



Painted by Thompson. 1810.

Engraved by J.B. Martin, Richm^d.

REV. JOHN D. BLAIR.

Joseph Jackson

SERMONS

COLLECTED FROM

THE MANUSCRIPTS

OF THE LATE

Rev. John D. Blair.

*“That ye be not slothful, but followers of those who,
through faith and patience, inherit the promises,”*

Richmond:

PRINTED BY SHEPHERD & POLLARD.

.....

1825.

District of Virginia, to wit :

BE it remembered, that on the thirtieth day of May, in
***** the forty-ninth year of the independence of
* L. S. * the United States of America, MARY BLAIR,
***** of the said district, hath deposited in this of-
fice, the title of a book, the right whereof she claims as
proprietor, in the words following, to wit : "Sermons
collected from the manuscripts of the late Rev. John D.
Blair." "That ye be not slothful, but followers of those
who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises."
In conformity to the act of the Congress of the United
States, entitled "An act for the encouragement of learning,
by securing the copies of maps, charts and books, to the
authors and proprietors of such copies, during the time
therein mentioned."

RD. JEFFRIES,
Clerk of the District of Virginia.

STATE OF OHIO
MAY 30 1850

PREFACE.



IN compliance with the wish of a number of the friends of the Reverend Mr. BLAIR, his family have selected from his manuscripts, the Sermons which compose the ensuing volume. They would, doubtless, have appeared much more advantageously, if they had been prepared for the press by his own hand. They are less perfect, too, than they would have been, in consequence of his habit of enlarging before the public, what he had written more briefly in private. Some of them appear to be among his earliest compositions of that kind, while others belong to a later period. Although they are less fully and less carefully written out than they would have been, had their author composed them for publication, yet they are deemed not unworthy of being read, and are commended to that blessing of Heaven, which alone can render them extensively useful.

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S E R M O N S .

TO THE PUBLIC.

The following Sermon was delivered and is published by appointment of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

That it met with any favorable reception, from the pulpit, was doubtless owing more to the affecting solemnity of the occasion; to the high sense which the Legislature entertained of the worth of the deceased **GEORGE WASHINGTON**, and to their unfeigned sorrow for his death, than to the merit of the performance itself.

But, since they have been pleased to request the publication of it, it is sent to the press without hesitation.

JOHN D. BLAIR,

Chaplain to the House of Delegates.

RICHMOND, January, 1800.

SERMON I.

ON THE DEATH OF WASHINGTON.

“ Help, Lord, for the Godly man ceaseth ; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.”

Psalms, 12th chap. 1st verse.

IN the familiar course of human events, we are apt to be regardless of the hand of God, in the usual operations of nature, and in all the ordinary instances of mortality which are presented before our eyes.

There is no doubt that, upon due consideration, the one of these would be interpreted into clear indications of an over-ruling Providence, and the other improved into impressive and affecting mementos of human frailty. Through the familiarity of both, however, we are sufficiently attentive to neither.

But, when the Supreme Ruler of the Universe makes bare his arm by some signal display of his power, his sovereignty, or his displeasure ; when he visits a city with some deadly contagion, or removes from amongst us such of our fellow-men as were eminently virtuous and useful, who had engrossed our affection, and on whose preservation our interests materially depended ; when he makes the Godly man to cease, and the faithful man to fail, he rouses by such high dispensations the attention of all his creatures, and causes them to mourn under the afflictive visitations of his rod.

Impressed by such circumstances with a sense of our weakness and dependence, and affected by the occurrence of such sorrowful events, we are brought to perform the duty, and exercise the privilege of nature, by putting ourselves more immediately under the guardian care of Heaven, and flying for succour to the throne of Grace. Hence the importunate application of the Psalmist in the words of the text.

Who was the particular subject of his plaintive strains, it is not material that I should now stay to enquire. They are applicable to the case of all good men; for, their lives are more or less important to the peace and prosperity of this world.

On the present occasion, we understand their application, alas! too well. Never did a people meet with so great a loss as that which we deplore. Never was there before so loud a call for earnest supplication to the Father of Mercies. Never had the people of America such cause of funeral grief, as that which has brought us together to-day. The Godly man hath ceased, and the faithful hath failed:—The beloved WASHINGTON is no more.

Often do we behold the sorrows of the afflicted parent, the disconsolate widow, or the helpless orphan; but in this sad instance, all America is become a house of mourning, and signals of distress appear on every side. The melancholy tidings of his death have deeply afflicted all descriptions of persons. The aged sire and tender matron bow down the hoary head in pensive sorrow; and the cheek of the ingenuous youth is bedewed with tears. In this numerous assembly I see sadness depicted in every countenance.

On this memorable day, the whole representatives of the people of his native State, by whose appointment these funeral honors are paid, appear in the sable badge of mourning in testimony of their grief for the loss of this illustrious, faithful man; and every individual citizen sympathises in responsive sorrow.

It is no wonder; he was the "hero of liberty, the father of his country, the first of patriots, and the friend of man."* Great is the worth of men of piety and virtue to every community; but when these are found to adorn conspicuous and important stations, it is wholly incalculable. The Godly and the faithful man is not only the most respectable in his private character; he is not only an honor to the State that gave him birth, and to the race from which he sprang, but he is the brightest ornament, and the most extensive benefactor to the world at large.

Virtue is not only necessary to the peace and happiness of private life, but it is that alone by which a nation can rise to greatness, or enjoy any lasting prosperity.

This, in a greater or less degree, is true of all nations; but to those which, like ours, are blessed with free republican forms of government, of which virtue is the leading principle, it is of still the greater usefulness, and the more indispensable necessity. It not only reflects upon them their greatest lustre, but is, in truth, their only sure defence.

When vice and licentiousness, by an injudicious choice, or any unfortunate accident, are advanced to

* Mr. Madison's eulogium in the Assembly.

important and influential stations of honor or profit, or of power; they do not confine themselves within the immediate circle of the court, but they diffuse their baneful influence all around, and gradually pervade and corrupt all parts of the community. Encouraged by the practice, instead of being suppressed by the influence of those who are in authority; they stalk abroad with hardy front, until finally they triumph over the honor, the dignity, the liberties, nay, the very existence of the people. Hence the saying of the wise man in the Proverbs, "when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn."

In contrast with this, let us view the Godly and faithful man, in a like situation, and learn hence to estimate the infinite superiority of his character, and his worth to society.

Walking in the "paths of truth and grace," he is not only himself a most dignified and venerable character, but becomes to others a pattern worthy of all imitation. He exhibits virtue in its native comeliness and purity, and from the eminence of his station he spreads a glory around it. He recommends religion by his example: he restrains vice by his authority. That prevails and rejoices under the patronage of his smiles; this flies from his presence, or shrinks at his approach with all the pusillanimity of conscious guilt. "When the righteous man is exalted, the people rejoice." In him virtue is personified as their representative, and to him their interests, as far as this is necessary, are cheerfully entrusted. The amiable excellence of his character acquires their confidence, and his integrity renders the deposit safe.

Surely the death of such a man is justly to be regretted as a great public loss ; and with affecting propriety has it been made the subject of the Psalmist's lamentations in the passage before us. Such a man, my brethren, was the dear friend whom we have lost.

He was well tried ; he was thoroughly proved by his country in a long and variegated life. He always held himself ready to obey its call on any emergency, and he ever discharged his trust with the utmost fidelity. He entered into its service in the prime of his life, and he continued in it, with but little intermission, to the day of his death.

In every station which this great man filled ; in every sphere of life in which he was appointed to move, I might call upon our fellow-citizens from one end of the continent to the other, and with tears of gratitude they would all bear testimony that he invariably exhibited the evidence and maintained the character of a "Godly and a faithful man."

As long as the people of America shall continue blessed with the enjoyment of peace, of liberty and independence, it will not be forgotten, that next to a kind and gracious God, who always made this country his care, they are greatly indebted for them to the manly firmness, the unremitting exertions, and the inviolable fidelity of GEORGE WASHINGTON.

Raised up by Divine Providence to defend the liberties and vindicate the rights of his country, he nobly stepped forward in the day of her distress, when oppressed by foreign domination, and bleeding from the wounds inflicted by an invading army ; and against a formidable host, led on her little band

of patriots. Then did his mighty soul, which never brooked oppression, exert its energy. A sincere lover of liberty, and "early accustomed to appreciate its value," he exchanged the ease of domestic retirement for the field of battle, and fought valiantly for the people and for "the cities of his God." Nor from this did he withdraw, until liberty was effectually secured, and its triumphs were proclaimed throughout our happy country.

Through many a wearisome and long campaign, and in all the vicissitudes of war, sometimes prosperous, and often adverse, he was the uniform, the faithful, and the steadfast friend.

In his highest prosperity, he entertained no thoughts of ambition; and in the darkest and most gloomy hour, when the hopes of many were beginning to fail, and they were almost ready to give the struggle for liberty up, the steady soul of WASHINGTON, firm and unmoved, animated with the purest patriotism, and fixing his hopes on Heaven, was stable as a rock. He never for a moment deserted the all important cause, nor suffered himself to despair of success. At every hazard he resolved to defend the interests of his beloved country, or that he would not survive its downfall, but perish rather in the general ruin.

If the united voice of America did not render it unnecessary, there are, I perceive in this assembly, not a few who would be ready to attest the justice of the character which I have thus far drawn. There are those here who were with him in the war, almost from the beginning to the end, who were witnesses of his wisdom in the council, and his valor

in the field ; who were trained to arms in his camp, who have often fought by his side, and whom I see alive this day to the friendship which was contracted in adversity, and cemented by the precious blood of many a fallen and many a surviving patriot. Ask these men ; ask all of this description, to a man, who shall be convened throughout America, on this mournful occasion, what the deceased WASHINGTON was ; whether he was always at his post in the hour of danger ; whether he loved his country ; whether he was *faithful* to the important trust which she committed to his hands ? And read the answer in their eyes.

O ! WASHINGTON ! now that thou art gone, delicacy to thy feelings no longer forbids strict justice to thy merits. To thy country thou ever wast a "good and faithful servant."

When the storm of war was over, he took an affectionate leave of his brave companions in arms, resigned his commission into the hands of Congress, and returned to the quiet walks of private life. But, there he was not long permitted to enjoy repose. In him were centered the valour of the soldier, and the wisdom of the sage ; and he was called upon by the unanimous voice of his countrymen, to administer the government which they had ordained, to "preserve domestic tranquillity," and perpetuate the liberty he had contributed so much to acquire. The constitution of the United States was quite a new experiment. It was the result, not only of their united wisdom, but of their mutual concessions also, and the administration of it must of necessity have been an arduous task, to which the

greatest experience, prudence and intelligence alone were adequate. It was in our now deceased friend that these qualities were in the highest degree combined, and on his shoulders was imposed the mighty burden. In the capacity of Chief Magistrate, for eight years, he laboured incessantly to promote the public good, which evidently appeared to be the only object of his ambition.

On the subject of politics, I am but little instructed, and with it, it is still less my inclination to intermeddle. To say nothing, then, of the acknowledged superiority of the beloved President's talents as a statesman, suffice it to observe, that notwithstanding the contrariety of opinion that soon appeared amongst our fellow-citizens respecting government as a science, or the administration of it as an art; notwithstanding that, upon this subject, brother and brother, father and son, were often found divided against each other; yet, not the smallest suspicion of GEORGE WASHINGTON'S integrity ever mingled itself with any disapprobation of public measures.

In March, 1797, he resigned this honorable and important office, and retired once more to his peaceful abode at Mount Vernon, which had long been the favorite object of his wishes. His resignation was accompanied by an affecting token of his love, in communicating to his fellow-citizens the result of his experience, and in tendering to them his last fatherly advice respecting their sentiments and conduct towards each other, and their true policy as a nation. And then, with all the tenderness of parental fondness, he took an affectionate leave.

If, on this sorrowful occasion, a place could be found for any criticism on his style and composition, I would just observe, that the writings of WASHINGTON, correct without study, elegant without art, resemble a native wood-land flower, which displays numberless indescribable beauties to the eye of every beholder, itself alone unconscious of its charms. While his precious memory shall warm and animate, these will please, instruct and edify the latest posterity.

He now flattered himself, that he had bidden a final adieu to all the troubles and perplexities of public life, and that he should be permitted to spend the little remainder of his days in peace. But, alas! the deceitfulness of all earthly prospects! like the Patriarch Abraham, he had to encounter the severest trial in the concluding scene.

His country, alarmed by the apprehension of foreign danger, cast her eyes once more upon her well-tried, faithful General, for her defence, if the calamity which seemed to impend, should actually befall: I have called this the severest trial, because he was now far advanced in years, and his arm was enfeebled by age. But, old as he was, though he heard with grief, he obeyed with promptitude his country's call, and prepared himself once more to take the field, whenever necessity should require, and buckle the armour on his weary limbs.

In this juncture of affairs, it pleased the God of Heaven, whose councils are to us unknown, to take him from us, and release him from all his labours. He called him to put the harness off, and enter into his rest. What fate awaits our beloved country, it

belongs to him alone, who can pry into futurity, to tell. We hope and trust in God, that the olive branch of America will still be regarded, and that our ambassadors abroad and envoys extraordinary, will, by his blessing, succeed in accommodating, on honorable terms, all existing differences, and in perpetuating peace with all the nations of the earth.

But if not; if our ears are again to be assailed by the din of arms, and war shall rage, we shall miss this valiant, faithful man; and the anxious enquiry in America will be, where shall we find another WASHINGTON?

In drawing the character of the great and illustrious, it is not the only object to pay that tribute to merit which justice demands, but especially to exhibit their example for the imitation of others. With this view, permit me to add, that our departed friend was not only a faithful, but a Godly man. Fidelity to his country was an amiable and striking trait in his character; but, to render it complete, we add, piety to God. This, like the oil on Aaron's robe, gives it a sweet perfume; or, like the mantle of Elijah, on the shoulders of Elisha, it spreads majestic grace and glory around it. Such was WASHINGTON. Virtue adorned his private life, and his first act of Providential duty was to dedicate himself to God, and commend his country to his Divine protection. This act of piety made the hearts of all good men in America glad, and they rejoiced under the auspices of a chief magistrate who thus paid homage to the Ruler of the Universe.

But, still more was the piety of their General the ground of their confidence through the more perilous

scenes of war. While his valor and fortitude qualified him, above his fellows, for the command of a patriotic army, this not only endeared him to all the wise and virtuous, but made him, as they rightly supposed, the peculiar care of Heaven. They were not mistaken. This fortified his integrity, and this secured his camp. The valiant Chief, although he was himself an host, and superior in courage and conduct to the opposite commanders, yet knowing that "the battle was not always to the strong," with his eyes directed to Heaven, commended himself and his army to the guidance of infinite wisdom, and to the protection of our omnipotent shield. Thus qualified, he went forth under the banners of the Lord of Hosts: he fought in his fear, and conquered in his name.

"The first in peace and the first in war," he was a singular example of virtue and piety in both. In the humble sphere of private life, in the more splendid chair of state, and amidst the confusion and licentiousness of war, this great man "walked with God." His heart was impressed with the highest reverence for his Holy name, and in his presence the mouth of the profane was shut.

Who of the heroes of antiquity shall compete for fame with the illustrious Chief? Alexander was vain-glorious, and sometimes cruel; Cæsar was ambitious; and the life of Cato terminated in an act of suicide.

But, WASHINGTON was not ambitious. Such was his modesty, that but for the trump of fame, the rising generation had not known that he was the "hero of liberty" who rescued them from bondage.

Guided by the wisdom, and protected by the power, he was also resigned to the will of Heaven. Piety adorned his youth; it rendered his "hoary head a crown of glory," and softened his dying bed. His setting sun went down unclouded and serene, the happy presage of a bright succeeding day.

Alas! "The Godly man hath ceased, and the faithful hath failed."

Heavy and afflictive is the loss which the people of America have sustained by the death of this great man. It is only in some measure retrievable by the improvement we shall make of it. Let us, then, under this sore visitation, learn in the first place, humbly to acknowledge and adore the hand of God. He is the sovereign disposer of all events, and he has a right to do whatsoever he will with his own. In his adorable, but to us mysterious providence, he has taken away our WASHINGTON; and though we cannot but mourn his loss, yet, since it is the will of Heaven, we will endeavour not to repine.

2. To submission to the Divine will, let us add a grateful acknowledgement of Divine goodness. God who hath taken our dear friend away, first gave him to us, qualified for the most important purposes. The whole of his useful life was devoted to the good of his country, and he lived to a good old age. He lived to perform the important work of procuring and establishing the independence of America, and proclaiming liberty to all her sons. Through all the perils and the fatigues of war; amidst the dangers of the field of battle, and under the pitched tent on the cold ground by night, the life and health of the illustrious Chief, and of his valiant army, were most

graciously preserved. Many a brave patriot fell ; but the General, on whom so much depended, was carefully protected from the "pestilence that walked in darkness, and from the arrow which flew by day." Nor was he taken hence, until he saw his country smiling in peace, and settled under the most excellent constitution that any nation on earth ever enjoyed. For all these mercies, "let the people praise thee, O God ; let all the people praise thee."

3. The character of the deceased, while it endears his memory, should also be improved into a source of consolation to all who mourn his death. People of America ! affectionate fellow-citizens of his native State ! ye may weep for yourselves, but weep not for WASHINGTON. He rests at length from all his labours ; and if a mansion be prepared in glory, for piety and virtue, thither I trust he is gone, and there will he shine, as a star in the firmament, for ever and ever. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."

4. Suffer me to recommend the example of our departed friend, to the imitation of his countrymen. It is dignified and lovely, and shews to what perfection human nature may arrive. In this, although he is dead, he still speaks to us. Ye youth of America, the hope of your country ! ye rising patriots of Virginia ! learn that to be truly great, you must be sincerely good.

Who will now fill the place of the American chief ? The expecting eyes of your country are turned upon you. She will have need for you in the cabinet, at least, if not in the field. If you

would be prepared to do her service, study the character, cultivate the virtues, and follow the example of your WASHINGTON.

5. Finally, let us improve this solemn occasion, by serious reflections on our own tendency to dust. We have here no abiding city. "It is appointed to all men once to die," and the temple of this body will soon be dissolved. Let us apply to the Redeemer of the world for pardon and salvation. Let us implore the assistance of Divine grace, that we may "so number our days as to apply our hearts to wisdom." Let us cordially imbibe the principles of piety, and steadily pursue the practice of virtue; so that when this "earthly house of our tabernacle shall be dissolved, we may have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens."

SERMON II.**ON THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD.**

“The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice: let the multitude of Isles be glad thereof.”

Psalms, 97th chap. 1st verse.

THE state of man on earth, is a state of imperfection and of dependence. Ever anxious about futurity, and deeply interested in it, yet unapprised of the events which await him, and which time alone will disclose; seeing but darkly, and imperfectly comprehending the objects which surround him; an incompetent judge, at best, of what is really good for him in the present state, he would seem, indeed, to walk in a vain show, if he were not directed to a power higher than himself. But, when taught to put himself under the guidance of Divine wisdom, and under the protection of an Almighty arm, he will feel himself secure, and will be confident of all necessary support and consolation, considering within himself that “the Lord reigneth.”

It is much to be lamented, however, that presumption too often accompanies ignorance; and, that the blindness of men to their own imperfections, renders them blind, also, to their best interests, and to the necessity of looking up for counsel and wisdom from above. On this account, it is the unhappy lot of many to live without God in the world: in a state of prosperity, without any sense of obligation; and in the day of adversity, without conso-

lation or hope. It is surely evident, from the instability of human things; from the great variety of scenes through which we pass; from the frequent occurrence of untoward events, which we could not foresee, or, foreseeing, were unable to control; from the failure of the best concerted plans, and from the woful effects which success itself is sometimes found to produce, that the lot of man is not at his own disposal. When we see that "the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong," we are led to contemplate the high dispensations of Divine Providence. Hence, then, it is the duty and the privilege of man, to make the Lord his sanctuary, and place his trust in the rock of his salvation. To this we are frequently encouraged in his word; and in his government is the earth invited to rejoice.

In the further contemplation of this subject, we are naturally led to consider the attributes of God, as the ground of our trust and consolation in Him, as the Governor of the World.

1. In the first place, he possesses all power. His arm is strong and mighty. He can do whatsoever he will, and none can hinder him. He ruleth with uncontrollable sway in the armies of Heaven, and doth his pleasure amongst the inhabitants of the earth. He sitteth on his throne and commandeth all the elements. The lightnings flash, the thunder roars, the earthquake rocks the ground, in obedience to his sovereign orders; and they are limited in their extent and operation by his controuling power. He curbs the fury of the tempests, and prescribes their bounds to the billows of the ocean. He restrains the wrath of man, and at his presence the

devils flee. Nothing can withstand his power; nothing resist his will. All created things are in his hand, for he made them all. He, then, who makes the Lord his trust; who puts himself under the protection of the Almighty, shall stand secure. He shall be established on a rock, and say within himself, if the Lord be for me, who can be against me? Dangers may threaten and foes invade; but dangers shall not appal, nor foes prevail against the man whose defence is the munition of rocks. Though weak in himself, he is strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. The language of the Psalmist, on this subject, is very natural, and highly expressive of that confidence which the protection of God inspires: "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do unto me? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear. Though wars should rise against me, in this will I be confident." The favour and protection of an able earthly friend, is no little consolation; but, it is infinitely better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in princes. Many are the exigencies of life, in which none but God can support, or deliver us. His arm is never shortened that it cannot save. He is a ready and an all-sufficient help in every time of need. Does the poor man cry? Is the lonely traveller distressed in the wilderness? The Lord shall send them food. Is innocence helpless, and in any instance oppressed? Let it not despond; it shall not be utterly cast down while the Lord reigneth. He can rebuke the oppressor and set the captive free. Let the widow

rejoice, that the Lord reigneth, for he is the widow's God. Let the stranger rejoice, for God is his shield. Let the orphan rejoice, for God is his stay. Let the whole earth rejoice, for "the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

2. In God, the Governor of the World, there is infinite wisdom to direct the exercise of Almighty power. If he can do what he will, he will also do what is right. He is not only wonderful in working, but he is wise in counsel. The influence of misguided power might injure or destroy whom it meant to befriend and relieve; in which case, there might be more cause to fear, than to rejoice. Men, through mere weakness of judgment, may, and often do, make a destructive display of their power. But, the wise Governor of the World surely will do right. He is perfectly skilled in all the affairs of his government, and his wisdom directs all parts of his dominions. We cannot survey the visible works of his hand without being impressed with a sense of his wisdom. We may well adopt the language of the Psalmist, and say, upon a review of the creation, "Wonderful are thy works, O! Lord, and in wisdom thou hast made them all." He who from a dark confused chaos could bring forth the beautiful and well ordered system of the universe, can surely be at no loss for wisdom to conduct it afterwards. He knows how to order all things wisely, and to accommodate all his works to answer their respective ends. He can bring light out of darkness, and order out of confusion. The dispensations of his providence may many times appear to us, to be intricate and mysterious, dark

and gloomy ; we can neither see the reason of them, nor comprehend the design. We may be unable to trace his footsteps : clouds and darkness may appear to be round about him ; and yet, by events, apparently the most unpromising, his own glory, and the happiness of his creatures shall be promoted. In all such cases, it is the consolation of good and considerate men, that God's providence presides, and that all things are conducted by infinite wisdom. Hence are they encouraged to commit their ways to God, and to ask counsel of him, persuaded that he will direct their steps. When, therefore, God promises to his people that he will lead them and guide them with his eye ; that he will be a light to them in darkness, and that he will direct their steps ; that " he will guide them by his counsel and afterwards receive them to glory," they may confidently commit the keeping of their ways to him. They may rejoice in his government, doubly secured by his power and wisdom.

3. The Lord is a God of infinite goodness. Terrible, indeed, to such guilty sinners as we, would be the strength of the Almighty, if it were not tempered with mercy, and a tender regard to the frailty of his creatures. But, he remembereth our frame, that we are but dust ; and our constant experience of his goodness, changes the dread of his power into a confidence of his protection. He is good, and he doth good continually. His tender mercies are over all his works. " The Lord God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgressions and sins," is his memorial to all generations. He sustains

the weak ; he relieves the oppressed ; he feeds the poor. His mercy visits the habitations of men ; and there is no living creature that does not partake of his bounty. He is ever disposed to be gracious ; but, to those who are in the greatest need of a helper, his goodness is most conspicuous, and his providence seems most actively employed. He beholds the falling tear ; he hears the voice of affliction ; he answers the importunate calls of poverty ; he delights in rendering happy all the subjects of his government. Indeed, our sins often render it necessary that he should contend with us in judgment, and that the dispensations of his providence should be of the afflictive kind. But, even here we cannot distrust the goodness of our God, for his tender compassions always accompany the rod. Afflictions are necessary to reclaim us from sin, which is the only source of lasting sorrow. Under the mild government of God, they are designed for our good, and are really blessings in disguise. We must acknowledge, after all, that our punishment is far less than our iniquities have deserved ; and thus bear our testimony to the goodness of God. Considering the character we sustain as guilty sinners, and the situation in which we are placed as candidates for eternity, the corrections of his hand are but tokens of his love. Afflictions do not spring out of the dust. We are sure that God doth not willingly afflict the children of men. Judgment is his strange work, and mercy is his delight. If he chastise his people, it is only for their good ; it is that they may be reclaimed from dangerous and destructive courses ; and that their light afflictions, which are but for a

moment, may work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. In the mean time, he does not abandon whom he finds it necessary to correct. He is with them in six troubles, and in seven he does not forsake them. His displeasure soon passes away, and he changes the plaintive effusions of sorrow into songs of praise. His "anger," says the Psalmist, "endureth but a moment. In his favour is life. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

4. We may rejoice in the government of God, because it is always righteous and impartial. Sovereign and independent, he is no respecter of persons, and can be under no possible temptation to give any but a righteous decree. He is not to be flattered by compliments, nor terrified by threatenings, nor bribed by gold. It is said, in the book of Proverbs, "that many will entreat the favor of the Prince;" but it is also added, that "favor is deceitful." When men are umpires in any cause, they are liable to an influence that does not proceed from the merits of the case. The different circumstances of the contending parties: the prospect of advantage, or habits of intimacy with one or the other: or the partial discernment of the Judge may induce him to pervert judgment, or may expose him to the danger, against his inclination, of passing an unrighteous sentence. But this happens not under the government of God. He suspends an equal scale, and holds the balance even. The injured and oppressed may appeal to him with confidence, as the avenger of their wrongs. Prosperous wickedness receives no countenance from him; and from the com-

plaints of poverty he turns not away. He regards not the rich any more than the poor: they meet together before him on equal terms; for, they are all the work of his hands. It may be alledged, perhaps, that this doctrine, though necessarily true, is not applicable to the present state of the world; and that it will not bear the test of experience and observation. We see that fraud is practised, and oppression too often exercised with success, amongst men. To this it may be answered, that the gains of dishonesty, and the reign of oppression, are not of any long continuance: and to an attentive observer of the providence of God, even in the present life, it will probably appear, that in the end, he only, that "walketh uprightly, walketh surely." But, however this may be, it is certain that there is a day of retribution approaching, when all these differences shall be finally adjusted; when the righteous shall receive their recompence of reward, and the wicked shall suffer the wages of their iniquity. In the mean time, it is the influence of this impression to support the good man in his integrity, and, in some measure, at least, to arrest the designs of the violent and unjust. Let the good man, then, "commit his way unto the Lord; let him trust in him, and he shall bring forth his righteousness as the light, and his judgment as the noon day."

5. We may rejoice that the Lord reigneth, because he is every where present. Dependent as we are at all times, upon his care and protection, it should be a ground of consolation to us, that he is continually about our path, a present help in every time of need. He is not like the Gods of the Hea-

then, "on a journey, or peradventure asleep, or engaged about other business," when their votaries call upon them in their distress. The Lord is ever near to them that are in trouble. His ear is never "heavy that it cannot hear, nor his arm shortened, that it cannot save." While we perform the labours of the day, the Lord is our sun and shield; and when we lie down at night, we rest secure under his guardian care, for the watchman of Israel never slumbers nor sleeps. He presides over the tumults, and defends from the dangers of the populous city: nor is the obscure inhabitant of the sequestered cottage deprived of his presence. Whether we travel the public road, or roam through the pathless desert, the eyes of God are equally upon us, and we are continually attended by the angel of his providence.

Among the many incidents of human life, it may happen to be one, that we shall be removed from all our earthly friends; and, overtaken by calamity, can find none to whom we can make known our necessities, or from whom we can expect relief; but, no change of place or circumstances, deprives us of the notice and protection of God. He is never far from every one of us, for "in him we live and move, and have our being." The tear that falls in secret, and the sigh which heaves the bosom of the solitary mourner, are noticed by him who is every where present. If we should "take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there would his hand lead us, and his right hand uphold us." In short, whatever we do, or whithersoever we go, we are under the notice and protection of the Ruler of the Universe; and in this sense we

may say in the consolatory language of the Psalmist, "O! Lord, I am continually with thee." Nor is the sense of the Divine administration a support and comfort to the mind, in the different stages of life only, but also, in the hour of our final dissolution. Life and death are equally in his hand. The same staff, which conducts through the former, supports us also in the latter. He, who ruleth in the Heavens, is as much present with us at the close of life, as at our entrance upon it, or our progress through it. Hence the consolation of the Psalmist: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, yet will I fear no evil, for thou art with me."

6. I shall only mention once more, that it is a ground of rejoicing in the government of God, that he ever liveth. If it be a happiness to be under the Divine government at all, it must be no small consolation that it endureth for ever. In the fluctuating state of human things, if we are contented and pleased with the administration of an earthly ruler, we anticipate with pain the period of his dissolution; when he must resign his authority and leave us to a precarious dependence on the whim, perhaps, or on the weakness of his successor. Let the righteous then rejoice in the Lord, "for his kingdom ruleth over all; for, he will guide them by his counsel while they live, and afterwards receive them to glory."

Let us now consider what improvement is to be made of this subject. Various are the reflections which it suggests; but that I may come to a conclusion, I shall content myself with one.

If the Lord reigneth, we may learn on our part, the great importance and the indispensable necessity of piety and virtue. It is the exercise of these only, that can warrant us to expect his protection or his favour. Without a consciousness of our own integrity, how can we trust in God? His mercy will encourage the penitent; his power uphold the upright, and his justice reward the faithful; but, he will by no means clear the guilty.

If our own hearts condemn us not, we may have confidence towards God; but, to this a sense of guilt, unaccompanied by repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, must always prove an insuperable barrier. Let us, then, think upon our ways, and turn our feet to the testimonies of God. Let us apply to the blood of sprinkling, that our consciences may be cleansed from dead works. Let us keep our hearts with all diligence. Let our conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ; that, instead of trembling because a righteous God reigns over us, we may rejoice in his government, now and forever.

SERMON III.

ON THE CONDESCENSION OF GOD.

“What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him?”

Psalms, 8th chap. 4th verse.

It was a survey of the creation, displayed before the eyes of the Psalmist, that drew from him the exclamation in the text. At the time, without doubt, a consciousness of his own insignificance and unworthiness, combined with the splendour and magnificence of the scene he was contemplating, to fill his mind with wonder. “When I consider,” says he, “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?”

When he considered the structure of the Heavens in all their order and beauty, and all their appendages; the dazzling sun, the silver moon, and all the twinkling stars of light, he could speak of them with less emotion; because, nothing less could be expected as a manifestation of the power and wisdom of the Great Architect of Heaven and Earth. Accordingly, in the 19th Psalm, he speaks of them in all the composure of a devout philosopher: “The Heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all

the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun." But, when he comes to consider for whom all these splendid preparations were made; for whose use they were intended and continued, then, as might well be expected, he is lost in astonishment. Can it be, that all these were intended for the accommodation of man! If, with the Psalmist, we take a survey of the visible works of God, and bear in mind, while we are doing so, for whose use they were designed, and to whose accommodation they were all adapted, we shall find reason, and feel a disposition, it is hoped, to join with him also, in his strains of admiration. To this, the subject naturally conducts us. The survey, however, shall be a brief one; because, for one reason, the theme is inexhaustible; but, chiefly because, however stupendous and splendid should be the objects that might meet our eyes, we should be called to contemplate in the history of man, more wonderful things done for him, by his gracious Creator, than the earth, or sea, or air, or sun, or moon, or all the host of Heaven, or all conjoined in one, would be able to exhibit to our astonished view. We shall, however, first pursue the train of reflection pointed out to us in the words of the text, and a few of the verses which follow. Before man was formed, we cannot read, but with wonder, the grand preparations, and the magnificent mansion which God was making for his reception. In these works, although the Almighty might have spoken them all into existence in an instant, by the word of his power, he was pleased to advance by progressive steps. The angels, who are afterwards

represented in the gospel, as prying with outstretched necks into the mysteries of the babe of Bethlehem, we may well suppose, were spectators of the Almighty's works, in the gradual creation of the world, for the residence of man. With wonder, when they saw the earth without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep, they heard the sovereign mandate, and beheld its instantaneous effect, when God said, "let there be light:" when they saw him dividing the light from the darkness, and thus concluding the first day's work. And, when at the end of the fifth, they beheld the work completed; the sun, the moon, the stars, the earth, the sea and the air, all beautifully arranged, and teeming with birds and fish, and flocks and animals of every description, that were calculated for use, how high must have been their anticipation of the purposes for which they were intended! Behold, they were all prepared for the reception and accommodation of man. On the sixth day, God said, "Let us make man," and he created him in his own image, and gave him the dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowls of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. The Almighty is then represented in Holy writ, as taking a survey of the works of his hand, and pronouncing them all very good. Then the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.

All these grand preparations were made for man, before his introduction into his terrestrial paradise. The sun, the brightest natural image of the great Creator; the moon, that rules by night; the earth, that yielded spontaneous fruits and flowers; the

flocks, that were destined to skip on the mountains, or graze in the valley, with all beasts, both tame and fierce; the birds, that cleave the air or warble in the grove; all fish, that swim in the sea, from the leviathan to the smallest tribe—in short, all the animal and vegetable kingdoms were, all of them, created subservient to the use, and subject to the control of man. And what is man? A creature of yesterday, whose breath is in his nostrils; yet, nevertheless, by the appointment of God, the mighty monarch of the land and of the sea; the monarch, in short, of all that he surveys. The sun, who like a giant rejoices to run his race, rises but for the refreshment, and sets but for the repose of man. It enlightens, warms and invigorates him, through all the business of the day; and when it is time to rest, behold, he retires; the evening shades prevail, the curtains of the night are drawn around him, and all nature is hushed to silence, that nothing might interrupt the slumbers of this great lord of all things here below. For him, the forests tower; for him, the mountains rise; for him, the valleys sink; for him, the fertilizing and refreshing shower descends; for him, the meadows are perfumed with flowers; for him, the garden blooms; for him, are the blossoms of spring, the shade of summer, and the fruits of autumn; for him, the whole earth was created to yield her increase.

Having exhibited man principally as lord of this lower world, we will now consider him with respect to the moral qualities and the intellectual powers with which he was endued at his creation, his present state, and future prospects. Could we draw

an adequate description of man in these parts of his character, we should exhibit a picture which would produce very different emotions ; a portrait well calculated to excite our wonder, our regret, our gratitude and our praise.

From the present state of man, it is difficult to conjecture, and impossible to ascertain exactly, what he originally was ; because, our powers, enfeebled by the fall, are inadequate to describe in full, what we are capable of realizing only in part. Yet, as from the fragments of a ruined palace we may behold the vestiges of its original grandeur, so from what remains of the faculties of reason, the powers of genius and the hopes of immortality, we may form some faint conceptions of primeval man. From the word of God, however, we learn, that he held an exalted rank in the scale of his works, capable of conversing with angels, and made but a little lower than they ; nay, capable of maintaining a familiar and holy intercourse with Him who created them all. Like the second Adam, the great restorer, the first, also, when he came from the hands of his Maker, was without sin ; he was pure and undefiled. When the rest of the works of creation were completed, and God was about to create man, as if omnipotence required aid, or infinite wisdom lacked counsel, he is represented in his word as calling a council in Heaven on the occasion : “ And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness ; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man

in his image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them; and God said unto them, be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." And forthwith, to confer an honor upon Adam, and vest him with this sovereignty, God was pleased to cause every fowl of the air, and every beast of the field to pass in review before him, "to see what he would call them; and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof;" Gen. 2, 19. Thus was man created in the image of God, in dignity and honor, in righteousness and holiness, with dominion over the creatures. O, highly honored! O, happy human pair! In paradise they walked with God, and held delightful communion with him, entirely conformed to his image. Man was not reduced to the necessity of earning his bread by the sweat of his brow; briars and thorns did not then infest the ground: but, while the earth produced for man spontaneous fruits and flowers; all that was pleasant to the eye and savoury to the taste, he employed the exalted capacities of the enraptured soul, in contemplating the glorious perfections of his Maker, in celebrating the riches of his grace, and admiring the beauty of his holiness. These, indeed, were gladsome times; then did peace and happiness abound on earth. Concord and harmony subsisted amongst all the works of God. Then did "the wolf dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion, and

the falling together ;” Isaiah, 11, 6. Then was no danger to be apprehended from the asp, nor from the cockatrice’s den. But, above all, the supreme love of God filled and transported the heart, and holy affections of God’s intelligent creature, man ; and no human passion excited any other emotions than those of wonder, gratitude and praise.

This will be, in some measure, the state of things again, in the reign of the Redeemer, who will bring in an everlasting righteousness, and cause religion to dwell on earth once more.

In the mean time, alas, a most distressing reverse of things presents itself to our view, in the history and state of man. Who could suppose, that in the midst of all the unspeakable happiness which he enjoyed, and the bright prospects and promises that were placed before him, he would ever have withdrawn his allegiance from his Maker ?*

* The manuscript of this sermon is incomplete. It was manifestly the author’s intention, which he executed in delivering the sermon, to describe the fallen state of man and its consequences, as illustrative of the condescension and compassion of God, in bestowing on him, not only the blessings of this life, but of salvation through Jesus Christ.

SERMON IV.**THE REMEMBRANCE OF GOD.**

“Remember now thy Creator, in the days of thy youth.”

Eccles. 12th chap. 1st verse.

WHEN we consider the nature of God, and the condition of man, we find from the comparison, that the happiness of the latter was the design of his creation. He who inhabits eternity and the praises thereof; who is completely blessed in the enjoyment and contemplation of his own perfections, cannot be supposed to have derived his happiness from the creature which he made; and he whose darling attribute is mercy, and whose goodness is over all his works, could have no other view in bringing thousands into existence, than the advancement of his declarative glory in the happiness of his creatures. The different orders of God's creation are calculated for different degrees and different kinds of happiness. The desires of the inferior orders are satisfied by temporal enjoyments, and circumscribed by the narrow bounds of time. But, man seems calculated for more refined enjoyments than mere sensual pleasures, and has more extensive desires than can be satisfied by the perishable objects of time and sense. His rational nature is not satisfied with bare meat and drink; but, whilst animal nature is supported by them, his soul must feed on intellectual pleasures, or otherwise he is not happy. He as-

pires to things more refined than material substance, and more lasting than time. In a word, he is destined to immortality, and this instruction seems engraven on his nature, as well as inculcated in his catechism, "that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever."

This being the case, it is evident, that man has more noble employments in the practice of his duty, and more refined pleasures, as the object of his pursuits, than the inferior orders of the works of God: not to insist on the exalted nature of his intellectual powers, the very time and manner of his creation denote his superior eminence. For, after the Almighty Creator had, as it were with a word, spoken all other creatures into existence, when he was about to create the Lord of his lower world, whom he intended to endue with reason, and to make in his own image and likeness, as if it were a work of too much importance for infinite wisdom to contrive without deliberation, he said, "Come, let us make man." The human race is not a tumultuous and unthought-of work; they were designed for eternal existence, and created with powers suited to the final end of their destination. Surely, then, man should be more rational in his conduct, and more aspiring in his pursuits, than the irrational creatures; as he has, by nature, a more excellent inheritance than they. He alone is endued with reason, and made capable of knowing and remembering his Creator. But, alas, it is hard to say, whether he is more distinguished by his privileges, than he has distinguished himself by the misimprovement of them. He only, of all the works of

God on earth, has not answered the end of his creation. By nature he is but a little lower than the angels, and by practice but a little higher than the irrational herd. How strange and unaccountable a being is man! How high! How low! How noble; yet how mean! At once almost a God and brute. Through the allurements of present objects, he becomes entirely engaged in the pursuit of temporal, perishable things, and mistakes his principal interests, the eternal interests of his soul. He lives, as if this were his ultimate place of residence, and as if he were not destined to eternity, and were not calculated for purer enjoyments beyond the grave. Instead of engaging in the earnest pursuit of those rational pleasures, for which men by nature were intended, they are wholly given up to the gratification of sensual appetites, temporal honors or emoluments. They place their happiness in pampering the body; which, instead of being the source of health and happiness, is generally the source of disease and misery. They forget, that the body is the less noble part of man; that it is fast hastening to decay, and that the more, by the very pains they take in nursing it; and that at best they only render it a richer prey to worms. Surely God has endued men with reason in vain, if they only employ it in pursuit of enjoyments which are common to them with the brutes, and in which it is probable the brutes surpass them. The ambitious climb the steep ascent of honor, not considering that it is but an imaginary bubble, that depends upon another's breath, easily lost and hard of acquisition, and that they only fall the lower, in proportion to the height

to which they ascended. Others, more irrational still, lay claim to happiness in rioting and dissipation, which they call pleasures. How eager are they in the pursuit of intemperance and disease! Preposterously they pervert the order of nature, and waste the season which indulgent Heaven allotted for the repose of man, in scenes of wickedness. View these votaries of pleasure arising in the morning from the vigils of the card-table, morose and peevish for the loss of money or the want of rest. What horrid spectacles will you then behold! What meagre faces! What hollow eyes and ghastly looks! The countenance as pale and lifeless, as if they had just risen from the grave. Unable to discharge the most ordinary functions of life, they shut their lifeless eyes upon the sun; go with the pleasurable owls to bed, and as they had misspent the night, they also waste the day in sleep. And is this the happiness of a rational creature?

It is only God, and the things of religion, that are a competent portion for the soul, the better part of man; and unless to these objects we direct our aim, we shall forever lose the happiness to which our natures are adapted. Try all the arts of the world in the prosecution of artificial happiness, and you will find them fruitless, because they are unnatural. We may pronounce upon them all, in the judgment of the preacher, "vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

Let me recommend to you, then, the opinion of the wise man, who knew the full value of human enjoyments: "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man;" that is,

the whole duty, and the whole happiness of man. Similar to this, is the direction given in the text: "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth."

In the further prosecution of this subject, I shall endeavour, in the first place, to explain what it is to remember our Creator.

In the second place, to enforce the obligations we are under to remember God; and

In the third place, to consider the propriety of beginning this work in the days of our youth, as the most favourable season of our lives.

It is very common in the sacred Scriptures, to see single, comprehensive expressions used to denote the substance of religion; such as faith, wisdom, the fear of the Lord, and the knowledge of the Holy.

More particularly to remember our Creator, is, in the first place, to have a habitual sense impressed on our minds, of the nature, perfections and omnipresence of God, and of our relation to, and dependance upon Him. Necessarily connected with these reflections, is the performance of the duties which we owe to him, as our Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, Redeemer.

The impression of the greatness and majesty of God, will fill us with becoming awe and adoration, and the sense of his goodness will excite our love and gratitude. To remember God, is, in a word to acknowledge him in all our ways, and to pay our homage and adoration to him. It is for want of this remembrance, that mankind, in general, are so careless and unguarded in their conduct. Did they endeavor to entertain just notions of God, of his purity and holiness, and of his omniscience and omni-

presence; if they considered that he was, as it were, an eye witness of all their actions, and that he was of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and would bring them to a severe account, they surely would not dare to sin. It is the glory and happiness of man, that he is capable of knowing his Creator. The irrational creatures know him not; they are, indeed, sustained by the common bounties of his providence, and are, as well as men, the constant beneficiaries of his goodness; but they are not capable of looking up to the author of their mercies, and not knowing to whom they are indebted, they feel not those noble and exalted pleasures, which the lively sensations of gratitude afford. The recollection of our relation to God, and our dependance on him, will, in another view, point out the duties which also are included in the remembrance of him. Is he our Maker? We will then obey him. Is he our Father? We will love and fear him. Is he our Benefactor? We will be grateful to him. Is he our Redeemer? We will confide in him, and devote ourselves to him.

This leads me, in the second place, to enforce our obligations to remember God.

Nothing, certainly, more naturally points out obligation, than the idea of Creator. We are his, for he has made us, and not we ourselves. He challenges an especial propriety in us, and to him our services are justly due. But, how apt are proud, presumptuous men to forget their Creator, and to contend that they are rather the effect of chance! The idea of Creator implies obligation, and inferiority; and, in consequence of obligation, they are

accountable for their actions: But, such is the pride of the heart of man, he is not contented with being the Lord of the lower creation, but he wishes, also, to own no superior, in Heaven or Earth. Adam, their stock, aspired to an equality with God, and the corrupted branches seem to have inherited the dreadful contagion. Plunging into the depths of Philosophy, falsely so called, and availing themselves of all the chicanery of scepticism, they foolishly endeavor to account for the formation of the world, and all its inhabitants, by a blind, fortuitous concourse of atoms, drawn together by I know not what imaginary impulse. That the system of the world was formed by a concourse of atoms, is strictly true; but they proceeded according to a plan devised by Infinite wisdom, and carried into execution by Almighty power. If it were not so, it would be difficult to say, why we never see a commodious and stately edifice erected by this unaccountable jumble of atoms. Besides, whence came these atoms, or who created them?

The combined order and harmony of God's works, and our security in the world, is another obligation on us, to remember our Creator. It is by his bounty, not only that we were at first created, but also, that we are constantly preserved. The same power that first produced the inanimate parts of the creation, still preserves them in their revolutions: and he who first created man, upholds him still in being. Miserable would be our lot, were we to forget our Creator, or let go our dependance on him. If to blind chance, we ascribed our creation, we should have no security for our continuance in life,

but would be under constant apprehensions, lest another blind, unlucky chance, should throw into confusion the works of her creation, and crush us in the general wreck. When, therefore, we consider our wondrous frame, and view the works of nature, let us, with reverence and adoration, remember our Creator. Alas, it is the consciousness of guilt that compels men to deny God, and in order to avoid the consequences that would follow, if they acknowledged him, and to allay the terrors of a future judgment, they endeavor to argue, or rather, to stupify themselves into the absurd belief, that all things come by chance, until at length "the fool hath said, in his heart, there is no God." But, is the sluggard to learn a lesson from the industrious ant? So let those who refuse to remember their Creator, learn instruction from the most stupid and sluggish of the irrational herd. "The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people do not consider."

Again, if the idea of God as our Creator, is not a sufficient obligation to remember him, let us then try the force of gratitude, while we consider him as our bountiful benefactor. Had he created us only to make us wretched, and to answer cruel purposes by our slavish subjection, the bare idea of Creator, might perhaps, fail to impress us. But, for our own happiness did he create us; by his kind providence he upholds us in life, and he daily feeds us with his loving kindness. He clothes the lilly of the valley and feeds the young ravens when they cry; and particularly he is ever mindful of the children of men; he feeds and clothes, and gives us

all things richly to enjoy. He is good, and does good continually, making his sun to shine and the rain to fall upon the evil and upon the good. The husbandman commits his seed into the furrow, but it is God that giveth the increase. He gives us rain from Heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with joy and gladness. He graciously brings forth the fruits of the earth, and in due time, blesses us with a plenteous harvest, abundantly providing for man and beast; and surely when his people eat, they should not forget him. With his helping hand, he is ever near us to supply our wants. Verily, my brethren, "he is not far from every one of us, for in him we live and move and have our being."

There is no living creature who has not experienced the sweetest emanations from this benign and blessed fountain. The guardian angel of his providence, is ever nigh us to direct our steps, and deliver us from troubles and impending danger. When our enemies invade us, with his own right hand he repels the blow and gives us peace; making us to sit down under our own vines and our own fig trees, having none to make us afraid; he turns the swords into plough-shares, and spears into pruning-hooks. The people of this land, my brethren, have the greatest reason to remember God, who pleaded their cause against their powerful enemies. With a little variation, we may thankfully adopt the praises of the Psalmist, "If it had not been the Lord, who was on our side," may America now say, "If it had not been the Lord, who was on our side when men rose up against us, then they had swallowed us up quickly, when their wrath was kindled against us."

Did the children of Israel look back to the twelve stones which Joshua erected as a monument of the goodness of God, in conducting them safely through the river Jordan? So let us, also, look back to the right hand of God, which fought our battles in the late oppressive war, and conducted us safely through a sea of blood, to the land of peace and freedom. Shall we, then, not remember God, who has done so great things for us? Surely we will make mention of his goodness. O! clap your hands together and sing praises, all ye people. But, why enumerate particular obligations? Our whole lives are the monuments of the goodness of our Creator. Young and old have reason to remember him. Young men and maidens! Remember him who made you his care in your helpless infancy, and guides you through the slippery paths of youth. Old men and matrons! Look back to that gracious hand that has supported you from the very womb; whose good providence has followed you through every period of your lives; has given you the honor of a hoary head, and is still the staff of your old age. Every day we have fresh cause to remember our Creator; he is ever multiplying his mercies, though, alas! we are too unthankful; he is daily increasing our obligations to him for his goodness, and has engraven, as it were, on all our enjoyments, the most affecting mementoes.

Once more; we are not only under obligations, gratefully to remember our Creator for the bounties of his providence, but more particularly for the special blessings of his grace, and the hopes of everlasting salvation through Jesus Christ. God, in

his gracious providence, had provided for man before he made him. He settled him in the beautiful garden of Eden, where he found all things ready to his hand and appropriated to his use. He honored him with the title and rank of Lord of the Creation; and the Earth, of her own accord, produced all things for him. But, even in this delightful situation, he abused the goodness of God, and lifted up his heel against the hand that made him, and loaded him with kindnesses and tender mercies. But, so merciful was our Creator, that he did not destroy man, as in justice he might, but still had mercy on the work of his hands. His soul, which bore the moral image of its Creator, was precious in his sight, and he provided for its recovery through Jesus Christ. Thus, to the bounties of his providence, he added the last and most costly gift of his own dear Son. Surely, then, that love requires the most grateful remembrance, which moved God to pay so great a price for our salvation. Had all nature smoked on the altar of Heaven, in atonement for the sin of man, it would have been nothing to the costly blood of the eternal Son of God. Surely that Saviour deserves our warmest love, who, for our sakes, left the bosom of his Father and all the joys of Heaven, to take upon himself the burden of our sins, and die upon the cross, that he might purchase life for us. Surely he must be lost to every sense of gratitude and every tender feeling, who could forget such boundless love. What were we, or what our fathers before us, that God should do such great things for us? Had one of our fellow-men done us essential service, we should be accounted vile, did

we not endeavour to make some compensation. But, the grateful remembrance of his favours, is all the return we can make to the Almighty; it is all that he requires, and surely we should not be deficient in that. The sufferings of our innocent Saviour, borne on our account, call for our remembrance. Look back to the agonies of Gethsemane's garden, where he sweated great drops of blood. Follow him to Calvary, and view him toiling up the hill with the weight of his cross upon him; think what he suffered when his God forsook him; think what he suffered when they nailed him to the accursed tree, and his precious side was pierced with the spear; then see salvation streaming from every vein, for the sake of guilty men. Was it not amazing pity? Was it not love beyond degree, that induced our blessed Jesus to endure all this? Surely, then, we must ever hold him in the most grateful and affectionate remembrance. Surely, if we have tears to shed, we must shed them here; if we are capable of the sense of gratitude, this spectacle must call it forth.

The bloody garment of Julius Cæsar, who was stabbed in the Senate house, kindled afresh the remembrance of his friends, and called forth all their pity. But, what is the blood of a desperate man, to the costly blood of the Son of God? Turn your eyes to that sad spectacle which we just contemplated on Calvary's hill. Who is this that cometh from Edom with garments rolled in blood? It is Christ the Lord. See in his side the stab that was given by the accursed spear, and mark how the blood of Jesus follows it. And whence, my breth-

ren, are all these sufferings? Let us ever remember it with heartfelt gratitude; let us call forth all the powers of our souls, to bless and magnify the Lord; it was for the sake of guilty men.

The benefits which we derive from the sufferings of our blessed Lord, also call loudly for our grateful remembrance. These are no other than Heaven and everlasting happiness. He has obtained a complete victory for us over death, the last and greatest enemy of our souls. As he formerly divided the floods of Jordan for his chosen people to pass through to the promised land, so does he also, by his grace, divide the swelling floods of that cold Jordan which separates between the world of misery and the Heavenly Canaan, and opens a passage to the promised land of everlasting rest.

I proceed now, in the last place, to consider, in a few words, the propriety of remembering our Creator, or beginning the duties of religion in the days of our youth.

It has ever been remarked, that youth is the most favorable period for qualifying ourselves, to sustain, with ease and dignity, the offices of future life: whatever be the occupations which we are to follow, and whatever the character we are to sustain, we must be trained to them while the mind is pliant. The oak is not easily bent, after it has grown stubborn with age; but in whatever direction we would have the tree to grow, we must bend it in the twig. Thus is youth a favorable season, in which to form the mind to religion: it then is young and tender, easily susceptible of Divine impressions: it has not yet been infected with the vices of the world, nor ren-

dered obstinate and inflexible by long habits of sin. If we begin, when young, to regard the things of religion, and practice its duties, it will become easy and desirable, and by custom it will become, as it were, a second nature. With good reason did the wise man advise to train up a child in the way in which he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it. I am well aware, that religion is represented by a wicked world, as too melancholy a thing to be engaged in, in our youth, and as it is necessary, they allow it a place at some more convenient season, which convenient season, perhaps never, never comes. Religion is deferred to be the companion of old decrepid age, or the last refuge of a dying bed: but these are both unfavorable seasons; old age is too lifeless for vigorous exertion, and a death-bed repentance is a fatal delusion, by which thousands have perished. When nature is exhausted by disease, or our bodies racked with excruciating pains and our weeping friends surround our beds, expecting in a few days to follow our breathless corpses to their long home; when the powers of our minds as well as bodies, are almost worn out; is this a time, think you, to work the great work of our salvation, and make our final peace with God, only because we can no longer indulge ourselves in sin?

Besides, what is called a death-bed repentance, is generally delusive and insincere. In the hour of our dissolution, when the soul looks through the veil to the world of spirits; when the consciousness of guilt, in neglecting God, preys upon our minds, and the awful terrors of the Almighty are unfolding to our view, then, indeed, we feel compunction of

heart and a dreadful kind of repentance, but not a repentance which is unto life. It proceeds not from real sorrow on account of sin, but on account of the punishment of it; not from unfeigned love to God, but from the fear of his wrath and indignation. Alas, we have too many instances of this kind of repentance, in those who apparently were drawing near to the gates of death. What earnest supplications did they make to God, that he would not cut them off? What solemn promises did they make, that they would amend their lives, and devote the remainder of their days to him, if he would be pleased to spare their lives and raise them from the bed of languishing? And, when in his mercy he heard their prayers and restored them again to strength, how soon have they forgotten their promises, and returned to their former wicked courses, as the dog to his vomit, or the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire? Let me advise you, trust not to a death-bed repentance.

And what can be your prospects in putting off the care of religion to old age, which is too cold and lifeless to enter warmly into the pursuit of it? Do you suppose that old age of itself, will inspire religion, or that your propensity to evil will be more easily broken, when you have, as it were, become veterans in sin, and are confirmed in it by long habitual custom? After you have spent your whole life in sin, and have arrived at that period when exhausted nature will no longer afford fuel to your desires; will you then devote the miserable refuse of your days to God? And, have you then reason to believe, that he will accept the offering at your hands,

when you thought your youthful days too good to be spent in his service? He has given us reason to believe the contrary. "Because I have called," says he, "and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I, also, will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh: when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you, then shall you call upon me, but I will not answer you; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me;" Prov. 1, 24. But, lastly, supposing that old age was the most favourable season for the business of religion, let me ask you what security have you, that you will ever arrive at it? Consult your own observation, and you will find the chance is much against you: it is comparatively but a few who arrive to three score years and ten. What, though your hill seems at present to stand strong, and length of days is promised by your ruddy countenance? Think not that nothing but old age can cut you off. You are every day exposed to a thousand snares, and in the midst of life you are in death. If he, who has the issues of life, only withholds his supporting hand, or sends forth his commission to the king of terrors, the stoutest of you, my young friends, will fall as easily a prey to death, as the old hoary head, which blossoms for the grave, and already bows to salute his kindred dust.

SERMON V.**ON INFIDELITY.**

“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you, an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.”

Hebrews, chap. 3, 12th verse.

THE connexion which subsists between principle and conduct, gives rise to the requisition of faith, so frequently made in the Gospel, and sufficiently shews its necessity. It is not, I presume, that there is any peculiar merit in the thing itself, but that it is the principle which prompts obedience to the Divine Will. If Abraham obeyed God, it was because he believed the record which God had given. It may also be said of faith, that it not only leads to the performance of what is required of us, but that, in a moral sense, it ascertains the character of every action thus performed. And hence it is said, that without faith, it is impossible to please God. Actions in themselves, are, strictly speaking, I believe, neither good nor bad; and it is not peculiar to theology, but common to that with every approved system of human ethics, that their value should be estimated by the motives which gave them birth.

If such be the nature and necessity of faith, we need not be surprised at the caution which is given us by the Apostle in the text.

If faith be necessary, unbelief must be fatal. If without faith it be impossible to please God, the in-

fiel must perish. Unbelief is assigned in the passage before us, as the reason why, any who came out of Egypt by Moses, did never enter, however, on the promised land of rest. On the contrary, we are told, that the carcasses of some of them fell in the wilderness. The account which is given of them by the Apostle, together with his comment upon it, is in the following words: "Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest."

"But, with whom," says the Apostle, "was he grieved forty years? Was it not with them that had sinned; whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom swore he, that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see," says he, "that they could not enter in, because of unbelief."

Thus, on the one hand, we behold faith and obedience associated together, and their reward is eternal Life; on the other, infidelity and sin, and their consequence is Death.

The contrast thus drawn, between these two descriptions, has prepared the way, for the execution of my purpose, in the present discourse; which is, in general, to enforce the admonition given us by the Apostle.

This is an age of general and anxious inquiry in the Christian world. The Scriptures of the old and new Testament, purport to be of sacred authority, and to contain a revelation of the will of God to man. The judgment we pass upon this book,

will, no doubt, involve the most important consequences. Our final happiness may depend upon our embracing it: and to reject it, may involve us in everlasting ruin. It is not my object now to examine the evidences which accompany it, for this has often been done already, by eminently wise and virtuous men; but only to submit some considerations which should administer caution in the investigation of the subject, and also point out the dangerous consequences of a wrong decision.

1. One consideration which entitles it, on the first appearance, to the highest respect, and the most candid examination, is the high authority on which it claims our attention. It addresses itself to us, not as the word of man, but as the word of God. Every precept which it enjoins, and every threat that it denounces, is delivered to us under no less a sanction than this: "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." To reject it, then, upon slight and insufficient reasons; to contemn its authority and disobey its injunctions, is to run the dreadful hazard of being "found fighting against God." It is no less than to say, "Who is the Lord, that he should reign over us?" I by no means intend to insinuate, that the pretensions which the Scriptures make to a Divine original, are, of themselves, a satisfactory evidence that they are genuine. I only insist, at present, that this circumstance renders them respectable and important to us, and calls for the utmost candor and impartiality in determining upon the reception which we shall give them. If we should reject them, without examination, or examining them with prejudice, should reject them without evidence of

their falsehood, would not the error of our conduct, and our punishment too, be aggravated by this consideration, that God had called, and we had refused; that the Lord had spoken, and we would not hear! We treat not thus the edicts of earthly rulers: whatever comes to us under the sanction of their authority, we receive with respect; nor do we disown its obligation upon us, until we are convinced by indubitable testimony, that it is the fabrication of some impostor. In such case, if any man were to tell us that it was only a cunning fable, contrived for the sole purpose of imposing on our credulity, or perhaps, for something worse, and should advise us to disbelieve it, or to resist its authority, we should think it prudent, I imagine, to consider, seriously and impartially, the proofs which he offered; we would weigh every circumstance; we would see what the edict contained; we would examine into the character of the man; we would enquire, whether he himself might not be an impostor; whether he might not have some sinister object himself in view; and we should think it neither wise nor safe to follow his advice, unless we were thoroughly convinced by his arguments. Shall we treat with less respect, then, the high authority of God? Shall we hastily reject what comes to us in his name? A thorough, and even a scrupulous investigation, is not to be condemned. This is the province of our reason, and to this we are invited.

Let us examine the Scriptures, then; for every principle of duty and interest requires this of us; and let us not reject them, without first deliberating before we conclude; let us convict before we con-

demn. Let us be able to demonstrate, by the most incontestable documents, that the Scriptures are spurious, and the belief of them a delusion; and when we have done this, let us reject them. Let us not be so inconsistent, as to disdain the prescriptions of the most high God, and at the same time suffer ourselves to be led blindfold, by those of wicked and designing men. The venerable authority on which they claim to be delivered, demands from us the most reverential attention, and strongly enforces the caution in the text, "To take heed, lest there be in any of you, an evil heart of unbelief."

2. The contents of the sacred Scriptures are of such a nature, as to be highly interesting to us, and, therefore, it is of much moment that we judge rightly concerning them. They give an account of the original rectitude, and the subsequent lapse and apostacy of man. They inform us that all are now included in unbelief; that all flesh have corrupted their ways, and are, of consequence, exposed to the wrath and displeasure of God. They inform us, that He so loved the world as to send his Son to seek and save that which was lost. They proclaim to us through Him, the offers of peace and pardon; and they declare, that there is no other name given under Heaven, amongst men, whereby we can be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ; that whosoever believeth in Him, shall have everlasting life, and that he who believeth not, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. If any thing can command attention, or inspire caution, surely it is that which is contained in the Scriptures. If the statement which they give of the situation of man be

true, then it is truly said of the Scriptures, that they contain the words of everlasting life. When we consider this, the frivolous conceit of a late plagiarist infidel, in comparing these with the writings of Homer, must dwindle into insignificance, or sink into contempt. What, if the Grecian poet wrote, or did not write the history of the Trojan war? And what, if the facts which he records be either true or false? What, if we believe them, though they be but fictions? Or what though we disbelieve them, if they are even true? It is a matter of the most perfect indifference. We gain nothing on the one hand; we forfeit nothing on the other. But, can the same be said of the sacred Scriptures? Are they only to be considered as works of genius? If they were, it would, indeed, be of no great importance whether we gave credit to their authenticity or not. We might content ourselves with admiring the imitably sublime description which they give of the lion, the leviathan, and the war-like horse. But, it is not their object to please the fancy, but to save the soul. We find in them these very serious words, or words to this effect: "Whoso believeth shall be saved, and he who believeth not shall be damned."

Suppose, then, for a moment, the Scriptures to be true, and we refuse them credit: suppose that a Saviour is provided for us and we reject him: suppose that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; that he will one day judge the world in righteousness, and we call him an impostor: the consequence is serious indeed. There is no hope of salvation for us; we must perish. We may so conduct ourselves here,

as to be miserable hereafter, if the Scriptures be false ; but, if they be true, and we reject them, we must be undone.

You will be pleased to bear in mind, that I am not asserting the authenticity of the Scriptures, nor attempting to prove it. I leave this to the decision of those, who have not yet decided. But, I think that the considerations which they suggest, are of sufficient importance to invite an inquiry, and to forbid a hasty judgment. It is possible, that some to whom I am addressing this discourse, may already have taken up an unfavorable opinion. It is possible, too, that they may have taken it up rashly ; that they may have never read the Bible, nor the evidences of truth, with which it is attended ; that they may have examined but one side of the question ; nor, even that thoroughly, but taken it on credit. It is possible, that most of our modern infidels are of this description ; and if so, their conduct is irrational in the extreme. They proudly refuse their assent to truths, that are proved to the satisfaction of every impartial inquirer, and yet implicitly believe in unbelief itself. They fulfil one part of the Scripture, which they affect so much to despise, in straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel. Yet, in this we might be indulged, if it were not as unsafe as it is irrational. It is certainly most dangerous, if the Scriptures be true ; and without inquiry, we cannot tell whether they are so or not. And, as they involve considerations so extremely serious, it is both our duty and our interest to give them a fair and thorough examination, and

to take heed lest there be in any of us, an evil heart of unbelief.

3. There is reason also, for the utmost caution and circumspection, lest in determining upon this subject, we substitute prejudice in the room of conviction. It is worthy of attention, that the Apostle speaks in the text of "an evil heart of unbelief," which seems to imply that it is more the depravity of our affections, than any defect in our understanding, that leads to error. In most instances, perhaps, we are too prone to consult our inclinations in preference to our judgment. We easily yield our assent to what we would wish to be true; but it is with the utmost reluctance, that we will be persuaded to admit unwelcome truths. It is no wonder, then, that we should be averse to the Gospel which so universally thwarts and opposes us. Nothing can be more repugnant to the propensities of depraved nature, than the purity of its precepts, or the rigor of its restraints. They require of us mortification and self-abasement. They stand directly opposed to every inordinate desire, and to all licentiousness of manners; to the designs of injustice, and the projects of ambition; to every purpose of revenge, and to all the unruly passions, in short, which agitate the human mind. All these claim an indulgence which the Gospel denies, and, therefore, it is reasonably to be expected, that they should set themselves in array against it. This is the very reason why it is embraced with so little cordiality by many who yet believe it to be true; who acknowledge its authority, but do not relish its precepts.

Is there not some cause of suspicion, then, that what we call disbelief, may resolve itself, at last, into nothing more than an ill-judged opposition to its truth? Hence it may be, that we so readily subscribe to the blasphemies of infidels. We are pleased to hear them revile what we ourselves dislike, and receive them as our prophets, because they appear to be our friends. In more familiar instances, we see that men, when filled with prejudice, will extol a character whom they believe to be base, for the express purpose of traducing whom they know to be innocent. If such malignity, then, be found in the human mind, ought we not, with caution, to listen to the objections which it may reasonably be supposed to suggest against the Christian religion? It must not escape observation, upon this subject, that it represents the heart of man as naturally prone to evil. A persuasion of the truth of this assertion, may be derived from other sources, than Divine revelation. We carry the evidences of it in our own bosoms; and he who would call it in question, must contradict the testimony of universal experience. It is a difficult matter, then, for men to indulge themselves in the practice of iniquity, as long as they believe the truth of Christianity. We could wish, therefore, the Scriptures were not true, very falsely calculating, that in that case, we should be released from every unwelcome restraint. Ought we not, in reason, then, to be distrustful of ourselves? Is there no cause to suspect, that on this account alone, we are so disposed to embrace the forlorn hopes of infidelity, and that, in order to spare our lusts, we endeavour to discard our faith?

4. It seems to be an inquiry worth making also, whether our interest does not lie, if it could be done, in exploding the Gospel. I mean, whether our conduct hitherto has not been stamped with such moral turpitude, as to leave us neither part nor lot, in the promises which it contains, but expose us only to the threatenings it denounces. This is a possible case; and if it be ours, we are not to be considered as very impartial judges. A good and upright man would wish, at least, the Scriptures might, in the end, prove true; but the interest of the wicked and licentious lies another way, and therefore, their inclinations accompany it. They fain would hope the Scriptures are a fiction; and upon the same principle, and on equal evidence, "the fool hath said, in his heart, there is no God." We cannot but suspect, I think, if we will judge with candor, that there must be something or other wrong in that system, which would place the utmost hopes to which a man could aspire, in total annihilation. It is true, indeed, that a late infidel has expressed a hope of happiness in a future world; but his imitative disciples do not seem so sanguine in their expectations, either as to themselves or him; and, therefore, they have added to their creed, that there is no hereafter. In this, they are the more consistent of the two; but, surely, when we have brought ourselves to this pass, it is time to make a pause, and consider, seriously, whether we are not building on a sandy foundation, and whether we may not possibly find, to our loss, that we shall be immortal.

But, that I may not seem, which, indeed, is not my intention, to draw any advantage from the very

vulnerable character to which I have just now alluded, it is but fair to acknowledge, that there are, also, men of good moral character who think unfavorably of the authenticity of the Scriptures. Yet, this is a matter of no moment to those whose duty it is to examine for themselves. If the Scriptures be false, we can only reject them with safety; that is, without guilt, when we know them to be so: and if they be true, the authority of their opinions will afford us no protection. But, it may be asked, What could induce men of good character to reject the Scriptures, but a conviction, upon sufficient evidence, that they are spurious? To this I answer, that the question proceeds from a misconception of the doctrines which are contained in the Gospel. The pride of those who call themselves Philosophers, by no means tallies with that humility which is so characteristic of the Christian temper. He who would be wise to salvation, must be clothed with humility, and be contented to sit, like Mary, at the feet of Jesus, and hear his words. You may judge, then, that this would be received as a hard saying by those who are ever wise in their own conceit, and that of course, they would be as much disposed as any description of men whatever, to discredit, or at least to reject, a system of discipline which would so effectually mortify their pride and rob them of all their glory. This is the reason why true knowledge is represented, in Scripture, as hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes. Another consideration is, that if the Scriptures be true, these men who thus reject them, are to be considered only as persons devoted to destruction.

There is an ignominy in punishment, which always changes pity into contempt for the sufferers. What consideration, more powerfully than this, could excite enmity against the gospel, which denounces such punishment on men, who are too proud to bear the yoke of a crucified Saviour, and too wise to be instructed in the things which belong to their peace. These considerations are suggested, only to caution against the influence of particular names, which have probably made more infidels than all the sophistical arguments which made infidels of themselves.

5. I observe, once more, that in determining upon the credit which we shall give to the Scriptures, we should see to it, that we do not reject them for objections which lie equally against other writings, which we yet receive as genuine; and that we do not discard them against evidence, equal, or in general, superior to that on which we admit the genuineness and truth of other authorities and institutions. To admit one thing as true, and reject another as false, when the circumstances attending them are precisely similar, is an arbitrary mode of deciding, to which no man is entitled, and at the same time, such an evidence of prejudice as cannot fail to impeach the soundness of his judgment, or the integrity of his views. If we reject the Scriptures as spurious, from the silly conceit, for instance, that Moses could not have been the author of the books which are ascribed to him, because Moses spoke of himself in the third person, we should consider whether we do not admit the genuineness of other books, under circumstances precisely similar. Ex-

amples of this kind are numerous, but one of common notoriety will suffice. The genuineness of Cæsar's commentaries has never been called in question. They pass under the name of Cæsar, and he is universally admitted, I believe, to have been the author of them; and yet, he every where speaks of himself in the third person. It is always "Cæsar carried the war into Gaul; Cæsar said, that he would march with the tenth legion." Now, to proclaim with an air of triumph, that Moses is an impostor, because, in the writings ascribed to him, he is spoken of in the third person, whilst we admit the genuineness of other writings similarly circumstanced, is to proclaim our own folly. We need not wait to be reproached with insincerity; we have every reason to suspect it of ourselves. Indeed, a man of common liberality would be ashamed of such a piece of criticism on any human composition. And, in an age of reason, properly so called, one would hardly expect to find it admitted against the word of God; but, with some sort of men,* it would seem that impiety and blasphemy can supply, with full effect, the place of argument.

* Of Thomas Paine's stamp.

SERMON VI.

EXHORTATION AGAINST SIN.

“But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of Sin.”

Hebrews, 3d chap. 13th verse.

It is a very great misfortune attending sin, that whilst it is both odious in its nature, and ruinous in its effects, it is often plausible in its pretensions, and delusive in its appearances. It flatters at the time that it betrays; it presents an alluring bait, the more effectually to conceal the fatal hook; it hardens, as it corrupts the heart. On this account, the Apostle's admonition to the Hebrews was given to exhort one another daily. For, the practice of iniquity is so contrary to every just sentiment of what is right, and so destructive of man's best interests, his happiness in the world to come, and as I hope to shew, his peace and comfort in that which now is, that its danger would be inconsiderable, as long as the conscience was tender and susceptible of religious impressions, open to the conviction of what is true, and faithful to the approbation of what is good. The mutual exhortations of Christians, are of infinite service in this respect, inasmuch as by them, just sentiments of religion are kept alive; motives to perseverance in duty, are constantly renewed; temptations to sin are avoided, and its delusions most effectually detected, because they have been practised upon all, and by many completely baffled.

By these means, religion is cherished and promoted ; sin maintains its dominion only over the callous mind. The tendency of mutual exhortations to promote the purposes intended by them, will be taken first under consideration, in the progress of this discourse. And, secondly, the danger that must be incurred by the neglect of them, of being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

1. With respect to the first of these propositions, it may be remarked with much truth, I believe, that mankind, taking them in general, have some sense of religious obligation. That we are naturally prone to evil, is indeed a very explicit doctrine of the Scriptures ; but, this doctrine is not inconsistent with the truth of this remark, in the sense in which it is made ; for, when men indulge themselves in the practice of sin, this will be found, I think, to proceed, not from the conviction of the judgment in its favour, but from the want of consideration ; from the impetuosity of passion ; from the arts of seduction, or from the contagion of evil examples ; or, perhaps, more or less, from all. When we are exhorted to remember our Creator in the days of our youth, it is not merely because it is at all times our duty to do it, but because youth is the most favourable season for imbibing the principles, or beginning the practice of religion. The mind is then more pliant and tender ; it is more susceptible of almost any impression ; it may be more easily trained up to virtue, or seduced and allured into the dangerous paths of vice. From hence, then, we may see the high importance, and presage the happy effects of the seasonable and repeated advice and exhortation of reli-

gious friends. They encourage to the filial fear and to the reasonable service of God ; they represent the evil and the danger of sin ; they guard from that evil communication which corrupts good manners.— Whatsoever things are honest ; whatsoever things are true ; whatsoever things are lovely ; whatsoever things are of good report ; if there be any virtue ; if there be any praise, to these they invite them, and they would often succeed, if religious exhortations were as frequent and fashionable as solicitations to sin. From the unhappy influence of wicked companions, and from the power of the temptations which proficient in vice are ever throwing before the young and unwary, we have often seen that the religious education of early years has been entirely marred, and many a promising youth been allured to his ruin. If, then, instead of these, religious friends should interfere ; if they should cultivate the morals of youth ; if exhortation to piety were frequently given, we might reasonably expect the most happy effects. Many temptations would be avoided, which, for want of assistance, often prove too strong for the young ; or, if not entirely avoided, they would, at least, be counteracted, and every good resolution would be strengthened and encouraged. It is sometimes urged, indeed, that religious instruction of every kind, is improper, and that the mind should be left entirely free to choose for itself, whether religion shall be embraced or not. But, these counsellors observe not the rule which themselves prescribe. On the contrary, there are many appearances of a most unhappy combination amongst wicked men, to engage as many as possible in the same de-

structive courses which themselves pursue. None shall be permitted to consult the dictates of their own reason and judgment, or to practice the duties of a religious life, if any exertion of theirs can prevent it. They constantly spread before them the delusive charms of vice, and represent any attention to religion, and every sentiment of virtue, as the prejudice of education, or as a mark of a weak and timid mind. That they unhappily succeed in this, the present Age of Reason,* as it is called, is an ample proof. But, in this, I trust, they could not succeed, if those who fear God were as active and zealous in recommending the pure and holy religion of Jesus Christ, and conducting others into the paths of pleasantness and peace. Religion would then gain ground, and vice and infidelity, so generally companions, would hide their heads.

2. Again, the religious exhortations of Christians would not only have a tendency to dissuade others from entering upon evil courses, but, also, to reclaim those from them who had been seduced into them. The commands of God carry with them an awful sanction; not only in the rewards which are promised to the obedient, and the denunciation of his displeasure against those who do wickedly, but also, in the testimony of a man's own heart, and those severe compunctions of conscience by which a departure from duty is either accompanied, or very shortly succeeded. This, in all probability, is always the case, in the first deviation into the paths

* Preached after the publication of Thomas Paine's Age of Reason.

of sin. At such a juncture, then, when the influence of a better education is not entirely lost, and when the heart is sorely wounded by a sense of guilt, the affectionate remonstrances and the tender persuasions of a religious friend, would be seasonable, indeed, in all probability welcome; and in that case, might be productive of the happiest consequences. The tenderness of rebuke, accompanied, as it would be, by the sincerest expressions of regard; the evil of sin clearly represented, and at the same time the goodness of God, and his willingness to forgive, brought into view, would be likely to have the most powerful influence on the ingenuous mind. Such considerations proposed to the tender heart, could scarcely fail, one would think, so far as means are concerned, to draw forth the most undissembled tears of contrition; exciting at the same time, the most determined resolution to return to God, and a lively hope of acceptance through Jesus Christ. The short experience he has had of the reproaches of a guilty conscience, aided by the advice and encouragement of Godly men, would prove to him a very useful lesson, and set him more upon his guard against seduction to sin, than he had been before. But, if he be deserted by his friends; if he be left alone to endure the pangs of a wounded spirit, which no man can long bear, he will probably be disposed to seek relief some other way. He will be exposed to the danger of falling into the hands of greater proficient in vice than himself, who will not fail to play the most seducing arts to encourage him to dispel his squeamish fears by mirth and wine, and allure him through the enchanted circle of unlawful pleasures,

until his conscience shall become callous and effectually hardened, through the deceitfulness of sin. By such wicked arts, have thousands been brought to ruin. If religious men were half so industrious, might not many be saved? Let them hearken, in the mean time, to the affectionate advice of Solomon: "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not."

3. The mutual exhortations of religious men are of great advantage to themselves, inasmuch as they respect the most important objects, and propose to their ambition the highest honors and the most refined and exalted pleasures. Religion, like every other attainment, requires care and cultivation.—Converse with the world, and an attention to the necessary demands of the present life, together with a becoming deference to the opinions and sentiments of others, are apt, generally, to produce a conformity to their principles and maxims. If these, then, as is too much the case in the present day, happen to savor but little or nothing of the spirit of religion, it will, in all probability, decay. There is a contagion in example, whether it be good or bad, with which we become infected before we are aware: it insensibly creeps upon us: by degrees we insensibly imbibe the principles and become assimilated to the manners of those with whom we converse. It is, therefore, of much importance, and of the greatest use, that those who profess the religion of Christ, and are solicitous to work out their salvation, should be guarded at this point; that they should maintain communion together; that they should exhort one another to walk worthily of the high vocation wherewith they are called; that motives to constancy and

perseverance should be proposed, and mutual assistance given. These considerations will appear to be of the greater usefulness, and the more indispensable necessity, if it be taken into the account, that it is not from the world only that religion is assailed. The temptations of Satan, and the corruptions of the human heart, occasion many conflicts and difficulties in the progress of the Christian life, with which none but religious men are fully acquainted, and in which they alone are qualified to instruct. Yet, there is hardly any situation, in which some one or other, in the small circle of religious men, has not, at some time or other, found himself placed, and from which he has not been delivered, through the assistance of Divine grace. Such cases very frequently occur: and one can hardly estimate the advantage that is to be derived from the experience of each, and from the encouragement and exhortations of all. Besides, it is a great pleasure and satisfaction to every good man, to perceive, that there are others who are walking in the same road, and engaged in the same pursuits with himself. Mutual exhortations, making for one thing, this discovery, afford a consolation to the mind, when religion is flourishing, and still more so when it declines. The followers of Christ, like those of Eneas, on the sacking of Troy, (if I may be permitted such a comparison,) rejoice to find, here and there, a cluster of their friends, however small their number, or however fallen their hopes. They find themselves, in some sense to be in an enemy's country, where their interest is small; where it seems to be borne down by a torrent of vice; where they themselves are con-

sidered as a sort of spies, and are obliged, in some measure, to observe as much caution and reserve, as if they really were so; but, when they meet together, their hopes revive. They are a little band of friends, which stick closer than a brother; they encourage and support one another; they bear each other's burdens, dispel their doubts, encourage their hopes and dissipate their fears; they assist the weak and cheer the disconsolate. In this lamentable age of reason, for instance, he who pursues the road to Heaven, must consider himself almost as a solitary pilgrim: but if he, perchance, meet with others by the way, and they are permitted to commune together, he feels as if surrounded by a cloud of witnesses, and is encouraged to run, with patience, the race that is set before him.

Such, then, is the propriety, and such are the advantages of religious exhortations.

We recur now to the particular reason on which the exhortation in the text seems to be founded. It is this: "Lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

There are so many instances of this, that I shall not pretend to enumerate them all; but content myself with two or three. It has been observed in this discourse, that the commission of sin, in the first instances especially, is ever accompanied or followed by the remonstrances of conscience, and the condemnation of our own hearts. There must needs, then, be some delusion or other practised, to account for the habitual practice of it afterwards. One reason, I suppose to be, that being more appalled by the fears of punishment, than shocked or disgusted

at the demerit of the crime, we set our ingenuity at work, to extenuate it: when our alarm has subsided, and the next temptation occurs, the offence is supposed to have been exaggerated by our own apprehensions, when, in itself, it was really small and trivial. All things considered, we cannot but hope, that it was very pardonable, and it is possible we may consider ourselves as entitled to some little credit, that we were guilty of nothing worse.

The circumstances of the case; the temptation which was thrown in our way; the natural impetuosity of the passions, and the suddenness of surprise, are all offered, on reflection, in palliation of the offence. These considerations must certainly entitle us to some indulgence. By these reasonings, we begin to conclude that we are not so guilty as we at first imagined. It is well, indeed, if we do not exculpate ourselves entirely, and lay the blame on some of our companions, or the peculiar circumstances in which we were placed.

Again, a comparison of ourselves with others, has a very natural tendency to divert our minds from a serious consideration of our own guilt. The mote that is in our own eye, is permitted to escape observation, when we behold a beam in the eye of our brother. These things are suggested, in order to administer peace to the mind; and, in consequence of them, from melancholy reflections on our own bad conduct, and from the apprehension of its unhappy consequences, we become quite secure, and are pleased to find that we are superior to so many others. Thus, a less degree of guilt is converted into a kind of negative virtue, and we transfer our fears to the

over-balance of other mens' sins. By such fallacious arts, we are persuaded to dispel the gloominess of our minds; we magnify the offences of others, to diminish our own. This passes for a detestation of sin, and we become prepared, in the end, to join with the Pharisee in the temple, in thanking God "that we are not as other men are."

Again, if the original depravity of human nature is admitted, that depravity is offered, if not as a full justification, at least as a sufficient excuse. This consideration, humiliating as it is, and most certainly true, we have the ingenuity to turn to our account, by giving it the appellation of a misfortune, rather than of a fault. We conclude, that all men have their failings, and that there is no such thing as perfection in the present life. This is, indeed, a melancholy truth; but, it must needs be a subtle argument that could produce any consolation from it. Yet, so it is, that whilst the honest mind regrets its many imperfections, and seeks improvement from the influences of Divine Grace, the deceitful heart is contented to take shelter under the unpromising banners of human infirmities. The grossest enormities are but constitutional evils. There are many virtues, besides, to counterbalance them, and we are apt to flatter ourselves, upon the whole, that we have a very good heart.

Another deception which sin practises upon us, is, the sanction which it is always wont to claim from specious names. The contempt of God and of his word, has learned to disclaim the harsh and odious name of infidelity, and to arrogate to itself the softer name of reason. We indulge the utmost licentious-

ness of principles, from our high veneration for liberality of sentiment. If we approve or justify, in any instance, the libertine conduct of others, though it be really for no other purpose than to give some countenance to our own, yet we do it from a principle of Christian charity. An avaricious disposition invites the patronage of frugality, and the most criminal profusion is called generosity. Thus, for whatever vice men suffer themselves to be addicted to, they invent a respectable plea; for, it is sure to put itself under the protection of some splendid virtue.

But, perhaps the more common deception of sin is, that which it practises upon us in early life. When we first enter on its career, we please ourselves with the prospect of many days. We soon learn that youth is the time for amusement; and we fondly hope that we may be indulged in a few juvenile follies, and the fashionable vices of the times. And, that we may indulge ourselves in them, we first form a resolution that we will repent at a certain time hereafter. And, though this is really nothing more than a determination to defer repentance for the present, yet it serves as a sufficient lure. In this delusion we pass through life; every day more corrupted and more hardened by sin, until, if we are spared, we arrive at old age, the time allotted for our repentance. But, here we are still deceived. For this period sin seems to have reserved its master-piece of fraud. Those evil days are now come, when they may say experimentally, that they see no pleasure in them. Their eyes grow dim with age; their desire fails, and they have no more

fuel with which to rekindle it. But, behold! when they have outlived their vices, they are persuaded to believe that they have abandoned them. They fondly flatter themselves, that they have at length come to a right way of thinking; that they have entirely forsaken their vices, when in reality their vices only have forsaken them.

Thus, sin deceives; thus, it hardens; and thus, it destroys.

SERMON VII.

DECEITFULNESS OF THE HEART.

“The heart is deceitful above all things.”

Jeremiah, 17th chap. 9th verse.

INNUMERABLE are the temptations, to which we are in this world exposed, and almost insurmountable the obstacles which obstruct our happiness. They are so far an over-match; the one for our virtue, and the other for our strength, that it is only by supernatural aid that we are enabled to resist, and finally to overcome. No sooner did man come from the hand of his Creator, and was placed in a peaceful and happy state, than a snare was laid for his destruction. He was plied with temptations by the great deceiver, and fell an unhappy victim to

their power. Ever since, their number has increased, and the ability to resist diminished. With departed innocence we lost our best defence, and by the corruption of his nature, man has become divided against himself. There is a law in his members warring against the law in his mind. Without, the roaring lion is ever seeking to devour him, and a strong party is formed against him within. Sin has introduced an innumerable train of foes. The world itself is become a snare; it is full of deceit; for, in its very friendship there is the greatest danger. On every hand we are beset with enemies. Who would suppose that our bosom friend, the heart, was amongst the number? Alas! it is combined in the league against us too. It betrays us under the most specious pretences; it flatters us to our ruin; it is one of the worst enemies we have; it throws open the door to every invader; and, "is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

That we may be on our guard against this dangerous enemy, it will be worth our pains to trace it through its various windings, and endeavor to expose to light its dark intrigues. Our own experience may assist us in the search, and serve as a clue to this mysterious labyrinth. Our case is singular, if it has not frequently practised its delusive arts upon us. It has secretly undermined our best resolutions, diverted us from our duty by the most subtle artifices, and allured us to the commission of crimes, by varnishing them over with a specious gloss. So crafty is it, that we seldom suspect the cheat, until we experience its effects; till a more honest conscience challenges our faults, and we are

constrained to take up the fruitless lamentation, "O! mine enemy, thou hast prevailed against me."

A more minute detail of some particulars, will employ the remainder of this discourse. It will bring to remembrance our past experience, and may serve as a warning to us hereafter.

First, then, we may safely ascribe it to the deceitfulness of our hearts, that we have so often and so soon broken through our resolutions to correct our errors and amend our lives. We may recollect when, in a serious hour, we had retired from the tumultuous scene, or were satiated with the vain pleasures of the world, the duties and necessity of religion made their claim. Then we determined that we would listen to their plea, and follow their advice. Or, when uneasy by the conscious sense of some forbidden wickedness, or harrassed by the gnawings of a guilty conscience, we resolved that we would amend our ways in future. This is so common, that we may presume it has been the case, at times, with every one in this assembly; and yet, perhaps, it is as universally true, that these good purposes have not been kept. We have frequently resolved, and as often relinquished our resolutions. A wicked heart, like a deceitful companion, has drawn us aside, and given to our mind a different turn. It has suggested to us the most fallacious arguments; accommodated some to our youth, some to our health and strength of body, some to our condition in life, and all to the pitiable depravity of human nature. It knows full well what advantage to make of all these sources of deception, and is well versed in the subtle artifice of sophistical deductions.

DECEITFULNESS OF THE HEART.

The young, untaught by experience to be wary and suspicious, are ever credulous to the plausible and fair. They listen, with pleasure, to the fond idea, that they have many days to live, and are easily persuaded to put off, for the present, the sober concerns of religion, and wait a more convenient season, which shall be better adapted to them. When life is young, (the deceitful heart suggests,) it is to be expected that it will bear some marks of folly and extravagance. They are, therefore, fondly persuaded, that a little indulgence in the pleasures and fashionable vices of the times, cannot be very criminal. They take the indulgence which their hearts desire: they enter into the enchanted circle of folly, noise and fashion, in which all things appear very differently from what they really are. They become captivated and deceived by their fascinating charms, and take their leave of all their serious thoughts. By such gradual process, are the youthful and unwary led astray.

As to the middle aged, they may, perhaps, be supposed to walk with cautious circumspection.—Years may have communicated wisdom, and the various scenes through which they passed, given them experience. But, they are not yet secure against the temptations of a wicked heart. They do not yet suspect it. It claims to be an old and tried friend. They have followed its counsels all along, and what is past of their journey, has proved pleasant enough. By its artful management, they have out-lived those qualms of conscience which disturb the repose of novices in vice. They were afraid, at first, that judgment would be executed; yet, they find all things continuing as they were.

All these grounds of security, it cunningly suggests. It admonishes them, too, that their hill is still unshaken: they have yet a sound and vigorous constitution, and their strength is unimpaired. This being the case, it is with no great reluctance that they are again persuaded to put off the evil day; and the deceitful, wicked heart, still cheers them up, through the succeeding period. With this, then, it must be presumed, that its good offices will end. Its deceitfulness must, surely, be detected. In their old age, the dream begins to vanish; their strength fails them; their bodies are worn out; the brawny muscles are shrivelled away; every nerve unstrung; and the hoary lock admonishes them that their race is over. By what possible artifice are their spirits now to be supported, when they stand on the verge of eternity, and look back on a mis-spent life? It would seem, that they cannot now be buoyed up by distant hope, and one would think that the wily heart itself would not presume on flattering them. But, for this last, concluding scene, it has reserved its master-piece of fraud. Those evil days have come, when they may truly say, they see no pleasure in them; their desire fails, and they have no more fuel to re-kindle it; and when they have out-lived their vices, they are persuaded to believe that they have abandoned them. They would fondly flatter themselves, that they have forsaken their vices, when, in truth, their vices have forsaken them. This is the subterfuge to which they are driven.— O, this wicked heart of our's! It deceives us from first to last.

Having pursued it through the several stages of youth, manhood and old age, we will now return and take a short view of its manœuvres in some intermediate steps. I intended, indeed, to hold up to view the subtleties of the heart, in accommodating its temptations to the various conditions of life in which men are placed, considering them as prosperous or unsuccessful, as private or as public characters. It has wiles to practise on each of these; but, from the example which has been already exhibited, we may learn them all. Let us, then, in what remains of this discourse, confine ourselves to the discovery of such dangers as are common to every station and every period of life. Notwithstanding all the allurements to a wicked life, there is no man, perhaps, that has persisted in it without many interruptions from the remonstrances and checks of conscience. It is well worth while to consider the deceitful suggestions of the heart, on such occasions. Like a ready counsel, it is ever at hand to appear for the criminal at the bar, and plead his cause. It leaves no subtle art untried to justify him to himself, and thereby appease his conscience. The offence, in the first place, is represented as small and trifling. All things considered, it is very pardonable; and, indeed, it is very meritorious that we were guilty of nothing worse.

If this art fail, there is another ready. The circumstances of the case; the temptation which was thrown in our way; the impetuosity of the passions, and the suddenness of surprise, are all offered in palliation of the crime. These considerations, sure-

ly, entitle us to some indulgence. Any other person, in our situation, would have acted as we did. By such reasoning, we begin to think that we are not so guilty as we at first imagined; and it is well if we do not exculpate ourselves entirely, and lay the whole blame on some of our companions, or the peculiar circumstances in which we were placed. A comparison of ourselves with others, is another very flattering plea, which is submitted to our consideration; and this affords at least an indirect satisfaction to our minds. From a melancholy review of our conduct, and from a dejection of spirit, from the apprehension of its dreadful consequences, we rise, all at once, to a superiority over many others. We are persuaded to transfer our fears to the overbalance of other mens' sins. We have some failings indeed; but, in comparison of others, we are quite innocent. So ingenious is the heart of man, that it converts a less degree of guilt into a virtue. By such fallacious arts, we are taught to dispel the gloominess of our minds. And before all is over, we are apt to join with the Pharisee in the Temple, in thanking God, that we are not as other men are. Again, the depravity of human nature offers us its aid, when we are at any loss for a ground of justification. This consideration, humiliating as it is, we turn to our account. If we are guilty, we ask, "And who is innocent? All men have their failings; and there is no such thing as perfection in this life." This is, indeed, a melancholy truth; and it must needs be a subtle reasoner, that could draw any comfort from it. Yet, so it is, that whilst the

honest mind regrets the many imperfections, the deceitful heart takes shelter under the deceitful cloak of human infirmities.

SERMON VIII.

ON THE VALUE OF THE SOUL.

“For, what is a man profited, if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

Matthew, 16th chap. 26th verse.

In the two preceding verses, our Lord acquainted his disciples with the terms of that salvation which he was to procure for his followers, and finally to bestow. And, as these appeared somewhat hard, he took occasion, in the words of the text, to obviate any objection that might be raised on that account.

The conditions were, that “if any man would come after him, he should deny himself, and take up his cross and follow him: for,” says he, “whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life, for my sake, shall find it.”

If there be any hard sayings in the Gospel, it must be acknowledged, that these are certainly within that description. To deny ourselves; to

resist and forego our own inclinations ; to give up all our favourite pursuits ; to take up our cross, and, finally, to resign life itself, are sayings, indeed, which few men can bear. They seem to imply the loss of every thing that is worth having, and to place us in a worse situation than we would otherwise be in.

Such, at first view, appears to be the amount of these conditions. But, before we thus decide upon them, we are called upon in the text, to make use of our reason, in a thorough investigation of the premises, and thence to draw our conclusion : “ What is a man profited, if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul ? ”

The question is stated, it must be allowed, in the most favourable light, on the side of earthly possessions. Perpetually engaged as men are, in contending for the goods of life, it is to be expected, that the portion of them which may fall, in the end, to the lot of any one, cannot be very large.

But, the supposition is, that a man shall be so successful as to get the whole world into his possession ; and, with this is contrasted the loss of his soul.

This is the state of the case, as exhibited by our Lord, and on this we will now join issue.

I beg leave, in this place, to make two remarks, on the truth of which the decision of this question will depend. The first is, that the ultimate advantage of any possession, to the owner, is not to be estimated by the quantity of the article itself, but by the balance that shall be found in his favour, after a deduction of all expenses, and the final settlement of

the account. Secondly, that when any two objects are put in competition, if we cannot enjoy them both, it is altogether reasonable to give the preference to that which is of the greatest value, whilst wisdom is employed in prosecuting the means which may be necessary to the attainment of it. If these observations be well founded, it will become no difficult task to decide upon the present question.

In order to obtain a fair and unbiassed judgment upon this subject, I will, in the first place, consider what sacrifices we are called to make, for the salvation of the soul.

Secondly, what may be the value of the soul itself. This, in the third place, will induce the comparison which our Lord has stated, between the value of the soul and that of all temporal possessions and enjoyments.

The first consideration is, the sacrifices which we are called to make, in order to the salvation of our souls. This will occupy the present discourse. This enquiry is not only fair and proper in itself, but is particularly authorised by the directions of our Lord. If a man have a mind to build an house, he recommends that he first sit down and count the cost. So, also, in recommending to men the care of their souls, as the one thing needful, he prefaces it with this information, that they must deny themselves, take up their cross, and even hold their lives cheap for his sake. These terms of admission into his kingdom, have been sometimes aggravated, and sometimes, I believe, too much mitigated.

The first of them, indeed, if I understand it properly, seems to admit of no qualification. We must

deny ourselves. If we would make religion our choice and adhere to the ways of Holiness, which alone lead to happiness, we must begin by restraining and mortifying our own natural desires and inclinations. The obvious reason of this is, that our affections are depraved, and that the natural man savoureth not of the things of God. Human nature is said, in Scripture, to be prone to evil as the sparks fly upwards. This propensity to evil, then, must in no instance be indulged, because it renders us unworthy, as well as wholly unfit to hold that communion with God, either here, or hereafter, in which the happiness of the soul consists. The grace of God, which hath appeared to all men, teaches, that denying ungodliness and every fleshly lust, we should live soberly, righteously and Godly, in this present evil world.

Were I asked how far this injunction extends, I would say that it extends to the prohibition, not only of all criminal pleasures absolutely, but even of such more innocent amusements as might be substituted in the room, or obstruct the progress of true and practical religion. I will endeavour to explain my meaning by one example, which I select from many others, because the most familiar, and, all things considered, perhaps the most dangerous of any. That propensity which many have to jovial companions, revelling and intemperate mirth of every kind, if it be indulged and unrestrained, stands directly opposed to our safety, and is highly injurious to the interests of religion. If we would be followers of our Heavenly Master, we must carefully guard ourselves against too great an indulgence in these,

and exchange them for the company of such as fear God, and for the more sober, yet not less cheerful duties of a virtuous life. In a word, we are required to turn from every evil way, and, having done iniquity, to do so no more.

The example which I have chosen, may, perhaps, appear but trivial; yet, as we are commanded to avoid a conformity to the world, I am persuaded it is of great importance, as far as the principles of religion are concerned; and particularly so, in the consequences with which it is usually attended.—When men have set their invention to work, to find out how far they may, with safety, give in to the fashionable follies and merriments of the day; how far religion may be consistent with a conformity to the maxims and manners of the age, they have seldom stopped short of an extreme, in abating more than they ought, I think, of that steady adherence to the principles and practice of virtue, which our Lord himself has seen proper to enjoin.

To the other part of the conditions which respect the renunciation of the profits of the world, and the losing of our lives for the sake of Christ, the Scriptures admit of certain limitations. Such as have retired from all the busy and industrious scenes of life, and rendered themselves useless, if not burthensome to society, under pretence of renouncing the world, have no doubt been guilty of an error. In this they have been influenced by a mistaken zeal, neither warranted by Scripture, nor directed by knowledge. The same principle, carried to its extent, would also lead them to put an end to their existence. It has sometimes happened, too, that piously disposed,

but misinformed men, have been officious in incurring the hatred, and provoking the insults of a contemptuous world, that they might have the honor of suffering reproach and scorn for the sake of their Master. Every thing of this kind seems evidently to imply a want of that prudence which should belong to a Christian ; and I do suppose that no man was ever called to it. Indeed, when a sense of known duty calls upon us, if we would attend to the precepts and imitate the example of our Divine Master, we should never shrink from it through fear of opposition, reproach or suffering, but be ready to meet and contented to bear them. Yet, if it be in our power, it is doubtless our duty to avoid reproach, and not to court ill usage, because, as our Saviour has expressed it, sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

But, the time has been, (and it may be again,) when it was the indispensable duty of Christians, to give up all their worldly possessions, and even to lay down their lives for the sake of Christ. Peter and the rest of the disciples, left all and followed him. So also, when persecution raged against the Church ; when those who professed the doctrines and observed the duties of the Christian religion, were accounted worthy of death, they were dragged as sheep to the slaughter. I should rather say, indeed, that they went cheerfully to the stake or scaffold, and sealed their testimony with their blood.

Should such circumstances occur again, our duty certainly would be to follow their example.

But though, in the providence of God, we possess a goodly heritage, and are totally delivered from

the fears of any such violence, we are, nevertheless, not altogether discharged from the exercise of the same duties. It has been said, and I think with great propriety, that every faithful Christian is an intentional martyr: that is to say, that if he were called upon, in the providence of God, he would, in the last extremity, think it his duty rather to resign his life, than to renounce his faith, and the testimony of Jesus Christ.

It is easy to see how the same application extends to the good things of the world. These, though, indeed, of inferior value, are yet by no means despicable in the estimation of a religious man. It is his duty, industriously to procure, and thankfully to enjoy them. But, the glory of God, and the interests of his own soul, must be uppermost in his esteem; and with respect to all things else, he must be comparatively indifferent. If, in times of danger and necessity, it would be incumbent on him to part with the gifts of fortune, and even his life, certainly a total deliverance from such urgent circumstances, though it should make him thankful, would, by no means, justify him in giving these things the highest place in his affections.

It appears, then, that the exercise of these duties, enjoined by our Saviour, will be found to consist in the temper and disposition of the mind. The transitory enjoyments of time and sense, of whatever kind they may be, whether houses, lands or relations, are to be held by Christians in perfect resignation to the will of their Heavenly Master, and they should be prepared to give them up without repining, whenever he is pleased to call for them.

What shall we say of the conduct of those, who, having met with disappointment in their worldly projects, or loss of their goods by fire, or by storms, suffer their grief and mourning to increase to such a pitch as to render them quite miserable and fretful while they live, and perhaps drive them, in the end, to destroy their own existence? It is certainly an evidence that they esteemed these things too highly, and were too much wedded to their idols.

When, in any instance, men are dissatisfied and unhappy under the hand of God, in the disposal of their worldly affairs, it is clear that they are destitute of the qualifications of those who shall inherit his kingdom.

The same thing is also to be said of that eager and unwearied pursuit, in which too many are engaged after the profits of the world. It seems to be their only study to heap up wealth, and their only inquiry, who will shew us any earthly good? This seems strongly to indicate, that they consider these things as the most valuable portion; and, if so, they are in the greatest danger of bartering for them the more precious interest of their souls. When this is the case with any of us, my brethren; when we find ourselves eager in the pursuit of the goods of fortune, or unduly attached to the possession of them, we are, I think, in very great jeopardy, and have placed ourselves nearly in the situation of the young man in the Gospel, who went away sorrowful, when he was directed to part with his estate, and refused to exchange it for all the treasures of Heaven. The influence of sensible and present enjoyments on the mind, is so exceedingly strong, and the danger from this quar-

ter is so great, that the disciples of our Lord thought it almost impossible that any could be saved. Therefore, there is great need that we endeavour to guard ourselves against them with the utmost caution, and deny ourselves to them with the most Christian fortitude and resignation. If any man love the world, says our Lord, he cannot be my disciple. The extent and meaning of this, is more fully expressed in a passage in the 10th of Matthew: "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. And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it."

SERMON IX.**RELIGION A REASONABLE SERVICE.**

“And his commands are not grievous.”

1 John, 5th chap. 3d verse.

CHRISTIANITY has suffered much in the world, by the misrepresentations of its enemies, as well as by the blind zeal of some weak friends and advocates. There is scarcely a reproach which has not been cast upon it; nor an evil which has not been charged to its account, by the malevolence of the one, or through the ill judged zeal of the other.

Our blessed Lord, himself, notwithstanding the peaceful and temperate life which he led, was charged with attempting to subvert the civil government, by forbidding to pay tribute to Cæsar; saying, that he himself was Christ, a King; of being a wine-bibber and a friend of publicans and sinners; and his Apostles were accused of introducing disorders in the world, though their doctrines had a direct tendency to promote peace and harmony; “those that turn the world up-side-down, are come hither also.” But, these charges were not of the most dangerous kind; for, their falsehood was too obvious for them to impose, even on the weakest.

Amongst the many objections which the enemies of Christianity have raised against it, none is more common or more unfriendly to its interests, than that of a gloomy, severe and unsocial spirit, which is often attributed to it by its enemies, and to which

the conduct of some of its professed friends, seems to give some weight. By a severe and gloomy exterior, they have created unhappy prejudices against Christianity in the minds of others.

If we embrace this religion, say they, we must, with it, embrace this austere way of living; we must assume this solemn air, and this sadness of countenance, which precludes even the most innocent and temperate enjoyments.

Adieu, then, to all the social pleasures, the cheerful look and joyful countenance; in fine, we must banish all but gloom and solitude.

Without the social pleasures; without cheerfulness; without joy; what is life? It is worse than death itself; and that religion which forbids us those innocent enjoyments for which nature has chiefly fitted us, however it may suit the gloomy and morose, is certainly very improper for us, and as such, we do well to reject it.

It is with a view to obviate this objection, and to expose its injustice, that I have chosen the words now read in your hearing, as the subject of this address; in the progress of which, I propose to shew:

1st. That the difficulties which occur in the practice of the duties of Christianity, proceed not from any thing in the nature of the requisitions, but from the temper of our minds.

2d. That those commands of the Gospel the most loudly complained of, are such as are the most salutary in their nature, and such as we would the most willingly perform, if we had a proper sense of our own interest.

3d. That Christianity is so far from being an enemy to innocent enjoyments, that it gives a higher relish to them.

It would be endless to eunmerate all the commands of the Gospel, which have, by men of different tempers of mind, been complained of as harsh and unreasonable; but, that we may do ample justice to this subject, we will select a few which have been the most general subjects of complaint.

“If thy right hand offend thee,” says our Lord, “cut it off; if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out.” These are amongst the hard sayings of the Gospel; and if any of its precepts may be complained of for their severity, these certainly may. It is here to be observed, that these are figurative expressions; and that by cutting off a right hand, or plucking out a right eye, the mortifying and subduing our reigning passions are pointed out. Yet, by this explanation, the nature of the command is no way softened; for, in this sense, they are still hard sayings to carnal men.

Though the power of sinful passions is great in every unregenerate mind, yet, the same passions do not prevail in every mind; and further, the ruling passion of the mind may, in some good measure, subdue, if not entirely eradicate, all the others.—Where this is the case, those commands of the Gospel are well received which do not interfere with this “master passion,” as the poet expresses it; but such as are levelled at it, are sure to be received as a hard saying.

We have an illustration of this observation, in the case of the young man in the Gospel, who came to

our Lord to know what he must do to be saved. Our Lord refers him to the law, the leading precepts of which were recited; and as nothing, yet mentioned, was opposed to his leading passion of avarice, they sat easy enough on his mind, and he replies, "All these I have kept from my youth." Yet, says our Lord, "Lackest thou one thing; sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor." This was a severe blow! This was lopping off a right hand, or plucking out a right eye. Any thing but this! He would honor his father and mother, as much as our Lord would require; or he would live as peaceably, as temperately, and as chastely, as could be wished; indulge him in this favorite vice, and in other respects he would be very virtuous. Why so? Is avarice so much harder to subdue than any other vice of the mind? No; but his heart was particularly weak in that quarter; avarice had corrupted his mind, and probing that wound, gave him infinite pain. Had sensuality, or ambition, or pride, or revenge, been the ruling passion of his mind, he would have gone away just as sorrowful, on being forbidden the pursuit of them.

Tell a proud man, that he must, if he would be a Christian, be just, sincere, benevolent, and even devout: why! all this is well; he has observed all these from his youth. But, tell him he must deny himself and take up his cross, and you send him away sorrowful.

The sensualist will subscribe to any thing, which will leave him in possession of his good cheer.

So, that you see the difficulty of obeying all these precepts of the Gospel arises from the temper

of our mind ; otherwise, the same command would be equally grievous to all. If the difficulty lay in the nature of the duty to be performed, all would find it difficult. But, you see what is most grievous to one, is easy to another, just as the temper of our mind happens to be.

The only way to make our duty easy to us, is to have these inordinate affections subdued, and the temper of our minds rectified, which is the very thing the Gospel professes to do for us ; and this leads to the second thing proposed, to prove, that those commands of the Gospel the most loudly complained of, are the most salutary in their nature, and such as we would most willingly practice, if we had a proper sense of our own interest.

It is plain, from the constitution of the human mind, that reason was designed to be the ruling power in it, to which all the passions were to be subordinate. It is the business of reason to give the passions their proper direction, and to moderate them in the pursuit of their objects ; to restrain us in the pursuit of what is hurtful, and quicken our endeavors in the attainment of what is proper and salutary.

Whilst reason is thus at the helm, the mind is tranquil and happy, and the character virtuous and respectable.

But, when this order of things is deranged ; when the passions cease to submit to the guidance of reason ; when we pursue with eagerness, what is most hurtful ; when we relax in the pursuit of what is more beneficial ; and, further, when different passions impel us in different directions, so as to dis-

tract the mind by engaging us in pursuits quite incompatible, it is easy to see what a scene of disorder and misery must ensue. Indeed, it is scarcely possible to conceive, of any thing, more wretched than such a state of mind.

And, the longer this disorder continues, the more it increases. The moral powers, by being diverted from their proper object, become unfit for any thing good or virtuous, and the soul sinks, at last, into a degree of depravity, which manifests itself in the most flagitious and shameful pursuits and enjoyments. And, what adds greatly to the misery of such a state of mind, is a sense of the Divine displeasure, resulting from a consciousness of having lived in the violation of the laws which God had impressed on their minds and revealed in his word.

That we are not mistaken in reasoning thus, from the constitution of our minds, scripture and experience both clearly evince. If we consult the former, we find the restless and agitated state of the sinner's mind painted in all that beauty and force of language, so peculiar to the sacred writings: "To the wicked there is no peace; they are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest; they travail with pain, all their days; trouble and anguish prevail against them; terrors make them afraid on every side; a dreadful sound is in their ears; and they are in great fear when no fear is."

Nor is the depraved and corrupt state of the sinner's mind less forcibly represented in the sacred writings, when it is compared to a cage of unclean birds.

Nor is the feeble and relaxed state of the moral powers less forcibly represented in these words, "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint."

And, when we consult the experience of past ages, we are but the more confirmed in the truth of those conclusions, which we have drawn from reasoning on the nature of the human mind. The history of mankind in all ages; the whole series of their transactions, however dignified by being recorded as the intrigues of statesmen or the exploits of conquerors, shews nothing more than the efforts of this restless and agitated state of mind which we have been describing, and the struggles of jarring passions amongst unhappy men.

But, the wretched state resulting from the disorders of the passions, is but half described, unless we take into consideration the miseries which await the unregenerate in a future life, which will be infinitely heightened in degree and endless in duration. From this scene of misery, both present and future, Christianity proposes to deliver us, and that, too, in the only way in which we can be delivered; by restoring the rectitude of our nature and calming the disorders of the passions.

How unreasonable, then, to complain of the very means of our recovery; whilst under the tyranny of sinful and disorderly passions, it is impossible we should ever be happy. How, then, should we welcome religion as our deliverer from so wretched a state? And, if we understood our own best interests, how cheerfully, nay, how eagerly should we practice those precepts of the Gospel, which have a tendency to break the power of those violent passions which

enslave us? And, how would we aspire to that state of liberty in which the Gospel would place us? And, if through Divine Grace we ever attain to a state of Gospel liberty from the tyranny of sinful passions, how much pleasure should we, then, have in the practice of those very precepts which once appeared so irksome and disagreeable to us? How should we, like the Psalmist, exclaim, "Oh! I love thy law, 'tis sweeter to my taste than honey from the honey comb:" then should we, like the converts of old, have joy and peace in believing. And this leads to the third head of our doctrine, that Christianity is so far from being an enemy to any innocent enjoyments, that it gives them a higher relish.

Chequered as the life of man is with good and evil; various and diversified as our conditions in this world are, there are two states in life which take in all the children of men; I mean those of prosperity and adversity, on both of which religion has the most happy effects.

Let us compare the situation of the righteous and of the wicked, in these two states of life, and then we will see how the Christian triumphs, whilst the wicked man desponds in adversity; and in prosperity, we will see how all his enjoyments are heightened to the Christian, whilst to the ungodly, prosperity has scarcely any real enjoyments.

The power of the great, the wisdom of the wise, and the riches of the wealthy, have, in all ages, been employed to secure their state against the approaches of adversity, or to defend them against its attacks. Power has tried to keep it at a distance; philosophy to conquer it by patience, and wealth to alleviate it by pleasures.

But, experience has shewn how ineffectual all these precautions have been. Religion has not been inattentive to this important object. Of all the considerations which can enter the mind, in the season of distress, none can have so soothing an influence as the belief of an interest in the favour of Him who has the disposal of all events. Accordingly, we find that Christianity has erected a pavilion, a secret place in the tabernacle of the Most High, to which her votaries are invited to resort in the time of trouble; that the Almighty spreads a shield and a buckler before them, to cover them from the terror by night, and from the arrow that flyeth at noon day.

Every form of religion has proposed to mankind an interest in the favor of Heaven; but, it was reserved for Christianity to point out clearly, how that was to be obtained by a mediator and an atonement. Christianity prepares the mind for adversity, by instructing us in the nature of true happiness; it lessens our estimate of the value of the things of this world, by shewing us their vanity. But, here I may be asked, whether we are likely to be made happier by being disgusted with the objects which surround us? My answer is, that religion secures our happiness by pointing out sublimer enjoyments and nobler pursuits; using the things of this world with moderation, when they fall to our lot, but never repining at being deprived of them, knowing and reflecting before-hand on their fading and transitory nature; so that when our earthly treasure fails us, we have recourse to that inheritance which is eternal and fadeth not away, reserved for the Saints in light.

On the other hand, the man who has chosen this world for his inheritance, has no resource in the loss of his goods and possessions ; but falls a sure prey to repining and discontent. The moral powers of his mind are so weakened and enfeebled by vice, that he cannot bear up against the pressure of adversity ; but sinks under its weight, joining in the abject complaint of the man of Ephraim, “ they have taken away my Gods, which I have made, and what have I more ? ”

If pain or sickness assail the Christian, he considers these as the chastenings of his Heavenly Father, and is so far from fainting under the rod, that he considers it as a proof of his adoption, knowing that whom a father loveth, he correcteth, and chasteneth every son that he receiveth ; and with the Apostle, believing that “ these light afflictions, which are for a moment, work out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. ”

But, how different are the reflections and views of a wicked man, under the pressure of sickness, or at the approach of death. The gay illusions which flattered his senses are now dissipated by the rays of truth. The view which he now has of his past life, is painful ; that of futurity is big with terror ; and hope, which could only befriend, is gone forever. Fain would he now take refuge in the sanctuary of religion, but that, alas ! is shut.

Where, O ! where, then, for shelter, shall the guilty flee.

People in general are ready enough to allow religion the office of a comforter in sickness, and adversity ; whilst they consider it as an unwelcome guest in the season of health and prosperity. But,

a little reflection will convince us, that as it alleviates the sufferings of one state, so it heightens the enjoyments of the other.

The mere possession of wealth, or any of the gifts of fortune, is far from ensuring us the enjoyment of them. Solomon tells us of some to whom God had given wealth and prosperity, but had not given them an heart to enjoy them. As there is something in the temper of our minds, which may alleviate the ills of adversity, so there is, likewise, that which may enhance the enjoyment of prosperity.

Gratitude to God contributes, in an high degree, to the enjoyment of prosperity. "Gratitude is a pleasing emotion; the sense of being distinguished by the kindness of another, gladdens the heart, and warms it with a mutual affection." We have a double relish for any thing, when we consider it as the gift of a friend. How often do we see that single circumstance give an immense value in the minds of many, to what would otherwise have had little or none? How much more ought gratitude to God to warm our hearts, under a sense of his favors, which are invaluable in themselves, without this consideration? If, to gratitude for the past, we add a cheering sense of God's favor for the present, the emotion will still be the more pleasing. What a rational, what a sublime pleasure it must be, to be able, on good grounds, to class ourselves in the number of those to whom these words are addressed: "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth thy works?" Our pleasure is still increased, if, to gra-

titude for the past, and a sense of the favor of Heaven for the present, we join comfortable hopes for the future, and are enabled, with the Psalmist, to entertain an humble confidence that goodness and mercy will follow us all our days, and that we shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

But, prosperity is doubled and multiplied to us without end, when we make a generous use of it. Happiness is reflected back on us in smiles, from the faces of those whose hearts we have gladdened; we then feel the exalted pleasure of doing good; and the prayers of the widow and orphan ascend to Heaven in our behalf, and draw down on us the blessing of the Hearer of prayer.

We have a beautiful description of the joy which Job experienced in the days of his prosperity, by relieving the wants of the necessitous, and dispensing happiness around him. "When the ear heard me, it blessed me; when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me, because I delivered the poor that cried, the fatherless, and him that had none to help him; the blessing of Him that was ready to perish, came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy." From this view of the subject, it is plain, that religion is so far from lessening the real enjoyments of life, that it is impossible to have any without it. The wicked, on the other hand, are so continually haunted with a sense of guilt, that nothing can afford them any real enjoyment.

What, I beseech you, in the pleasures of the ball room, the card table, or the theatre, where the intoxicated senses are unfitted for the enjoyments prepared for them, or the temper is soured by ill suc-

cess; what, in the loud laugh or vacant mind, can compare with the rational enjoyment of the Christian, who uses the world as not abusing it; and, supported by the goodness of God under every affliction, is pressing on to an eternal inheritance in Heaven?

SERMON X.

RELIGION THE ONE THING NEEDFUL.

“ But one thing is needful.”

Luke, 10th chap, 42d verse.

IN considering the frame and constitution of human nature, we find it to be composed of two parts, the soul and the body. These are of a different nature, yet have a mutual influence on each other; and both of them demand a careful attention, according to their various wants, and their respective value. The former is undoubtedly the more excellent of the two, and is, therefore, entitled to the first and highest consideration. Upon this principle our Saviour has recommended a particular attention to religion, which he calls “the one thing needful.” The particular occasion of his delivering the words of the text, was a difference which he observed in the conduct of Martha and her sister

Mary: whilst the latter "sat at his feet and heard his word," the former was "cumbered about much serving." Upon this, he said to her, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful."

From this connection of the passage, it might possibly be supposed, that there was something criminal, or improper, in the conduct of Martha, upon this occasion; and that this language is an indirect condemnation of all worldly pursuits. But, this certainly cannot be a true conclusion, because it would be contrary to the general tenor of the Gospel. Two things, then, may rationally be concluded: one of them probable enough; the other, I think, certain. One is, that the great attention of Martha to her domestic concerns, was, at this time, unseasonable, as it is probable, that our Lord was discoursing to his hearers on very important subjects, and such as nearly concerned both their present and their future happiness. The other is, that our Saviour only took an opportunity, from this incident, to impress on the minds of his hearers, the superior importance and necessity of spiritual attainments, representing them, by way of eminence, as the one thing needful. And then, the more necessary the provision was, which Martha was making, of the greater moment religion would appear, as being more needful than any thing else. In the same manner of speaking, we call the sacred records of God, emphatically, the Scriptures; although all other writings may be, strictly speaking, Scriptures also. In this view, I shall now consider the subject, as best according with our Saviour's general

instructions. If, in any instance, he appears to disapprove of an attention to our worldly interests, it will be found to be only where there was an unreasonable solicitude about them. When he cautions us against any great anxiety about what we shall eat and drink and wear, he does not represent these things as unlawful or unnecessary; but informs us, that such provision is made for them, in the course of nature and the providence of God, that there is no necessity, in the pursuit of them, to neglect the more important concerns of our souls. "Your Heavenly father," says he, "knoweth that ye have need of these things; but, seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." And, that we might not distrust the goodness and care of God, in this respect, he states a comparison between our situation and that of the fowls of the air. The latter sow not, neither carry into barns: yet, they are provided for. How much more, then, may we be free from any painful apprehensions of want, when in the exercise of common industry, we can sow, and in due season carry into our barns, a sufficient stock of provisions for the whole year? These things seem to be thus ordered in the wisdom of God, that we who have such important interests at stake, may not neglect them.

The condition in which we are placed in this world, seems to represent an attention to religion emphatically as the one thing needful. Indeed, were we always to continue here, as our only place of residence, the cultivation of our minds by the principles of piety and virtue, would be essentially necessary to our own peace and comfort, as well as to that

of the world at large. He who, in that case, should turn his attention entirely to the amassing of earthly treasures, would forego the best and noblest enjoyments of which a rational mind is capable. How much more, then, is this the case, when we consider that we are but sojourners here, and that we are travelling to another country? It is not from the word of God only, but by the desires of nature, the dictates of reason, and the properties of the mind, we are informed that we are all candidates for eternity. We know to a certainty, that there is no continuing here in any one stay: the things of the world are in the most constant fluctuation, and man lives but a few years to be pleased with the enjoyment of them, or engaged in their pursuit. At the same time, the high powers of reason which we possess; our great desire of knowledge, and our progressive advances in it; the aspirations of the soul after higher attainments, and the imperfect state to which at best we can arrive here, are very plain indications, that we are now only laying the foundations for another life, which must be happy or otherwise, according to the improvement which we shall have made of this. Every thing teaches us, that in this world we are but in a state of probation, and, that our principal business and our most important interest is to prepare ourselves for that which is to come. It is impossible that the next life should be happy, if the present have not been virtuous. As we sow, so we must reap. The success of the harvest depends on the putting in of the seed; and, the blossoms of the spring are a necessary prelude to the fruits of autumn. When we see men eagerly engaged in the

pursuit of earthly treasures, at a time of life which seems to be the best calculated for mirth and entertainment, we cannot but think the preference given to labour before pleasure to be judicious and right, when we are told that it is with a view to the providing of a comfortable and secure retreat for the wants and infirmities of advanced years.

On the other hand, an idle and dissipated youth is generally considered as the very probable, if not certain fore-runner of a reproachful and indigent old age. This life, then, is to be viewed as the youth, (I was going to say,) but certainly as the prelude only, to that eternal existence which awaits us hereafter. The one thing needful, then, in the present life, is to secure the happiness of the next. To urge the necessity of care and attention to the necessary concerns of the present life, in order to justify or palliate the neglect of religion, is to invent a frivolous and unreasonable excuse against our own interest. It is to separate two things, which the will of God, and the very condition of our nature, have joined together, and which are perfectly consistent. It is very evident, from the general tenor of the Gospel, as indeed from the very nature of the thing, that religion does not forbid, but injoin a due attention to the affairs of this world; and that it does not mar, but rather has a tendency to insure the success of any lawful calling. These things, then, we ought to do; but, surely, not to leave the other undone. In other matters, we reason more correctly. If two objects cannot both be obtained at once, we are seldom at a loss in our conclusion, to resign that which is of the least importance. It is not very common

to see men much engaged in religion ; but when it does happen, how often do we hear the neglect of their worldly matters charged to their account ? It is very possible to be too remiss, and to neglect our duty in this respect ; but certainly we must be greater losers, when, by an eager and unremitting pursuit of earthly treasures, we neglect the more important concerns of our souls and forfeit every hope of salvation. If, then, it were so, that we could not gain this world, and that which is to come, it would yet be much the wiser choice to make our calling and election sure. The superior importance of the soul would fully justify the above conclusion, if it were even true that religion was that solitary, and for the present, comfortless possession, which so many seem to think it is. If it imposed the necessity of resigning every thing else, it would still be the pearl of great price, the one thing needful, inasmuch as it alone could procure our future and eternal happiness : but, it is saying much more in its favor, if it may with propriety be added, that it looks with a benign aspect on all our worldly pursuits, and contributes very much to the enjoyment of all that we possess. As it teaches and inculcates the duties of justice, temperance, labor and frugality, it seems to point out the straightest road to wealth and preferment. While the hand of the diligent has a tendency to make rich, religion directs to more exalted objects, and presents to the good man's view, a more excellent inheritance. A sense of the Divine presence dignifies his mind : the experience of Divine goodness fills him with gratitude : a dependence on Divine providence supports his hopes, and dis-

pels, or rather prevents, any apprehensions of being deserted in future. David certainly considered all needful blessings as included in his charter, both for time and eternity, when he expressed himself in one of his Psalms, in the following words : “ The Lord is my Shepherd ; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures : he leadeth me beside the still waters. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, yet will I fear no evil ; for, thou art with me : thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies ; thou anointest my head with oil ; my cup runneth over. Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

Surely a sense of the favour of God ; the experience of past goodness, and a confidence in its continuance, cannot fail to enhance the value, and increase the relish of every present comfort. It secures from the restlessness of fierce, and from the anguish of disappointed ambition ; for, it makes the rich man humble. It prevents the forebodings of adversity, and renders him far superior to fruitless murmurs and complaints ; it makes the poor man thankful ; it enlivens the pleasures and alleviates the burdens of every situation in life ; it cheers our abode upon earth ; it softens the bed of death ; it gives us a passport to Heaven. If, then, we would secure the happiness of the present life ; if, as we often hear, we would strew the way over with flowers, we must engage in its pursuits with moderation,

and season its enjoyments with religion ; while this course is recommended by the superior motive, that it leads to everlasting happiness.

SERMON XI.

ON ANGER.

“ The discretion of a man deferreth his anger, and it is his glory to pass over a transgression.”

Proverbs, 19th chap. 1st verse.

THE experience of almost every man will, no doubt, have evinced the error and inconvenience of a hasty spirit. Anger and passion are ever evil counsellors. Often perverting, and always aggravating the truth, (if I may so speak,) they urge men on to unreasonable and excessive resentments, which often prove ruinous to others, beyond the power of remedy, and to themselves, the inexhaustible source of the most painful sensations. Incompetent judges of the measure of injury received, and over-looking the rational means of redress, their effects are seldom such as escape the censure of regret and of cool reflection. Hence, it is the part of discretion in a man, to defer his anger. “ Anger” is said to “ rest in the bosom of fools ;” but, he that is wise, will by

all means endeavour to suppress its emotions; will listen with caution and distrust to its suggestions, and will, at any rate, defer the execution of its plans.

To enumerate some of its baneful effects, and propose some considerations which may have a tendency to overcome it, are the objects which I have in view at present. Perhaps it is proper, first to observe, that anger, in a certain degree, is not considered criminal. God himself is represented in Scripture as being angry: and this direction is given even to us, "*Be ye angry and sin not.*" By this we are to understand, probably, the marked displeasure with which God beholds iniquity, and which it ought also to excite in us. But, the sense in which I am now to consider it, and in which I suppose it is intended in the text, is the same that we generally understand by quick resentments, or hasty passions.

1. If it were attended with no other effect than the perturbation and distraction of mind which it occasions, it would, in this view, demand our serious attention. If it be true that the countenance is an index of the mind, which is pretty generally the case, we may be assured, that he is in a state of wildness, disorder and uneasiness, in whom anger is permitted to bear the sway. The representation of the furies, in Heathen Mythology, must have been taken, one would imagine, from the countenance of a choleric man. Reason and judgment are dethroned, the reins are thrown upon the neck of passion, and the man is carried away into every absurdity and extravagance through its resistless impetuosity.

It gives no time for reflection ; it has no prudence as its guide. It discards the ties of nature : it is an out-law against the rules of politeness : it violently outrages the laws of society. The rational character is degraded and the judgment is impaired by the dominion of passionate anger, which is emphatically said in the book of Proverbs, to be outrageous. It distorts all the features of the face, and gives to the eye a terrible aspect. It is justly said of anger, that 'it is a transient madness. He that is under its influence is not at his own command, but at the mercy of every blind and violent impulse. A man in the heat of passion, is not open to the conviction of truth, except it be only to increase his rage. Hence, he is deaf to the remonstrances of reason ; and in debate, he answers argument with invectives. When his anger is once kindled, he is no longer master of himself, but unhappily is made a wretched slave to his irascible temper.

This growing upon him by every indulgence, soon acquires an absolute controul, and sets every reasonable consideration at defiance. It is often not to be soothed even by concession ; but yields only to the fatigues of nature, when its victim sinks down into an unhappy debility both of body and mind. It resembles the fury of an angry tempest, which is not to be appeased but by being exhausted.

2. Again, the feuds and animosities which frequently obtain amongst neighbors and friends ; and all their mischievous effects, originate for the most part, from hasty and uncontrolled anger. It magnifies every trivial offence, and precludes, at the same time, all reasonable accommodation. There is a

sympathy in human nature in almost every instance. A soft answer turneth away wrath; but hasty resentments commonly provoke the same. Hence, while violence and passion exaggerate every trifling offence, or perhaps, create them where none were intended, they impart the same spirit also to the real or supposed aggressor, and prevent such concessions as his faults might demand, or reason would accept. Hence are men hurried on to extremities at once, without prudence or discretion. To this cause, almost all the petty strifes and quarrels which obtain amongst men, owe their original. Hence frequently wars arise amongst nations; and hence, the boastful sons of courage take the field for single combat. They call it honor; but, if you examine it narrowly, and trace it to its source, you will find it to proceed from the impetuosity and madness of a quick and inflammable temper. If you enquire why the doughty champions are equipped with the implements of death and thirst for each other's blood, you will find, perhaps, that but the day before they were cordial friends, and that the unhappy difference arose from some unguarded, or misconstrued expression, or from some innocent jocularly, over the intoxicating bowl. Did they take time to reflect, or defer their anger for a moment, all would be well. But, intoxicated at once with the liquor and with rage; taking fire at the phantom of an heated imagination; too blind to distinguish, too impatient to deliberate, and too hasty to admit of defence or palliation, they provoke each other to the last extremity, from which their honor, as they imagine, forbids them to recede. The last conclusion

is neither judicious nor rational, but it leads me to observe, how often it happens, that men under the influence of passion, will utter reproaches, or commit acts of violence, which are not to be remedied or atoned for through the whole course of their lives. Many a friend has been estranged forever by a hasty, intemperate and groundless invective. A neighbour, in a gust of passion, will destroy both the life of his neighbor and the support and happiness of his family. A choleric master will often maim or slay a servant by an unlucky blow; and by the same means, a parent, through the instigation of passion, will destroy the intellects of an innocent and promising child. Indeed, when anger is indulged without discretion or control, no man can tell where it will end, or what tragical events will not ensue. He cannot say to the raging tide, thus far shalt thou go and no farther. The consequences with which it is often attended, are such as is not in our power to redress as long as we live. We may feel, indeed, the most lively regret, and profess or experience a great deal of sorrow, but all our compunctions will be insufficient to dry up the sorrows of the widow or orphan, or restore to life a deceased friend, whom our violence has brought low. We may wish we had deferred our anger, and be convinced that it would have been our glory to pass over a transgression, but this is all too late, after we have vented our passion in fury and destruction.

No serious person can reflect on the growing practice of duelling, but with sincere regret. It is a sad mark of the prevalence of infidelity in the rising generation, who seem unhappily to discard the

influence of religion, disown its authority, and remove the fear of God from before their eyes. At the same time, it is one of those vices which almost every body condemns, yet it is one which almost nobody has the magnanimity to discountenance by his own example. Surely no man has a right to dispose, as he pleases, of the life which God has given him; and his command is, "*Thou shalt not kill.*" The laws of civil society, too, forbid a man to be his own avenger. But, then, the world will call you *coward*, if you refuse to give or to accept a challenge; and, as long as you are in the world, you must conform to the laws of honor. Indeed! And is it come to this, that a decree of Heaven's High Chancery is to be reversed by an appeal to your petty court of honor!! O! thoughtless, desperate young man. You are not afraid of offending God, but you are afraid of incurring the displeasure, or exciting the ridicule of a fantastic, sinful world. I pray you, can your court protect you against the sentence of that High Tribunal, at which you must at last appear, and against the vengeance of the Almighty, which "*burns hotter than an oven.*"

It is at best, a serious, solemn thing to die; but, surely it must be the height of madness, guilt and desperation, to rush into the presence of your Great Judge, with your guilty hands reeking with your own blood, by an act, the very perpetration of which, might preclude all possibility of repentance.

In every point of view, this practice is wholly unjustifiable and inexcusable in the young. But, when an amiable man, advanced in years, falls unhappily a victim to this wretched point of honor, who can

sufficiently reprobate it, or bewail its consequences? An instance of this kind lately occurred in Hanover, where you may, indeed, behold a house of mourning. Go now, then, ye honorable men; go, view the melancholy feat your valour has achieved. Go, feast on carnage. Go, enjoy the pleasure; nay, revel in the luxury of beholding the widow whose husband you have slain, at once frantic and dumb with grief, and a large number of unoffending children, sons and daughters, in a moment rendered fatherless, by one hasty, wicked, cruel, irrevocable deed. If this be honor, "*O! my soul, come not thou into the secret.*"

But, what is to be said of these subordinate champions who are called seconds? The law of the land, I believe, considers them equally guilty with their principals, and has ordained for them the same ignominious punishments; yet, all things considered, they appear, in reality, to be far the most culpable. A second has no offence to complain of; no irritation to plead in his excuse; and, on this account, he may, probably, be pronounced more a murderer than the principal himself. But, I must return from this digression.

3. Another certain effect of intemperate anger, is the self-condemnation and regret with which it is always succeeded. Like all other vices, it leaves a sting behind it. When the violent agitation of mind subsides, and calm reflection takes place, we recollect what has passed with the most uneasy sensations. We review with mortification and abhorrence, the spectacle we exhibited while under the dominion of passion. We are sensible that we have

degraded the rational character; that we have exposed ourselves to the pity of our friends, the scoffs of our enemies, and the contempt of the wise and temperate. We recollect the wildness of our looks, and the childish extravagance of our words and actions. When in the moment of cool reflection, we consider the cause of all this disorder, we find the offence which the heat of passion had magnified so much, is dwindled into a very trifle; or, perhaps there was none at all, but what was occasioned by our own mistakes. Yet, we are mortified to find that we suffered ourselves to be transported with rage; and, very probably, to our utter confusion that we have vented it indiscriminately, on friend and foe; on the offending and inoffensive; on the innocent and guilty. We have traduced the character and estranged the affections of a steadfast friend, by hasty insinuations which anger suggested, and at the same time discredited. We have wounded the feelings, or abused the person of a faithful servant, who had been guilty of no wilful offence, who had toiled for us many years, and was grown grey in our service. And what was the offence? Why, perhaps no other than the natural slowness or decrepitude of advanced years. We forgot the respect and denied the indulgence which are due to age; and were lost to every sense of gratitude for the fidelity and services of youthful days. In our families we have acted the tyrant, and have made our helpless and unoffending children feel the fierceness of our anger. It is a painful task which is devolved on parents, to inflict the rod upon their children, when reason and duty make it necessary.—

What, then, must be the sensations of a man, when, after a fit of rage, he casts his eye upon a dutiful and affectionate child, smarting under the undeserved or excessive correction of an angry father? In short, we are obliged to condemn almost every thing we said and every thing we did. All that we can say is, we hope to be forgiven, because we were in a passion; when, if the plea were admitted, we could not forgive our own folly and madness. Thus is the choleric man successively at variance, at first with others, and at last with himself.

II. I come now to offer some considerations that may assist us in our endeavours to correct this dangerous evil.

1. The cultivation of humility is specially calculated to effect this purpose. We are extremely prone to entertain a fond and partial opinion of ourselves, and to look for such indications of respect and obedience as we may consider as an acknowledgment of it from others. Hence, we are vulnerable from every quarter. Our sensibility is tender to the smallest indignity, and the least neglect is tortured into an indirect affront. Every instance of this kind, is aggravated far beyond the demerit of the thing itself, by the high sense we entertain of our own importance. Humility, on the other hand, is slow to anger; it is modest and unassuming. If overlooked by others, it is not discomposed, because it exacts nothing from them. It is contented with a little, and is not suspicious. And, as it is least affected by neglect or injury, so it is, also, our surest defence against both.

All seem rather concerned to honor, than reproach; to exalt, than depress the meek and lowly man.— They say to him in their hearts, “*Friend, come up higher.*” It, is, therefore, an excellent advice which is given us in Scripture, not to be high-minded, nor to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think.

2. It will also prove a security against the sallies of intemperate anger, to accustom ourselves to meditate frequently on its dangerous tendency and its extreme inutility. It is generally productive of the most serious evils; and, on the other hand, it answers no good purpose whatever. It does not increase, but diminish the dignity of our character: it does not increase, but diminish the weight of our authority. If any purpose is to be accomplished; if differences are to be accommodated, or redress obtained, to be calm and temperate, promises the most certain and complete success. Outrageous anger, on the other hand, is sure to defeat its own intentions, and makes matters infinitely worse than they were before. At the same time, it exposes us to the ridicule and contempt of the world. When a man has once established his character as peevish and passionate, he meets with a thousand wanton provocations from others, who practise upon his temper for their own amusement. They will “use him for their mirth, yea, for their laughter, when he is waspish.” On the other hand, a command of temper, which is more or less in every person’s power, adds a dignity to his character, and procures very general esteem.

3. It will contribute much to the acquiring of a dominion over passion, to fix a resolution that we will not be under its control. If, on former occasions, we have been in a ferment of temper, we no doubt have recollected afterwards many extravagances both in words and actions which we must candidly condemn. It is the part of a sensible and prudent man to determine in future to be more upon his guard. Nor is it so difficult a matter as some would imagine. Experience in many instances has evinced, that the most hasty and refractory temper will yield to resolute and steady discipline. By the mere aid of philosophy, men who were naturally quick and vehement, have, by habit and restraint, acquired such an evenness of mind, that their natural temper has not been known but by their own confession. To say we cannot help it, is to invent an excuse to encourage and defend it. Men who have habituated themselves to swearing profanely, have often said the same; yet, we know that many, from a consideration of its folly and wickedness, in their cooler moments, have desisted from it entirely. With respect to passion, we know that we can restrain it, in the company of those whose good opinion we count upon having obtained, and would wish to preserve. This shows, then, that it is not invincible, but that it yields to the umpire of reason and good sense. By a little discipline and fortitude, we may become in private what we would appear in public; for, by these, the most refractory spirit will become tame and manageable. It is most certain, that the more we indulge or excuse our anger, the more it will in-

crease upon us. It grows the more outrageous the oftener it is kindled, and upon every fresh occasion, it will be the more easily excited. Let us only indulge it a little, and it will soon bring us to that pass, that we shall fume and fret at every trifle.— In this view, it may be compared to tinder, which is the more inflammable, for having once been burnt. If, then, when anger begins to rise, we fix a resolution to suppress it, we shall find, to our satisfaction, that the work is already more than half accomplished. And, indeed, it is so troublesome and tormenting, that it is worth a little pains to overcome it.

4. It will be of singular benefit, also, to reflect on the infirmities of human nature, and especially to entertain a due sense of our own. Many things that we call offences proceed oftener from the weakness of others, than from any malevolent design. How often do we offer it as an apology for our own indiscretions, that we meant no harm? Ought we not then, in all reason and justice, to extend to others the same indulgence that we claim to ourselves?— But, the passionate and angry man sees no imperfections in himself. He is always in the right, and his wrath often rises to a most excessive degree from this very mistaken notion; when, at the same time, perhaps, he is the greatest aggressor. My brethren, are any of us without our faults? Do we never do any thing that appears unfriendly? Do we never say any thing that seems disrespectful? Do we never act amiss through mere ignorance or inattention? And this may often be the case with others. The thing which we resent with violence and outrage, may have been said or done without the least inten-

tion to injure or offend us. Surely, if we would but consider our own numberless imperfections, we would not let our anger burn so fiercely against the failings of our neighbors and friends.

5. I shall propose one other consideration, and then conclude. It is to fix our eyes upon those examples of patience and moderation which others have exhibited. Amidst all the infirmities of man, we now and then find some, whose calm and steady temper we cannot but admire. They have been falsely accused, or received much reproachful and abusive language; yet, they bore it with great coolness; they vindicated their innocence with great firmness, but with great coolness; they did not suffer their temper to be ruffled, nor one indecent expression to escape their lips. Such characters rise high in our esteem. We say they acted much better than we should have done.— We wish we had the same command of our passions. Well, they very probably acquired the command of their's by the very considerations which I have been suggesting. And it is not impracticable. With a little pains and prudence, we might do the same. But, above all, let professing Christians turn their eyes to that great pattern of all excellence, the Lord Jesus Christ. He has left an example after which we should follow. His temper was tried by the most frequent provocations, the most repeated disappointments, the most flagrant injuries, and the most severe distress; yet, with what patience did he endure the contradictions of sinners? He returned not evil for evil, nor railing for railing. When he was reviled, he reviled not again. With such a

bright example, then, before our eyes, let us all endeavor to learn of him, for he was meek and lowly. Let us implore the assistance of his grace, so needful for us in all cases, that we may be enabled, also, to defer our anger and account it our glory to pass over transgression.

SERMON XII.

THE GOSPEL RULE.

“Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.”

Matthew, 7th chap. 12th verse.

ALTHOUGH it is most evidently the duty of every rational creature to yield an obedience to the commandments of his Creator, yet, it is hard to say, from the nature of the commandments themselves, whether a compliance with, and a strict observance of them, is more his duty or his interest. Notwithstanding the many defects which men pretend to have discovered in the revelation of God, this at least appears to be one recommendation of it, that no man can observe its precepts without, at the same time, promoting his own advantage. If it be entirely reasonable, that the Glory of God, the Creator of all things, should be advanced, it is surely a happy consideration that the performance of this duty should not only be altogether consistent with, but directly conducive to, the happiness of his creatures. On this ground

alone independently of the promises of future reward to the obedient, it is expressly declared, that the seed of Jacob shall not seek God's face in vain, and that no man shall serve the Lord for nought. And the Psalmist must have been impressed with this sentiment, when he declared, "Great peace have they that love thy law, and in keeping thy commandments there is great reward." In this, most certainly he had in view, not barely or chiefly the happiness which a religious life conducts to hereafter, but the pleasure and advantage with which it is at present accompanied: not only for, but "in keeping thy commandments, there is great reward." If this be true in any instance, it seems to be most obviously so with respect to the precept which is contained in our text. Or, if the commandments of God were, in all other instances, grievous, yet this must be acknowledged to be an exception: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

To point out the excellency of this rule, and to recommend it to our practice, are the objects at which I shall aim in the progress of this discourse. With this view, I shall consider it first, with regard to its qualities; and, secondly, with regard to its effects.

In inquiring, then, of what kind is this rule? We observe, in the first place, that it is of such a nature as to establish a connexion between the obligation of a man's duty and the promotion of his happiness. It seems to take advantage of that selfishness of principle which often prevails too far, and makes it one's interest to do that which is right.

It produces a happy reciprocity of good offices between man and man, and engages each in the service of all the rest, though his views should be confined and his endeavours directed to his own advantage. It places a man in the situation of his neighbour, and obliges him to do good, from the hope and expectation of receiving it. It enforces the obligation and procures the discharge of all the duties of justice, benevolence and mercy, by establishing a claim upon a like return. For the same reason, and in conformity to the same principle, it forbids and prevents the commission of what is hurtful or unfriendly, inasmuch as a man would not wish that himself should be surrounded by enemies, or overreached by fraud. At the same time that it marks the duty and coincides with the inclinations of the conscientious man, it disarms the hand of violence, and arrests the designs of injustice. It not only stays the execution of both, but converts them by maturer reflection, into the opposite virtues.

Another quality that this rule possesses, is the most amiable simplicity. This quality renders it the more agreeable, and at the same time, the more useful; the more agreeable by corresponding with the true elegance of taste, and the more useful, by prescribing, with plainness and accuracy, the path of duty. It is sometimes objected against Divine Revelation, that it abounds in mysteries. If it be so, which I pretend not to deny, it is only in things which we are obliged to believe; but, in no instance in those which we are required to perform.

In the science of theology, there are some things mysterious, but, in the practical parts of it, there is

no obscurity. The path of duty is plain and straight, and the language of Scripture is, "This is the way, walk ye in it." If this be true of the precepts of the Gospel in general, it is especially so of our text in particular. The rule is drawn in characters so perspicuous, that he who runs may read it. Its simplicity is attractive to the most refined genius, and its import obvious to the most humble capacity. It is equally intelligible to the most improved and the most illiterate. Or, instead of saying it may be understood, we may rather say, that it cannot be otherwise. It is neither involved in the mysteries of science, nor perplexed by the terms of art: but, being intended for direction to all, it is so simple in its style, and so plain in its construction, that no man can possibly misinterpret its meaning, mistake its application, or evade its force. Its plainness contributes very much to its utility, while the benefit of it is the more readily acquired and the more extensively diffused by its great simplicity.

§. Another quality that enters into the character of this rule is, that it is always invariable in its application. I mean by this, that as it is not to be mistaken in its meaning, so neither can it be perverted in its use. With respect to many other of the Divine precepts, an attempt is often made to wrest their meaning or elude their force, not because they are themselves obscure, but in order to procure an indulgence for men's favourite vices, or to palliate, perhaps to justify too great an attachment to their worldly interest. How often does it happen, that the prohibition of one evil, has been improved by the ingenuity of men, into a sanction for another, or at

least into an excuse for it? Under pretence, for instance, of avoiding covetousness, we indulge ourselves in the opposite extreme of profusion and waste. On the other hand, the lawfulness of riches, and the injunction to provide "things honest in the sight of all men," have been made to countenance an inordinate desire of worldly acquisitions, and an unbecoming, or unlawful eagerness in their pursuit. Under love of charity for our neighbour, we indulge our own licentiousness of principles, and under pretence of being just, we become unmerciful, rigorous and oppressive to the necessitous and poor: and, as this is frequently the case, with the duties of our relative situation to one another, the same measure is also dealt out to those which have respect immediately to God.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," is the first and great command. It is reasonable in itself, and every one understands it; yet, this is made to warrant the exercise of cruelty and hatred to our fellow-men, whom we are pleased to consider as his foes. The Apostle Paul himself once thought, he did God service by persecuting his Saints. There is nothing more rational and commendable than a becoming zeal for religion; yet, under pretence of this, more blood has been shed in the world, and more cruelties committed, than on any other account whatever. It fares not thus with the rule in question: its design is to regulate and enforce the moral obligations of man to man, and is in no case liable to abuse or misapplication. That partiality for one's-self, and

that regard to private interest, which make a person pervert or violate most others of the commands of God, become parties in the cause of this, and join in enforcing its observance. If, therefore, it were but attended to, it would make a man honest, out of very knavery, (if I may use the expression,) allowing him to be destitute of any better principle.

4. Another quality of this rule, which presents itself to our view, is this, that there is in it the utmost conciseness, with the utmost fulness. I join these two together, because neither of them would be very remarkable, without the concurrence of the other. It would be no great recommendation of it, if shortness were counterbalanced by obscurity, or fulness by prolixity. But, it is one of its excellencies, that it is short without any deficiency, and replete with instruction without any redundance. There is nothing in it that is not necessary, and nothing omitted that would have been an improvement. It is itself a compendium of the whole system of morals, and a complete and perfect rule of conduct in every situation. It is so general as to comprehend all cases, and yet so special as to apply, particularly, to each. It is a general rule without exception, and a special rule without restriction. It is so excellent, as to attract universal admiration, and yet so obviously just, that any man would almost suppose he could himself have laid it down. Yet, the wisest of men and the greatest philosophers were not able to discover it. Their systems of ethicks consisted, partly of worldly maxims, and partly of abstruse and metaphysical reasonings. And, hence it has happened, that some of them have been them-

selves unjust, and some of them to common capacities wholly unintelligible. Some of them indeed have reflected honor upon their authors for their justice and equity; but yet they have been exceptionable in this, that they have been so exclusively adapted, and so much restricted to particular cases, as not to be calculated for common use. Men have been as much at a loss to find out the application of the rule, as they would have been to act without any rule at all. But it is truly said of our blessed Saviour, that "he spake as never man spake. He spake as one having authority." There is more contained in this short, this plain, this golden rule of the great teacher, than in all the volumes that the world contains. In comparison of this, the philosophy of the world is foolishness. In these few words, "as ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them," he may with propriety be said to enlighten every man that cometh into the world.

It is a great recommendation of useful books, that they are easy of acquisition, and that they are portable. What then must be said of this short and comprehensive rule, when it is considered, that he who has the Gospel, or who retains in memory the 12th verse of the 7th chap. of Matthew, carries with him a complete and perfect rule to guide and direct the conduct of man to man in every circumstance, and in all the relations of life? So various are the connexions, and so multiplied the demands, and so different are the situations of men in society, that to ascertain the rule of duty for every particular case, if this were possible, would be to fill the world with books; and indeed the whole world would not con-

tain them. But this short comprehensive rule is in the place of a thousand volumes. It makes a man at once a master of the subject; it acquaints him fully with the rule of his duty, because it places himself in the very situation to which it is to be applied.

5. I shall mention but one other property which this rule possesses, and that is, that it is unlimited in its extent, and universal in its operation. There is no instance in the course of life to which it is not applicable, and in which it does not administer instruction. It embraces all cases that occur, all contingencies that may happen, and all relations that subsist between man and man. It clearly defines the duties of superiors, equals, and inferiors: I mean superiors on account of public office, and inferiors in consequence of accidental distinctions. It teaches the duties and enforces the obligations of rich and poor, white and black, neighbours and aliens, friends and foes, those who are appointed to rule, and those who appoint them.

I am aware, that some have thought they descried an exception to the rule, in attempting the application of it to the civil magistrate. This is in the case of pronouncing sentence against a criminal: and it is stated, that as the magistrate would not wish to die himself, he would be bound up by this rule from passing sentence of death upon another. Many things might be said in answer to this; but suffice it to say, that in all such cases, he acts in an official, and not in his individual capacity. The objection contemplates the magistrate, not the man, and it is to the latter only that the rule is intended to apply. To the latter, under all the badges of office,

this rule will still find access. It will teach him to forbear all unnecessary severities, to extend every lawful indulgence, and from the heart to pity the situation of the unhappy criminal, whom the duties of his office oblige him to condemn. If in any instance he delights in cruelty, and takes pleasure in inflicting the penalties of the law, and in beholding the sufferings of the condemned, in such instance he acts the man; in such, he violates the rule; in such, he wounds the common feelings, and offers a reproach to the general character of human nature.

In all ordinary cases, independently on the obligations of official character, it teaches a man to do justice and to love mercy; to hold the balance even between man and man; to redress the wrongs of the aggrieved, and extend protection to the helpless, because he would expect and wish the same good offices for himself, in a like situation. To relations which bear some resemblance to this, I mean those of masters and servants, the same application is to be made. I have mentioned the case of inferiors, in consequence of accidental distinctions; this will be considered as one of those, or at least it will serve to explain our meaning, when it is remembered, that whilst some, in one country, are appointed to rule, men of the same description, in others, will be doomed to obey. It has been often known, that a Prince in Africa, by unexpected and unavoidable events, in the providence of God, has found his situation reversed in America. What, then, is the measure of their respective duties? The rule in question fully and pointedly decides it. Do to others as you would have them do to you. Let the master put

himself, for a moment, in the room of the servant, and substitute another in his own, and he will at once see, and must acknowledge the demands upon himself, of justice, humanity, benevolence and mercy. And, vice versa, on the other hand, the servant will be taught the indispensable obligations of obedience and fidelity. It might be easily demonstrated, that the rule in question extends its application to all the relations of men to each other, either in a state of nature, or of civilized society: to the former, it supplies the place of laws; and, to the latter, it is the unerring rule of their construction, and ought to be the invariable principle on which they are enacted; but, what has been said, must suffice upon this head.

We will briefly consider the effects with which the observance of this rule would be attended. I think I am not mistaken, when I affirm, that if this simple rule were attended to, wars would cease amongst nations, and strifes and contentions amongst men. That hypocrisy, intrigue and fraud, which are generally called the policy of nations, would, happily for the world, become entirely useless, and give way to justice and fair dealing. That servile phraseology would soon become obsolete, which represents a nation as superior in wisdom, merely because they excel in dissimulation and knavery. But, truth, justice and good faith would universally prevail. The policy of nations would be, in all cases, to deal out such measure as they would wish to receive. The strong would no more plunder and oppress the weak: deception and falsehood would not be practised upon the credulous: craft would find no employment

in over-reaching the honest; nor would the most powerful fleets and armies be construed into a right to trample under foot, all the rights of humanity. Such would be the effect of this rule upon nations; for, nations bear to each other, the relation of moral persons. And, how happy would it be, for every community, and every individual in it, if the rights of men were respected, as our Saviour requires? Injuries of every kind would be avoided; or, if unwittingly committed, would be speedily repaired, and men would dwell together in peace and harmony. Friends would be more closely cemented by the continual interchange of good offices: and enemies would be speedily and thoroughly reconciled, by being at least rendered just and placable to each other. Every instance that would occur of relieving each other's Ox from the ditch, (to use the language of Scripture,) would be like coals of fire on their heads, to disarm their resentments and melt them to terms of reconciliation and amity.

SERMON XIII.

COMMON LOT OF THE RIGHTEOUS AND WICKED.

“All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath.”

Ecclesiasties, 9th chap. 2d versc.

THERE is something, at first sight, unpromising in the aspect of this subject, and a superficial view of it, has been the source of great mistakes. The indiscriminate lot which falls into the lap of good men and of bad, has been thought to bear hard on the justice of God, and to destroy the connexion which Reason seems to have established betwixt guilt and punishment, and virtue and reward. If all things happen alike to all; if there is no difference; if there be one event to the righteous and the wicked, what odds does it make, to which of these descriptions we belong? What profit do we receive from the service of God? What loss do we sustain from the practice of sin, if virtue meets with cold neglect, and vice is permitted to pass with impunity? Nay, every instance in which we see the righteous dejected and the wicked prospering, which is no uncommon spectacle, seems to be giving the latter every advantage, and to deprive the former of

all encouragement. Such is the appearance which it wears, and such, indeed, has been the effect of it in every age of the world.

The wicked have been hardened in their sins by the forbearance of God, and turned his goodness into licentiousness. They say, exultingly "God careth not for it." Experience hath abundantly vindicated the observation of the Prophet, "Because judgment against an evil work is not speedily executed, the heart of man is set in him to do evil continually." And this has not only been a cause of vaunting to such as had thrown off the fear of God. It has been the subject of complaint also to men of piety and virtue. "Righteous art thou O! Lord," says the Prophet Jeremiah, "when I plead with thee: yet, let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are "all they happy that deal very treacherously?"

This also seems to have been the frequent subject of the Psalmist's meditations, and he speaks of it in the most plaintive strains. In the 73d Psalm, he delineates the character of the wicked, and describes their lot. "They are not in trouble," says he, "as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain, violence covereth them as a garment. They have more than heart could wish. They set their mouth against the Heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth. And they say how doth God know? And is there knowledge in the most High?" Such is the character which he gives them. It is an unfavourable one, indeed, and does not seem to merit

many tokens of favour from God. But in the next verse the Psalmist says, "Behold these are the ungodly who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. "Verily," says he, "I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency: For all the day long have I been plagued and chastened every morning." Laying aside the peevishness which the Psalmist discovered on the occasion; this seems to be a natural conclusion. But if we attend him a little further, we will find the whole mystery unravelled in a satisfactory manner.— "When I thought to know this," says he, "it was too painful to me. Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst sit them in slippery places; thou castedest them down into destruction." For the support of this truth, I am not now concerned. But bearing in mind, that if it be ill with the righteous on earth, it will not always be the case; and if it be well with the wicked, it will not be so long; let us endeavour to account for the mixed state of good and evil in the human lot. This is the immediate object of the present discourse, which I shall endeavour to pursue, not as a matter of speculation, but from a desire of vindicating the ways of God to men, and of administering some satisfaction to such of his people as may have been tempted by the present situation of affairs to doubt his tenderness and regard for them. In entering upon this enquiry, it is proper to premise, that evils of every kind which we are called to endure, are the effects of sin. We are informed "that at first the generations of the earth were healthful, and there was no poison of destruc-

tion in them." Sin, therefore, was the inlet to every other evil. Justice would require that perfect innocence should be exempted from suffering, but our iniquities have made it necessary that we should be visited with the rod. It should therefore reconcile the children of God to their keenest affliction, if affliction be their lot: it should hush their complaints, and silence every murmur, to reflect that if they are sufferers, they are still greater sinners. Whoever will seriously consider how much he has offended, will rather wonder how little he has suffered, than complain how much; and be obliged to acknowledge that his punishment is far less than his iniquities have deserved. Are any under the pressure of calamity, ready to conclude that God has forgotten them in their affliction? Let them call to mind how often in their prosperity, they have forgotten him. In him they live, and move, and have their being; from him they derive all the mercies which they enjoy, and every hope they entertain; and he has never been so unmindful of them, but that he has protected them by his good providence, and upheld them by his power, yet under all these circumstances, they have forgotten the God that made them, and rendered an ungrateful return for all the bounties of his providence, and the richer blessings of his grace. The children of God, then, upon this supposition, have no reason to complain, when they reflect that judgment without mixture had been entirely just, and that all the comforts they enjoy in life, are of free and unmerited grace. I do not offer these remarks, however, as a solution of the difficulty which arises from the in-

discriminate lot of righteous and wicked men. I am sensible that they do not fully answer this purpose; yet they are not altogether inapplicable, as they are of force, I think, to obviate any objection that might be made on account of those calamities, in which pious men are frequently involved.

The question still recurs, if the evils of life be the effect of sin, why do the wicked escape them, whilst they overwhelm the righteous? If those who fear God, and are the objects of his love, feel the correction of his rod, on account of their remaining corruptions, and their frequent miscarriages; why are not those more severely punished who are destitute of the many virtues which the Saints possess? Why, in short, do the former suffer, and the latter prosper? These questions seem to involve the merits of the case, as it has been generally stated. It is to be observed, however, that it requires some limitation. It does not always happen that good men are punished with poverty or drowned in sorrow, whilst those of the contrary character abound in riches, or exult in joy. This is by no means so universally the case, that we can distinguish the former by his sufferings, and the latter by his success. The heart of the good man sometimes sings for joy, and the most successful sinner has his seasons of outward adversity, and inward anguish. But this is frequently, perhaps generally reversed. We often see innocence in distress, and guilt triumphing. We often see the good man persecuted even for his religion, and the wicked crowned with success by the practice of vices, which seem to call for vengeance both from God and man.

Let us then join issue upon this case, and endeavour as concisely as possible, to account for the one and the other of the circumstances which compose it.

In the first place, we would remark, that it is evidently not the intention of providence that this world should be a place of rewards and punishments. It is a state of trial, in which we are to be trained up by the practice of Godliness and the exercise of patience, to inherit the promises of future glory. In this point of view, an indiscriminate lot to good and bad, recommends itself as highly proper. Were God continually to interpose in behalf of his children, he would leave but little room for confidence in his promises, or submission to his will. When I say this, it goes on the presumption that there is to be a future state of retribution, and that this world is but preparatory to the next. It is the character of the Christian, that he walks by faith and not by sight. It is in this view, that I said, on the supposition just mentioned, that there would be no room for confidence in the promises of God; for, as the Apostle has expressed it, what a man seeth, why does he yet hope for?

There are certain duties in religion, to be performed in this life, and progress to be made in Holiness, in order to our being made meet for the inheritance of the Saints in light. The servants of God, then, are not to expect their reward until their work is done; and, for the same reason, it does not seem reasonable, that the wicked should be punished till after sufficient trial. But, were God, on all occasions, to interpose by rewards and punish-

ments, there would seem to be less virtue in adhering to duty or refraining from vice. A mercenary disposition might lead us to the one, and servile fear deter us from the other. Besides, such a dispensation would have a tendency to obscure the view and weaken the expectation of a future state. Did we see men here, treated in every instance according to their deserts, it would seem to supersede the necessity of a final judgment, and lead us to conclude, that there was nothing better to be expected, or worse to be dreaded after the present life; whereas, the present allotment, in this respect, is a direct implication of the one and the other: it holds out sufficient encouragement to the practice of religion, and a sufficient caution against the danger of sin.

In connexion with this, let me observe, in the next place, that as we are candidates for another world; so the dispensations of God's providence, have a special regard to the progress of sanctification in our hearts, and our reformation from, and repentance of sin. This, I trust, will fully account for the afflictions of his children, and his forbearance towards the wicked and profane.

If the Christians were in this life perfect in Holiness; if they were free from infirmities; if they were proof against the power of temptation and the contagion of example, then there would be no occasion for the trials which they are called to endure, nor, indeed, for any other mean of grace which they are enjoined to use. Both Scripture and experience evince, that this is not the case. "If any man," says our Lord, "say he has no sin, he deceiveth himself, and the truth is not in him." There are

remainders of sin with which they must contend; they have many corruptions that must be mortified, and often much pride that must be humbled. Even his children are prone to forget God, and in the fulness of their prosperity to depart from his statutes. To correct these errors and promote the growth of Christian virtues, God has ordained various means of grace; but, those which fall under present consideration, are the corrections which he administers in the course of his providence. No judicious Christian will be surprised, that I have ranked these amongst the means of grace, when it is considered how great is their influence in weaning our affections from this present world, and producing the virtues of patience and humility, of dutiful resignation to the will of God, and even of thankfulness for the corrections of his rod. We know from experience and common observation, that it is much easier to bear affliction with patience, than uninterrupted prosperity with due moderation and humility. The promises of the Gospel afford support in adversity, which this in its turn disposes us to lay hold of, whilst prosperity undermines the foundations of virtue, weakens the sense of obligation and our own insufficiency, and often produces the lofty look which goes before a fall. I said, also, that afflictions produce the acceptable offering of a thankful heart. This, I apprehend, will appear to have sufficient foundation, when it is considered, that the people of God shall have the sanctified use of afflictions, and that they will not be continued longer than they have answered their end. As recovery from sickness convinces us of the value of health, so

the people of God have ever been found more thankful for deliverance from calamities of whatever kind, than they would have been for a total exemption from them.

They are, therefore, greatly mistaken, who suppose, from the unpromising aspect of affairs, that God has forgotten his people; or, that the afflictions of his providence are marks of his displeasure. Admitting what has been said, they are really tokens of his love and blessings in disguise; they are promised as blessings and prove so in the end. "Whom the Lord loveth," says the Apostle, "he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

Does not the tender father correct his child, that he may save him from ruin, and divert him from the pursuit of dangerous and destructive courses? And, is this an evidence of his neglect or hatred? Does this prove that he has no regard for him? Does it prove that he is destitute of paternal affection? Or, is it a mark of his ill will? Surely it is not. It is a certain, and to him a costly token of concern for the welfare of his beloved charge. His heart melts within him while he inflicts the rod: but, his child is dearer to him than every other consideration, and, therefore he will not give him up, but will endeavour to save him. But if he spare the rod, it is a sad symptom that the child is become incorrigible, and is given up at last as altogether hopeless. God also loves his Saints. A woman may forget her sucking child, sooner than he will forget them. They are dear to him as the apple of his eye. Yet for their good, he often finds it necessary to visit

them with judgments, to chasten them very sore, and purify them by the furnace of affliction. Whoever considers for a moment the frailty of human nature, must be sensible these afflictions are necessary, and their good effects are evident. Prosperity has a hardening and stupifying influence on the mind. When all things prosper we are apt to grow presumptuous and elated, to be lulled into a dangerous security, and the forgetfulness of God. But when we are blessed with seasonable corrections, before the repeated commission of wickedness shall have hardened our hearts, we are brought to consider the error of our ways, to be humbled under a sense of our manifold sins, and to turn us unto the testimonies of God. Such was the happy effect that it produced in Job, after many conflicts with his Maker on account of his judgments. "Behold I am vile," says he, "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." Job 40. 4, 5. Such also was the acknowledgment of the Psalmist David. "It was good for me that I was afflicted, for before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I keep thy Law." And the Apostle Paul says, that though afflictions for the present are not joyous but grievous, yet they are but for a moment, and they work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

When I said that the righteous were not to expect their reward until their work was done, and for the same reason that the unrighteous were not to be punished without sufficient trial, I in part ac-

counted for the forbearance of God towards the latter. Another reason why they are permitted to prosper and prolong their lives in their wickedness, is, that the goodness of God might lead them to repentance. "And knowing," says the Apostle, "that the goodness of God leadeth to repentance." For this reason he bears with them. He long waits to be gracious, not willing that they should perish. "As I live," saith the Lord, "I have no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but would rather he would turn and live: Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O ! House of Israel."

SERMON XIV.

THE DIVINITY OF THE SAVIOUR.

"That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father: he that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father which hath sent him."

John, 5th chap. 23d verse.

FOR the creature to honor the Creator, is certainly not to advance him to any new dignity, or confer upon him any higher titles than such as he would possess, independently of human applause, but devoutly, with the most profound reverence and humility, to worship and adore him. It is to acknow-

ledge his majesty and glory ; to shew forth his most worthy praise, to reverence his Holy name ; to exercise an entire resignation to his sovereign will, and yield a prompt and unreserved obedience to his commandments, together with all such expressions of homage as he may be pleased to reveal to us, that he will vouchsafe to receive. It is matchles condescension in the God of Heaven, that he should accept the praises of men at all, or the praises of the most exalted Archangels that surround his Throne on high. But, the homage of neither will he ever deign to accept, to the exclusion of his Son. Those spotless intelligencies cease not, day nor night, in their ascriptions of praise to "Him that sits upon the Throne, and to the Lamb that was slain : " and, to the children of men, he hath given commandment that they "honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." The exalted seraphs that "adore and burn," account it their highest honor, in obedience to the sovereign mandate, to cast their crowns at our Redeemer's feet, in token of their most profound submission.

The children of men, however, from what source of information I know not, but certainly not from the wisdom that is from above, through their great zeal for the honor of the Deity, and an extreme repugnance to idolatry, cannot be brought to bend the knee to Him that was slain, although alive again, or acknowledge him as God. Their doctrine is, that our Lord "Jesus Christ was a mere man, who had no existence antecedent to his miraculous conception ; that the Holy Ghost is not a distinct person ; but, that the Father is truly and properly God."

They contend, that the doctrine of satisfaction for sin, is utterly false, and that Jesus Christ only preached the truth to mankind; that he set before them an example of heroic virtue, and sealed his testimony with his blood. The doctrine of original sin and justification, in consequence of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, is altogether excluded from their system. Such is the religious creed of Socinus, the founder of this sect. Some new notions, however, are fitting, as I understand, before the imagination of some modern, eastern theologians, who tell us that there was nothing miraculous, nor at all extraordinary in the conception of our Saviour, and that he is in no degree to be considered as the object of religious worship.

When men engage in the discussion of points of controversy, they are too apt to lose their temper; to represent each other as destitute of all religion, and to attribute to them the most unhallowed motives.

It is, doubtless, the duty of the ministers of Jesus Christ, to maintain the truth as it is in him, and to oppose such errors as they judge detractive from the honor of their Redeemer, and prejudicial to the best interests of their fellow men, more especially of the people of their charge: but, at the same time, to use harsh language, and to entertain illiberal sentiments, is not only contrary to the mild, benevolent spirit of the religion of Jesus, but of real disservice to the cause in which they are employed. I hope, however, that without breach of charity, in this case, I may say, that if this system of doctrine laid down by Socinus, and espoused by his followers, be true;

if our Lord and Saviour be not very God as well as man; if the sufferings of his human nature were not of infinite value and merit by its union with the Divine; and, if the sufferings and death of Christ were not endured for the express purpose of cancelling and expiating human guilt, our case is hopeless and deplorable indeed. We have had some experience, I trust, of our guilt and misery: and when we were enquiring what we should do to be saved, we were invited and encouraged to flee for refuge from the avenger of blood to the peace-speaking blood of Jesus, which his Gospel assured us was shed on purpose for the remission of sins. Every time we seated ourselves at the table of the Lord, it was in commemoration of this; and in partaking with reverence, humility and contrition, of the symbols of his body and blood, our hearts were consoled by the hope of mercy, while at the same time they overflowed with gratitude for the unspeakable gift, and the most tender and endearing manifestations of Divine love to perishing sinners.

In this faith our fathers lived, in this they died, and triumphed in the hour of their death. In this faith, we have been instructed from our earliest youth. And under the influence of this persuasion, many a distressed heavy-laden sinner, and some amongst ourselves, I trust, have with penitent hearts applied to the God of mercy for pardon, through the merits of a crucified Redeemer, and found, or thought they found, rest and peace to their souls. Thought they found, I say; for, if Christ did not die for the sins of the world, to expiate human guilt by his atonement; but the opposite doctrine be

true, alas! where are we? And what is to become of us? If Christ was not delivered for our offences, and did not rise again for our justification, I have no glad tidings for you any more. Instead of directing enquiring souls, and applying myself to the blood of atonement for the pardon of guilt, I should be reduced to the painful necessity of declaring in the words of Paul to the Corinthians, respecting the resurrection of our Lord from the grave, "We are yet in our sins:" And that, as without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins, in our own blood we must perish forever. But be of good cheer, O! humble believer. Let not go this only anchor of your hope. The great design of God in sending his Son into the world, was that he might redeem the world, that whosoever believed in him might not "perish, but have everlasting life."

The rule laid down by a great Latin critic, never to introduce a God, but on occasions worthy of Divine interposition, is perfectly just, and obviously applicable, I think, to the case before us. It is very difficult to see any necessity, that the Son of God should come down from Heaven, assume our nature, become a man of sorrows, and finally die on the cross, or die at all, if it were merely, or principally for the sake of dying, and that men might be taught by his example, to endure sufferings with patience, and death with fortitude. Where was the necessity for such great preparations, to accomplish such a purpose? There are instances enough on record, of persons who died heroically, before the Saviour came; and thousands and thousands since, have died like poltroons. But it was worthy of the Son

of God to save a ruined world ; to redeem from death and destruction, precious souls which he had formed ; to appease the wrath of God ; to render him propitious to guilty sinners ; to inform them that by his precious blood shed on the cross, on their account, there was forgiveness for them with God, and plenteous redemption ; to encourage the humble, believing penitent ; to teach him, not only how to live and how to die, but how to rise again and receive eternal life which he died to purchase for them.

For the doctrine of the atonement, we are indebted to Divine revelation, and from that source we must derive all our information respecting it. That Jesus of Nazareth died, that he suffered the painful and ignominious death of the cross, is a matter of fact which all men are ready to admit ; but that he died for sin in the room of sinners, is called in question by some, who profess to embrace the Scriptures as the oracles of truth, and the source of their instruction. Thus do poor erring mortals differ.

Without being ensnared or influenced by the enticing words of man's wisdom, I shall just lay down before you the doctrine on the point in question, as it is revealed to us in the word of God ; and then you will judge for yourselves, whether Christ was offered as a sacrifice for sin or not. Our blessed Lord, immediately after his resurrection, in conversing with two of his disciples whom he overtook on their way to Emmaus, concerning the things that had been done to him, referred them to Moses and the Prophets for satisfactory information. I shall

therefore cite to you a few passages out of the Old Testament. It contains predictions respecting our Saviour, almost innumerable; but I shall only select a few of such as have reference to the design of his death. In the 53d chap. of Isaiah, then, from the 5th verse, you will find the following account: "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, and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all. He was taken from prison and from judgment; he was cut off out of the land of the living, for the transgressions of my people he was stricken." "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities. And he bore the sins of many, and made intercessions for the transgressors." Without multiplying quotations, I shall only further refer you to the 9th chap. of Daniel, 26th verse. "And after three score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself."

When we turn to the Gospel, we find it abounding in explicit declarations to the same effect.—"The Son of man," says Saint Matthew, "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Chapter 20, 28. In the 6th of John, our blessed Lord himself says; "And the bread which I shall give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." And when he gave the cup to his disciples, at the institution of the Christian passover, he accompanied it with these words; "This is my blood of the New

Testament which is shed for many, for the remission of sins." Saint Paul, in his 1st epistle to the Corinthians, informs them that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures;" 1st Corinthians 15. 3. In his second he says, "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;" 2d Corinthians 5. 14, 15. In the 1st Epistle to the Thessalonians, the words of the Apostle are, "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us;" 5. 9, 10. See also the 2d chapter to the Hebrews, 9th verse. "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man;" Hebrew 9. 28. "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many," &c.

Now, let us suppose that it was really the intention of these words to represent Jesus Christ as a sacrifice for sin, and that it was his great object in dying on the cross, to expiate human guilt, and procure pardon and salvation for guilty and perishing sinners; I beseech you, in what plainer and more unequivocal language, could the doctrine have been expressed? Take for a specimen the declarations of our Saviour himself which have been already quoted; "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Again, "And the bread which I shall give you is my flesh which I will give for

the life of the world;" and, in giving the cup, "This cup," said he, "is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for many, for the remission of sins."

Such language as this, certainly gives but little countenance to the frivolous conceit, that the great and sole object of Christ's coming into the world was to instruct them in things they did not know before; and, that the only design of his sufferings and death, was to teach men how to bear adversity with patience, and meet death with fortitude. It is true, that he did instruct as a Prophet; but, it is as true, and to us of greater interest, that as a Priest, he offered a complete atonement for sin: on this, depends all human hope.

To deny the atonement of Christ, is, in effect, to deny his Divinity; and there is no doubt, but that the one is done for the sake of the other. Hence it is alledged, that to worship the Saviour is an act of idolatry. If this were indeed so, what would become of the direction in the text, "That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father?" That is, in the same manner, with the same reverence, and to the same extent. Is it not most unaccountable, too, if it be idolatrous in men to worship the Son, that the Angels should be expressly commanded to commit this very idolatry? "Let all the Angels of God worship Him," is the sovereign mandate.

SERMON XV.**THE BENEFIT OF AFFLICTION.**

“It is good for me that I have been afflicted.”

Psalms, 119th chap. 71st verse.

THAT man is born to trouble, is a general assertion, to which so few exceptions are to be found, that the vainest hope which we can entertain, is, that we shall pass our lives in uninterrupted prosperity, and know the nature of trouble and disappointment, not by experience, but by observation. Yet they who are in a state of prosperity, are often inclined to indulge this vain hope, and to flatter themselves with the expectation of many days to come, all as fair as those which they at present enjoy.

There is another illusion as common as this, and more dangerous, namely, a persuasion that adversity is the greatest evil which can befall us. The Scriptures frequently affirm the contrary, and though out of respect to their sacred authority, we admit in general all to be true which is contained in them, yet, on this point, we believe as though we believed not; our faith is imperfect, and its influence upon our passions is feeble and superficial. And yet the doctrine of the Scriptures upon this subject is agreeable to general experience, and to plain common sense. The Scriptures have no refined and subtle notions about the nature of adversity, nor do they endeavour to persuade us that we may take pleasure in it; but acknowledging that it is irksome

and contrary to our inclinations, they assure us that it produces many salutary effects. "No chastening," say they, "for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterwards, it yieldeth to peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby." "It is good for me," says David in the words of the text, "that I have been afflicted." He doth not say, that afflictions, whilst he endured them, were agreeable to him; but that he had found them profitable, and that they had made him a better man, a more careful observer of the laws of God. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes." He confesses, that prosperity had been prejudicial to him: that it had conduced to make him negligent of his duty; that whilst he seemed to be happy, his soul was in no good condition, though he perhaps was not sensible of it, till adversity taught him his danger, and the necessity of amendment. "Before I was afflicted" says he in this Psalm, "I went astray; but now have I kept thy word."

Afflictions have a tendency to produce in us reformation and improvement. It will be proper to shew this, and to point it out in particular instances.

One use, then, of afflictions, is, that they often make us better members of society, by giving us a compassionate disposition towards those who are unhappy, and a proneness to assist and relieve them.

Experience shews, that they who have been acquainted with trouble, are the most inclined to pity a fellow-sufferer who is in the same condition. They have been in the like hard circumstances: they then wanted the friendly advice and the good

offices of others: they then more especially were displeased if they found themselves neglected and slighted, and their reasonable requests refused. They are consequently the more disposed to make the case of others their own, and to have a strong sense of the beauty of that Divine precept, which directs us to do to our neighbour what we would that he should do to us. The sacred writers have not omitted this observation, when, to encourage us to trust in our Mediator, they remind us that he, having borne our nature and its weaknesses, is consequently the more ready to assist us; for in that himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted. We seem to be naturally disposed to pity those who suffer, but this disposition may be weakened and destroyed, or preserved and strengthened. It is often weakened by temporal prosperity, which raises in us a thoughtless careless gaiety, a great love of amusements and pleasure, and an aversion from all objects which may create any melancholy and uneasiness: and it is as frequently preserved and increased by calamities, which soften the heart, and give it a taste for the serious pleasures arising from benevolence and humanity.

It is a thing of far less importance, and yet it is not altogether unworthy of observation, that afflictions have a tendency to improve, not only a man's moral dispositions, but his natural abilities also, his sentiments and his expressions, his thoughts and his style.

Here then is a particular and a general use of afflictions. They are certainly profitable to those

whose temper and understanding they have improved, and they are of general use to societies, by raising up among them, public benefactors.

Afflictions have also a tendency, either to prevent or to remove from us pride and insolence, and a disregard of our fellow-creatures.

They who live at their ease, who have experienced no disappointments, who enjoy health, and plenty, and power, learn to imagine that health, and plenty, and power, contain in them all perfections of body and mind, or at least, supply all the defects of either; they learn too easily to forget themselves, and to slight those who are beneath them. But trouble, like death, equals all, and at its approach, the frivolous marks of worldly distinction shew their emptiness. Calamities befall the poor and friendless: they visit also the rich and the powerful; and when they come to those whom prosperity has spoiled, they bring this instruction along with them, that all states are exposed to the evils of life, that all persons stand in need of each other's assistance, and that the most considerable difference between us, is that which is made by virtue and vice.

Again; afflictions are useful, as they wean us from too great a love for this world.

Since men are fond of life, and of all that conduces to its convenience, and since this fondness is very much increased by the possession of the good things belonging to the present state, it is fit upon the whole, that man who is born to die, should also be born to trouble, and meet with disappointments, and see the disagreeable parts of life, that he may be contented to submit to a decree which he cannot

reverse, and learn to retire decently from a state which the law of mortality will force him to quit, whether he be willing or not.

It hath been thought by some, that if we lived long enough, we might and we should learn all this, without the assistance of afflictions, those rigid instructors. We are satiated, say they, as of other things, so of life itself. A constant return of the same occupations, and of the same amusements, will grow unwelcome and insipid at the last, and we shall desire a release, and receive it as a favour.

A certain mixture of sprightliness and melancholy, might lead some persons into this way of thinking; but, the greater part of men are so much attached to the present state, that much stronger causes are necessary to give them an indifference towards the world: nor, would a long life grow tiresome to them, unless it were attended with worse inconveniences than a review of the same objects, and a repetition of the same actions.

Afflictions, therefore, come seasonably, to those who would willingly take up their abode in a place which was not designed for their home, and give them a sense of the many defects which render that place undesirable; and, then the mind, dissatisfied with its present condition, and ever desirous of finding rest and peace, looks forward and turns its views towards Heaven. This is another use of troubles, and one of the ends for which they are permitted, or appointed by providence. They are designed for our amendment, and they naturally conduce to it.

Men, living in a neglect of their duty, find ways to compose their conscience, and to drive away the

thoughts of their offences, whilst their condition here is easy and prosperous. The variety of amusements and occupations, to which they have recourse, employ and divert them, and keep off serious and sorrowful reflections. It was the observation of a Pagan, that altars were made for the unhappy; and, that other people seldom approached them. But, when the scene is changed, and things fall out contrary to their expectation, and trouble overtakes them, new thoughts take place. They seek relief and assistance, and they see that worldly objects can give them no ease and no comfort: they then begin to know the nature of such objects, and to look upon them with more indifference. When they have lost the things which they most valued; or, when they find them deceitful, useless and unsatisfactory, they learn to pass a new, and a better judgment upon them. At the same time, they perceive the beauty of virtue, the excellence of piety, the many advantages of a religious life, and the inestimable value of the future rewards promised to the obedient: they see the folly of preferring the transitory pleasures of sin, to these substantial and durable blessings: they will then be sensible, that God alone can be a refuge to them; that he can, in many ways, assist them; that he can remove or lessen the evils which oppress them; give them strength of mind to bear them, or make those calamities turn to their temporal or eternal welfare.

Then their past offences will rise up before them, with shame and sorrow, that they had not served God better in the days of their prosperity: then resolutions of amendment, and of working out their

own salvation with care and diligence, will follow.

Lastly; afflictions are useful, by inducing us to exercise the virtues suitable to that state. In this view they are trials; trials of our patience, constancy, faith, resignation and reliance; and, therefore, great benefits when they answer the end for which they were designed. To be contented, when every thing succeeds according to our desires, to think that God has given us what is necessary for our well-being, when we abound with all conveniences of life, is no virtue. But, to believe that a state of affliction is proper for us, because God thinks fit to try us with it, to submit to it with meekness and patience, to be willing to undergo any thing here, if by it, we may secure his approbation, and a place in his kingdom, is a disposition most acceptable to him. The behaviour of such a person, recommends constancy and piety to all who converse with him, more than the most elaborate discourses upon the subject. It hath been said, that a good man contending with ill fortune, and superior to it, is a spectacle which God himself may delight to behold: He is certainly an example, from which men by beholding may receive instruction and improvement.

I have mentioned several desirable effects which afflictions have a tendency to procure. It is true that they have not always these happy consequences. There are, and there have been many to whom calamities have done no good, but the contrary: Hence, those expostulations and complaints in the Prophets: "For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still; for the people turneth not to him who smiteth them, neither

do they seek the Lord of Hosts. Why should they be stricken any more? They will revolt more and more. Strangers have devoured the strength of Ephraim; but they do not return to the Lord, nor seek him for all this." Afflictions produce in some, a distrust of God's goodness, hardness of heart, despair, injurious thoughts against Providence. In others, they excite humility, repentance, charity, humanity, and all good works. To be made worse by sufferings, is a sign of a corrupt and profligate mind, and must arise from a disbelief of all religion, or from a very wicked conduct; but they who are in a state, between gross impiety, and Christian holiness, are often improved by sufferings. We may observe that in the New Testament, the afflictions which befall Christians are represented not as punishments, but as corrections, as the chastenings of a father and a friend; as acts of God's kindness to us, intended to make us better and happier.

We may also observe, that afflictions will be more or less heavy and grievous to us, according to the bad or good effect which they produce in us. Very grievous they must be to those, who account God to be their enemy, and neither seek nor expect his favour and assistance; but to those who are amended by them, they will not prove insupportable. Trouble leads them to repentance, and repentance is a kind of pleasing grief, a remorse attended and allayed with hopes of being reconciled to our Father, and of seeing, one time or other, an end of sorrows. And besides this, God hath told us that such as our behaviour is, when we are thus visited

by him, such will his conduct be towards us. If we turn to him, and receive his corrections with submission and humility, and by the reformation of our lives shew that we have a due sense of our faults, and of the kind end for which those corrections were inflicted, God will make them easy to us, and in due time relieve or release us : But, if we harden our hearts, and sin on in defiance of his judgments, we may expect that God will deal with us as he declared that he would deal with the people of Israel, who having denounced terrible evils, which should overtake them, if they forsook him, tells them, “if you will not be reformed by all this, I will punish you seven times more, and again seven times more for your sins.”

Having observed thus much of the design and tendency of afflictions, it only remains now that we consider the use which is to be made of this doctrine. There is a pretty fable related by an ancient Pagan writer, that the Deity who formed the first man out of the ground, reflecting at the same time on the calamities which the unhappy creature was to undergo, wept over his work, and tempered it with tears, that man, whose heart should be so often overcharged with griefs, might not want a way to give it vent. This writer has considered afflictions in a desponding and melancholy way : but there is a more manly, and more rational way of considering them, and it is thus : Since we have no reason to expect that we shall spend our days in an uninterrupted enjoyment of temporal happiness ; since affliction seems on the contrary to be man's patrimony, his birthright and inheritance ; since troubles

are also intended for our benefit, and when they produce proper effects, become more easy to be endured, it is our duty and our interest to prepare ourselves to meet them, and to acquire the methods of softening their harsh nature, and of improving their good tendency. Therefore, if we are in an easy condition, we should preserve ourselves free from the faults which often accompany that state, such as pride, uncharitableness, irreligion, a pursuit of unlawful pleasures, and an unreasonable fondness for the world. We should remember that there is nothing besides our virtue that we can call our own, and that almost every thing else, is vanity or uncertainty.

There is a thoughtfulness about future evils, which makes us dissatisfied and uneasy before-hand, and raises apprehensions of troubles which may never befall us; and this is a weakness, or rather a folly. But there is a meditation upon these subjects which is pleasant and profitable, which teaches us moderation in the best state, and arms us with courage and constancy against the worst.

Happy circumstances incline us to seek out variety of amusements, to keep much company, to indulge our appetites, in a word, to create to ourselves many wants, to make many things necessary to us, which many persons in lower life never possessed and never desired. Thus we lay ourselves open to grief and misery, upon any change of circumstances, and become unfit to act a rational part in any other station. This evil would not befall us, if we used the pleasures and conveniences of this world, as things which we may lose and ought to resign de-

cently. If we can gratify our appetites in all things, we should yet sometimes cross and contradict them, that we may live contented upon a little, if poverty should ever overtake us. If we have friends and relations, we should at certain times withdraw from them all, that we may know how to bear retirement and solitude, if need should require it; that we may secure to ourselves good company, within our own breasts, and be able to converse agreeably with God and our own thoughts. By acting thus in prosperity, we shall escape those evils which others draw upon themselves, and those which God inflicts upon sinners, to bring them to a better mind, and we shall not be overcome by those which befall us. If our days have been and are prosperous, we have great reason to add to our gratitude an uncommon care of our behaviour, and to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. God hath often declared, that he corrects those whom he loves best. We must therefore beware, that we be not of the number of those who receive good things only in this state. If that should be our case, our present happiness would be our heaviest misfortune. But the favours, the temporal favours of Providence, are no curses, unless we make them such. We may be successful and virtuous too. Indeed, it requires no small wisdom and caution to gain these two blessings, which men almost always put asunder; and the difficulty of doing this should teach us a distrust of ourselves, a moderate esteem of our possessions, and a religious fear, lest we should miss our reward in Heaven. If we have endeavoured to behave ourselves like men and like Christians, then have we

many motives to bear adversity with patience and resignation, and not to be quite cast down. Then we have a refuge, and may apply to him who hath told us, that all things shall work together for good to them that love him ; that he will not suffer them to be tried above their strength, but will with the temptation, make a way that they may escape ; and that blessed are they who are trained up by these short hardships, to glory and immortality. If our days are evil, they are few, and then follows a state of peace to the righteous ; then various rewards will be distributed, and probably none of the smallest to those who have been exercised and improved by afflictions. We judge persons fortunate or wretched, according to their present outward circumstances. How uncertain must that judgment be ? If God should enable us to see what passeth in the hearts of men, or if he should remove the cloud from our eyes, and give us a view of the state which is to succeed this, how desirable would the condition appear of many, whom the world now is disposed to pity or to despise !

If the evil days come upon us before we are prepared to meet them, before we have reformed our conduct, it is our duty to consider the purposes for which it pleaseth God to visit us. If we give ourselves up to sullen discontent or despair, or if we have no sorrow for our past offences, but only for our present calamities, we make not a right use of his corrections : we offend him still more : we add to the weight of the burden, which he hath laid upon us. His corrections call to repentance ; and we should be thankful that he took us not off at a time when

death would have been the destruction, both of soul and body; and whilst we endeavour to reform our lives, we should trust in the promises of God, that he will be found of those who thus seek him.

Lastly: If we have passed through troubles, and seen an end of them, our behaviour should be such, that we may be able to say with David, "It is good for us that we have known afflictions." We may reflect upon them with pleasure, if we are sensible that they weakened our depraved appetites and vain desires, strengthened our good dispositions, and adorned our minds with new graces. But, if they have left us no better than they found us, our condition is bad indeed. In honest and generous tempers, the blessings of God produce gratitude and love: In those which are less tractable, afflictions often create amendment: But there is no hope of those upon whom nothing can work, upon whom both severity and kindness are forever thrown away.

SERMON XVI.

FUTURE PUNISHMENT.

“And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.”

Matthew, 25th chap. 46th verse.

THE unequal distribution of rewards and punishments in this life, has not only been made a pretence with men of dissolute lives for continuing in iniquity and the neglect of God, but also for calling in question the superintendence and care of his providence over the affairs of men. The afflictions of the righteous, and the prosperity of the wicked, have been thought to be inconsistent with the justice of God, which, according to their idea of equity, should necessarily reward the good, and punish the vicious. But, the main design and drift of their arguments, have been to allay the apprehension of a more equitable distribution in a future state, and to prove as a necessary consequence, that there is no judgment to come, because there is no Providence. These are considerations they take for granted by turns, and dispute in a circle about them; that there is no future judgment, because there is no Providence, and there is no Providence, because there is no future state.

It was even a stumbling block to good men to see the wicked flourishing like a green bay tree, whilst the righteous were visited with severe afflictions. This almost tempted the Holy Psalmist to distrust

the care of God's Providence over his servants, and made him hastily conclude, that he had cleansed his heart and washed his hands in innocency in vain. "As for me," says he, "my feet were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipped, for I was envious as the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. But as the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, so he was enabled to look forward to a future state, and see the different situations of those that feared God, and those that feared him not. When I sought to know this, it was too hard for me, until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I them, and, surely thou didst sit them in slippery places; thou castedst them down to destruction. But thou shalt guide me with thy council, and afterwards receive me to glory." When the prosperity of the wicked became their snare, he no longer envied their lot, nor did he distrust the goodness of God, in the afflictive dispensations of his Providence, when he understood that the light afflictions which the Christian endured, would work out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

In the very solemn passage under consideration, our Saviour very expressly informs us, what will be the different conditions of the sinner and the Godly man, and the final destiny of both; these shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal.

In the further prosecution of this subject, I shall endeavour in the first place, according to my promise, to shew that the afflictions of the righteous and the prosperity of the wicked, are no arguments

against Providence and a future judgment. In the second place, as time will not allow me to discuss at length, both parts of this subject, I shall confine myself to the former part of it, and consider a little, the nature of the punishment that awaits the wicked; and in the third place, consider its duration. Then a few observations, from what may have been said, shall conclude the discourse.

Under the first head, the unequal distributions of rewards and punishments in this life, which men who think but little, are apt to consider as weighty arguments against Providence and a future state of retribution, is so far from answering the purpose, that it is, if duly considered, at least, an indirect implication of both.

According to every just notion of the purity and holiness of God, sinners must be the objects of his abhorrence, and good men his delight; and to deal with them in equity, he must punish or reward them according to their deeds. When, therefore, we see the wicked flourishing, and the righteous afflicted, and at the same time, take into consideration the justice of God, who awardeth righteous judgment, we may rest assured, that the time will come, when these differences shall be finally adjusted; when the righteous shall receive their recompence of reward, and the wicked shall suffer the wages of their iniquity; that God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, and render unto every one according to the deeds he shall have done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil. If we consider it as essential to the justice of God, that good men should be re-

rewarded, and bad men punished, and we know that this is not the case in this life, the only natural conclusion is, that these distinctions are reserved for a future state. Indeed, a little reflection would serve to convince us of the propriety of an indiscriminate lot to the righteous and the wicked. This world is a state of probation in which we are to be trained up in the practice of religion, and by the exercise of virtue, be made fit for Heaven. The servants of God, then, are not to expect their reward until their work is done; and if wicked men complain of God's Providence, on account of their prosperity, probably, they would think it much harder to have suffered the demerit of their crimes immediately in this world, and be punished without a trial.

It is easy to see, that if God were on all occasions to interpose in behalf of the righteous, and in punishment of the wicked, it would in a great measure lay a constraint upon their actions, and leave but little room for the exercise of Christian graces. There would be but little virtue in refraining from vice, if the terrors of the Almighty were constantly displayed before our eyes. And on the other hand, it would destroy our faith in the promises of God, which is so essential to the Christian, that he is said to walk by faith and not by sight. But what a man seeth, why does he hope for? It is reserved, therefore, as a reward to good men in another life, that their faith should be swallowed up of vision, and their hope terminate in enjoyment.

2dly. As far as the Providence of God is concerned, and his care of the righteous in this world, they are very much mistaken who attribute the af-

flictions of good men to his neglect, or consider them as marks of his displeasure; they are rather the tokens of his kindness and regard. Afflictions are promised as blessings to God's people; for, whom he loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son and daughter whom he receiveth. The sufferings of this present life, though for the present they are not joyous, but grievous, are designed for, and productive of our good, in abating our attachment to the transitory objects of time and sense, and stand as beacons on these earthly coasts, to warn us to look for happiness in a better country, to lay up our treasure in Heaven, where moth and rust do not corrupt, and where it will not be subject to the inroads of time. When all things go prosperously on, we are apt to grow presumptuous, and repose in a dangerous security, and in the neglect of God, until destruction overtake us: But, when we are blessed with seasonable correction, before the frequent commission of wickedness hardens our hearts, we are brought to consider the error of our ways, to be humbled under the sense of our sins, and to turn unto the testimonies of God. Thus, says the Psalmist, "It is good for me that I was afflicted: Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I keep thy law."

As a father chasteneth a son, so does God deal with them, that fear him. When a child is chastised, he weeps beneath the smart; but the correction proceeds from the sincerest regard, and is a token of the purest desire to promote the interest of the child. On the other hand, when he withholdeth the rod, it is a sad token that the child is become

incorrigible, or that having been often chastised, he has hardened his heart, and is given up to his own destruction. Accordingly, the Apostle says to the Hebrews, "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as sons; for, what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons."

Lastly, under this head, as to the prosperity of the wicked, considering what has been already said of the necessity of correction, it is still a smaller objection against Providence in permitting it, when their lives at furthest are but short, and often chequered too with the misfortunes that fall to the common lot of humanity; and especially, where this is not the case, when the objection is so easily removed by the Psalmist in the 37th Psalm, "Yet a little while and the wicked shall not be; yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be." When the same persons who have been the spectators of their prosperous wickedness, shall live to see a sudden end of them. "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." If the righteous then suffer tribulation here, their reward is great in Heaven; and if the wicked enjoy an uninterrupted series of earthly prosperity, there is a day of reckoning appointed for them, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God in a future state.

This leads me to consider the nature of that punishment which awaits the wicked hereafter. The

most that we can say of this is, that it surpasses all description. We have reason to bless God, that we are yet the monuments of his mercy and forbearance; that we do not know the sufferings that are contained in the phials of his wrath, and the blackness of darkness for ever. Could I open to your view the bottomless pit, that tophet that is prepared of old for the Devil and his Angels, and the smoke of torment that ascendeth thence; or, could we hear the groans of the wretched prisoners that are there confined, we might have some idea of what they endure, who have fallen under the wrath of Almighty God.

In the general, however, from what the Scriptures teach us, we may learn, that the punishment of the wicked is of two kinds: the one is an utter exclusion from the joys of Heaven; and the other, the actual vengeance of God. We are informed of this, in the distressing story of Lazarus and the rich sinner. The latter, we are told, saw the happiness at a distance, which he had lost forever: he saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom, while he was excluded from those happy regions; and, to add to his misery, he was tormented in the flames. Had we no greater punishments to fear, it would be an awful thing, when we knocked at the gate of Heaven, to find it barred against us, and to receive that sentence from our Judge, "Depart from me, ye cursed, I never knew you." And this, we know, shall be the fate of all the wicked, that they shall be forever banished from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power. They are not to be permitted to taste of the rivers of pleasure, which flow forever more at God's right hand; they shall not en-

joy the smiles of their Maker and Redeemer, nor receive the congratulations of kindred souls. In short, they shall be forever deprived of greater happiness than eye hath seen, or ear heard, or hath entered into the heart of man to conceive.

But, secondly, this, however dreadful, alas ! is not all; they must not only depart from Heaven, but they must go to Hell : they not only forfeit everlasting happiness, but they must be exquisitely miserable. The rich sinner lifted up his eyes in Hell, being in torment. The unhappy doom which they shall suffer, who, by continuing in sin, lose their souls, will not only be, "depart ye cursed," but, "Depart into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels." The torments of Hell are exhibited to us under the most dreadful representations ; such as fire and brimstone, the blackness of darkness ; the worm that never dieth, and unquenchable fire. Yet, as we are to understand by these representations, the everlasting death of the soul, men have flattered themselves with vain hopes, that these torments will not be real, and that material fire will not be used in punishing an immaterial spirit. But, these hopes, whether true or false, are dangerous delusions. Can we suppose that infinite wisdom will be at a loss to contrive, or that omnipotence shall want power to inflict the most intolerable torments ? The body, as well as the soul, will be cast into Hell ; and, therefore, we cannot say that there will be no fire there. But, allowing these to be figurative expressions, we have reason to fear that the future punishments of the enemies of God, instead of being lighter, will be much more grievous,

than they are represented. The spirit of God does not hold out figures that exceed the reality ; and, if the lake of fire and everlasting burnings are no more than metaphors, good God ! what will the real torments of the damned be ? God grant that none of us may ever feel his frowns ; for, believe it, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Having thus offered some imperfect observations as to the nature of future punishment, I proceed, in the third place, to consider its duration. There has long been a warm dispute about this point, and it is now becoming a popular doctrine, that it will be only for a limited time. Whilst some, from the conviction of their minds, have maintained, that it will be everlasting ; others, from a different conviction, or to gain proselytes to a popular doctrine, have asserted, that the wicked will be punished but for a time, and will afterwards be received into glory with the righteous.

For my part, I should be loth to disturb your peace, by endeavouring to maintain the contrary, were it not that I consider this as a very pernicious doctrine, and that we are no where warranted in Scripture to entertain such flattering hopes.

Men who are amused with such airy fancies, instead of being led to repentance by the goodness of God, are apt to sit down deliberately to count the cost, to indulge themselves in wickedness, in some measure, with the hope of impunity ; and, as it were, to compound with their Maker, for a whole life of sin, by paying the forfeit of a limited punishment. They use the kindness of God, but the more to provoke him ; or, to use the striking and elegant lan-

guage of our Saviour, "Their eye is evil because God is good." Thus, they are led by these mistaken notions, to prolong their punishment, if it be but temporary; but, if it should chance to be everlasting, they lose their souls forever.

It is with reluctance that I enter upon this subject; but, to guard you against dangerous deceptions, you will give me leave to try the force of an argument or two upon it.

In the first place, then, if we pay any regard to the Holy oracles of God, we have there, the plainest and most awful threatnings of everlasting punishment against all the workers of iniquity. Amongst the many passages in Scripture, to this purpose, I shall only instance two or three. See the 36th verse of 8d chap. John: "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." See, also, the 66th chap. Isa. 24th verse, and no less than three places in the 9th chap. Mark, read to the same purpose: "It is better to go to Heaven maimed, than to go into Hell; into the fire that shall never be quenched, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." The chapter we have read, denounces the same doom. And I shall only instance further in the revelation of Saint John the Divine; "And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, if any man worship the beast, &c. the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and they shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up *for*

ever and ever." These passages are so plain and pointed, that it is a wonder that there should be any altercation about them. But, interested men have learned the art of turning every part of Scripture to serve their own opinions. And setting up their own reason as their guide, have contended, that it is inconsistent both with the goodness and justice of God, to punish his creatures forever, for offences committed in a small space of time.

But, 2dly. The demerit of sin is not to be estimated by the time of its commission, but rather by its nature and malignity. In human discipline we do not think it inconsistent to punish a malefactor with perpetual servitude, or with death itself, for crimes committed in an instant of time. But the common reply to this objection, and at the same time an argument for the eternity of punishment is, that sin is infinitely aggravated; as being committed against God. I do not mean to strain this argument very far: but it is very reasonable, however, that offences are more or less aggravated according to the innocence, or excellency of the object against whom they are committed. An offence against an inferior, is worthy of stripes, or strict reparation. An offence against a superior, is on that account the more highly aggravated; and treason against the King or the supreme Magistrate of any government, is punished with death. And by parity of reasoning, an offence against the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, the infinitely pure and holy God, must be of infinite demerit; and consequently, must create an obligation to infinite punishment.

3dly. However men may argue speculatively, upon this point, the sufferings and death of Christ, I think, put the matter out of all dispute. If a finite atonement could have removed the guilt of sin, and satisfied the justice of God, no doubt Abraham had been permitted to offer Isaac ; but when an infinite sacrifice was required, the offence must certainly have been infinitely heinous, and of consequence worthy of infinite punishment. We cannot without blasphemy, suppose, that the Father was so lavish of the blood of his only begotten Son, as to pour it out without necessity ; and if so costly an atonement was necessary to the salvation of them that believe, certainly a mortal creature who by refusing to believe, takes the satisfaction for sin upon himself, must necessarily suffer an eternity of punishment, to make up in duration, what he wants in dignity.

4thly. The nature of sin itself presents us with a solid argument upon this subject. Sin, in general, may be described in two particulars : the one, is the want of conformity, unto ; the other, the actual transgression of the law of God. I shall confine myself for the present, to the former distinction, and if the one be sufficient, the other certainly will increase the guilt. Sin, according to the original expression, signifies literally, to miss the mark. In prosecution of this idea of it, I observe, (as it is agreed upon all hands,) that the chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. Now when we direct our aim to a different object, we miss the proper end of our creation ; and as an arrow shot beyond the mark, the longer it flies, is but the further distant ; so the soul of man being an active principle,

and destitute of original righteousness, must wander further and further from God. Now the only method of recovery, is through Jesus Christ, who with striking propriety is said to bring us back to God, and unless we lay hold of this hope that is set before us, we must eternally wander from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power. Accordingly it is said of the wicked, that they are afar off from God. And, to conclude this argument, we may observe in the fifth place, that the day of God's grace lasts only while we live. If we die filthy, we must be filthy still; for there is no working, nor faith, nor repentance in the grave whither we all haste; but as the tree falleth, so it lieth, and as death leaveth us, so will judgment find us. It is a fixed decree, that without holiness, no man shall see God: and our Saviour said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." We have reason to believe also, that if we perish finally, we shall continue even in torment to sin against God. It is said in revelation, where there is a description of those miserable souls that suffer under the phials of God's wrath, that they were scorched with heat and blasphemed the God of Heaven because of their pains, and repented not to give God glory. But if we did not add to our guilt, if we should be so miserable as to go to hell, yain would be all our hopes of Heaven. For, if we die unfit for that holy place, the longest and the severest punishment would not entitle us to it. The children of God themselves suffer punishment in Jesus Christ; that is, he suffered it for them; but this is not sufficient;

for by the grace of God, they must be made holy here, that they may be happy hereafter: And if without holiness no man can see God, miserable beyond expression must be their fate who die in their sins.

SERMON XVII.

ON THE GENERAL JUDGMENT.

“Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”

Acts 17, 31st verse.

THE frequent assurances of a general judgment which are given in Scripture, serve to account, amongst other things, for the unequal distribution of mercies, and of punishments in the present life. Upon any other supposition, the prosperity of the wicked, and the calamities of righteous men, would hardly be consistent, either with the justice or goodness which we ascribe to God. David seems to have been an attentive observer of the unequal lot of the sinner and the religious man, and could not discern the propriety of it, until he went into the sanctuary of God, and saw their different end. If

we should subscribe to the heresy of those who contend that there will be no future state of retribution, we must either deny the interposition of God's righteous Providence, or call in question his justice and benevolence. The latter of these suppositions is too shocking to be avowed by any; but the former has had its advocates. They have represented the affairs of men as too trivial to attract the notice and attention of the Almighty. But this is to diminish his greatness, instead of extolling it, and that at the expense of all his other attributes. Can he be wearied or embarrassed by a multiplicity of cares? Is it to be supposed that he should make the world and its inhabitants, without any regard to the administration of the one, or the transactions of the other? Surely not. But, it may be asked, if God does behold the affairs of men, is it not an impeachment of his justice, that good men should be depressed and the wicked triumphant? Why does vice pass with impunity? And why does virtue suffer without compensation? The words of the text solve all the difficulty that attends this question, and afford a full and satisfactory answer. "He hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness." We will first attend to what the Scriptures inform us of this awful and important truth, and then recur to such other sources of information, as may further serve to confirm it.

In the first place, then, although God in his wise Providence suffers many calamities to befall the righteous, and permits the wicked to prosper in their wickedness, he has not left the former comfortless, nor withholden his testimony against the latter. To

the one, he has afforded the most certain assurances of a happy issue out of all their troubles; and to the other, he has given the most solemn denunciations of his wrath.

When we examine the sacred records of God, we will find indeed, that the passages which contain this doctrine, are neither so numerous, nor so clear in the Old Testament, as in the New. But, in neither the one nor the other, has he left himself without a witness, his children without hope, or to his enemies any colour of excuse. This ray of Heavenly hope, darted athwart the gloom of sorrow which surrounded Job, and cheered his afflictions, with the prospect of happier days. "Though worms destroy this body," says he, "yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes behold him." The revelation of this truth also corrected the errors into which the Psalmist David was about to fall, on account of his own distresses and the prosperous situation of wicked men. "I was envious at the foolish," says he, "when I saw the prosperity of the wicked, until I went into thy sanctuary: there saw I, their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places." "The Lord cometh," says he, "he cometh to judge the earth; he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth."

"Let us hear," saith Solomon, "the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man; for God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

I might mention several other passages of similar import in the writings of the Prophets, but as some, perhaps, account them rather equivocal in their meaning, I shall pass them over in silence. The Gospel of our Saviour abounds in the most pointed declarations of a final judgment. The Apostle Paul represents the fallen Angels as being reserved in chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day. And of sinful and impenitent men, he says, that "they treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honour, immortality and eternal life: But indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish to every soul of man that doeth wickedly." Saint John in 20th chapter of the revelation gives us a description of the dreadful glory of the Judge's throne, and the solemnity of the last day. "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it: And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened, and the dead were judged, out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man, according to his works." And, finally, our blessed Lord himself has described the process of the general judgment, with the most awful majesty. "When the son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And be-

fore him shall be gathered all nations ; and he shall separate them, one from another, as a Shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats : And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. 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. Then shall he say also unto them on the left, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." Such then is the doctrine which the Scriptures teach us on this interesting subject. But in as much as the Scriptures are not deemed sufficient authority by those who pretend to have discovered that they are cunning fables, it will be proper to observe, that there are also other sources of information, from which we may derive instruction upon this important matter.

Independently of revelation, it seems to have been the universal persuasion of the world, that there will be a future state of retribution. The more virtuous of the Heathens, comforted themselves under the calamities of the present life, by the pleasing prospect of the Elysian fields. These they supposed were allotted for the habitation of upright men, where their attachment to virtue should meet with its reward. It was obvious to them, that in the present world, there was nearly the same lot to the virtuous and the wicked, the just and the unjust, the philosopher and the libertine ; and from these observations they were led to conclude, that some time or other, the difference between the two would

be finally adjusted; the one should be rewarded, and the other punished. The happy plains were prepared for a retreat to the wise and virtuous, whilst the wicked were doomed after this life to the most dreary and loathsome abodes. The voice of the people in this instance may, I think, be reasonably considered as the voice of God to man. Though the Heathen were not favoured with the light of revelation, yet as the Apostle Paul has expressed it, they were a law unto themselves. God had engraven it on their hearts.

Again, the very frame of the human mind affords evidence in support of this truth. Every man by appealing to what passes within himself, may be very well satisfied, that some time or other, God will assuredly judge the world. It is very remarkable, that he hath not left himself without a witness. He has impressed on the mind of man, an indelible sense of right and wrong, to which we give the general name of conscience. From this principle it is, that we derive inward satisfaction from the consciousness of upright conduct; and from this principle it is, that remorse and fear pursue us in every deviation from the path of rectitude. The Apostle Paul produced this, in confirmation of revealed truth, when he said "We commend ourselves to every man's conscience." And of the Gentiles, who had not the law, he said, that they "shewed the works of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts, the meanwhile, accusing or else excusing one another." This conscience, then, this universal sense of right and wrong, is the vice-gerent of God

in the human heart. It is implanted there as the centinel of virtue, and the monitor of guilt. It supports the good man in his integrity : it arrests and condemns the wicked for his sins. It applauds the one for his virtue ; it upbraids the other for his vice : it presents the former with the hopes of glory ; and it alarms the latter with the fears of punishment. The sense of guilt is always attended with the fear of judgment either here or hereafter. It destroys the peace and tranquility of the mind, and torments the culprit with the painful forebodings of approaching ruin. Whence is it that we are often filled with inward terror, when the world smiles upon us, and there is nothing apparently to make us afraid ? It proceeds from the twinges of a guilty conscience, which tells us we have done wrong, and arrests us for our crimes. Whence is it, that when the darkness of the night shall have secured us against detection, and precluded the apprehensions of temporal punishment, the sense of guilt still haunts our minds, and preys upon our spirits ? It is conscience presenting to the wicked the fear of something after death. It torments us before the time by summoning us to judgment. Whence is it that the wicked man is dismayed and feareth where no fear is ? Why does he startle at a shadow and flee when no man pursueth ? It is owing to this universal sense of good and evil desert, which ever carries with it the awful sanction of rewards and punishments. We have a remarkable instance of this, in the case of Herod, on account of John the Baptist. The story is well known of his beheading the Baptist to gratify the humours of a resentful woman. Therefore,

when the fame of Jesus reached the ears of Herod, the cruelty of the murder he had perpetrated, recurred to his mind, and filled him with the most dreadful apprehensions. His fears suggested, that it must be John who had risen with power to take vengeance on him. He said, "that John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore, mighty works do shew forth themselves in him." But some, to pacify him, probably, said it was Elias; and others said, that it is a Prophet. But all this would not appease the clamours of a guilty conscience. No, said the wretched Tetrarch, "It is John whom I beheaded, he is risen from the dead." The situation of Felix was somewhat similar to this, save, that his crimes were more numerous, and if possible, more aggravated. When Paul reasoned before him of truth and righteousness, he discovered no emotion. But when he mentioned a judgment to come, his guilt acknowledged its obligation to punishment and Felix trembled. This, in different degrees, is the same in all bad men; it seems inseparable from our very nature. What then can be the reason of this? And what does it indicate? Can this principle be implanted in us, for no other purpose but to disquiet and torment us? No: This awful trial at the tribunal of conscience, is but the anticipation of a more solemn and decisive judgment at the tribunal of God.

Permit me to observe, once more upon this subject, that the very reason and nature of the thing, render a future judgment and retribution, extremely probable, if not absolutely certain. If it be acknowledged that God is a lover of truth and jus-

tice, integrity and mercy; and that the opposite vices are the objects of his abhorrence and detestation, is it not reasonably to be expected, that he will some time or other testify his approbation of pious and Godly men, and make known his displeasure against the sons of falsehood, injustice, treachery and violence? That he will one day espouse the cause of his obedient and faithful servants, and take vengeance on his adversaries? To suppose the contrary, would be to suppose that piety and virtue, irreverence and vice, that justice and humanity, cruelty and fraud, were all alike to him; and that he neither loved the one nor hated the other. If, therefore, there is no marked distinction made between them here, in the situation of those who respectively practise them, is it not certain that a wide difference will be made hereafter? Will not the God of justice punish the guilty? Will not the God of grace protect the obedient and reward the faithful? But, in the present world it is evident that this is not the case. It is long since the wise man observed, that "It happened to the righteous according to the works of the wicked; and to the wicked, according to the work of the righteous." The Psalmist also complained, that the righteous were involved in calamities, whilst the wicked flourished "like a green bay tree." We see plainly, indeed, that there is an essential difference in the conduct and character of men. There are some, who from the fairest estimation that we can make, are honest, upright, and pious men. They maintain their integrity, in their worldly intercourse. They are conscientious in their dealings, true to their word,

merciful in their disposition, and sober in their general deportment. They appear also, as far as we can judge, to fear and love God, to reverence his name, and pay respect to his commandments. But these characters are contrasted by others in every point of view. They observe none of these things: They are fraudulent, false, insidious: They are cruel and implacable, unjust and oppressive.— They traduce the innocent; they trample on the helpless; they over-reach the simple; they defraud the widow and the orphan; they grind and oppress the poor; they pay no respect to God their maker; they profane his holy name; and they violate his sacred laws. In short, they fear not God, nor regard man. We observe a striking difference in these two characters, but we do not see the same difference in their lot. The virtuous do not meet with that prosperity, nor with that favour from their fellow-men, which their virtue seems to merit; nor are the unrighteous visited with those afflictions which their crimes deserve. No: the case is more frequently reversed. It happens to the wicked according to the works of the righteous, and vice versa. The virtuous suffer and the wicked prosper. Tears are often the repast of the Godly, while the ungodly are revelling in mirth and wine. The rich man fared sumptuously every day, while Lazarus lay at his gate a beggar. God seems entirely to have forgotten the just; he suffers them to endure perils, and nakedness, and hunger and thirst. Nay, one of his promises to them is, that in this world they shall have tribulation. He seems to declare himself here on the side of the wicked. He suffers them to pros-

per in their wickedness. Their eyes stand out with fatness ; they are permitted here to carry it with a high hand ; they oppress the meek, and increase their own substance by their ruins ; they strip them of their goods, and laugh them and their religion to scorn. Their very religion seems to entail calamity upon them in this world. It inculcates the forgiveness, not the revenge of injuries. They are to be patient, submissive, and innocent ; and when they are reviled, they are not to revile again, nor to return railing for railing. One would think indeed, that the practice of such virtues should secure them from the persecutions of the world. But where has it been known, that the innocence of the lamb protected him from the rapacity of the wolf? The world declares itself against them, and the sons of violence triumph over them. Witness the numberless victims that fell in the repeated persecutions under the Roman Emperors, and also on various other occasions. Men, of whom the world was not worthy, have been accounted not worthy to live, and have been accordingly put to death on account of their religion. And, in every age of the world, they have been derided. And will this always be the case? Shall the favours of the Almighty be the only punishment of vice? And sufferings, contempt and sneer, the only recompense of virtue? It cannot be. Surely, God some time or other, will remember the sufferings and fidelity of his people: he will come to judge the world in righteousness, and give to every man according to his deeds. Such is the reason of things. It belongs also to this part of the subject, to observe, that the very nature

of virtue, and in many instances, of vice, requires that there should be a general and a public trial. There are many virtuous exertions and exercises of the religious, that are necessarily concealed from the world. Self-examination, self-denial, confession of sin, contrition for it, and humiliation before God, are of this kind. There are some transactions also, which are only virtuous, in proportion as they are secret, or intended to be so. To this class belong the distribution of alms, and the devotions of the closet, in which the Christian is not to sound a trumpet before him, but address himself to God who seeth in secret. The purity of the heart, humble resignation to the will of God, and trust in his promises are highly pleasing in the sight of God, but are in a great measure concealed from the observation of men. The meek and humble Christian often walks obscurely through life, disregarded, or perhaps despised by the world. On the other hand, there are many vices also which lurk secretly in the heart, and which fail of opportunities to come forth in practice. There are many also which are committed under a veil; many works of darkness which are concealed from the world.

In all such instances, then, justice seems to require, that the obscure and humble Christian should be exalted, and publicly receive the praise of God. It is obvious, that our Saviour intended this, when he said, "Thy Father who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." It is highly proper also, that the secret workers of iniquity should be brought forth to light; that the mask should be stripped off, and their works of darkness made manifest; in

order that the final sentence may be justified by the assembled universe. In short, reason and justice require, that all men should one day appear in their proper colours, and be finally judged according to their real character.

SERMON XVIII.

THE UNCERTAINTY TO US OF FUTURE EVENTS.

“For he knoweth not that which shall be ; for who can tell him when it shall be ?”

Ecclesiastes, 8th chap. 7th verse.

THE narrow limits to which the knowledge of man extends, is a subject of common observation, and too frequently of complaint. Our perception of things in the present state of being is so faint, that we can only see a few objects which are near at hand, and even them but indistinctly: For “we see,” as the Apostle has expressed it, “through a glass darkly.” Inquisitive minds are apt to be discontented with this, and make that consideration to excite their murmurs, which should rather be improved to suppress their vanity. In addition to this, there seems to be a prevailing desire in men, to pry into futurity, and anticipate the events that are to

befal them, in the various stages of their progress through life. It has been supposed that it would contribute much to the promotion of our temporal interest, if we could know before-hand the many favourable opportunities which the succession of time alone presents. The avoiding of the calamities of life, which we inconsiderately call accidents, would also be another very desirable acquisition of this extensive foresight. By this estimation too, men are led to suppose that it would be highly conducive to their most important interests in the future world, if they could be apprised of the time of their death. On a due preparation for this great event, their eternal happiness depends, and it would seem to be a great advantage, if they knew precisely their appointed time. In this case they would know how to regulate the business of their lives, and would not be in perpetual hazard of being cut off in the midst of their sins, while they were indulging their pleasures of the present moment, or extending their prospects into future life. The aged, indeed, could not reasonably calculate on any great length of days; and their time of life would, of itself, admonish them to retire from the bustle, and profits, and vices of the world; but the young would seem to stand in need of some security against the suddenness of surprize. Such reasoning appears at first view, to be very plausible, and to have considerable weight; for, really it does seem, that to know certainly the time of our dissolution would have a great tendency to check the presumption of youth, and restore that activity to the old, which their years have taken from them.

I hope, therefore, it will not be time mispent, to enter more minutely into the consideration of this subject. The investigation of the premises will serve to convince us, that the present disposition of affairs is, on the whole, the best; and that it is a mark both of the wisdom and goodness of God, that he has concealed from us not only the future scenes of life, but also the time of our final departure.

From the present situation of the world, it is altogether necessary that we should meet with sorrow and tribulation. These are the inevitable consequence of sin, and the standing marks of God's displeasure. On this account, the Apostle says, "The whole creation groaneth." If men were innocent, the permission of these might be considered as a charge against the dispensations of Providence, but as they are involved in guilt and exposed to ruin, the impeachment of God's justice gives way to the acknowledgment and admiration of his mercy. An uninterrupted series of earthly prosperity, would confirm men in the forgetfulness of their Creator, and of themselves. But afflictions have a tendency to put them in remembrance of their sins, and of "working out for them," according to the language of Scripture, "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." The design, and frequently the happy effect of them, is to wean our affections from this world, and engage us to seek a better country, even a Heavenly. Now, if these were entirely suspended, or we were endued with such forecast, as to enable us to foresee and avoid them, not only these good purposes would be altogether frustrated, but we would be encouraged to run into many fatal

excesses, from which we would otherwise refrain. A very material difference would take place to our disadvantage; for instead of considering our afflictions as the consequence of our sins, we should consider our prosperity as the reward of our merits. As events are now, the common bounties of God's Providence are undeserved mercies, and even the corrections of his rod are blessings in disguise; but as we would have them by this alteration, all afflictions would be called cruelty, and his goodness only would be just. It is easy to see, then, that such a dispensation of things would be illy suited to our real situation, as guilty sinners.

From the attention we have given to the subject, in this point of view, we may already venture to conclude, that it would contribute nothing to our happiness, if our desires should be gratified, and we had a foreknowledge of the different scenes of life through which we had to pass. We see from the whole face of nature, as well as from the word of God, that sin and sorrow are inseparable companions. A total exemption, then, is not to be expected. But, were we even secure ourselves against the reach of calamity, which is far from being the case, we must still be involved in the distresses of our friends. To know them before-hand, would be to make them more grievous, for we could not avoid anticipating them before they arrived. Like a heavy weight, they would continually depress our spirits, and our imagination would paint them in more gloomy colours than they really deserved. In most cases, I believe, they would be far less oppressive by coming unexpectedly. We may add to this,

that the previous knowledge of them, would disqualify us for relishing the enjoyments of the present time. Perfect happiness is utterly inconsistent with our present situation, but God has graciously ordained, that we should not be completely wretched. There is a mixture of pleasure and of pain; but were this alteration to be made, the former would be banished the earth. Any comfortable circumstances in which we might be placed, would be embittered by the painful forebodings of approaching evil. Even the noise and sprightliness of mirth and festivity, would subside into silent pensive melancholy, from the anticipation of the doleful scene with which it would be concluded. Most probably we should have sunk under the misfortunes which we have already surmounted, if they had found our spirits exhausted by the long expectation of them. And did we know all the scenes of sorrow through which we have yet to pass, it is hardly to be doubted, but that every countenance in this assembly would bear many marks of sadness.— That active fancy which now perhaps gilds our present prospects, would be employed in depicting all the wretchedness of woe. Were the prosperous and opulent apprised, that in the vicissitude of human affairs, their situation should be reversed, and they would end their days in poverty and want, the unwelcome prospect would be continually preying on their spirits. They would think themselves impoverished in the midst of plenty, and long before the event took place, they would bid adieu to all their greatness. Did the vigorous and blooming know, that in a few days they would be stretched on

a bed of sickness, such information would not only deprive them of the enjoyment of health, but hasten the catastrophe by a previous disposition.

With our friends too, we are intimately concerned; our own happiness depends in a great measure on them. We rejoice with those that rejoice, and weep with those that weep. An addition to our knowledge in this case also, would be but an addition to our tears. Our children, for instance; we rejoice at their nativity, and our fond prospects increase with their years. We know indeed, that they are born into a world in which danger and trouble abound; but we invoke the blessing of God upon them, in humble confidence, that he will protect and guide them. We entertain many an anxious fear on their account, but hope prevails. Were we permitted to pry into their future destiny, and see the afflictions marked in their lot, in ten thousand instances the joy that sparkles in the fond parents' eyes, and fills their hearts, would disappear, and prophetic sadness take its place. This blindness to the future, then, is kindly given. It may, perhaps, strengthen this persuasion to remark here, on the great unhappiness which many persons bring upon themselves by the groundless fears of imaginary evils. I mean those who terrify themselves by the interpretation of their dreams. These are construed into omens or warnings of some calamity, which is soon to befall them. They have a powerful effect on superstitious minds, and are made the source of great and constant uneasiness. Their fancy goes in quest of adventures by night, and they employ their waking hours in watching for their accomplishment.

I shall not go into any enquiry after the origin or import of dreams. I only introduce them for the sake of observing, that if the groundless apprehension of evils, be made the cause of so much disquietude, the certain fore-knowledge of them would be much more tormenting, and produce despair instead of fear. But, it has been observed, that life does not consist of evils only; many blessings are also bestowed to qualify the cup of affliction. Let us suppose, then, the case to be reversed, and that, in the midst of our distresses, we were consoled by the assurance of prosperous and happy days. Would not the fore-knowledge of them be an unspeakable advantage? Would it not effectually support the mind, and prevent much murmuring and discontent?

If we take into the account, our future, as well as present happiness, this situation, in all probability, would be worse than the former. The one seems unfriendly to the prospects of time; the other would be as much so, to the more important interests of eternity. Such a fore-knowledge, however, would not be so conducive as might be imagined, even to our present happiness. It would, inevitably, lead to some disappointment. The desired object would seldom prove equal to the fond ideas which it had excited, and we would find less of enjoyment in the possession, than we promised ourselves in the pursuit. This almost always proves to be the case with blessings merely temporal. But, as far as the prospect operates, it would thwart all the designs and purposes of afflictions. These should be improved, to wean our affections from this world, and

teach us to seek the Kingdom of Heaven, where all tears shall be wiped away forever. It would make us too well pleased with our present situation, and totally negligent of the Heavenly inheritance. If, as has been suggested, it would secure us from impatience and repining, in adverse circumstances, it would also remove the necessary trials of our virtue, and supersede the exercise of submission and resignation to the providence of God. On the whole, then, instead of endeavoring to pry into those things which God has been pleased to conceal, we ought rather adore the goodness and mercy of God in the present disposition of affairs.

As to the tendency of these supposed circumstances, to increase our earthly treasures, it proceeds upon a mistaken calculation, which is scarcely worth the rectifying. I shall, therefore, pass on to consider, briefly, the other part of the subject, which relates to the previous knowledge of our death.

This has been within the secret wishes of many, and on a superficial view of the subject, it would appear a desirable acquisition. We should be inclined to think it would assist us much in our preparation for this important event, to know, precisely, when it would happen. The young, particularly, would not devote the prime and vigor of their lives to pleasure, and to sin, if they knew that they would never arrive to manhood. They would begin their days in the fear of God, and engage, with earnestness in the duties of religion, if the deceitful hope of a long and a prosperous life were once taken from them.

That this would universally be the case, seems, to many, highly probable; yet, it is far from being certain. But, if it be granted, that it should, what would become of the improvements of this world? The strength and activity of the young, who are most inclined to vigorous enterprise, would be lost to society. They would seclude themselves from the company and the concerns of men. They would consider themselves as having no interest here, and would, therefore, be too indifferent about the duties of social and domestic life. They would withdraw from the society of men, retire into the gloominess of solitude, and sequester themselves from all the busy scenes of life. The consequence would be, that a great part of the world would be uncomfortable to themselves, and entirely useless, if not a burthen to society. Cities would be slow in rising; improvement in Literature would receive a check; the Arts and Sciences languish. The duties of our relative situation, would be held in low estimation, and the designs of Providence, with regard to the affairs of time, in a great measure frustrated.

Besides, what a melancholy prospect would such a situation of affairs present? A perpetual gloom would hang on the countenances of those who were doomed, in their youth, to death. They would be like criminals under sentence of condemnation, without hope of reprieve. They would wear a pensive melancholy look, which would also depress the spirits of all that beheld them. On every side, we should hear the voice of mourning. The father's joy would be turned into grief, and many a Rachael

would weep for her children, as though they already were not. The brother, the sister, and the friend, would all share in the general distress.

Neither does it appear, that these circumstances would be as favourable to religion, as we at first imagined. They would, in a great degree, preclude a deliberate choice. Our actions would be the effect of constraint, and proceed from a principle of fear rather than of love.

Add to this, that our friends would consider it a charitable office to divert our minds as much as possible from our approaching fate. A variety of amusements and of company, would be employed, for the purpose. In order to gain a little ease, we ourselves would probably be disposed to favor the cheat, until the number of our days would be fulfilled, and we should die suddenly, that is, unexpectedly, at last.

But, again, upon this supposition, there would be those who would know that they had a great many days before them, and that they should live to an advanced age. Such a fore-knowledge would certainly be unfavorable to the interests of religion, and of their own souls. If, in the instance before mentioned, men should be excited to a speedy preparation for eternity, from the certain intimation, that the time was short, in the one now before us, the assurance of a long life, would have a contrary effect, and prove a great encouragement to all manner of vice. In vain would you exhort them to "Remember their Creator in the days of their youth." Such an exhortation would be highly proper to those who should not survive that period, but

to those who could count on fifty, sixty, or seventy years, or more, it would be quite unseasonable, if not wholly impertinent. The most pressing calls and admonitions of the Gospel, would receive no better answer than, "Go your way for this time; sixty years hence will be time enough for me to think of religion. I will rejoice in my strength, my heart shall cheer me in the days of my youth, and when the time draws nigh, when old age arrives, and I can no longer enjoy the pleasures of life, then I will call for you." When we consider the depravity of human nature, its proneness to evil, and its aversion for that which is good, there does not remain a doubt but that this would be the case. As Providence now stands, we see that men will not be deterred from the commission of the most deadly sins, when they do not know but that they may be cut off in the very act of perpetration, and be summoned to appear at the bar of God. The uncertainty of life is, in most cases, a powerful restraint; but what would be the consequence, if this were taken off? Who, then, would be afraid to sin, especially when they recollected that they would have sufficient warning, and time enough to repent? They would, therefore, indulge themselves in the gratification of their wicked inclinations; they would walk in the sight of their own eyes, and according to the imaginations of their hearts, having none to make them afraid. They would give a loose to licentiousness, and iniquities would abound more and more. And, I pray you, what an uncomfortable and tumultuous scene would this world be. Indeed, it is bad enough now. Men of piety and religion have sufficient

cause to mourn for their own sins, and the sins of the land. But, let the fear of death be removed, and a torrent of iniquity would bear down all before it. We should be beset on all sides, with the violence of the rude, the snares of the designing, the deceit of the fraudulent, and the cruelties of the oppressive. But the presumption is, that we would repent of all these, and make our peace with God when the time of our death approached. This would not take us by surprise; and, therefore, we would be prepared for it. In this, too, we reckon without our host. Sin is not only fatal in its consequences, but hardening in its nature. The frequent repetition of it renders the conscience callous, and sears it as with a hot iron. "Exhort one another daily," says the Apostle, "while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened, through the deceitfulness of sin."—There is such a thing as sinning away our day of grace; that is, of becoming so hardened in iniquity, as to be proof against all the ordinary means which God has ordained for our recovery. If, therefore, we wilfully persisted in our sins, which we should certainly do, but for the preventing grace of God, there would be the greatest danger that we should provoke him to withdraw, entirely, the influences of his Spirit, and give us up to hardness of heart and a reprobate mind. There is a very alarming example of this in Scripture: "Ephraim is joined to his idols," says God, "let him alone." It is a very mistaken notion, that we can indulge ourselves in the pleasures of sin, through the course of our lives, and when the time comes that we can no longer enjoy them, we can then repent, and devote the mis-

rable refuse of our days to God. Repentance is his gift ; and this he has threatened to withhold. " Because I have called," says he, " and ye have refused ; I have stretched out my hands, and no man regarded ; therefore, I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh."

SERMON XIX.

ON PRAYER.

" But in every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

Philippians, 4th chap. 6th verse.

THERE is no duty which is more becoming in itself, more agreeable in exercise, or more beneficial in its effects, than that of prayer. It is an acknowledgment of the sovereignty, and a token of submission to the will of God. It is an humble expression of the dependence of the creature upon the power and goodness of the Creator. In its exercise, it is the communion of the soul with God, and an admission into his presence. It is to have fellowship with the Saints and Angels which surround his throne, and to join with them in their more exalted songs of praise. In its effects, it is the refuge

of the needy and the afflicted. The making known our wants, procures a supply; the cry of distress is answered with deliverance; and the effusions of love, with the sweet communications of grace. It is the hope of mercy in the sinner, the confidence of faith in the believer, and a tribute of praise from both. The definition of prayer, as given by the Westminster assembly of Divines, is as follows: "Prayer is an offering up of our desires to God for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies."

The confession of sin is necessarily implied in our petition for pardoning grace; and Jesus Christ is the door of access to God: He is the way, the truth, and the life. As for the rest of the definition, it is fully expressed in the words of the text. "In every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

I recollect to have discoursed on this subject once before, in your hearing. It was my business, then, to endeavour to open to your view, the nature of prayer in general; and this, with the intention of obviating such objections as might be raised against this duty, from the unchangeable nature of God. In answer to such, I observed to you, that prayer was 1st, an expression of homage from the creature to the Creator, who is God over all, blessed forever; 2dly, an expression of gratitude from the beneficiary to the benefactor, who is the giver of every good and perfect gift; and 3dly, one of the means of grace to procure his blessing, not by disposing him to bestow it, but by qualifying ourselves to receive it.

At present, I will solicit your attention to the same subject in another point of view, not less doctrinal, but perhaps, more practical. I therefore beg leave to submit to your consideration, the following particulars; 1st, that the injunction in the text to make our requests known to God by prayer, implies that, of ourselves, we are needy and helpless; 2dly, it implies that God is at all times, accessible to his creatures; 3dly, that he is ready to hear and able to save; and 4thly, that he is not only quick to hear, but willing to answer.

The object of prayer; the subjects of it; its design and efficacy, together with the improvement of the whole, will be reserved for another occasion.

First then, when we are exhorted to make our requests to God, the implication is obvious, that we are subject to a variety of wants, and that our help is placed in him. All created things are the productions of his power, and are as dependent on him for their continual support, as they are indebted for their first creation. But man, though in various respects, the noblest of his works below, is amongst the most dependent of all his creatures. The frame of nature subsists from age to age, in obedience to the laws, and by virtue of the powers which were given it at first. The sun revolves without interruption, in the path through which it was directed by the great Creator, when first it entered on its race; and thus it shall continue to revolve from year to year, until he who gave shall also stop its course; until he shall dissolve the frame of nature; strike off the wheels of time itself, and bid them cease to roll. But it is not so with man. He is a

creature of few days at best, and even those he possesses on a precarious tenure. His life at best is but a conflict between life and death: The seeds of both are sown together. Such is his constitution that he requires continual supplies of nourishment to keep it in repair and prevent a total dissolution. For this he is dependent on the care and bounty of his Heavenly Father, who gives him his food in due season, and hath directed him to come to him for it from day to day. Of the prayer which our Lord taught to his disciples, this is a part: "Give us this day our daily bread."

In the new-born infant, we see a striking picture of our condition in every stage of life. Is the helpless child indebted for its preservation and support, to the tender care of its parent? So is our whole race provided for, by the Father of all. Indeed, this is a truth so universally acknowledged, that it stands in no need of illustration, and which it would be unnecessary to mention, were it not that it is so generally forgotten. As we approach to manhood, and begin to act for ourselves, we find that our own exertions are required, and that our success in general, is in proportion to them. By industry and economy, men thrive in the world, and at length attain to that situation which is called easy and independent. In this situation in life, they are apt to attribute their prosperity, to their own good management, and to suffer the kindness of Providence to lie concealed behind the very gifts which it bestows. Independent, in a great measure, on their fellow-men, they also lose sight of their dependence upon God. But what our Lord said to his disciples, is as true

in natural, as in spiritual things ; “ without me ye can do nothing.” If man eats bread by the sweat of his own brow, it is God that gives him strength to labour. If he rise to opulence by success in trade, it is God that gives him enterprize, and gives to commerce wings. If he embark his treasures in the ship, still it is God that must direct the helm, command the winds and waves, and bring it safe to shore. The husbandman may yoke his oxen to the plough, and commit his seed to the furrow, but without the blessing of the Almighty, he can never reap. It is God that giveth the increase, and causeth the earth to yield her fruits.

Hast thou goods laid up, O man, and yet art not thankful? Dost thou covet any more, and in the greatness of thy might, lookest not up to God? Shall the harvest certainly fill thy barns? Stop; what, if he withhold the rain? The seed shall die in the ground, and all thy hopes die with it. Canst thou enter into the treasures of the rain, and cause it to descend upon the ground in showers? What, if God make the Heavens as iron, and the Earth as brass? Soon should thy strength decay, and thy face grow pale, for lack of bread. The grass would be burnt up; every green herb wither; and nothing would be sold in the shambles. Both men and beasts would groan, and pine, and die with hunger.

After the same manner, it might be shewn, that of all our numerous wants, there is not one of them which, of ourselves, we are able to supply. In God, we live, and move, and have our being; and unto God, all flesh must come.

It is the same thing, precisely, with regard to our spiritual necessities, or rather, in this respect, we are even more indigent and helpless. We are represented in Scripture, as dead in trespasses and sins, and are, therefore, altogether insufficient. We need the pardon of our sins, and yet, are wholly unable even to repent us of them. We need the renewal of our natures, and the sanctification of our wicked hearts, in order to the enjoyment of God. But, who is sufficient for these things? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one. It may, perhaps, be objected, that the appointment of the means of grace, is an acknowledgment that we have power to use them; that they are conducive to the end of our salvation; and, therefore, that by the application of them which is in our power, we may, in the end, accomplish the great and important work. Be pleased to observe, that there is a strict analogy between the works of nature and the means of grace. We may plant, and we may sow, but unless God be pleased to succeed our labors, unless he bestow the early and the latter rain, the almond tree shall not blossom, nor the earth yield fruit. The means of grace will also prove ineffectual, unless God be pleased to accompany them with his Divine aid, and grant the influences of his Holy Spirit to co-operate with our own endeavors. In every point of view, then, altogether helpless in ourselves, all our hope and expectations are from God, who has graciously promised to perfect strength in our weakness, and to give the Holy Ghost to them that ask him.

The second particular was, that we have free access to God. "In every thing," says the Apostle, "let your requests be made known unto God." Although he is far exalted above our praises or our highest conceptions; although he stands in no need of our services, he does not, however, forbid or reject our petitions. Completely happy and blessed in himself, he is not inattentive to the wants of his creatures. He has been pleased to establish a Throne of Grace, and invites us to come to it, and find grace to help us in every time of need. The very lowest of his creatures is not beneath the notice of the most High. The most contemptible amongst men is not despised of the God of Heaven. It is, indeed, astonishing, that such unworthy creatures as we are, should be suffered to approach the Sovereign of the Universe; that such sinful and polluted creatures should be admitted into the Holy presence of the King of Saints. Yet, this is not enough. We abridge our own privileges, and we disparage the goodness and condescension of God, when we barely say he is accessible. "Let us come with boldness," says the Apostle, "to the Throne of Grace." One of the Evangelists tells us, that "the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." "All ye that make mention of the Lord," says the Prophet, "keep not silence, and give him no rest." We have not only free access, then, to the Throne of Grace, but are permitted to be importunate when we are there, and even to take no denial. We find various instances to this purpose, recorded for our encouragement in the word of God. He is represent-

ed as suffering himself to be overcome by Jacob, who is said to have wrestled with the Almighty, and to have overcome him in the contest. "Let me go," says God; to whom Jacob replies, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." This might be considered, perhaps, as indecent boldness in a creature, but it ought to be considered as an astonishing instance of the condescension of God on the one hand, and the confidence of the believer on the other, laying hold of the promises. So it appeared in the sight of God, who suffered him to overcome. For that reason, we read that he changed his name: "Thou shalt be called Israel," says he, "for as a Prince thou hast power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." In like manner, the case of the Canaanitish woman, pleading with our Saviour, is truly affecting, and at the same time, full of encouragement. She came and cried unto him, saying, "have mercy on me, O! Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a Devil." But at first, as if to make her still more importunate, he answered her not a word. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, "Lord, help me." What was the answer? The most discouraging that could have been given; "It is not meet to take the childrens' bread, and cast it to dogs." It would seem, that there was but little hope now left. But the poor woman would not give over her suit, and our blessed Lord seems to have been moved by the humility of her concessions, and overcome by the weight of her argument. "Truth Lord," said she: as much as to say, I own I am no better than a dog, "yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from

their master's table." "Be it unto thee," says our Lord, "even as thou wilt; O! woman, great is thy faith."

It must occur to every one who has attended to this part of the subject, what a difference there is between God and man in this respect. The meanest creature upon earth, may at all times go to God, make known his wants, and have his claim allowed. But, how hard of access are the rich and honourable of this world? With what difficulty can the poor and helpless approach their stately habitations? They stand at the gate at humble distance, impelled by necessity, and yet fearful of intrusion and apprehensive of repulse. They pour their complaints into deaf ears, and make their distresses known in vain. It is far otherwise with the great God. No living creature is below his notice. The most forlorn and helpless, may at all times go to him. He never rejects the humble supplicant; he gives to him liberally and upbraids him not. The God of Heaven is no respecter of persons. The beggar on the dung-hill, is as easily admitted, as the King on the throne; the poor man as the rich; the black man as the white. Who shall be admitted into the palace of an earthly prince? The great and the splendid only, to the exclusion of others. You see the porter placed at the gate, with instruments of death in his hands to guard his master from unhallowed approach. But the King of Kings, not only admits, but invites the poor and needy into his Heavenly courts. There is no flaming sword to guard the passage to the throne of Grace. It stands open night and day. Jesus Christ the Son of God, our

glorious advocate and intercessor with the Father, has removed every bar, and erected a mercy seat in the midst of the throne.

3dly, God is ready to hear and able to save. In vain should we cry unto him, if he could not hear, and in vain would he hear, if he were unable to bring deliverance. He is intimately acquainted with all our ways, and he knows our inmost thoughts. He that formed the ear, can he not hear? He who formed the heart, cannot he understand? "Thou knowest my down-sitting, and my up-rising," says the Psalmist, "thou understandest my thought afar off: There is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O! Lord, thou knowest it altogether." "Behold," says the Prophet Isaiah, "the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear." The Psalmist calls him by way of eminence, the prayer-hearing God: "O thou," says he, "that hearest prayer." This distinguishes him from the Gods of the Heathen. They could not hear their votaries, though they cried aloud. Our God is distinguished from the Gods of the nations, in this, as in every thing else, that he heareth prayer. The Gentiles worshipped stocks or stones that could not hear, or bulls and other animals that could not understand; and the Apostle tells of certain Gentiles that sacrificed to devils that cannot save, and would not if they could. But, in vain would men worship such Gods, for they cannot help them. They may paint or carve them with ears, indeed, but they cannot make them hear. They may put the likeness of eyes in their heads, but destruction may overwhelm their votaries and they cannot see

their distress, nor move a hand to relieve them. They are well described by the Psalmist, in the 115th Psalm. "They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not; they have hands, but they handle not; feet have they, but they walk not."

This circumstance is also taken notice of by the Prophet Jeremiah, 10, 5. "They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not; they must needs be borne, because they cannot go." The Apostle had good reason when he said, "an idol is nothing in the world." But the Prophet Elijah has exposed both them and their votaries, with the most cutting railleury that is any where to be found. As the circumstance is singular, I will relate it in full. The Prophet reprov'd the priests of Baal for their absurd and idolatrous worship, and wished to bring them to the knowledge of the true God. He had told them to serve Baal if he were God, but if the Lord were God, they should serve him. For this purpose, he proposed to them the following experiment. They should take two bullocks; he one, and the Prophets of Baal one. They were to cut the bullocks in pieces, and lay them on wood, but put no fire under. This being done, they were to call on the name of their Gods, and Elijah on the name of the Lord; "The God that answereth by fire," says he, "let him be God." The challenge was accepted, and all the people said that Elijah had spoken well. Accordingly, the Prophets of Baal took their bullock, and having dressed it, they laid it on the wood as was proposed; and they called upon their God Baal incessantly, saying O! Baal hear us; and they

leaped up and down upon the altar, either through great uneasiness, or a kind of charm. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. This was in the morning. At noon, after Elijah had given them sufficient time, he jeers them with the most mortifying mockery. "Cry aloud," says he, "for, he is a God; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure sleepeth, and must be awaked." They cried aloud and cut themselves with knives and lancets until the blood gushed out, but Baal was not to be awaked. It was now to be determined, whether the Lord whom Elijah served, were God or not. The Prophet called upon the God of Isaac, and of Jacob, and of Israel; and he sent fire from Heaven and consumed the offering. It is one of his distinguishing characteristicks, that he heareth prayer.

4thly. He is not only ready to hear, but willing to answer. The goodness and mercy of God invite his creatures to pray to him. His goodness is conspicuous in all his works. But, in addition to this, as often as he has invited and commanded us to pray, he has assured us, that he will hear and answer. "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him; yea, all such as call upon him faithfully. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: He also will hear their cry, and help them." "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not." "Ask," says our Lord, "and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." And, "Whatsoever ye ask the Father, in my name, believing, he will give it to you." From these, and

many other passages of similar import, we learn, that the prayer of the humble petitioner, offered in sincerity, through Jesus Christ, shall never be rejected. "Whosoever cometh to me, through him," says God, "I will in no wise cast out."

I do not know, indeed, that we are warranted to conclude, that we may always expect the very things we ask for, in answer to our prayers. This will depend on a variety of circumstances, such as the temper of mind with which we ask them; the purposes for which we want them; and particularly, the wisdom of God, who knows what is fittest for us.—Short-sighted as we are, and ignorant, not knowing what to ask for, or how to pray aright, we may often ask such things, as would really be a disadvantage to us, if God should bestow them. But, when we ask such things, in faith, as have a tendency to the glory of God, and are necessary for the good of our souls, he not only bestows the very things we ask for, but abundantly more. For instance, the bounties of his Providence will always accompany the blessings of his Grace. This is the character of true piety and Godliness. Godliness has "the promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come." "Seek ye, first, the kingdom of God," says our Saviour, "and all these things shall be added unto you." We have an instance of this in the case of Solomon, who asked wisdom of God.—"Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart, so that there was none like thee, before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked,

both riches and honor ; so, that there shall not be any among the Kings, like unto thee, all thy days." In like manner, when we pray for a meek and forgiving disposition, we may certainly expect, that God will enable us, from the heart, to forgive our enemies ; and it is probable, he will add to this, wisdom to counteract their designs, and strength to resist their power. Again, he may not grant the very thing asked for, but something else, and yet effectually answer our prayers. For instance, when we are under the pressure of temporal calamity, or bodily infirmity, and make application to God, he may not grant us a deliverance from them, because we might not be able to use prosperity with moderation, nor enjoy health with thankfulness ; but he would certainly grant us grace to bear them with patience, and cause them to be working out for us, in the mean time, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. This would answer the purpose full as well, and a great deal better. It would alter the whole aspect of the calamity : it would become light and easy for the present, and the greatest of blessings in the end.

There is but one other case to be considered under this head, and that is the time. This is also to be submitted to the sovereign will and boundless wisdom of God. A prayer is not unanswered, because it is not answered immediately. One of the Prophets represents prayers as remembrancers, which remain before God's throne. And though the answer seems to tarry, yet the way is constantly preparing for it. It may be, that something must first be brought about, to prepare the mind for the

reception of what is asked. And those blessings which are sought, agreeably to the will of God, will be bestowed at the most proper season, by him who never required the house of Jacob to seek his face in vain.

SERMON XX.

ON SALVATION BY GRACE.

“For, by Grace are ye saved, through Faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”

Ephesians, 2d chap. 8th verse.

It is frequently said, that some doctrines contained in Scripture, are more essential than others.— It is not my intention now to examine with what propriety this is affirmed; but if it be so, this, which has been just read, must be admitted to be one of the most important, if we may judge by the nature of the subject itself, the earnestness with which it is inculcated, or the frequency of its repetition. That Salvation is by Grace, and not by the Deeds of the Law, is continually maintained by our Lord and his Apostles, through the whole of the Gospel. It is the only ground of the sinner's hope, of the good man's rejoicing; and “Grace, Grace,” is the unceasing theme of the Saints in Glory. In the passage now before us, the Apostle affirms, that “God, who is

rich in mercy," hath quickened us, that, in ages to come, he might shew the exceeding riches of his Grace, in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus: "For by Grace are ye saved, through Faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." It is immediately added, "Not of works, lest any man should boast."

But, notwithstanding that this doctrine is so exceedingly important, and so expressly revealed, it may yet be supposed, that there is no one in the whole Word of God, perhaps, more imperfectly understood, or more grossly misrepresented. Although the works of Righteousness, as will be shewn in the sequel, are the natural effects of Grace, as the fruit is the production of the tree; yet, men have made out, in theory, to put them asunder, and set them in array against each other. Hence, we are informed by the Apostle James, that one man says, "I have Faith, and another I have Works." The pretensions of both are evidently false, yet there is not so great inconsistency between them, as men have since invented. It is seriously contended, against the doctrine of Grace, not only that it would supersede the necessity of good works, but that it is a cloak for the practice of iniquity. There are two circumstances which seem to have given rise to this objection: the one is the glaring inconsistency that is observable between the pretensions and the lives of too many who profess this doctrine; the other is the fatal blow it gives to the pride of human nature, which induces a man to refuse a scheme which leaves him, as he imagines, nothing to do, and requires him to renounce every kind of merit, in the

important work of Salvation. With respect to the first, it is not to be denied, but very much to be lamented, that there are too many instances of professing Christians, who do turn the Grace of God into licentiousness; who really do seem to imagine that their conversion, as they call it, gives them some exclusive privileges this way; and who would palliate their own vices, under the tender appellation of pardonable infirmities, which, at the same time, they are pleased to consider, in others, as highly criminal. If the doctrine in question were justly chargeable with encouraging these things, the objection against it would be wholly unanswerable. But, I shall endeavor to vindicate it against this imputation, by stating to you, precisely, in the first place, the doctrine itself, as it is delivered in the Gospel; and secondly, by pointing out its natural and necessary tendency to produce the fruits of practical religion.

As to the other source of opposition against the doctrine of Grace, I shall leave it where it is; being well persuaded that nothing can remove it but Grace itself. I proceed, therefore, to my purpose.

1. The doctrine of the Gospel, then, upon this subject is, that we are saved by Divine Grace, and that, alone, without the Deeds of the Law; but, that our obligations to obedience, on that account, are not diminished, but increased.

In this chapter, which contains our text, after having asserted, that we are saved by Grace, which is the gift of God, and not by Works, lest any man should boast, the Apostle adds, in the next verse, that we are "his workmanship, created in Christ

Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." In the 6th chapter to the Romans, 1st verse, the Apostle, as if with an eye to the objection which has been stated, asks this question: "Shall we continue in sin, that Grace may abound?" To which, he answers, "God forbid: How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" In the 14th verse of the same chapter, he says, "Sin shall not have dominion over you;" and the reason that he assigns is, that they were under Grace: "For, ye are not under the Law, but under Grace." The same thing he expressly asserts in the 3d chapter to the Romans, 31st verse: "Do we, then, make void the Law, through Faith? God forbid: Yea, we establish the Law." I shall only cite to you one other passage, which will serve to explain the doctrine, and assist us very much in the discussion of what remains upon the subject. It is in the 3d chapter of Paul's Epistle to Titus, from the 5th verse: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost: that, being justified by his Grace, we should be made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life.— This is a faithful saying; and these things I will that thou affirm constantly; that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works." "The faithful saying" is, we are saved by the mercy of God, and justified by his Grace. And the reason that the Apostle would have this constantly affirmed was, not that believers might learn, that they then were at liberty to break

the commandments of God, but on the contrary, that they "might be careful to maintain good works." Such, then, in a few words, is the doctrine of Grace, as stated in the Scriptures. If we attend to the expressions, there is not one which gives the least encouragement to sin; but, they all represent the doctrine, as imposing upon Christians the highest obligations to a life of righteousness. Thus far, then, it must be unimpeached. If any objection will still lie against it, it must arise from something in the nature of the doctrine itself, which is calculated to defeat the purposes which it was intended to promote. This is a charge of a high nature, indeed; but, nevertheless, it has been exhibited against it. It has been considered as a dangerous doctrine for ministers to preach, from an apprehension, that to maintain the doctrine of Justification by Grace, without the Deeds of the Law, would be to unhinge the whole system of moral duties. I do not know that it has always been correctly stated, or judiciously explained, in public discourses; but, if objections of this sort are permitted to operate against any doctrine, there is none, whatever, that could stand the test.

2. My second proposition was to shew, that the natural tendency of Grace, was to produce a life of practical religion. Whether it has this tendency, or the contrary, shall now be submitted to a fair and full investigation.

There are two senses in which the word Grace is to be understood in Scripture; the one, is an act of God's goodness in pardoning sin; the other, the work of his spirit in sanctifying the sinner. We

will take a view of the subject with respect to both of these. Considering the matter in the first place, then, merely as an act of God's goodness without regard to any thing else, it must have a direct and very powerful operation on the gratitude of true believers. If the sense of obligation can provoke to love and gratitude to God in any instance, it must ever bear a proportion to the greatness of the favour received. The common bounties of life will have a claim upon it; but it will exert itself most powerfully of all, for the richer blessings of Divine Grace. This was the sentiment of the Apostle, when he said, "the love of Christ constraineth us." Through the sovereign mercy of God, who hath mercy on whom he will, they are delivered from the condemnation of his law: their sins are pardoned, through the abundant riches of Grace, and themselves are made heirs, according to the promise of eternal life. It cannot be supposed to diminish, but rather to increase these obligations, that the favor was entirely free and wholly undeserved. The subjects of it cannot immediately forget their former situation.— They cannot fail to recollect, that not only their righteousness could not ascend to God, but in truth, that they had none; that they were aforetime workers of iniquity and children of wrath, even as others. To a person, then, just delivered from this unhappy situation, could it be any objection to the Grace of God, that it was free; or, would it lessen it in his estimation, that he did not deserve it? The greatness of the favor received, combined with the consciousness of his own unworthiness, to fill him with gratitude and love. Under the first impression, it

would be the language of his heart, "What shall I render unto the Lord, for all his benefits?"—"Lord, what is man," says the Psalmist, "that thou shouldst be mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou shouldst visit him?" The question which our Lord once put to the Jews, is exceedingly applicable to this subject. "Is your eye evil, because I am good?" That heart must surely have inherited, or contracted, rather, a more than common degree of malignity, that would impel a man to hate, or injure another, merely because he was his benefactor. And this consideration would not be construed to excuse, but to aggravate his offence. Is the goodness of God, then, alone to be forgotten? Or, is it of a nature so peculiar, that the remembrance of it should only serve to render men more licentious and disobedient? It is worthy of remark, that men are as much, that is, as entirely indebted to God for the bounties of his Providence, as for the blessings of his Grace. But, what kind of reasoning would it be to say, that this, too, was a licentious doctrine; because, if men were once persuaded that their lives, and all the comforts of life, proceeded from the love and goodness of God, it would give them a warrant to abuse those mercies, and sin against their author? This certainly is not the natural effect which favors of any kind have upon the mind: and I can discern no good reason, why the great and unmerited blessings of Divine Grace should be made the only exception.

But if, in the second place, we take into the account, that Grace, implanted in the heart, is, of itself, an inherent principle of holiness, it will render

the foregoing reason altogether conclusive. When men have contended against the doctrine of Grace, they have not been at the pains to understand it thoroughly, or represent it fairly. If, by being saved by Divine Grace, it be understood, that we are to receive the reward of holiness, together with a dispensation from the practice of it, and that we are delivered from the punishment of sin, whilst it is not only permitted, but by this doctrine, invited to hold dominion over the heart, I acknowledge that the doctrine is wholly indefensible. But, this is not the doctrine of the Gospel; and I am persuaded, that no well informed person ever held it in this view. To represent it in this light, is to act over again the cruelties of the old persecutors, who dressed the Christian martyrs in the skins of beasts, in order that the dogs might worry them. It was the direction of God, that when the Saviour of the World was born, he should be called Jesus, because he was to save from sin. "And thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." The Apostle says, in the text, that we are saved by Grace, through Faith; and that this is the gift of God; yet, it is the property of Faith to work by love and purify the heart. In the 5th verse of the 3d chapter of Titus, before cited, the Apostle says, that "according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." If he be correct in this, then where is the tendency of this doctrine to give encouragement to sin? Is this the effect of the renewing of the Holy Ghost? Does the washing of regeneration make men more unclean? Or, is human nature, of itself,

so extremely pure, that the Grace of God would prove an alloy? If this be not true, but the contrary, then certainly in proportion as this Grace is communicated, it produces an aversion from sin, and a propensity to holiness; and according to the degree of these, their necessary influence will be to produce a correspondent life of righteousness. Our Saviour surely was not chargeable with any inconsistency, when, upon this principle, he said to his disciples, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." It is perfectly natural, that men should pursue those objects to which their hearts incline them. If they devote themselves to the practice of sin, it is not because it is safe, but because it is agreeable. When Divine Grace, then, takes possession of the heart, and produces a change in the affections, what else is reasonably to be expected, than a change, also, of the objects of pursuit? The requisitions of the Gospel are, of themselves, not grievous; it is the depravity of human nature only, that deprives us of the ability, as well as the inclination, to comply with them. It would be a hard case indeed, then; it would argue a very extraordinary perverseness in religion, and would forever exclude us from the kingdom of Heaven, if the removal of that depravity, by the Grace of God, should only serve to increase the difficulty. In such a case, well might we ask, with the disciples of our Lord, "Who, then, can be saved?" On the contrary, the Grace of God inclines our hearts to keep his Law; it removes the opposition which there is by nature, between our duty and our inclinations, and makes his service perfect freedom. When Paul complained of a thorn

in the flesh, the answer was, "My Grace is sufficient for thee." It is said, in Scripture, that the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. Is repentance, therefore, excluded? By no means: for, our Saviour says, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Repentance is inseparably connected with the forgiveness of sin: it is the effect of God's gift; and in the same manner is holiness the effect of his Grace. But, let us hear the reasoning of our Lord himself upon this subject, which is surely not to be refuted: "A good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and a corrupt tree bringeth forth corrupt fruit." What is the conclusion, then? Why simply this: make the tree good, and the fruit will be so too. Or, according to another very common allusion, cleanse the fountain and the streams will be pure. If the tree be good, and the fountain clean, will the fruit, therefore, be the more unsavory, and the streams more muddy? Surely not. Grace is this fountain, and righteousness the stream; or Grace the tree, and holiness the fruits. The comparison made by our Lord, of the vine and its branches, goes also to illustrate the same thing. "I am the vine, ye are the branches." Now, if the vine be fruitful, will the branches, therefore, be barren? If the former be living, is it, therefore, a necessary consequence, that the branches should be dead? Or, if the vine be a good vine, must the branches, of course, bring forth bad fruit? If not, then how can it be, that the Grace of God should make the subjects of it more wicked and licentious? This ill-favoured objection betrays not only a want of that candor which should accompany criticism, but a sad misapprehension of the nature of true religion.

I would observe, in the third place, that the reputation, if I may so speak, of their Master in the World, is another security for the exemplary lives of true believers. In the first ages of Christianity, the disciples of our Lord were hated and reviled, on account of the Redeemer. "The world hated me before it hated you." It is also true, that any defect in the temper or miscarriage in the lives of his followers, is reflected, in its turn, as a reproach upon him. The credit of religion is, in some measure, at stake, upon the fidelity of its professors. The eyes of the world are upon them; and, therefore, if they in reality possess that love which the Grace of God inspires, they will be concerned to promote the glory and proclaim the praises of their Divine master, by such a moral and religious life as shall effectually stop the mouths of gain-sayers. A religious life is not only the best evidence of our own sincerity, but the greatest ornament we can bestow on the doctrines of our Saviour. With this view, our blessed Lord said to his disciples, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." Notwithstanding the objections raised against the doctrine in question, it is observable, I think, that those who oppose it, are very watchful over those who profess it, and seem to expect more of religion from them than from others. This seems to be rather unreasonable, when, at the same time, they charge them with a scheme of doctrine, which has a tendency directly opposite. If sifted to the bottom, however, it is a relinquishment of their objection as groundless, since they themselves are unable to give it credit.

4. After the same manner, it might be demonstrated, that the same principle which inspires love, and insures obedience, as we have seen, to God, diffuses its influence, also, through the whole circle of duties of man to man. It leads to the discharge of both the great commands on which the Law and the Prophets hang, viz. to love supremely the Lord our God, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. The same principle which produces piety towards God, will also produce justice and benevolence towards man: if for no other reason, at least for this, that he who hath said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," hath added, "Thou shalt love thy brother also."—"This is my commandment," says our blessed Lord, "that ye love one another as I have loved you."

The sense of God's love, must certainly have a very powerful constraint on them that believe; and will teach them readily to forgive those that offend them, since God was merciful to their unrighteousness. This is strikingly set forth by our Saviour, in the parable of the wicked servant, who owed his creditor ten thousand talents, which he was unable to pay. His Lord at first was willing to remit the debt; but, when he saw his conduct to his fellow-servants, he delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

Improvement. 1. We may learn, from what has been said, that the inconsistent conduct of professing Christians cannot reasonably be charged to the account of the doctrine of Grace. It is rather a justification of the doctrine, that the lives of men, as far as they are immoral, are inconsistent with it: yet, inasmuch as the world will have it so, we

see the unspeakable importance of an exemplary life. To profess the doctrine of Salvation by Grace, the province of which is to purify the heart, and at the same time, to indulge ourselves in the practice of iniquity, is to be traitors against the cause of truth. As Judas did his master, it is to betray it with a kiss.

2. We may learn, also, the great mistake of going about to establish a righteousness of our own, and endeavoring to enter into the kingdom of Heaven, by any other way than that which God hath appointed. A system of morality without the principle of Grace, is a body without a soul, and that, too, exceedingly maimed. It is like the fabulous victim once slain in Rome, which was found, upon examination, to want a heart.

3. We may also learn, how to understand the great doctrine of Salvation by Grace. Its office is to cleanse from sin; to produce holiness in heart and life; to assimilate us to God, and qualify us for the enjoyment of his spiritual kingdom. That it is proof against all impeachment, and that when rightly considered, it is exclusively calculated to bring glory to God and Salvation to man. And the conclusion of all is, that we earnestly seek that Grace of God which bringeth Salvation; that Grace by which we are saved, through Faith, which is at once so essentially necessary, and so entirely free.

SERMON XXI.

ON THE GLORY OF THE SAVIOUR.

“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.”

Revelation, 5th chap. 12th verse.

WE find every where in Scripture, that the same attributes and the same honors are ascribed to God the Son, as to the Father. He, himself, with respect to his Divinity, is called the Father and Maker of all things. Let all the Angels of Heaven worship him, was the Divine command: and, accordingly, in the verse before the text, John informs us, that “He saw and heard the voice of many Angels around 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 honor, and glory, and blessing.”

In the next verse he informs us, that the Earth and Seas joined with the Heavenly Hosts in this tribute of praise, and these expressions of homage, to the Almighty God our Saviour. “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 honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.”

It will not be an unpleasing, and I hope not an unprofitable task, to employ a few minutes, at present, in considering such of the attributes of our Lord, as will shew the propriety of these ascriptions. This I shall endeavor to do, by considering their application to his character, first as God, and secondly as the Lamb, that was slain. The former will occupy this discourse.

I need make no apology, I hope, to this audience, for entering so abruptly on the subject, without adducing arguments to prove, in the first place, the Divinity of our blessed Saviour. This is a point, in which most men, I believe, are well established, notwithstanding the opposition which has been made to it in former times, and the subtle distinctions of some late Theologists.

I begin, therefore, with observing, that if infinite greatness and majesty can justify these ascriptions, they certainly belong to God. He is the great Jehovah, the King eternal, immortal, and invisible. He is the Supreme Governor and Sovereign of the Universe, and besides him there is not another.—The Gods of the Heathen are dumb idols, and vanity; but he is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is the cause, and he the end of all things, the greatest and the best of beings. All things else proceeding from him, his happiness, alone, is undervalued; his glory is uncreated; it is above the Earth and the Heavens. Nay, the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain him. Alone, unbounded and independent, he sitteth on the Throne of his Glory: before him, the mountains flee away, and the inhabitants of the Earth are as grass-hoppers.

Do men behold, with admiration, the majestic, the valiant, and the strong? Do they venerate and admire the great, the wonderful; do the topless mountains, and unfathomable deep, present to the mind an awful grandeur? Much more, then, may glory, and power, and might, be ascribed to God; for, he measureth the waters in the hollow of his hand, and taketh up the isles as a very little thing. "He hath measured the waters," says Isaiah, "in the hollow of his hand, and meted out Heaven with a span, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance. Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance. Behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering. All nations before him, are as nothing, and they are counted to him nothing and vanity. The Lord excelleth in strength; he is great in might and terrible in battle."

If antiquity be that which we behold with respect and veneration; if men rise up before the hoary head, and make obeisance to years, what honor and glory are due to the Ancient of Days, the mighty God, the everlasting Father? If frequent changes and subjection to decay, be marks of weakness, and imperfection, what ascriptions of praise are due to him, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; with whom there is no variableness, nor even the shadow of turning? "The Heavens shall be wrapped up as a scroll," says the Psalmist; "as a vesture thou shalt change, and thou shalt fold them up; but thou remainest forever and ever, and to thy

dominion, there is no end." "I am the Lord, I change not." But, what language has attained such lofty height, as to describe the greatness and majesty of God? What tongue, of men or angels, can declare his glory? The thousands of thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand which surround his throne, fall infinitely beneath his praise. His power and greatness are, in some degree, manifested by all the works of his hand; his eternal power and Godhead are manifested by the things that are made: the whole Earth is full of his glory. We know that he is great; but how great, who can tell? He is infinitely exalted above all description, and the highest conceptions of men or of Angels. He is surrounded with light as with a garment; unto which, no mortal can approach and live. The Sun is a faint emblem of the great Creator; yet, who can behold the Sun, in his meridian splendor, with a stedfast eye? How infinitely superior must be his brightness, who gave the Sun his lustre? No man hath seen him, nor can see him. When his servant of old descended from the mount, on which he had had some faint display of the Creator's glory, his face shone like the Sun, so that the Israelites could not look upon it. How great, then, how overwhelming to mortal view, must be that brightness, where the glory of God shineth, and the Lamb is the light of it? Moses desired to see God's face, and he in mercy shewed him not his face, or he had instantly expired. No man on Earth could view it. In the holy city, where he displays his glory, the most exalted Angels, which excel in strength, are obliged to veil their faces before him. He is light,

and in Him there is no darkness at all. Great is the Lord, then, and greatly to be praised.

2dly. God is worthy of the ascriptions in the text, because of his infinite holiness. He is the righteous Lord, who loveth righteousness. He is the holy one of Israel, and holiness becomes his courts. His greatness is well supported; it is amiable as well as venerable. He abuses it to no unworthy purposes. He is under no obligations. He cannot receive profit from any of his creatures. He can be deceived by no artifice; he can be terrified by no threats. He is infinitely superior to all temptations, to unrighteousness, and cannot do amiss. Men who are comparatively great, are sometimes disposed to abuse their power. Because they are dependent on others, they are liable to be seduced. They are allured by promises, or dismayed by threats. Self interest, or the prospect of immediate or ultimate advantage, disposes them sometimes to pay respect to persons, and pervert justice; but, as such instances occur, they destroy all the greatness and respectability of their character. Their foibles are only rendered more conspicuous, and themselves more exposed to censure, by their exalted station. But, this is not the case with him who sits upon the throne. Otherwise, he would cease to be God, and become altogether such an one as ourselves. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and evil cannot dwell with him. So infinitely pure is he, that the Heavens are not clean before him, and his Angels are charged with folly. When the redeemed on Earth, the Saints in Glory, and the Holy Angels which surround the Throne, pay their homage to God, they

begin and end with the praise of his holiness.—
“Thou art holy,” says the Psalmist: “O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.” We have a grand description of the praises of God, for his holiness, in the 6th of Isaiah from the beginning: “I saw also the Lord sitting upon his Throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the Temple; above it stood the Seraphims; each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of Hosts; the whole Earth is full of his Glory.”

3dly. It is proper, that all creatures should express their submission to God, because he is infinitely powerful. It is fit to ascribe glory and power and might to Him, for he hath all power in Heaven and on Earth. He doth what he pleaseth, and who can let him? He ruleth in the armies of Heaven, and doth his pleasure amongst the inhabitants of the Earth; and none can stay his hand. Omnipotent and uncontrouled, he doth whatever he will. He will have the glory of his sovereignty, for his is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. He is the great and mighty God; great in council and wonderful in working. He creates and he destroys; he kills and makes alive; he brings down and raises up, according to his sovereign pleasure. He supports the upright, and he dashes the enemy in pieces. None can harden himself against him and prosper. “I am the Lord,” saith he, “and there is none else; I form the light and create darkness: I make peace and create evil: I, the Lord, do all these things.”

The councils of Kings and Princes are often disappointed; their designs are often thwarted; but the purpose of the Lord of Hosts, that shall stand, and who shall make it void? Who can withhold his hand from working? or say unto him, what dost thou? He speaketh and it is done; he commandeth and it stands fast. Though men join hand in hand; though Earth and Hell should league their united force against Him, they would be as the dry stubble before the consuming fire. Great is the Lord, and matchless is his might. He has the keys of Death and Hell: he shutteth and no man openeth; he openeth and no man shutteth. The Lord of Hosts is his name.

4thly. Wisdom, and honor, and glory, and blessings, are properly ascribed to God, because he is infinitely wise. Glory is due to him that hath all power, in that he has all wisdom too. The former is directed in its operation by the latter. "The Lord is mighty," saith Job, "in strength and wisdom." He knoweth how to accommodate all his works to answer their respective ends, and to manage, with infinite ease and exactness, all parts of his dominions. He appoints all the times and seasons, summer and winter, seed time and harvest. He appoints the rising and setting of the Sun and Moon, and the various revolutions of the planets, in the most perfect harmony and order. The rain and sunshine, day and night, are ordered by his infinite wisdom, to fertilize and refresh the earth. Also, from things the most unpromising, he produces good. The howling tempest and the heaving ocean, the impetuous torrent and the hurricane, which seems to rend the earth, contribute to the general harmony and the health of all.

Under the direction and controul of the only wise God, these partial evils, (to use the language of the Poet,) are universal good. He bringeth light out of darkness, good out of evil, and universal order out of partial confusion.

So wise beyond conception, is the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, that notwithstanding the various tempers and different pursuits of his intelligent creatures, his purposes are all accomplished, his glory advanced, and the general good promoted. Neither his designs are thwarted, nor their liberty invaded. There is no disorder, no disturbance, no confusion in his most wisely conducted government. All things, however opposite they may appear to us, in their natural tendency, are conducted to the same conclusion, the glory of the Creator and the good of his creatures. The most disorderly passions, and the most submissive temper, in the end, advance his praise. He receiveth honor and glory from his Saints, and he maketh the wrath of man to praise him. Well may we say with the Psalmist, when he surveyed the works of God, "How manifold are thy works, O! Lord, and in wisdom thou hast made them all."

5thly. God is infinitely good, and, therefore, he should receive praise from all his works. His tender mercies are over all his works. His goodness, his wisdom, and his power, are all employed for the protection and happiness of his creatures. He maketh all things to work together in the end, for good to those that love him, and that walk uprightly. The Lord is great, and, therefore, we should fear him: the Lord is kind, and, therefore, let us praise him.

Lastly, if the right of creation be a sufficient title to honor and praise, then power and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing, are to be ascribed to God. It is most fit that he should receive praise from all on Earth and in Heaven, for, "All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." "By him," says the Apostle, "were all things created that are in Heaven, and that are in Earth, visible and invisible, whether they be Thrones or Dominions, Principalities or Powers; all things were created for him and by him, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." To him should, therefore, be ascribed the credit of his works, for he made them, and they are very good. The language of the whole creation, is praise to the great Creator. "The Heavens declare his glory, and the firmament sheweth forth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night teacheth knowledge of him."

It is fit that riches should be ascribed to him, for he is the sovereign proprietor of all things, and he made them for his own glory. "Whatsoever is under the whole Heaven," says God, "is mine." The flocks that range the valley, and the cattle on a thousand hills are his. The whole earth is the Lord's, and the fullness of it.

He is the former of our bodies, and the father of our spirits. "All souls are mine," says he; "as the soul of the father, so, also, the soul of the son is mine. I have made the earth and created man upon it." It is meet that we should praise the Lord, for our souls and bodies are his. "Worthy art thou, O! Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and

power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." "Bless the Lord, ye his Angels, that excel in strength. Bless ye the Lord, all ye his Hosts; ye ministers of his that do his pleasure. Bless the Lord, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the Lord, O! my soul."

SERMON XXII.

WISDOM JUSTIFIED.

"But wisdom is justified of her children."

Matthew, 11th chap. 19th verse.

It is no objection against any institution, that the clamours of men are loud against it, if they be found, upon examination, to be the effect of ignorance or prejudice. The former cannot understand it thoroughly; the latter will not represent it fairly.

The Christian system, and the conduct of its author, have been assailed from both these quarters; and they appeal from their decision to the judgment of the wise and upright, who have understanding to comprehend their design, and candour sufficient to judge impartially of their principles. Before these judges, it is presumed that our Holy Religion will bear the strictest scrutiny; and, that a full jus-

tification will be the event of the trial. On these grounds our Saviour joins issue with the Scribes and Pharisees; and he delivered the words which are contained in the text, as an answer to the cavils which they made on account of the different circumstances in which he and his fore-runner, John the Baptist, made their appearance in the world. Their objections are stated in these words: "John came neither eating nor drinking; and, they say, he hath a Devil." "The Son of Man came eating and drinking; and, they say, Behold! a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners."

One would have thought, indeed, that the austerity of their own manners should have prevented the first of these objections; for, they themselves are represented as fasting often, or at least appearing to do so, by being of "a sad countenance, and disfiguring their faces." At any rate, the first objection should have precluded the second; for, if John was reprehensible, in their opinion, for not eating and drinking, our Saviour might be expected to escape their censure, for the circumstances of his appearance were directly the reverse. Both of them together, however, exhibited an evidence of rooted prejudice too strong to remove, and a perverseness of temper too difficult to please. The matter is then submitted to the judgment of the candid and sincere; to those who have no prejudices to maintain, but are open to the conviction of truth. This I take to be the import of the text: "But wisdom is justified of her children." This is the simple proposition which I am now to consider.

One great end of our Saviour's mission from Heaven, was to introduce and establish a religion which would be acceptable to God; to reform the world, re-claim men from sin, and teach them the things which belonged both to their present and their future peace. Taking for granted, at present, the tendency of his precepts to accomplish those objects, I deem it pretty evident, that wisdom would dictate, and reason justify, the measure of endeavoring to conciliate, by his manners, the affection of those whom he wished to benefit by his instructions. For this purpose, the Son of God was found on Earth in fashion as a man. He took every opportunity of testifying his humanity, yet always supported his dignity. He was condescending in his manners, but never low; he did good without ostentation; he was affable, yet always seasoned his discourse with wholesome instructions, and the most unaffected piety. He was serious, but never gloomy; and if, at any time, he was cheerful, yet nothing of levity appeared in his deportment. He was an enemy to vice, but he was a friend to sinners. He reproved the former by his innocence, and recommended virtue by his example. Such was the character of the great teacher sent from God. Had he come to advance the Jewish Church or nation only, we should have expected to see something of the Pharisee in him, which would no doubt have recommended him to that sect. But, then, his wisdom would have been confined to the Sanhedrim, and his good offices to the Jews exclusively. On the contrary, he came to bring the glad tidings of the Gospel to the world at large; and, therefore, made no distinctions, but con-

versed with all, and preached the Gospel to the poor. He discoursed in private, or mingled with the croud, as opportunity offered, or necessity required. He sometimes honored a marriage with his presence, and sometimes ate with publicans and sinners. For the latter, he was reproached by the Jews; but, the reason which he assigned for it, was not only a justification of his own conduct, but a severe reproof also to his revilers. "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance; and the whole need not a physician, but those that are sick." His great object was to reform the vicious, to instruct the ignorant, and open the eyes of the blind. Accordingly, he was equally accessible to all descriptions of men, and he ever mingled tenderness with reproof, benevolence with instruction, and pleasure with utility. What, if his superior excellence had been accompanied with pride, and his wisdom with reserve? What, if he had associated only with the great, conversed only with the wise, and restricted his courtesy and benevolence to the rich? Where would the poor have found a friend? Where would the afflicted have found a refuge? And from whom would the ignorant have received information? Such a conduct would have served only to foster the pride of a few; the bulk of mankind had been kept at a distance; the benevolent intentions of our blessed Saviour would have been frustrated, and the object of his mission failed. His holy religion would not have been established, but the world, at this day, would have been overwhelmed with darkness, and perplexed in the inextricable labyrinths of bigotry, superstition and error.

Had our Saviour appeared in the circumstances in which the Jews expected he would, and wished he should appear; I mean with many outward badges of pomp, and power, and splendor as a great temporal Prince, he would have been well received by them, indeed; he might have relieved them from the Roman yoke, have restored their liberties, and re-established their government; but, there his commission would have ended. Any wholesome regulations he might have instituted, would have been confined to one nation only, and would have been generally attributed, not to any intrinsic excellencies in the things themselves above other institutions, but only to the temporary influence which is always attendant on power. Christianity would, at this day, perhaps, have been in little higher estimation than the religion, if it may be called so, of Mahomet, which was conceived in ambition, and enforced by the sword. The private citizen of Mecca, though attended by all the favourable circumstances of family and fortune, made few or no proselytes to his scheme, until he became, by a stratagem, the sovereign of Medina, and was placed at the head of an army. Such a leader the Jews, it seems, would have wished; and if such had been the case, however excellent might have been the institution, its credit would soon have been destroyed by the very means of its first propagation. Its adoption would have been considered as the effect, not of choice, but compulsion; and its principles, not the dictate of wisdom, but the prescriptions of power. Now the conduct which our Saviour displayed and the means which he used, were the reverse of all this. They

were the occasion of much reproach in his time; yet, the wisdom of them is justified of all her children by the event itself. He was not austere, but affable in his manners, and his benevolence was not restricted, but universal. His doctrines were new indeed, but they were rational: they were not at first popular, but they were sound. They did not avail themselves of popular prejudices, but directly encountered them. They were delivered by our Saviour, with candour and fidelity, and he preached them openly in the synagogue. They did not hide themselves in mystery and darkness; but with that conscious integrity which is peculiar to truth, they sought the light. They were the result of infinite wisdom, and they were suffered by their author to stand upon their own intrinsic excellence. He used no weapon but truth, no argument but reason, no art but persuasion. They had no powerful friends to patronize them, no formidable armies to enforce the reception of them. The station in life which their blessed author assumed, was the most humble; but, through that humility, the wisdom of his precepts shone the more conspicuous. This circumstance extorted the expression of wonder and surprise from his enemies, "Whence hath this Man all this wisdom?" His retinue was not a band of soldiers, but a company of men, whom his innocence had captivated, whom his wisdom had enlightened, whom his bounty had relieved, or his benevolence attached to him: who were at once proselytes to his doctrine, and the beneficiaries of his goodness. The propagators of his gospel were not temporal Princes, nor members of the Jewish Sanhedran, nor eloquent

Roman orators, nor refined philosophers of Greece ; but a company of fishermen, neither armed with power, nor dignified by station, nor accomplished in human literature. The means by which the gospel was propagated, have, some of them, been mentioned : Behold here the instruments ! Wisdom is here again justified by her children. The conviction which such men would produce on the minds of others, can be resolved into nothing else than that conviction which truth inspires, and the impression must be lasting. When by their instrumentality the gospel gained ground continually : when it conquered the most stubborn prejudices ; when it withstood the frowns of human pride, and baffled all the subtleties of human wisdom : if it made its way, not only unaided by civil authority, but when the powers of the Earth were combined against it ; it is an evidence, that the doctrine itself is founded in reason ; and a plain indication also, that the power was not of man, but of God.

Now, let all these things be put together and duly considered ; let us keep in view the great objects of our Saviour's mission, and the means which he used for their accomplishment, and see if they do not correspond with the strictest properties of wisdom. Wisdom consists in two things ; first, in the pursuit of a valuable object : and, secondly, in employing means which are the best calculated to obtain that object. What more worthy object could our Saviour have had in view, than to maintain the government, and make honourable the Law of God : to make atonement for sin, and procure Salvation for sinners ? The means he used, that

men might partake of his Salvation, were instruction to the ignorant, warning to the guilty, and encouragement to the penitent. If these means are deemed improper, then let us for a moment substitute in their place, those which the wisdom of this world would have devised. Instead of the humble form of Joseph, the carpenter's son, he should have assumed that of a mighty Prince. In that case, he would have been an example and a companion, only for Kings. His followers would have been a servile herd of flatterers and sycophants; of hypocrites and knaves. The poor, would scarcely have ventured to approach the splendid Palace. It would have been guarded probably, by the proud, disdainful Pharisee, who could pay his tithes; and the poor Publican would have smitten his breast in vain.

Again, he ought not have conversed with publicans and sinners. With whom, then? why, the Pharisees. But, he did not come to call the righteous, but, sinners to repentance. If he had messages of Grace to deliver; if he had offers of pardon to proclaim, to whom should he have delivered such messages, to whom should he have made such offers, but to those, who were sensible of their guilt and misery? They would have been entirely lost, upon those self-righteous characters, who made the objection against him. But they were acceptable; they were glad-tidings to the "lost sheep of the House of Israel." And if he was a Physician, surely the sick were the proper objects of cure.

But, he ought to have conquered his enemies; he should have compelled them to embrace his doctrines, whether they would or not. Yes, if it had

been his object to render men more deceitful and hypocritical than they were, this would indeed have been the most ready way. We have had examples enough of such a plan, and have seen its effects. We have seen religious establishments by human authority : we have heard much of inquisitions, of fines, penalties and imprisonments, in order to procure a conformity in matters of religion. And what has been the consequence? Why, swarms of hypocrites on the one hand, and of blood thirsty persecutors on the other. Religion has never been found to flourish under such management. It suffers by it to this very day ; for, this very circumstance has principally given rise to the hackneyed reproach which is cast upon it by infidels ; that it is a piece of priest-craft, and a trick of State. Indeed, when the sincere and genuine Christian considers what a dreadful engine of destruction it has been made, by wicked men : when he casts his eye over the historic page, all besmeared with human blood, shed by the hands of barbarous persecutors, he cannot help, if I may borrow the expression, “ wrapping himself up in the mantle of mourning,” for the dishonor done to the benign and Holy Religion of our blessed Saviour.

SERMON XXIII.

EXCELLENCY OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

“The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor; but the way of the wicked seduceth them.”

Proverbs, 12th chap. 26th verse.

AN ambition to excel, seems to be common to all men. In a competition for superiority, they all engage; but, it does not seem to be agreed amongst them in what it consists, or what are the most proper means of obtaining it. The rich generally claim to be superior to the poor, and the sons of science to the illiterate; whilst the man of fashion looks down upon them all, as from some higher station. Without deciding, however, upon their respective pretensions, I shall beg leave, at present, to direct your attention to a character which is represented in the passage before us, as more excellent than any other. It is found in a collection of maxims or proverbs, by Solomon, the wisest of men, addressed to his son. They are intended to form the mind of the Prince for real greatness, and point out to him the path in which superior honor was to be acquired. In his judgment, to be truly good and virtuous, was alone to excel. Whether his circumstances in life were equal or not; whether he was affluent or indigent; whether he lived in state, or were the tenant of the most humble cottage, were matters of inferior moment; for, every consideration of this kind being against him, the righteous man was still

more excellent than his neighbour, who should be of an opposite description. I say of an opposite description; because, if this is not directly expressed, it is necessarily implied. The reason for which, in the opinion of Solomon, one man was more excellent than another, is, that he is righteous. In the further prosecution of this subject, I propose, in the first place, to delineate, very briefly, the character of the righteous man. And in the second, to maintain the position in the text, that the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.

1. As to the first of these, I begin with observing, that when we speak of righteousness, we have respect to some rule, by which the conduct of our lives is to be regulated, and the purity of our hearts attested. To act agreeably to this rule, in all respects, is to be perfectly righteous; and he who deviates less from it than another, is more righteous than the latter. There is no doubt at all, but that the will of God is this rule to his creatures, whenever it can be ascertained.

The question often agitated amongst Divines and others, whether the obligation of this rule, upon us, is merely its being "the will of the Creator; or, in addition to this, its being consonant with what they call the reason and fitness of things," is of little moment in the present discussion; it being always admitted, that when this will is known, the rule is ascertained. I must observe, however, that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament sufficiently recommend themselves to us as a revelation of the Divine will, if we consider the miracles by which they were propagated, the sanction by which they

are enforced, the effects with which they have ever been attended, the instruction they convey, their inherent purity, or their wholesome tendency. Their precepts are such as we are obliged to approve, notwithstanding the depravity of human nature, however little we may relish the severity of their restraints. "Thy word is truth," said our blessed Saviour, and the sentiment of the Psalmist was, "Thy word, O! God, is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." Taking this, then, for our guide, the following is in substance, the character of the righteous man: he walks uprightly, and he hates deceit; he loves mercy, and he acts justly. He protects the helpless, befriends the fatherless, cheers the afflicted and relieves the poor. Placable to his enemies and faithful to his friends, he forgives freely, and he loves sincerely. He follows peace with all men, and whatsoever he would have them do to him, that is the measure of his conduct towards them. This is a part of his character, but this is not all. To crown the whole, he is pure and upright in heart, in the sight of his Heavenly Father. He loves the Lord his God, with all his heart. He obeys from a principle of love, and he loves from a principle of holiness. Hence his benevolence to his fellow men, whom he considers as children of the same family, is not with him an empty name. His charity to the poor, is not the effect of ostentation, nor his justice of a selfish policy. Formed by the model of the sacred Scriptures, his piety to God is genuine, and his professions of benevolence to men, sincere. In him you behold the pleasing union of piety and good works, of prayers and of alms; of the Apos-

tle in short, who touching the law, was blameless, and, of the Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile. I shall conclude this head, with a short quotation, on the character we have been considering, from the Book of Job. "I put on righteousness," says he, "and it clothed me. My judgment was a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor, and the cause which I knew not, I searched out." "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me, and when the eye saw me, it bear witness to me; because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish, came upon me; and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy."

Such is the character of the righteous man. It is truly amiable: and while we admire its beauty and excellence, we cannot but regret, that it is so rare on earth. Time was, when such was not the case. Even in this day, there are some here and there, it is to be hoped, who at least endeavour to deserve it. But, indeed, now that the word and spirit of God, which are necessary to form it, are, the one, so much derided, and the other resisted, they are, alas! but few.

2. It remains now to shew, that these are the truly excellent ones of the Earth. This is, in substance, what I proposed under the second head of this discourse, which was to maintain the position in the text, that the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour. I have observed already, that it necessarily goes on the presumption, that his neighbour is of an opposite character. Contrasting this,

then, with that which has been described, it is evident, that a comparison between the two, is but a comparison between the loveliness of virtue, and the deformity of vice. Form in your minds, a contrast to the several traits which compose the description of the righteous man, and the result is obvious. Let the crafty and insidious be compared with the honest and sincere, the blasphemer with the pious, and the charitable with the extortioner. Collect all the treasures of dishonest gain, and compare them with the peaceful pittance of the poorest Saint. Let vice, attired in its most gaudy dress, be brought into a comparison with the spotless robe which adorns the righteous man; and without waiting your decision, itself will forthwith retire ashamed to the shades of night. Let the poor that cry, let the fatherless, and him that had no helper, relate to you their several tales of woe, let them point out the man who made their sorrows flow, and him who soothed their grief and wiped their tears away: let the solitary widow tell, who caused her heart to bleed, and who it was that made it sing for joy, and you will join with them to bless the man who had a heart to pity and relieve them. There can be no sort of competition between these two characters. As well might the darkness of midnight contend for brightness with the splendor of the sun: Nay, more, the one resembles the merciful Father of the Universe; the other, the common enemy of God and man.

The tendency of virtue to promote the happiness of the world, and the long train of evils with which vice is evermore attended, bear the most honorable and pointed testimony to the superior excellence of

the righteous man, who is so in proportion as he cultivates the one and discards the other. To give a detail of these, and point out their connection with human happiness, would protract this discourse to too great a length. Suffice it just to say, that the God of Nature hath established this connection, and that the truth of it is confirmed by the experience of every day. Righteousness exalteth a nation and ennobles the individual, whilst the effects of vice are public calamity and personal disgrace. In support of these remarks, so far as they respect individuals, I beg leave to offer you the concurrent testimony of all nations and of all men, the most dissolute and licentious not excepted. The character and respective merits of nations might, indeed, be very justly ascertained by the same criterion; but, as these are not now put in competition, I shall only mention a general maxim respecting them, which some hold to be true, but which, nevertheless, is in all probability false: it is, that things which are morally evil may be politically good. This maxim has, indeed, respectable authority to support it; but, it seems contrary to the very nature of things, and it yet remains for any community to experience its truth, or to practice upon it with success; I mean, for any length of time. It will ever remain true of nations, that righteousness will exalt them, and that sin will sooner or later prove the reproach of any people. That places them on high and stable ground, while treachery and fraud, if they do not bring immediate destruction, will at least entail indelible disgrace.

Neither success nor reputation is reckoned amongst the advantages, which the Carthagenians derived from their proverbial Punic faith. It is true, indeed, that brilliancy of talents and exploits may, for a while, conceal the defects of moral character, from those whose eyes are dazzled by their lustre; but, a little time will always discover, that they are the most approved rulers, and those the happiest people, who derive their politics from the ethics of the Gospel; from the holy word of God.

But, as the proposition in the text seems to contemplate the respective merits of individuals, rather than of communities, it is to the former that it is principally to be applied. I proceed to observe, therefore, that the righteous man is more excellent than his neighbour, in the judgment of the world, in the judgment of his neighbour himself, and above all, in the estimation of God.

The concurrent testimony of all mankind is in favour of virtue; and, when for any laudable purpose, confidence is to be reposed, it is with the greatest security reposed in the upright man; in him, who means to do what is right, and is disposed to act conscientiously. Who does not at once discover and acknowledge the necessity of rectitude in the magistrate, and of uprightness, as well as talents, in the judge?

It has ever been the art of those who would injure the interest of their personal or political adversaries, to take advantage of any defect, which they may have discovered in their moral character, however low they may be sunk in vice themselves. And this is an

homage which vice is evermore constrained to pay to virtue; that it not only attempts to put on its semblance, when any advantage is to be gained; but looks up to it, as the solemn tribunal, from whence the decisive sentence is to be pronounced.

In personal altercations between irreligious men, it is never, if it can be avoided, one of their own stamp, but the righteous man, that is appointed umpire. The aggrieved would be loth to submit the decision of his cause, to an unprincipled tribunal, for he knows that it is the part of wicked men, to pervert judgment; nor would the aggressor himself appeal to him with confidence, lest the superior influence of his adversary should extort, or entice rather, from the judge a righteous sentence. In cases more public and important, of judicial process before a court of justice, every body must have observed the prodigious influence of character, in the estimation of men. If the upright, good man, be a witness, the excellency of his character, corroborates the particulars of his testimony, and sets the stamp of truth on all that he says. Every body knows him, and every body believes him. So powerful is this principle, that as well as I recollect, it was decreed in Athens that the simple word of Aristides should be received in evidence, without his oath. This was owing to his established credit for veracity.

But, the righteous man may also be arraigned. Here, the fairness of his reputation stands him instead. As far as it goes, and as long as it remains unimpeached, it answers the double purpose of rebutting the charges exhibited against him, on the one hand, and of strengthening, on the other, every legal

presumption of his innocence. Now, if in your minds you will for a moment reverse the picture, I need not stay to point out to you the disadvantages under which the profane and unprincipled must labour, in either of the two cases supposed.

But, if the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour in the judgment, even of wicked men, how much more so must he be in the estimation of the righteous Lord, who loveth righteousness?

SERMON XXIV.

ON COVETOUSNESS.

“And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of Covetousness ; for, a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.”

Luke, 12th chap. 15th verse.

THERE is nothing more plain, and yet nothing, perhaps, more generally mistaken, than the proper use of the good things of this world. Yet, the different points of view in which men of different casts have accustomed themselves to consider them, have seldom failed to carry them into extremes. The unspeakable importance of the things of Eternity, when compared with those of a temporal nature, have sometimes led men of sober minds into a false

estimation of the things of time; whilst, on the other hand, the beauty and the accommodations of the world, have drawn thousands into a fatal delusion.

The one class, through a mistaken notion, seek future happiness by the austerity of penance, retiring to seek God in the horrors of penury and solitude; and, divesting themselves of all the necessary cares of life, they hold the world in absolute contempt. They deny themselves the means of happiness, which were designed for their use, and sequester themselves from all the busy and engaging scenes of life, where the goodness of God is most active, and his providence most conspicuously employed.

The other delusion, the reverse of this, and by far the more dangerous and fatal, is of those who put too high a value on temporal objects, and consider those things as their enjoyment which are calculated only for their use. Being drawn aside by the allurements of pleasure, or the thirst of gain, they sacrifice their intellectual and moral happiness, to temporal acquisitions; and, like the rich man in the Gospel, choose their portion out of the good things of this world.

Thus, whilst men of honest intention, but mistaken in their sense of duty, retire into solitary caves, or hide themselves in secluded cloisters, the votaries of pleasure and the pursuers of gain, would divide the empire of the world between them. But, as man is evidently designed for different stages, he is called to act his part on both; to attend to the concerns of this world, and of the world to come, and that with an ardour proportionate to the importance

of their different objects, and with a wise reference from the one to the other. Thus, whilst some account it criminal to pay any attention to the things of time, and others over-rate them, the path of duty runs between the two extremes. To improve the present as conducive to the future; to use this world in subservience to our final interest; or, in the language of Scripture, so to use it as not to abuse it, is the business and duty of men on earth.

The one is to be considered in conjunction with, or rather in reference to the other. But, dangerous is the mistake, and fatal the delusion, when we direct our aim and confine our views to present objects, to the exclusion of the more important concerns of a future state. For, the things of this world, though requiring attention in a subordinate degree, bear but little proportion to those of the world which is to come. The former are temporal, the latter are eternal; the one gross and sensual, the other spiritual and refined.

Were the interests of both equally in our view, there could not possibly be any competition between them, for the preference in our choice. But, it unfortunately happens, that men suffer themselves to be led by present inclination, rather than by reason. Hence, the things of time will ever have the advantage with inconsiderate men, over the things of Eternity, because the former are present, and the latter future, the one at hand, the other at a distance; the one seen, the other invisible; the things of Time, the objects of sense, those of Eternity, the objects of faith. Hence it is, that the necessity of faith is so often and strongly inculcated in Scripture; for, it is a lively faith alone, that can overcome the world.

There is nothing more inconsistent with our duty to God, and more unfavourable to our present, as well as future happiness, and at the same time a more powerful temptation to the generality of men, than the love of this world. The acquisition of worldly advantages, is the fatal lure which the great enemy of souls holds out to men, and with which the thoughtless and narrow-minded, are generally taken. However, for want of inclination, or through fear of punishment, they may be able to withstand other temptations which he may endeavour to practise upon them; he no sooner exhibits to their view the kingdoms of the world, than all their virtue fails, and they fall down in worship.

It is no doubt on account of the baneful influence of temporal objects, upon the mind, that we are so often cautioned against Covetousness in Holy Scripture. And, indeed, when we say of other evils, that they have slain their thousands, we may say of this, that it has slain its ten thousands. In this, as in other things which are not directly criminal, the fault lies in the excess.

When the Almighty had created all things, he looked upon the works of his hands and pronounced them very good. To use them as such, therefore, is reasonable and right. But, to worship the creature, instead of the Creator; to adhere to the former and forsake the latter; or, to be so much attached to the things of the world, as to divert our attention from the worship of God, and the enjoined duties of religion, is, indeed, a very criminal prostitution of love, and nothing short of idolatry itself. Accordingly, the Apostle Paul, in warning the Colossians

against adultery, uncleanness, and evil concupiscence, adds to the list, Covetousness, which, says he, is idolatry.

As this vice is so often reproved in Scripture, and such frequent examples given us of the insufficiency of outward circumstances to administer peace and happiness, and withal, as it is a vice so generally prevalent in the world, it will be worth our while to attend a little particularly to it. I shall, therefore, endeavour, in the further prosecution of the subject, in the first place, to consider, in a few words, the nature of Covetousness: and, in the second place, to enforce the exhortation of our Saviour, to beware of the evil.

To define Covetousness under one comprehensive term, we may do it, perhaps, with sufficient precision, when we call it an undue, or inordinate desire of wealth, or any worldly object. It is common, indeed, to confine it to an avaricious desire of that which belongs to another. But, though it cannot be denied that this is Covetousness, indeed, yet it is certainly too much restricted. It is plain, that our Saviour did not consider it in this contracted view. For, when he was applied to by a certain man to speak to his brother, that he should divide the inheritance with him, he did not reprove him for desiring what was not, by right, his own; which it is probable he would have done, had it been the case. But, informing them that his business was of a different kind, he declined all interference in their common dealings, one with another. And, observing, perhaps, too great anxiety about the inheritance, he took occasion from this incident, to caution them

both, against too great a concern about the things of the world, and direct their principal attention to the securing of their future interests. "Take heed," says he, "and beware of Covetousness, or too great an attachment to a worldly inheritance; for, a man's life doth not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Neither does Covetousness itself consist in the abundance of our possessions, but in our sordid views before we have obtained them, in making them the object of our unwearied and main pursuit, and in the value we set on them, and our excessive attachment to them after the acquisition. The disorder lies in the mind, and not in the possession.

Nature wants few things; but office, and the different relations which we may sustain in life, may require many. It is our duty, then, to bound our desires by our necessities, and to use the bounties of God's providence as things designed for our use, and not our principal enjoyment. To do otherwise, is to mistake the means of happiness for the end, and to love the creature more than the Creator, who is God over all, blessed forever. An excessive and restless desire after more than is necessary is Covetousness, and a mistaken estimation of worldly acquisitions as our chief good, which is the case with every avaricious man, is idolatry. What ought to suffice the peasant, would be insufficient for the king. For the king, then, to desire more than the peasant is not a mark of avarice: but discontentment with a competent portion, and an unceasing quest of gain, argue a sordid love of money, and is Covetousness in both. In one word, Covetousness is an

attachment to the things of this world, as such, or for their own sake; and differs in degree, according as that attachment is stronger or weaker.

I proceed now, in the second head, which I proposed, to enforce the exhortation of our Saviour, "Take heed and beware of Covetousness." And we should guard our hearts against the admission of this destructive vice; because, in the first place, it is idolatry. Secondly, because it bars the door against the exercise of charity, so often inculcated in Scripture, as the mark of a Christian temper. Thirdly, because it debases the mind, and renders it incapable of intellectual improvement. Fourthly, because it is a growing evil. Fifthly, because it is an ungrateful use, or abuse, rather, of the mercies of God. Sixthly, because it is an inlet to every other vice. And, lastly, because a man's life doth not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. This last it will be sufficient at present to consider. When we say, that a man's life doth not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesseth, we mean that such abundance is neither necessary to the true enjoyment of our earthly possessions; nor affords the least security for the continuance of life itself. To this it may be added, that its tendency is greatly to obstruct the attainment of life everlasting.

It requires the assistance of Divine Grace to enable us, while engaged in the prosecution of our worldly employments, to be contented with the portion of goods that falleth to us. But, Covetousness, like the grave which ere long will swallow us all, has never yet been heard to say "It is enough."

The amount of pecuniary acquisitions which can render men perfectly contented with their portion, has never as yet been ascertained. This depends on the state of our minds. Where this is not settled, an increase of fortune will not be found sufficient to compose it. Experience, if I mistake not, has evinced, that this does little else than to whet more keenly the desire of further acquisitions. The possession of one field renders another but the more desirable ; or, as we suppose, more necessary to us. Our desire of gain, then, like the thirst of dropsy, only increases, it would seem by being gratified. This state of mind, is not only ever restless, but it frequently mars the enjoyment of what we already possess, and endangers our life itself, in the eager pursuit of more.

SERMON XXV.

THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST.

“What think ye of Christ?”

Matthew, 22d chap. 42d verse.

WHEN it is considered, that a man's friends are more or less numerous, and more or less zealous, according to the estimation in which they hold him, this will appear an enquiry of no little importance. In this case, indeed, it cannot but be considered as entitled to the most serious consideration: as not so much his honour as our own interest is concerned in the question, and will be decided by the answer. As far as it respects him, it is of very little moment, what may be the sentiment of a mis-judging world. Once, indeed, at the time when this question was proposed, he was found “in fashion as a man,” and the weakness of humanity to which he humbled himself, exposed him to insult which he received, and to pain which he endured, at the hands of men. Then, too, the kind offices of his friends were welcome: his necessities frequently required them, and they will be had in everlasting remembrance. But, now that he has ascended on high, and resumed the glories which he had with the Father, before the world was, he is far above the scoffs of sinners, or the praises of the Saints. These, indeed, he humbles himself to receive; whilst the vices and the scorn of wicked men, can only, for the present, excite his pity. For the present, I say, for he is still the same compassionate Saviour he ever was,

not willing that any should perish, but that all might repent and be saved.

Considering him, then, as the Saviour of the world, the opinion we entertain of him is, to us, all important; for, to as many as receive him, he giveth power to become the sons of God; but those who reject him, must perish in their sins. "Ye will not come to me," says he, "that ye may have life." "What think ye" then of Christ?

That we may come to a decision on this subject, and be prepared to give an answer to the question, I must beg the favour of you to accompany me in surveying a little, the most prominent traits in the Saviour's character, and the most remarkable incidents of his life. When he entered on the duties of his office, he informed us, that the end of his coming into the world, was to seek and save that which was lost: and that for this purpose he had come to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel." On this account he was called Jesus, which signifies a Saviour. By the direction of God, this name was given him, before he was born; "And thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins." He is also called Christ, which signifies anointed, on account of his being especially appointed of God; and qualified for the work of redemption. This name is given, probably, in allusion to the custom which obtained with respect to the Kings of Israel, who, upon their accession or appointment to the Throne, was anointed with oil. As the Saviour of sinners, he is called Jesus; and his super-eminent qualifications for this important office, have given him the title of "the Lord's anointed."

This being the character in which he was introduced to the world, you would naturally expect to hear, that the circumstances of his appearance were such, as you would judge to correspond with these great preparations, and the importance and dignity of the office which he was appointed to sustain. Human wisdom, indeed, would have lavished upon him all the pomp and splendor of its own greatness : but, this, however, is not the only instance in which the wisdom of this world has been accounted “ foolishness with God.”

It is not my intention to present a detail, or make an application of the prophecies which are contained in the Scriptures, concerning Christ, to enable you to anticipate the state in which he was first of all to be found. Suffice it to observe, at once, that we find the fulfilment of them in the babe of Bethlehem.

It may, perhaps, offend the pride of philosophy, and confound the more sober reason of man, but it is not to be concealed, that he who was by Divine appointment to be the glory of his people of Israel, was of obscure parentage, and as far as external circumstances could make it so, of very humble birth ; for, he was born in a stable : yet, in a helpless infant you behold the fore-runner of the future Saviour.

Sacred history has been very particular and explicit in recording this circumstance ; for, when it was announced by an Angel of the Lord, to the Shepherds of Judea, that a Saviour was born unto them, it was given as a sign by which they might know him, that he was laid in a manger : “ Ye shall find the babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes, ly-

ing in a manger." And, "suddenly," the historian adds, "there was with the Angel, a multitude of the Heavenly Host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men." The Shepherds, too, when they had seen the babe, "returned, glorifying and praising God:" and, good old Simeon, who was "waiting for the consolation of Israel," when he saw the child soon afterwards in the temple, "took him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Being filled with the Holy Ghost, he then uttered some prophecies concerning the child, which have since been exactly fulfilled, but which it does not belong to the subject at present to repeat. You may find them, however, in the latter part of the second chapter of Luke. The humble birth and low estate of Christ, have been made, by some, a pretext for rejecting, if not despising him, in every age of the world. But, as little as we can depend on the deductions of our reason, we may yet discern in these arrangements, the marks of superior wisdom, and justly draw from them, conclusions of Divine appointment, if we will but lay aside, for a moment, our prejudice against poverty and the pride of comparison. We, to be sure, would never have devised such a Saviour as Jesus of Nazareth; but, would have had him that was Divine, on all occasions to display the God. But, yet our rational faculties may teach us to approve what we could not originally have discovered. It is not invention, but the power of examining thoroughly, of choosing

deliberately, and of deciding justly, that is the prerogative of reason. The approbation of this, after such a process, must be, to us, at least, an argument of truth.

Bearing in mind, then, that we are considering Christ Jesus in the character of a Saviour, we may surely discover the reason of his assuming the "body which God prepared." If it be accounted reasonable, that the same nature which had violated God's law, should yield obedience, and that the same should suffer the penalty which had contracted the guilt, then, as St. Luke and the other Evangelists express it, it "behoved Christ to suffer;" and, in order to be prepared for this, that he should be found in fashion as a man. If any one, then, be offended at this, he must surely have forgotten that Christ was substituted in the room of sinners.

But, wherefore was he made an infant? Why was he laid in a manger? Would it not have answered these purposes effectually, if he had put on the fashion of a man in all his vigor, and been created like Adam, in full perfection? No; considering who he was in reality, he ennobled poverty by the indigence of his very birth, and rendered humility conspicuous by being wrapped in "swaddling clothes."

Besides, as it was necessary that he should take upon him human nature, it was reasonable, it was right, it was wise, it was merciful, that he should visit it in all its stages, and experience all its infirmities and vicissitudes, from the cradle to the grave: That he should experience the helplessness of infancy together with its innocence; the bloom of youth, together with its temptations; and the strength, to-

gether with the cares of manhood. Who sees not that by these things he was the better qualified for the office of a Saviour? In this school is he instructed to succour them that are tempted, for he had felt the same: to pity and relieve the sons and daughters of affliction, as he had experienced sorrow; and to carry the lambs in his bosom, having been himself a child. This is always considered as a great encouragement to approach the Throne of Grace, now that Christ is seated on high, and make known our wants "by prayer and supplication." To this purpose speaks the Apostle to the Hebrews. "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. For we have not an high Priest, which cannot be touched with a fellow-feeling of our infirmities: but was in all points tempted-like as we are. Let us therefore come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find Grace to help in every time of need." For this purpose it was the part of infinite wisdom to ordain, that "the Captain of Salvation should be made perfect through sufferings." This was indeed the lot of the Saviour of the world. He came into the world in poverty, and he left it in pain. A manger was his cradle, and his dying bed a cross.

Before I dismiss this part of his character and history, I must invite your attention, to a very remarkable incident of his infant state and the interposition of Divine Providence for his preservation. It had long been prophesied, that "Out of Bethlehem of Judea," should come a governor that should rule the people of Israel. When, therefore, there came

wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him," "Herod the King was exceedingly troubled." Mistaking the nature of the Saviour's authority, he became apprehensive for his throne and jealous of the child. After making some fruitless attempts to discover him, he at length issued the bloody decree, that "all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof of two years old and under, should be put to death." He sent off his officers in his wrath, and had it executed. Then was lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, indeed. Then many a Rachel was heard weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted. But Joseph, warned of God in a dream, of the approaching danger, had taken the child and his mother by night, and fled into Egypt, before the executioners arrived. Thus Divine Providence watched over him; and indeed, who could have seen the executioners on their way to Bethlehem, and Joseph in his flight to Egypt, and not have wished the child God speed?

Upon the death of Herod, an Angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, advising him to take the young child and his mother, and go again into the land of Israel. On this, I have only to observe here, that it was the accomplishment of an Ancient Prophecy; "Out of Egypt have I called my Son."

In the succeeding period of his life, we discover such unusual marks of wisdom and of Grace, as are truly surprising, and as may instruct us what we

ought to think of Christ. "The child grew," says the sacred historian, "and waxed strong in spirit filled with wisdom; and the Grace of God was upon him." "At twelve years old," he was found "in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions." These questions were not the effect of childish curiosity, nor was there discovered in his answers, any mark of childish weakness. Wisdom, more than human, issued from his mouth, insomuch that "all that heard him," says the historian, "were astonished at his understanding and his answers."

From this time until about the age of thirty years, he lived in obscurity with his mother and reputed father, working with him, as commentators suppose, at his trade, which, it seems, was that of a carpenter. At this time, after a lapse of eighteen years, he publicly made known his commission from on high, proclaiming himself the promised Messiah, "sent of God," to instruct a benighted, and to restore a ruined world. "And Jesus returned," says the sacred historian, "in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out of him a fame through all the region round about. And he taught in their Synagogues, being glorified of all. And he came to Nazareth where he had been brought up: and as his custom was, he went into the Synagogue on the Sabbath-day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the Prophet Esaias; and when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent

me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." He then closed the book, returned it to the Minister and sat down. And whilst the eyes of all that were in the Synagogue were fastened on him, he said to them, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears."

This Scripture to which Jesus Christ refers, you may find in the 42d of Isaiah, 7th verse, and more particularly, in the 61st of the same Prophet, of which the words which I have read, are almost a literal quotation. He then went from place to place and from city to city, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom. He went about continually doing good, administering consolation to the afflicted in spirit, wiping away the tears from mourners in Zion, instructing the ignorant in the way of everlasting life, sympathizing with, and cheering the sad and disconsolate. In confirmation of his authority, and to encourage poor sinners to put their trust in him, and to convince them that God had sent him, he accompanied his kind offices by miraculous displays of power and of Grace. Saint Matthew informs us that on a certain occasion, when Jesus had gone up on a mountain near the sea of Galilee, "Great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet, and he healed them: insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel." The opposition of

the Jewish Sanhedrim, and of the Roman Senate had not as yet been excited against him. His countrymen, however, I mean more particularly the rulers, when they became acquainted with the object of the Messiah's mission, and the nature of his Kingdom—that he came, not to deliver them out of the hands of the Romans, who had subdued them, but to save them from their sins—to restore them to the favour of God—to overthrow the Kingdom of Satan, and despoil the powers of darkness, immediately organized the opposition of the Sanhedrim, who, by artful insinuations, excited against him the jealousy of the Romans, by whom, he was at last crucified.

SERMON XXVI.

THE MYSTERY OF PROVIDENCE.

“How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.”

Romans, 11th chap. 33d verse.

THE most that we can know of God in this state of darkness and imperfection is, that his nature is incomprehensible to the human mind, and his judgments unsearchable. He is perfectly to be known and comprehended by himself alone. “Canst thou by searching find out God?” says Job. “Canst

thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as Heaven; what canst thou do? Deeper than Hell, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea."

To his judgments, however, it is the duty of all men to attend, and endeavour, as far as possible, to learn instruction from them. Our sources of information respecting them, are in general the communications of God's word, and the dispensations of his Providence. It was the Revelation of the hidden mystery, as the Apostle calls it, to wit: The purpose of God, in calling the Gentiles to be partakers with the Jews, of his Salvation; his including them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all, which extorted from him, the rapturous exclamation in the text. And, when we reflect on the ways of God towards men, and view the dispensations of his common Providence, we cannot but be filled with wonder and astonishment, and will find sufficient reason for adopting the words of the text. "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." These were probably within the general view of the Apostle, and in this view I beg leave to direct your attention to them on the present occasion. "The works of the Lord are wonderful," says the Psalmist, "and they are sought out of all them that take pleasure therein." Yet, when we turn our thoughts to this subject, we shall often find ourselves involved in inextricable difficulties, and be obliged to adopt the language of the same inspired writer; "Thy judgments are a great deep: Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy foot-steps are not known."

Though God is surrounded with light, as with a garment, yet we cannot comprehend it; but to our weak apprehension, clouds and darkness appear to be round about him. He giveth account of his works to none of his creatures, but maketh the darkness his pavilion. His judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out.

The use which I would wish to make of these words, is, in the first place, to give some general and particular instances of the wonderful ways of God, in the dispensations of his Providence: And, secondly, To adduce such reasons as may tend to vindicate these judgments, and point out the duty of man, to be resigned, and to adore.

And, in the first place, if we consider the general Providence of God, as superintending the affairs of the world, or his special Providence, as exercised over individuals; they will both appear to us mysterious and unsearchable. The rise and fall of nations are frequently produced by the most unexpected, and, even unpromising events; and, are to be resolved only into the good pleasure of him who raiseth up, and pulleth down as he pleases. By avarice and oppression they become great and powerful, and their very prosperity becomes their down-fall.— They flourish and make a noise in the world, then suddenly dwindle away, and are no more heard of. Some seem to have been raised to the very pinnacle of Glory, as if for no other purpose than to declare the power of God in their ruins. We read in history, both sacred and profane, of nations who bid defiance to the God of Heaven, and were yet permitted to prevail against his chosen people, who

trusted in his name, and to carry them captive into a strange land. When we come down to more modern times, we observe events taking place, which fall entirely without the calculations of the most experienced politicians. The best concerted plans are frustrated; the wisest councils are turned headlong; whilst on the other hand, the weakest efforts are crowned with success. God exercises his wonderful Providence, in promoting the low, and bringing down the mighty, and in verifying the wise man's maxim, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. It will occur to every hearer, that the land in which we live, affords in a great measure, an example of all this. The ways of God, are, in this respect, past finding out. When a powerful nation, and well skilled in war, rose up against us, and threatened, in the Spirit of Pharaoh, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil," they were arrested in their career, and finally given into our hands. The Providence of God interposed for us, covered the heads of our soldiers in the day of battle, and crowned their arms with success. As then, so also now, his judgments are mysterious.

Again, when we consider the lot of individuals, it seems to be shut up in impenetrable darkness. Alternate hopes and fears, encourage and depress them. The Divine Providence watches over every man, yet he appears to walk in a vain show. The very hairs of his head are all numbered, yet he is involved in perplexities and doubts, and seems to be given up to blind chance or accident, and often knows not, on which hand to turn. He is thwarted in his desires, his best devised schemes are frus-

trated, and he is disappointed in his most sanguine hopes. If he obtain the object of his wishes, it is soon removed from him, or the possession of it proves injurious or uneasy to him, from which he expected the greatest happiness. How often do we hear the tender parent mourning the loss of his most promising child? And, how often do we see the helpless infant left destitute by the removal of its parents?

When we peruse the sacred writings, the Almighty appears to have hidden himself in thick darkness, with respect to his dispensations. The history of Jacob and Joseph, of Abraham and Isaac, of Job, and above all, of our blessed Saviour, appears a continued series of mysteries; which at the then present time, were past finding out.

2dly. The indiscriminate lot which falls into the lap of righteous and wicked men, has of old been a subject of wonder and perplexity. Prosperity and adversity do not appear in any great measure, to be distributed according to the respective characters of men. It was a complaint of the Psalmist, that the wicked flourished like a green bay tree, whilst the righteous were involved in calamities; and when he sought to know this, he says it was too painful for him.

We find the Prophet Jeremiah, also expostulating with his Maker on this subject. "Righteous art thou, O! Lord," says he, "when I plead with thee, yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments; Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?" We indeed are not very competent judges of any part of this matter; because on the one hand,

there may be in many instances, much depravity of heart concealed under a fair outside ; and on the other hand, men may appear to others much worse than they really are. Yet, as far as we are able to judge, we seem to discover a very material difference in the characters and worth of men, and when we consider the Providence of God in the disposal of their affairs, it seems to be very wonderful, and taken by itself, not to be unravelled. There are those, who according to every candid construction, are honest, virtuous men ; they are upright and conscientious in their dealings ; they are humane in their disposition, and sober in their general deportment. They appear also to fear God, to pay respect to his authority, and reverence his name. There are others again who are evidently profligate in their lives, unjust, insidious, cruel and oppressive ; and who appear neither to fear God, nor regard men. We observe a material difference in this respect, yet the allotments of Divine Providence do not seem in any measure, for the present, to be accommodated to that difference. The former do not meet with that approbation and support which might be expected ; nor do the latter suffer those disappointments and afflictions, which one would think should be the wages of their iniquity. Sometimes indeed, the case is entirely reversed. Tears are the repast of the Godly man, whilst the ungodly prosper and abound. The rich man in the Gospel, who did not fear God, nor regard man, fared sumptuously every day, whilst Lazarus lay at his gate, a beggar, and full of sores.

We are assured that the Lord doth love the upright, and that his eyes are continually over the righteous ; and yet, when we read the history of his Church, it seems that he had reserved for it the very sorest of his judgments. His most pious and faithful servants have sometimes appeared to be singled out by his vengeance. He permitted that they should suffer for their attachment to his cause. He suffered their enemies to prevail against them, and to drag them like sheep to the slaughter. These, no doubt, were the Lord's doings, and truly they are marvellous in our eyes.

On the other hand, those who set themselves against God, do often prosper ; and though, as the Psalmist says, they set their mouths against the Heavens, they have all that heart can wish, whilst affliction seems to be the patrimony of the righteous. In this world, says our Lord to his disciples, "ye shall have tribulation." In the mean-time, it cannot but seem singularly strange, that the favours of the Almighty should, in so many instances, be the only punishment of vice, and distress and tribulation, the only recompence of virtue. Lastly, on this head, the manner of God's government in general, seems of all things, to be to us the most mysterious and incomprehensible: That all his purposes should be accomplished without the least miscarriage, and the freedom of the human will, be left entirely unimpaired: That the most submissive, and the most untoward and untractable temper, should both contribute to the fulfilment of his gracious designs, without the smallest restraint being put upon the inclinations of either: That the most wise and holy ends of

his Providence, should be answered by the most wicked instruments, and by the perpetration of the most impious deeds, and at the same time, that neither he should be liable to the imputation of being the author of evil, nor the agents be in any degree excusable, is truly astonishing : It passes all understanding, and as the Psalmist expresses it, is a deep where all our thoughts are drowned. Of this, however, we have a striking instance, in the sufferings and death of our blessed Lord. The son of man goeth, says the Scripture, as it is written ; but wo to that man, by whom the son of man is betrayed. Such, are the wonderful workings of God ! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out !

2. The second thing proposed in the opening of this subject ; was to submit to your consideration such reasons, as may tend to vindicate these mysterious Providences of God, and teach the duty of man, to be resigned and adore.

And, in the first place, if we should resolve it all into the good will and pleasure of the Almighty, it should be to us a very sufficient reason. This should teach us with reverence and humility to adore, though we should not be able fully to comprehend. He sits a Sovereign on his throne, and is under no obligation to render an account to any of his creatures. He made all things for his own glory : for his will and pleasure, they are and were created. He has therefore a right to conduct the affairs of his government, and to dispose of the works of his own hand, in whatever manner it may seem good in his sight. We cannot, therefore, without presump-

tion, pretend to pry into his secret councils, or say unto him, "What dost thou?" The question, with which he challenges his creatures in this respect, is altogether unanswerable; "May I not do what I will with my own?"—But,

2dly. What, if God chooses in this way to make his power known, and lead his creatures by the mysteries of his Providence to the acknowledgment of his name? This could not be thought unworthy of God, or afford just ground of complaint, though thousands should fall on the left hand, and ten thousands on the right. And besides, if all things happened precisely according to human calculation, and in every instance agreeably to the stated course of nature, men would be disposed to supplant religion altogether by their vain philosophy, and lose sight of the God of Heaven, who rules and presides over all.

SERMON XXVII.**THE VISION OF JESUS.**

“ We would see Jesus.”

John, 12th chap. 21st verse.

WHEN we hear the relation of great exploits, it is apt to fill us with admiration, and excite in us a strong desire of seeing the person to whom they are attributed.

The achievements of our fellow-men, even in matters of indifference to us, will raise our curiosity to see them, that we may behold with our eyes the subject of that fame, which has often filled our ears. But, when we ourselves are nearly concerned, and the actions are such as tend to our own peace and happiness, we consider ourselves as partakers of the glory; and it inspires us with the most profound and generous veneration of the person; and we wish for an opportunity, not barely of satisfying our curiosity, but of paying our respect to the patron of our cause. We have an instance of this kind in the subject under our present consideration. The fame of Jesus Christ, the great author of our Salvation, had filled the world with astonishment, and the mouths of generous men with loud acclamations in his praise. When it was known at Jerusalem that Jesus was at Bethsaida, where Lazarus was, the trophy of his power, of whom many bear record that he had raised him from the dead, and that he was coming to the city to keep a feast, they welcomed his approach with loud eulogiums,

Hosanna in the highest, blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord. The sincere congratulations of grateful men were a more glorious triumph to the Prince of Peace, than ever graced the proud processions of the conquerors of the world. Princes subdued and long trains of captives did not attend the chariot-wheels of Christ in a forced compliment; but as trophies of his goodness, and as grateful and voluntary tokens of respect, garments and boughs of trees, were strewed on the way, that their Saviour might ride, as on a carpet, to Jerusalem. It is no wonder, then, that the Greeks desired to see him, whose fame was so renowned, and for whose reception so great preparations were made. But, this was not all. It was not to gratify a vain curiosity, that they came to Jerusalem. They came not only to see the person of Christ, but in him to see and worship their Saviour and their King. The Greeks, who made this request to Philip to introduce them to the Saviour of the world, were such, as having heard of him by the hearing of the ear, had been converted from the idolatry of the Gentile nations. They were what were then called proselytes of the gate, or, as some suppose, proselytes of righteousness, who were not entitled to all the immunities of the Jews, but were suffered to live and converse amongst them. They desired to see him on whom, though they had not seen, yet they believed. No doubt, they were desirous of being admitted into his company, to receive instructions from his mouth, respecting the things which belonged to their peace. They, therefore, made application to Philip, who was the constant companion of Christ,

that, through his introduction, they might gain admittance. And, as they were not entitled to all the privileges of the Jews, lest it should be considered as an intrusion, they first asked leave, and said with a degree of diffidence, "Sir, we would see Jesus."

Having thus shortly opened the nature and circumstance of this request, I shall proceed to what I principally intended ; to consider what it is to see Jesus.

When I turn to the awful solemnity of the scene which we have this day to exhibit, in which, through the good Providence of God, we are favoured with an opportunity of commemorating the death and suffering of our crucified Saviour, methinks, were I to ask you what you would see? The answer of many of you would be, we would see Jesus. And, whilst many have come out of mere curiosity, I hope some of you, my dear brethren, impatient of so long an absence, are come with a sincere desire, to meet your Saviour here, to see once more the light of his countenance, and his stately steppings in his Sanctuary, as you have seen them in times past. Had we been told, that he was on the road and would be here to-day, to keep the feast with us in his bodily presence, how glorious would be the sight, how sweet the entertainment ! What a Heavenly guest would be the Son of God, and with what pleasure might we gaze upon the Lord of Glory ! But, let us not indulge these pleasing thoughts. He has left the world ; he has gone where we shall never see him, until we see him in his Father's Kingdom. But yet, I hope you will not be disappointed altogether. Though he has gone, he has not forsaken us. I

hope he will be here, though we see him not. Oh! keep on the wedding garment. Near eighteen hundred years ago, he tabernacled in the flesh and was seen of men. Old Simeon saw, and clasped his Salvation in his arms. His presence often comforted his disciples: they always knew where they might find a friend in every straight: He ever received them with cordiality and friendship, and even permitted John to lean upon his breast. For many years he conversed constantly with men, until his translation into Heaven, when a cloud intercepted him from their view. With a mixture both of pleasure and of pain, they took their last look of their ascending Lord, and gazed till all the stupendous scene was over. "Yet a little while," says he, before his departure, "ye see me, and again, a little while, and ye shall not see me, for where I go ye cannot come."

But, though we cannot with our eyes behold him, yet there is a sense in which we may see him still, that is, by our faith and understanding: for, we walk, says the Apostle, by faith, and not by sight. In a word, those who are so desirous, may see Jesus in the ordinances of his institution, which he has ordained as the medium of interview between him, and those who sincerely seek him. Through the Holy Scriptures, the New Testament in particular, we may maintain a Holy and a pleasant correspondence with our Heavenly Master. The Scriptures, indeed, are hidden to many; to all such as are spiritually blind: but, to those who read with a sincere desire to profit by them, and to be instructed in the things which belong to their everlasting peace,

they afford the sweetest entertainment, and a Heavenly vision in every page. As, when we peruse the epistle of an absent friend, when we read the effusions of his affectionate and tender heart, we feel a pleasure little inferior to that of his personal presence: so, also, when we read the Holy Oracles which our blessed Lord has left us on record; when we read the assurances of his love and favour, and the promises of his Holy Spirit, to co-operate with our own endeavours, we may see him whom our soul seeketh. By the sanctifying influences of his Grace, and the illuminations of his Holy Spirit, we may as in a vision behold the Lord Jesus Christ, opening to us the glorious methods of Salvation, giving us a view of the Heavenly Canaan, directing us into the paths of peace, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." In the works of nature, we may behold the Great Creator, but in the Scriptures only can we see the Saviour of the world. As the consciousness of guilt, presents to the wicked the awful picture of an offended God frowning in Justice, the sincere penitent, may here see the blessed Jesus smiling in mercy, and inviting him, to a reconciliation with his Heavenly Father, through the great atonement by his blood. He may here see Justice satisfied, and the sinner saved: he may here see the Lord Jesus Christ, his friend and advocate, standing as his shield, between an offended God, and the offending sinner, to ward off the blow. Well indeed, might the Apostle say, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto Salvation, to every one that believeth." As in the open countenance of a friend, we view the index of a generous

soul, so, on the other hand, in the tender effusions of compassion and forgiveness, of love and friendship, in the Gospel of our Saviour, we may behold the placid countenance of the blessed Jesus.

Secondly : We may also see Jesus in the solemn and delightful exercise of secret devotion. In the wide theatre of the world, the goodness of God is most conspicuous, and his Providence most employed : but the secret retirement of the closet is the scene, where we may converse with the Father of our spirits, and the God of our Salvation. We may retire from the hurry and bustle of the world, and enjoy a holy interview in private with our blessed Saviour, where no human eye can see us. We may there make known our case, unbosom all our complaints to Jesus Christ, our tender and affectionate friend, and commune with him who seeth in secret, as it were face to face. If fortune frowns, or if the world forsakes us, we may here find a friend, whose compassions never fail, who himself knows what it is to be forsaken of the world, and, who in pity of his followers, administers in secret those sweet consolations which this world can neither give nor take away. In this solemn exercise, we are permitted to draw near to God, and he draws near to us. It is the medium of sweet communication between God and the soul, in which we may, as it were, see the face and taste the love of Jesus, who presents our petitions in his own name, before the Father's throne. The Christian here receives that Heavenly food which the world knows not of, and the sweet consolations of the Holy Ghost, which strangers to God intermeddle not with, and which administers more

pure pleasure, than the men of this world receive, in all the abundance of their corn and wine.

Thirdly: The face of Jesus shines in the worshipping assemblies of his people. He delights in the praises of his Saints, and is wont to grace his sanctuaries with his own presence. This is the place which he has chosen, in which to meet his people, and dispense to every one according to his necessities. "It was good for me," says the Psalmist, "to draw near to God." He is ever to be found of those who seek him; but he is more especially to be seen amongst his assembled worshippers, and has, as it were, appointed his sanctuary as the place, where he will meet with such as desire to see his sacred glory. He has promised, that when two or three are met together in his name, there he will be in the midst of them. His Holy Spirit often accompanies the preaching of his word, to make it ~~effective~~ ~~in~~ building up his Saints, in holiness and comfort, through faith unto Salvation. This is a near approach to God through the merits of our Redeemer; and they who worship in the sanctuary, have often good reason to say with his disciples of old, "It is good for us to be here." Where should we see the blessed Jesus, if not when we approach his Holy Altar, the peculiar place of his abode? Though we can never be said to be far from God, for in him we live and move, and have our being; yet, his house is the place in which he especially delights to display his mildest glories in the plan of redemption by his Son Jesus.

Before I proceed to the next particular, we may pause a moment to consider, how unfavourable to

their own souls, is the conduct of those who absent themselves repeatedly from the house of God. A secret disinclination to the duties of religion, is often covered by the trite excuse, that we can be as well employed at home, and may even have an opportunity of reading a better sermon than we should hear from the pulpit. Not to insist that this is no more than a mere pretext, but allowing it to be the case, that we should employ ourselves at home, in reading and devout meditations, yet we would do well to consider, whether we do not run a great risk of losing the blessing of God by absenting ourselves from the assemblies of his people, the place which he has appointed to dispense his favours. Ought we not to fear, lest we should lose the sight of Jesus, by abstaining from his sanctuary, where he shews his face? If we have an offering to make to our Saviour, where should we offer it, but at his altar? This is an ordinance of Divine appointment, in which our worship is accepted, through the merits of our Redeemer. If, therefore, we would expect a blessing, we should not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, nor let our voice be wanting, when Christians meet to celebrate the praises of their Saviour.

In the fourth place: They may be said to see Jesus, who are enabled, by faith, to trust the keeping of their souls to his care. He that mourns under a sense of his sins, who is sensible of his lost condition, may direct his eyes to the blessed Jesus, and find a shelter under the shadow of his wings. He is ever to be found of the returning sinner; and he that cometh to him he will in no wise cast out.

Come unto me, says he, "all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." He is ever ready to heal the broken-hearted, and free the penitent from the bonds of iniquity. "The Lord hath sent me," says he, "to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound: To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise, for the spirit of heaviness."

Oh! how precious is the sight of Christ to the soul that is bowed down under a sense of sin! How sweet to hear his pardoning voice, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven!" How happy the state, to have the Spirit of Christ bearing witness with our spirits, that we are no longer the heirs of Hell, but the children of God, through the merits and intercession of the dear Redeemer. If any are in my hearing, who have thus seen the smiling countenance of Jesus, as I hope there are, O! be thankful, and rejoice in the God of your Salvation. If there are any who would wish to see him, let me exhort you to seek him diligently in the ordinances of his institution, and ye shall find him. Oh! if I thought there were any that had set their faces Zion-ward, I would gladly dwell upon this subject. I would rejoice, if I could be instrumental in directing you to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of sinners. But, if there should chance to be one who would wish to see their Saviour, let me encourage you to persevere. Be not discouraged because your sins are great. This is a suggestion, which the great enemy of your souls is ever ready to throw in the way. He is apt to tell

the poor dejected sinner, that his crimes are so great, he need not look for pardon. But, my dear brother, it was for such sinners that Jesus died ; and his blood is of sufficient efficacy to wash away your stains. "Come, let us reason together," saith the Lord, "though your sins be as scarlet, I can make them white as snow ; and though they be as crimson, I can make them as wool." O! come and see the Lord Jesus, for he is gracious. Come, guilty and heavy-laden as you are, come with all your sins, for he is able and willing to save to the uttermost. Come, plead the merits of his blood, which was shed on purpose for the remission of sin, which pleads in your behalf, and if your crimes are great, you will only be the richer trophy of his grace. Had men been guiltless, Christ had not died: the whole have no need of a physician, but those that are sick. Come, therefore, under a deep sense of your sins, and my dear brethren, you come well recommended. Let us, therefore, be encouraged to wait upon him, without weariness, and he will be found of us in his own good time and way. "He that cometh unto me," says he, "I will in no wise cast out. I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me."

5thly. The blessed Jesus is represented in a very lively manner in the Holy Sacrament of the supper. In the common ordinances of God's institution, the face of our Redeemer shines in Glory, as head over all things to his Church ; but in this mournful scene, he is evidently held forth as crucified, before our eyes, with his face marred by sinful men. He, here lays aside the brightness of his Father's glory, and

appears in the character of a distressed sufferer. You have often heard of our Saviour's crucifixion, and that it pleased God to lay on him the iniquities of us all, and yet by his stripes we were healed. Behold there the symbols of his broken body and shed blood. In this sad spectacle, we may behold the sufferings which our Saviour endured on our account. Look on his mangled body, and bedew it with drops of unfeigned love and sorrow. Oh! Christian, look on him whom you have crucified; and while your hearts melt under the sense of his love in giving himself for you, let them be broken on account of your sins, which brought your Saviour to that dreadful end. Oh! look on him, whom you have pierced, and mourn, as one mourneth for a first-born, or for an only child. In these sad symbols, we may, as it were, behold the bruised body of our Saviour, and by faith in his blood, appropriate his sufferings as the great atonement for our sins. Like Thomas, we may put our finger into the print of the nails, and cry out with a mixture of love and sorrow, my Lord, and my God. In the elements of bread and wine, we may taste and handle of the word of life; "for my flesh," says our Saviour, "is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." I would not teach you, my brethren, that these consecrated elements are the real body and blood of Christ, and that as often as you eat the bread and drink the wine, you do really eat his body and drink his blood. This would be, as the Apostle says, not to discern the Lord's body. No, we are by faith to look through the signs to the things signified by them. It is designed as a feast, not for the body,

but for the soul, which does not feed upon substantial food. Whoso eateth the body of Christ, shall never hunger, and whoso drinketh his blood, shall never thirst; but, unless in the exercise of faith we are enabled to discern spiritually the Lord's body, we may eat this bread and drink this cup without any profit to ourselves, but rather in so doing, eat and drink judgment to ourselves. God has appointed these sensible signs, not from any real virtue in themselves, but for the assistance of our faith, because they are familiar to us, and well calculated to bring to our remembrance in a lively and affecting manner, the death and sufferings of our blessed Saviour. The Apostle reproving the Corinthians for their abuses of this holy ordinance, particularly in profaning the Lord's supper with their own feasts, tells them, that their meeting together in that case was not for the better, but for the worse. "When ye come together into one place," says he, "this is not to eat the Lord's supper: for in eating, every one taketh before the other his own supper, and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What shall I say to you?" says he. "Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not." Then recalling their recollection to the primitive institution, he informs them, "That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread: and when he had given thanks, break it, and said 'Take, eat: this is my body broken for you. This do in remembrance, or for a remembrance of me.'" This shows then that the Lord Jesus is held forth in this ordinance as the object of faith, and that he is not transubstantiated into the elements, as some have vainly and superstitiously

believed ; that these symbols are intended only to bring the death and sufferings of the Lord Jesus, more strongly and affectingly to our remembrance. When we behold the broken bread and the wine poured out, we are to understand by it, that the precious body of Christ was bruised, and that his blood was shed for the remission of our sins. As we derive our ideas in general from outward objects, so these external signs are designed not to feed the body, but affect the heart.

And, as the blessed Jesus is represented by the symbols of bread and wine; the one the staff of life, the other calculated to cheer the heart, so, also, they intimate to us, that we are to look to Jesus Christ for spiritual food, who is the bread of life which cometh down from Heaven: To look to him for that hidden manna which is the support of the Christian life; for the influences of his Holy Spirit, and the effusions of his Grace, which shall be sufficient for us, which will make our broken bones rejoice, and our hearts glad in the God of our Salvation. When, therefore, you receive the elements, let your faith look through the signs, and receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your all-sufficient portion. And, further, inasmuch as we are commanded to eat the bread and drink the wine, we may learn from hence the intimate union between Christ and his people, and, that we are to be engrafted, as it were, into his body, and live a life of Holiness by the assistance of his Grace. "I am the vine," says he, "ye are the branches; 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." Accordingly, the Apostle says, "To me to live is Christ." And elsewhere, "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."

Once more, as the wine is an allusion to our Saviour's blood, it is to be considered as a solemn pledge of our allegiance to him. This is an usual practice in confederacies amongst men. The seven warriors round the walls of Thebes, plighted their faith to be true to each other, in a draught of bullock's blood; and the Catalinarian conspirators broached a vein in their arms, and, mixing their blood with wine, pledged their faith in an oath of horrid fidelity. But, what is the blood of bulls? or, what the blood of a banditti of desperate men, to the precious blood of the Son of God? This is the strongest and most solemn of all obligations, in which we bind ourselves to be the faithful followers of the Lord Jesus. I have been the more explicit in this particular, in order to open to you, as clearly as possible, the nature and design of this solemn transaction. O! Christian, receive this Holy ordinance in faith, and you will, indeed, see Jesus to your comfort and unspeakable joy.

Lastly, under this head: There is still reserved a more glorious sight for all the friends of Jesus; that is, the open vision of their Saviour in his Father's kingdom. In the ordinances of God's institution here below, we see, as in a glass, darkly; but there, we shall see face to face; we shall see as we are

seen, and know as we are known. Oh! how glorious will be the sight of that precious body in exaltation and glory, which once hung for us upon the cross, and redeemed our souls from death. Here we see him faintly by types and figures, in receiving bread and wine; but, there we shall drink new wine with him in his Father's kingdom. Oh! this will be the consummation of our faith and hope; for, our faith shall then be swallowed up of vision, and our hopes terminate in complete enjoyment. Here, in broken symbols we may contemplate his body; but there, we shall see our Redeemer as he is, and resemble him forever.



SERMON XXVIII.

THE GOSPEL NO CAUSE FOR SHAME.

“For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.”

Romans, 1st chap. 16th verse.

It generally happens in matters of religion, as it sometimes does in the ordinary occurrences of life, men are ashamed to acknowledge, in public, the occupations by which they earn their daily subsistence, especially, if by the corrupted maxims of the world, the idea of poverty or meanness be annexed to them. So, also, in the concerns of religion, many who can see no defect in the Gospel of Christ, and

no impropriety or indecency in the performance of their duty to God, are yet ashamed to practise the one, or to profess the other, lest they should be exposed to ridicule or contempt in the eyes of the world, who consider it only as the business of the sober and unpolished, to be religious, and of persons of ignoble blood to profess the Gospel of a crucified Saviour. Did we consider the nature and design of the Gospel, and how necessary were its precepts to our present and future happiness, we should imagine that it would readily be embraced by all the world; yet, such is the corruption of human nature, that mankind in general are ashamed of it. Although they must be sensible, that they stand in great need of the provision that is made, and the mercy that is offered by Jesus Christ, they notwithstanding reject them with scorn; and, if they cannot be saved by their own righteousness and good works, they seem resolved rather to suffer, than to confess their own impotency, or to purchase their happiness at the expense of reproach, or the galling sacrifice of human pride. What an ungenerous return do they make, for the kindness of Jesus Christ, who humbled himself even unto death, to purchase for them the benefit of the Gospel, when they treat it with contempt, and are ashamed to profess it! So prevalent and universal is the contagion of evil maxims and example, and such is the corruption of human nature, that there are very few, if any, in our day, who can say with the Apostle, "I am not ashamed of it."

Surely religion is at a very low ebb; its doctrines are indefensible, or our faith is very weak, when

men of the most shameful and abandoned character are suffered to triumph over its professors. Surely it is but a small sacrifice we make to religion, if, in defiance of the ridicule of the world, we should not be ashamed to profess and to support it, from which our present subsistence and our future hopes are both derived. If there are any in this assembly, who, in their hearts, wish well to the cause of Christ, let me have the assistance of your countenance and approbation, whilst I stand forth this day in its defence, against the libertinism which so much prevails. Let me encourage you to make open profession of your faith in the Gospel, and, believe me, it shall not be turned to shame, unless it be by the weakness of its defence. If you believe in your hearts, that the Lord is Christ, and will not be ashamed to make open profession of him with your mouth, you will have reason to rejoice that the light of his Gospel has reached your eyes, and that your ears have heard its joyful sound.

Let the scoffers of the age exert their wretched talents, in ridiculing the most important concerns of religion; but, let me caution them to beware, lest they purchase their character as wits, at too dear a rate, and joke themselves into everlasting destruction. Let me remind them, that the merit of the Gospel is not a matter of empty speculation: it is life everlasting to embrace it; it is death to reject it. It is, indeed, a distressing consideration, that men, whose interests are the greatest of all other creatures, should be the most blinded to them. The irrational creatures, led by instinct in an unerring track, pursue the objects that are most conducive to

the happiness of their natures ; but, mankind, endowed with the superior privilege of reason and understanding, instead of using them to the advancement of their happiness, employ them, rather the more effectually to secure their own damnation. Surely reason would not lead to so unwise a choice ; but, such is the dreadful effect of sin, that it has set our inclinations at variance with our better judgment, and has subjected our reason to the dominion of our passions. Suffering ourselves to be led blind-folded by this blind guide, has been the occasion of so many of us falling into the gulph of libertinism and infidelity, which make, in these degenerate days, such rapid progress, that the Gospel is treated by the very witling, with contempt, and our most Holy religion has become the laughing-stock of fools. And, as the Gospel of Christ is so generally neglected and treated by many with every mark of contempt, one would be led to imagine, that it was, indeed, ridiculous or absurd, especially as the scoffers would persuade us, that their contempt of it was the effect of their superior reason. I shall, therefore, attempt to vindicate it against this charge, and fix the reproach where it is justly due. In order to prepare the subject for this purpose, I shall endeavour to consider, in the first place, what the Gospel implies : Secondly, to consider the reasons that induce men to be ashamed of it : And, in the third place, to show on what account the Apostle Paul, and Christians in general, so far from being ashamed, should rather glory in it : “ For, I am not ashamed,” says he, “ of the Gospel of Christ.”

And, under the first head, the word Gospel, being a corruption of, or derived from the old Saxon word Godspel, literally signifies glad tidings, or good news. This too, is the literal import of the word Evangelion, in the original Greek, which, in the Bible, is translated Gospel. Accordingly, the Disciples of Christ are called Evangelists, or the publishers of good news. It surely was glad tidings to the world polluted with transgression and exposed to the wrath of Almighty God, to hear that he was yet willing to be reconciled to sinners. Was it not an agreeable, a joyful surprise to the guilty sons of men, already under the awful sentence of condemnation, to hear that they had obtained a reprieve, and the hopes of pardon with an offended God were offered to them through Jesus Christ? Conscious of our guilt and ill desert, when the eternal Son of God came into the world, must we not have quaked with the fearful apprehension, that he had come to bring a sword for our destruction, and to take vengeance for his broken law? Had it been so, his sword ere now had been drunk with our blood. But, O! hear the good news, hear it with joy and gratitude, he came to bring the Gospel or the offer of peace, of pardon to us, of reconciliation with an offended God, and of eternal happiness in Heaven, instead of being doomed without hope of mercy, to the dismal abodes of Hell. Who would not have supposed, that the awful ministers of justice composed the vindictive retinue of the Son of God, to execute vengeance on the human race, who had most ungratefully rebelled against his Father? But instead of the minister of justice, behold the angel of

mercy. The air is filled with the glorious sound. O! hear, the joyful proclamation, "I bring you glad tidings of great joy, peace on earth and good will to men. Unto you is born this day a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." It certainly would be a joyous message to prisoners under sentence of human laws, to hear that their pardon had been granted and the prison-doors were opened; and should we not account them mad to the last degree, should they begin to throw in objections against the propriety of the proclamation, and refuse to come out? On generous minds, the goodness of God in sending a Saviour would have the good effect of leading them to repentance, and causing them to regret the first transgression. Certainly, then, we are the more unpardonable and worthy of the more dreadful condemnation, if we should reject the mercy purchased at so dear a rate, and sin against so great a salvation. Did we consider the dreadful fate to which we were exposed; could we realize the horrors of the awful dungeon which was prepared for the Devil and his Angels; could we see the iron-gates of Hell, and hear the groans of damned ghosts, with what eagerness would we seize any opportunity of flying from that place of torment? Horrid as this picture is, it is but a faint, rather than an exaggerated representation. And, this is the doom to which we were exposed; and this is a state, from which a deliverance is provided in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This being the case, could we believe, **that any could be found so mad as not to embrace it; that so much pride could consist with so much distress, as to induce sinners, doomed to destruc-**

tion, to be ashamed of this glorious plan of salvation? Yet, unhappy experience abundantly evinces, that the only effect it has had on the generality of persons, is to put them to the trouble of inventing excuses, or of filing exceptions against it.

Let us, therefore, proceed to examine, under the second head which I proposed, what it is in the Gospel of Christ, that has given such general offence to the world, or induced them to be ashamed of it. In the first place, the poverty and meanness of our Saviour's birth, and appearance in the world, was as early, and will, probably, be as lasting a prejudice, as any that have been taken up against the Gospel. The little pomp and grandeur of earthly riches will give a sanction to the words of the most consummate ignorance and weakness; whilst the words of wisdom itself, however necessary and wholesome, will be treated with contempt or ridicule, if they proceed from the mouth of one who is poor and depressed. The heathen oracles, because the invention of human wisdom, were implicitly obeyed, and the splendour of the shrine was accounted sufficient to illuminate the darkness of their absurd and ambiguous answers. The very obscurity of the replies received from them, inspired the vain and superstitious with the most solemn veneration for their profound, unfathomable wisdom: But, how differently did they treat the oracles of the Divine Teachers sent of God? Though he spake as never man spake, being wise in their own conceits, they accounted it as altogether foolishness: professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and esteemed the meanness of his birth, and the poverty of his cir-

cumstances, as weighty arguments against the truth and wisdom of his doctrines. "Is not this," say they, "Joseph the carpenter's son? Can any good come out of Nazareth? or any prophet out of Gallilee?" Thus, the only return they made to his instructions, was reproach, on account of the meanness of his birth and parentage, and the obscurity of the country from which he came. Yet, so weighty is the force of truth, that it would have prevailed in time over all opposition; and it did even astonish his enemies, and extorted from them the involuntary confession, that never man spake as he spake: but, what little credit his low birth, and the necessity of his circumstances left him, was totally destroyed by his sufferings and death. When the hour of his suffering was approaching, and he was bowed down with affliction, they openly and cruelly insulted over his distress, and with a malicious mockery, triumphed over his pretensions to save the world. "Thou who destroyest the temple, and buildest it up in three days," now "save thyself." "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross."

2dly. This, then, is another cause of offence against the Gospel: If the wisdom of our Saviour's instructions, and the sanction of miracles in support of his mission, could not procure him obedience and respect, we need not be surprised if it proved ineffectual in his Apostles to preach Christ crucified. This was to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness. The Jews looked for a great temporal deliverer from the galling yoke of bondage. They, therefore, would confide in none, nor would they receive any to rule over them, but a great

and splendid personage, whose appearance would have spoken his power and dignity. They had no need, as they supposed, of such a Saviour as Jesus Christ, who seemed to be even now, more miserable than themselves, and not able to rescue himself from the most ignominious and accursed death. To the Greeks also, it was foolishness. The men of Athens sought after wisdom, and they could see but little of that in the simplicity of our Saviour's doctrines, and nothing but foolishness in the cross. So blinded were they with the ideas of worldly greatness, that they conceived of the majesty of God, according to their own notions of power and dignity. When they made their Jupiter to speak, his voice forsooth was thunder, and his grand appearance was a blaze of fire. The oracles of their Apollo, were too mysterious and too sacred to be communicated to vulgar ears. But in Jesus Christ, there was no such appearance; his majesty was not supported by such little helps of outward pomp and grandeur as the mock-majesty of men requires. His voice was mildness and mercy, instead of thunder; instead of lightning, he exhibited a human appearance, for he was found in fashion as a man; his oracles were not wrapped up in mysteries and obscurity, but his doctrines were plain and simple, they were calculated to purify the heart, to give wisdom and understanding to the simple; they were communicated to every ear, and the poor had his Gospel preached to them. It is easy to see, how exceptionable these parts of the Gospel are to the world in general, who are puffed up with vain notions of wisdom and power. They take offence at the author of our salvation,

because he appeared in poverty and not in honour and majesty, with a splendid retinue whose very appearance might command respect and credit.

3dly. The doctrine which the Gospel contains, of the future punishment of the wicked, is another source of great offence. They, therefore, would frame an excuse for continuing in sin, by turning the Gospel to shame, or endeavouring to persuade themselves into the disbelief of it. To purchase indulgence in sin, at the constant expense of the rebukes of conscience, is indeed an intolerable situation to continue in. It, therefore, has become the art of the world, to find shelter in the forlorn hopes of infidelity, that they may enjoy the poor pleasures of sin, without being disturbed by the fears of punishment. I need not enlarge upon this : you know how common it is, and can easily see how absurd and dangerous. And, passing over in silence many other particulars that might be mentioned, for offences against the Gospel are almost innumerable, I shall proceed to observe, in the last place,

That the desire of being accounted wise or witty, is another very common source of prejudice against the Gospel. The age in which we live will afford a sad proof, how prevalent offences of this kind are, and how catching the spirit of libertinism is. So vitiated and so depraved is our taste, that we embrace infidelity as a mark of superior sense, and will barter the salvation of our immortal souls, for the sake of a dull and silly joke. Such kind of folly, of all others, is the most inexcusable. They who, to be accounted uncommonly wise, from a petulant itch for singularity, profess themselves infidels, take

great pains to shew how little they esteem the Gospel of Christ, and represent it as the want of spirit, or the want of genius to be religious. Their chief merit, and the greatest mark of wisdom, as they conceive, consists in contradicting the opinion of all the world respecting religion, and representing any attachment to the Gospel of Christ, as a narrowness of mind, or the prejudice of education. There are not wanting persons of this character, in every profession, art and science, whose mark of wisdom lies in contradicting opinions that are commonly received; but, they are much the most numerous in the things of religion. The common professions of life are much divided, and few, comparatively, are concerned about them. These, then, are not sufficient objects for the wisdom of libertines and infidels; for, their conquests would be too limited: but, religion is the universal concern of all mankind, and here their ambition leads them to triumph over all the world. With all their freedom of thinking, they do not so much as consider either the merits or demerits of religion; but, finding that it is generally received, they set themselves in opposition to it, for no other reason than because it is generally received. Their ambition is to shew, that they only are wise, and to convict the whole world of an error. They, therefore, profess themselves greater infidels than they are capable of being. It is vain to urge upon them the reasonableness of endeavouring to serve and please their Maker; it would spoil their glory to listen to the dictates of reason; for, how then would they be accounted wiser than others, if they believed the same things which they believe? Such

are governed by no other principle than that of opposition ; and to avoid a conformity to the common opinion in matters of religion, they choose the pitiful and costly pre-eminence of being singularly bad. The bare profession of their disbelief of the Gospel, is their exclusive title to wisdom ; and to conceal from the world their fears of punishment by openly blaspheming the name of Christ, is their desperate mark of courage.

Having thus enumerated some of the causes for which men are ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, I proceed to consider, in the last place, on what account, so far from being ashamed, we should rather glory in it. And, here we need no better reason than that which the Apostle has assigned ; “ for, it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” To this purpose, also, was the reply of Peter, to the question of our Saviour, at a time when many of his Disciples had taken offence and left him ; “ Will ye, also, go away ?” “ Lord,” says he, “ to whom should we go, but unto thee ? Thou only hast the words of everlasting life.” This, surely, is a sufficient reason why we should glory in the Gospel of Christ. If it be the power of God unto salvation to them that believe, we need not envy the lot of the infidel, to whom it is the savour of death unto death. If faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ will procure the salvation of our immortal souls, we shall not lose by resigning that share of applause, which is due to those who ridicule or blaspheme it. Let others be ashamed of him on account of the poverty and mean appearance of the Great Author of our salvation ; but, we will not be asha-

med to reverence and adore him ; for, he has declared himself to be the Son of God with power. We need not be ashamed of his humble station ; for, he humbled himself that he might exalt us to the Throne of God. If we would judge rightly, we must look beyond the veil of flesh, which concealed his excellence from the eyes of prejudiced men, and through the thin disguise we may behold the Lord of Glory.

In the second place, Christ crucified was to the Greeks foolishness, and to the Jews a stumbling block ; but to those who believe, he is the power of God. The blinded and inveterate Jews could see nothing but blood and water gushing from his side ; but to those who believe in him, salvation flows from every vein. In the works of creation we may see the power, the goodness, and by natural inference, the justice of God ; but his power is a terror to the weakness of sinful flesh : from his goodness, we learn our baseness and ingratitude in abusing it, and his justice affords no consolation to the guilty. That which may be known of God is manifest in his works ; for, the invisible things of him are clearly manifested by the things which he has made from the foundation of the world ; but mercy, in which we can have any hope, is seen only in the cross. It is only by this shedding of blood, that we can receive remission of our sins, and justification in the sight of God. In the cross of Christ, mercy and truth have met together ; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. In this we may rather glory, than be ashamed of it ; for, justice is satisfied, it is rendered more awful by the punishment of sin, and mercy

more amiable by the salvation of the sinner. The Jews, who stumbled at the cross of Christ, acquiesced in the blood of bulls and goats. When men make an offering to the Almighty, nothing more could be expected; and when our King stands at the altar, why should we be ashamed of a royal sacrifice? Here is rather our ground of joy and rejoicing; and we will say with the Apostle, "God forbid, that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

3dly. We need not be ashamed of the Gospel of our Saviour, for he has declared himself to be the Son of God. So much was the world deceived by their vain notions of dignity and power, that they suffered the glories of the Son of God to be concealed by the veil of flesh, which he condescended to put on. Accustomed to judge according to the ideas that are familiar to them, they could not conceive it consistent with the majesty of God, that his ambassador should appear in the fashion of a man, and even put on the form of a servant. Similar to this spirit, was that of Naaman the Syrian, when he applied to Elijah to be cured of the leprosy. The Prophet directed, that he should wash seven times in the river Jordan, and he should be clean. The haughty Syrian, in the greatness of his wisdom, rejected the easy cure, and disdained the Prophet. "I thought, surely," said he, "he will come out to me, and call on the name of God, and stretch his hand over the leper, that he might be healed." He, therefore, turned away in his wrath. But, his servants expostulating the case with him, said; "my father, if he should tell thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not do

it? How much more, when it is only, Wash and be clean." When, therefore, he was prevailed on to try the experiment, which he so much despised, he was cured of his leprosy. Similar to this, are the sentiments of those who object against the Gospel, on account of the humanity of our Saviour, and the simplicity of his doctrines. But, if we would judge rightly, the more plain and easy is the plan of salvation, and by how much more unlikely the means, so much the more visible is the power of God. The waters of Jordan had no special, natural virtue, to heal diseases, nor was there any inherent virtue in the rod of Moses to divide the sea: but at the appointment of God, the waters of Jordan were made effectual, and the sea fled back at the touch of Moses's rod. Surely, when the weak things of the world confound the things that are mighty, it is the more evident, that the power is of God, and not of man. Thus, the works which Jesus did, testify of him, that he was the Son of God, though clothed in the weakness of human flesh.

SERMON XXIX.

EVIL SOCIETY.

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.”

1st Psalm, 1st verse.

THE general tendency of this Psalm, is to describe the character, and declare the blessedness of the religious man; with which is contrasted the misery of the wicked, both here and hereafter. The gradation by which the royal Psalmist has risen in his description, in the verse which contains our text, denotes the progressive steps by which men attain to the utmost pitch of wickedness that they are capable of in this world.

And, whereas the text says, “Blessed is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.” We observe the most positive meaning in these negative terms. The unhappy lot of the contemptuous sinners seems more emphatically declared, than if all the terrors of the law had been directly denounced. If he may be called blessed, who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, what must be his portion that deviseth mischief? If the very company of sinners be so infectious, how great must be their pollution, and how odious their character? If a man cannot, with impunity, associate himself with such, how dreadful must be their condemnation, who, in addition to their own immediate crimes, have also the blood of others on their heads?

That this sentiment may not be reckoned invidious, and that what is to follow may be guarded against misconstruction, I would observe, here, that by the society of wicked men, I mean not a kind and friendly communication with them, a courteous demeanor towards them, or a respectful attention to them, which is all necessary and proper; but, only such a connection as immediately implies, or is necessarily attended with a fellowship in their crimes. Having premised this, I proceed to a further consideration of the subject.

The clue which the Psalmist affords, leads us directly to consider, in the first place, the various steps by which men ascend to eminence, or more properly speaking, sink to infamy in vice. And,

2dly. The danger with which the company of such is attended. These two considerations will occupy the present discourse. To each of these, I will speak a little in order, and then conclude with some short improvement.

In the first place, then, the various steps by which men advance to a confirmed, and almost hopeless state of wickedness, are designated in the text, not only in their most natural order, but in the most striking manner of expression. The wicked man is introduced in the beginning of his career and pursued to the end of it. First, he "walketh in the counsels of the ungodly." He yields to their solicitations, and for want of reflection advances in their way. We are then led to behold him standing in the way of sinners. He not only doth not forsake their company, but seemeth deliberately to choose; or, perhaps from his posture, to be watching for it.

At last we find him seated in the scorner's chair ; not only in the highest possible degree of guilt, but with a determined resolution to keep possession. So easy and so sudden is preferment in vice !

It is a common observation, and one that is generally admitted, that no man becomes very wicked all at once. Together with the native deformity of vice, the force of early education, and the universal authority of conscience, there are many barriers which must be broken through, before he can enter fully into the practice of iniquity, and make great proficiency in it. We may add to this, that the world at large seemeth to agree with the voice of reason and revelation, in condemning a wicked and abandoned character. As long as the influence of these remains, the effect is a comparatively regular and harmless life. I do not say, that any, or all of these considerations together, will be sufficient to produce a love of virtue ; but, they will certainly avail to prevent any great deviation from it in practice. If they do not render true religion amiable, at least they spread an awful glory round it. They impress such a sense of its majesty and excellence, as makes the young practitioner of vice to stand in awe, extorts his respect at least, and we would think, should forever defend it against contempt and scorn, the very last degree of human guilt. But, though men enter cautiously on a course of sin, they seldom stop short of the scorner's chair. A wretched station this, which none but men can fill ! The Devils believe, and tremble ; profligate men believe and sneer.

Wherever this takes place, however, it is never at the entrance, but always at the conclusion of a

wicked course. The counsel of the ungodly, and the solicitations of greater proficient, prepare the way. These draw the young and unwary, insensibly into the snare, which they have laid for youthful virtue. They insinuate themselves into their favour and confidence ; they expatiate on the pleasures of sin, and have already learned to call every religious scruple a childish weakness. All these things co-operating with the inherent corruption with which human nature is imbued, too often prove a powerful temptation, and engage the unpractised youth to listen to the counsel of ungodly men, and to walk in it.

This first step being taken, necessity impels him to advance. When innocence is gone, conscious shame takes place. He shuns the company of his sober friends whom he has deserted. He fears an interview, because he deserves rebuke. He stands aloof from those by whose remonstrances and entreaties he might be reclaimed, while his conscience was yet tender and his heart susceptible of good impressions. He adheres to his new companions, as the only refuge from the consciousness of guilt, and the uneasiness of remorse. Timid and cautious at first, it now becomes his interest to give a loose to licentiousness, in mirth and wine ; to stand in the way of sinners, that their company and counsels may bear him up against the rebukes of conscience, and divert the gloomy reflections of a wounded mind.

But, not to dwell longer on these intermediate steps, experience has shown, that the sad propensity to vice becomes strengthened and confirmed by indulgence in a profligate course of life. It is a great unhappiness, that, while guilt is increased, the heart

is hardened. The conscience becomes seared, and leaves us at liberty to persevere in a course of sin without remorse or controul. The transition now is short and easy. Free from those restraints which religion imposes; free from those qualms of conscience, and those little religious scruples which restrain the liberty and destroy the peace of weak and timid minds, with all the unfeeling majesty of triumphant guilt, we take possession of the scorner's chair. We laugh in our turn, at those doughty fears which once appalled us, and keep the vulgar multitude in awe. We make a mock of sin. We bestow upon the Bible all the sprightly epithets, which malice has invented, and ignorance proclaimed. We despise the ordinances of the Gospel; we ridicule those that attend them, and call them mighty good. With malignant wonder, we behold, and with sullen pride, disdain, the weakness of our fathers and religious friends, who make a conscience of their duty to God and have a reverence for religion. We could wish them more polite accomplishments; that they were a little acquainted with the world, and were more agreeable companions. And, with respect to all others, with whom we are happily not connected, we call them fools, fanatics, hypocrites; or, if we would reproach them still more, we call them Saints. If instances of this were wanting, what has been said might be considered as a fictitious rant. But, alas! allowing for what may be inaccurate in the picture, there can be no doubt of the original from whence it is drawn. Attend to the conversation of such as call themselves men of the world, upon this subject, and, what is it else? If religion be indeed a weak-

ness, we certainly live in an age of no little refinement.

But if, on the other hand, religion be not a weakness; but the glory and ornament of man; and of that vast importance to our future welfare, of which we are told it is, then, to be sure, the conduct of such must be reprehensible in itself, and destructive in its consequences. Their example is unworthy of imitation; nor is their company safe. This is what I proposed to consider, under the second head of discourse.

The proposition is, that the wicked courses of ungodly men are not only fatal to themselves, but very pernicious to others, who, in the language of the text, stand in their way. This will appear from two considerations: First, the immediate influence of their example; and, secondly, the various advantages for a religious life, of which their fellowship deprives us.

Mankind, in general, are exceedingly prone to imitation. There is a contagion in example, with which we become infected, ere we are aware.—Universal experience and observation have confirmed this truth, that by degrees we insensibly imbibe the principles, and are assimilated to the manners of those with whom we associate.

The irreligious lives of wicked men are too consonant to the inherent depravity of human nature, not to prove a very alluring bait. And, though the habits of a virtuous education, like habits of every kind, are strong; yet, they are not an impregnable fortress, unless they are confirmed by a renovation of the heart. They yield to the solicitations of

guilt, and fall an easy prey to the power of temptations. Let us suppose a youth, then, just dismissed from the care of pious parents, and entering on the theatre of life, to act his part. On the very stating of this case, we feel ourselves interested in his welfare, and apprehensive, particularly on account of his virtue. We are very sensible of the great jeopardy in which it stands, from an ensnaring world; and secretly wish, that God would be pleased to preserve him from the society and stratagems of wicked men. If, as I have stated, the parents of the youth have true religion, or a reverence for it, the father or mother will hold to him, at parting, in substance, the following discourse: "My son, you are now about to leave us, and act for yourself. We doubt not, but that by industry and prudence in your calling, you will make a livelihood. But, we shall be particularly glad to hear that you behave well. Be religious, my son, and God will bless you. Keep company with religious people; they will prove your truest friends; they will assist you with their advice, and they will have a tender care of your morals. But, O! beware of wicked company. They will endeavour to draw you in; and, if you join with them, they will certainly work your ruin. If you would be a comfort to your parents in their old age, and to all your religious friends, let us never hear that you keep company with the profligate and impious." This, or language like it, will be their last affectionate charge to their beloved child. Such, also, was the wholesome counsel of the wise man: "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not."

Let us now add to the immediate influence of bad examples, the loss to be sustained by associating with wicked men, as to opportunities of improvement in religion. There is something in the reasonableness of religion, which teaches us to adore our Maker and love our benefactor; and, more especially, in its necessary connection both with our present and our future peace, which should entitle it to the respect, and recommend it to the choice of every reflecting mind. To aid us in the attainment of this religion, or in progress in it, several directions are given us in Scripture, which are intended, amongst other things, for the rule of life. Two of them will be sufficient for my present purpose, and, therefore, I shall not mention more: One of them is secret retirement, and the other is the company of godly men. We are directed to commune with our own hearts; and the Psalmist, to secure and crown his religious attainments, concludes his resolution in these words: "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy law." And, great are the advantages of such associations. They assist, encourage, and support one another. They bear each other's burdens, assist their good resolutions, relieve their doubts, encourage their hopes, dissipate their fears; they assist the weak, and cheer the disconsolate. Now, these are great and special advantages, of which the society of wicked men effectually deprives us. If we go with them, we have no time, and but little inclination for serious reflection. We must give up the means of grace for those of sensual gratifications. We must employ our time and talents to the service of sin,

instead of the service of God. We hear nothing that savours of religion, from the scorner's chair. If it be mentioned, it is only in contempt or ridicule. If we walk in the counsel of the ungodly, we hear no good advice : if we stand in the way of sinners, evil overtakes us ; and, the seat of the scornful is the station of death.

SERMON XXX.

THE RESURRECTION.

“And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will raise up us, also, by his own power.”

1st Corinthians, 6th chap. 14th verse.

ALTHOUGH it is sufficiently evident, that man, as a rational creature, will also be accountable for his actions, and there is something implanted within him, which shrinks back with horror at the thoughts of a dissolution, which painfully forebodes a future judgment, and intimates an eternity to come ; yet, the consideration of the mortality of man, the separation of his soul and body, and the dissolution of the latter into dust and ashes, have occasioned some objections against the doctrine of Immortality ; since, according to the present state of things, it must depend upon the Resurrection of the body. The Immortality

of the soul, indeed, is not affected even by death; for, as far as we can see, it does not deprive it of any of the properties of an immaterial, thinking substance. But, a very material alteration takes place in the body; and the Resurrection of it from the grave after being dissolved into dust, does not, indeed, appear to be evident, upon the bare light of reason or nature; for, we do not see in nature any such similitude as dust and ashes rising into life. This difficulty has given occasion to many curious speculations, as to what is the man. They who would support the doctrine of Immortality and a future judgment, from the original intimations of nature; or, in other words, from what passes in our own breast; in order to get over the difficulties which the dissolution of the body throws in their way, have endeavoured to prove that the soul only is the man. They allow, that human nature is composed of soul and body; that this soul is of two kinds, sensitive and rational; and contend that the latter only survives the common wreck of nature, and lives beyond the grave. But, though their apprehensions of futurity be founded in nature, so much I think cannot be said for the manner in which they attempt to support them, by endeavouring to rid their doctrine of the difficulties which death occasions, in which nature's most sanguine hopes are blasted; for, it does not seem a very reasonable and satisfactory conclusion, that simple thought should make the individual, in a future state, which in this is composed of body, sensation and thought. Others again, because the Resurrection of the body cannot be ascertained by clear and undeniable intimations of nature, as they suppose,

and which I am willing to allow to be the case, have denied that there is any hereafter, and disbelieve the assurances that are given us in Scripture, of the resurrection of the body; because, they contend, that it contradicts the original law of our nature. We shall consider, presently, the force of this argument. The truth is, the original and universal voice of nature is, that man is designed to be immortal, though nature cannot get over the difficulties that are occasioned by the dissolution of the body, nor tell how to preserve, for a future state, those very individuals which we see evidently destroyed by death. The question, then, is, are not the Scriptures founded upon the original law of our nature; or, can we suppose that the all-wise Creator made nature at first imperfect, and found it necessary, upon experience, to amend his plan? There is no doubt, that all things came perfect from the hand of God; and the obscurity of the light of nature must be attributed to another cause. This cause is death; and, as death is certainly a breach upon the state of nature, it is no wonder it should be a difficulty in the religion of nature; for, the religion of nature was most certainly adapted to the original state of nature.

The wise man tells us, "That God made not death: for, he created all things that they might have their being, and the generations of the world were healthful, and there is no poison of destruction in them, nor the kingdom of death upon earth: for, righteousness is immortal; but, ungodly men with their works and words call it unto them." If, then, immortality were the condition of the crea-

tion, and death came in as a surprise upon nature, it is no wonder if she stands silent and astonished at the fatal change, and seems neither willing to part with her hopes of immortality, nor yet quite able to support them. Thus, it is evident, that the coming in of death obscured the original light of nature, and made a revelation necessary to supply the defects of nature; and with great propriety, indeed, may it be said, that life and immortality have been brought to light by the Gospel. So far, then, is this from being an argument against revelation, that every candid person must allow it to be an argument in its favour; and, instead of cavilling against it, we should rather adore the goodness of God in giving us a sure and lively hope that we shall never die.

There is nothing better calculated to support the spirit, under all the trying vicissitudes of human life, and defend us against the natural fears of death, than the blessed hope that is given us in the text of a resurrection from the grave. Death, in itself, is a great enemy to human nature, in as much as it puts an end to all our enjoyments, and dissolves that tender and intimate connexion that subsists between the soul and body, the nearest and the best of friends. There is implanted in the heart of man, a natural desire of happiness: and if, after a few years, a final end was to be put to our existence, and we were to sink into our primeval nothing, it would cast a melancholy gloom on our most pleasing prospects: the apprehensions of a dissolution would mar all our enjoyments; and, through the fear of death, we should, indeed, be all our life subject to bondage. But, blessed be God! he has given our

souls a lively hope, that they shall never die; and, though our bodies be consigned to the dust, we have yet the fullest assurance that they, also, shall rise again: "For," says the text, "God hath both raised up the Lord, and will raise up us, also, by his own power."

In the further prosecution of these words, I shall consider a little more fully, these two propositions in order to shew:

1st. That God hath actually raised up the Lord.
2dly. In consequence of this, that he will raise up us, also.

In the first place, then, we are to consider the resurrection of our blessed Lord. As this is a great and important event on which the Christian's hope relies, (for, if Christ be not risen, his hope is vain,) so it is an event which, to the wicked, is big with terror and dismay. The interests of the two are widely different; the hopes of the one are supported, and the hopes of the other are totally blasted, by the resurrection of Christ. Accordingly, the enemies of religion have summoned up all their malice to confute the arguments and proofs that are to be produced in its support: but, being driven from this resource, they have taken shelter in the most unpardonable obstinacy, and shut their eyes against the clearest light of reason and revelation. They pretend to despise the arguments which they cannot refute, and unreasonably contend, that the resurrection of the dead is a thing in itself impossible; and, therefore, that no arguments in its favour, however plausible, deserve any serious consideration. They endeavour to repel the truth, by refusing to see it,

lest it should disturb their dangerous security, and are just like little children, who shut their eyes lest you should see them.

It would be an endless task to examine all the arguments, that are to be found on this important subject. A few of the most direct proofs, drawn from the word of God, I suppose would be sufficient for my present purpose; but, as infidelity has now become a fashionable vice, and many of our youth, especially, are so unhappy as to esteem it a mark of politeness and refined wit to cavil against the Scriptures and dispute their truth, I shall first beg leave, for a moment, to enter the lists with such, upon their own ground, and try if it will not appear, from reason itself, of which they boast so much, independently of revelation, that the resurrection of the dead, however extraordinary, is a thing in itself by no means impossible.

If, then, we attend to the voice of reason only, we must acknowledge, that before we pronounce peremptorily on the possibility or impossibility of any thing whatever, we are to take into consideration, not only the difficulty of the thing itself, but the power of him whom we expect to accomplish it. The resurrection of the dead, it must be granted, is a great and extraordinary act of power. When the breath is once departed, not all the charms of medicine, nor strength of man, are able to restore it. Noah and Abraham, and all the ancient Patriarchs, have long mouldered in the dust, and are still the prisoners of the grave; and, should we endeavour to restore a dead man to life, we, indeed, should judge but weakly of the extent of our abilities.

With man, indeed; weak, feeble man, this is impossible; but, with God, all things are possible; for, surely we are not to scan the power of Omnipotence by our own weakness and infirmity. Herein do we err, not knowing the Scriptures and the power of God: for, that Almighty voice which once sounded into the dark caverns of the grave, and said, "Lazarus, come forth," need only say, the dead man sleepeth, and awake him from his slumbers.

They who would thus restrict the power of God, would make him to be altogether such an one, as themselves. And, as well might children say, it is impossible for man to raise a house, because their own strength is unequal to the task, as for men to pronounce it impossible for God to raise the temple of our Saviour's body, because it surpasses the utmost stretch of their abilities.

But, to come nearer to the point: Let those who thus dispute the power of God, or rather measure by their own, for once make trial of their strength in the works of a creation. Let them stretch out new Heavens as a curtain; let them make the clouds their chariot and ride upon the stormy winds; let them lay foundations for their earth, and appoint a place in its bosom for the deep; then let them summon up their magazines of fire and storm, to form the artillery of their skies. Does their strength fail them for this? And, are not these the works of God, and marvellous in our eyes? These are not matters of empty speculation; they are notorious facts which all nature proclaims aloud. The unwearied sun from day to day, shews that the hand which made him is Divine, and publishes his Ma-

ker's praise through every land, in a language which every nation, tongue and kindred understand. And, should he see proper again to destroy these works of his creation, might we not say, with equal propriety, that that Almighty power which only spake and it was done, which but commanded and it stood fast, was not able to repair their ruins? And, do not men argue with as little reason, when they daringly set bounds to Omnipotence in the resurrection of the dead, and pronounce it impossible for God to effect?

Once more: All men, (a few excepted who are called Atheists, and whom it is not my province at present to consider,) allow themselves to be the work of God. And, is not this, if properly considered, a sufficient acknowledgment that he has power to raise the dead? For, surely it does not require a greater exertion of power to make a dead body live again, than it required at first to fashion it out of clay, and breathe into it the breath of life.

Having thus endeavoured to remove this objection of the impossibility of raising the dead, let us now see, if we have not sufficient proofs in Scripture, that God hath actually raised up our Lord.

The death of our Saviour is the first thing in point of order, which I should have to prove; but, this men are ever ready enough to allow. But, did they deny it, we could produce a cloud of witnesses who were spectators of the horrid scene, when he hung upon the tree; who saw him bow his sacred head, when he cried, "It is finished," and gave up the ghost. Die, then, he certainly did; but, he rose again. He died that we might live, and rose again to bring back the pardon which he purchased

with his blood. The ascension of our Lord from the grave, comes now to be a matter of fact; for, we can produce enough of witnesses who saw him, conversed with him, and handled him after he had risen. God so ordered it in wisdom, that he was put in a new sepulchre in which no man had lain, that we might have the fullest assurance that it was he who was to save Israel, and not another; and to baffle the cunning and subtlety of his enemies, who otherwise would have contended, that it was some other that was removed out of the sepulchre, and not that despised Nazarene, who three days before expired as a malefactor on the accursed tree. But, there was no other in the tomb: it was the same Jesus who arose, that his followers might be able to give an account of the hope that is in them, and know assuredly in whom they trusted. Now, for the proof of this, let us examine the testimony of Mary Magdalen, and Mary the mother of James and Joses. When Joseph of Arimathea, who was also a disciple of Jesus, had obtained his dead body of Pilate, and brought it to the sepulchre, they were sitting over against it and saw the interment of the Lord of Glory. And, in the end of the Sabbath, towards the first day of the week, Mary Magdalen and the other Mary went to see the tomb, and behold, there was a great earthquake; "for, the Angel of the Lord descended from Heaven, and rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and sat upon it. And, for fear of him, the keepers did shake and became as dead men. But, the Angel said to the women, fear not ye, for I know that you seek Jesus which was crucified; but he is not here, for he is risen."

And, as they departed quickly from the sepulchre, with fear and great joy, to tell it to the disciples, behold, Jesus met them: And, that they might be certain it was not an apparition only, they caught him by the feet, and then they worshipped him. Next, he appeared to the eleven disciples on a mountain in Galilee, where he had appointed to meet them before he died; and, there they saw, and there they worshipped their living Lord.

The same testimony is also recorded in the Gospel according to St. Mark and Luke; but, as I have not time to examine them all, I shall only further offer you the testimony that is given by John, which, in some things, is a little more particular. He also informs us of our Saviour's appearing to Mary, as he turned from the sepulchre, and afterwards to the disciples. It seems they did not, as yet, fully understand the Scriptures, about his rising again. They, therefore, knew not how to believe so extraordinary an event, upon the testimony of Mary, who first was favoured with the vision of her Lord. Thomas in particular was hard of belief, and said, "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." Here, then, we have abundant scope for the full proof of the reality of his resurrection; and, he who is satisfied in these particulars, surely cannot doubt. Have we, then, these proofs? Yes: In eight days afterwards, Thomas and the rest of the disciples were all together. Jesus came and stood in the midst of them, and said, "Peace be unto you." And, to Thomas he said in particular;

“Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side, and be no longer faithless, but believing.” The incredulous Thomas then was satisfied; his faith was fully established, and he answered and said, “My Lord and my God.”

Thus, then, the resurrection of Christ appears to be a matter of fact; and, however wicked men may argue speculatively against it, yet on this rock we may venture to build our hopes, and the very gates of Hell shall not be able to prevail against them. The ascension of our Lord from the grave, is well confirmed by the plainest testimony.

When we see a man walking before us, when we hear him conversing, and observe him performing the usual offices of life, we must certainly believe the testimony of our senses, and can no more doubt whether he is alive or not, than his enemies could doubt whether he was dead or not, when he had given up the ghost; and, we are at no more loss to determine this point, than whether those we see and converse with every day, are alive. As for us, indeed, we have not the same kind of testimony; but we have it confirmed by the same kind of evidence upon which we know and believe most things in the world, which come under our direct knowledge. Thomas had sufficient reason to believe our Lord's resurrection before he saw him; for, he had it confirmed to him by the rest of his disciples, as well as by Mary; and, our Saviour's reply to him on that occasion, is well worthy our most serious consideration. “Because thou hast seen me, Thomas,” says

he, "thou believest; but, blessed are they who, though they have not seen, yet have believed."

Now, you will please to lay all these considerations together, and add to them the promises of God, to give us life; his ability to perform his word, and the confirmation of our hopes by the resurrection of our Lord; and I see not, what further is necessary to make this an article of our rational belief.

I proceed, now, to the second thing which I proposed, which was to shew you, in consequence of this, that God will raise up us, also, by his own power; or, in other words, that our hopes of a resurrection are well supported by the resurrection of our Lord.

Although the death and sufferings of Christ were a sufficient atonement for the sins of the world, and his blood of sufficient efficacy to wash away the deepest stains, yet his resurrection was absolutely necessary to establish our faith, by which only, his sufferings and obedience could be imputed to us for righteousness. In the time of our Saviour's abode upon earth, we find it was a dispute whether he was Moses or Elias, or one of the Prophets; and, his dying a violent death by the hands of men, after a life of the most perfect innocence, and teaching the great duties of religion and morality, was common to him, with others before him, from the days of righteous Abel to the Holy Prophets, who were also raised up to be shining lights in the world. Yet, the blood of Abel and the Prophets, speaks not the language of peace and reconciliation, but calls for vengeance on an unrighteous world. Had our Lord, then, died like one of them, and never been heard

of any more, we should not have had whereon to build our faith, nor have known that he was the true Messiah, who was to save Israel, and to give repentance and remission of sins: But, when, like a glorious conqueror, he rose in triumph from the grave, and declared peace and pardon to the world, then did we know assuredly, in whom we trusted, and that he was of a truth, the Son of God.

The most incredulous and inveterate of his enemies only desired, that he would come down from the cross, and they would believe him. It was necessary for him to die, that we might live. This was the errand that brought him to the earth; and, therefore, he did not come down from the cross. But, he did what is far more a proof of his power; he rose from the strong hold of the grave. "Thus," as the Apostle expresses it, "he was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." His resurrection, then, though not the efficient cause of our justification before God, is yet absolutely necessary to establish our faith, by which only we could be justified in his sight. This is the sure sheet-anchor of the soul, on which our everlasting happiness depends: for, if the Lord be not risen, my preaching is vain, and your faith, also, is vain; we are yet in our sins. Unless he rose to confirm the doctrines which he had preached, we should not have known that he was the Great Teacher; and unless he returned to bring back the pardon he had purchased by his death, we should have had no confirmation that the great atonement he offered on the Cross, had been accepted of God.

It was glad tidings of great joy that the Angel of the Lord brought to the world, when he proclaimed to the Shepherds, "Unto you is born this day, in the city of Bethlehem, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." And old Simeon rejoiced when he saw the babe and clasped his salvation in his arms. But, when he fell a victim to the rage and malice of his enemies, and was put to the most excruciating torments under which he also expired, in that doleful day the hopes of men were blasted; the disciples were disconsolate, and Mary wept: their hopes all fell with their expiring Lord, and were buried with him in the tomb. All nature mourned when the God of nature suffered. The Sun, unable to endure the moving scene, veiled his face in midnight darkness: the Earth did quake, and the very rocks were rent, and many bodies of the Saints who had slept in hope, felt the shock and rose from their graves, as if conscious that their everlasting happiness was then in suspense. O! my brethren, had he still remained a prisoner of the grave, we had now been hopeless: we might now join in the lamentations of Mary, weeping for her Lord, and enquiring where they had laid him. Instead of contemplating the glories of his resurrection, I might this day invite you to the funeral of the Lord of Glory. But, let me raise your thoughts to brighter objects. Hallelujah! Your Lord is risen; he conquered when he fell, and rose again; and, he rose not only from the grave, but ascended up to God in triumph, and took his seat on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Many were present when he was taken up, and

gazed in raptures on their ascending Lord, till a cloud intercepted him from their view.

And, as our Lord is risen, so shall we, also, rise again. Our blessed Saviour, to whom all power is given, will come again the second time, to raise up all his Saints. "This is the will," says he, "of him that sent me, that every one who seeth the Son and believeth on him may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day." And, before he was taken up, he promised, he pledged himself to his disciples, that he would come again and receive them to himself, that "where he was, there they should be also." Supported by this hope, the Apostle Paul was made superior to the fear of death, and was willing to endure affliction for the sake of Christ, having respect, withal, to the recompense of reward which God, who cannot lie, hath promised. In order to prevent immoderate sorrow for the dead, he says in his epistle to the Thessalonians, "I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as others, which have no hope: for, if you believe that Christ died and rose again, even so, them also which are asleep in Jesus, will God bring with him." Under the prospect of a glorious resurrection, one might even dare to die, looking forward to the second coming of our blessed Saviour, knowing, that when Christ, who is our life, shall come, we, also, shall appear with him in glory: when this corruptible body shall put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality: when, also, shall be fulfilled that saying, "that death is swallowed up of victory."

CHRISTIAN HEROISM.



A SERMON

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH

OF THE

REV. JOHN D. BLAIR,

DELIVERED BY THE REV. JOHN BLAIR HOGE,

In the Presbyterian Church, Shockœ-Hill, Jan. 1823.



*“ For I am now ready to be offered, and the time
of my departure is at hand.”*

II. Timothy, 4th chap. 6th verse.

THE venerable Paul was now, the second time, a prisoner at Rome. He had already travelled far in the pilgrimage of life. There was little ground for the hope, that he could escape the unsparing persecution which, instigated by the bloody Nero, was now raging against the Christian cause. Nor is it unreasonable to conjecture, that he had been Divinely admonished, that he should soon exchange a mortal, for an immortal life.

With this event distinctly in his view, he sets down to write an affectionate letter to his beloved son Timothy. Doubtless, he will now pour out all his

heart. If a mask had heretofore hidden from the world his true character, he will now lay it aside, and disclose his genuine feelings. If the ardour of his mind had impelled him to espouse an unworthy, or a doubtful cause, the damps of his prison will now have chilled his blood and frozen him into prudence; and he will endeavour to arrest his young friend in a course which had proved so disastrous to himself; or, if embarked in a good cause, he had been transported by the extravagance of his zeal, into dangers which it became him to avoid, he will erect his own experience as a beacon for the warning of one whom he tenderly loved. But, instead of this, he animates Timothy, by the prospect of his own departure, to perseverance and to fidelity. "I charge thee, therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom: Preach the word; be instant, in season, and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine." "But, watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an Evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry." He does not lament his own hard fate, nor execrate the folly by which he had brought it on himself. Nor, does he sit down in the temper of a savage, resolved that his enemies shall see no token of yielding in his fierce and fiery spirit; but, blending together the tenderness and the dignity of the Christian character, he exclaims, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand."

Ever since his introduction into the world, Death has been the king of terrors. With instinctive ap-

prehension, mortals shrink from his presence and strive to evade his stroke. In their estimation, death is so awful, that, for the most part, they are reluctant to contemplate it, in relation to themselves. When, in the course of that reflection into which even the unthinking are sometimes led, the image of death crosses the path of their minds, they suddenly strike out some new channel for their thoughts. Death wrenches from us the possessions which we have garnered up on earth; unlocks our grasp on the hand of friendship and affection; closes our eyes on the fair scenes of this splendid creation; shuts up our senses, and removes us forever, from all the objects with which we have been familiar. A viewless, formless foe, he stands in our path, ready in an unexpected hour to dart upon his victim. Beyond him lies an untried, unexplored region, where is erected the tribunal of a Righteous Judge, who will in no wise clear the guilty. And, if there be a Heaven for those whom he approves, there is also a Hell for those whom he condemns. "Their worm dieth not, their fire is not quenched." These are some of the considerations which sharpen the sting of death, and deepen the horrors of the grave.— With all this lowering upon him, is it strange that a sinful mortal should shudder at death? Rather, is it not strange, that any should fail to shudder? And yet, there are some who seem to meet death without alarm. Ignorant of his own character, and of his relations to God, his Maker, and reckless of the prospect before him, a man may die without fear, because he will not permit himself to think. Perverted by scepticism or unbelief, he may have toil-

ed so earnestly to persuade himself that he has nothing to dread beyond the grave, that God may have given him up to his own strong delusion. Accomplished in the dreadful work of hardening his own heart and searing his own conscience, God may have consigned him, judicially, to that indifference which he has coveted; and, he may pass untroubled through his last hour, because no visitation of mercy comes to give movement to his fears. He, whose native timidity made him tremble when his eye met the grave, may, by some strong excitement, be lifted above his fears. Glowing with patriotic ardour, or panting to have his brows encircled with the chaplet of fame, or driven by some other powerful impulse, the warrior may advance courageously to meet the array of death on the plain of battle.— Apart from all external stimulus, a man may have such tension of nerve, and such daring of character, that the prospect of death will not shake his natural fortitude. All this may be true; and, still to mankind in general, death may be inexpressibly awful. But, where is the heroism evinced in all this? Is it a proof of heroism for a mortal to die, trifling with all that is venerable and holy; unthinking, indifferent and asleep, when the mental eye should turn all its power of vision on the future, and when his own eternal destiny trembles in the scales of an irreversible decision? Then, the pilot is a hero, who, warned of the breakers that are in his course, remains supine, until the shock is felt which wrecks his vessel. If the sceptic be true to his professions, he cannot be afraid of death, and can exhibit no heroism on its approach. And yet, even he has

been known to tremble, when a solitary speck arose to obscure the horizon of life. It is no certain proof of courage, or contempt of death, when he is voluntarily encountered on the field of blood. Thousands who have braved him at the cannon's mouth, have afterwards trembled to meet him in retirement. What, I pray you, is the moral value of that animal courage, which depends on nerves too insensible to be shaken, or on blood too sluggish to be accelerated through its accustomed channel? But, enough of this. We all must die. The sentence has gone forth, and we cannot be reprieved from its execution. We are all naturally afraid of death. We want something that can reconcile us to this event, and support us under this shock; something that can solace the aged and cheer the young; something that can add a Heavenly charm to natural fortitude, and transform timidity into calmness and confidence; something that can adapt itself to the peculiar state of each, and tender substantial comfort to every mortal in that fearful hour, when, for the most part, consolation yields to despair. Where shall we seek that moral heroism which can achieve this victory over man's last foe, and adorn with the badge of triumph him, who, though he falls beneath resistless power, yet falls with such dignity and grandeur, that he sinks from the view of mortals in a blaze of Glory? Where? In the religion of Jesus Christ; that religion which lived in the heart, breathed in the thoughts, glowed in the words and shone in the life of the heroic Paul; and, which enabled him to exclaim, not only with submission,

but with triumph, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand."

This declaration was not the offspring of a sudden impulse, or a late attainment. Thirty years had now elapsed since Paul had surrendered his hostility to the Cross, and had become a Christian and an Apostle. Previous to this time, he had a desire to depart and to be with Christ; and his whole deportment evinced, that he was triumphant over the fear of death. We, it is true, are not called to be Apostles, or to encounter the difficulties which opposed his course: but, we are required to be Christians; and, it is our privilege, as it was his, to derive from the all-sufficient grace of God, preparation to say, each one for himself, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for, thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they shall comfort me." Multitudes, "who, through fear of death, have been all their life-time subject to bondage," have been emancipated from it by that Grace to which Paul ascribed his victory; the world has faded from their sight; Heaven has opened to their eyes; and, out-flying in their desires the rapid wheels of time, they have pressed forward to that verge, from which millions recoil, and joyfully throw themselves into eternity. Charge not this experience with enthusiasm. What can be more reasonable, than that the soul, leavened with the truth, and cast into the mould of the Gospel, should serenely, and even exultingly follow through the grave, the Redeeming Messenger, who beckons it to the skies, where angelic spirits sweep

their harps and sweetly sing, "Sister spirit, come away."

But, we have not yet done justice to the heroism of Paul. He knew that the time of his departure was at hand. And, he was not ignorant of the steep and rugged path which he was about to scale. The last agony, unsoothed by a single opiate, was to be encountered, not in the bosom of a peaceful home, nor environed by sympathising friends, but on a scaffold, reeking with the blood that had flowed in Christian veins. He resigned himself to death, not when it should become inevitable, when nature had worn herself out, or when disease had quenched the fountain of life; but, to a voluntary and a violent death, which he might have averted by proving recreant from his faith, and forswearing his allegiance to his Heavenly Master.

From this peaceful era of the Christian Church, when the Gospel of Christ has accomplished an astonishing revolution in the sentiments and feelings and practice of men, from sympathy in which, even they are not excluded, who neither entertain its doctrines, nor obey its precepts, we look back with horror on the past trials of the Church; and with admiration on the fidelity of those of her members who "loved not their lives unto death," we read the history of the martyr; we dwell with indignation on the story of his wrongs. Applauding his unbending integrity, we follow him to the desecrated spot, where the sacrifice of his blood is to be consummated. There, we gaze on his transfigured countenance, and mark the fire of confidence that gleams in his eye: we see the Heavens cleaving above him,

and the portals of his celestial mansion unfolding to welcome him : and as he falls beneath the axe, we cover him with that glory, which now, invests the cause in which he bled. What would be the result, if the ban of proscription, were once more published ; if the arm of persecution were once more bared ; if the trial were once more instituted, whether professing Christians, love most, their lives, or their Christian honour, and the Glory of that Saviour, who, for them endured the Cross? Mark those inglorious desertions ! See how the columns of the Christian host are melting away ! Many are found unable to endure this baptism, who had said in the hour of security, Lord, we are ready to go with thee to prison, to judgment, and even to thy Cross. But, if it would be difficult to pass this ordeal now, when the sympathies of the Church and the world, have prepared for the sufferer, a bed of roses, and a Crown of triumph, what must it have been, when, on the immolation of a solitary and an excoriated victim, the orgies of the rabble were echoed from the imperial throne? Yet, under these appalling circumstances the Apostle declared, that he was "ready to be offered;" willing to be poured out, as a libation on the altar of God. "Blessed man, indeed ; who could look upon the pouring forth of his blood, as the libation of a sacrifice, of thanksgiving, on which he could call for the congratulations of his friends, rather than their condolence ; who could loosen from these mortal shores, and set sail for eternity with a shout." * Here was true heroism !

* Doddridge.

Soon after this period, Paul suffered at Rome, the martyrdom which he anticipated. "He counted not his life dear, that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the Grace of God." This was, doubtless, indisputable proof of his sincerity, which in its turn, demonstrates the divinity of the Christian religion. An individual may, indeed, be so wedded to an erroneous creed, that no terrors can divorce him from it: but Paul was a martyr, not only of the opinions, which he avowed, but of the facts which he professed to be a witness, and in relation to which, he could not be mistaken. If, then, Paul was sincere, the facts which he reported, and the doctrines which he published were true; and if they were true, the religion of Christ is divine; and if the religion of Christ be divine, here is the rock on which we may securely build our confidence for eternity, and which the billows of death can never shake.

But, what is there of mystery in the heroism which Paul exhibited? The Grace of God was adequate to sustain him. He who abases the proud and elevates the humble, could easily transform, even a trembling, to a triumphant faith. And to him, when exulting over death and the grave, Paul carried the ascription of praise, "Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Still we are able to render a reason of the confidence that was in him. It is reflection on the past, or apprehension for the future, that gives death his utmost power to agitate the bosom of a mortal. But, standing on the margin of both worlds, whether he turned his eye backward or forward, Paul saw

nothing, but what was calculated to assure, and to animate him.

In the retrospect of his life, he perceived nothing that could render death terrible. True, he had once been without God in the world; he had reviled and persecuted Christ and his cause; he had waged war with the most precious interests of Earth and Heaven: but, when convinced of his error, he had renounced it; his sins were washed away in the blood of expiation; he had become a new creature; a Holy influence now pervaded his character and directed his conduct; he maintained a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man: not having yet attained, he was pressing "towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Impeded by no difficulties and dismayed by no opposition, he made his career progressive to the end. To his efforts as a Christian, were added his unparralleled toils and sufferings as an Apostle: and in reference to both, he had adhered to the truth and preserved his fidelity inviolate. This, indeed, was not the ground of his confidence. He who had taught that "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid," well knew that Christ was his only foundation: but a re-view of his past life, brought to him the evidence, that he had built on this solid basis, and not on the sand. He had therefore no reason to fear, for he could say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course; I have kept the faith."

Guided by the light of Divine Revelation, he could explore the invisible world, and anticipate the events, in reserve for him there. He beheld an august tribunal

and an Omniscient Judge. He saw the smoke of Tophet, ascending up for ever and ever. But he knew, that the Christian character, which had been graciously conferred upon him, would evince his interest in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ; he could regard even the Judge as his friend; and he felt assured that the rectitude of the Divine Government would forbid his perdition. He knew, therefore, that when his "Earthly house of this tabernacle should be dissolved, he had a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens." Why should he be afraid of death, who could say, "Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me in that day."

Thrice happy mortal! standing on the confines of the grave, the recollection of the past planted no thorns in his conscience; and the anticipation of the future, cast no dimness over that crown of glory, which he was soon to wear and to wear forever. To this happiness we may all aspire. We may not resemble him in all the high qualities by which he was distinguished; but we may be partakers of the joy, which chased away all sadness from his last hour; and in those rewards of Grace in which he now exults. Let us imitate his example. Choosing that good part which he chose, let us cleave to it as an invaluable possession. Let us run with patience the race set before us. Let us fight the good fight, finish our course, keep the faith, in imitation of his example, and for us there shall be "laid up a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give us in that day; and, not to us only,

but to all who love his appearing." And when summoned to leave the world, we may accommodate to our own condition the dignified exclamation, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand."

From the martyrdom of the Apostle, let us now turn to contemplate the death of a minister of the Gospel, who has been recently translated from this Church, we trust, to the General Assembly of the Church of the First-born, which are written in Heaven. This event should not be permitted to mingle, unheeded, with the croud of incidents that make up the history of our lives. I see many by whom it will not be forgotten. But, the most affectionate remembrance of this bereavement is not enough. A dispensation so signal, of the Providence of God, towards this Church, demands to be pondered: and, all its intentions in regard to us will not be fulfilled, unless we derive improvement from it. This day has been set apart for that interesting purpose; and you are now admonished to profit by his past ministry, and his recent death.

On the present occasion, a tribute is due to departed worth, which, I acknowledge my inadequacy to render. It is only within the last few years of his life, that I had the advantage of knowing your late pastor. Of that period, the last three months have furnished me the only opportunity of an intimate acquaintance with his character. During that period, I knew him only on the couch of affliction, and under the oppressions of disease. Of this season of his life, I could speak from personal observation. For his earlier history and character, I should

be indebted to others. Testimony in the highest degree respectable, and for aught I know, universal, would warrant me to say, far more in his favour, than is contemplated in the present service. Should I attempt no delineation of his character, your knowledge on that subject would supply the deficiency. And if I exhibit a diminished and imperfect portrait, you will be able to expand it to its just dimensions, and to apply to it those assimilating touches, which will render it a more perfect likeness of the original.

The Rev. John Durburrow Blair, a native of Pennsylvania, was born October, 15, 1759. The family from which he descended, has furnished the Church with several distinguished Ministers, of whom his father was one. He enjoyed the advantage of an early education at the College of Nassau Hall, in New-Jersey, then under the presidency of the venerable Dr. Witherspoon. Having graduated, while yet in his minority, he was appointed one of its tutors. President Witherspoon having been requested to recommend some one, to take charge of the Academy of Washington Henry, in Hanover, designated Mr. Blair for that service; who, accordingly came to Virginia, and entered upon the duties of the office to which he was appointed. In his youth he had made a profession of religion, and directed his views to the ministry, in preference to other pursuits, more gainful, or more honourable, in the view of the world. These views he prosecuted during his residence in Virginia. About the year 1785, he was introduced into the ministry by the Presbytery of Hanover, and inducted to the pastoral charge of the Church of Pole Green, in Hanover,

which at a former period had enjoyed the pastoral services of the Rev. Mr. Davies ; and which was one of the earliest Presbyterian establishments in Virginia. About thirty years ago, Mr. Blair removed to Richmond. Since that time, he continued, until recently, to supply the Church in Hanover, and also officiated in the Capitol in this City. In this latter service, he was, for many years, most harmoniously associated with the late Dr. Buchanan. On the completion of this Church, of which Mr. Blair may be regarded as the founder, he devoted to it his whole services, and felt the strongest interest in its prosperity. But Providence did not intend, that he should much longer bear the burden and heat of the day. And his ministry was now hastening to its close. For nearly a year, his health has been declining ; and the exhausted lamp of life at last went out. The solemnities of the last Sabbath, are yet before our eyes. We yet seem scarcely to have lost sight of that long and melancholy procession which attended his remains to this temple, and from this temple, to the cemetery, where we committed his body to the ground, "earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes." But he is not dead. He only sleeps. That body shall be reared again, and occupied by the spirit which once dwelt there, shall meet us in eternity.

I cannot here repeat all that I have been told of his worth, and of the estimation in which he was held. As an amiable and excellent man, he deserved to be esteemed. Correct in principle and uniform in deportment, he pursued through life the even tenor of his way. Covetous neither of gain nor

applause, he was contented and unambitious. Mild and conciliating, benevolent and disinterested, patient and forgiving, liberal and catholic, the sterner passions seemed to have no hold upon his character. In the domestic circle, and in general society, he was well fitted to attract affection, and to secure respect. Without ascribing to him a perfection that belongs not to mortals, and without instituting invidious comparisons between him and others, it may be safely affirmed, that his character was marked by the predominance of those qualities which constitute a high degree of moral excellence.

In preaching the Gospel, he inculcated the essential doctrines of the Christian system. In this office, he displayed a sound and well cultivated mind. He avoided in his discourses, the extremes of abstruse discussion and of empty declamation. Their object was to enlighten, to convince, to persuade; these effects they were calculated to produce. In many instances, especially, as I have been informed, in his most vigorous days, he displayed a highly impressive eloquence. But, his last sermon has been delivered; and, the results of his ministry shall be developed in eternity.

One trait of character has not been distinctly noticed, which, on the present occasion, it were unpardonable to omit. It is personal religion. Without this, the most splendid and lovely human qualities perish in the grave: with this, they become immortal; and, transferred to a nobler theatre, they shine and attract forever.

The work of final judgment belongs not to us. It were far better to examine, solicitously, our own

condition and our future prospects, than to pry into the destiny of others. As we are not bound to infer that every thing which assumes the name, is the reality of religion ; so, we are not authorised to denounce as spurious, whatever fails to accord with *our* views. It is only when our judgments are enlightened by Scriptural truth, and a knowledge of the facts in a given case, that we are safe from error.

An undue power to control the events of eternity, is often attributed to a few of the last scenes of life. Yet, these scenes are not without their interest. In some cases, a disguise which had been long worn, is at last withdrawn, or a foundation on which hope had long reposed, is unsettled. In others, a seal of confirmation is affixed to the evidences of preparation for Heaven, which the previous life had furnished. It is, therefore, natural to enquire, and it may be profitable to know, how our friends felt and acted at the close of life. This congregation is, doubtless, solicitous to know how he who was wont to admonish them to prepare for their last hour, met his own. Could I only tell you that, having long professed to be a Disciple and Minister of the Lord Jesus Christ, and having given evidence of his sincerity, this evidence remained unimpaired by the events of his last trial, this ought to be sufficient. Even the shrinking of nature from this shock, ought not to outweigh the evidences of a pious life. Far be it from me to depreciate that triumphant grace, which is often afforded to mortals in their final conflict ; but this, pre-eminently desirable as it is, is not indispensable to salvation.

On this subject I may, without impropriety, exhibit the views which your Pastor has disclosed. Instead of gathering up the fragments of repeated conversations, reference shall be made to one specific occasion; not for the purpose of finishing off his character, or making an ostentatious display, but in order that his death may be useful, as well as his life. Suffer me, then, for a moment, to rend the veil of domestic privacy, and introduce you as witnesses of a scene, which it was my privilege to witness. An affectionate father, worn down with disease, collects his afflicted children around him; and, feeling that the time of his departure is at hand, thus addresses them:

“I have little to say to you; much less than I expected, in consequence of my weakness. In the contemplation of death, you are present to my mind. To part with you will be a painful scene. My manner of life, and my doctrine, and the exhortations I have given you, you know. I have nothing new to add to these now. Your reliance for the pardon of your sins, must be on the Lord Jesus Christ. To him, alone, you must look. But, this is not enough. You must be sanctified. You were born in sin, as I was. This must be overcome; for, nothing unholy can enter the kingdom of Heaven. The grace of God alone is sufficient to sanctify you, to rectify the disorders which sin has introduced, and to implant in your hearts new principles, destroying the power and the love of sin. This grace is ever to be sought with humble, fervent, penitent hearts. In addition to this, and in consequence of this, you will find your highest delight in God, and your highest pleasure in his service.

“As for me, I have reason to believe that I was early made a subject of Divine Grace. I have not been without my faults. My aberrations were chiefly in practical religion. When I was young, I was very enthusiastic. I had the folly to think, that if they would suffer me to preach, I could convert the world. But, God was pleased to show me my insufficiency. When I began to preach, I converted nobody. I could not do it. Yet I hope that God has been pleased to make me an instrument of good to many souls. When I came to maturer years, my religion became rather a calm and settled conviction and habit, than a matter of feeling and an ebullition of love. And now, after I am gone, when it is asked, if I made any remarkable speech, you may tell them no: but, that I am not without hope and confidence. I depend on him in whom I have believed. I think I have a right to plead his promises of mercy. He has never left me, nor forsaken me; he has supported me all along, and I believe will still do so. I know that I must pass through the dark valley of the shadow of death. But, I trust I am prepared for God’s will, and that I shall be ready whenever he shall call me hence. Lord Jesus! into thy hands I commend my spirit.”

After giving some instructions respecting his funeral, and advice on other subjects, he added, “I should like once more to speak to the congregation, but I shall not be able to do that.”

In dropping the curtain around this scene, suffer me to repeat the message from his dying bed, which was announced on the day of his interment. He wished you to recall to recollection the doctrines which he had preached to you, and to be assured,

that he saw no reason to retract them. In this message, he has sent to you his last testimony of their truth and importance; and his last exhortation that you should cherish them.

This discourse shall be closed with a few remarks, in relation to his Christian views and Christian character.

The opinion is extensively current, that a good moral deportment is a sufficient preparation for death. I would not detract from the value of sound morality. But, whatever purposes it may answer here, something more may be necessary for eternity. This was the sentiment of him, whose loss we deplore. He makes no allusion to his personal merit as the ground of his confidence, although he was better entitled to do this, than multitudes, who build on this as their only foundation. Even when he speaks of his own attainments as evidences of his safety, he employs the language of humility and confession. He asserts no claim to perfection. He concedes, that as a Christian, he has not been faultless; and that he has erred in practical religion. His is the spirit, not of the Pharisee, but of the Publican. Who among us, whatever may be our attainments, could venture into eternity without a similar confession? "God resisteth the proud, but giveth Grace to the humble." Accordingly, his dependence, was not on himself, but on "Divine Grace;" on the "promises of mercy;" or the Saviour, into whose hands he commended his departing spirit. This is the only foundation for one who feels himself to be a sinner. And, on this he must establish himself at last, as he did at first. "All else is yielding sand."

Religion, though uniform in principle, is various in its influences. There is one spirit, but a diversity of operations. In every instance it regulates the intellectual and moral and active powers of its subject; but its influence is often more manifest in one department than another. It may appear to be chiefly the reign of conviction, or affection, or action. In one case calmness, and in another triumph, is its fruit in the last period of human life. Thus, in the case before us, it seemed, according to his own account, less to excite feeling, although it could not fail to do that, than to direct the convictions of the judgment, and to influence the habits of the life. In view of death, his deportment was uniform. Habitually patient under an oppressive disease, he at no time exhibited the least symptom of alarm. His evangelic confidence did not forsake him. He even expressed his solicitude that the scene might close, and the world retire from him forever. In a sense, accommodated to his own condition, he might have said, "I am ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." As far as mortals can judge, his end was *peace*.

Let, then, the afflicted family that mourn this bereavement, while they sorrow not as those who have no hope, remember the instructions, the example and the prayers, of their head: let them trust in the God of their father, as they are taught in the Gospel; and he will be their friend and unfailing portion.

Let the congregation, whose Pastor has been removed from them, enquire how they have profited by his ministry; and prepare for the account which awaits them in the last day.

Let the Ministers of the Gospel, one of whom has been removed from his watch-tower, remember that their time is short; that their work is great; and that it becomes them to do quickly, whatever they meditate for the salvation of their fellow-men, and the Glory of their Lord and Master!