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# S E R M O N V.

*The INFLUNCES of GOD, as a SUN, the GREAT CONSO-  
LATION of his PEOPLE.*

B Y

ALEXANDER MACWHORTER, D. D.

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PSALMS lxxxiv. II.

*For the Lord God is a Sun.*

**T**HESSE words stand here, as a reason of the Psalmist's declaration in the preceding verse, *that one day spent in the house of God, that is, in an attendance on his ordinances, was better than a thousand: that he would rather hold the lowest place in God's house, and thus enjoy the privileges of his public worship, than dwell in tents of wickedness, or enjoy the utmost pleasures of sin. The reason of this preference, is resolved into this consideration, that the Lord God is a Sun.*

This view of the words in their connection, serves to shew us, wherein consists the true excellency and advantage of the instituted ordinances of divine worship; and the true reason, of the high

esteem, all good men, without exception, have of them; their great respect, and love to them; their care and diligence in attending them: *God is in them, as a Sun.*

As the natural sun, by his influences, enlightens, and revives every living thing; so God, in his ordinances, enlightens, and revives the hearts of his people: shining into their minds, and giving them the light of the knowledge of his Glory, in the person of Jesus Christ—shedding abroad his love in their hearts, and granting them *that peace, which passeth all understanding.*

But if we consider the words in a more independent view, they teach us, that God is to good men, what the sun, by its influences, is to the natural world. Who is ignorant of the high importance of the natural sun? This heavenly luminary forms our day; disperses the gloomy horrors of the night, and sheds fertility, light and joy, through every part of our system. Without it, all nature would be one frozen mass; neither life, nor vegetation, nor fruitfulness would appear.

Now, when God is represented by the beautiful and striking image of a Sun, with regard to his influences and agency, towards those who walk uprightly, who can help perceiving, how supreme, and sensible a blessing, his existence and communications are, in *their* experience, and estimate?

As the natural sun is the fountain of light; sheds joy and gladness through the animal and vegetable

kingdoms; and causes our earth to teem, with all its rich variety of fruits, so, the Sun of Righteousness, the true, and eternal God is all this, and more than this, in his communications to his people. He communicates spiritual light to their minds—infuses joy and gladness into their hearts, and renders them fruitful, in every branch of goodness.

I. God is a Sun, as he communicates *spiritual light* to his people.

There may be said to be three kinds of light—*physical—intellectual—and spiritual*—or, the light of this *world*,—the light of *reason*, and the light of the *Spirit of God*. Each of these differs from the other in its nature. There is as real a difference between intellectual, and spiritual light, as there is between intellectual, and physical, or the light of the sun. The former agree, in many more respects, than the latter; but there is no such agreement, as renders them, of the same nature and kind. This difference will farther appear in the sequel.

The natural condition of the human mind, since the fall of Adam, is a state of darkness, and blindness. When man apostatized, he lost that spiritual sense, whereby he was capable of discerning spiritual objects: the image of God forsook his heart, and so, no longer was he captivated with the beauties of holiness. The soul now remains in spiritual darkness, until the divine image, or spiritual sense be restored; which is done by the ope-

ration of the Spirit of God in the work of regeneration. This teaches us the great propriety of those scripture phrases, where natural men are represented, as *not discerning spiritual things*; as having their minds *darkened*; being *ignorant, blind and dead*.— These expressions can, by no means, be understood to mean the want of intellectual light, or the light of reason; for were we to understand them in this respect, they really carry the matter so far as to signify, that the light of reason was not only impaired, but utterly lost and extinguished: wherefore this cannot be the scripture sense. But if we understand them as expressions of the want of *spiritual light* then they are perfectly true and proper: The whole world lieth in darkness: *Having the understanding darkened; being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts.*

Spiritual light is wholly extinguished by the fall; and hence is there so much darkness, ignorance and confusion, even in speculation, with regard to divine things. That the world is full of darkness, respecting God, his perfections and kingdom, is a matter which cannot be denied: and this darkness must be occasioned, either by something in God, or by his concealment of himself, or by the loss of a spiritual understanding amongst men.— But this blindness doth not arise from any thing in God, as if he were darkness; *for God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all*: nor does it proceed from any concealment of himself, so that we

cannot behold him by reason of it. This was never true in itself at any time, however great and palpable the darkness of mens minds have been with regard to God; but it is less true under the Gospel dispensation than ever; for the true light now shineth, and God hath eminently manifested himself in the character and instructions of his Son, whom he hath revealed for this purpose; who was *the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person*; and whose glory so conspicuously shone forth to the view of those who were enlightened from above, that they knew him to be *the only begotten of the Father*.

Therefore it remains, that this darkness must be occasioned by the loss of a spiritual understanding, through the wickedness of mens hearts: *For light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil*.

Now, of *all* sorts of light God is the author.—He formed the sun to rule the day—he maketh us *wiser* than the fowls of heaven, and he alone giveth *supernatural light*, or a *spiritual understanding*.—Hence is he stiled the *Father of Light*, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift.

If any admit no other kind of light, with regard to divine things, but that of reason, *improved and heightened* by external advantages and diligent application, I shall not, at present, dispute the subject with them. It is not this sort of light that I

mean, but something of a nature entirely different—a light that is properly supernatural, and from God; in a manner, the light which reason furnishes, is not, nor can, with any propriety, be said to be. God manifests himself to his people in a peculiar manner, by a lustre, as superior to that of mere natural reason, as it is different from it in kind. They have the same common knowledge of God as others—the same powers of reason—the same external advantages from his word and works, for acquiring a speculative acquaintance with him, his nature and perfections; but they have a knowledge of him which is not acquired in this way, which is far above the efforts of reason, though blessed with the best aids, and applied with the greatest diligence. This knowledge is the effect of a spiritual illumination of their minds, by God's shining into them with the light of his glory. The heart is the subject of the divine irradiation; the eyes of the understanding are enlightened by the spirit of wisdom and revelation. When God thus shines into their hearts, the effect is a clear, distinct, lively perception of his supreme and transcendent excellency—of the beauty and amiableness of his nature and perfections. God appears exceedingly lovely, and exceedingly glorious; worthy to be feared, and to be had in reverence of all intelligent creatures. The genuine language of their heart now is—*Bless the Lord, O my soul!—who would not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name!—love the Lord, all ye his saints!—laud him all*

*ye people!---praise ye him, all his Angels!---praise ye him, all his hosts!*

Not only does this or that perfection appear agreeable; or this or that branch of his conduct; but every thing in God is lovely; every perfection of his nature, and every branch of his providence---every thing that belongs to him has a peculiar sweetness, and acceptableness in it to the soul. Especially the Gospel appears with peculiar lustre, as the brightest and most distinguishing display of the uncreated loveliness of the Father, the Son, and Holy Ghost.

Some persons talk of great regard to God, great esteem of his perfections, and high expectations of future happiness; while they have but a mean opinion of the Gospel, and are destitute of all sensible love and deference to the character of Jesus Christ. But all their religion is a deceit, and their hopes a delusion: for these things cannot be separated:---*He that hath not the Son, hath not the Father---He that rejecteth the Son, rejecteth the Father---He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father which hath sent him---He who receives not the record of God, maketh him a liar.*

In proportion to our sense of the excellency of God, and his perfections, will be our sense of the excellency of the Gospel, and its author, and so on the contrary.

When God at first regenerates a soul, and shines into the heart, and gives it to behold the light of

the knowledge of his glory, the creature is introduced into a new world---All things appear new. It has new views and perceptions of God and Jesus Christ; such as it never had before; yea, those things, which were known before, appear with a new lustre and beauty---The scripture and its truths appear new: new light and glory appear to shine in them---Now the heart has an evidence of their divinity, and a sense that they are not cunningly devised fables, far beyond any thing it could obtain from mere speculation---In these discoveries, the mind is brought to the full assurance of understanding.

There is no knowledge which we can acquire, that can anticipate this divine illumination, or render it useless---Some say, men may, by their own application, obtain all that knowledge in religion that is necessary; and then, all that remains to make them good men, is to practise what they know. This is one of the modern refinements, and is as far from being true, as some others: for that religious knowledge, which is necessary to form the heart and practise to real goodness, lies not at all in mere speculation; neither will the result of our own application, in itself considered, ever sanctify the soul, or produce a truly virtuous life. That knowledge, which sanctifies, is of a different original: It comes down from above; it flows from the mercy-seat of God.

And as no acquired knowledge can supercede the necessity of this divine teaching, so, when it is

granted, in any considerable degree, it is very perceptible. The most learned divine becomes immediately sensible of the vast difference between his *own knowledge* and this *divine instruction*. His own notions, however diligently collected and matured, are as nothing, with respect to clearness and efficacy, compared to one view of the divine glory communicated to the heart, by the spirit of God shining into it. Now, he sees divine things in a different view; he beholds them in a very different light: Hence, this knowledge is altogether a different thing, from the teachings of any outward means whatsoever.

In this sense, God is a sun, and, in this manner, does he communicate spiritual light to his people.

## II. God infuses *joy and gladness* into their hearts.

As God is the author of spiritual light, so also of spiritual joy. Holy light always precedes holy joy, as it is the reason and ground of it. That joy and affection which does not rise from a spiritual discovery of the excellency of divine things, is false and enthusiastic---There is no such thing in true religion, as heat without light; or zeal without knowledge. There is, indeed, much of this sort of religion in the world, but as it has not the nature of true Religion, it ought not to bear the name.

So, on the other hand, there is no such thing in real religion, as spiritual light without heat; or

spiritual knowledge without zeal. These can be no more separated than light from the sun ; or heat from fire ; or reason from an intelligent nature.

God does not give to all his creatures equal degrees of joy and consolation : but he usually grants them, in some degree ; and in those communications, he shews a wise and holy sovereignty. And where the least measure of this spiritual joy is given, it is of so exquisite and heavenly a nature, that the soul can never again thirst *supremely* for earthly joys, nor habitually prefer the delights and pleasures of earth to those of true Religion. This is the distinguishing nature of spiritual joy, of which God is the author, that it forever palls the taste to all sensual and sinful pleasures.---This is the water which Christ gives, that he, who drinks of it, will never thirst again.

It is only the true and upright Christian, who knows the refined pleasures and joys which God pours into their hearts : such as the men of this world understand not, neither do strangers intermeddle with them. These are the secrets of the Lord, which are imparted only to those who fear him. They are sacred pledges of mutual friendship---foretastes or prelibations of those rivers of pleasure at the right hand of God, which are in reserve for his people, when they shall have finished their present pilgrimage. These joys, wherewith true Christians are entertained, are produced by the

holy spirit, through means of the word and ordinances.

God's own existence and glorious perfections, *realized to their hearts*, form one *comprehensive reason* of sweetness and satisfaction. None but good men know what infinite pleasure it affords, *that God exists*. Oftentimes it fills their souls with unspeakable transports, and they inwardly exult in the *blessed assurance*.

The universal dominion and government of God, is another source of sensible pleasure to the truly pious. O! how comfortable is the thought, that *the Lord God omnipotent reigneth*!---that in the darkest state of things, *he sits at the helm*, and directs the affairs of the church, and of the world!---that his own glory will be advanced!

Sometimes these joys arise from having their hearts drawn out in strong and sensible love to God above all things: in a love, stronger than death---O! how transporting the pleasure, to feel an heart full of love to the most amiable of Beings!

Sometimes he gives them the kindest assurance of his favor and regard through Jesus Christ---While they fear their unworthiness and sinfulness will forever separate him from them, he secretly communicates some tender testimony of his love, and, at once, dissipates every distressing suspicion of heart. O! how sweet is it, to be prevented by the goodness of God; and to have a garment of praise for a spirit of heaviness!

Oftentimes he causes the humble and upright Christian to rejoice in the hopes of glory, and the shortness of that interval, that bars him from his immediate and everlasting presence. God enables the contrite one to anticipate the joys of that blessed season, when he shall be admitted to see him, as he is:—when sin shall be no more, and sorrow have an end—when the imperfection and vanity of his present state, shall no more obstruct the vigor of the soul, but his songs and praises to God and the Lamb, be as ardent and sincere as those of saints and seraphim around the throne.

Thus, God is a sun, in communicating *joy and gladness* to the hearts of his people.

III. God, by his influences, renders true Christians fruitful in every branch of goodness.

It is the influence of the natural sun, that makes the earth productive of fruits, necessary for the life of man and beast: In like manner, it is the influence of the sun of righteousness, that makes Christians fruitful in all good works. Their improvements in piety and virtue, will always be in proportion to the degree and frequency of these influences---Without them, there is no progress to be made—*Without me*, says our Lord, *ye can do nothing*. How much is the truth of this assertion, the experience of every true Christian? If Christ does not animate him by the secret power of his grace, how dead the heart to every spiritual exercise!---How does grace languish, and things di-

vine loose their sensible relish, from day to day!— Just as you have seen things in early spring, in the natural world, when the beams and influences of the sun are intercepted by thick clouds and frosty winds, the vernal, beautiful appearances fade—grass, and herbs and flowers decline and languish; till the clouds and cold are dispersed, and the sun resumes its splendor, and sheds abroad its genial warmth, by its unrebrated rays: then all nature flourishes again. Thus it is in the Christian life. When God lifts up the light of his countenance, every grace begins to spring, and the soul becomes gay and blooming, as the garden of God. And now, there is much fruit to the glory of their heavenly Father. Praise and joy and holy walking employ every hour. But alas! when God hides his face, troubles again return. Sin and the world renew their attacks; and, too often, former victories are disgraced by new defeats: but when the sun of righteousness shines upon them, grace grows, and every good work abounds.

### I M P R O V E M E N T.

I. We here learn, of what high consideration, the being, government, and communications of God are to good men—There is no supposition more terrible and distressing to a pious mind, than this; *that there is no God.* No attempts made by Satan to disturb the peace and tranquillity of good

men, are so insupportable, as those which consist in bringing into question God's existence and government: Let the foundation be attempted, and there is no resource nor rest---On the supposition that God did not exist, it were better not to be. Existence is a blessing only on condition of God's Existence, without this, life itself would be a curse.

But O! what pleasure has the true Christian at times, in the single reflection, that God is—The character of God, as represented in his word, is also an essential consideration of happiness, as well as his existence itself. If those perfections are retrenched, which he has ascribed to himself in his own revelation, the happiness of real Christians is subverted in its original foundation. For it is in a realizing sense of heart, of the reality and holy excellency of them; that their souls are much formed to a supreme duty, and respect to him and his ways. And they have not only sweet delight, that God is, but that he is *what* he is. I AM THAT I AM, was the name by which he revealed himself to Moses, for the comfort of Israel.

The universal and particular providence of God is likewise a principle, in which all good men are extremely interested. Were it not for this support, there would be no spirit left in them. As it creates them the greatest pain, not to be able by faith, to see that God, who is invisible; so, a full assurance and feeling sense of his agency and concern in all things, is to them a reviving cordial.

It is a solitary condition with a good man, when his sense of these things is abated; and though God is on his right hand and on his left, yet he cannot behold him---And indeed, my brethren, it is not an easy matter to live in the realizing sense of the being, perfections, and providence of God. *He* knows but little of himself, and what it is to have a true faith of these things, who thinks not so. To assent to these truths, indeed, is an easy matter; and to be free from all hesitation and doubt about them in our judgment: but he grossly mistakes, who imagines this is that faith, in these things, which belongs to true Christians. There is a divine sense of it, that is more or less their aim and consolation; and the whole compass of creature enjoyments, is not able to compensate the want of this faith.

2. We may be here led to enquire, my hearers, whether the Lord God is our sun?

Do we perceive God's nature, perfections, and influences, of such high consequence and importance *to us*? Are these the sources of our truest enjoyment, and sweetest consolation? Is God's existence our life and delight? His perfections, his glory and felicity, our pleasure and entertainment?---His holy and enlightening influences, the blessings for which we pant and languish?---Is God our sun? Does he form our day? Is it his presence makes our Heaven? Is it his beauty, his excellency, and glory shining in the face of Jesus

Christ, that we admire?---Are our thoughts taken up with God?---Is he our light and our joy?

If we can answer understandingly in the affirmative to these queries, then, *blessed are ye of the Most High.* Blessed is that people whose God is the Lord; to whom *the Lord God is a Sun.* He is a Being of universal dominion; he is the creator and preserver of all; he sits at the helm of government, and his eyes run to and fro through all the earth. He beholds the thoughts and councils of men; and nothing can happen to his people, whereby they are affected, but what shall work for their highest good. How blessed are ye, O Christians! who have a friend of this character, of such universal sway and influence!—You know his absolute and incontrollable power. He will do all his pleasure—he can save, when every resource fails and all things look desperate. You know that all happiness is in his gift: *in his presence is fullness of joy*; whom he blesteth, *is blessed indeed.* Out of his favor there is no such thing as true happiness. The pleasures of such are but as crackling thorns under a pot. Happiness, derived from this world, is like the light of a meteor, which instantaneously ends in darkness. The joys of the wicked cease with their breath: and as these cease, *everlasting sorrows commence.* But then the happiness of those who choose God for their portion, will eminently begin---to such, a natural death will be but the commencement of everlasting life

and blifs---To his people, he delights to shew his mercy---he will give grace and glory.

God is more inclined to do good to those who walk uprightly, than the most affectionate parent is, to be kind and tender to a favorite child---A woman may forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb; but God will never forget those, who put their trust in him; he will never leave you nor forsake you. O Christians! live in his light---bask in his rays---and may you enjoy an unclouded sun, until you be introduced into immortal day. It is but a little while till your sun shall never set, or grow dim, but it will shine, with encreasing brightness, for ever and ever---O then! walk worthy of your high calling and dignity.

3. Are there not some in this assembly, who are under the power of an absolute indifference in respect to all these things, who have never had any discovery of divine glory---to whom worldly prosperity is the most important consideration of felicity? Abundance of this world's goods can satisfy you without God: and do you, my hearers, in this situation, look upon yourselves to be real Christians? Can you read your Bible, and not hesitate about your pretensions to so high and refined a character? Can God be your exceeding joy and great reward, and yet never feel your hearts exult in his existence, perfections, and universal dominion? Can he be your sun, and you never felt the

warmth of his beams, quickening your hearts into love and devotion? Can he be your *centre, rest, and home*; and you never experienced the attractive power of his excellency and glory, drawing your hearts into union with him, and disposing you to long and breathe after a state of greater nearness, and more free and delightful intercourse? Can you live happy without the enlightening beams of God's gracious presence? Can this world satisfy you, and its enjoyments content you? You are often asking, who will shew us any good? but never enquiring, where is God our maker?—Surely you have no reason to consider yourselves as true Christians, whatever your pretensions may be.

Wherefore, O Sinners! you, who have hitherto preferred the world, and its flatteries, awake this day to choose the Lord for your God---Is it not better for you to have God for your friend, than all the world without him? Can the world comfort you in a dying hour? *Can it befriend you before the bar of God?* Can it relieve you, when doomed by the divine sentence to eternal misery?

Wherefore, O Sinners? be persuaded this day to renounce the ways of vanity and sin; and take the God of Israel for your portion, the Sun of Righteousness for your Saviour, and the Spirit of Grace for your Consolation.

And may God of his infinite mercy, work this persuasion in your hearts, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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# S E R M O N VI.

## THE EVIL AND DANGER OF SECURITY IN SIN.

B Y

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M A T T. xxiv. 38, 39.

*For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the Ark: and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.*

**T**HE discourse, of which these words are a part, was addressed by our Lord to his disciples—The express design of it was to animate them to a steady vigilance and attention to their immortal interest—to preserve them from sloth and stupidity, the *too common effects* which divine patience has upon mankind. This design is sufficiently visible in the account St. Luke gives us of this discourse; but what is here related by St. Matthew, puts the matter beyond all doubt:---

*Watch therefore, for ye know not the hour when your Lord doth come.*

Hence, the propriety and force of the words of our text, with regard to the general argument and exhortation of our Lord to vigilance, stand thus :

“ There can be no season whatsoever in which it  
 “ is proper or safe to grow secure, and neglect a  
 “ daily preparation for the solemn appearance of  
 “ Christ; either to summon us before him by  
 “ death, or to pour out trying and terrible judg-  
 “ ments upon our land; or to bring on the general  
 “ judgment of quick and dead: I say, there can be  
 “ no season in which it can be safe to be secure and  
 “ unprepared; because, there is no season in which  
 “ he may not come, in one, or other of these ways:  
 “ and it would be shocking and irretrievable, to be  
 “ surpris'd in an unprepared condition.”

And besides, Christ's coming, both to the general judgment, and to punish wicked communities, will certainly be in a time of general security, as it was in the time of the flood, and destruction of Sodom. It is generally in this condition he comes, and surpris'es men by death. Therefore, it is greatly to be apprehended, that the season of our security and negligence about his coming, will be the very juncture in which he will come, to our great surpris'e, and to the everlasting sorrow of many---we ought then, always, *to watch, and to be ready.*

The words of our text, considered independent on their relation to the general argument, present us with the following observations.

I. We may observe the state of the old world, before the flood. They were perfectly secure--- *They were eating and drinking, &c.* They were eagerly pursuing their pleasure, each in his own way, and according to his own taste. Their attention was universally engaged in those affairs, projects and applications, that were calculated only for a present *sensual happiness*, utterly inapprehensive both of the wrath of God, that was already enkindled against them, and of those fatal effects into which it soon burst out, and mingled them in one common destruction. They had no misgivings of heart with respect to their danger; although the justice of God is always awake, and attentive to the growth and prevalence of vice; or if some of them had any apprehensions of evil, they did not suffer them to mature into serious considerations and sincere repentance. They were seduced either by a passion to imitate the general practice and opinion; or carried away, by an innate desire for sensual gratifications; or overwhelmed in the cares and business of life.

Nor was this insensibility owing to want of sufficient warning. In the sixth chapter of Genesis, God tells us with an original regard to mankind in that day, *that his spirit should not always strive with man.* This, in the strongest man-

ner, implies, that God had remonstrated against their wickedness---used proper methods to reform them, and had given them sufficient assurance of the fatal issue of their impenitence. The Apostle Peter informs, that Jesus Christ, by his spirit, preached to them their danger, and the necessity of repentance. He acquaints us also, that Noah was employed to declare to them, in the name of God, the wickedness and danger of their practices. They had, likewise, the strongest confirmation of the truth of Noah's doctrine, for a great while before their eyes, in that long and tedious labor of his building the Ark. So singular a machine must needs have struck their attention and awakened their curiosity. The use of which, when known, we may well suppose from their temper, did not fail to be matter of pleasantry and ridicule among them. How often did they call him an old foolish fanatic, and wild enthusiast! How much was he the subject of the scoffs and sneers of the gayer sort; while the graver ones among them, who were admired as oracles by the meaner rabble, pronounced his conduct, the height of frenzy and madness. Would not some say, 'see the doating fool, how he toils and labors to build himself a machine, by which he may escape a deluge, that his disordered brain suggests to him is to come.' While others reply, 'Curse the old enthusiast, I wish he was drowned ten thousand fathom deep; for he does nothing but interrupt business, and distract the world with his reveries and nonsense.'

II. We observe, that their wickedness, insensibility and unbelief, continued to the last. The representations of the divine displeasure against them, were utterly disregarded—God's threatenings carried no terror to their hearts, and consequently formed no prevailing argument, or reason for reformation. The denunciations of general ruin, without a speedy change of heart and life, were no doubt looked upon *imaginary and romantic*; fitted, only to alarm weak and superstitious minds, incapable of examining such predictions by the laws of reason, and the perfections of God. We may easily conclude, that they objected to Noah's prophecies, that they could not be true, because they were repugnant to the divine attributes. It was natural to blind, and unbelieving sinners to assert, that it was inconsistent with the mercy and goodness of the common parent of the universe, to destroy so many millions of his creatures, and that too, only for indulging those very appetites with which himself had formed them. How plausible would such arguments be? How well adapted to the taste, and depraved reason of licentious and presumptuous sinners? How would they triumph in this reasoning, as a complete confutation of the falshood and absurdity of all the divine declarations by his servant. "What! might they not say—  
"Is not God's mercy and goodness infinite? Do not  
"all his works proclaim it? Are not his goodness  
"and benevolence as evident as his existence? But  
"where is his goodness, or his mercy, upon the doc-

“trine of this romantic fellow, this upstart preacher? Is not this strange divinity grossly unreason-  
 “able? Such things cannot come from God, that  
 “are plainly contradictory to his known and essen-  
 “tial perfections.” Noah, of consequence, must have  
 been deemed an old fanatic; mad with new notions,  
 and zealous to propagate the infection, and make  
 others as mad as himself; or an artful knave, who  
 endeavored to dupe mankind to his private purposes,  
 under the pretence of a divine commission.

With these principles, with this perversion of reason, it was plainly impossible, that divine threatenings could have their proper effect upon them; or that any means which were judged proper by infinite wisdom should prevail. Hence they quickly fell sacrifices to the falshood of their strong and plausible reasonings. Vain were all attempts to undeceive their minds, and discover the uncertainty of their elaborate arguments. But the event convinced them by an awful experiment, of what their reason could never reconcile with the perfections of God, or admit as worthy of their attention and credit. Their arguments drawn from the nature and perfections of God, mightily comforted their hardened hearts, and supported their blind minds, until the day in which *the fountains of the great deep were broken up*, and then their refuge of lies was swept away; and the conviction of the truth of divine revelation was forced in upon their minds, with all the horrors of despair—Thus ma-

ny, even at this day, pretendedly argue from the divine perfections against divine revelation; and like these unhappy antediluvians, will receive conviction when it is too late, from the deluge of Jehovah's wrath, which they would not believe.

III. We observe, that the vengeance of Heaven executed by a general flood, was to them extremely sudden and surprizing.—They had for a long course of years, the loudest calls to repentance, and the most express warnings of universal ruin, in case of disobedience. Noah, it is probable, was a preacher of righteousness an hundred years, and endeavored to stem the current of general wickedness, by the application of divine threatenings, and exhortations to repentance. In this view, therefore, their destruction was not at all sudden, nor unexpected. But they did not believe the truths of God; the divine threatenings were to them as idle dreams.—*They ate, they drank, they married, and were giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered into the Ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.*—They were sure in themselves no such event would happen—they were sure God was merciful, and in this confidence they blessed themselves, and bid defiance to such shocking and barbarous declarations. They could not, in any shape, believe them, until the fatal event administered demonstration, *with confusion* to their senses—until they found themselves overwhelmed, and strangling in the flood, and the same ven-

geance pursuing them down to Hell. How awful was the security and confidence, in which they were surpris'd! While all were chearful, gay, easy, and happy, sacrificing to pleasure, indulging their natural, and as they imagined, innocent desires, looking for no such thing; they lift up their eyes, and behold, the awful torrent from afar, rolling irresistably along! Oh dreadful consternation! shocking change! In a moment, from mirth, music, tranquillity and joy, to horror, amazement, and despair! Hear how they shriek and howl! but God laughs at their calamity! See how they run hither and thither, mingling without distinction; in distraction, looking for places of refuge and security! See some ascending to the tops of houses, and aspiring domes! Vain expedient! for the impetuous surge overturns their strong places, and confounds their hopes! See millions fleeing to the lofty mountains, before the encreasing flood! But Oh! how fruitless is their attempt! Thousands sink in the vale—Thousands are overtaken upon the brows of the steep hills, and dashed to pieces by the lashing waves, among the craggy rocks—The residue are swept from the deceitful summit, down the long precipice, to deeper ruin! Hark, how they cry for mercy! But alas, it is now too late! These cries might have succeeded, had they been made in time; but then they judged them unnecessary, and that it was too soon: as many, even at this day, put off seeking God, and crying for mercy, until they are surpris'd in death.

IV. We observe, that the circumstances and state of mankind at those seasons in which Jesus Christ will come to punish and judge them, will greatly resemble those at the time of the flood.—They will be times of great security, of eminent inconsideration and carelessness, with respect to the matters of religion and eternity: Seasons in which both wise and foolish virgins will be sleeping; in which profaneness and wickedness will prevail; the love of pleasure, and the love of the world, will be remarkably great and general.

1. This is often the case when Jesus Christ comes to remove particular sinners by death.—It frequently happens that careless and impenitent sinners, who have had many warnings of their danger, and made light of them, are taken away when they least expected such an event. Innumerable are the instances of this sort. How often are men checked in the career of their madness, folly and security, with that awful language, *Thou fool! this night shall thy soul be required of thee.* Oh! my brethren, a state of security is a dangerous state! When sinners cry, *peace, peace,* then sudden destruction cometh; when they imagine themselves most distant from death, judgment, and eternity, then those events are nearest. How tremendous is it, to be arrested by the grim messenger in the midst of scenes of pleasure, or worldly projects, and not one day more allowed to prepare for another state!

2. This is the case when Jesus Christ comes to punish and destroy guilty and impenitent nations and churches.—Nothing is more certain than that in all past ages, seasons of divine judgments on communities, either civil or sacred, have ever been seasons of great security, and reigning impiety.—The truth of this observation is evident with respect to the Jewish nation, in all the public judgments God poured out upon them.—And the conduct of Providence towards this nation, ought particularly to be observed; for it is designed as a specimen of the ordinary methods, in which God will deal with communities that he has distinguished with the honorable relation to himself, as his church and people.—It is evident God never visited them with any public remarkable calamity, but some remarkable public defection is mentioned as the immediate reason and ground of it.—They indeed often disowned the imputation; they denied their guilt; were insensible of any such remarkable degeneracy, for which they should be so severely visited; they refused to accept those judgments as the punishment of their sins; and had the common disease of an unhumiliated heart to exculpate themselves.—But from them we learn, that public judgments on a professing people, are always the ordinary effect, and designed punishment of public declensions from their duty, and regard to the covenant and oaths of God they are under. And their not seeing themselves in this light, nor being affected with them is no argument at all that this is not the case.

3. This will be the case, when Jesus Christ shall be revealed from Heaven to hold the general judgment.—Awful security, and awful wickedness will then prevail; for scarcely will faith be found upon the earth.

There is a day, a dreadful day, fixed by divine decree, when Jesus Christ shall be revealed from Heaven, with his mighty Angels in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them, that know not God, and obey not the Gospel—to call all nations, tongues and languages; all the kindreds of the earth, and every individual that ever existed, to his bar;—to lay open the secrets of every heart—to disclose the hidden springs of action, and determine the real characters of men, and fix their eternal destiny! One would imagine, that the certainty of an event of such high consequence, and everlasting importance, would have an irresistible effect: that it would interest and penetrate every heart, and determine all universally to the most studious and incessant attention to those things, whereby they might be prepared to stand in the awful day! And yet we are assured, notwithstanding, that it will be a time of great and general security. Jesus Christ's coming will be as a thief in the night; when men are in a profound sleep, altogether inapprehensive of danger. *As in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the Ark, and knew*

*not until the flood came and took them all away ; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.*

I proceed now to close this discourse with a few reflections.

I. How great is the resemblance between our present state, and that of mankind before the flood ! The similitude bears in all respects, and that too with peculiar aggravations on our part. It is so glaring to every serious observer, that the very mention of it were sufficient to bring all to an humble confession, and mournful sense of our danger. But, it is the dreadful unhappiness of sinners, the nearer they approach to judgment and ruin, the more blind and insensible they grow.— This arises from two general causes. 1. The proper nature of sinful courses, which always blind the mind, and harden the heart. 2. The additional judgment of God, who permits the malignity of the human heart to exert itself with less control.— He ceases to apply those usual methods of restraint—gives them up more to themselves—leaves them to the government of their own heart's lusts—denies them restraining grace—takes his spirit from them.

The resemblance between us and the old world, is evident in the following respects.—The universal prevalence of deep security—the great means which God is using with us to reclaim us—and the amazing wickedness which abounds among all ranks of men notwithstanding.

I. The resemblance is evident in the universal prevalence of deep security. Let us look around us, and do we not find in ourselves and others, stupidity and unbelief in its strongest likenesses, to that we see drawn for those beyond the flood? Are we acting any otherwise than they? Are we doing any thing else but *eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage*, buying, selling, planting, building, &c.—though the wrath of God is ready to burst upon our devoted heads!—Are we doing any thing but increasing our guilt, which is already gone up to Heaven? Are we not by adding iniquity to iniquity, blowing up the fury of God Almighty to an unquenchable flame? Are we not walking in security, taking no notice either of his word or providence, as though we were resolved to make trial of what God will do after all his threatenings? Oh foolish people! do you thus provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are you stronger than he? Remember if you thus continue, your feet shall slide in due time. The things that come upon you make haste:—And nothing but repentance—nothing but a speedy entrance into the Gospel Ark—nothing but taking refuge immediately under Emmanuel's wings, can secure you an escape.

II. The resemblance between us and the old world is strong, in respect to the great means God is using with us to reclaim us. Noah was a preacher of righteousness to them, but we have Jesus Christ and his Apostles preaching righteouf-

ness to us. The exhortations to repentance—the warnings of our danger recorded in the scriptures, are very many; and these exhortations and warnings are so clear and pointed, that he that runs may read them. He must be absolutely stupid, and nearly sunk into a state of Atheism, that does not perceive and understand thier voice. They proclaim aloud the height and enormity of our wickedness, and the displeasure of Heaven against us.

How loudly have we been called upon to repent and change our ways! How earnestly and frequently has the importance and necessity hereof been inculcated upon us!—How express have been the warnings we have had, and still have of the danger of our natural courses of sin and pleasure!—How often have the terrors of that wrath, to which we expose ourselves by impenitence, formality and negligence in religion, been painted and exhibited to our view, from the word of God!—How distinctly have the glories and divine rewards of the Gospel been set before us, to induce us to prefer the service and work of Jesus Christ, to all the flattering, delusive, and sinful enjoyments of this world!—How many events have we met with in the course of our lives; to rouse our attention to the vanity of all things below the sun!—*We have had line upon line, and precept upon precept*—and notwithstanding all this, does not an awful and fatal security prevail among us, as it did among the inhabitants of the antediluvian world?

III. The amazing wickedness which abounds among all ranks of men, bespeaks a too great likeness between us and them. It is recorded of them, that *all flesh had corrupted their way, and the earth was filled with violence.* And is not this awfully true with regard to us?—I cannot now pursue this argument in all its parts, or give the black detail of reigning vices, which demonstrate the imitation to be general and true. Would to God that the matters and evidences, applicable to the support of this representation, were less obvious and less abundant!—What a growing contempt for divine revelation takes place among us?—What attempts are daily made to weaken its authority and influence?—Vain are all devices to support virtue by ingenious theories, and labored arguments, when the plain and simple doctrines of the Gospel of Jesus Christ are set aside. Oh! how blasphemous an insult on the perfections of God, is the attempt to substitute other methods to promote virtue in the room of the ever blessed Gospel, in the place of this glorious instrument of Heaven for the support of Religion! Will not a jealous God take vengeance, and confound the designs of all such deistical and antediluvian builders!—But leaving this, what sort of wickedness does not abound among us? How is the name, the dreadful name of God profaned? How often are our ears stunned with hellish oaths, and direful imprecations?—How are God's sabbaths abused? How are the ordinances, and special institutions

of Jesus Christ neglected? What restraint of prayer? What thoughtlessness, respecting all the great realities of eternity, take place? How does beastly drunkenness, and more than beastly uncleanness, in all their horrid forms, defile our land?—And how has love and friendship among mankind ceased? What extortion and injustice—what tricking, defrauding, overreaching, and cheating, almost every where abound?—Alas! how few are of clean hands, how few are of pure hearts!

How are mankind plunged and sunk into iniquity!—How do they add drunkenness to theft, licentiousness to liberty, profaneness to foolish jesting, and to all these, a total neglect of divine admonitions, and yet vainly imagine they shall have peace!—Will not the eternal God cause his jealousy to smoke against such secure and bold transgressors?—Jehovah's wrath is already enkindled, and unless we awake to repentance and reformation, it will surely *burn unto the lowest hell!* It will consume *the young man and the virgin, the suckling also with the man of grey hairs.*

Let us hearken to the divine voice, and not be found proclaiming defiance to the vengeance of Heaven. Oh! that secure, stupid, and careless sinners would make a stand; lay your ways seriously to heart; consider what is likely to become of you, and what you will do at the awful appearance of the Son of Man!

Go, confess your sins ; mourn for your iniquities ; break off from your transgressions ; and cry unto the Lord, and it may be that he will restrain the fierceness of deserved wrath, and bestow blessings upon you.

*Let the wicked man forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts ; and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

*Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.*—Let there be a general preparation. The Lord is on his way. Behold he comes quickly ! Gird up the loins of your minds, and go ye forth to meet him, repenting of your sins, acquiescing in the Gospel plan of reconciliation, observing all the commandments and ordinances of God. But if this advice seem evil unto you, prepare, O Sinners, for judgment ! Prepare to meet an incensed judge ! Our God is a consuming fire !—*Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest ; this shall be the portion of your cup.*

Let it be the fervent prayer of all, that God would awaken the secure, alarm the stupid and inconsiderate, and turn multitudes to righteousness.