many surprising circumstances, that I cannot help saying, How can these things be! But as Samson said in his riddle, "Out of the eater came forth meat, out of the strong came forth sweetness;" so out of the suggestions of your corrupt minds, I would derive some evidence of the truth. A cunningly devised fable would be dressed by the deceiver in a manner suited to the human taste; but this doctrine hath not upon it any of the marks of human wisdom. I do not think if it had not been revealed, that it could have entered into any human mind; and therefore we may justly say, "Salvation belongeth unto God." It is because he is God, and not man, that we, the children of men, "are not consumed."

2. You may learn, from what has been said, the encouragement that is given to sinners to return to God through Christ. The very circumstances that are most astonishing and admirable in this great dispensation, are the undeserved love and unexpected condescension of God to guilty and miserable sinners. I know that the inward and effectual call can only be given by the Holy Ghost; but I know also, that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Therefore,

Therefore, in expectation of the blessing of him who "hath the hearts of all men in his hand, and "turneth them howsoever he will," I proclaim in the hearing of every sinner within these walls, "that God so loved the world, that he gave his "only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth "in him might not perish, but might have ever-  
"lasting life." I repeat the universal call, that "him that cometh to him, he will in no wise "cast out." Are there not many in this house under the power of sin, and the curse of a broken law? Nay, who is there that is not condemned by these important words, which you will find Gal. iii. 10, "Cursed is every one that "continueth not in all things which are written "in the book of the law to do them." This sentence stands uncanceled against all who are not reconciled to God by faith in Christ Jesus. Is the application difficult? Ye slaves of sin, drunkards, swearers, profane and lascivious jesters, envious and malicious slanderers, retainers of unjust gain, and all without exception who are lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, ye shall be slain all of you; "as a bowing wall "shall ye be, and as a tottering fence." Remember the misery of those who die in an unconverted state: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the "hands of the living God. Who can abide with "devouring fire? who can dwell with everlasting "burnings?" Admire the infinite grace of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and admire the infinite wisdom of God that hath laid help for you upon  
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one who is "mighty to save." May I not say, that, on this solemn occasion, your Saviour speaks to you, not only in his word, but from his cross? See the justice of God in the cross of Christ, and thence learn the evil of sin. See the power and wrath of God in the cross of Christ, and tremble at your own state. See the matchless love of God in the cross of Christ, and be persuaded to return to him with weeping, with supplication, and with mourning. Let the eye of faith be pointed at the dying Saviour, and say unto him, "O almighty sufferer, look down, look down from thy triumphant infamy, pity and pierce this hard heart with a sense of guilt and misery. Thou hast said, that when thou shouldst be lifted up from the earth, thou wouldst draw all men unto thee: let this promise be fulfilled to my experience. *Draw me, we will run after thee.* Lord, take away my complicated guilt; Lord, renew and pacify my unsanctified affections, form me for thyself, that I may serve thee here, and afterwards see thee as thou art!"

3. From what hath been said upon this subject, you may examine your title to partake of the holy ordinance of the Lord's supper; or, in other words, your right to the favour of God, and to eternal life. No disposition more suitable, none more necessary, at a communion-table, than a grateful and admiring sense of redeeming love. Not only the profane blasphemer, or the scornful despiser, is unfit to sit down at this feast, but the self-righteous formalist who never saw him-

self undone. It is true indeed, that when angels themselves are put to a stand, all our thoughts must soon be lost and swallowed up. But, my brethren, do you desire to look into it? do you feel a sensible pleasure and delight in this sacred employment? do you, in some measure, see the glory of divine grace, though you are not able to measure its dimensions? There is no subject so obscure and unintelligible to those who are strangers to the power of religion, as the mystery of redeeming love; no subject so odious and distasteful to those whose minds are formed upon the maxims of the world, as the doctrine of salvation by grace. Christ upon a cross, Christ upon a throne, Christ the believer's rock and refuge, the source of his strength, and the source of his comfort, they are neither able to relish nor comprehend. All the warm expressions of gratitude and attachment, which are unspeakably sweet and ravishing to a serious soul, appear to them in the light of enthusiasm and visionary folly. But as many as it hath pleased God to bless with an inward and personal conviction of their lost state by nature, will see the greatest beauty in this plan of salvation, and will rather rejoice, than shrink, at sharing with their Redeemer himself the contempt of the world. They will say, with the apostle Paul, Gal. vi. 14. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." There is a beautiful opposition stated by the same apostle, between a believer's understanding the love of Christ, and yet being unable to search it to the bottom, in the

the following passage, Eph. iii. 17. 18. 19.  
“ That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith ;  
“ that ye being rooted and grounded in love,  
“ may be able to comprehend with all saints,  
“ what is the breadth, and length, and depth,  
“ and height ; and to know the love of Christ,  
“ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be fill-  
“ ed with all the fulness of God.”

4. In the *last* place, From what has been said, learn what is your most proper employment at the Lord's table. Adore and contemplate the riches of redeeming grace, that great theme which “ the angels desire to look into.” Think, with humble amazement, on the boundless mercy of God, which reached even to you, and with the highest thankfulness on the honour to which you are admitted, of receiving the sensible pledges of his love. Dwell on this impenetrable mystery of “ Immanuel God with us—God manifested in the flesh.” Think on this awful proof of divine justice and holiness, the wrath of God poured out upon his own Son. Think on the perfection of that atonement which is made for the sins of the world. Rejoice in the fulness of that Saviour who is now made “ head over all things to the church ;” and draw, by faith, from his fulness, every necessary supply to yourselves : and as you are now to commemorate his death, with a view to his second coming, think on that “ day of salvation,” when he shall come “ to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe ;” when you shall enter in triumph into the holiest of all, where

no doubt the mystery of redemption shall be more fully discovered; when saints and angels shall jointly sing that new song, Rev. v. 12. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive  
" power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength,  
" and honour, and glory, and blessing;" when the whole plan of divine grace shall be completed and closed, and the mediatorial kingdom itself brought to a period; for "then cometh the  
" end, when he shall have delivered up the king-  
" dom to God, even the Father;" when confirmed angels, and redeemed sinners, when the whole host of heaven shall unite in one acclamation, "Hallelujah: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

S E R.

## S E R M O N VIII.

## Glorying in the Cross.

GALATIANS VI. 14.

*But God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Action Sermon.*

**M**Y brethren, we are this day met to keep up the remembrance of our Redeemer's sufferings and death in our room. We are to commemorate an event the most important, the most interesting, and the most astonishing, that creation ever beheld. We are to contemplate a subject the most wonderful and mysterious that ever was offered to the mind of man. The *incarnation* of the *Son of God*, the *King of kings* found in the form of a *servant*, and the *Prince of life* expiring on an *accursed tree*. What is this but the union of things the most opposite and seemingly inconsistent that can possibly be conceived? the union of the most distant extremes of strength and weakness, glory and baseness, honour and shame?

In a sort of correspondence and analogy to this great subject itself, nothing can be more op-

posite than the sentiments formed by believers and unbelievers with regard to it. To the one, it hath a dignity and majesty unspeakably amiable; to the other, it hath a meanness and baseness that is shameful and contemptible. The Apostle Paul often takes notice of this, that it was "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness;" and he often discovers his own inviolable attachment to his Saviour, by an open profession of esteem for those circumstances in his character and appearance which a blinded world were most apt to treat with derision and scorn. This is particularly the case in the text, "But God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

By the cross of Christ, in the New Testament, we are sometimes to understand the sufferings of believers for Christ's sake; but more commonly, and, I think, evidently in this place, it signifies his humiliation in general, and particularly his crucifixion, to which circumstance our attention is directed, because it was the most base and ignominious of the whole. In this the apostle says he would glory: nay, he expresses his abhorrence at the thought of glorying in any thing else: "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Nothing can be more suited to the employment of this day, and nothing more proper to distinguish between the friends and the enemies of Christ, than this, when carefully attended to; for the one will undoubtedly *glory*, and the other will as certainly *be ashamed* of his cross.

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In discoursing further on this subject, what I propose, through divine assistance, is,

1. To explain the import of the apostle's glorying only in the Saviour's cross.
2. To shew what good reason every real Christian hath to glory in it. And,
3. To make some practical application of the subject.

I. IN the *first* place, then, let us explain the import of the apostle's glorying only in the Saviour's cross. What is this object in which the apostle says he would glory? Very wonderful indeed. It is, That Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Mary, was subjected to a long life of sorrow, reproach, and contempt: That towards the close of it, he was arrested, accused, condemned as a malefactor; and after innumerable and unspeakable indignities, was at last nailed to a cross, an engine of torture of the most cruel and painful kind, and so shameful, that it was a manner of punishment appropriated to the most detested criminals of the basest rank. What is there here to glory in? and what does the apostle mean by this expression? It means,

1. That he had a high esteem of it, as an event of the greatest moment, and an object worthy of the highest regard. We do not glory in common things, but in things of peculiar dignity and worth. It was not then in his view merely what it seemed. He did not consider it, surely, as the execution of a criminal; but said, with the centurion on Mount Calvary, Truly "this  
" was

“was a righteous man;” Truly this was “the Son of God.” He considered it as the effect of the infinite love of God, who sent his only begotten Son to die for our sins. He considered it as an infinite price paid for the pardon of our offences, as the only way of deliverance from guilt, as the sure and certain pledge of peace to an awakened conscience. In this view, how does it rise in his esteem? While others are disposed to scorn, pitying their madnets, he is constrained to worship and adore. Think of it, Christians, how different were the sentiments of his insulting enemies and his mourning disciples, when he hung upon the cross. The one consider him as a guilty sufferer, the other as a loving Saviour. The hearts of the one were boiling with hatred, or filled with contempt; the hearts of the other were swallowed up in admiration, or melted with love.

2. The apostle’s glorying in the cross, implied his having a strong though humble confidence of his own relation to and interest in it. I think it is impossible to separate this from our idea of the apostle’s meaning. We do not glory or boast of any thing in which we have no concern. A man of great genius, or uncommon worth, I may admire and honour, merely for the eminent qualities of which he is possessed, and I may do him all justice by commendation; but I am never disposed to glory in him, nor have I any title to do it unless he is somehow related to me: but if I add, that he is my child, or he is my brother, I  
 may

may be truly said to glory in him, or to boast of him, because the honour that is given to him, is, in some measure, reflected upon myself. Again, I may speak of the riches and magnificence of some great city; but I am then only said to glory in it, if I add any circumstance of relation; as that it is the place of my nativity, or the place of my residence, or the place in which I have property and interest. When therefore the apostle says, "God forbid that I should glory "save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," it certainly implies a humble persuasion of his own interest in it, and his happiness to flow from it. This indeed naturally arises from a real and spiritual discovery of its proper glory. None can see the transcendent beauty of this object, till they have seen their own guilt and misery in the sight of a holy God. And no sooner do they discover the excellence of this atonement, its perfect sufficiency for all, and the unrestrained offer to all, than they fly to it as their security, and rest on it as the ground of their hope. The word here translated *glorying*, signifies at the same time *exulting*, or *rejoicing*; and therefore to glory in the cross, is the same thing as to rejoice in the Saviour. The truth is, it is but seldom that this apostle mentions the death of Christ without some appropriating expression: Phil. iii. 8. "Yea doubtless, and I count all "things but loss, for the excellency of the know-  
"ledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I  
"have suffered the loss of all things, and do  
"count them but dung, that I may win Christ;"  
Gal.

Gal. ii. 20. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

3. To complete the idea of the apostle's glorying in the cross, it implies such a sense of its comparative worth, as prompts him to a public and open profession of esteem, with a sovereign contempt of the judgement or conduct of others, who set themselves in opposition to it. Glorying always signifies the declaration of our mind to others; and is not ill illustrated by that expression of the apostle Paul in writing to the Romans, chap. i. 16. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." The opposition between the sentiments of others, and his own, he often mentions; as 1 Cor. i. 18. "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness: but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God." And ver. 23. "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." When he glories in the cross, therefore, it implies an open and resolute adherence to this despised cause. This meaning is particularly carried in the word *cross*. It had been less wonder, if he had said, he gloried in his Saviour's divine power exerted before his crucifixion,

crucifixion, or that he gloried in his triumphant resurrection, and exaltation to the right hand of God after it; but, instead of this, he says he gloried in his *cross*, in his very abasement, in what was most vile and contemptible.

A late very eminent writer and champion for the cross, in a sermon on the same subject, makes a remark to the following purpose: “ \* That  
 “ through the veneration of many ages, and the  
 “ difuse of that punishment among us in the ex-  
 “ ecution of malefactors, the word *cross* does  
 “ not carry so base an idea to our minds; but  
 “ that in the ear of a Galatian, it sounded as if  
 “ the apostle had said, he gloried in a gallows,  
 “ a gibbet, or a halter.” And in a note upon  
 this passage of the sermon, when published, he  
 expresses himself thus: “ Some persons, I am  
 “ informed, were disgusted at these words, *hal-*  
 “ *ter, gallows, gibbet*, they are so horridly con-  
 “ temptible: to whom I would reply, That the  
 “ cross, in point of ignominy, implied all this;  
 “ and in point of torture, much more. Unless  
 “ the English reader forms to himself some such  
 “ image as this, he will never be able to appre-  
 “ hend the scandalous nature and shocking cir-  
 “ cumstances of his divine master’s death. The  
 “ words, I must confess, were diversified, and  
 “ the sentiment reiterated, on purpose to affect  
 “ the mind with this astonishing truth. Neither  
 “ can I prevail with myself to expunge the ex-  
 “ pressions, unless I could substitute others of a

\* Mr Harvey.

“ more

“ more ignominious and execrable import in  
 “ their room. Only I would beg the serious read-  
 “ er to spend a moment in the following re-  
 “ flection. Is it so, that a polite and delicate  
 “ ear can hardly endure so much as the sound of  
 “ the words? How amazing then was the con-  
 “ descension, how charming and adorable the  
 “ goodness of God’s illustrious Son, to bear all  
 “ that is signified by these intolerably vile terms,  
 “ bear it willingly, bear it cheerfully, for us  
 “ men, and our salvation!”

Before concluding this head, it will be proper  
 to observe, in what it was the apostle did not  
 glory. There is plainly a tacit opposition in the  
 form of his expression, to some things in which  
 others were apt to glory, and he as heartily de-  
 spised: “ God forbid that I should glory save in  
 “ cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” He says in  
 general; Phil. iii. 7. “ But what things were  
 “ gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.”  
 We find elsewhere, in his writings, express men-  
 tion of those particulars which he renounced as  
 any subject of boasting. 1. His learning as a  
 scholar; 2. His privileges as a Jew; 3. Even  
 his zeal and activity as a minister of Christ. Let  
 us consider each of these by itself.

1. He would not glory in his learning as a  
 scholar. The apostle Paul had been brought up  
 at the feet of Gamaliel, and seems to have been  
 well accomplished in every branch of human  
 science. Yet he speaks of it with great neglect,  
 or rather with a noble disdain, when compared  
 with

with the doctrine of the cross: 1 Cor. i. 17.  
 " For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach  
 " the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest  
 " the cross of Christ should be made of none ef-  
 " fect." And again, ver. 19. 20. " For it is writ-  
 " ten, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and  
 " will bring to nothing the understanding of the  
 " prudent. Where is the wise? where is the  
 " scribe? where is the disputer of this world?  
 " hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this  
 " world?" It may perhaps be asked, What is  
 the meaning of this renunciation of human learn-  
 ing and wisdom? Is there any real opposition  
 between learning and the cross? Would not the  
 legitimate use of human wisdom lead us to em-  
 brace it? To this I answer, that it seems to im-  
 ply these three things.

(1) An admiration of the divine glory in that  
 which had not on it any of the marks of human  
 wisdom: in consequence of this, a steadfast adhe-  
 rence to the doctrine of the cross, though those  
 who were wise in their own conceit might be  
 tempted to despise it, and to despise him for its  
 sake. This great scholar, then, was not unwill-  
 ing to suffer the derision and contempt of other  
 scholars for his glorying in the cross.

(2) It implied such a superlative admiration  
 of this glorious and interesting object, that all  
 the knowledge he possessed, and the honour he  
 could otherwise acquire, seemed to him unwor-  
 thy of regard: his attention was wholly fixed  
 upon, and his affections wholly ingrossed by, his  
 Redeemer's cross.

(3) It implied, that though he certainly ought, and certainly did use the noble parts and accomplishments of which he was possessed, with zeal in his master's cause; yet he he did it with that humility and self-denial, with that noble contempt of vain embellishments, which showed he was not building a monument to himself, but seeking the honour of his Saviour. The doctrine of the cross should be treated in a manner some how correspondent to it; not with a learned and ostentatious self-sufficiency, but with a meek and truly evangelical self-denial.

Mistake me not, my brethren: I am not speaking against learning in itself; it is a precious gift of God, and may be happily improved in the service of the gospel: but I will venture to say, in the spirit of the apostle Paul's writings in general, and of this passage in particular. Accursed be all that learning which sets itself in opposition to the cross of Christ! Accursed be all that learning which disguises or is ashamed of the cross of Christ! Accursed be all that learning which fills the room that is due to the cross of Christ! And once more, Accursed be all that learning which is not made subservient to the honour and glory of the cross of Christ!

Well then, the learned and eloquent apostle renounced the wisdom of words; and how do we apply this in general? By a small comparative esteem of all natural advantages; and by thinking it, in the heart, a greater honour and a higher privilege to sit down at Christ's table, and to find acceptance with him, than to possess beauty,

beauty, wisdom, learning, riches, and honours in the highest possible perfection : and may God grant, that every one in this assembly may be able to say, in sincerity, that, in what things he thinks he excells, these he is willing to “count  
“loss for Christ!”

2. The apostle would not glory in his privileges as a Jew. This we find him affirming in many places of his writings : Phil. iii. 4. “Tho’  
“I might also have confidence in the flesh. If  
“any other man think that he hath whereof he  
“might trust in the flesh, I more : Circumcised  
“the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the  
“tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews ;  
“as touching the law, a Pharisee ; concerning  
“zeal, persecuting the church ; touching the  
“righteousness which is in the law, blameless.”  
Toward the latter end of the Jewish commonwealth, there was a very prevailing and gross mistake among them, to look upon their external privileges as intitling them to the favour of God, and making a difference between them and others. We have reason to be sensible, that much of the same disposition is ready to adhere to men in every age. But one great design of the gospel is, to level the pride of man, to throw down all distinction in point of merit before God, and to show, that the power of the Redeemer is equally necessary to, and equally sufficient for, all without exception : Rom. iii. 22. “Even the righteousness of God which is  
“by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all  
“them that believe ; for there is no difference.”

Rom. x. 12. "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all, is rich unto all that call upon him."

Col. iii. 11. "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all."

3. The apostle did not glory in his personal character, not even in his zeal and activity as a minister of Christ. This appears through the whole of his writings, where he is at particular pains to destroy every foundation of boasting or glorying in ourselves: Rom. iii. 24.—28. "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law." Nay, we find that all his public services he considers as quite unfit subjects for boasting, even when he is obliged to mention them for his own vindication: 1 Cor. xv. 9 10. "For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which

“ which was bestowed upon me, was not in  
 “ vain; but I laboured more abundantly than  
 “ they all: yet not I, but the grace of God  
 “ which was with me.”

I am persuaded that those who, from really Christian principles, serve God in their generation with the greatest zeal, will be most ready to renounce all plea of merit upon that account. I have read with pleasure the following account of the temper expressed by John Knox, that eminent instrument in the reformation, when he was drawing near to his dissolution. Some person present mentioned to him, what comfort he might now have in his extraordinary labour and great usefulness in the church: to whom he answered, “ Forbear to puff up the flesh with  
 “ vanity, to which it is of itself sufficiently prone.  
 “ The port I would be in at, is that of the free  
 “ grace of God, through the merits of my blessed Saviour.” The truth is, these are but the sentiments which shall not only go with us to death, but continue with us to eternity. A deep sense of redeeming love, and grateful celebration of the Redeemer’s glory, is not only the language of the church on earth, but the delightful worship of the church triumphant in heaven: Rev. v. 11. 12. 13. “ And I beheld, and I heard  
 “ the voice of many angels round about the  
 “ throne, and the beasts, and the elders: and the  
 “ number of them was ten thousand times ten  
 “ thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying  
 “ with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that  
 “ was slain, to receive power, and riches, and

" wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory,  
 " and blessing. And every creature which is in  
 " heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth,  
 " and such as are in the sea, and all that are in  
 " them, heard I, saying, Blessing, and honour,  
 " and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth  
 " upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever  
 " and ever."

II. WE proceed now to the *second* general head of discourse, *viz.* To consider what reason every real Christian hath to glory in the cross. This indeed opens to us a subject of the most amazing compass and extent. Though there is nothing here but what is vile and contemptible to an unbelieving worldly mind; by the eye of faith, every thing that is wonderful, amiable, and valuable, is discovered in the highest perfection. I cannot particularly enumerate every subject of glorying in the cross; and therefore shall just point out to you the three following subjects of meditation, which though they often run into one another, may be considered in distinct and separate lights. 1. The glory of divine perfection shines in it in the brightest manner. 2. The riches of divine grace are manifested in it to the most astonishing degree. 3. The sanctifying efficacy of it is so transcendently superior to that of any other mean, as shows it to have been the appointment of infinite wisdom.

1. The glory of divine perfection shines in it in the brightest manner. Would we directly contemplate the glory of the invisible God, as it

shines

shines in his works and ways? let us look upon the cross. It hath been sometimes, and very justly, said of the works of God, that they have usually in them something much more wonderful and excellent than appears at first view. It hath also been further observed, that, in this respect, there is a complete contrast and opposition between the works of the Creator and those of the creature. Every thing that flows from God, the more strictly we examine it, and the more perfectly we know it, the more we shall admire it; but every work of the creature, the more perfectly it is known, the more its inherent weakness always appears. This discovers itself even in comparing the produce of the field with the effects of human art. Naturalists observe, that the finest and most admirable human manufactures, when seen, as by a finer sense, with the assistance of a microscope, appears quite coarse and irregular; but that if you look at a pile of grass, or any thing natural, with the same assistance, you will see still more exquisite and delicate strokes of the almighty operator.

If this is the case even in the material productions of natural power, how much more must it be so in the unsearchable mysteries of God's spiritual kingdom? In none will it hold more than in this chief of the works of God, this glorious though despised object, the cross of Christ. Here indeed the glory of God appears in all its lustre. It appears in so strong and so various lights, that the highest angels are employed, delighted, and lost in the contemplation of it: 1 Pet.

i. 12.

i. 12. "Which things the angels desire to look into." Eph. iii. 10. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." O what a display of power in the union of God and man! What an almighty arm was required to make these things meet, which were infinitely distant! The Creator of the ends of the earth born of a woman! the self-existent become a feeble infant! the Lord of glory covered with shame! the judge of all condemned to suffer! the author of life giving up the ghost!

What unsearchable wisdom appears in finding a victim able to bear almighty vengeance! in finding a way by which sin might be at once punished and pardoned, justice fully satisfied, even where mercy is extended! Little wonder indeed that the angels desire to look into this mystery. They had tasted the fruits of divine benignity in the happiness of innocent creatures; they had seen the glory of divine justice in the perdition of the rebel-angels; but the cross of Christ was the first thing that discovered to them the glory of divine mercy, in pardoning the chief of sinners, without in the least obscuring the brightness either of justice or holiness, nay to the illustration of both. In the cross of Christ there is a more awful and penetrating view of the justice and holiness of God, than could have been given by the irreparable destruction of the whole race of Adam. And at the same time, his not "sparing his own Son," but "delivering him up  
"for

“for us all,” is a more astonishing effect of love, than pardon without satisfaction could have been, had that been a thing in itself possible. There is no end or measure to our views of this subject; but I hope many of you will now say, with the apostle Paul, what I dare say he has not yet done repeating in heaven, Rom. xi. 33. “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past finding out!”

2. The riches of divine grace are manifested in the cross of Christ to the most astonishing degree. It is not merely a wonderful work of God, which all his intelligent creatures may behold with admiration, but it is a design in which we ourselves have an immediate and an infinite concern: For, Is. liii. 5. “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.” O what an amazing display of unmerited love! Every divine perfection indeed appears in it very clearly, but chiefly love. The tender mercy of our God predominates, actuates, and reigns through the whole. Christ’s undertaking, in general, is the fruit and evidence of the everlasting love of God: John iii. 16. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Salvation, in the whole of its purchase and effects, was the fruit  
and

and expression of the infinite love of Christ : Rev. i. 5. 6. " Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and his Father ; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." The believing soul is never more at a loss than when attempting to confess its obligations to redeeming love. The human mind never feels its weakness more than when it attempts to conceive, or to illustrate, this truly incomprehensible subject.

The grace of redemption may be considered and illustrated in a great variety of lights : From the greatness of the misery from which we are delivered ; for " we are saved from wrath through him : " From the greatness of the happiness to which we are intitled ; for we are made " heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ : " From the guilt and unworthiness of the objects of this love ; for it was " when we were enemies " that " we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." But besides these considerations, there is more than enough of divine mercy to excite our wonder in the cross of Christ, the price paid for our redemption.

Great sufferings usually melt the heart to sympathy and tenderness, though we have no immediate concern in them at all : but how much more must every source of tenderness be opened, when we consider the sufferer as an innocent person, and as suffering in our room ! Remember the person, remember the nature, remember the greatness, remember the end, of his suffering;

ing; the eternal Son of God, the great Immanuel, covered with shame, dragged to an unrighteous tribunal, not to abide the decrees of justice, but to bear the effects of blinded rage! See him; O shocking sight! blindfolded, buffeted, and spit upon, severely scourged, crowned with thorns, arrayed in purple, adored in derision! See him nailed to the cross! O shameful, O tormenting, O most accursed manner of death! Is it possible to conceive the grace of this amazing humiliation, this infinite condescension? I would even call it incredible condescension, but that happily it carries upon it this great truth, That God's ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts. Apply it therefore, O sinner, and see how it magnifies the love of God. Was all this abasement, all this shame, all this suffering for me? and shall I not glory in the cross? Shall I even glory in any thing but the cross? As it magnifies the divine power, as it magnifies the divine mercy, so it magnifies the sinner. Is it any less to our honour than to his shame? We can never appear so valuable as when our salvation is purchased by our Saviour's dying groans.

3. In the *last* place, The real Christian has reason to glory in the cross, for its efficacy as a principle of sanctification. This is plainly implied in the clause immediately following the text: for "by it the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." The apostle certainly has this also in view, when he celebrates the doctrine

doctrine of the cross as the wisdom and the power of God unto salvation. And indeed to every believer the cross, considered only as the truth, and as operating by faith on the understanding and heart, is such an argument to duty, as there is not another in the whole compass of human knowledge that may once be compared to it. Does any thing set in so strong a light the obligation of God's most holy law? Does any thing set in so strong a light the infinite evil of sin? the infinite holiness of God? the infinite danger of sin? Must not the reflection of every believer be, "Who can stand before this holy Lord God? If such things be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"

But what is the great source, evidence, sum, and perfection of sanctification? Is it not the love of God? And how shall this be produced? how shall it be preserved and improved, in so effectual a manner, as by believing views of the cross of Christ, the most tender and costly expression of his love to us? 1 John iv. 19. "We love him; because he first loved us." How does this fill the Christian with indignation against sin, which he must consider as "crucifying him to himself afresh!" &c. How does it endear to him his Saviour's commands! how does it inspire him with zeal in doing his will, and fortitude in suffering for his cause! Will any thing so effectually determine us to love our fellow-creatures, as his command and example?

ample? Will any thing so effectually persuade us to discharge the most important duties to others, I mean, seeking their eternal welfare, as the value of a precious soul estimated by the cross? Will any thing so effectually dispose us to the most difficult duties to others, I mean, meekness, patience, and forgiveness, as the great debt cancelled to us by his sufferings on the cross? Is it possible that his own words, in that awful season, can ever be forgotten, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do?" I cannot at present enlarge further on these views; but well might the apostle, and well may every Christian, glory in his Master's cross, for the unspeakable benefit he receives from it: For, 1 Cor. i. 30. "of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

I proceed now to make some practical application of what hath been said. And,

1. From what hath been said, you may learn what is the great and leading doctrine of the gospel, the sum and substance of the truth as it is in Jesus, *viz.* the doctrine of the cross, or Christ suffering the wrath of God, to redeem us from hell. This was the great design formed in the councils of peace, early intimated in the first promise, gradually unfolded in after ages, and completely manifested in the fullness of time. The Saviour was the subject of the ancient promises, the hope of the ancient patriarchs, the

substance of the New-Testament dispensation, and the burden of the everlasting gospel. He saith of himself, Rev. i. 8. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." On his glorious character, and precious blood, the inspired apostles delighted to dwell. Did they then mistake their message? did they mislead their hearers? No; it was, and it shall ever remain an unchangeable truth, what the apostle declares, 1 Cor. iii. 11. "For other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

On this foundation, every thing that is agreeable to the will of God, in doctrine or practice, must be built. Every other part of the word of God derives light and beauty from the cross; every other part of the word of God derives force and meaning from the cross; every other part of the word of God derives life and efficacy from the cross. Let us therefore remember its influence and value, and never lose view of it. Let us despise the ignorant reproaches of those who slander it as unfavourable to moral virtue. I dare not say indeed, that it is very favourable to an ostentatious parade of human merit; but I am sure it is the only way of producing self-denied obedience to the will of God.

2. From what hath been said, you may see the guilt and danger of the enemies of the cross, and at the same time may learn who they are who deserve this character. They may be divided into two distinct classes: 1. Those who are

are enemies in principle to the cross, who have no sense of their own unworthiness, of the evil of sin, or the necessity of an atonement. Such may sometimes retain the name of Christians, and contend that they ought to retain it, while they oppose, with the utmost virulence and malice, its most important and fundamental truth. I cannot think, without horror, on the guilt and ingratitude of all such persons, and the fearful punishment which they shall meet with at last, when this despised Saviour "shall come in the clouds, and every eye shall see him." 2.

They are also enemies to this truth who are governed in temper and practice by a spirit directly opposite to that of the cross. The shame and reproach which the cross implied are not sufficiently attended to, nor the humility and self-denial necessary to all those who would be the followers of a crucified master. Are there not many who will have no religion but what will be pliable, and accommodate itself to the maxims of the world? Loaded with prudence, they are unwilling to break measures, either with the good or the bad. Dazzled with human pomp, they despise every thing in religion, but what, either in substance or circumstances, is grateful to human pride. Fashionable practices, however dangerous or vicious, they have not courage to oppose. It were well, if they would consider the ancient form of confession at baptism. Do you renounce the devil, and all his works? I do. Do you renounce the world, its pomps, its pleasures, and its vanities? I do. And this

was not merely Heathenish idolatry, and ceremonies of false worship, but that indulgence of vanity, and that gratification of appetite, in which worldly men, in every age, place their supreme delight.

3. What hath been said may serve for the support and consolation of real believers, under the trials to which they are exposed in the present state. It is melancholy to think, how frequently, and how easily, we are unhinged by distress; what discontent and impatience we are apt to discover under suffering. Alas! my brethren, are you not ashamed of impatience, when you consider the unparalleled sufferings of your Redeemer in your room? A believing view of the Saviour's cross, one would think, might stop every mouth, and compose every murmuring thought. Has he suffered so much for us? and shall we refuse to suffer from him, and for him? His sufferings should make us patient, as they shew us the evil of sin, and what we have deserved. Did we really deserve avenging wrath? and shall we dare to complain of fatherly correction? Did he suffer with patience who did no sin? and shall we complain who are punished less than our iniquities deserve? His sufferings should teach us patience, because they take away the bitterness and malignity of our sufferings, and turn them from a poison to a medicine: he hath exhausted, if I may speak so, the whole wrath of God, and left nothing for us but what is highly salutary. And as he hath changed the nature of all the sufferings of life,  
he

he hath taken away the sting of death, which is the end of all our suffering. That blood which speaks peace to the wounded spirit, should be a healing balm to the wounded body.

But of all the different kinds of suffering, if we pretend to glory in the cross, we ought to be least afraid of the reproach thrown upon us for adherence to our duty. To glory in the cross, is indeed to glory in shame. The form of expression used with regard to Peter and John, Acts v. 41. is very remarkable. They departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. It would greatly tend to fortify us against this trial, if we would lay up in our hearts what hath been said on the doctrine of the cross. If it is impossible to avoid it, we must needs sit down composedly under it. And if our attachment to our great master is what it ought to be, we will cheerfully follow him even without the camp, bearing his reproach.

4. In the *last* place, By what hath been said, you may try your title to sit down at the Lord's table, and learn your employment there. This ordinance is a sensible memorial of our Redeemer's cross and passion. It was on the cross that his body was broken, and his blood shed, for you. Are you then to commemorate it? You cannot do so, either in an acceptable or profitable manner, unless you can join the apostle in glorying in it. Have you seen any thing of the excellence and amiableness of this despised object? Nothing so tasteless and insipid to the proud

and self-righteous ; nothing so delightful and refreshing to the broken in heart. Have you seen any thing of the glory of the true God, in the sufferings of Christ ? and can you say with the apostle Paul, Heb. ii. 10. “ It became him, for  
“ whom are all things, and by whom are all  
“ things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to  
“ make the Captain of their salvation perfect  
“ through sufferings.” Do you see the glory of infinite mercy in the cross ? and are your hearts drawn with the cords of love to him who  
“ loved you, and gave himself for you ?” Have you experienced the sanctifying influence of the cross ? are your corruptions weakened and mortified by looking upon it ? Is it your unfeigned desire, that they may be finally destroyed by it ?

To draw to a conclusion of the subject : I cannot point out your duty to you in a manner more suited to this day’s employment, or more proper for your after security and comfort, than to turn the three reasons for glorying in the cross into the form of exhortations.—I beseech you, my beloved hearers, contemplate the glory of God in the cross of Christ. See him, infinite in power, infinite in wisdom, infinite in holiness. You may see a faint emblem of his glory in the book of nature ; but you can only see his transcendent majesty in the book of God. And may  
“ he who at first commanded the light to shine  
“ out of darkness, shine in your hearts, to give  
“ you the light of the knowledge of the glory  
“ of God, in the face of Jesus Christ !”— Adore and apply the riches of divine grace. Let the  
convinced,

convinced, fearful, trembling sinner, fly to this atoning blood, rest his hope upon it, and be secure.—And neglect not to use the cross of Christ for mortifying your corruptions. Let your views of it now be lively and strong, and carry the same impresson away, to be your great preservative from daily temptation. Make no image of the cross in your houses; but let the remembrance of it be ever on your hearts. One lively view of this great object will cool the flames of unclean lust: one lively view of this great object will make the unjust man quit his hold: one lively view of this tremendous object will make the angry man drop his weapon: nay, one look of mercy from a dying Saviour will make even the covetous man open his heart. In one word, believing views of the cross of Christ will unite the Christian more and more to a reconciled God, will make his presence comfortable, his worship delightful, and excite a humble longing for that time when we shall see him no more through the help of these elements, but as he is in himself, exalted on his throne, where his worship and service are everlasting.

## S E R M O N IX.

The world crucified by the cross of Christ.

GALATIANS vi. 14. last clause.

— *By whom the world is crucified to me,  
and I unto the world.*

THE character of a servant of God is sometimes described in scripture by particular dispositions or instances of obedience, and sometimes by a general view of the spirit that runs through the whole of his temper and carriage. Each of these ways has its own advantage and use. Each of them is to be found in its proper order in the holy scriptures, and stands there as a proof of their fulness and perfection. The whole of this passage, but particularly the last clause, upon which I am now to insist; is of the general kind, and, in the apostle's own example, gives us a very comprehensive view of what ought to be the temper and disposition of every real Christian: "By whom," that is, by Christ crucified, or, "by which," that is to say, by the cross of Christ, "the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

This description will serve, if carefully attended to, as a trial and touchstone of sincerity;  
and,

and, in particular, will serve to distinguish real religion from some of its most deceitful and plausible counterfeits. At the same time, it will furnish the sincere Christian with very important directions for his preservation and improvement, by pointing out the most fatal and dangerous rocks of temptation, which it is his interest to avoid. Having explained the words in my discourse upon the former part of the verse, I now only observe, that the proposition contained in them is, "That the world is crucified to the believer, and he to the world, by the cross of Christ." This naturally resolves itself into two parts, which I propose to consider distinctly, *viz.*

1. What is the import of a believer's being crucified to the world, and the world to him.

2. What influence the cross of Christ hath in producing this effect. Having done this, I will,

3. Make a practical improvement of the subject.

I. **FIRST**, then, we are to consider the import of a believer's being crucified to the world, and the world to him. This seems to deserve the greater attention, that through the whole New Testament, there is a direct opposition stated between the world and the disciples of Christ: an opposition of character, an opposition of interest, and a continual conflict in consequence of both: John xv. 18. 19. "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would

“ would love his own : but because ye are not  
 “ of the world, but I have chosen you of the  
 “ world, therefore the world hateth you.” In  
 this passage the world seems to be taken chiefly  
 for the men of the world, or its inhabitants.  
 It is, however, taken in a more extensive sense  
 in the two following: 1 John ii. 15. “ Love  
 “ not the world, neither the things that are in  
 “ the world. If any man love the world, the  
 “ love of the Father is not in him.” 1 John v. 4.  
 “ For whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the  
 “ world : and this is the victory that overco-  
 “ meth the world, even our faith.” Here, no  
 doubt, it signifies not only men, and our hopes  
 or fears from them, but every thing in the pre-  
 sent life that may be the object of carnal affec-  
 tion, of sinful or undutiful attachment.

The expression in the text, “ The world is  
 “ crucified to me,” is figurative ; but abundantly  
 plain, and exceedingly strong. It might be con-  
 sidered very extensively, and several things upon it  
 may probably afterwards occur. Let it suffice at  
 present to make two observations. 1. This in-  
 timates the sincerity and heartiness of the belie-  
 ver’s opposition to the world. It must be re-  
 membered, that crucifixion was a death the most  
 painful and disgraceful that could possibly be in-  
 flicted. When this image, therefore, is borrow-  
 ed, and applied to the believer’s separation from  
 the world, it implies not only an indifference to  
 it, but the most sovereign contempt of it, from  
 the deepest and strongest conviction of its abso-  
 lute vanity. Nay, as no persons were crucified,  
 but

but who were hated as well as despised by their judges, to be crucified to the world, implies an unfeigned abhorrence of its pollution, and a dread of being enslaved by it.

2. The same thing intimates the perpetuity and fixedness of the Christian's opposition to the world. Those who were crucified were devoted to destruction, when they were nailed to the tree: they were not only tormented for a season, but fixed there till death concluded the scene: so I apprehend the apostle intended to signify, by this expression, his final separation from the world, without the least hope or desire of ever returning to it.

After taking this short and general view of the import of the expression, it will be necessary more distinctly and fully to consider what is implied in being crucified to the world. This ought to be done with the greater care, that it is at once an important and difficult duty. To be truly crucified to the world, I am afraid is exceeding rare; and even those who are so in sincerity, upon the whole, are far from being so in the degree that they ought to be. The punishment of crucifixion is a strong image, in one particular, of the believer's character. Though it was certain death, it was slow and lingering: so worldliness, in many persons, continues long vigorous, and dies very slowly.

There is another reason for treating this subject with care, that men are very apt to consider such expressions as extravagant, and carrying matters an unreasonable length. Mistaking the  
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the nature of the duty, they are neither concerned themselves to practise it, nor will they allow that any body else does so in reality. I will therefore endeavour to shew you, 1. What is not implied in crucifying the world; 2. Wherein it immediately and properly consists.

On the *first* of these, I beg your attention to the following particulars.

1. The world's being crucified to us, does not imply that there is any evil in the natural world, considered in itself; and as the work of God. The whole frame of nature, as it was produced and is preserved by God, and the whole course of providence, as conducted by him, are perfectly faultless. We may even say more, the creation carries on it such an image of its maker, as the materials are able to bear. In this view, it is our duty to look upon the world with reverence, and adore the glory of God in all its parts, from the highest to the lowest. The evil arises wholly from ourselves, and our disposition to sin. When we say a corrupt enticing deceitful world, it is but another way of speaking for the corruption of the human heart.

2. It does not imply that we should undervalue or be insensible of present mercies. Every gift of God is good, if it be received with thankfulness, and used with sobriety. The more the world is crucified as it ought to be, the more we will discern the goodness of God, even in common mercies. It is matter of daily experience, and well worthy of observation, that those

those who idolize the world most, as an object of sinful desire, do usually despise the world most, as the subject or ground of thankfulness to God. A voluptuous, ambitious, or envious person, who pursues the world with eagerness, and never thinks he has enough, is commonly discontented and unthankful. His eyes are so wistfully fixed on what he wants, that he neither remembers nor values what he already has. On the contrary, the self-denied and mortified Christian, though despising the world as an object of pursuit, is yet deeply sensible of the kindness of providence, in his daily preservation, or liberal provision. A mind formed upon the principles of the gospel, may look down with contempt upon the lustre of a throne, and yet know the value, and feel a sense of gratitude in the possession of a crumb.

3. It doth not imply that the world is useless to a believer, even with regard to his spiritual benefit. It is not only certain that he may have, but that he will have, the sanctified improvement of every state: Rom. viii. 28. "And we know that all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." The same mercies which make a wicked man insolent, make a good man thankful. They also extend his power of doing good to others. You may see, by our Saviour's advice, how the world may be profitably employed: Luke xvi. 9. "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye  
VOL. I. S " fail,

“ fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.” See also the account of his procedure at the great day, Matth. xxv. 34.—36. “ Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me in : naked, and ye clothed me : I was sick, and ye visited me : I was in prison, and ye came unto me.”

4. It does not imply that we ought to retire from the employment or business of the world altogether. Though there is a manifest danger in being too much involved in business, as well as too much devoted to pleasure ; it is an error, on the other hand, to place religion in voluntary poverty, in monkish austerity, or uncommanded maceration of the body. This is not doing, but deserting our duty : it is not crucifying the world, but going out of it ; it is not overcoming the world, but flying from it.

But let us now consider, directly and positively, what is implied in the world's being crucified to us, and we to the world. And that the after illustrations may be at once more intelligible and more convincing, it will not be improper to begin by saying, in general, that we must be crucified to the world in those respects in which man, at his first apostasy, fell away to the world from God. While man continued in innocence, the world, which in itself is without stain, was never

never put to any but a sacred use. It was then a theatre of divine glory, as indeed it is still; but not a scene of human guilt, as it is now. It was intended for a place of trial, however, in which man was left to the freedom of his own will; and therefore it was capable of being abused. Thence came that sacrilegious attachment to the world, from which it is so much our interest to be effectually delivered. But to explain this matter a little more at large, the world must be crucified to the believer in the following respects; which, though I confess they all come at last to the same thing, yet I think it is proper and necessary to mention distinctly.

1. *As it is the subject and occasion of, or a temptation to sin.* It is very plain, that however faultless and excellent the whole works of nature and providence are in themselves, from the corruption of our nature they become the food of carnal affection, the fuel of concupiscence. The very liberality of Providence, and rich provision made for the supply of our wants and the gratification of our appetites, becomes a temptation to gross sensuality, and criminal indulgence. This is well described by the apostle John, 1 Ep. ii. 16. "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." In this view, we ought to hold it in the utmost abhorrence. But how is this to be done? By seriously considering the unhappy and powerful influence it hath in soliciting us to evil. Instead of being taken with its

charms, we ought to dread their force, we ought to be sensible how unequal we are to the conflict, and how unable, without superior strength, to keep ourselves from its pollution.

When we see persons in honour and power, and are tempted to envy their distinguished rank in life, we ought to consider how naturally exaltation tends to intoxicate the mind, how few are able to bear honour or reputation with humility, and how little reason we have to confide in our own steadiness and resolution. When we see the splendor of a rich and affluent state, we ought to consider the strong temptation which commonly arises from riches, to contempt of God, oppression of others, sensuality of temper, and forgetfulness of eternity. Suffer me, on this subject, to make every man his own reprover. How few are there in a rich and affluent state, whose conduct in the application of riches you can wholly approve! Are you not constantly blaming them for covetousness and oppression on the one hand, or prodigality on the other? How is it, then, that you entertain no suspicion that you yourselves would be led astray by the same means? Is not this a strange insatiation, and blindness to divine truth, even where every word of the Spirit of God is ratified by daily experience?

When we see and are tempted to envy the votaries of pleasure, those who live delicately and fare sumptuously every day, we ought to consider, what a dangerous insnaring thing appetite is, how it steals upon men insensibly, and at last

last inflaves them absolutely; how hard it is for the most cautious to set proper bounds to it, as well as how dreadful and fatal the excessive indulgence of it. To crucify the world, then, as a temptation to sin, is not to consider its charms by themselves, but always in connection with their probable effects. This seems to have suggested the wise and well-conceived prayer of the prophet Agur, Prov. xxx. 7, 8, 9. "Two things have I required of thee, deny me them: not before I die. Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain." On the same thing is founded the advice of Solomon, with regard to the sin of sensuality: Prov. xxiii. 31. "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright."

2. The world must be crucified to the believer, as it would be his supreme felicity and chief good. This is no otherwise to be distinguished from the former consideration, than as the general course and stream of our affections differs from particular acts of transgression. It is very necessary, however, to attend to it; for there are many under the habitual government of a worldly mind, who do not think themselves, and who perhaps are not justly chargeable with gross acts of irregularity and excess. I bleed inwardly to think, how many of the ordinary professors

of religion are here included. How many are there, who, if conscience would be faithful, must confess, that the favour of God, his worship, his sabbaths, his people, are not their supreme delight! Yet that this is essential to real religion, or rather is the substance of all true religion, I think we have repeated assurances in the holy scriptures. It is plain from the language of the Psalmist, Psal. lxxiii. 25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." It is plain from the sum of the moral law, Luke x. 27. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself;" as also from that trying passage, Matth. x. 37. "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me."

Take heed then, my brethren, to this important truth. If the world would keep its distance, so to speak, it might be esteemed, and used, in its proper place, and to its proper end; but if it will needs pretend to be what it is not, and to promise what it cannot give, we must take it for a deceiver, and hold it in detestation. Your Maker formed you for his own glory: He must be the rest and consolation of your souls, or they never shall have rest; he must be their happiness, or they shall be miserable for ever. But if the world would seem to be your home, if it promiseth you content and satisfaction, if the possession

possession of it is the ultimate end at which you aspire, so that you do not heartily, and with affection, look any further, it is usurping its Creator's throne; and therefore down with the idol, and tread it in the dust.

Is not this the great question with regard to us all, Whether the objects of faith, or of sense, things present or things to come, God or the world, has the possession of our hearts? A believer who will thankfully receive and use the blessings of a present world for their proper end, will notwithstanding hold it, and all its possessions, in the highest degree of contempt, when compared with the one thing needful. He will say, from the bottom of his heart, in the presence of an all-seeing God, 'Lord, let me never have  
' my portion in this world only. The glory of  
' a throne, the most inexhaustible mines of gold  
' and silver, without thy favour, I would not on-  
' ly despise, but abhor.'

Whence arises this disposition in the believer? From a conviction of the unsatisfying nature of all earthly enjoyments; from an inward persuasion of this truth, That "the world, in its best state, is altogether vanity;" from a sense of the infinite disproportion between the possession of the creature, and the favour of the Creator; but, above all, from a deep and abiding conviction of the precariousness and uncertainty of all earthly things. However undeniable it is, that the fashion of this world passeth away, few there are who live under the strong and lively practical impression of it. The deceived hearts  
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of sinners believe the contrary. How well are they described by the Psalmist, Psal. xlix. 11. 12. 13. " Their inward thought is, that their " houses shall continue for ever, and their dwell- " ing-places to all generations; they call " their lands after their own names. Never- " theless, man being in honour, abideth not: he " is like the beasts that perish. This their way is " their folly; yet their posterity approve of their " sayings!" One would think, nothing more should be necessary to crucify the world, than to reflect upon the many descriptions given us in the word of God of its uncertain duration: Psal. xxxvii. 35. 36. " I have seen the wicked in " great power; and spreading himself like a " green bay-tree. Yet he passed away, and lo, " he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could " not be found." Il. xl. 6. " And the voice said, " Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh " is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the " flower of the field." I shall only add our Lord's description of the sudden call of a worldly man to death and judgement: Luke xii. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 21. " And he spake a parable unto them, " saying, The ground of a certain rich man " brought forth plentifully. And he thought " within himself, saying, What shall I do, be- " cause I have no room where to bestow my " fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will " pull down my barns, and build greater; and " there will I bestow all my fruits, and my goods. " And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast " much

“ much goods laid up for many years ; take  
 “ thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But  
 “ God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy  
 “ soul shall be required of thee : then whose  
 “ shall those things be which thou hast provided ?  
 “ So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and  
 “ is not rich towards God.”

3. The world must be crucified, *as it pretends to be necessary to our felicity.* This is chiefly directed against those who love the world to excess, though at the same time they at least pretend to love God more. They seem to have chosen God as their supreme; but it does not appear, that they have chosen him as their sufficient portion. The world still bulks so much in their eye, that they know no happiness or comfort of which it makes not a part. They see, or think they see, the insufficiency of the world, without the favour of God, as a refuge when the world fails ; but they can no more rest satisfied in God without the world, than in the world without God. I have no doubt, you will be sensible there are many amongst us in this condition : nay, I am afraid there will be not a few within themselves secretly justifying this character and conduct. They will say, ‘ Is it possible  
 ‘ to deny, that the world is necessary to us while  
 ‘ we continue here ? is it not so to you as well  
 ‘ as to us ? and therefore why should it not be  
 ‘ regarded in this light ? ’

To all such I answer, The world, in a certain proportion, is indeed necessary to us ; but this proportion is not to be ascertained by us. It  
 must

must be left to the disposal of infinite wisdom, without any conditions. When there is a divorce or separation between the believer and the world, it is entire and complete, without reserve or limitation. He gives up all as the object of carnal affection, that he may receive again, for a nobler purpose, that measure which seems necessary to the sanctified will of God. He is just in the situation of a man who, having contracted obligations which he is unable to discharge, has surrendered his all into the hands of another; and has no further use of what was formerly his own, than as much, or as long as the new proprietor shall think fit. I know no image that more properly represents the condition of the believer; with this difference, that in human affairs the change is usually for the worse; but in spiritual things, the renunciation is an infinite advantage, and the seeming loss an unspeakable gain.

Think not, my brethren, that this is carrying matters to excess. It is what our Saviour expressly requires of all that would embrace his doctrine: Luke ix. 23. "And he said unto them  
"all, If any man will come after me, let him  
"deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and  
"follow me." It is indeed one of the hard sayings of the gospel. You have heard it sometimes said, that every Christian must be a martyr in resolution; and doubtless the world is not thoroughly crucified, unless our attachment to every worldly enjoyment, without exception, be so broken, that we are ready to resign it whenever God, in his providence, shall see fit

fit to demand it. We have an excellent lesson to this purpose, in the trial to which our Saviour put the young man in the gospel, with a decent and regular profession : Matth. xix. 21. 22. " Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give it to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven : and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful ; for he had great possessions." To crucify the world, then, is to count no worldly enjoyment whatever necessary, either to our present comfort, or everlasting happiness, but to put an absolute and unshaken confidence in the wisdom and goodness of a reconciled God. This is excellently expressed by the prophet Habakkuk, ch. iii. 17. 18. " Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olives shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls : yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

4. In the *last* place, The world must be crucified, *as it is a separate and independent good, without its due relation to God.* God himself alone is independent. All other things stand in an inseparable relation to him, and should be used in subserviency to his honour : " For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things." Every rational creature, who continues in, or returns to his duty, discerns this relation, and maintains this subserviency. It was the first idolatry and sacrilege, to break the ties that join  
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the Maker to his works, and love the creature for its own sake. But he that is crucified to the world, will consider every earthly enjoyment as the gift of God: he will confess the goodness of God in bestowing it, and will obey the command of God in the use and application of it. That this is the duty of a Christian, is plain from the general strain of the holy scriptures; and particularly from this express and positive declaration, 1 Cor. x. 31. "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

The world, then, as a separate independent good, or as a mere gratification of carnal desire, is to be crucified. It was not given us for so low a purpose as the indulgence of appetite, but for nobler ends. But perhaps it will be necessary to observe, that some of the mystic writers have raised a variety of improper questions on this subject. Some have affirmed the unlawfulness of tasting any of the sweetness of created enjoyments, more than was barely necessary for subsistence. It is easy to see, that it must be very hard, in many such cases, to fix the bounds between necessity and convenience, use and pleasure: hence the conscience is involved in unspeakable and endless perplexity. Upon this I would observe, that the general reference of all things, even common actions, to the glory of God, is sufficiently and clearly established upon the passage of scripture above mentioned. But in order to do this in the most profitable manner, some subordinate ends also must be considered;

dered; and therefore, not only what is necessary to health and comfort must be used with this view, but the enjoyment of many of the creatures may be allowed as the fruits of divine bounty, and tending to inspire an habitual cheerfulness and gratitude to God.

I shall conclude with giving you these two general rules to be observed in the enjoyment of outward mercies.

1. That we have greater reason to guard against sins of excess and intemperance than of abstinence. The first are unspeakably more common and prevalent than the other: they always have been so, and are always likely to be so. If some few have gone into superstition, by extraordinary mortification, thousands have been betrayed into sin, and at last brought to perdition, by the charms of a sensual life.

2. If any are in danger of erring on the opposite side, the way to discover when we are going wrong, is to consider, whether the mortification renders us more spiritual, and more active, or, by excess of scrupulosity, we are consuming our time, and neglecting our duty. The deceits of Satan are very subtle: he fills some persons with so many doubts upon every particular, that they are like one who makes little progress in his journey, from continual uncertainty, and frequent stopping to enquire the way. It is certainly far better to carry on the general ends of God's glory, and point to this as our ultimate purpose, than every now and then

to intangle and imbarrafs ourselves with questions of little moment.

Before proceeding to the second general head, I shall finish this discourse by a few observations for the improvement of what hath been already said. And,

1. From what hath been said upon this subject, you may learn the great *importance* of the duty; that it is the distinguishing character of a real Christian, to be crucified to the world, and the world to him. Alas! how many deceive themselves in this particular! How many satisfy themselves with a name to live, when they are dead; with a form of godliness, while they deny the power thereof! How many, with a decent and regular outward profession, are yet wholly devoted to the world! Their meditation dwells upon it; their affections center in it; their care is bestowed upon it; and their delights entirely flow from it. Let it be considered, that there is nothing more contrary to true religion. The world, or created good, is the great competitor with God for the heart. All the honour and esteem that is given to it is taken from God. All the service and obedience that is bestowed upon it is refused to God. Call to mind some of the passages of scripture referred to in the preceding discourse; particularly the following: 1 John ii. 15. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

My dear brethren, there are many who would look

look with contempt or indignation on those who are guilty of particular scandalous and disgraceful sins, for example, on a profane swearer, drunkard, or unclean person, while yet they themselves are as much wedded to the world, and have as great an inward aversion at the practice of piety, and the power of the spiritual life, as any of them all. Other sins are but the body or the members : worldliness is the soul and spirit of irreligion. Other sins are but the acts or expressions, worldliness the inward principle that gives them life.

How important a part this is of the Christian character, will plainly appear from these two considerations : 1. Worldliness may be itself the principle which restrains men from many other sins. A desire of reputation, a delight in the esteem of others, is often the cause of outward decency ; nay, it is not seldom the cause of apparent zeal and eminent hypocrisy. 2. There may be as great a degree of worldliness with as without a profession of piety. Men may retain a form of godliness chiefly to set themselves free from the reproofs of conscience, that their present enjoyments may have the higher relish. Nay, I cannot help observing, that though covetousness is one of the gross sins mentioned in scripture, as entirely subversive of religion, there is scarcely any sin that can be carried to such a degree, without casting off the profession of it. Hence it plainly appears how important a part of the character of a real Christian it is to be crucified to the world. Without this the

soundest principles, and the strictest profession, will avail nothing; for they that are "Christ's," "have crucified the flesh, with its affections and "lusts."

2. From what hath been said you may see, not only the importance, but the great *extent* of the duty. The world itself, and all that is therein, in the sense formerly explained, must be crucified. That you may, in some measure, conceive the extent of this, consider the common division of worldly enjoyments, *viz.* riches, honours, and pleasures. All these, without exception, and all these equally, must be denied by the Christian. You shall often see, that the covetous man will despise and hate the prodigal, and even express the greatest zeal against riot, and extravagance of every kind. The sensualist, on the other hand, despises the miser, as glued to the world, and a slave to the most fordid of all human passions. And the ambitious man, eager in the pursuit of honour and dignity, vainly conceives himself superior to both. But they are all equally opposite to and inconsistent with the spirit of the gospel. If your supreme delight, if your portion and happiness is here, it is of little consequence whether your hearts are set upon "the lust of the flesh, the lust of "the eye, or the pride of life." It is with the soul as with the body: there are many different diseases taking place in different parts, and shewing themselves by different symptoms, but which will equally end in death as their effect.

3. You

3. You may hence learn the *difficulty* of the duty; to be crucified to the world, and yet to live in the world; to be crucified to the world, and yet to possess the world; to be crucified to the world, and yet to have a great part of our thoughts and love necessarily employed about the world. The temptation is ever present, and, through the corruption and treachery of our own hearts, fatally strong. Ought we not hence to infer the absolute necessity of continual vigilance, and continual prayer? continual vigilance in our duty, and jealousy of every temptation that may be in danger of diverting us from it? continual prayer to the Father of lights, in the name of Christ, for supernatural strength? Every exercised Christian knows from experience the danger of the world as an enemy, and how hard it is to keep such clear views of the things of eternity, as to be preserved from an undue and sinful attachment to the things of time. The world is dangerous even to those who maintain an habitual jealousy of it, and hold it as an enemy: how much more must it be ruinous and fatal to those who love and prosecute it as the object of their chief desire!

4. I shall now conclude, by improving this subject for the purpose of self-examination. And surely no serious hearer will be backward to bring himself to the trial. My beloved hearers, I speak to all of every rank, high and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, who profess to bear the name of Christians: Are you,

or are you not, crucified to the world, and the world to you? All real believers are so. If you are not, your riches or your poverty, your honour or your shame, your regular behaviour, or even your zeal for public duties, will avail you nothing in the day of Christ's appearance. I am sensible, that the decision of the question, Whether you are, or are not, crucified to the world? may often be attended with no little difficulty. I will therefore, as far as I am able, endeavour to assist you in the trial. For which purpose, I beg your attention to the following observations.

1. You are crucified to the world, if you do not habitually allow your thoughts to dwell upon it, and your desires to run out after it. The cross was an abhorred object, which nobody could look upon with delight. Worldliness is often as much discovered by our desires after what we have not, as by the use or employment of what we have. There are many whose great delight seems to arise from the fond expectations they entertain of worldly happiness to come: nay, there are many who are so slothful as not to pursue the world, and yet feed themselves with the very imagination of it. Their thoughts, and even their language, constantly runs upon idle fancies, and romantic suppositions of the happiness they should enjoy, were they in such or such a state. Now, my brethren, he that is crucified to the world will make conscience of restraining these irregular desires; and, from a deep conviction of the vanity of  
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of the world, will find little pleasure in the contemplation of it.

2. Your being crucified to the world will appear in the moderation of your delight and complacency in what you possess of it. You will not, if I may speak so, give yourselves up to it, but will always qualify the enjoyment of it by a reflection upon its vanity in itself, and its short duration as to any connection we shall have with it. We are ready to pity the weakness of children, when we see them apply themselves with so much eagerness to trifles, and so greatly delighted with their amusements and enjoyments. A parent, looking on them when hotly engaged at play, will be at once pleased to see them happy, and at the same time filled with a tender commiseration of their want of reflection. Something of the same view one crucified to the world has of all earthly enjoyments. Many a grown person will smile at the play of children, while he himself is perhaps as eagerly engaged in the schemes of ambition, in political struggles, and contests for power; which are often as great trifles as the play-things of children, only that they are the play-things of men.

3. You are crucified to the world if you have low hopes and expectations from it. It is hope that stirs us up chiefly to action in all our pursuits. And so long as we entertain high thoughts of what the world will afford us in some after-season, we are not crucified to it.

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There is a common proverbial saying, 'If it were not for hope, the heart would break : ' just so, when our hopes from the world are destroyed, the heart of the old man is broken. We are exceeding ready to think, that were such or such a difficulty or uneasiness removed, could we obtain such or such an advantage in view, we would be happy. But there is always a deception at bottom. We vainly think, that happiness arises from the creature; but he that is crucified to the world judges, by past experience, that it hath little comfort to give; and therefore he will place but little dependence upon it.

4. He is crucified to the world who hath truly subdued all invidious dispositions towards the possession of it. There are many who seem to have little comfort from their own enjoyments; but there is reason to fear, that it arises not so much from self-denial, as from discontent. The world may be said to be crucified to them, but they are not crucified to the world. It is by this that worldliness expresses itself chiefly in the lower ranks of life. Those who are obliged to live moderately and hardly, from mere penury, often shew, by their carriage and language, that they have as much sensuality in their hearts, as those who indulge their irregular desires to the greatest excess. But he that is crucified to the world, not only sees all its pomp and splendour in others without repining, but will often bestow a thought of compassion upon the great, for the insnaring circumstances in which they are

are placed with regard to their souls. And surely they are of all others most to be pitied. May the Lord, in mercy, convince them of their danger; and, in the mean time, preserve his own people from being led astray by their influence and example.

S E R .

## S E R M O N X.

The world crucified by the cross of Christ.

GALATIANS vi. 14. last clause.

— *By whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world.*

**I** Now proceed to the *second* thing proposed, which was, To show the influence of the cross of Christ in crucifying the world. This, my brethren, deserves your most serious attention, as pointing you to the great and vital principle of the Christian's sanctification, the true and only source of spiritual comfort and peace. The cross of Christ is always considered in the apostolic writings as an object of the highest dignity and merit; and the believer is there taught to speak of it in expressions of the warmest attachment and regard. Witness the words of the text itself, in the preceding clause: "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." We may perhaps be easily induced, in a time of external quietness and peace, to adopt this sentiment as an opinion, or to use it as a form; but happy, and only happy, those in whom it dwells as an ever-present

sent truth, and operates as a daily governing principle!

Taking the subject in great latitude, I might observe, that the cross of Christ being the price paid for the blessings of salvation in general, every illuminating discovery in the mind, and every gracious affection in the heart, which are the work of the divine Spirit, may be justly ascribed to it. But I propose, at this time, to consider it singly as an object of faith, and to shew how the firm persuasion and frequent recollection of this great truth tends to crucify the world to us, and us to the world; the rather, that we find elsewhere our victory over the world ascribed to faith, and this faith particularly terminating on the Son of God: 1 John v. 4. 5. "For whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" For the further illustration of this subject, then, let us observe,

1. That the cross of Christ crucifies the world, as it gives us an immediate and striking view of the mortality of our nature, as well as the original and general cause of this mortality. The vanity of created things is in nothing more manifest, than in their precarious nature, particularly our own tendency to the dust, by which all earthly relations shall be speedily and entirely dissolved. In this view, indeed, you may say, that the death of any other person, sickness, and  
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all its attending symptoms, or a funeral, with its mournful solemnities, tends to crucify the world: and most certainly they do. But there is something still more in the cross of Christ. There we see, not only the death of our nature, but the death of the Son of God in our room. There we are carried back to a view of the great cause of the universal reign of the king of terrors. Sin, sin first brought death into the world; and this made it necessary that Christ "should taste of death for every man," that we might be restored to spiritual life. Mortality, therefore, is written in the most legible characters on the cross of Christ. Nay, the curse of creation itself is written upon the cross of Christ. We cannot look upon it, therefore, in a serious manner, without being deeply affected with the doom which we ourselves have still to undergo: "Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return." It is impossible to avoid knowing that we must die; but those only discover the moment of this truth, who see its procuring cause. Those only have just and abiding impressions of the speedy approach of natural death, who are filled with concern for their own deliverance from the power of the second death.

2. The cross of Christ crucifies the world to a believer, as it shews him how little he deserves at the hand of God. Believers on the cross of Christ see him standing in their room, and bearing the wrath of an offended God, which was their due. When this is not only professed with  
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the mouth, but received into the heart, it gives a deep conviction of the evil of sin, and lays the sinner prostrate in humility and self-abasement. Must not this greatly weaken and mortify all worldly affection, which takes its rise from pride and self-sufficiency? It is, if I may speak so, a sort of claim and demand upon Providence, as if something were due to us. Worldly persons, in prosperity, not only cleave to the world as their portion, but may be said to assert their title to it as their property. The same inward disposition may be discovered by their carriage in the opposite state. When their schemes are broken, and their hopes blasted, by repeated disappointments, or when their possessions are taken from them by unexpected strokes, they resist and rebel with impatience and indignation, as if some person had done them wrong.

But when men are sensible that they deserve nothing at the hand of God, this mortifies their earthly desires, and puts their complaints to silence. See how Job expresses himself after all his calamities, as sensible that he had lost nothing of his own, chap. i. 21. "Naked came I  
" out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I  
" return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord  
" hath taken away; blessed be the name of the  
" Lord." Let me speak of this, my brethren, as a gracious disposition, which, alas! is too often but weak, yet surely hath place in the heart of every child of God. Let me suppose him convinced, that he is unworthy of the least of all God's mercies; will he not keep his pos-  
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essions the more loosely, and will he not quit his hold the more easily? But where shall we learn real self-abasement so well as from the cross? where shall we learn how little we deserve that is good, so well as in that place which shews we have indeed deserved every thing that is evil? where shall we learn to make moderate demands of created mercies, but where we see, that not only the creature, but life itself, was forfeited by our guilt? Let me suppose a condemned criminal carried, with many others, to a scaffold, there receiving a pardon, and witnessing, in the execution of others, what was the sentence of the law upon himself; will he, at this instant, think you, be impatient or thankful? Will he be jealous of the honour or respect paid to him? will he quarrel about the dignity or convenience of the place assigned to him? No surely. Lost in the consideration of the fate he has escaped, and the favour he has received, he will pay little regard to matters of small comparative importance. Just so the Christian, placed by faith at the foot of the cross, deeply moved by a discovery of the wrath of God, which he had deserved to suffer to eternity, and taking an immediate view of what his Redeemer suffered to deliver him from it, will be little thoughtful of the world, or any of its enjoyments.

3. The cross of Christ crucifies the world, by reversing all worldly maxims, and shewing of how light estimation worldly greatness is in the sight of  
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of God. So long as worldly maxims prevail, and worldly greatness is in high esteem, the cross of Christ is a despised object. But so soon as this object acquires bulk and value in the believer's eye, by being taken for what it really is, the world is disgraced in its turn. It pleased God, in his infinite wisdom, for the salvation of sinners, to send his own Son into the world, in the human nature : and as it was in itself a deep step of humiliation, for the Son of God to be found in fashion as a man ; so, even in this assumed nature, he was attended with every circumstance of meanness and baseness. No retinue of illustrious ministers to serve him ; no splendid or elegant apartment to receive him ; but born of a mean woman, brought forth in a stable, and laid in a manger. Memorable and instructive history indeed ! which shall never be forgotten where the gospel is preached, to the end of time.

Remember, my beloved hearers, though divine sweetness and benignity adorned his carriage, though divine power and energy attended his ministrations ; yet poverty, slander, and contempt were his continual portion ; so that he could say, in the language of the prophet, " Re-  
"proach hath broken my heart : " and again, " The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air  
" have nests ; but the Son of man hath not  
" where to lay his head." Some of the ancients have represented the Saviour as of extraordinary beauty of countenance and comeliness of form, founded perhaps on a literal interpretation of

that expression in the Psalmist, Psal. xlv. 2. "Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever." Without being positive, I shall only say, that this does not correspond much with the other circumstances of his incarnation. And indeed some have supposed directly the contrary, founding their opinion upon the language of the prophet Isaiah, chap. lii. 14. "As many were astonished at thee; (his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men);" as also, chap. liii. 2. "For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness: and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." Whatever be in this, it is beyond all question, that the whole course of his life, and particularly the remarkable conclusion of it, was one continued tract of suffering and mortification.

Does not this, Christians, bring a reproach upon worldly greatness, and stain the pride of all human glory? Does it not show how little it is esteemed of God, and how little it is an evidence of his acceptance or approbation? What an influence must this have upon the believer to crucify the world? How must it endear to him a mean and despised, and reconcile him to a suffering state? With what propriety does the Christian, when he is baptized in the name of Christ, renounce the world, its pomps, and its pleasures? Does not a single reflection on the despised state

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of our Redeemer, in the days of his flesh, make you patient under contempt, and extinguish the desire of applause? Have you any remaining uneasiness at seeing others getting before you in the career of ambition, overtopping you with titles, eclipsing you with splendor? Do you not now see the propriety of the account given of the carriage of the apostles, when the world and they were at variance, Acts v. 41. "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." Whether do you now envy the conqueror or the sufferer, the prince or the martyr? Where-ever there is a real Christian raised to opulence by the will of God, or surrounded with ensigns of dignity and honour, will not this consideration fill him with deep humility and self-denial, and a holy jealousy, lest he should abuse his influence, or misapply his talents? The highest honour of real ability is usefulness, the brightest ornament of worldly greatness is self-abasement. All this shews, in the clearest manner, how the cross of Christ crucifies the world, by reversing every worldly maxim, and giving a new turn to the principles of honour and of shame. This leads me to observe,

4. In the *last* place, That the cross of Christ crucifies the world, by putting a quite different object of desire and affection in its room. Our limited powers can attend but to few things at once; and therefore, when any one acquires an interest in our affections, it must comparatively

weaken or destroy the interest of others, especially those of an opposite or independent kind. Make a new bed to a river, and turn its stream in that direction, and it will immediately dry up its former channel. Now, the cross of Christ presents to us an object of infinite importance, peace and reconciliation with God here, and everlasting happiness in his presence hereafter. Can any worldly object be laid in the balance with these? What esteem or attention can it merit in comparison with these?

Whether we consider the end or the means of salvation, the cross of Christ tends to supplant the world, by improving our views of and increasing our affection to both. It shews the infinite importance of eternity and its consequences: and what more proper to deliver us from an undue attachment to the things of time? Eternity, by its greatness, makes time itself to shrink into a point, and annihilates all those little temporary distinctions on which worldly affection entirely depends. What doth it signify to him that views eternity aright, whether he be for a few years in health or sickness, riches or poverty, on a throne or in a cottage? How immense, according to human measure, appears the difference between the possessions of some persons in the world and others! But of all the generations before us, who have now fallen asleep, how equal is the condition in this respect! The monarch and the slave, when laid in the dust, fill nearly the same space.

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If we consider the means of religion, the cross of Christ applied by a convinced sinner, opens to him such a prospect of the infinite unmerited love of God, and of this astonishing expression of it, the death of his Son, as at once captivates the heart, and, if I may speak so, occupies so much room there, as leaves but little for any other object. How soon did it open the heart of the publican Zaccheus, and expel the spirit of covetousness and extortion! Luke xix. 8. "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 any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." In how strong a manner does the apostle Paul express his comparative esteem of the cross of Christ! Phil. iii. 7. 8. "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ." This is the very same disposition with that which he expresses in the text; and it differs no otherwise from that of every Christian, than that it is probable he had a particular view to his calling as a minister and an apostle. Captivated with a sense of his Redeemer's love, filled with a view of the glory of his cross, and devoted to his service in the ministry of the gospel, he renounces all worldly prospects, and sets at defiance

defiance every thing that might distract his attention, or divide his care: "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world."

III. I proceed now, in the *last* place, to make some practical improvement of what hath been said. And as, upon this interesting subject, it is necessary that I should speak with all seriousness and fidelity, as well as at some length, so I must earnestly beseech you, as you regard your present peace, your comfort in the hour of death, and the everlasting happiness of your souls, to hear it with attention and application.

1. I must take the opportunity to reprove the sin, and shew the danger of those who are wedded to the world. I would willingly interrupt that comfort, and break that peace, which will end in perdition. For this purpose, and in order to make the reproof more distinct and effectual, I shall direct it separately to the three following characters.

(1) To those whose love of the world is so great, that they scruple not to use, occasionally at least, if not habitually, sinful means of getting or keeping possession of it. This indeed opens to us a very extensive field: it leads us to consider all the particular sins which an inordinate love of the world may produce, or increase. It is melancholy, my brethren, to think what contention and variance, nay what hatred and violence, even amongst the nearest relations,  
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the division of worldly property occasions. What envy and grudging, what slander and evil-speaking, between person and person, between family and family ! And even in the ordinary way of traffick, what art and dissimulation, what falsehood and equivocation, are to be found between man and man ! But what I have chiefly in view is, to speak a few words to those who, in order to promote their worldly ends, have been guilty of direct dishonesty, and known injustice. How many are there whose consciences, if they would be faithful, must tell them, that they are now in possession of the fruits of unlawful gain ! Oh ! the blindness of those deluded unhappy souls ! if an inordinate love of the world, however honestly acquired, is not only sinful, but destructive of your eternal interest ; what shall become of those who have trodden under foot the laws both of God and man, in order to obtain it ? If an excessive love of the most lawful enjoyments, father and mother, wife and children, is inconsistent with salvation ; what must become of those who have loved and followed the gain of unrighteousness ? what must become of those who, to clothe their backs, or feed their bellies, or gratify their pride, have not scrupled to be guilty of breach of trust, or breach of promise, of open oppression, or secret fraud ? If every poor worldling must stand trembling upon the brink of eternity, when he sees all his painted shadows ready to sink into everlasting darkness ; what horror must seize upon the dying sinner, who

who is just about to surrender all his dear possessions to another, while his conscience is loaded with the guilt of fraud or perjury? and this he cannot leave behind him. Oh! my dear brethren, tremble at the thoughts of dishonest gain; loathe it; return it; shake your hands clear of it. It will imbitter your enjoyments: it will be a moth in your substance, a fire in your consciences on earth, and a hell to your souls after the earth itself, and all that is therein, is burnt up.

(2) I would address this reproof to those who are apparently more decent and regular, whom a sense of honour, or a desire of the approbation of their fellow-creatures, preserves from grosser crimes, or whom perhaps natural conscience persuades to take up the outward and ordinary part of religion as a form. Many such persons are wedded to the world. Their thoughts are there, their delights are there, their hopes and expectations are only there. Bear with me, my brethren, in pressing this a little; and do not turn away, and refuse the charge. Worldliness is the reigning sin, and will be the eternal ruin of many persons of better rank, to whose conversation, a more liberal way of thinking, and a sense of decency, may give even an amiable appearance. I would beseech the attention of such persons to what shall now be said; not from any disrespect to their state and situation in civil life, God knoweth! but from fidelity to their souls. Consider, I pray you, the extreme danger

ger of worldliness of mind. It is itself a great and aggravated sin, and is the parent of many others. It is a sin, where it hath dominion, inconsistent with salvation. Hear the words of the Lord Jesus: "He that loveth father or mother, son or daughter, more than me, is not worthy of me." There are some sorts of sinners on whom you would look with contempt or abhorrence; but you may possibly deceive yourselves. The strict and regular, but covetous Pharisees, little thought that the publicans and sinners were nearer the kingdom of heaven than themselves. I do not say this to extenuate sin of any kind, but to guard you against the power of delusion and self-deceit. I know that none but the searcher of hearts can make a certain judgement of the degree of depravity in different characters; and therefore I do not so much urge the comparison for your condemnation, as caution you against relying upon it for your justification. The unalterable rule, taken both from the law and the gospel, is this: Which of the two has the supreme commanding interest in your affections, God or the world? As an eminent author expresses it, 'He is the most wicked man that hath in his heart the strongest interest that is opposite to God; and all that is not subordinate to him is opposite to him: I say again, the greater creature-interest, the more sinful the state. Though you be neither thieves, nor extortioners, nor adulterers, your sin may be as deep rooted, and the interest of the world as predominant, or more so, in you, than in some  
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' of them. Alas! Sirs, the abstaining from some  
 ' of these sins, and living like civil and orderly  
 ' persons, though it is so far commendable, is  
 ' not enough. If the world be not crucified to  
 ' you, and you to it, such abstinence will but  
 ' hide your sin and misery, and hinder your  
 ' shame and repentance, but not prevent your  
 ' eternal damnation. Your lands and your houses,  
 ' and hopeful posterity, and other provision you  
 ' have made for the flesh, may have more of  
 ' your hearts, than the world hath of the heart of  
 ' a poor wretch who never had so much to ido-  
 ' lize.' Upon the whole, my brethren, let me  
 only put you in mind, this exhortation is not  
 less necessary to you than the like cautions were  
 to the hearers of Christ in the days of his flesh,  
 whom he warns against the dangers of an af-  
 fluent state: Luke viii. 14. " And that which  
 " fell among thorns, are they, which when they  
 " have heard, go forth, and are choked with  
 " cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life,  
 " and bring no fruit to perfection." Matth. xix.  
 23. 24. " Then said Jesus unto his disciples,  
 " Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall  
 " hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.  
 " And again I say unto you, It is easier for a  
 " camel to go through the eye of a needle, than  
 " for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of  
 " God." It ought to give you great consolation,  
 that he adds,  $\gamma$  26. " With men this is impos-  
 " sible, but with God all things are possible."

(3) I would address this exhortation to the  
 children of God, in whom I know the world is  
 crucified

crucified upon the whole ; yet, alas ! it still retains such a degree of interest as is provoking to God, offensive to others, and hurtful to their own peace. In what glass can you see more clearly the weakness of faith, and every other gracious disposition, than in their little influence in restraining the motions of carnal affection ? Had the great objects of faith and hope that place in our hearts, and that entire dominion in our affections, which they ought to have ; would there be so much conformity to worldly maxims and practices, as is daily to be seen ? would there be so much emulation in all the outward expressions of pride and gaiety, in dress, furniture, and equipage ? would there be so much desire of the increase of wealth and greatness ? would there be so much envy of those who are successful, and go beyond us ? Shall I tell you how a Christian should look upon those who prosper remarkably in their worldly affairs ? If they are truly pious, he should rejoice with them ; for here is so much wealth and influence put into such hands as will employ them in doing good. On the other hand, if they are wicked, he should sincerely pity them, as immersed in the most dangerous temptations. If we were thoroughly dead to the world, and the world to us, would the loss of wealth or reputation wound us so deeply as they generally do ? would the malice or slanders of others make so sensible an impression ? It should be pitied, as it is their sin ; but it may easily be despised, as it is our danger. Try this by the condition and conduct

of the opposite character. A wicked man is dead to God and spiritual things. What then does he value the loss of any thing of that nature? Tell him, that he hath lost such or such an opportunity of communion with God, in his worship in public, or in family; that he hath lost an opportunity of excellent instruction, in a sermon or discourse; with what manifest contempt will he receive the information, and smile at your weakness and credulity in shewing any attachment to such things! Were we crucified to the world as we ought, would there be so much impatience under the hand of God in poverty, sickness, the loss of relations, or calamities of any kind? The lopping off a limb or member that is dead, gives little or no uneasiness: it is the life that remains which occasions the pain of separation. If the world sat loose upon us, its removal would scarcely be felt; but we must needs suffer at the very heart when any thing is withdrawn that hath its hold there. Let me therefore beseech you, in this, to confess your sin, to be humbled for it, and to pray, that you may be daily more and more delivered from it.

2. I shall improve this subject for pointing out the use of affliction, and the ground of your consolation under it. This world at best is but a scene of sorrow; and we then reap most comfort from it when we are sensible that it is so. The very purpose of affliction is, to shew us the vanity and uncertainty of all created comforts, and deliver us from an excessive attachment to them.

them. It is much more difficult to crucify a smiling than a frowning world. It is not easy to hate it in its loveliest form, or, if I may use such an expression, to speak harshly to it when it is speaking kindly to us? But in the time of affliction, when we are obliged to confess its vanity, is it not reasonable to expect, that our affection for it will be abated? I have said, that this seems the natural effect of suffering; because it is the lesson evidently carried in it. And accordingly the prophet Isaiah says, ch. xxvi. 9. "For when thy judgements are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." I am sensible, however, that the reception which affliction meets with, and the effects which it produces, are very different in different persons. It makes the worldly man curse his idol in the rage of despair; and it makes the child of God abhor the idolatry, and dwell with complacency on his unchangeable portion.

Consider this, I beseech you, my brethren; for you are all liable to the stroke of affliction, young and old, rich and poor, holy and unholy. It is indeed lamentable to see the fretful impatience of those to whom the world is blasted from without, but the love of the world, in all its strength, still subsisting within. They have no source of consolation in themselves; and nothing comfortable can be spoken to them by others in a manner consistent with truth and duty. To deal faithfully with them, we must do our utmost to add the bitterness of repent-

ance to their other sufferings; and this the cruel kindness of surrounding relations will seldom permit to be done. In the case of dying persons, in particular, with what concern have I heard friends and physicians telling the grossest falsehoods, in order to keep off, for a few moments, the apprehension of what they knew must immediately and certainly take place, and be the more terrible for the surprise!

On the other hand, it is comfortable to reflect, that the sanctifying influence of afflictions is no less the language of experience than of scripture. Many have born their testimony, and set their seal to it. Some have been so effectually mortified to pride and vanity, by the injuries or the slanders of others, that they have even felt consolation in the reproach itself. But in a particular manner, I have been often pleased with young persons to whom the world, and all their expectations from it, have been crucified by early affliction, expressing themselves, not merely with submission, but with serenity and thankfulness. Bear with me in mentioning a real instance, known to myself, of a young man, who had been long confined with a diseased member, and had a near and certain prospect of his dissolution. When, at the desire of some person present, his loathsome fore was uncovered, he expressed himself, to the best of my remembrance, in these very words: ‘ There it is; and a precious treasure it has been to me! It saved me from the folly and vanity of youth;

‘ youth ; it made me cleave to God as my only  
 ‘ portion, and eternal glory, as my only hope ;  
 ‘ and I think it has now brought me very near  
 ‘ to my Father’s house.’ Now, what a spring of  
 consolation is here ! Our duty, our business,  
 our interest is, to crucify the world, and to be  
 crucified to it. May we not, then, with the  
 utmost gratitude, as well as patience, receive the  
 appointments of that God who has promised,  
 not only to deliver us from all our sufferings in  
 due time, not only to make up and recompense  
 our losses with something better, of a different  
 kind, but has assured us, that these very suffer-  
 ings and losses, as their immediate effect, shall  
 crucify sin, and further our meetness for his own  
 presence ?

3. Let me improve this subject by earnestly  
 exhorting you to endeavour to acquire more and  
 more of the temper and state of mind expressed  
 by the holy apostle, in the text, “ By whom  
 “ the world is crucified to me, and I unto the  
 “ world.” Be persuaded, my beloved hearers,  
 to look upon all created things with the eye of  
 faith. Remember their relation to God. He is  
 their maker and yours ; and they must not be  
 loved or served but in subordination to his glory.  
 Do not place your chief happiness in them ; do  
 not esteem them too highly ; do not love them  
 immoderately ; do not persecute them too vio-  
 lently. Place your chief happiness in the fa-  
 vour of God, in communion with him on earth,  
 and the well-grounded hope of the perpetual en-  
 joyment of him in heaven ; and let your regard

to earthly things be no other, nor greater, than is suited to this end. That I may press this resolution upon you, allow me to propose the three following considerations.

(1) Consider the unsatisfying nature of all earthly enjoyments. They do not at all carry in them that sweetness and excellence which worldly men suppose. Sin has drawn a mist of delusion over the minds of men. The inflamed and disordered appetites of our corrupted nature always promise themselves, in worldly possessions, a satisfaction infinitely greater than they are able to afford. We have this from the confession of many who have made the experiment with every possible advantage. The book of Ecclesiastes is an admirable and animated description of the vanity of human enjoyments. Solomon seems to have been raised up in providence, for this among other ends, that he might leave behind him an account of the vanity of earthly greatness. And this is the title that he hath left written upon all that the world can give: Eccles. i. 2. "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Power and wealth, dignity and fame, variety of pleasures, nay knowledge itself, as a source of present comfort, he affirms the vanity of them all: Eccles. ii. 11. "Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." And towards the close of the same book, ch. xii. 12. he says,  
 "And

“ And further, by these, my son, be admonished : of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.”

Have there not been innumerable examples of the same testimony in every age and country ? And what says your own experience ? or your observation of others ? Do men indeed rise in comfort and satisfaction, in proportion as they rise in station or opulence ? On the contrary, do they not rather commonly increase in anxiety and discontent ? Do you indeed think, that those who appear in gilded equipages have always on that account the most joyful hearts ? Alas ! there cannot be a greater mistake. Could you see what passes within, there would appear ungoverned passions, ungratified desires, and disappointed hopes ; and could you enter their houses, you would find weariness and impatience, family-distress, family-disorders, and family-quarrels. It has been an old, and it is a most just observation, particularly upon avarice, That the desire still grows with the possession. It is the same with every other sinful passion. Indulgence does not gratify so much as it inflames them. Let a man climb ever so high on the ladder of ambition, he sees still others before him ; and emulation and envy are as strong, or stronger, between those who stand on the adjoining steps at the top as at the bottom. There is one particular remark, that serves at once to show the vanity of the world, and the sinfulness of human nature : The greater variety of worldly comforts any person possesses, he is not the  
more,

more, but the less content, under the want of any one. The more and the longer any person hath been accustomed to obsequiousness or flattery, he is the more impatient of the least contradiction. The more abundant and universal respect that has been paid to any person, he is the more deeply wounded by neglect or contempt; as Haman, notwithstanding all his greatness, was quite unsatisfied while there remained one poor man in the king's gate who would not do him reverence. Take but one example more. If a man hath great and extensive possessions, and is without children, he is but the more distressed to think, that so noble an estate and family should be without an heir, and will often envy the families of the poor, as if it were hard measure, that he who had so many temporal mercies should not have all. Upon the whole, you may see, that there is a double vanity in the present state. Created comforts are unsatisfying on the one hand, and human desires are insatiable on the other.

(2) Consider the uncertainty of all earthly enjoyments. No circumstance whatever should more abate our attachment to the world than its instability. What happiness can we receive from, or what value should we put upon those possessions, which may be taken from us the next moment? The speedy, unexpected, and melancholy change, which often takes place from health to sickness, from wealth to poverty, from honour to contempt, I leave every hearer to meditate upon, from his own knowledge and observation

ervation of human life; only I cannot help mentioning to you the strong language of the holy scriptures, Prov. xxiii. 5. "Wilt thou set  
" thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches  
" certainly make themselves wings, they fly a-  
" way as an eagle towards heaven." But the  
circumstance upon this subject to which I would  
particularly and chiefly point your attention, is,  
that our possessions and enjoyments of every  
kind are under the immediate and constant di-  
rection of Divine Providence. Believe it, Chri-  
stians, and remember it, the providence of God  
reaches to every event that befalls you, howe-  
ver inconsiderable it may seem. It is God that  
" giveth you power to get wealth."—It is he by  
whom you are " diminished and brought low."  
—It is he that " raiseth up one, and putteth  
" down another."—It is he that makes the  
" voice of joy and health" to be heard in your  
dwellings, or that " chastises you with pain, and  
" the multitude of your bones with strong pain."  
If this is the case, what reason have you to be  
afraid of giving that love and service to any  
worldly enjoyment that is due to God? Will  
you " provoke him to jealousy? are you strong-  
" er than he?" If you set your affections im-  
moderately on any temporal possession, he can  
immediately remove it, or turn it into gall and  
wormwood.

Instead of enumerating the several kinds of  
present enjoyments, I shall only mention one,  
the desire of which is commonly very strong,  
*viz.* children or posterity. Now, how easily  
can

can a holy and righteous God take away the desire of your eyes with a stroke? Nay, in how many instances is the life of children a heavier trial than their death itself? For I must say upon this subject, as I have said often in your hearing, that to one that truly fears God, I do not know any temporal calamity equal to that of having profane or profligate children.

But perhaps some attentive hearer will hesitate a little, and say, 'I have not observed this to hold true in experience. Even pious persons seem generally to bear the irregularities of their children, though some of them very scandalous, much better than their deaths. Neither is it unfrequent to see them excusing or palliating the worst practices, from the partiality of natural affection.' Perhaps then I must retract, or alter the assertion, and say, it is either the heaviest trial, or the most dangerous temptation. But, after all, who can tell what floods of tears are shed in secret on this subject? Parents may be often obliged to conceal their sorrow from the world, because they know it would be treated with derision. I the rather incline to this supposition in many cases; for where indifference or partiality to the sins of children is so plain that it cannot be denied, I should greatly suspect the piety of such persons, let the appearance or profession be as flaming as it will.

All your mercies, then, are in the hand of God, who can give or withhold, continue or withdraw them at his pleasure. But there is something

something more still : your life itself is in his hand. Though outward things were ever so stable in themselves, they are altogether precarious as to us. We know not what a day or a night may bring forth, or at what time our souls shall be required at our hands. This surely ought, and if it be seriously attended to certainly will weaken our attachment to the things of a present world ; according to the inference drawn from it by the apostle Paul, 1 Cor. vii. 29. 30. 31. “ But this I say, brethren, the time is short. “ It remaineth, that both they that have wives, “ be as though they had none ; and they that “ weep, as though they wept not ; and they that “ rejoice, as though they rejoiced not ; and “ they that buy, as though they possessed not ; “ and they that use this world, as not abusing it : “ for the fashion of this world passeth away.”

(3) Consider that there is really much more real satisfaction to be found in a crucified than in an idolized world. This to many will appear a contradiction ; but it is a great and certain truth. It is impossible for any person to pass ever so little the limits of duty in the use of the creatures, but it is to his own prejudice. This I do not mean only of its after consequences, but even in point of present comfort. There is a more genuine sweetness in those things that are used with moderation and self-denial, as the gospel requires, than in any sinful gratification. But if this holds even with regard to the simple enjoyment, it holds much more strongly when we consider the benefit of a sanctified world. He  
that,

that, from a humble sense of the divine mercies, can rise to a grateful acknowledgement of the giver of all good; he who is thereby inspired with a holy zeal to serve him in his generation, and values no temporal blessing, but so far as it may be useful in promoting the glory of God, and the good of others, has a delight from them, infinitely superior to what arises from the licence of criminal indulgence. He enjoys his mercies without sting, he possesses them without the fear of losing them; nay, he can even rejoice in the surrender itself, as a part of the will of God. Is this fabulous, my brethren, or extravagant? I hope not. I believe and trust it is matter of real experience to the children of God. Did the Psalmist David say, it was good for him that he was afflicted? did the apostles of Christ take joyfully the spoiling of their goods? did they rejoice that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name? I hope that many others will rejoice, that they have been enabled to use their substance in feeding the hungry and clothing the naked, and other useful purposes. I am persuaded, that a pious and liberal mind tastes a more exquisite delight in relieving a poor family, than in the most costly and sumptuous entertainment; and that he who values his reputation only for his usefulness, will give thanks to God for the esteem in which he may be held; and when reproached for doing his duty, will have a pleasure in submitting to it without complaint, greater than the proud and selfish can possibly

possibly receive from the daily incense of flattery and praise.

4. In the *last* place, As this subject has the most intimate connection with the power of religion, I shall conclude with offering to serious persons a few particular directions for their daily practice. (1) Remember that your great care ought to be the one thing needful. Salvation is your great work, heaven is your home, the world is but your passage to it. If you can keep this constantly upon your minds, you will immediately perceive the danger of the world, as a temptation to sin. You will not be able to forget, because you will daily feel, what influence it hath in helping or hindering you in your journey heavenward. A traveller who hath his thoughts still fixed on the place of his destination, and is anxious to get forward, will sensibly feel every incumbrance from the weather, or the way, by which his progress is retarded. It is by misrepresentation that the world leads us astray; true and just apprehensions of our own state, would keep our affections in their just measure with regard to it.

(2) Be particularly upon your guard against the un sanctified use of lawful comforts. A person who hath any principle of conscience, would be filled with horror at the thoughts of gross sin, such as uncleanness, injustice, or sensuality; yet such may be in great danger of placing their affections upon the world, and resting on it as their portion. Their houses and lands, their children, their name and reputation,

may inroach upon them, and usurp dominion in their hearts. Be careful, therefore, habitually to improve these to the glory of God; learn to give him thanks for them, as the blessings of his providence, and to serve him by them, as they are talents or opportunities of usefulness, for which you must render an account in the day of judgement.

(3) Be attentive to the course of providence, and improve the characters and conduct of others to your own profit. If you see one man grow proud and self-sufficient as he grows rich, if you see him forgetful of God while he continues in prosperity, tyrannical to others because they are in his power, then fear lest you also be tempted. If you see wealth suddenly poured in upon any persons make them anxious, quarrelsome, and impatient, then moderate your desires of prosperity, and "be content with such things as you have." It is very common to enumerate and censure the faults of others, that we may nourish our own pride by the comparison; but it is infinitely more beneficial, to improve the weakness of others for our own humiliation. What is the ordinary style in conversation? Were I such a person, had I his estate and possessions, I should not grudge to be more liberal to the poor; I would do something for the public; I would do every thing for my friends. Truly you do not know what you would do. Were you raised to the same situation, perhaps you would be ten times more proud and covetous than the man you blame. And as you would

would observe the sins of others, so observe the ways of God towards them. If an oppressor is at last overtaken in his wickedness, if he is held as a wild bull in a net, and, instead of humility, it produceth nothing but the rage of impatience and despair; adore the righteous judgement of God, and be sensible that neither mercies nor trials will change the heart, unless they are accompanied with the power of divine grace. If it pleaseth God to bring down any from riches to poverty, or from honour to disgrace, remember that he visits his people in mercy for their correction, and his enemies in vengeance for their punishment; so that, whether you are the one or the other, you have no charter of security from the same calamities.

(4) Think much of mortality, and the innumerable sufferings which are every where to be seen among our fellow-creatures. The wise man tells us, Eccles. vii. 2. 3. "It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to his heart. Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better." There are some who, from mere tenderness of heart, and a strong attachment to sensual delight, are not able to look upon scenes of misery and distress. They fly from them, therefore, and deceive themselves into a dream of security by intoxicating pleasures. But, my brethren, it is infinitely better to fortify yourselves against the fear of death, by faith in him who is the resur-

rection and the life; and then the frequent observation of others in affliction, will have the noblest and most salutary influence in mortifying worldly affections. You may also sometimes see the triumph of faith in the joyful departure of believers, which is one of the most edifying and comfortable sights that any Christian can behold.

(5) In the *last* place, I would recall to your minds, and earnestly recommend to your meditation, what made a principal branch of the doctrinal part of this subject, "the cross of Christ." By this the believer will indeed crucify the world, so to speak; but the cross of Christ pierces it to the heart. Shall we murmur at the cross, when our Redeemer bore it? Are not the thoughts of what he suffered, and what we deserved, sufficient to eradicate from our minds every the least inclination to what is provoking to him? Are not the thoughts of what he purchased, sufficient to destroy in our hearts the least disposition to place our happiness here? The thoughts of the cross of Christ are strengthening as well as instructive. We are drawn as it were by the power of sympathy, emboldened by his example, and animated by his conquest. Is not the Christian, when he is in full contemplation of this great object, saying, 'O most merciful Saviour, shall I any more idolize that world which crucified thee? shall I be afraid of their scorn who insulted thee? shall I refuse any  
' part

‘ part of his will, who, by the cross, has glorified thee?’

Let us conclude by attempting to say, in faith, what God grant every one of us may be able to say in the awful hour of the last conflict: “ O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory! The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

## S E R M O N XI.

Fervency and importunity in prayer.

GENESIS xxxii. 26.

*And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou blest me.*

**M**Y brethren, real communion with God is a blessing of such inestimable value, that it cannot be sought with too great earnestness, or maintained with too much care. If it is no fable, that God vouchsafes to his people, on some occasions, a sense of his gracious presence, and, as it were, visits them in love; with what fervour should they desire, with what diligence should they improve, so great a mercy! In a particular manner, when a good man hath in view, either an important and difficult duty, or a dangerous trial, it is his interest to implore, with the greatest importunity, the presence and countenance of God, which only can effectually direct him in the one, and support him in the other. This, my brethren, ought to be our concern at present, as we have in view a very solemn approach to God, *viz.* laying hold of one of the seals of his covenant: what trials may be before us, or near us, it is impossible to know.

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The words I have read relate to a remarkable passage of the patriarch Jacob's life. He was now returning from Padan-aram with a numerous family, and great substance, and had received information that his brother Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred men. We are told, *ψ* 7. of the chapter, that he was "greatly afraid and distressed," being, in all probability, quite uncertain whether his brother was coming with a friendly or a hostile intention; or rather, having great reason to suspect the latter to be the case. He rose up, we are told, long before day, and sent his wives, his children, and cattle, over the brook Jabbock: and as it follows, in the 24th verse, "Jacob was left alone: and there wrestled a man with him, until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh: and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh: and he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."

Some of the fathers, and also some of the Jewish writers, suppose that all this was done in prophetic vision, to represent to him the difficulties that were yet before him, which, by faith and patience, he was to overcome. But it is more reasonable to think, that this was in truth the appearance of an angel to him; and indeed most probably of the angel of the covenant; because, from the passage itself, it appears that he had "prevailed with God." The same thing

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we are assured of by the prophet Hosea, chap. xii. 3. 4. "He took his brother by the heel in  
"the womb, and by his strength he had power  
"with God: yea, he had power over the angel,  
"and prevailed: he wept and made supplication  
"unto him: he found him in Beth-el, and there  
"he spake with us." From this passage also we learn, that it was the same who met with him at Beth-el. Some think, with a good deal of probability, that this attack was made upon him by way of punishment for the weakness of his faith; that though he had received the promise, he should yet be under so great a terror at the approach of his brother. In this indeed he was an example of what happens to believers in every age. Past mercies are forgotten at the approach of future trials; therefore the same God who visited at Beth-el, and promised to be with him, now meets him in displeasure, and threatens to destroy him: but by "weeping and supplication" he not only obtained his preservation, but a further blessing. It is also the opinion of many, that the wrestling or conflict was literal and real for some time, and that Jacob perhaps took it to be one of Esau's attendants who had come to surprise him in the night; but that at last he perceived his mistake, when the angel, by a slight touch of his thigh, shewed him, that, if he had pleased, he might easily have destroyed him. Then, as he had contended with his supposed adversary, he now continues the struggle, by insisting upon a blessing; which he obtains, in such terms as carry in them a commendation  
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both of his constancy and importunity:  $\psi$  28. "And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God, and with men, and hast prevailed." The last part of this verse is supposed indeed to be wrong translated; and that it should be, "as a prince thou hast had power with God, and therefore much more shalt thou prevail over men;" which was a promise not only of present security, but of future prosperity and conquest.

But though this remarkable event had a particular and immediate relation to Jacob, there is no doubt, that the Spirit of God, in putting it on record, had a purpose of further and more extensive usefulness. It is plainly an example of importunity, and, as it were, holy violence in prayer. So uniform and general has this sense of the passage been, that fervency and importunity in prayer has been generally called *wrestling with God*. This is a subject which well deserves our most serious attention; the rather that I am sorry to say, the practice has fallen into much disrepute; and I am afraid the expression itself is in some danger of being treated with derision. In discoursing further on this subject, I shall,

1. Explain and illustrate a little the nature and subject of this holy wrestling and importunity in prayer.

2. The duty and reasonableness of it.

3. The great benefit arising from it. And,

4. In the *last* place, I shall make some improvement:

provement of the subject, for your instruction and direction.

I. **FIRST**, then, I am to explain and illustrate a little the nature and subject of this holy wrestling and importunity in prayer. Wrestling necessarily supposes some resistance or opposition to be overcome. Prayer indeed, of itself, and in the simplest cases, may be said to carry this idea in it; because he that prays stands in need of something which he can only obtain by prevailing with, or bending the will of another to bestow: Matth. vii. 7. "Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you." But as there are many gracious assurances of God's readiness to hear our prayers, the subject we are now upon leads us particularly to the consideration of the obstructions or difficulties that lie in the way, either of our praying as we ought, or praying with success. These two things must be joined together, because they are in their nature inseparably connected: James iv. 3. "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." James i. 5. 6. 7. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering: for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind, and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." Now, for the illustration of this duty and

and practice, in a way suited to the condition and daily experience of the children of God, I shall mention some of the chief obstructions or difficulties we have to wrestle with in our access to God, and which must be overcome by the importunity and holy violence of prayer.

1. The first of these I shall mention is a sense of guilt overwhelming the soul. This, which is the strongest of all arguments for the necessity of prayer, is often found in experience to hinder the performance. When any person is arrested of conscience, when his multiplied transgressions appear before him in all their variety, and in all their aggravations, it is apt to fill him with a jealousy of God, a dread of entering into his presence, and in some sort a despair of obtaining his mercy. This hath been often seen in great profligates, overtaken by a visitation of Providence, and stung by the reproaches of conscience. When they have been urged to apply for divine mercy, they have answered, 'I cannot pray;' or, 'How can I pray who have been so monstrous a sinner?' Nay, it may be frequently observed, that men who live in security, without any just conviction of their sinful state, will maintain some sort of form of religion, will even go through their form with some pleasure, and place some dependence upon it. But when conscience begins to rise a little upon them, and they see the enormities they are guilty of, though it cannot make them forsake their sins, it makes them speedily forsake all their

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their religion. It is taken notice of by Dr Dodridge, in his life of Col. Gardiner, that when he was indulging himself in all manner of wickedness, he began, from a natural sense of duty, to pay some acknowledgements to God; but as he was not resolved to forsake his sins, the daring profanity of it struck him with horror. He therefore determined, says the author, 'to make no more attempts of this sort; and was perhaps one of the first that deliberately laid aside prayer from some sense of God's omniscience, and some natural principle of honour and conscience.' In this last reflection, the worthy author is undoubtedly mistaken; for he was not the first, nor will he be the last, who has been driven from prayer by a sense of sin, and a horror of his maker's presence.

I have described this difficulty in its most hideous form, if I may speak so, as it stands in the way of wicked men. But there is often too much of it to be found even in good men themselves. A deep sense of sin often fills them with a slavish fear, mars their confidence before God, and tempts them to keep at a distance from him. Ps. xl. 12. "For innumerable evils have compassed me about, mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of mine head, therefore my heart faileth me." He that wrestles in prayer, refuses to yield to this discouragement. He still ventures, though at a distance, to look to his offended God. Though  
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he is filled with tribulation and fear, he will not give up his plea. He says with the Psalmist, Pf. lxxvii. 7. 8. 9. "Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? "Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his "promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut "up his tender mercies? Selah." He endeavours to take such views of the glory and extent of divine mercy as will give him some ground of hope. He maketh supplication with strong crying and tears. Against hope he believeth in hope; or resolves, that if he perish, he shall perish at the footstool of mercy. And nothing is so proper to bring him to this resolution, nay, nothing is sufficient for that purpose, but the freeness of salvation, as it is offered in the gospel of Christ, where all confidence is derived, not from the goodness of the sinner, but from the power and grace of the Saviour.

2. Another difficulty to be overcome in prayer is, a frowning Providence discouraging the mind. When this is added to the former, as they commonly go together, it augments the difficulty, and adds to the distress. When great calamities are brought upon the believer, when one stroke follows upon the back of another, when sin challenges, and Providence punishes him, he is then in danger of giving up his condition as desperate, and without remedy. See the reflections of Job in this strain, notwithstanding he is commended to us as a pattern of

patience, Job xix. 8. 9. 10. "He hath fenced up  
 " my way that I cannot pass, and he hath set  
 " darkness in my paths. He hath stript me of  
 " my glory, and taken the crown from my head.  
 " He hath destroyed me on every side, and I am  
 " gone: and mine hope hath he removed like a  
 " tree."

When the rod of correction falls heavy, the Christian finds it very difficult to believe that it comes from the love of a father, and is rather apt to tremble under it as the severity of a judge. So did Jacob himself, after all his experience, in the close of life, Gen. xlii. 36. "And  
 " Jacob their father said unto them, Me have  
 " ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not,  
 " and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin  
 " away: all these things are against me." Sometimes the course of Providence in general has the same effect. The prosperity and insolence of sinners, the oppressed state of the children of God, the disappointed endeavours of his servants, make them often call in question his presence, his faithfulness, or his power. This is the subject of the whole 73d psalm, and summed up in the 10th and 11th verses: "Therefore  
 " his people return hither: and waters of a full  
 " cup are wrung out to them. And they say,  
 " How doth God know? and is there knowledge  
 " in the Most High?"

He that wrestles in prayer, therefore, considers the depth of Divine Providence with reverence. He dwells upon the wisdom and power of God, who alone can bring light out of darkness, and  
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order out of confusion. He taketh hold of his covenant, and the sure and everlasting mercy that is contained in it, and humbly and earnestly prays for universal and absolute resignation to the divine will. This, my brethren, is one of the greatest and most important objects of prayer, and what believers should wrestle for with the greatest fervour and importunity. They should cry mightily to God, and expostulate earnestly with their own hearts, as the Psalmist, Ps. xlii. 9. 10. 11. "I will say unto God my rock, Why "hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning "because of the oppression of the enemy? As "with a sword in my bones, mine enemies re- "proach me: while they say daily unto me, "Where is thy God? Why art thou cast down, "O my soul? and why art thou disquieted with- "in me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise "him, who is the health of my countenance, "and my God." I am not here to go through all the grounds of encouragement on which the suffering and pleading believer may place his dependence, drawn from the perfections of an unchangeable God, from the power of a Saviour upon a throne, from the precise and express promises in scripture of support or deliverance, and the daily experience of the faithful. It is sufficient that I have pointed out to you the state and practice of a distressed and afflicted Christian wrestling with God.

3. Another difficulty often arises from unbelieving thoughts, and inward temptations distressing the spirit. Prayer takes its rise from

and is carried on by faith. Prayer indeed is little else than the immediate and lively exercise of faith: Heb. xi. 6. "For he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." On this account, dutiful and acceptable prayer is called the *prayer of faith*. Who would apply, or who can apply, to God, for any mercy, but from a persuasion, that he is present to hear, and that he is able and willing to bestow? Now, when this faith begins to fail, either from its natural weakness, from our sinful negligence, from the subtle insinuations, or the more violent assaults of the adversary of our salvation, it must be a great hindrance to the exercise of prayer.

Many are the difficulties of this kind which the Christian, from time to time, hath to struggle with. Sometimes he is made to doubt of the certainty, and sometimes of the meaning, of the promises. We see some distressed persons so embarrassed with scruples, or so misled by controversy, as to lose the relish and spiritual comfort of the word of God, while they are contending about it. Sometimes they are made to doubt their own title to apply the promises, which appear like a rich and sumptuous table, encompassed with a flaming sword, forbidding their approach. Thus they are led away from the consolation of Israel, and made to seek in vain for a foundation of comfort in themselves. How often do we see, that the very sense of sin, and fear of danger, the very misery and necessity

cessity which particularly discover the fitness and excellence of the truths of the everlasting gospel, are made use of to discourage us from embracing them!

Sometimes the truths themselves are perverted, or set in opposition one to another, and mutually destroy each other's influence. Thus, while the constant and over-ruling providence of God should be the great foundation both of our faith and prayer, it is sometimes set in opposition to both. The false reasoner will say to himself, Why should I pray for deliverance from this distress? why should I pray or hope for the possession of such a mercy? The whole order and course of events is fixed and unalterable. If it is appointed to happen, it shall happen, whether I speak or be silent; if it is otherwise determined, the prayers of the whole creation will not be able to obtain it. How unhappily do men thus reason themselves out of their own peace! not considering the unspeakable absurdity of making our weak and imperfect conceptions of the nature and government of God to stand in opposition to his own express command. The influence of second causes, moral as well as natural, is a matter of undeniable experience. If you acknowledge it in the one, should you deny it in the other? Is not intemperance the cause of disease? is not slothfulness the way to poverty? is not neglected tillage the cause of a barren field? and is not restraining prayer also the way to barrenness of spirit? Believe it, my brethren, fervent prayer is as sure and effec-

tual a mean of obtaining those mercies which may be lawfully prayed for, as plowing and sowing is of obtaining the fruits of the ground.

Again, sometimes by the cunning of Satan, the believer is driven to the brink of the precipice, and made to doubt of the very being of God, and the reality of all religion. It is easy to see, that this must wholly take away the necessity and use of prayer. But even when it is not so powerful as to prevent the practice, yet doth it, in a great measure, cool the fervour and destroy the comfort of prayer. He that wrestles with God has often these difficulties, in a greater or lesser degree, to struggle with. Some of them it is his duty to oppose by reason, and some of them directly and immediately to resist and banish as temptations; and I think an exercised Christian will usually make the matter of his complaint the subject of his prayer. This is indeed defeating the tempter with his own weapons: it is bringing sweetness out of the strong, and meat out of the eater, when the difficulties thrown in the way of our prayers serve to excite us to greater ardour, importunity, and frequency in that necessary and profitable exercise.

4. Another difficulty with which the believer hath to struggle, is the coldness and slothfulness of his own heart. This is as great a hindrance of prayer as any that hath been named; and I believe it is of all others the most common and prevalent. At the same time it affords a very mortifying view of our own character and  
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and state. Strange indeed! that when we consider the great and eternal God with whom we have to do, we should find so much difficulty in maintaining a serious and attentive frame of spirit! that when we lie under so great and unspeakable obligations to his mercy, our sense of gratitude should be so weak and languid! that when we have blessings to ask of so inestimable value, we should notwithstanding do it with so much indifference! And what is stranger still, are there not many who have tasted, in some degree, the sweetness and consolation of communion with God, and yet are ready to return to a state of coldness and negligenee!

I am persuaded I need not tell any serious person in this assembly the danger or frequency of the Christian's being seized with a slothfulness, coldness, or security of spirit. It is probable many are at this moment inwardly ashamed on being thus barely put in mind of it. How often is it the reproach and stain of all our worship, in public, in family, and in secret! how easily do we degenerate into a form! how hardly is the spirit and affection kept alive! How many are there over whom conscience has so much power, that they neither dare absent themselves from public ordinances, nor discontinue the form of secret duty; and yet they may continue long in a heartless, lifeless, and unprofitable attendance upon both! Times of deep conviction, of heavy affliction, or harassing temptation, are more distressing; but they are not so ensnaring, as this leprosy that creeps up-

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on us in a season of quiet and serenity. The other difficulties, if I may speak so, force us to wrestle with them, because they leave us no peace; but this tempts us to sit still under it, because it gives us no disturbance.

He that wrestles with God in prayer, then, must maintain a conflict with the slothfulness of his own spirit, and endeavour to preserve that vigour and fervency of affection so necessary to the right performance of the duty. You will say, perhaps, With what propriety is this called wrestling with God? it is rather wrestling with himself. But when we consider, that every gracious disposition must come down from above, from the Father of lights, and author of every good and perfect gift; and, in particular, that the spirit of prayer is one of his most precious and excellent gifts; the justness and propriety of this language will manifestly appear. The coldness of our hearts, and deadness of our affections in worship, ought, on the one hand, to be imputed to ourselves as the immediate and sinful cause, and, on the other, may be considered as a part of God's most holy providence, who withdraws his Spirit in righteous judgement. Thus the Psalmist very beautifully says, Ps. lxxv. 4. "Blessed is the man whom thou chusest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts." And thus the spirit of supplication is a remarkable gospel-promise: Zech. xii. 10. "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications, and

“and they shall look upon me whom they have  
“pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one  
“mourneth for his only son, and shall be in  
“bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness  
“for his first-born.”

My brethren, there is the greatest reason for every Christian, not only to wrestle against a slothful disposition as a sin, but to fear its influence as a judgement; for if among spiritual judgements it holds a chief place, when God giveth “the spirit of slumber; eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;” it ought to be treated in the same manner with all other obstructions, that is to say, encountered by vigorous resistance. Like all other enemies, it acquires courage by success; like all other sins, it is strengthened by indulgence. And yet, alas! how often is this very circumstance made use of as an excuse for the omission of prayer? When the Christian finds himself lifeless and indisposed to prayer, it makes him either neglect it altogether, or slur over the performance in a careless and trifling manner, saying to himself, ‘I am not now in a fit temper for it.’ Nay, sometimes he reasons himself even religiously out of his duty, saying, ‘I shall but dishonour God by such a heartless sacrifice; and therefore I had better delay it till I be in a frame that is fitter for it.’ But if the time and other circumstances call for the duty, our own indisposition of heart is, of all others, the most foolish and criminal excuse. How much better would it be to wrestle as Jacob in the  
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text, and insist upon the blessing ; which cannot be more sensibly illustrated with respect to this particular branch, than by mentioning to you a resolution which an eminent Christian entered into for his own practice : That he would not be baffled by a treacherous spirit ; for he would never give over the work of praise, till his affections were stirred, and he was brought to a sense of gratitude for divine goodness ; and that he would never give over enumerating and confessing his sins, till his heart was melted in contrition and penitential sorrow !

5. I may mention one other difficulty with which we have to struggle in prayer, *viz.* when it pleases God to postpone, for a season, his compliance with our requests. Though his ears are always open to the cry of his people, he sometimes carries in such a manner, as if they were fast closed against them. Though their petitions be offered up in faith, and on a subject agreeable to the will of God, they may not always be granted in the manner, in the measure, or in the season that they themselves desire, or even in their imperfect judgement may think most proper. Many examples might be given of this. A minister praying for the success of his labours, may be heard in mercy, though it do not happen so soon, and though he cannot see it so clearly, as it is natural for him to desire. He may have many seals of his ministry, although he meet with disappointment in some of those on whom he looked with the most favourable eye. A parent may pray for the

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the salvation of his children, and his desires may have gone up with acceptance before the throne, although the accomplishment be yet far distant, and they seem, for the time, to increase unto more ungodliness. An afflicted person may have actually obtained the sanctified improvement of his affliction, although he cannot yet perceive the ends of divine providence in it, the comfortable discovery of which may be a feast reserved for him at some future season; or, in general, a mercy may be granted with advantage and increase, though it be suspended for a time.

In this interval, however, the Christian's eyes may be ready to fail with looking long; he may be in danger of ceasing his application, or abating his fervour, through despair of success. Therefore we have many exhortations in scripture to perseverance and importunity in prayer. We are exhorted to pray without ceasing, and to continue instant in prayer. Our Saviour, Luke xviii. 1. spoke a parable on purpose to teach men, that they ought always to pray, and not to faint: Heb. x. 36. 37. "For ye have need of patience; that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." Habakkuk ii. 3. "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry." To which passage I shall only add Lamentations, chap. iii. 25. 26. "The Lord is good

“ good unto them that wait for him, to the soul  
 “ that seeketh him. It is good that a man  
 “ should both hope and quietly wait for the sal-  
 “ vation of the Lord.”

I shall conclude this head by observing, that all these obstructions are at the direction and disposal of Providence, for the trial of the faith and patience of believers; and therefore their perseverance under, and constancy in opposition to them, is, with great propriety, considered as an imitation of the patriarch Jacob in his wrestling with God.

BEFORE proceeding to the remaining part of this subject, suffer me to make a practical improvement of what hath been already said. And,

I. Let us hence learn the infinite grace and condescension of God, who not only admits his people to communion with him, but invites and encourages them to the most pressing importunity, and even, to speak so, to offer a holy violence to him. The reasons of this will be more fully opened in the next discourse. In the mean time, let us make it the subject of wonder and praise. Well may we say with Job, chap. vii. 17. 18. “ What is man, that thou shouldst magnify him? and that thou shouldst set thine heart upon him? and that thou shouldst visit him every morning, and try him every moment?” This is the dignity of human nature indeed, not from what he is in himself, but what he may be by union with God through Christ; for through him we have all access by  
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one Spirit unto the Father. And if nearness to God is so great a privilege, who would not covet it? who would not cultivate it? Surely all but those who, to their final condemnation, disbelieve and despise it.

2. Let us learn from what hath been said, to defend the exercises of piety, and particularly this honourable privilege of the saints, from the scorn and reproach of the enemies of vital religion. I am abundantly sensible, that there are some, and some amongst ourselves, who treat this subject with contempt and disdain, and look upon a believer's wrestling with God in prayer, his being sometimes in, and sometimes not in a frame for his service, as the raving and incoherent effusions of weakness and enthusiasm. This is not only an evidence of their being themselves strangers to true religion, but is indeed directly contrary to sound judgement and reason. I have laid down to you the meaning and subject of this wrestling and importunity in prayer; and is there anything more clearly founded upon truth, nature, and experience? Hear, ye unbelievers; might I not transfer every particular, and illustrate it in the intercourse of man with man? If you had a favour to ask of another, and were sensible that you had done him a great, recent, and unprovoked injury, would not this fill you with jealousy? would it not keep you at a distance? would it not make you, as the common saying is, afraid to look him in the face? If he had carried himself as your enemy, and seemed, in many instances, to set himself in

opposition to you; would not this give you even more than suspicion and uncertainty as to the issue of your application? If by the suggestion of his enemies, you were made to believe him resentful and implacable; would not this extinguish your hope, and break up all correspondence? If your own heart were naturally too proud to intreat, or too careless to give attendance, would not the suit be neglected? Or if you had presented your petition, and for a long tract of time no answer was returned; would you not give up all hopes of it as forgotten or rejected? Is not this an image of the state of the Christian in many instances? And therefore, if prayer is a part of natural religion, if it is a matter of duty or necessity at all, it must often have the above difficulties to overcome, and, on that account, be justly considered as a species of wrestling with God. And why should the Christian's being in or out of frame for his duty to God, be made the subject of derision? Is there not something similar to it as to every object of study or application? Are there not some seasons when you say, your mind lies to your book, your work, or even your play, and then it goes on sweetly and pleasantly? Are there not others, when it is against the grain, and then every trifle is a difficulty, and even the air is a burden. If you consider these things, you must be sensible, that all to whom eternity is the highest concern, and therefore religion their chief care, must be attentive to the state  
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of their hearts towards God. And if this is the case, every thing, whether inward or outward, that promotes or hinders their acquaintance with him, will appear to them of the utmost moment. The truth is, whoever take the liberty to despise and ridicule the concern of serious persons about communion with God, must excuse me for saying, because it is my deliberate judgement, either that they are enemies to religion in their hearts, or that they are wholly ignorant of the important subject.

3. As we would defend the duty above explained from the scoffs of infidels, let us also guard it from abuse, and distinguish it from any corruption that may pretend, or may be thought to resemble it. Particularly, let us beware of allowing in ourselves, or approving in others, any gross indecent familiarity, either of speech or carriage. You see, my brethren, that wrestling with God arises from a deep impression of the infinite and unspeakable importance of the blessings in prospect, and their absolute necessity to the petitioner. This will make him still insist, and urge his request; and, as it were, refuse to let go his hold. But it is also constantly attended with a sense of the holiness of God's nature, and the greatness of his power; which, when let home upon the wounded conscience, is often the principal cause of the distress. Is there not then the justest reason for earnestness and concern? But is it not also plain, that this must preserve the believer from impropriety; and that it cannot lead to any foolish or indecent familiarity,

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ally, which is often mistaken for it, and often reproached in its room?

What hath been said upon the subject, I hope, will point out to you the just middle between every vicious extreme. Such real concern, such fervour of spirit, will not indeed lead any to study in their prayers a nice, vain, or ornamented style. This is the language of a mind at ease. It is but of little value at any rate: but O how misplaced! O how unsuitable in prayer to God! This is best carried on by plain and ardent expressions of the very temper of the soul, when the fulness of the heart gives a ready utterance to the tongue. But neither will the views which the wrestling believer hath of the glory and majesty of God, of the strictness of his law, and the terror of his wrath, suffer him to give way to any trifling, slovenly, or ridiculous manner of addressing himself to the throne of grace. It must be observed indeed, that there will be a difference, according to the different circumstances, station, and capacity of the persons concerned. There may be many a serious Christian, who knows what it is to pour out his heart before God, and spread his sins and sorrows at his feet, who would not be fit for leading the devotion of a public or promiscuous assembly; yet he may be the person who, as a prince, hath power with God, and prevails. The prayers of such a wrestler, with all the blemishes that attend them, are probably far more effectual, than those of such over-nice persons, as despise the weakness of his understanding, or  
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make themselves merry with the homeliness of his style: nay, I must say further, that we sometimes meet with persons whose language in prayer is so unspeakably superior to their abilities or performances of other kinds, as to show that they have an unction from the Holy One; and that they are examples of the accomplishment of that promise, Psal. xxv. 14. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him: and he will shew them his covenant."

4. I must conclude the subject at this time with earnestly exhorting you all to the diligent exercise of this duty. And that it may be the more distinct and effectual, I shall briefly point out to you the following objects of prayer.

1. Be fervent in prayer for the improvement of the spiritual life in your own souls. Prayer is at once the security and the comfort of a Christian. Hate, fear, prevent as much as you lieth every thing that may obstruct your regularity and earnestness in this duty.

2. Be earnest in your supplication, and importunate in your pleading for the church of Christ, and the glory of his kingdom, especially in your native country. The character of real Christians, in this respect, is well described by the prophet: Is. lxii. 6. 7. "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." The languishing state of religion in this nation,

and the threatening aspect of Providence, should press us to this duty: and surely, in proportion as our belief of the truths of the gospel is real and prevalent, we must behold transgressions with grief, and be ready to intercede for a "time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."

3. Be earnest for a season of the power of God at this approaching communion. We serve an all-sufficient and unchangeable God, the same yesterday, to day, and for ever, who is able to pour down his Spirit in a large and plentiful measure, and make it a happy time for the espousal of many sinners to Christ, and for edifying his saints, that they may go on their way rejoicing, and eat their bread with gladness and singleness of heart. Let us plead his own promise, *I. xlv.*

3. 4. "For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses."

4. Pray for the ministers of the gospel. The apostles often ask this assistance of the faithful: *Col. iv. 3.* "Withal, praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bond." If you believe the efficacy of prayer, you must be sensible that your diligence in this respect will prepare ministers for you, and you for them. This is to point the eye of faith beyond the servants to the master of the feast; and

and you will probably both look for and receive your answer from himself.

5. In the *last* place, I would earnestly recommend to you the exercise of joint and social conference and prayer. There is great danger of extinguishing the heavenly flame, if while you are necessarily surrounded with a flood of ungodly men, you do not often associate with the excellent ones of the earth, and place your delight there: Malachi.iii. 16. "Then they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." There is a great advantage in society for every purpose. If we know the benefit of united bodies for business and trade, if we find the pleasure of joining together for mutual entertainment and social converse, must not as great a benefit result from a more sacred union? Serious persons, by associating together, direct each other by their counsels, embolden each other by their examples, and assist each other by their prayers. There is also a particular promise of efficacy to social prayer: Matth. xviii. 19. 20. "I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

Now, may the Lord himself visit you with his  
gracious

gracious presence, and make you to say with Jacob at Bethel, Gen. xxviii. 16. 17. "And he said, "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew "it not. And he was afraid, and said, How "dreadful is this place! this is none other but "the house of God, and this is the gate of hea- "ven."

S E R -

## S E R M O N XII.

Fervency and importunity in prayer.

GENESIS xxxii. 26.

*And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou  
bless me.*

Second sermon on the text.

II. **W**E proceed now to the *second* thing proposed in the distribution of the subject; which was, To show you the duty and reasonableness of wrestling and importunity in prayer. Here I am sensible, that a corrupt and impatient mind may be able to muster up objections against it. There is something wonderful and unsearchable in all the works of God, and in none more, as it is reasonable to suppose, than in the methods of his grace. In particular, it may appear surprising, that he should exercise his people with such conflicts and trials, that it should be necessary to overcome him, as it were, by importunity, before we can obtain those blessings which himself hath commanded us to ask, and which he hath promised to bestow. Why, will it be said, does a God of mercy, and of infinite fullness, to whom all our wants and  
weaknesses

weaknesses are perfectly known, wait for our prayers, before he will part with what is so much needed by us? Why doth he, who knoweth our frame, and remembers that we are dust, unnecessarily throw obstructions in our way, and wrap himself up in darkness, to discourage our approach?

But how does this surprize increase, when we consider how unequal we are for the conflict, if no strength but our own is opposed to the Almighty! nay, that our strength for resistance must come only from himself: so that he wounds, and he heals; he oppresses, and he sustains; he discourages, and he invites. It is by prayer that we must obtain every blessing from the Father of lights; and one of the greatest and most necessary of these blessings is the spirit of prayer itself. My brethren, when either unbelief or profanity moves any such difficulties as these, I think it my duty to call upon you, in the first place, to bow yourselves before the sovereignty of God. There is an unsearchable impenetrable depth in the divine wisdom, whether we look upon the works of nature, or of grace. As creator of the world, he could, no doubt, in a moment, with one word of his power, have raised the whole fabrick in perfection; yet it pleased him, in a gradual manner, to finish every part by the addition of another, for the space of six days. When he gave the first promise to Adam, or when he renewed it to the father of the faithful, he could, no doubt, have

have sent the Saviour into the world, to finish transgression, and make an end of sin; yet he saw it proper to give only distant intimations of this blessed period, and to defer the long-expected appearance till the fulness of time, while the nations were suffered to sit for many ages in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death. In the same manner, he often takes a great variety of steps with his people before they are made partakers of his promises.

But notwithstanding that something must still remain mysterious, and beyond the comprehension of a finite creature, in the management of God, who "giveth not account of any of his matters," we may see much propriety and beauty in this part of his procedure. And is it not our duty to attend to it? We may see the reasonableness, nay we may perceive the wisdom, of his requiring a holy fervency, wrestling, and importunity in prayer: for it serves to engrave upon our hearts, and even to work into our affections, some of the most important truths of religion, and such as will have the most powerful and extensive influence upon our temper and practice. This will plainly appear from the three following considerations.

1. Fervency of spirit, and importunity, in prayer, is suitable and necessary, because of the greatness and glory of that God with whom we hold communion, as well as it serves to strengthen and improve the sense of this upon our minds. The infinite majesty of God, and the unmeasurable

rable distance at which he is removed from all created weakness, is often spoken of in scripture with admiration of his condescension: Psal. viii 3. 4. "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Under a deep impression of the same great truth, Solomon says, 2 Chron. vi. 18. "But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!" Is not, then, some fervour of affection due to the greatness and glory of that God whom we worship? Our affections should always, in their strength and exertion, be in proportion to their object, its dignity and worth. Indifference and carelessness in an inferior towards a superior is always counted a mark of disdain. We naturally suppose, that those in great and high stations ought to be approached with reverence, and solicited in the humblest manner, by their inferiors, who hope to share in their bounty; and the more exalted the person, the more submissive the posture, and the more earnest the supplication. Much more ought this to take place between God and us. On this account it is, probably at least on this amongst others, that indifference and coldness in religion is represented as peculiarly the object of divine detestation: Rev. iii. 15. 16. "I know thy works, that thou art neither  
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“ther cold nor hot : I would thou wert cold or  
 “hot. So then because thou art lukewarm,  
 “and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out  
 “of my mouth.”

2. Our own great unworthiness, who are the objects of divine love, and admitted to this sacred intercourse, should powerfully excite us to fervency in pleading. This is precisely a counterpart to the former consideration, and greatly strengthens the conclusion. Even the highest of the spirits above, most eminent in knowledge and sanctity, who stand nearest to the throne of God, we are told, cover their faces with their wings, as lost in respect and wonder, when they look to him who dwells in inaccessible light. How much more “man, who is a worm, and the son  
 “of man, who is a worm, whose foundation is  
 “in the dust, who dwells in houses of clay,  
 “and is crushed before the moth !” Accordingly, in some of the examples we have of the most impudent pleading and wrestling in prayer, this is the very difficulty which seems to stand in the way, and requires the greatest efforts of holy boldness to overcome ; as in the account we have of Abraham’s intercession for devoted Sodom, Gen. xviii. 27. “And Abraham answered and said, Behold  
 “now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the  
 “Lord, which am but dust and ashes.” And again, in the 32d verse, “And he said, Oh let  
 “not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet  
 “but this once ; Peradventure ten shall be found  
 “there. And he said, I will not destroy it for  
 “tens sake.”

But, my brethren, I beseech you remember, it is not our frail nature, and limited powers only, that point out our unworthiness ; but our guilt and impurity, so opposite and so odious to the divine nature. This, I have shown you in the preceding discourse, is one of the greatest hindrances of our access to God in prayer. And may we not say, How suitable, how necessary is it, that, in order to keep us still deeply humble, God should sometimes cover himself with a cloud, and exercise the sinner with strong crying and tears, before he will vouchsafe the intimations of his love ? This reason will be felt, and that the most sensibly, by the best and most dutiful of his children, as their sanctification continues imperfect so long as they are here below. How should a sense of guilt and misery at once increase our self-abasement, and add to the earnestness of our desires ! There cannot be a juster description, both of our state and duty, where misery and weakness conspire in showing the necessity and difficulty of wrestling with God, than the apostle hath given us, Rom. viii. 26. “ Like-  
“ wise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities :  
“ for we know not what we should pray for as  
“ we ought : but the Spirit itself maketh inter-  
“ cession for us with groanings which cannot be  
“ uttered.”

3. The duty and reasonableness of wrestling and importunity in prayer, appears from the inestimable value of the mercies to be obtained. Should there not be a proportionable strength of desire to the worth of the blessings in prospect ?

Now,

Now, who can compute the value of the divine favour, and all its happy effects? and therefore who can compute the guilt of indifference, and the necessity of fervour in asking it? The blessings of salvation in general are in their nature and source unspeakable, and in their duration without end.— On the one hand, deliverance from everlasting misery, from the wrath of an almighty and incensed God. True it is, that those who are but yet in the way must be very unable to form just conceptions of this. But we may in general conclude, from the glory of creating power, which is in so many instances displayed before our eyes, how fearful a thing it must be to be the monuments of the vengeance of such a God. He who is mighty to make and save, is also mighty to destroy. This is particularly felt by the sinner, when, humbled by conviction, and in every inward conflict there is a repetition of the same distress, as it arises from the same cause.

On the other hand, what must be the value of everlasting happiness in the presence and the enjoyment of God! How blessed, beyond expression, must the believer be, when the fullness of the divine benignity, of which we have now access to taste only some smaller and more distant streams, shall be the portion of the soul! What supplications should we not make, when we are assured, that importunity may obtain so rich a treasure! And let me add, how valuable present fellowship and communion with God, which is the earnest and foretaste of complete

deliverance from the one, and the eternal unchangeable possession of the other ! Say now, my brethren, is it not just and reasonable, that these blessings should be desired with ardour, and sought with importunity ? What fervent language have we from the scripture-saints upon this subject ! Pf. xlii. 1. 2. " As the hart panteth  
 " after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul af-  
 " ter thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God,  
 " for the living God : when shall I come and  
 " appear before God ? " Pf. lxiii. 1. 2. " O  
 " God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee :  
 " my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for  
 " thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no wa-  
 " ter is : to see thy power and thy glory, so as  
 " I have seen thee in the sanctuary." Is it any wonder that there should be often trials and conflicts in the way to so honourable a relation, and so happy a state ? What is cheaply obtained, is commonly esteemed of little worth. Is it to be expected, then, that God should prostitute the blessings of his love to cold and disdainful petitions, to lukewarm and indifferent petitioners ? And are there not, alas ! too many who " ask and have not, because they ask a-  
 " mifs," who, by their feeble and heartless demands, do justify, and, if I may use such an expression, even solicit a refusal ?

III. We proceed to the *third* thing proposed in the method ; which was, To point out the great advantages which flow from wrestling with God. These, in consequence of what hath been  
 already

already said, may be considered as all centering in one point, *viz.* its power and efficacy in procuring the blessings. Nothing can be said stronger on the benefit of wrestling with God, than that we shall assuredly prevail. The success of Jacob's wrestling is recorded in the passage immediately following the text, *ψ* 27. 28. 29. "And he said unto him, What is thy name? "And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for "as a prince hast thou power with God and "with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob "asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy "name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou "dost ask after my name? and he blessed him "there." But that I may illustrate this a little in a practical manner, observe, that the efficacy of wrestling with God in prayer, appears from the three following considerations.

1. It prepares and disposes the people of God for receiving his mercies, and in some cases is itself the actual possession of them. Every part of the divine conduct towards his saints is full of wisdom, and full of grace. One reason why he who knows our wants, requires us to pray, is, that we may be prepared for a profitable supply. We may also rest assured, that he will not delay his interposition one moment beyond the fittest season. Now, that ardent prayer, wrestling, and importunity with God, is the best preparation for receiving his mercies, is plain, both in respect of worth and capacity. It may seem indeed improper to speak of any

fitness as to worth for receiving the divine mercies, which are all free and unmerited on our part, however dearly purchased on the part of our surety. But, my brethren, with due caution, we may also take in this consideration, the rather that it is in the exercise of prayer that this fitness is obtained; which plainly shews, that it cometh from God, that it is his own gift, and his own work. Is not that person the fitter for deliverance from distress of any kind, and for the communications of divine favour, who is wholly emptied of himself, truly and deeply humbled, brought prostrate before the Divine Majesty, convinced and satisfied of the vanity of all created enjoyments, and breathing after God, as his sole refuge and consolation, which he will not, and cannot forego?

May we not also say, that he is much more fit, than one, on the other hand, who flies from God with impatient complaints, or sullen disdain; or who, without asking help from above, when one earthly comfort fails him, cleaves the closer to another? The great, if not the only end of divine correction, is, to weaken the power of sin, to make us feel the vanity of the creature, and to break every attachment to the world that is inordinate and excessive. When this end is obtained, therefore, must not the rod be withdrawn? and will not this promise be certainly accomplished? that the Lord will “appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit  
“ of

“ of heaviness, that they might be called trees  
 “ of righteousness, the planting of the Lord,  
 “ that he might be glorified;” If. lxi. 3. If we  
 look into the scripture-qualifications for recei-  
 ving the communications of divine love, we shall  
 find the chief of them to be, the earnestness of  
 our own desires: If. lv. 1. “ Ho, every one  
 “ that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he  
 “ that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat,  
 “ yea, come, buy wine and milk, without mo-  
 “ ney, and without price.”

Further, wrestling and importunity in prayer  
 gives a capacity of relishing the mercies of God.  
 They are then, and not till then in the same  
 degree, truly mercies, earnestly desired, infinite-  
 ly prized. It is a common and beaten remark,  
 That the worth of any mercy is never known  
 till we are deprived of it. There is great ac-  
 cess to observe this in the Christian life, not only  
 in its beginning, but in every step of its pro-  
 gress. O how refreshing is the intimation of  
 pardon to a convinced sinner, who hath long  
 trembled through fear of wrath, or to the be-  
 liever, who hath long groaned under a spirit of  
 bondage! O how ravishing is a sense of divine  
 love to that child of God who hath long com-  
 plained of the hiding of his Father's face! When,  
 after he hath been lost on a sea of temptations,  
 one wave or billow following close upon the  
 back of another, he is at last received into a  
 peaceful haven! the *everlasting arms* are stretch-  
 ed round about him, the *faithfulness of God* is  
 his

his shield and buckler, and the strength of the *Almighty* his impregnable security? There is no such stayedness or composure of mind as after a variety of trials. The exercised Christian has tried and thrown away every broken reed, one after another; he hath found the vanity of every refuge of lies; and hath settled his hope on the immoveable foundation of the rock of ages, which shall never fail.

I added, in entering on this particular, that wrestling and importunity in prayer is in many cases itself the possession of the very mercies we desire. It is the exercise of almost every gracious disposition. To increase in sanctification, to have his graces strengthened, and his corruptions subdued, is the habitual and prevailing desire of every real believer. But how can this be more effectually obtained than by fervent prayer? How, and where, can any gracious disposition be either more improved and strengthened, or more clearly discerned, than when it is in exercise. Faith, love, penitential sorrow, trust, and resignation, are the very dispositions essential to a wrestling believer. Perhaps some will say, True indeed; but they are only attempting to shew themselves, often discovering their weakness, sometimes yielding to their opposites. Alas! says the Christian, my faith is often over-matched with unbelief, and my love contradicted by impatient complaints: what is my penitential sorrow but weeping over a hard heart? my trust and resignation is but a short-lived promise: in a little time my courage fails,  
and

and I am ready to tremble at the falling of a leaf. But, my dear brethren, is not the importunate wrestler maintaining the conflict, instead of yielding to the stream? and how infinitely preferable are his hours of deepest anguish to that slothful and unequal conduct to be observed in many secure and formal Christians! It is also certain, that many times deliverance comes unlooked for. As the Psalmist says, that whilst he was musing the fire burned; so it frequently happens, that a gracious God visits distressed souls, even when they least expect it, with the joy of his salvation, and causeth the bones which he hath broken to rejoice.

2. The efficacy of importunate prayer appears from the promises of success which are annexed to it in scripture. I must here begin by observing, that there are many commands in the word of God to pray, to pray without ceasing, to continue instant in prayer. Now, every command to pray, contains in it a promise of a gracious answer from the hearer of prayer. It necessarily implies it. The truth of God is a pledge and security for it. He would not deceive us with vain hopes, or put us upon a fruitless attempt: for he is not a man, that he should lie. But besides this general consideration, there are many express promises particularly to the earnestness and importunity of the desire: Prov. ii. 3. 4. 5. "Yea, if thou criest  
"after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for  
"understanding: if thou seekest her as silver,  
"and searchest for her, as for hid treasures:  
"then

“ then shalt thou understand the fear of the  
 “ Lord, and find the knowledge of God.” See  
 also the parable of the importunate widow, and  
 the unjust judge, Luke xviii. 1. which concludes  
 thus, ver. 7. “ And shall not God avenge his  
 “ own elect, which cry day and night unto him,  
 “ though he bear long with them?”

Let me beg your attention to another passage  
 recorded in the 17th chapter of Matthew, where  
 there was brought to our Saviour a possessed per-  
 son, whom his disciples could not cure : ver.  
 19. 20. 21. “ Then came the disciples to Jesus  
 “ apart, and said, Why could not we cast him  
 “ out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of  
 “ your unbelief : for verily I say unto you, If  
 “ ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye  
 “ shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence  
 “ to yonder place, and it shall remove ; and  
 “ nothing shall be impossible unto you. How-  
 “ beit this kind goeth not out, but by prayer  
 “ and fasting.” This passage is somewhat re-  
 markable, and entirely to our present purpose.  
 It shews, that in the œconomy of divine grace,  
 there are some mercies that may be obtained by  
 less, and some that require more earnest and fer-  
 vent prayer. This species of devils, it seems,  
 would not yield to the same influence that o-  
 thers did. See only further James v. 16. “ Con-  
 “ fess your faults one to another, and pray one  
 “ for another, that ye may be healed : The ef-  
 “ fectual fervent prayer of a righteous man a-  
 “ vaileth much.”

3. In the *last* place, The same thing appears  
 from

from the daily experience of the people of God, and many memorable examples of the efficacy of prayer. I might cite a great number of these to you from the holy scriptures, which are not only a sacred repository of divine truth, but a history of divine providence. You may take the few following instances. Abraham's intercessory prayer for Sodom, in which that ancient patriarch, honoured with the glorious title of the *friend of God*, was allowed to plead with him, to repeat and urge his request, as well as to strengthen it with arguments. It is true, it saved not the whole city from destruction; yet was it heard in every part of it, according to its tenor. Nay, even though the ten righteous, which was his lowest supposition, were not found in it; yet the few righteous that were there, were not involved in the general calamity, but suffered to escape. Take also the example of Elias, as cited by the apostle James, chap. v. 17. 18. "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." See the case of Daniel, recorded in the 2d chapter of that book, particularly the 17th, 18th, 19th verses of that chapter, where you will learn, that, by the united prayer of Daniel and his companions, the secret of the king's dream was communicated to them in a revelation

tion from heaven. I only add the instance recorded Matth. xv. 21. and downwards, where the woman of Canaan so importunately presses her request, and at last receives this answer: ver. 28. "Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour."

I might easily mention many more recent examples of the efficacy of prayer; but those which have been already produced are abundantly sufficient. The truth is, I am persuaded that every serious Christian is able to recollect examples of it from his own experience; and surely they are of all others most inexcusable, who restrain prayer before God, after they have known the unspeakable benefit which flows from it.

IV. LET us now make some practical improvement of what hath been said on this subject. And,

1. Suffer me to improve what hath been said, for the conviction and reproof of those who are habitually unmindful of this important duty. Alas! my brethren, what reason have we to complain of the neglect of wrestling, and want of importunity in prayer! Is not the language itself become unfashionable, and liable to scorn? As a person as eminent in station as in piety once said, 'Men have now devised a smooth and easy way to heaven, quite consistent with the spirit of the world, in which temptations and  
' spiritual

‘spiritual conflicts, and inward trials, are unknown.’ But be assured, however changeable we are in our fancy and inclination, the word of God abideth for ever. There is very great reason to fear, nay there is good ground to affirm, that those who are strangers to wrestling with God in prayer, are sleeping in security, and under the dominion of sin. You will say perhaps, you live at ease and undisturbed. It may be so, and it is so much the worse; for the prince of this world will always consult the peace and quietness of his own subjects.

I would earnestly intreat every hearer of the gospel to suffer this reproof to enter into his mind, as it is what can be certainly known only to God and your own souls. Though there is sufficient outward evidence of the general neglect of this duty, how far any person is particularly guilty, must be left to the determination of his own conscience, and the judgement of him who seeth and searcheth the heart. If there is any among you who habitually despiseth prayer, who makes every little business, every little indisposition or laziness of mind, an excuse for neglecting or postponing it: if there are any who satisfy themselves with a dead cursory formality in duty; who call in question the reality of communion with God in others, because they are strangers to it themselves; without all doubt they have great cause to fear, that they are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Tell me, what is the reason of your backwardness to drawing near to God? Is it not, that you

are afraid of coming into his presence? Is it not, that you cannot bear the opening of your hearts? Is it not from some dark jealousy and suspicion, that all is not right with you, though you had rather cover than confess it? My earnest prayer to God is, that though you keep at a distance from him, he may not keep at a distance from you; that he may, by his Spirit, convince you of your danger, and, in great mercy, deliver you from this miserable state.'

2. You may learn, from what has been said, one great cause of the low state of religion, and the barrenness of ordinances among us at present. It is the neglect of prayer, and that many, though they may condescend to ask, yet do not think it worth their while to wrestle for the blessing. The profane are not the only persons justly chargeable with a failure in this part of their duty. Many real Christians are apt to slacken their diligence in this important exercise, and many often read their sin in their punishment. But is it not very wonderful, my brethren, that those who have once tasted that the Lord is gracious, who have known the sweetness of communion with God, should ever lose it by their own indifference and backwardness to maintain it? Yet here we must, of necessity, lay the blame. We must still say, in justification of his procedure, *Is. lix. 1. 2.* "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save: neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his

“his face from you, that he will not hear.” It seems to appear from the experience of Christians, that God is jealous of their treatment of his love, and deeply resents the alienation of their affections; and therefore, to have sensible joy in him, and to walk in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, which is so great a privilege, cannot be preserved, without the greatest watchfulness on their part, and the greatest constancy in prayer.

3. Suffer me now, in a few words, to exhort every person in this assembly, and in particular those who have so lately renewed their engagement to God, over the symbols of the broken body and shed blood of Christ, to give themselves unto prayer. Of what use is your being admitted to this sacred table, if it do not incline you to live nearer to God in the habitual tenor of your life? This is the very privilege which we obtain by the blood of Christ, that we have access with boldness and confidence through the faith of him. This is the very advantage that we obtain by his continual intercession before the throne, Heb. iv. 14. 16. “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” Again, have you not devoted your lives to the service of God? have you not promised to keep his commandments? How do you expect to fulfil your promise? Are you not ready to say;

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‘Not

‘Not unless he be pleased himself to preserve  
 ‘and keep me; not unless he put his Spirit with-  
 ‘in me, and write his laws in my heart?’ And  
 do you not know, that he hath said, “Yet for  
 “all these things will I be inquired of by the  
 “house of Israel to do it for them? I will ask  
 you one question more. Do you not know that  
 you are yet in an evil world? Do you not know  
 what variety of temptations and sufferings you  
 may yet be exposed to? How shall you bear up  
 under trials; how shall you “glorify God in  
 “the day of visitation,” if you live habitually at  
 a distance from him? Christians, it is to him  
 you must look when trouble cometh upon you.  
 All other refuge will soon fail; and vanity, va-  
 nity, be seen written upon the creature. But  
 with what confusion must you then lift up your  
 eyes to him, if you forget him in prosperity!  
 Therefore let me beseech you, in the most ear-  
 nest manner, to renew your diligence in the exer-  
 cise of prayer. In a particular manner, I must  
 recommend this exercise to young persons. You,  
 my dear brethren, are exposed to many dangers,  
 your strength small, your experience little, your  
 knowledge imperfect. Live a life of prayer, and  
 dependence upon God. Daniel and his compa-  
 nions were young persons, yet mighty in prayer;  
 therefore learn it early, practise it diligently,  
 and wait upon it habitually and constantly. Hear  
 what the prophet says in commendation of it,  
 Is. xl. 29. 30. 31. “He giveth power to the  
 “faint; and to them that have no might, he in-  
 “creaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint  
 “and

“ 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.”

4. I shall conclude the subject, by giving you two or three directions for the preservation and improvement of the spiritual life; and particularly for enabling you to persevere with uniformity and comfort in the exercise of prayer.

1. Be watchful and circumspect in the whole of your conversation. Let it be your great aim, to keep consciences void of offence towards God and towards man. Prayer and watchfulness have a reciprocal influence upon one another. Neglect of prayer will make you yield to temptation, and the indulgence of sin will make you afraid to pray. But habitual watchfulness will carry you with comfort to God, at the hour of prayer, both in thankfulness for past mercies, and reliance on him for future strength.

2. Observe with attention the course of his providence towards you. Enumerate his mercies to you in prosperity, adore his righteous will in adversity. Let this be the work, not only of particular seasons, but of every day. This will at once shew you the necessity, and abundantly supply the matter of prayer. If you do otherwise, you will go to prayer without any clear and determinate views of what you are to pray for, and then it is no wonder that it degenerate into a lifeless form. Once more,

3. Be much employed in intercession for others.

thers. This noble testimony of Christian love, has the most powerful influence in warming the heart, and enlivening the affections in prayer. It happens frequently, that those who have hardly a word to say for themselves, and whose desires are quite heavy and languid as to what regards their own interest, no sooner come to supplicate for others, than they are enabled to pour out their whole souls before God with the greatest fulness of expression, and enlargement of affection; as if it were the purpose of God, to invite us to this exercise, by honouring it with a particular mark of his acceptance and approbation. Oh that it would please God to revive among professing Christians a spirit of prayer, that when they cannot unite in sentiment, they may unite in prayer; that when impiety and immorality are bold and insolent, they may oppose them by prayer; and that when they are slandered, insulted, or abused by their enemies, they may find unspeakable comfort in imitating their dying Saviour, loving them that hate them, blessing them that curse them, and praying for them who despitefully use them and persecute them. I conclude with the words of the apostle, Jude, ver. 24. 25. "Now unto him that is able to keep  
 "you from falling, and to present you faultless  
 "before the presence of his glory with exceed-  
 "ing joy, to the only wise God, our Saviour,  
 "be glory and majesty, dominion and power,  
 "both now and ever. Amen."

S E R -

## S E R M O N XIII.

## Obedience and sacrifice compared.

I SAMUEL XV. 22.

*Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice; and to hearken, than the fat of rams.*

**T**Hat obedience is due to God from all his intelligent creatures, I suppose none here present will deny. It is the original unchangeable law of creation, which every after-discovery served not to undetermine, but to support and confirm. It was the religion of man in his primitive state of innocence; and it shall be the religion of heaven, when we shall see our Maker as he is. The very excellence of truth itself lies in its influence on holiness, and the very purpose of every sacred institution is to form our minds to a habit of obedience, and subjection to the will of God.

In the mean time, it is of the utmost moment, that we have clear and just conceptions of the nature and principles of obedience, and that we guard against the errors that are often committed on this subject. Some, from a partial or excessive attachment to one branch of duty, are apt

apt to disparage another; and some are apt to make a merit of their zeal or diligence in one duty, as if it would procure indulgence for them in the wilful neglect of another. From the language in the remarkable passage of scripture which I have chosen for my text, it is plain, that sacrifices, or the outward worship of God, are sometimes made a cover for the neglect of obedience. Nor are there wanting other passages where complaints are brought against the same mistake. On the other hand, this passage where the text lies, and another expression akin to it in the gospel, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice," have been often grossly misapplied, to bring contempt upon every positive institution, and even upon the whole exercises of piety; and that by such persons as do very little honour either to themselves or their opinions, by the perfection of their obedience. I have chosen these words, with a view to the information and conviction of both these sorts of persons, and for the instruction and edification of those who desire to walk in the straight path of duty, without turning to the right hand or to the left. In discoursing further upon them, I propose,

1. To open a little, and make a few remarks on the history which gave occasion to the words of the prophet.

2. To shew in what respects it is, that obedience is opposed and preferred to sacrifice, or justly called *better*, as in the words of the text.

3. In the last place, To make some application of the subject.

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I. FIRST, then, I am to open a little, and make a few remarks upon the history which gave occasion to the words of the prophet. This will be the more proper, that the setting this part of the sacred story in a clear light, will both afford us some excellent instructions, and also obviate the cavils of unreasonable men. The people called *Amalekites* were derived, and had their name, from one *Amalek*, the son of Esau's eldest son Eliphaz, by a concubine, (Gen. xxxvi. 12.). The first mention we have made of them as a people, was their being engaged in a very unjust war with the children of Israel, (Ex. xvii. 8.). This provoked God to determine, or at least upon this occasion he was pleased to intimate, their being devoted to utter destruction; as Exod. xvii. 14. 15. 16. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi. For he said, Because the Lord hath sworn, that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

The injustice and impiety of this action of the Amalekites, which provoked God, not only to threaten, but to swear their destruction, may be learned from the account of this matter given us in Deut. xxv. 17. 18. 19. "Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt: how he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee,

“ thee, even all that were feeble behind thee,  
 “ when thou wast faint and weary; and he fear-  
 “ ed not God. Therefore it shall be, when the  
 “ Lord thy God hath given thee rest from all  
 “ thine enemies round about, in the land which  
 “ the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inherit-  
 “ ance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the  
 “ remembrance of Amalek from under heaven;  
 “ thou shalt not forget it.” From this it ap-  
 pears, that the Amalekites attacked the Israelites  
 unprovoked, and without any cause; for the  
 Israelites neither intended to possess themselves  
 of their country, nor were they so much as  
 passing by their borders, which might have gi-  
 ven them some cause of suspicion. Without  
 any thing of this sort, they came out of their  
 own country, to attack the Israelites in the wil-  
 derness, either in consequence of the old grudge  
 between Esau and Jacob, or from a principle of  
 covetousness, to seize upon the riches which they  
 heard the children of Israel had brought out of  
 Egypt.

It is further observed, that they cut off those  
 that were faint and weary, when the distressed  
 condition of that people seemed rather to call  
 for compassion and help. This was unjust and  
 cruel; and discovers them to have been a savage  
 and profligate people; especially if one circum-  
 stance more be taken notice of, that they did  
 all this in open defiance and contempt of God.  
 They had no doubt heard, that he interested  
 himself in a particular manner in the preserva-  
 tion of the Israelites, and was, in a literal sense,  
 their

their king and governor ; and therefore it is said particularly, ver. 18. of the last-cited passage, that the Amalekites "feared not God." Is there any thing absurd or unsuitable to the majesty of the King of kings, in his declaring he would have war with such a people from generation to generation, and at last destroy them, as he certainly foreknew that they would not grow better, but worse and worse ?

Let us not omit to observe the long-suffering and patience of God. It was not till some hundreds of years afterwards, that orders were issued out to put the sentence in execution against that people, when they had filled up the measure of their iniquities, and were ripe for judgement. This appears evidently from the hints of their character given in the chapter where the text lies. They are called, ver. 18. "the sinners the Amalekites," by way of emphasis, to shew, that they were eminently wicked above all other people. It is no less evident, that their king that ruled over them was a bloody cruel man, from the words of Samuel to him, ver. 33. "As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women." These circumstances make it highly probable, that this prince and his people were commonly employed in the trade of war, in plundering and murdering such of their neighbours as they were able to subdue. Now, how groundless are all the tragical outcries of unbelievers against this part of the history

story of the Bible! Is not God the supreme disposer of every event? Is not the fate of nations decided by his righteous will? Is he not known by the exercise of this his holy prerogative, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay?" It is incontestable, from many undoubted facts in the history of Providence, that "verily there is "a God that judgeth in the earth." Oh! that this were considered in time by many who are bold enough to impeach the conduct of their Maker, to whom one part of the character of the Amalekites seems very applicable, "They fear "not God."

It will perhaps be expected, that I should take particular notice of that part of the command given to Saul to destroy the "infants and "sucklings," together with those who were come to age. On this you may observe, that it was no more than the exercise of that absolute right which God hath to the lives of all his creatures. He gave them at his pleasure, and he may recall them whenever he will. Those who offer this objection against the scripture-history, do not seem to consider, that it militates equally against the daily and visible course of Providence. How many infants do we see daily carried off by the diseases incident to that state? Do not the half of mankind die before they grow up to the years of reason? Does this happen without the foreknowledge and providence of God? or dare any charge him with being unjust in this part of his will? If we dare not presume to go so far, then, the commanding the  
children

children to be cut off by the hand of man, is a mere circumstance, that cannot alter the nature of the decree. The sovereignty of God appears in the clearest manner from the whole of his written word, and from what happens every day before our eyes. Instead, therefore, of raising presumptuous objections against such instances as this referred to in the text, it would be far more just, as well as dutiful, to infer from them, that we are "conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity;" that we lie under an universal forfeiture of life, and therefore a righteous God may execute it upon us at whatever time, and in whatever manner, it seems good unto himself.

I might also observe, that if we consider the circumstances in which these Amalekite children were, from the character of their parents, we shall see, in the conduct of God towards them, a mixture of mercy with judgement. I have already observed, from the sacred history, what wicked persons the Amalekites were. Now, supposing their children left to be trained up by their parents, the presumption is, that they would have been formed by their pernicious example, to murder and rapine, and all sorts of wickedness; and, in particular, to a hatred of the people and God of Israel. This would have rendered their condition infinitely more miserable than we can possibly suppose it by their being cut off in infancy, before the commission of actual guilt. Have we not every day before our eyes examples of persons living and dying in

sin, to whom it would have been a great mercy if their eyes, as soon as ever they saw the light, had been closed up in everlasting darkness? Upon the whole, we have reason to be fully satisfied on every such question as this, by resolving it into the sovereignty of God; but I have shortly mentioned this particular, to show how incapable we are of forming a proper judgement of the procedure of Divine Providence; and that the order to destroy “both man and woman, infant and suckling,” when given by the Lord of nature, hath nothing in it either unjust or unmerciful.

This awful command was given to Saul, the king of Israel; which he, being fully satisfied of its coming from God, prepared himself to execute. But he and the people, from a principle of covetousness, reserved what was most valuable of the effects of the Amalekites for their own use, in direct contradiction to the command of God, who had ordered the cattle and substance of that people also to be destroyed. This was probably done to show, that their punishment was an act of pure justice, without any intention to enrich his inheritance by it. When the prophet Samuel challenged Saul for his disobedience, he endeavours to cover his conduct by a pretext of religion, ver. 15. “And Saul said,—The  
 “people spared the best of the sheep, and of the  
 “oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God;  
 “and the rest we have utterly destroyed.” To this my text is the answer, made by Samuel, in the name of the Lord: “And Samuel said,  
 “Hath

“ Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey, is better than sacrifice; and to hearken, than the fat of rams.”

Before I proceed to the *second* general head, I will make a few observations on this piece of history, for your instruction.

1. How easily are people misled into disobedience by their present interest, or carnal inclinations! how ready are these to mix themselves in all our actions, and to turn what was intended as an instance of obedience, into an act of impiety and transgression! The children of Israel would not destroy the goodly substance of the Amalekites, according to the express command of God, that they might have it to themselves; though it is remarkable, that they do not appear from the history to have made any difficulty in executing what was by far the hardest part of the command, *viz.* the slaying of man and woman, infant and suckling, that fell into their hands. Agag indeed, and him only, they accepted, perhaps to grace their triumph, or from some other selfish motive. Interest seems to have prevailed here; but there are other passions also which too often mix themselves with our religion. Malice and anger, for example, and a desire of revenge, are often seen to intermingle themselves with our zeal for the glory of God, and convert one of the most amiable virtues into a detestable-crime.

2. You may observe how natural it is for people, when challenged for any fault, to lay the

blame of it upon others, even when there is little prospect of hiding their own guilt. "But the people," says Saul, ver. 21. "took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed." Whereas, though no doubt they were also in the fault, he was much more guilty than they. He had received the particular command from God: he was king and leader of the people, and ought to have restrained them from acting contrary to the divine purpose. This, however, he was so far from so much as attempting, that he is spoken of as consenting to, and a chief actor in the offence, ver. 9. "But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen." This disposition seems to be as old as sin itself; for we see it in the case of Adam, after eating the forbidden fruit: Gen. iii. 11. 12. "Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." We ought to be humbled for it, as a part of the corruption of our nature, which is not only prone to the commission of sin, but backward to repentance or confession.

3. We may see it is no unusual thing for men to imagine they have been obedient to God even in that very action by which they have in a remarkable manner shown their disobedience. This was plainly the case with Saul, whom we find  
 maintaining

maintaining and insisting upon his innocence, ver. 20. "And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way which the Lord sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites." Where-ever any duty, in its substance, in its circumstances, or even in its principle, varies from the rules laid down for it in the word of God, it is essentially defective; and where the fault is capital, it becometh a sin. This, I believe, will be always found to be the case where merit is pleaded from human performances. True obedience is always humble, and sensible of the imperfections attending it. Ostentatious obedience, if it were for no other reason, is an abomination in the sight of God.

4. How often does it happen, that the excuses for sin are the aggravations of it! It seemed to Saul, that he had fully justified his conduct by saying, that he spared of the best of the spoil, to sacrifice unto the Lord. If there was no such thing in his or the people's mind, when they departed from their commission, then it was a fearful aggravation of his sin, to add to it the guilt of falsehood and hypocrisy; nor did it seem to want impiety, to pretend to offer sacrifices from the accursed substance of that devoted race. If, on the other hand, they really from the beginning intended to present a part of the spoil as a sacrifice to God, it shows the great deceitfulness of sin, which suggested this unholy composition, and made them think, that

their disobedience might be atoned for by a gift at the altar. Many like instances might be given, in which the excuses for sin are an addition to the guilt. There are not wanting some who, either in a doubtful or explicit manner, would lay the blame of their sins upon their maker, and impute to the influence of his providence what belongs to the freedom of their own wills. At the same time, it is very remarkable, though melancholy to reflect upon, that those excuses for sin which carry in them the most daring profanity, are commonly most stupifying to the conscience. Such is the state of all those who fortify themselves in an evil practice, by embracing loose principles, who, having first given way to unbridled inclination in the breach of God's laws, steel themselves against conviction and repentance, by a denial of his truth.

5. How great is the folly of men who hope to atone for their disobedience by any compensation, but particularly by religious rites! Saul and his people, whatever were their views at first, seem to have hoped that they might escape the punishment of disobedience by offering sacrifices. There seems to have been a tendency to this among the Jews, in general, in after times; and it is the mistaken hope of hypocrites in every age. But how manifest is the error! how gross is the delusion! Sacrifices, and all acts of worship, derive their very beauty and excellence from the disposition of the worshipper. Solomon tells us, Prov. xv. 8. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to  
" the

“ the Lord; but the prayer of the upright is his “ delight.” How absurd and contradictory, how dishonourable to God, is it, for the same person to be a zealous worshipper and a wicked liver, a man fervent in prayer and deceitful in dealing, heavenly in his language and sensual in his heart ! One would think the dreadful inconsistency of such a conduct would alarm the most drowsy conscience ; but God, in righteous judgement, gives up to a spirit of slumber, that they may be the standard of punishment for the greatest sinners, who shall be appointed their portion “ with hypocrites and unbelievers, in the “ lake that burns with fire and brimstone for ever-  
“ more.”

II. I PROCEED to the *second* thing proposed ; which was, To show in what respects it is that obedience is opposed and preferred to sacrifice, or justly called *better*, as in the words of the text. It is not uncommon to hear this passage produced in order to prove the value of moral above positive precepts. Moral precepts, I suppose you know, are precepts of perpetual and unchangeable obligation ; and positive, such as either have not, or do not seem to have, any intrinsic excellence in themselves, but depend upon the immediate and express institution of God. Now though, no doubt, if it is done with proper care, and upon legitimate principles, a distinction may be stated between these different kinds of duties : yet it is plain, that this cannot be the spirit of the passage before us. There  
needs

needs no more to satisfy us of this, than to reflect upon the history illustrated above, which gave occasion to the words of the prophet. That command of God, for disobedience to which Saul was so severely reprov'd, and afterwards so signally punished, was so far from being in itself a moral duty antecedent to the command, that it was not merely a positive, but an occasional and temporary duty: nay without the express appointment and authority of God, it would have been an atrocious crime, *viz.* "Utterly destroying the Amalekites, man and woman, infant and suckling." We have not therefore the least encouragement from this example to make light of any command that is supported by the institution and authority of God. Well then, may it be said, were not sacrifices instituted by him? and how does the prophet affirm in this passage, that "obedience is better than sacrifice?" For illustrating this, and at the same time guarding it against perversion and abuse, I intreat your attention to the following observations.

1. Obedience is preferred to sacrifices as they were uncommanded, free, and voluntary. If we attend to the sacrifices under the law, we shall find them of different kinds; particularly, we shall find them distinguished in this respect, that some of them were expressly and positively ordained, and others were left to the good-will or spontaneous inclination of the offerer. The first were binding upon the whole of that people in the strongest manner, and could not be dispensed with; the other were left to themselves, as the  
occasion

occasion should point out the propriety, and the piety or gratitude of their hearts should dispose to the performance. It would be a great mistake, to suppose, that the appointed service of the sanctuary might be omitted or altered by any human prudence, or dispensed with, even under pretence of obedience to the moral law. The observation of the sabbath, of circumcision, of the passover, the daily burnt-offering, the annual sacrifice on the great day of expiation, the trespass-offering, and many others, were so indispensably necessary, that no opposition was to be presumed or imagined between them and the moral law. Nay, the whole circumstances of these rites were precisely specified, and those who varied any thing in the manner of their observation were to be cut off from their people. For this see Exodus xii. 19. ; xxxi. 14. and many other passages. I must further observe, that even with respect to voluntary or free-will offerings, though they were left at liberty whether they would offer such at all or not; yet if they did offer, the manner in which it behoved to be conducted, was appointed precisely, and they were forbidden to depart from it, under the same awful sanction. You may see the rules laid down for peace-offerings in the 2d and 3d chapters of Leviticus; and for the danger of any error in attending on them, see Lev. vii. 20. 21. ; Lev. xvii. 8. 9. Now, nothing can be more plain, than that the sacrifices which Saul and his people had in view to offer, or at least pretended to have had in view, were voluntary

or

or free-will offerings : they were no part of the regular, stated, unalterable service of the sanctuary ; but might be offered or not as they themselves thought proper. When you remember this, my brethren, you will see with how great justice and force the prophet opposes sacrifices of this kind, to obeying the voice of the Lord : " Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings, as in obeying the voice of the Lord ?" As if he had said, Can you imagine that God will be as well pleased with gifts of your own devising, as with a strict and punctual execution of the orders which himself had given ; especially when the very sacrifices you would offer to him, are purchased by the breach of his own express command ?

The words of the text having been spoken by an Old-Testament prophet, and in language directly suited to the circumstances of that dispensation, I have kept the laws of the Mosaic œconomy closely in view. The spirit however of the whole, and the truth resulting from it, belongs as clearly and sensibly to us as to the fathers. We are not to presume to make light of any institution of God, though, either in whole or in part, of a positive nature. But considering sacrifices as including all acts of worship, nay all acts of religion or service to God, of whatever kind, so far as they are voluntary in their circumstances, let us not think to put them in the room of obedience to his law. If any man, from this passage of scripture, shall take liberty to despise the sabbath, to forbear prayer in secret

secret and in family, to neglect the sacraments or instituted worship of God, he perverteth and wresteth the scriptures, to his own destruction. On the other hand, if any person, under pretence of extraordinary prayer, shall neglect his calling, if he shall put voluntary fasts and bodily mortification in the room of repentance, if he shall make donations to the poor, or to sacred uses, instead of paying his just debts, to the prejudice of others; it may, with great propriety, be said to him in the words of Samuel, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey, is better than sacrifice; and to hear-ken, than the fat of rams."

2. Obedience is opposed to sacrifices as they are false and hypocritical. Even in those sacrifices that were most expressly appointed, and of the most indispensable obligation, there might be an essential defect, from the inward disposition not corresponding to the outward action. Reason, as well as scripture, teacheth us, that in all acts of worship, the sincerity of the heart makes the chief ingredient. It is the prerogative, and the glory of God, that he searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men. Therefore, in every part of his service, he requires integrity and uprightness of heart: "He desireth truth in the inward parts." That I may treat this part of the subject with the greater distinctness, you may observe, that our sacrifices or worship may be polluted by a twofold hypocrisy. These may be called, hypocrisy to-wards

wards God, and hypocrisy towards man ; or, in other words, inconsistency or unsoundness in the character, and disguise or insincerity in the act of worship.

(1) Our sacrifices may be polluted by inconsistency or unsoundness in the character. This is the case where men are careful in attending upon the institutions of religion, but do not make conscience of keeping the commandments of God in their ordinary conversation ; when they are punctual in the outward performance of the duties of the first table of the law, but are under no restraint as to sins against the second ; but, in a particular manner, when they are under the unhappy delusion of imagining, that the one will make atonement for the other. I believe it will be found, that this is the meaning of many passages of scripture, where sacrifices are spoken of with disregard. The word of God could never be so inconsistent with itself, as to condemn them simply, while the law concerning them stood in force ; but when they were offered by wicked men, when they were rested on as the whole of religion, or made to compensate for the neglect of moral duties, then they are spoken of with abhorrence : Hosea vi. 6. " For I desired  
 " mercy, and not sacrifice ; and the knowledge  
 " of God, more than burnt-offerings. But they  
 " like men have transgressed the covenant : there  
 " have they dealt treacherously against me."  
 Hk. i. 10. Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers  
 " of Sodom ; give ear unto the law of our God, ye  
 " people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the  
 " multitude of your sacrifices unto me ? saith the  
 " Lord :

“ Lord: I am full of the burnt-offerings of  
“ rams, and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight  
“ not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or  
“ of he-goats. When ye come to appear before  
“ me, who hath required this at your hand to  
“ tread my courts? Bring no more vain obla-  
“ tions, incense is an abomination unto me,  
“ the new-moons and sabbaths, the calling of  
“ assemblies, I cannot away with, it is iniquity,  
“ even the solemn meeting. Your new-moons,  
“ and your appointed feasts, my soul hateth:  
“ they are a trouble unto me, I am weary to  
“ bear them. And when ye spread forth your  
“ hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea,  
“ when ye make many prayers, I will not hear:  
“ your hands are full of blood. Wash ye, make  
“ you clean, put away the evil of your doings  
“ from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn  
“ to do well, seek judgement, relieve the oppress-  
“ ed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.”  
Psal. l. 16. “ Unto the wicked God saith, What hast  
“ thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou  
“ shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth?”  
Amos v. 21.—24. “ I hate, I despise your feast-  
“ days, and I will not smell in your solemn as-  
“ semblies. Though ye offer me burnt-offerings,  
“ and your meat-offerings, I will not accept  
“ them: neither will I regard the peace-offer-  
“ ings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from  
“ me the noise of thy songs, for I will not hear  
“ the melody of thy viols. But let judgement  
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“run down as waters, and righteousness as a  
“mighty stream.”

Indeed, my brethren, what can be more abominable, than the worship of such persons as live in the habitual indulgence of sin? what more provoking to God? what more presumptuous in the sinner? And who can sufficiently wonder at the blindness of all of this character? That their very access to God, which should increase their abhorrence of sin, should, notwithstanding, set them at ease in the commission of it? Will he bear more in you, think you, than in others? He will bear less. He will visit you sooner in his providence, and he will punish you heavier to all eternity. Things are quite opposite to what you suppose. Instead of your duties rendering your sins pardonable, your sins render your duties insupportable.

(2) The other kind of hypocrisy is, when men put on religion as a cloak and covering on their wickedness, and, without any inward regard or sense of duty to God, aim only at the praise of men. This is, if possible, more daring and presumptuous than the other, or rather is a more advanced stage of the same character. It was for this that our Saviour so severely reprehended the Pharisees: Matth. vi. 1. 2. “Take heed  
“that ye do not your alms before men, to be  
“seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of  
“your Father which is in heaven. Therefore,  
“when thou dost thine alms, do not sound a  
“trumpet

“ trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do, in  
 “ the synagogues, and in the streets, that they  
 “ may have glory of men. Verily I say unto  
 “ you, they have their reward.” And ver. 5.  
 “ And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as  
 “ the hypocrites are: for they love to pray,  
 “ standing in the synagogues, and in the corners  
 “ of the streets, that they may be seen of men.  
 “ Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.”

But truly this is not all. Some are not satisfied with doing things in themselves praise-worthy from ostentation, or the hope of applause from men, but they endeavour, by their shining and burning zeal in such things, to blind the eyes of others, and hinder them from discovering and punishing their secret wickedness: Matth. xxiii.

14. “ Wo unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye devour widows houses, and  
 “ for a pretence make long prayers; therefore  
 “ ye shall receive the greater damnation.” Whenever this is the case, it is no wonder that obedience should be preferred before sacrifice, and indeed set in opposition to it. You see, however, that this is no more than what our Saviour says of almsgiving, which is so eminent a moral duty, but which can never find acceptance with God, when done merely from a principle of ostentation. It is impossible, upon the whole, to set this matter in a juster light than our Saviour has done, in speaking of the same Pharisees, Matth. xxiii. 23. “ Wo unto you, scribes and

“ Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye pay tithes of  
 “ mint and anise, and cummin, and have omit-  
 “ ted the weightier matters of the law, judge-  
 “ ment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to  
 “ have done, and not to leave the other un-  
 “ done.”

3. Obedience is opposed to sacrifices as they are *dead* and *formal*. I am not at this time to mention all the ends which an infinitely wise God intended to serve by the appointment of sacrifices: but every one must be sensible, that they could be of no avail without taking in the principle from which they were brought, and the temper and disposition of the offerer. There was no doubt very much of outward form in the Mosaic œconomy; and the ritual practices bore so great bulk in it, that, by way of comparison with the spirituality of the gospel, it is called the *law of a carnal commandment*. But it would be mistaking it very much, to suppose, that God was fully satisfied with, or desired that his people should rest in the outward form. This is plain from many passages of scripture. What an example of fervour and elevation of spirit have we in the exercise and language of the psalmist David, through the whole of his writings! You may see, Ps. v. 7. “ But as for  
 “ me, I will come into thy house in the multi-  
 “ tude of thy mercy: and in thy fear will I  
 “ worship toward thy holy temple.” Ps. xxvi.  
 6. “ I will wash mine hands in innocency: so  
 “ will

“will I compass thine altar, O Lord.” To this you may add what he says, Psal. li. 16. 17.  
“For thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”

In opposition to this, however clear a dictate, both of reason and scripture, it seems to have been the disease of ancient times, to imagine, that the sacrifices were some how necessary or useful to their maker in themselves; and that he was pleased with the possession of the gift, independent of the disposition of the giver. This led both Jews and Gentiles to suppose, that the more numerous and costly the victims, the greater would be their influence: Micah vi. 6.  
“Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” To such an excessive height did this error proceed, that on extraordinary occasions the Heathens of many different nations offered human sacrifices, and endeavoured, by their number, their youth, or the high rank of their parents, to increase their value in the sight of God. In opposition to this

gross delusion, God often asserts his all-sufficiency, as well as sovereignty; as particularly in that admirable passage, Ps. l. 7. — 14. “Hear, “O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and “I will testify against thee: I am God, even “thy God. I will not reprove thee for thy sa- “crifices, or thy burnt-offerings, to have been “continually before me. I will take no bullock “out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy folds. “For every beast of the forest is mine, and the “cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the “fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts “of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I “would not tell thee, for the world is mine, “and the fullness thereof. Will I eat the flesh “of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Of- “fer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows “unto the Most High.” And even with regard to their ordinary attendance on instruction, he says, Ezekiel xxxiii. 31. “And they come unto thee “as the people cometh, and they sit before thee “as my people, and they hear thy words, but “they will not do them: for with their mouth “they shew much love, but their heart goeth af- “ter their covetousness.”

This conduct, so dishonourable to God, and so inconsistent with the holiness and purity of his nature, had no sufficient excuse either among Jews or Heathens. But surely it is still more criminal among Christians. The gospel, as a dispensation of clearer light, and greater purity,  
is

is called *the ministration of the Spirit*. And in opposition to all ceremonial and local worship, our Saviour says, John iv. 23. 24. "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." But are there not some amongst us who may be justly charged with guilt in this respect? or rather, who is there amongst us that does not in some degree fall under the reproof? Are there not some who rest in the form of worship, and are strangers to the spirit of it? Are there not some who value and trust in their forms while they are regardless of the spirit? Nay, are there not some who not only submit to, but are pleased with the form, and yet have no relish for that nearness to God, and sense of his presence, which constitutes the spirit of worship? How many sinful motives may bring us to the house of God! If you come to avoid the reproach of men, is that a real sacrifice to God? If you come from ostentation, to be seen of men, is that an offering acceptable to God? If you come to gratify your fancy, by hearing the performance of man, you are offering the incense to the creature that is due only to God. Consider further, how often we may be sinfully employed in the house of God. Are careless inattentive persons offering acceptable

ceptable sacrifices to God? Are those who indulge vain, proud, sensual, covetous thoughts in worship, offering sacrifice to God? Are those who come to censure or admire the speaker offering sacrifice to God? In all such cases, without any disparagement to the holiest institutions of God, or rather from a just concern to defend them from profanation, we may say, in the words of the text, "Behold, to obey, is better than sacrifice; and to hearken, than the fat of rams."

4. In the *last* place, obedience is opposed to sacrifices as they are misplaced and unseasonable. In the ancient dispensation, time and place were as much ascertained as any circumstance that belonged to the temple-service; and nothing could be more contrary to the spirit of that economy, than taking any liberty with the order which God himself had established. There are several instances of heavy judgements denounced against princes, whose chief fault seems to have been, offering the appointed sacrifices in forbidden places, or at improper seasons. If, therefore, he would not suffer any variation in circumstances which he had prescribed, how could Saul suppose, that he would accept of a sacrifice in the place of a duty which he had commanded? It is also to be observed, that the duties of the moral law are perpetually binding; and therefore, when in providence any example of them occurs, strengthened with the urgent call  
of

of necessity and mercy, they become exceptions to an ordinance of a positive nature. Thus our Saviour does not contradict the law of Moses in what he teaches concerning the sabbath; but shows in what manner that command was, or ought always to have been understood by the Jews themselves. See an instance of this, Luke xiii. 14. 15. 16. “ And the ruler of the  
“ synagogue answered with indignation, because  
“ that Jesus had healed on the sabbath-day, and  
“ said unto the people, There are six days in  
“ which men ought to work; in them therefore  
“ come, and be healed, and not on the sabbath-  
“ day. The Lord then answered him, and said,  
“ Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you  
“ on the sabbath loose his ox, or his ass, from  
“ the stall, and lead him away to watering?  
“ And ought not this woman, being a daughter  
“ of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo-  
“ these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond  
“ on the sabbath-day?” See also two other  
examples of the same thing, in the 12th chapter  
of the gospel according to Matthew; in sup-  
port of which our Lord cites a passage from the  
Old Testament, ver. 7. “ But if ye had known  
“ what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and  
“ not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the  
“ guiltless.”

The same general rule is to be observed at all times. We must attend to the intimations of Providence, and as far as they can be clearly discerned,

cerned, discharge those duties to which we are immediately called. Every thing is beautiful in its place and season, and is then not only most acceptable to God, but most useful to men. It is so far from being any disparagement of sacrifices, that it is their very excellence, to be confined to their time and place. And the maxim in the text will apply with equal propriety to every duty of the moral law. The most excellent of them may be misapplied. True religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is, to visit the fatherless and the widow; and yet, if the time of divine worship be unnecessarily chosen for that purpose, or if too much time be consumed in it by those whose presence cannot be useful, it is a rejected sacrifice. Feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked, is the character that shall meet with the approbation of our final judge; and yet, if any shall, out of ostentation, feed the poor abroad, and starve their families at home, or perform this duty at the expence of any other more immediately binding, he falls under the condemnation of the prophet in the text: "Behold, to obey, is better than sacrifice; and "to hearken, than the fat of rams." To conclude this head, we shall greatly misinterpret this passage of scripture, if we pretend to honour one part of religion to the prejudice of another. The sacrifices condemned by the prophet are not to be understood of positive duties, as opposed to moral, nor of acts of worship, as opposed to the duties of the second table; but  
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of every act of religion, however excellent in itself, or necessary in its place, if it is done from an ill principle, with a sinful purpose, in a sinful manner, or substituted in the room of that which God in his providence doth immediately require.

III. I PROCEED now to make some practical improvement of what hath been said. And,

1. From what hath been said, you may learn what are the great characters of acceptable obedience; and, I think, they may be reduced to the three following. 1. It must be implicit obedience. It must be founded immediately and directly on the authority of God. We must not take upon us to judge of the moment and importance of any part of his will, further than he hath made it known himself. It is a very dangerous thing for us to make comparisons between one duty and another, especially with a view of dispensing with any of them, or altering their order, and substituting one in another's place. 2. A second character of true obedience is, that it be self-denied and impartial, that it be not directed or qualified by our present interest. It was the best of the spoil that Saul and the people saved; that which was vile and refuse, they utterly destroyed. It is too common, that our own interest both points out the object, and assigns the measure of our obedience; and, in that case, it does not deserve the name of obedience

dience to God at all. But when the Christian is devoted to God, ready at his call, and equally disposed to any employment assigned him in providence, he then may be said indeed to do his will. 3. A third character of obedience is, that it be universal, without any exception. Saul, and the children of Israel, had complied so far with the order given them, that the greatest part both of the people and substance of Amalek was destroyed; but he stopped short, and knowingly left unfinished what had been enjoined him by the same authority.

2. From what hath been said on this subject, you may see, that the true notion of obedience is inconsistent with the notion of merit, as if we could lay our maker under some sort of obligation. This is as fatal and dangerous an error as any whatever, to think we may merit at the hand of God, and yet very common. Nay, it seems to be natural to us all, with great difficulty restrained, and never in this life wholly overcome. You see how Saul justified himself, and said, "Yea, but I have obeyed the voice of the Lord." But, in the judgement of God, there was no consideration had of what he had done, but a severe sentence of condemnation upon him for what he had neglected. True obedience is always considered, in this light, as a debt due to God, for the performance of which nothing can be claimed, but for the neglect of which a penalty is incurred. I wish this were properly

properly attended to. The guilt of transgression is plainly inconsistent with the merit of obedience. If we are liable to punishment for not obeying, the right of our maker to our service must be complete, there is no room to plead any merit in compliance, and the reward must be of grace, and not of debt. Thus, I think, it is always felt by good men; and the more that they are devoted to God, they are the less disposed to avail themselves of any thing they have done, and the more inclined to ask forgiveness for what hath been either omitted, or ill done.

3. From what hath been said, you may learn the great defects of our obedience in general. If we consider the characters of true obedience, implicit, impartial, and universal, we must be sensible what great blemishes attend every act of duty to God which we perform. We shall always find something amiss, either in its extent, its principle, or its end. What reason this for humiliation? what a powerful argument to every Christian to live a life of continual dependence on divine strength to enable him to obey, and divine mercy to accept of his imperfect obedience? Nothing but great ignorance of themselves, or great inattention to what passes in their own hearts, can embolden men to put confidence in themselves. And indeed their doing so is commonly attended with very mortifying effects. When God leaves them, in fatherly displeasure, to prove and try them, or when he

leaves sinners to themselves, to fill up the measure of their iniquities, it soon affords a satisfying proof, that in us, that is, in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing. To will may be present with us, but to do that which is good, we find not.

4. In the *last* place, Suffer me earnestly to exhort you to make it your daily study, not only to keep the commandments of God, but to take particular notice from what principle your obedience flows. See how much there is in it of self-denial, of devotedness to God, of subjection to his providence. One act of silent submission, or a quiet application to those duties that are immediately necessary, though neither easy nor honourable, is of much more value, than a long tract of activity and zeal in a public and visible sphere of action, sweetened by reputation and applause. As the submissive Christian lives upon the Creator alone, independent of the creature; so the obedient Christian serves his God and Redeemer alone, without paying any regard to the esteem or approbation of his fellow-sinners. In this way only is your obedience given to God, and in this way only will you find it pleasant or profitable to yourselves. If you keep clearly and closely to the command of God, and have not so much as any other desire, or inclination, than to know what it is, you will hardly ever be mistaken. But if you allow other motives to have place, if you take upon you to judge of what is most proper or expedient, or even practicable, you will pollute every part of your

your duty, and find yourselves often involved in impenetrable darkness. If what is duty be the inquiry, and interest set aside, if duty be the object of your attention, and events left to God, you will find unspeakable consolation from it in the mean time, as well as the success more effectually secured than it could possibly have been by any anxiety or foresight of your own. Let God then have the unadulterated obedience of all his creatures; and let us ask of him, according to his promise, "to work in us to will and to do of his good pleasure."

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